

Block**3****BRITISH ROMANTIC LITERATURE II**

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This Block will introduce you to the most important British Romantic poets like Charles Lamb, Lord Byron, P B Shelly, John Keats.

After the completion of this block, you will be able to:

- Get introduced to the important poets of British Romantic poetry.
- Be familiarised with the major influential factors on Charles Lamb, Lord Byron, P B Shelly, John Keats.
- Independently comprehend their effects worldwide.
- Understand the lives and works of the torchbearers of this literary period.
- Trace their impacts on the later generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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THE PEOPLE'S
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UNIT 1 CHARLES LAMB: ‘A DISSERTATION UPON ROASTED PIG’: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Charles Lamb: A Biographical Sketch
- 1.4 An Introduction to “A Dissertation upon Roast Pig”
- 1.5 Text
- 1.6 Glossary
- 1.7 Summary and Analysis
- 1.8 Humour
- 1.9 Prose Style
- 1.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.11 Suggested Reading
- 1.12 Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit will expose the reader to the vibrant world of

- Charles Lamb’s “A Dissertation Upon Roasted Pig”, its summary and analysis A Brief Biographical Sketch of the writer: the man, his means and achievement.
- Lamb’s Characteristic Humour and situations leading to exploration of humorous situations.
- Lamb’s well received and much appreciated Prose Style.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will have the reader’s confidence in appreciating Lamb’s subtle thematic strands involving humour, pathos, and intrinsic appeal of the essay. The write-up is meant to provide clarity and expression leading the reader to comprehensive understanding of the essay. The questions under the self check category will provide the reader opportunities his/ her grasp of the essay.

Lamb’s essays usually bear the stamp of his versatile personality, hence, a brief analysis of the author’s biography seems to be indispensable in the context of the present unit. Thematic exploration of the essay will enable the reader to understand the essay with clarity and precision. Working understanding of the essay then, will lead the reader to explore the more nuanced attribute of Lamb’s characteristic humour. Finally, the comment on Lamb’s prose style will give the

reader much needed fillip in grasping not only the essay and its theme and style but also a cursory glance at the developments of the contemporary period.

1.2 CHARLES LAMB: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The adage style holds true for Charles Lamb (1775-1834) for his purely personal and engaging style that always won the readers' confidence by leaps and bounds. Son of a clerk to a famous barrister Samuel Salt who held his bench at the Inner Temple, Lamb had promising beginning to his literary career amidst some famous luminaries of his time. It is but natural that Lamb spent his childhood and youth at Inner Temple. His schooling at Christ's Hospital from 1782 to 1789 was both eventful and productive in the company of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In a sense, Lamb had profound regard for Coleridge who was two years older to him. They enjoyed a hand and glove relationship between them which lasted till Lamb's death. His fondness for Greek Language helped him in acquiring mastery over Latin Language and writing after his departure from Christ's Hospital. After a short stint at South Sea House with his brother John's appraisal, Lamb joined East India Company as a clerk from April 1792 till his superannuation in 1825.

Harsh realities of his life took tragic turn at times which made Lamb strong from inside. Both Lamb and his sister Mary Ann suffered from bouts of mental derangement which resulted in Lamb being hospitalized for six weeks treatment during 1795. However, the brother-sister collaboration came strong in 1799 which helped them to publish books for children, notable among which *Tales From Shakespeare* (1807). He tasted literary success quite late in his life after trying his hands with measured success in poetry and drama. The demerit of his four plays was they were considered as desolate. On the other hand, his essays *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808) brought him back to limelight as a critic of repute on Elizabethan Drama which also revived Elizabethan drama considerably.

Lamb's fortune touched a sky high with the publication of "The Essays of Elia" in serial form in the *London Magazine* in 1820; their immediate success is accumulated through a book form in 1823. Essays published in this collection covered almost every aspect of contemporary life, with varied subject and remarkable range. Compelling subjects from the humorous "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" to the reflective "New Year's Eve" have proved handy for the readers in more than one ways. The pseudonym Elia also helped Lamb to be at arm's length from the real recognition of the identity of the author.

His essays are direct and matter of fact invoking tenderness, pathos and humour in direct contrast to hypocrisy and pretence. His subtle style with its uncanny emphasis on close knit structure is a real asset for the reader. This is not to deny the compelling appeal of his essays with the characteristic and thought provoking observations on life. Humour, pathos and fantasy are being employed as potent weapons to explore the complexities involving the contemporary life. No wonder, Lamb is considered as one of the greatest essayists of all time. His rapport with his contemporaries and his gifted style made him a popular and much hyped essayist to cast sway over his readers over the years and across the

ages. William Hazlitt holds him with high regard as “the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men.”

1.3 AN INTRODUCTION TO “A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG”

In September, 1822, Charles Lamb published his classic essay “A Dissertation upon Roast Pig” in London Magazine under the pen name of Elia. This is an essay that shows Lamb at his humorous best. It is full of fun from beginning to end. In this unit we shall examine both content and style of the essay and observe the various devices that Lamb uses to portray a humorous account of the origin of mankind’s practice of roasting pigs besides giving us insight into his own temperament and tastes.

1.9 TEXT:

1. MANKIND, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations, where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Cho-fang, literally the Cooks’ holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swine-herd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as youngers of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian make-shift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the east from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in the utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labour of an hour or-two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from ? -- not from the burnt cottage -- he had smelt that smell before -- indeed this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young fire-brand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world’s life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted -- crackling! Again he felt and fumbled at the

pig. It did not bum him so much now; still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and, surrendering himself up to the new-born pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hail-stones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his exhaustion, something like the following dialogue ensued.

2. "You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you, but you must be eating fire, and I know not what -- what have you got there, I say?"
3. "O father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."
4. The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.
5. Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste -- O Lord," -- with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.
6. Ho-ti trembled every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavour, which, make what sour mouths he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had despatched all that remained of the litter.
7. Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbours would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the goodmeat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Hoti himself, which was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Peking, then an inconsiderable as size town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and

verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it, and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy, against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given, -- to the surprise of the whole court, towns- folk, strangers, reporters, and all present -- without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

8. The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision: and, when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus, this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery, that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (burnt, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string, or spit, came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind.
9. Without placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as . setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be .assigned in favour of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in ROAST PIG.
10. Of all the delicacies in the whole mundus edibilis, I will maintain it to be the most delicate -- princeps obsoniorum.
11. I speak not of your grown porkers -- things between pig and pork -- those hobby dehoys-- but a young and tender suckling -- under a moon old -- guiltless as yet of the sty-- with no original speck of the amor immunditiae, the hereditary failing of the first parent, yet manifest -- his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble, and a grumble -- the mild forerunner, orpraebdium, of a grunt.
12. He must be roasted. I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed, or boiled -- but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!
13. There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, crackling, as it is well called. The very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance with 0 call it not fat -- but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it -- the tender blossoming of fat -- fat cropped in the bud -- taken in ~ h e shoot -- in the first innocence -- the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food -- the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna

- or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result or common substance.
14. Behold him, while he is doing -- it seemeth rather a refreshing warmth, than a scorching heat, that he is so passive to. How equably he twirleth round the string! -- Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes -- radiant jellies -- shooting stars.
 15. See him in the dish, his second cradle, how meek he lieth wouldst thou have had this innocent grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal -- wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation -- from these sins he is happily snatched away --
 "Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade, Death came with timely care--"
 his memory is odoriferous -- no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth, the rank bacon -- no coalheaver bolteth him in reeking sausages -- he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure -- and for such a tomb might be content to die.
 16. He is the best of Sapons. Pine-apple is great. She is indeed almost too transcendent -- a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning, that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause -- too ravishing for mortal taste, she woundeth and excoriateth the lips that approach her -- like lovers' kisses, she biteth he is a pleasure bordering on pain from the fierceness and insanity of her relish -- but she stoppeth at the palate -- she meddleth not with the appetite -- and the coarsest hunger might barter her consistently for a mutton chop.
 17. Pig -- let me speak his praise -- is no less provocative of the appetite, than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the palate. The strong man may batten on him, and the weakling refuseth not his mild juices.
 18. Unlike to mankind's mixed characters, a bundle of virtues and vices, inexplicably intertwined, and not to be unravelled without hazard, he is good throughout. No part of him is better or worse than another. He helpeth, as far as his little means extend, all around. He is the least envious of banquets. He is all neighbours' fare.
 19. I am one of those, who freely and ungrudgingly impart a share of the good things of this life which fall to their lot (few as mine are in this kind) to a friend. I protest I take as great an interest in my friend's pleasures, his relishes, and proper satisfactions, as in mine own. "Presents," I often say, "endear Absents." Hares, pheasants, partridges, snipes, barn-door chicken (those "tame villatic fowl"), capons, plovers, brawn, barrels of oysters, I dispense as freely as I receive them. I love to taste them, as it were, upon the tongue of my friend. But a stop must be put somewhere. One would not, like Lear, "give everything." I make my stand upon pig. Methinks it is an ingratitude to the Giver of all good flavours, to extra-domiciliate, or send out of the house, slightingly, (under pretext of friendship, or I know

not what)a blessing so particularly adapted, pred'estined, I may say, to my individual palate -- it argues an insensibility.

20. I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweet-meat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcombry of charity, school-boy-like, I made him a present of -- the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I -- I myself, and not another -- would eat her nice cake -- and what should I say to her the next time I saw her -- how naughty I was to part with her pretty present -- and the odour of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last -- and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing, old grey impostor.

21. Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims. We read of pigs whipt to death with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom. The age of discipline is gone by, or it would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards in tenerating and dulcifying a substance, naturally so mild and dulcet as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet. Yet we should be cautious while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto.

22. I remember a hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I - was at St. Omer's, and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, "Whether, supposing that the flavour of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (per jlagellutionem extremam)

super added a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death ?" I forget the decision.

23. His sauce should be considered. Decidedly, a few bread crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage. But, banish, dear Mrs. Cook, I beseech you, the whole onion tribe. Barbecue your whole hogs to your palate, steep them in shallots, stuff them out with

plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them, or make them stronger than they are -- but consider, he is a weakling -- a flower.

1.5 GLOSSARY:

My friend M.: the reference is to Thomas Manning (1774- 1840), eastern traveller and linguist. In 1799 Charles Lamb visited Cambridge, and there made the important acquaintance of Mr. Thomas Manning, then a mathematical tutor in the university.

Confucius: the famous Chinese sage and moralist of sixth century B.C.

Mundane Mutations: title of a book invented by Lamb.

Cho-fang: another term invented by Lamb.

the elder brother: the older custom of the two.

mast: fruits of the beech, oak, chestnuts and other

forest trees used as food for pigs.

lubberly: awkward, clumsy.

youngsters: youngsters.

a sorry antediluvian a poor, prehistoric, substitute for a building.

make-shift:

litter of new-farrowed pigs: A 'litter' is a brood of young ones. To 'farrow,'

to bring forth young, is only used of swine.

consternation: surprise and fear.

tenement: cheap dwelling place.

assailed: attacked violently.

fire-brand: incendiary, troublemaker. Charles Lamb:

"A Dissertation upon

premonitory moistening: he was forewarned of what was coming by his Roast Pig"

mouth beginning to water because of the delicious odour of the burnt pigs.

nether: lower.

crackling: the crisp, outer skin of roast pork.

rafters: the sloping beams forming the framework of a roof.

retributory cudgel: a heavy stick or club the father brought to beat

L his son with for starting a fire.

lower regions:

callous:

the stomach. hardened; unfeeling.

lay on: deal blows with vigour.

graceless whelp: mischievous young cub.

devouring: eating hungrily or greedily.

burnt me down: ruined me by burning down.

be hanged to you: confound you.

cramming: stuffing himself.

enjoined: commanded.

abominable: causing hatred and disgust.

sow farrowed: the female pig gave birth to piglets.

chastising: punishing severely.

inconsiderable assize town: a small town in the countryside.

obnoxious: nasty.

charge: the address of a judge to a jury before they proceed to give their verdict, explaining the

evidence against the accused.

winked at: shut his eyes to, connived at.

privily: privately or secretly.

built slighter and slighter: built their houses of more and more flimsy materials.

Locke: Gridiron: the English philosopher and thinker, John Locke (1632-1704).

framework of metal bars used for roasting meat or fish over a fire.

mundus edibilis: world of eatables (Latin).

princeps obsoniorum: the chief of dainties (Latin).

porkers: colloquial for pigs.

between pig and pork: too large and coarse to be sent up as 'roast pig'; not fully grown enough to be treated as pork.

hobbydehoy: word used to denote that awkward, self-conscious stage of youth between boyhood and early manhood.

under a moon old; less than a month old.

guiltless as yet of the sty: unsullied by the filth of the pig-sty

amor immundibiae: love of filthiness (Latin).

praeludium : prelude (Latin).

seethed: boiled.

exterior tegument: the outer skin, which, when roasted, becomes crackling.

coy, brittle resistance: the resistance offered to the teeth by the hard but easily broken crackling.

the adhesive oleaginous: the sticky, oily, indescribable sweetness.

cropped in the bud: taken in the shoot, like a flower picked before it blossoms or a tender leaf not yet unfolded.

the cream and quintessence: the concentrated essence.

animal manna: heavenly food, consisting of flesh, not grain.

Ambrosian: :heavenly. According to Greek mythology, ambrosia is the food of the gods. shooting stars.

radiant jellies The heat of the fire causes the eyes of the pig to melt and drop out, like bright

Jellies or meteors.

shooting stars: meteors.

indocility: unwilling to be guided.

glutton: a person who eats too much.

sloven: a lazy fellow.

filthy conversation: filthy behaviour.

odoriferous: fragrant, sweet smelling.

bolteth: to swallow hastily

sepulchre: tomb.

sapors: flavours.

excoriateth: pricks.

stoppeth at the palate: does not go beyond satisfying the taste; not substantial enough to be treated as food.

barter: exchange.

batten: grow fat on.

neighbours' fare: food for good neighbours.

absents: absent friends.

villatic fowl: common or rural poultry.

upon the tongue of my friend: to enjoy the taste by thinking my friend is enjoying it.

like Lear, "give everything" : like King Lear, in Shakespeare's play, who said to his daughters: "I gave you all."

make my stand upon: firmly draw the line at.

extra-domiciliate: an outside dwelling house (Latin).

predestined: fore-ordained, fated to happen

counterfeit: made or done in imitation of another thing in order to deceive; fake.

the very coxcombry: conceited affectation or pretension.

buoyed up: feeling light-hearted and happy.

impertinent: irrelevant, out of place.

insidious: causing harm secretly; wicked

impostor: person pretending to be somebody he is not

nice: particular.

obsolete: out of date.

the age of discipline is the age when men believed in the discipline of gone by: the rod has passed.

in a philosophical a question of purely philosophical interest, not

light merely: with any view to practical experiment.

intenerating and dulcifying: softening and sweetening.

dulcet: sweet, pleasing.

refining a violet: improving upon something already exquisite.

censure: criticize unfavourably.

a gusto: additional relish or flavour.

hypothesis: idea put forward as a starting point for reasoning or explanation.

St. Omer's: a Jesuit college in France, where many English and Irish Roman Catholics used to be educated more than a century ago.

per flagellationem

extremam: by whipping to death (Latin).

I forget the decision: He will not say whether he thinks such treatment is justifiable or not. The whole of this invented incident is only a roundabout way of humorously suggesting that perhaps our ancestors, from a culinary point of view, were: right.

a dash: a small quantity. barbecue: roast whole.

to your palate: to suit your taste.

shallots: a kind of small size onion.

plantations: huge quantities.

the rank and guilty

garlic: the coarse and pernicious garlic.

a weakling: a frail creature.

1.6 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

The narrator introduces the readers to prehistoric period when man used to eat meat raw without cooking. The writings of Chinese philosopher Confucius confirm this fact in an era known as “Cooks Holiday” meaning that the Chinese had no knowledge of cooking before Confucius came to the literary scene. The narrator also confirms that Confucius’s writing or the essay deals with how cooking was discovered by Bo-bo the son of swine herd Ho-ti.

While playing with fire as a child, Bo-bo burnt his entire cottage along with nine pigs accidentally. Before he could come up with a satisfactory reason for explaining the mishap, the mouth watering smell of roasted pig came to him and not surprisingly he wanted to taste it. Forgetful of his remorse at the sad demise of his domestic animals, he could not resist devouring the taste of delicious meat and he could not help eating it. Ho-ti was upset at not only of burning of the cottage but being a fool to eat burnt pigs without guilty consciousness. He eventually gives in to his son’s pleading to taste delicious roasted pig with an accord that they would keep the invention a secret. But burning of cottage and pigs become routine affair resulting in loss of Ho-ti’s property.

The father-son duo faces trial from their town people upon revelation of the secret of frequent fire. While asking for practical demonstration of breaking out of fire during the trial, the jurors also fall prey to delicious roasted pig and let off the accused. The judge does not approve of the typical behavior of all concerned people but eventually fall to the lure of burnt pig when the mysterious fire breaks out in his own house. The mysterious fire occurs frequently in the entire town now giving people opportunity to devour delicious roasted pig as a favourite dish.

This is how the history of roasted pig is glorified by the narrator, describing about the crackling skin and succulent fat. What stands out here is the humorous analogy between the swine, known for its gluttonous behavior and being a base animal, and human beings subverting themselves, in both character and morality, to the level of pigs in eating pig meat.

The narrator also fall in line with others in devouring all types of fine meat, from strange fowl to oysters, inviting his friends and acquaintances to have taste of it. He then narrates an interesting piece of a story in which a child offers a beggar on the street a plum cake baked by his aunt having found nothing to appease him. He alleges the hypocrisy of his gifting prowess for this indiscretion. The essay ends with an anecdotal reference to ancient people sacrificing pig by whipping them resulting in a moral let down while relishing pig meat. But what

is shocking here is that even the narrator without condemning the act of pig sacrifice, suggests salads made of shallots to eat with pig meat.

Analysis:-

Part of comic genre, Lamb's lighter vein dissertation narrates pleasure of eating roasted pig. The literary device of hyperbole becomes Lamb's forte, exploring all possible means of eccentricity for lavishly extolling the flavor of roasted fork. The personal tone is also heightened by the absurd logic of discovery of roasted meat by an accidental house fire in China, that to by a child. What is the highlight of the essay is the fictional representation of the ancient myth by mixing up literary devices and narrative forms to his advantage. How man can stoop to such a low morale by resorting to beastly ways in eating animal meat has been highlighted by Lamb's essay.

Romantic features figure prominently in the essay even if Lamb prefers to chose a culinary pleasure of devouring roasted fork. The detail and engrossing account on the subject with subjective emphasis is a romantic feature that Lamb uses to prove his point. While seasoned campaigners like Thoreau explores natural side of Walden Pond how a man in society can behave in nature's company, Lamb's culinary thrust forms the crux of his romantic enquiry involving the epicurean delight, narrating how a delicious dish can bridge the gap of ideological differences between men otherwise engaged in persistent war of words for supremacy. In other words, they can sacrifice ideology for weakness of delicious food. It also points out the contemporary inquiry of performing impossible tasks by middle men by offering lavish food in a restaurant to officers, offering contemporary relevance of the essay.

The essay highlighting the culinary characteristics does not stand alone; rather it has a tradition of its own. It has a more illustrated and famous example in Jonathan Swift's satiric account of cooking and eating England's Children in "A Modest Proposal". David's Foster Wallace's more recent popular example, "Consider the Lobster" exploring the cooking and eating habits of people at the expense of cruelty to animals by rampant sacrifice of animals. All these essays fall into the genre of deriving a moral lesson of gluttonous behavior of human beings, sacrificing lives of other animals for their taste of the tongue. In other words, cooking and eating habits are primary habits of human beings but man's descent into primordial appeasement is the root cause which is caught by Lamb and other essayists' critical eyes. Man's knowledge without leading him to the stage of wisdom lends him in the domain of sheer ignorance where he fails to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. This effect is achieved by Lamb without being serious speaking volumes about Lamb's humorous or comic personality.

1.7 HUMOUR

Lamb deals with humour and pathos personally out of history and antiquity imbibed with his personal experience. His personal turbulence has clear imprint on his writings as he wanted to forget his personal sorrow involving his sister Mary to indulge in lighter vein writing. He writes about the immediate experience which is intimate close to his heart. Humour, pathos and pretty things of his life get preference in his writing. The greatness of Lamb's genius lies in

his ingenious approach in writing where his personal life does not interfere explicitly. Boisterous humour characterizes the essay thoroughly revealing Lamb's fondness for pointing at human faults in comic vein.

The device that Lamb uses to achieve comic exploits is exaggeration taking on real absurdities of life to task. Mark the instance of Ho-ti pouring blows as thick and strong as hail stones on Bobo upon eating the roasted pig which the son considers not "any more than if they had been flies." Instead, the son relishes the taste of roasted fork inviting his father Ho-ti to taste the food lavishly: "O father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats." While offering pig meat to his father, Bo-bo does not want to part with meat of his choice reserving it for his own relishing. The reader couldn't help laughing at the turn of things: "Bo-bo, whose scent was wo"nerfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out 'Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste -- O Lord,' -- with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke."

Humour achieves its acme when the judge and juries also join the party to taste the roasted fork. What could be more effective in depicting humour than Lamb's gauging of situation in beautiful line? He certainly takes the reader into confidence while describing the hilarious situation thus:

"The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision, and when the court was dismissed, went privily and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his lordship's town house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fire's in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world.

The situation becomes so hilarious that even a sage like person like the philosopher Locke does want to sacrifice his philosophy and morality for a more mundane thing like the roasted pig. It becomes even more interesting when Lamb himself becomes excited and delighted by the care and precision that goes to preparation of the roasted pig and how helpless is the roasted limb of the animal on the dining table.

Lamb's humour is without malice and cynicism which enables readers to enjoy the piece with conviction and certainty. He laughs at himself for the misfortune he is subjected to, and at others for their inability to cope with erosion of value system. But his tone is one of compatibility and adjustment. He points at the follies and foibles of the human beings unraveling the gross absurdities and terrible limitations of human beings. He employs a narrative style where no one is spared if he or she has done something incompatible with the norms of society. His tongue-in-cheek humour, his close knit presentation of material and his exploring the immediate surrounding without bias- all go to the making of him as a very important essayists for all time to come.

1.8 PROSE STYLE

Style is always personal and an essayist uses the device on purpose for personal and societal exploits. Lamb tries to imbibe a style in his prose which caters to suit the content and his personal experience as well. The chain of associations helps the writer to relate antiquity with contemporary without making things subtle or complex, rather the complex strands are being made simple by the writer's aura of confidence and calm composure he brings to the corpus of his essays. Chinese manuscript he refers to, and the other concerning his childhood experience of having to part with the cake which his aunt gifted to him serve as appropriate illustrations of the point he is trying to make. The truth of anecdotes is revealed by their connection to contemporary happenings which Lamb has resorted to brilliantly almost all his essays of *Elia*. His adaptability in mixing up popular saying to a universal significance tinged with a touch of purely personal style is the unique gift of Lamb to the world of literature.

Lamb's style takes recourse to iteration or repetition. Separated by dashes, the phrases help in conveying the cumulative effect of impressions to the reader. In this essay Lamb uses a series of phrases to emphasize his ecstatic love for the roast pig. He writes: "There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, crackling, as it is well called -- the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance -- with the adhesive oleaginous -- O call it not fat -- but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it -- the tender blossoming of fat -- fat cropped in the bud -- taken in the shoot -- in the first innocence -- the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food -- the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna -- or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance".

Another interesting feature of Lamb's style in this essay is use of archaic words and phrase without compromising on the smooth flow of thought and communication. Expressions like "the adhesive oleaginous," "villatic fowl," "intenerating and dulcifying," etc may appear off beat at times but they contribute immensely to the overall effect of the essay; the detailed glossary only helping out the reader to grasp the gripping communication that Lamb intends to in positive spirit. Similarly the use of Latin words also like *mundus edibilis*, *princeps obsoniorum*, *bamorimunditiae*, *praeludium* etc are used without affecting the attention of the reader in understanding the subtle nuances in the larger context of the essay. Using language and words of grandeur suited to heroic poetry, he only heightens the trivial life style resulting in humour characteristic of Lamb's style.

Lamb's prose style owes a great deal to Elizabethan writers like Sir Thomas Browne, Spenser, Burton, Fuller and Izaak Walton. He also explores the rare gift of Elizabethan play wrights and poets' style in his writing by openly acknowledging their influence. This is not to write of the individual imprint of his style for which Lamb is famous. His personal style laced with romantic fervor has a spontaneous appeal upon his readers for which he will be remembered forever.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have:

examined the essay “A Dissertation upon Roast Pig” as a representative of Lamb’s

style and personality;

The typical and uniquely striking traits of Lamb’s essay makes it a lighter vein enterprise which helps the reader understanding the intrinsic nuances of humourous style.

To become well versed with the various literary devices that Lamb uses in this essay; and

how you have been able to relate features of his style to his personality and to the Writers of the Elizabethan period.

1.10 SUGGESTED READING

You can read other seminal essays by Charles Lamb for a complete comprehension of and innovative insight into the world of Lambs characteristic style and humour.

A Bachelor’s Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People
Dream Children: A Reverie

Imperfect Sympathies
The Superannuated Man

The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers

Christ’s Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago

The Old and the New Schoolmaster

1.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

What effect does Lamb achieve by relating history and antiquity to contemporary happenings?

Write a note on Lamb’s characteristic humour and pathos with reference to the essay you studied?

It is said that style is purely personal. Elaborate upon the statement in the light of the essay “A Dissertation Upon A Roasted Pig”.

Why does Lamb bring so much reference to use of Latin Language? Does this device help your understanding of the essay?

Allusion to Elizabethan writing is Lamb’s gift to English Literature. Do you agree? Elaborate.

How does Lamb’s personal relationship with his sister Marry Interfere in his writngs? Give your opinion.

Does this appeal to you? If yes, in what Way? Show your acquaintance with the development of the essay.

UNIT 2 LORD BYRON: ‘ROLL ON THOU DEEP AND DARK BLUE OCEAN’, ‘GEORGE THE THIRD’

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.2 Lord Byron (1788-1824)
- 2.3 Roll on Thou Deep and Dark Blue Ocean
 - 2.3.1 The Background of the Poem
 - 2.3.2 The Text
 - 2.3.3 The Stanza Form
 - 2.3.4 An Appreciation
- 2.4 George the Third(From The Vision of Judgment)
 - 2.4.1 The Background of the Poem
 - 2.4.2 The Text
- 2.4.3 A Discussion
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Suggested Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After having read this unit you will be able to:

- Talk about Byron the poet
- Appreciate Roll on Thou Dark and Deep Blue Ocean and
- Examine George the Third as a piece of satire.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we will discuss Byron’s life in brief because it has often been said that Byron’s life itself was poetic. Critics have read his poetry as a record of his life. We will see how this is true.

The first poem is an extract from Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage which is very close to a travelogue in verse. In the fourth canto from which the poem has been taken, Byron drops the mask of Childe Harold and talks about his experiences more directly. We have scanned a stanza of the poem. You may practice scansion by scanning the poem selected for you. The second poem is a piece of satire: born out of a feud with another poet—Robert Southey. We have, in the introduction to the poem shown how Byron ridicules Southey. Thus,

in both cases Byron is an active participant in his poetry, a matter that critics have repeatedly pointed out. It is better if you read through the Unit section by section and do the exercises as you read and give yourself a break after you have worked on a major section.

2.2 LORD BYRON (1788-1824)

Byron was the eldest of the second generation of the Romantic Poets. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey belonged to the first generation. You have already learnt about the first two. In the present and the succeeding two units we will read about the second generation i.e. Byron, Shelley and Keats. Byron was born in London on 22nd January 1788 while his mother was on her way to Aberdeen. He was born in poverty and of a club foot. While the former disappeared by the time he was 10 years of age, the latter remained permanently with him. Byron was the son of one captain Jack Byron often remembered as 'Mad Jack'. He had run through the fortunes of two heiresses—a marchioness, who gave birth to Augusta Byron, the poet's half sister, and Catherine Gordon of Gight, mother of the poet. It was while running away from her rapacious (typical of a person who takes everything they can especially by force) husband that she gave birth to the poet. When Byron was three years old his father died (1791). In 1794, when Byron was six, his cousin, the heir to the Byron title, was killed. So when the fifth Baron Byron died in 1798, Byron inherited the title at the age of ten and then mother and son moved to Newstead Abbey, a dilapidated Gothic inheritance.

In Scotland, Byron had attended the Grammar School at Aberdeen. He later went to Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Byron had always been a rebel. In order to avoid the regulation that forbade keeping dogs, he kept a bear as a pet in his room at Cambridge. He also became a member of the "Whig Club" along with John Hobhouse about whom you will read more, later in this unit—and Lord Broughton. When later, Byron went to the Parliament, he spoke in support of the "frame-breakers" or workers who had destroyed some textile machines through fear of unemployment. On another occasion, he supported relief of Catholics in Scotland. He had sympathy for both Napoleon and George Washington. Byron almost wished that Napoleon was not defeated at Waterloo by the British.

Byron lived a considerable part of his life on the continent. it was at Leghorn in Italy that Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) joined him and they produced *The Liberal* magazine in which was published "The Vision of Judgment", an extract from which you are going to read later in this unit. Byron, perhaps of all the British poets, was the most European in outlook. Comparing him with Wordsworth, Bernard Blackstone, a critic, wrote: "Wordsworth's topos is a narrow one, the Lake District, and this limits his appeal to the European reader. Byron's is a very broad one, the whole of Europe and the Mediterranean world, and this makes him strange to the English reader. Mosques, temples, bazaars, dervishes, pashas, deserts, wades, don't go down very easily to a palate accustomed to clergymen, farmers, public-houses, markets, churches and cottages. So that Byron has never seemed quite real to an English audience though his work was very real to himself and to his Mediterranean readers" (Byron: A Surrey London, Longman, 1975, p.xi).

Mosques, temples and bazaars, dervishes, pashas, deserts and wads are unusual in English poetry. So was Byron's personal life. Byron married Annabelle Milbanke on 2nd January 1815 but he had many women with whom he had affairs—Lady Caroline Lamb, Lady Oxford, Mary Godwin's step sister Claire Clairmont, Teresa Guiccioli and an incestuous relationship with his half sister Augusta. The result was that he and Annabella got separated only after a year of the marriage. It has often been said that Byron's life imitated literature and his poetry makes its primary impact as a historical and biographical document. Perhaps it is generally true to say about the Romantics that it helps us appreciate a poet's work if we know more about their life. This is truer in the case of Byron. Perhaps his last 'poetic' act was his death (19 April, 1824) on the island of Missolonghi while he was working for Greek independence from the Turks.

Lord Byron: 'Roll on Thou Deep and Dark Blue Ocean', 'George The Third'

Do you find Byron's life interesting? If you do you will find a longer introduction to it in the Encyclopedia Britannica at your Study Centre.

Now find out how well you have understood the short section you read just now.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) In the space provided below write the names of the Romantic poets of, The first generation

The second generation

- 2) How old was Byron when he died?

- 3) How did George Byron become a Lord and what did he inherit?

2.3 ROLL ON THOU DEEP AND DARK BLUE OCEAN

2.3.1 The Background of the Poem

Roll on Thou Deep and Dark Blue Ocean is an extract from Canto IV of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. We have here the stanzas CLXXVIII (178) to CLXXXIII (183). These are the last but three stanzas of the canto. The poem Childe Harold's Pilgrimage describes the journey of Childe Harold whose experiences correspond to Byron's own. On 2nd July 1809 Byron left England along with a Cambridge friend John Cam Hobhouse, his servant Fletcher and his 'little pager', Robert Rushton. On 6th July they reached Lisbon. The first two cantos describe the pilgrim, surfeited with his past life of sin and pleasure, finding diversions in his journey across Portugal, Spain, the Ionian Islands and Albania. Byron returned to Newstead in England in 1811 and the first two cantos were published in 1812. It was received enthusiastically by London society and launched Byron as a major poet of England. "I woke one morning", Byron wrote in March 1812, "and found myself famous." In April 1816 Byron left England, never to return again. He went to Geneva in Switzerland where he met Shelley and completed the third canto of Childe Harold, which was published the same year. It describes the pilgrim's travels to Belgium, the Rhine, the Alps and Jura. Childe Harold also reflects on the Spanish War and the Battle of Waterloo (1815) at which Napoleon suffered his final defeat against the United Kingdom.

In October 1816, Byron left Geneva for Venice with Hobhouse. In the fourth canto he speaks directly about his experiences in Italy, his meditations on time and history, on Venice and Petrarch, Ferrara, and Tasso, Florence and Boccaccio, Rome and her great men ending with the symbol of the sea. Byron has an abiding interest in the mountains and the sea. The extract that you are going to read is a meditation on the symbol of the sea.

2.3.2 The Text

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:

I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which
I steal From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,

He sinks into thy depths with bubbling grown,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war—
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar

Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.
Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters, wash'd them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay

Has dried up realms to deserts:—not so thou;—
Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play,
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow:
Such us creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,—
Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou pest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

Glossary

rapture -	great joy and delight.
ravage -	to ruin and destroy; (of an army or a rabble) that robs (an area) with violence.
spurn -	to treat or refuse with angry pride.
haply -	(old use) perhaps.

leviathan -	a Biblical sea-monster; huge ship arbiter - a person who has complete control or great influence over actions and decisions.
Armada -	the fleet sent by Philip II of Spain against England in 1588 and defeated in the English Channel.
Trafalgar -	Cape on the South Coast of Spain near which the British fleet under Nelson gained victory over the fleets of France and Spain on 21st October 1805.
azure -	sky-blue
torrid -	very hot
convulsion -	an unnaturally violent and sudden movement.
convulse -	to shake (a person or animal and by extension a society) violently.

2.3.3 The Stanza Form

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is in an old stanza form. It was invented by Edmund Spenser (1552-99) and used in *The Faerie Queen* (1590, 1596), his greatest work. It thus came to be called the Spenserian stanza. In his preface to the first and second cantos of the poem Byron wrote thus:

"The stanza of Spenser, according to one of our most successful poets, admits of every variety. Dr. Beattie makes the following observation:—'Not long ago, I began a poem in the style and stanza of Spenser, in which I propose to give full scope to my inclination, and be either droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical, as the humour strikes me; for if I mistake not, the measure which I have adopted admits equally of all these kinds of composition. Strengthened in my opinion by such authority, and by the example of some in the highest order of Italian poets. I shall make no apology for attempts at similar variations in the following composition; satisfied that if they are unsuccessful their failure must be in the execution, rather than in the design, sanctioned by the practice of Ariosto, Thomson, and Beattie.'"

Byron saw himself in the tradition of Ludovico Ariosto who author of the famous romantic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1532), James Thomson (1700-48), author of *The Seasons* (1726-30) and James Beattie (1735-1803) who wrote *The Minstrel* in Spenserian stanza and was an influence on *The Prelude* of Wordsworth.

Let's scan the second stanza of the poem here:

Roll on / thou deep / and dark / blue O' / cean, roll,
Ten thou / sand fleets / sweep O/ver thee / in vain
Man marks / the earth / with ru/in; his / control
Stops with / the shore; / upon / the wa/tery main
The wrecks / are all / thy deed; / nor doth / remain
A shadow of / man's ra/vage save / his own,
When for / a mo/ment like / a drop/ of rain
He sinks / into/thy depths / with bub/bling groan
without / a grave, / unknelled / uncoffined, and / unknown.

In the above extract, we have eight five-foot iambic lines, followed by an iambic line of six feet. The lines rhyme ababbcbcc. You know that a five-foot iambic line is also called iambic pentameter of which blank verse is made and a six-foot iambic line is known as iambic hexameter and also Alexandrine. Byron has used this stanza form because he agreed with James Beanie that it would be most suitable for expressing his variety of moods effectively. Notice that a poet makes a conscious decision about a variety of matters before writing poetry. This may appear contrary to the popular notion that poetry gets written without conscious effort. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* was composed in dream and Shelley wrote about the Aeolian Harp. However, poetry is in words what a flower is in its petals and sepals, androcium and gynaeceum, more than a sum of their parts. A great poem is likely to elicit a unique response from every individual who reads it. You may, now that you have read the poem carefully yourself, read my appreciation of it.

2.3.4 An Appreciation

Roll on, Thou Deep and Dark Blue Ocean is a ceremonial song in praise of the sea. It is an anthem to the Ocean. It is the classic voice of a poet not in the Apollonian but in the Dionysian tradition. Here there is not the clarity and balance, neatness of outlines and the beauty of form but the rapture, the enthusiasm, the exuberance and joy of youth. Here is Romantic poetry in its splendour. The English Romantics were lovers of nature. "I love not Man the Less" proclaims Byron, "but Nature more". Byron's nature, as that of the classical poets—Dryden and Pope, Johnson and Goldsmith—was not truth—the laws of nature—but God's variegated creation, its soothing power, its destructive aspect and creative force—Shelley's "destroyer and preserver". What Shelley saw in the "wild" West Wind, Byron sees in the sea. The West Wind's "clarion O'er the dreaming earth" drives "sweet buds like flocks to feed in air". Byron's ocean chastises the vain man, melts his Armadas and the spoils of Trafalgar into the yeast of its waves. From its slime are born the monsters of the sea.

Roll on is a hymn to the sea because it is the Almighty's "glorious mirror". It is his throne. It is the image of eternity itself. It expresses God's grandeur in its varied aspects—calm and violent as in a "breeze, or gale, or storm"; frigid as in the Polar Regions and dark and tempestuous as in the equatorial. In looking at the sea as a symbol of the Divine because of its variegated beauty, Byron pre-empted Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-'89). Hopkins in *Pied Beauty* saw God's beauty in many colours, in certain birds, or the sky—azure and white—or the fish (trout) with its "rose-moles" (red dots), or the landscape with its bends, portions fallow and ploughed, or the freckled skin. What we find in the last stanza of *Roll on* is magnified many times by Hopkins in *Pied Beauty* but the seed of experience in both cases is the same.

In *Roll on*, the sea has been apostrophized. The poem is an address to the sea. It is the expression of the rapture of communion with the Universe which Byron thinks he "can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal". However, Byron's rapture is well communicated to the reader through the images and cadences of the poem. The tone is set in the first stanza itself.

There is society....

By the deep sea and music in its roar!

Byron does something more. He ignores the barriers raised by human language by refusing to distinguish between the sea and ocean as he declines to accept that society is made only of human beings. For Byron there is music in the beat of the drum and the roar of the sea. Byron was a poet of the mountain peaks and the sea just as Wordsworth, of the child and “the meanest flower” and of the “unravished bride” and the “fruit with ripeness to the core”. It is strange, but true that the creator of *Don Juan* loved loneliness—“the pathless wood”, “the lonely shore”. The dichotomy of the poet finds expression in these oxymorons.

Byron’s repudiation of man’s pride and power finds expression in the image of man compared to a raindrop falling on the surface of the sea. Like the raindrop, he dies with no more than a “bubbling groan”. Worse still is his image in the third stanza where he is rejected and thrown into the sky, ridiculed by the cold and “playful spray” and sent back to some port or bay nearby. In the fourth stanza, it is not the ordinary man but his monarch who is subjected to the same insult. The “clay creator” refers to the man who makes the ships of war—“oak leviathans”. Man claims to rule over the waves and assumes titles such as “arbiter of war”. However, the truth is that it is the sea which has complete control over the monarch, the empire builder. For the sea, his ships are objects to play with.

Byron began with an image of the insignificance of man in the second stanza and through the fifth he develops it into the futility of his exploits—the decay of ancient civilizations of Assyria, Greece, Rome and Carthage. To Byron, the poet, it matters not which was the first civilization—Assyrian or Greek, Roman or Carthaginian. Poets are insular to the prosaic world of facts. What matters to them is the core of humanity, made in the image of God. Byron feels that man’s acquisitive instinct has led him to ruin. Wordsworth said, “Getting and spending we lay waste our powers”. Byron’s sea scorns the emperor, spurns the conqueror and lays to waste civilizations that are expressions of man’s greed. While they decay, the sea remains as young as it was in the first dawn of creation. It is the image of eternity.

If on one hand Byron decries the British Victory on the Spanish Armada in the sixteenth century and the Battle of Trafalgar in his own time, with contempt, on the other he remembers Shakespeare, if only in a veiled way, with approval. There is an echo of sonnet 60. In the last two lines of the fifth stanza, Shakespeare wrote:

Time doth transfixe the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauties brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature’s truth,
And nothing stands but for his sieth to mow.

From the second through the fourth stanzas are the various images of man as an ordinary individual compared to a rain drop, as a king and tyrant who is repulsed to the shore; as a conqueror whose ships are the ocean’s toys, and as a builder- of civilizations that decay. Byron has presented a series of word pictures that drive his point home. The last two lines of the fifth stanza, in reminding us of “creation’s dawn” prepare us for the “image of eternity” that the sea becomes in the last stanza. The transition due to those two lines becomes smooth and gentle.

There is a happy marriage of sound with sense in the poem. The choice of the word "roll" is a stroke of genius of a master craftsman. The epanadiploitic (from epanadiplosis) use of roll in the first line of the second paragraph echoes in our ears the sound of the wave and the sound suggests its ebb and flow to our visual imagination. The pattern of rhyme suggested by the words—roll, vain, control, plain, remain. as it were, bring the elation to our heart that the sight of the gigantic waves in the sea themselves bring. Byron thought that the Spenserian stanza was capable of expressing a variety of moods. In this short specimen itself we notice that while the second, through fifth stanzas, at the level of the sound, picture the sea, the first part supports an introspective mood and the last part, a meditative one. The introspective mood is suggested by the three assertive statements of the first stanza.

The repetition of "there is" three times suggests that the introspection is only a prelude to the rhetorical vein in which Byron is soon going to get into. However, the rhetoric here only brings in variety to the poetry. It does not detract us from the rich poetic experience that Byron has to offer. The poem has remained unforgettable because it has pictured in words the sights and sounds of the actual experience of standing in front of the expanse of the sea. It is a product of Byron's catholic temper, his love for the sea and above all, an abiding faith in man's capacity to improve himself in the face of adversity.

Check Your Progress 2

1 A) Comment on the following examples of literary devices from Roll on in the space provided for the purpose:

a) There is society where none intrudes. By the deep sea.....

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b) I love not man the less.....

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c) What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

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d) his control Stops with the shore....

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e) Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd and unknown....

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f) he Oak leviathans whose huge ribs make Their clay-creator the
vain title take Of lord of thee....

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g) Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, What are they?

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h) Thy waters washed them power while they were free.

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i) The Stranger slave or savage....

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- j) Time writes no wrinkles on thine azure brow Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Lord Byron: 'Roll on Thou Deep and Dark Blue Ocean', 'George The Third'

- k) Thou glorious mirror.

- B) Look up in the dictionary for the meanings of 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' and record them below.

2.4 GEORGE THE THIRD

2.4.1 Background of the Poem

Byron's *The Vision of Judgment* (1822) is a parody of Robert Southey's (1774-1843) original poem, *A Vision of Judgment* (1821). (Notice the differences in the two titles.) Southey's was meant to be a panegyric to George III of England who died in 1820. Byron's is a satire both on Southey and the King.

In Southey's poem, the poet in a trance sees George III rise from his tomb and reach the gates of Heaven where the Devil and Wilkes the democrat leader come to charge him with crimes he has committed on earth. However, they retire in discomfiture when Washington eulogises him and he is greeted by the previous English monarchs, the eminent English and finally his own family.

In the preface to his poem, Southey made a direct attack on Byron's works and referred to him as the leader of the 'satanic school' of poetry. In response, Byron wrote the parody in which Southey is swept up by one of the devils from the Lake District where he offers to write Satan's Biography and on being declined, Michael's when he attempts to read his own 'Vision' Saint Peter.

Upraised his keys,

And at the fifth line knock'd the poet down;

Southey fell into the lake but there he did not drown,

He first sank to the bottom—like his works, But soon rose to the surface—like himself; For all corrupted things are buoy'd, like corks,

By their own rottenness, light as an elf,

Or wisp that flits O'er a morass;

This is trenchant satire and Southey had provoked Byron to deserve it.

The extracts that you are going to read are mainly a satire on George III. In it, however, Byron praises George's domestic virtues. His family life was free from the characteristic vice of his predecessors. However, he wanted to re-establish his personal rule. He opposed Catholic emancipation, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution. He suffered from recurring bits of insanity and finally became insane in 1811. His eldest son was appointed regent until his father's death in 1820.

If you now read the satire you will be able to appreciate the darts that Byron shoots at George.

2.4.2 The Text

In the first year of freedom's second dawn
Died George the Third; although no tyrant, one
Who sheilded tyrants, till each sense withdrawn
Left him nor mental nor external sun:
A better farmer ne'er brush'd dew from lawn,
A worse king never left a realm undone!
He died—but left his subjects still behind,
One half as mad—and t'other no less blind.

He died! his death made no great stir on earth:
His burial made some pomp; there was profusion
Of velvet, gilding, brass, and no great dearth
Of aught but tears—save those shed by collusion.
For these things may be bought at their true worth;
Of elegy there was the due infusion—
Bought also; and the torches, cloaks, and banners,
Heralds, and relics of old Gothic manners,
Form'd a sepulchral melodrame. Of all
The fools who flock'd to swell or see the show,
Who cared about the corpse?
The funeral Made the attraction, and the black the woe.
There throb'd not there a thought which pierced the pall;
And when the gorgeous coffin was laid low,
It seem'd the mockery of hell to fold
The rottenness of eighty years in gold.

'Look to the earth, I said, and say again:
When this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor worm
Began in youth's first bloom and flush to reign,
The world and he both wore a different form,
And much of earth and all the watery plain
Of ocean call'd him king: through many a storm
His isles had floated on the abyss of time;
For the rough virtues chose them for their clime.

'He came to his sceptre young; he leaves it old;
Look to the state in Which he found his realm,

And left it; and his annals too behold,
 How to a minion first he gave the helm;
 How grew upon his heart a thirst for gold,
 The beggar's vice, which can but overwhelm
 The meanest hearts; and for the rest, but glance
 Thine eye along America and France.

Lord Byron: 'Roll
 on Thou Deep and
 Dark Blue Ocean',
 'George The Third'

"Tis true, he was a tool from first to last
 (I have the workmen safe); but as a tool
 So let him be consumed. From out the past
 Of ages, since mankind have known the rule

Of monarchs—from the bloody rolls amass'd
 Of sin and slaughter—from the Caesar's school,
 Take the worst pupil; and produce a reign.
 More drench'd with gore, more cumber'd with the slain.

'He ever warr'd with freedom and the free:
 Nations as men, home subjects, foreign foes,
 So that they utter'd the word 'Liberty!'
 Found George the Third their first opponent. Whose
 History was ever stain'd as his will be
 With national and individual woes?
 I grant his household abstinence; I grant
 His neutral virtues, which most monarchs want;

'I know he was a constant consort; own
 He was a decent sire, and middling lord.
 All this is much, and most upon a throne;
 As temperance, if at Apicius' board,
 Is more than at an anchorite's supper shown.

I grant him all the kindest can accord;
 And this was well for him, but not for those
 Millions who found him what oppression chose.
 'The New World shook him off; the Old yet groans
 Beneath what he and his prepared, if not
 Completed: he leaves heirs on many thrones
 To all his vices, without what begot
 Compassion for him—his tame virtues; drones
 Who sleep, or despots who have now forgot
 A lesson which shall be re-taught them, wake
 Upon the thrones of earth; but let them quake!'
 (From The Vision of Judgment)

Glossary

freedom's second dawn - 1820 was a year of political unrest in southern Europe including the beginning of the Greek revolt against Turkey.

aught - I don't know; don't care

Herald—	a person who carried messages from a ruler and gave important pieces of news to the people.
Gothic -	of or concerning a Germanic people called Goths, who fought against the Roman empire; their style in art and architecture; old fashioned.
Sepulchre-	tomb.
sepulchral-	a reminder of the dead.
melodrame-	melodrama.
Abyss-	a bottomless hole
Sceptre-	a short rod or bar carried by a monarch.
annals-	historical records.
Minor-	a person who flatters his superiors for favours.
helm -	the position from which things are controlled.
cumber-	encumber--to fill up (a place) inconveniently
sire-	the father of an animal, especially of a horse.
middling-	fair, quite. Ram is middling good in soccer.
Apicius-	a person who knew a lot about food and drink in the circle of Tiberius; he hanged himself when he found he had spent a large part of his fortune on his luxuries.
anchorite-	hermit.
quake-	tremble, shake.

2.4.3 A Discussion

George the Third, as you know, is an extract from Byron's "The Vision of Judgment". The scene which the poem has in the foreground is that of the death, funeral and ascent of George III to Heaven. The first stanza sets the background of the poem. It announces the event—the demise of George III—and sets the comico-satirical tone of the poem. 1820 was the year in which the struggle for Greek independence began in which Byron also took some interest. George died in the same year. Byron thus makes use of periphrasis. He tells us about some of George's good qualities—that he was no tyrant and was a good farmer—and some bad ones—that he shielded tyrants, (perhaps a reference to Lord Castlereagh about whom you will read in Unit 10 of this block on Shelley); that he left his kingdom undone, that he was blind etc. A satirist attempts to rectify the vices of the society in which he lives. While Byron apparently ridicules the king alone, at times he hints at the shortcomings in the British people as well. He points out that George left his subjects, "One half as mad—and t'other no less blind."

The second and the third stanzas describe the melodrama that the funeral was.

There was plenty of everything “velvet, gilding, brass, elegies, torches, cloaks, banners and heralds” and dearth of only one thing—genuine sorrow for the deceased. The fourth through the seventh stanzas are the words of the Devil who has come to claim George from Michael at the Heaven Gate. Hence you find the king subjected to caustic satire. The ‘I’ of the first line of the fourth stanza refers to the Devil. His chief attack is on George’s attempt to establish personal rule in England. During his reign, Britain’s American colonies became independent. Britain, both in trying to suppress the American colonies and Napoleon who was in the popular imagination a symbol of liberty, became the butt of Byron’s satire. Besides being a foe to liberty, George had an insatiable thirst for gold. The sovereign was a tool in the hands of other people. The last two lines of the seventh stanza make a transition to the main subject of the eighth, recounting George’s virtues—‘his household abstinence’, faithfulness to his wife, qualities as a father, etc. These, the Devil admits, would not have been seen as virtues in a person at a lower station in life. The two telling images that clinch the point are those of “Apicius’s board” and “an anchorite’s supper”.

The last stanza shifts the focus of our attention from a dead British monarch to the monarchs of Europe who either sleep on their thrones unmindful of their country’s plights or are despots who have refused to learn from the mistakes of the deceased monarch. Byron’s satire thus has a nobler intention, that is, to rectify the sources of political administrative power of their ills. The sovereigns on the European thrones are George’s heirs, metaphorically speaking and Byron’s satire is directed at them also.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Read the first stanza and indicate the rhyme scheme.

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- 2) State briefly George III’s qualities as a person.

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- 3) What were the monarch’s shortcomings according to Byron?

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- 4) What in the short run was the aim of *The Vision of Judgement*?

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- 5) What in essence is Byron's aim through the satire?

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you read about the life of Lord Byron and examine two excerpts from his poetry. The first is from his epic poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which is an account of Byron's own travels on the continent and Asia Minor. It is written in the Spenserian stanza and we hope that you can now scan the remaining stanzas of the poem yourself. Do the exercise with your counsellor at the Study Centre.

The second extract is from Byron's satire on Southey and George III. You have seen how Byron had two or three goals behind writing *The Vision of Judgement* and how he fulfilled them. We hope now you will try to read a few more poems of Byron you may find in anthologies or the collected works of Byron.

2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress – I

- 1) See paragraph one of 2.2
- 2) 36 years
- 3) Read the 4th paragraph in 2.2 beginning—When Byron was three....

Check Your Progress – II

1. Paradox
2. Anastrophe in 'love not' we normally say 'don't love', Through the inversion the statement has
3. been made more effective.
4. Parallelism in the two parts of the line in ideas and sound—called Isocolon.
5. Alliteration (repetition of 's' sound)
6. Different words here express different ideas but of the same general kind.

This is

**Lord Byron: 'Roll
on Thou Deep and
Dark Blue Ocean',
'George The Third'**

7. synthraesmus.
8. Unusual collocation in 'oak leviathans' for ship, 'clay-creator' for man. They are also
9. metaphors. The first line is an extended metaphor.
10. Rhetorical question or Interrogatio.
11. Alliteration in 'water washed' and Ellipsis in 'them power'. The latter's full form would be
12. 'washed them of their power'.
13. Alliteration.
14. Personification of 'Time' and 'Dawn'.
15. Apostrophe.

Check Your Progress- III

- 1) a b a b a b c c
- 2) George took interest in British agriculture. He was a good husband. He was no tyrant.
- 3) George shielded tyrants (such as Castlereagh). He worked against freedom and liberty in America and against France.
- 4) It was meant to be a satire on Robert Southey who had attacked him in the first instance.
- 5) Byron perhaps wishes to improve monarchs of Europe and make them more sensitive to their subjects' lives.

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

There is a good survey of Byron's work in *Byron: A Survey* by Bernard Blockstone from which I have quoted a passage in this unit. Byron's *Poetical Works* edited by Frederick Page and re-edited by John Jump has been published by the Oxford University Press (Oxford, 1970). R.K. Kaul has edited Byron's *The Vision of Judgment* which is published by College Book Depot (Jaipur 1965). *The Growth and Evolution of Classical Rhetoric* by A.B. Sharma (Delhi, Ajanta Books International, 1991) will be helpful in understanding the rhetorical devices used in the course generally and this unit particularly.

UNIT 3 SHELLEY ‘ODE TO THE WEST WIND’, ‘TO A SKYLARK’

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 P. B. Shelley
- 3.3 Ode to the West Wind
 - 3.3.1 Text
 - 3.3.2 Interpretation
 - 3.3.3 Poetic Devices
- 3.4 To A Skylark
 - 3.4.1 Text
 - 3.4.2 Interpretation
 - 3.4.3 Poetic Devices
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.7 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we are going to discuss two of Shelley’s well known poems: Ode to the West Wind and To a Skylark.

- After reading this unit you will be able to appreciate:
- ‘Shelleyan’ thought
- Poetic craftsmanship which consists of fusion of form and content, ease and flexibility of rhythm, and style which contains a profusion of vivid and striking images.
- You will also be able to analyse and appreciate other poems by Shelley.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier units of this block you have been acquainted with some of the main characteristics of Romantic poetry, which make it distinct from Neo-Classical poetry of Block 2. The poetry of the Romantics such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron is marked by an intensity of feeling and imagination, a predilection for intuition rather than reason, a return to the primitive, medieval and natural life, to rural solitude a preoccupation with the aesthetic and spiritual aspect of nature. It is also marked by visions of the mysterious, the ideal, and the infinite. It is poetry of individual speculations and image and symbols. In this unit we are going to discuss further these characteristics with reference to Shelley’s

Ode to the West Wind and To A Skylark. We shall highlight the inevitable gap between desire and fulfilment, tragic knowledge of the transience of human life, and the glad life of nature perpetually renewing itself in the spring. These are hallmarks of Shelley's poetry and his poetic craftsmanship which consists in fusion of form and content, musicality, and a profusion of striking images.

Shelley 'Ode to The West Wind', 'To A Skylark'

I would like you to first read the poem. Then you should read it again with the help of interpretation of lines and words given in the unit. After you have followed the interpretation, read the note on poetic devices. After you have understood the poem and critical comments, write down the answers to the exercises. Your answers should be then checked with the answers given by us at the end of the unit.

3.2 P. B. SHELLEY

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) came from an aristocratic family. Even as a child at Eton, he reacted by revolting against authority and withdrawing himself from it. He bred within himself a passionate desire to reform the world and improve the lot of mankind. His dual reactions of escape and rebellion shaped the essential spirit of his poetry. He and his friend, Hogg, were sent down from Cambridge for writing and circulating a pamphlet on 'The Necessity for Atheism'. Shelley's poetry is marked by optimism for he seeks in this natural world for analogies by which he wants to assure himself that regeneration follows destruction, that change does not mean extinction, and there is yet hope for the world if it will pay heed to those "unacknowledged legislators of the world"—those sensitive poets like himself.

Though he is known for his lyrics—Ode to the West Wind, To a Skylark and The Cloud, he wrote The Mask of Anarchy, an indictment of Castlereagh's administration, Peter Bell the Third, a satire on Wordsworth. He also composed Prometheus Unbound, his great lyrical drama. His last long poem was The Triumph of Life.

3.3 ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Referring to his *Ode to the West Wind*, Shelley himself tells us that:

"this poem was chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by the magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions"

The Ode is charged with speed, force and energy like the tempestuous wind itself. The powerful movement of the verse is carried on by use of a series of images thrown up in rapid succession. The movement is not just confined to the elemental forces of nature: it is also to be seen in the emotions roused in the poet's mind by his contemplation of the wind. The movement slows down in Section III and then gains rapidity in line with the poet's impetuous spirit as he drives to the close.

There is, in this poem, a blend of natural and spiritual forces. The West Wind is a force of Nature, but it also symbolizes the free-spirit of man, untamed and proud. Shelley's great passion for the regeneration of mankind and rebirth of a new world finds a fitting symbol in the West Wind which destroys and preserves and sweeps away old and obsolete ideas and also fosters fresh and new ones. The Ode has five sections; each depicting one aspect of the autumn scene.

3.3.1 Text

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

2

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulche,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

3

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

4

If I were a dead leaf thou mightiest bear;

If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

5

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

3.3.2 Interpretation

Section I depicts the wind in its dual aspect of being a destroyer and a preserver. It opens with the customary invocation or address to the West Wind which blows in autumn. But here, autumn is not mellow and fruitful as in Keats' Ode to Autumn. The poet calls the West Wind the breath of autumn. It is a wild spirit ("unseen presence") invisible like an enchanter; the leaves are dead leaves fallen from trees and are compared to ghosts that fly before the magical powers of an enchanter. The inversion of "leaves dead" insists on fatality by posing "dead" as a rhyme-word at the end of the line. Even though the wind is seen as a destroyer, the West Wind destroys to preserve. Shelley uses colours that suggest disease, decay and death such as "yellow", "black", "pale" and "hectic red". Death and life, however, are simultaneously discussed. The seeds scattered by the West Wind are only seemingly dead till the warm Spring breeze blows thawing the ground so that seeds can sprout through softened earth and spring flowers quickly bloom everywhere. The "corpse within its grave" is juxtaposed with the lyrically literary and azure sister of the spring whose living hues are an absolute contrast to the death-evoking colours of line 4. What provides unity to the 14 line-stanza is the invocation to that stimulating force "moving everywhere" which can blast out the promise of new life from even the most apparently decayed context.

The imagery in line 11 demands the reader's own creative contribution. The flocks of sheep come out of their folds (like buds opening out), and 'feed-in air', with warm weather summoning them higher and higher up the mountain side. The elemental force by which the dead leaves 'are driven' is the same force which, with the benign protectiveness of a shepherd, is later 'driving.... flocks to feed'. Thus imagery contributes to the dynamic emotiveness of a force which is moving everywhere.

Annotations

- wild : untamed; characteristic of what Shelley saw in Nature and in the elemental powers.
- L 1-5 : depict the image of a destroyer. The West Wind is compared to an enchanter i.e. a magician who drives away ghosts or evil spirits. Spiritually the purifying spirit, symbolized by the wind destroys useless creeds and institutions, like superstition, tyranny and outworn words evoking loss of health, decay and death, pestilence: plague.
- L 6-12 : chariotest: Carried. Note the different words used. The dead leaves are 'driven' to be destroyed, but the seeds which have life in them are carried to be preserved. Winged seeds: Many seeds have wings or fluff that helps them to float or be wafted by the breeze. Azure: clear blue sky; here 'bright' is indicated.

Clarion : trumpet; like the trumpet of God's angel who rouses the dead, so that they can wake to a new life in Heaven. Spring calls the seeds to sprout and bloom in a new world. The 'living hues' or colours or 'odours' or sweet smells contrast with the sickly colours of the dead autumn leaves. During spring time in England and Europe, the meadows starred with crocuses, snowdrops, daisies, etc.

Section II

The setting shifts from the land to the sky. The sky's clouds are "like Earth's decaying leaves". They are "shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean". However, there may be more accurate geography behind this scene. Shelley's poems are far better informed about science than those of any other Romantic poet. So a term like "uplifted" (line 20) though lodged in a classical context may have a literal application: moisture is, of course, lifted by evaporation into the sky where it forms the clouds of future rain-storms.

The force of West Wind causing commotion in the sky is depicted with the help of three images. First is the image of the sky filled with storm-clouds which the wind shakes as it shakes the trees on earth. The second image describes the sky as a Maenad whose hair shakes in the wind. The third image is connected with death and the tomb. What is dying is the old year, symbolically, the old forms; the sky, now completely overcast and black is like the vault of a dark tomb, in which the year will be buried. The wind is both dirge of the dying year, and a prophet of regeneration. The "vast sepulchre" is not only the burial-ground of the past; it is also the pregnantly 'congregated might' of the future.

Annotations

L 15-17 : stream: here air current

The clouds are compared to dead leaves. The West wind is driving them all over the sky, while in Section I, it was driving the dead leaves all over the earth. The masses of cloud formations over the ocean and in the sky are like the inter-twining branches in a wood and bits of loose clouds are being torn off by the West wind, as leaves fall off the trees.

L 18-23 : The cloud-masses causing rain and lightning are referred to as spirits of rain and lightning.

L 21 Maenad: The Maenads or Bacchae were worshippers of Bacchus, the God of wine. They gathered in bands and worshipped the god, with sweet wild music when they became possessed by a divine frenzy or intoxication. In this state, they ran down the hills and through the woods, with flying hair, singing and dancing.

L 24 : dirge: lament, song of mourning. sepulchre: tomb vaulted: covered over with an arched roof.

L 27 : the night-sky is in the shape of a domed or arched roof of a tomb, in which the dead year would be buried. The moisture in the air in the form of storm-clouds, forms the thick, solid roof of the tomb. Terrific force is contained in the cloud-roof and this force would

descend on earth in the form of torrential rain accompanied by rain thunder and lightning.

Shelley 'Ode to The West Wind', 'To A Skylark'

Section III

This section presents a picture of the calm Mediterranean Sea and it appears dazzling blue and crystal clear as it is in summer and early autumn. Old Italian villas, moss-grown palaces, ruined castles with gardens full of bright flowers line the shores and the calm sea reflects all this beauty on its glassy surface. The concentration here on the wind-swept ocean perhaps leads to the poem's most fluidly suggestive gestures. The underwater city seems unstable and elusive. The illusion would be the product of the wind. Even if the city does seem to be there, it is less significant to the poem's more significant purpose of suggesting creative, swirling energy in the form of west wind.

Annotations

L 30-36 : note the slow moving lines. The image of the blue Mediterranean, dreaming as it were under the bright sunshine and the reflection on the surface of the sea of the places overgrown with moss and flowering creepers, moving ever so lightly. The Mediterranean Sea is here personified-sleeping peacefully, dreaming sweet dreams, the sea is in calm repose.

crystalline: clear as crystal, transparent as glass. pumice isle: volcanic island made of lava that has cooled off. Baiae's bay: Baiae was a town near Naples, used as a pleasure resort by the Romans, but now covered by the sea intenser day: The light is reflected under water.

L 39-41: Shelley's note to the poem mentions a phenomenon known to naturalists which proves that the vegetation at the bottom of the sea is influenced by winds blowing at the change of season, in the same way as vegetation on land. sea-blooms: sea flowers; a poetic fancy. oozy woods: large masses of sea-weed. Ooze is the wet mud and slime at the bottom of the sea. sapless foliage: leaves without the moisture that runs in the stem and leaves of plants and trees above ground.

Section IV

Stanza 4 sounds like the beginning of some new work. The poet discusses himself. The first-person pronoun or adjective, varying through 'I', 'me', 'my' appears nine within fourteen lines. The poet dramatises his own situation by carefully controlled use of the earlier sections; for instance, his longing to respond as 'leaf', 'cloud' and 'wave'. We have, here, implications of romantic melancholy. The poet is reminded of his former vigour which is now lost and distracts him into talking more to himself and less to the forces of the future. The poet lifts himself out of his dejection and goes on to a triumphant close. He prays to the West Wind to lift him out of the age of ties, responsibilities and claims in a suffering society. The poet chafes against the bonds of human existence that tie him down, weak and helpless, when his spirit, like that of the West wind, desires to accomplish the great task of the regeneration of humanity by destroying away all that is decayed and evil in life. A strong personal note is evident in this stanza.

Section V

The concluding lines are magnificent expression of hope and exultation. "Tameless, swift and proud: Shelley's spirit is like the spirit of the West Wind, he cannot despair. The imagery which in earlier sections was confined to earth, air, and water, now aspires to the fourth element of fire. Certainly, first person pronouns and adjectives are frequent here but they are more positively linked to the second person pronouns and adjectives of the larger forces to which the poem addresses itself. One can observe the juxtapositions of "me thy" in line 57 and "thou me" in line 62. Stanza 4 had articulated the self as essentially singular: "a..., leaf", "a cloud", "a wave", which led to painful doubt ("I fall...I bleed") and to despair which allowed the once "tameless and proud" mind to imagine itself as "powerfully chained and bowed". By contrast in stanza 5, the recovery of freedom and pride is sought through a redefinition of the self in plural terms ("my thoughts", "my words") as one component in a mass movement. The Wild West Wind inspires Shelley to write poetry and this poetry, in turn, serves as an inspiring message to humanity. This message would fire human hearts, kindling the desire for progress and a better world. Thus, the poem closes on a note of ardent hope.

Annotations

- L 57-61 : In these lines the poet identifies himself with the autumnal forest for they are both like a musical instrument, on which the wind plays, drawing out sweet sounds. The strings of a lyre, i.e., harp are supposed to emit sounds when brushed by the breeze. The wind blowing through the bare branches of the forest, makes deep music, sweet though sad.
- L 63-64 : The Poet identifies his words with flying autumn leaves. His dead thoughts will prove fruitful ground for new ideas to spring. These lines go back in thought and image to the opening section.
- L 65 : Recall the charms of the enchanter in L 3. The enchanter drives out ghosts and evil spirits; the poet's words will similarly drive out outworn, useless and evil ideas.
- L 68: The earth is "unawakened", because mankind is still ignorant and does not realise that it can build a better world. Mankind, according to Shelley, was still a slave to superstition and authority. Shelley considered the poet a prophet: an "unacknowledged legislator of the world".
- L 69-70 : The 19th century in Europe, which according to Shelley was a period of darkness, would see a new spring time, a new and better world, where all his cherished ideals of charity, love and justice would reign supreme.

3.3.3 Poetic Devices

The poem is rich in poetic devices. Rich elemental imagery is its most striking feature. The imagery relates to earth, air, water and fire. The imagery is suggestive of "swirling energy". The West Wind drives the leaves as "ghosts"

fleeing from an enchanter. As preserver, the wind "chariotest" the light seeds to the place where they would blossom forth. Yellow, black and pale are hues associated with death or dying. Thus, opposing moods and different conventions in language are colliding with each other as a single vocative that invokes the stimulating force "moving everywhere" which can blast out the promise of life from even the most deadly context. The elusive imagery of line 11 discussed earlier is also suggestive of motion. Similarly, the image of sky filled with storm clouds and the ocean with high waves, the image of the sky as a Maenad whose hair streams in the wind and sky as a tomb is highly suggestive. There abound metaphors such as "pestilence-stricken multitude", "azure sister", "wild roanis rich in night", "the dome of a vast sepulchre", "oozy woods", "sapless foliage", etc.

The poem is also rich in similes such as; "leaves dead are driven like ghosts from an echanter fleeing". The winged seeds are like "a corpse within its grave" "Loose enchanter like earth's decaying leaves are shed. "Angles of rain and lightning" are "like the bright hair uplifted from the head of some fierce Maenad".

The whole poem is based on personification. Wind is presented in its dual aspects of Destroyer and Preserver. The poet calls the West Wind "unseen presence, an enchanter". Shelley personifies the leaves that are "pestilence-stricken multitudes, yellow, black and pale". The Spring is seen blowing her clarion over the dreaming earth. The sky looks fierce like a Maenad whose hair streams in the wind. In the third section, the blue Mediterranean is like a person sleeping peacefully dreaming sweet dreams.

Alliteration in the opening phrase makes the wind invigorating. Inversions such as leaves dead insist on fatality by posting dead as a rhyme word. Qualifying adjectives, "living hues", "clarion call", "winged seeds", "wild spirit", "oozy woods" are vocative, suggestive of that stimulating "force", "moving everywhere". In lines 29-42, the wind-swept oceans lead to the same suggestive gestures. The subject of saw in line 33 could be the Mediterranean, this could also be the West Wind itself. However, what is important is the creative energy of the elemental forces.

The opening phrase of stanza 4 focuses not on the object of the poet's address but on the subjective speaker "If I". The first person pronoun or adjective varying through "I", "one", "my" help the poet to dramatise his own situation. In stanza 4 the pronouns and adjectives are linked to the second person pronouns and adjectives. Consider the juxtapositions of "me thy" in line 57 and 'thou me' in line 62. A way is found of dedicating such terminology to more communal values. The recovery of freedom and pride is sought through a redefinition of the self in plural terms ("my thoughts", "my words"). The use of future tense "will" reminds us that the ode is indeed a "prophecy".

Check Your Progress 1

1. The Ode is full of exquisite imagery. Pick out three such images where you find the poet's skill in vivid description.
2. Quote the lines where the West Wind is described as:

- a) the herald carrying the poet's message to the rest of the mankind.
 - b) the destroyer and preserver.
3. What are the underlying themes of the poem with reference to:
- a) the poet's love of liberty.
 - b) the poet's hope and despair.

3.4 TO A SKYLARK

It was written in the spring of 1820 and is representative of Shelley's thought and style in his major poetry. Shelley seeks "in this natural world" for analogies by which he wants to assure himself that regeneration follows destruction (as in West Wind) that change does not mean extinction (as in the Good) and there is yet hope for the world if it will pay heed to "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" by which of means the poets. He contrasts the perfect happiness of the bird with the sad state man whose "sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought". The bird's joyous spirit—symbolises the divine essence, the aspiration of the soul and the force of "inspiration. The possibility of world's salvation is through the power of human thought when it is given memorable expression in poetry. The musical quality of Shelley's poetry comes out striking in this poem. Swinburne called Shelley "the Let singing God.

3.4.1 Text

To a Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!

Bird thou never wert,

That from Heaven, or near it,

Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher

From the earth thou springest

Like a cloud of fire;

The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning Of the sunken sun,

O'er which clouds are bright' ning.

Thou dost float and run;

Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see- and feel that is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,

Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glowworm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
what sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal.
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,

A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

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what objects are the fountains

Of thy happy strain?

What fields, or waves, or mountains?

What shapes of sky or plain?

What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance

Languor cannot be:

Shadow of annoyance

Never came near thee:

Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep.

Thou of death must deem

Thing more true and deep

Than we mortals dream,

Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,

And pine for what is not:

Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet it we could scorn

Hate, and pride, and fear;

if we were things born

Not to shed a tear,

I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

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!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

3.4.2 Interpretation

Stanzas 1-6

Lines 1-30 describe the poet's experience of the bird as a barely seen, imagined and sharply felt phenomenon. The poet greets the bird as a spirit of joy and not any ordinary bird because from a great height in the sky, it pours down a flood of sweet melody (stanza 1). He is thrilled by its flight heavenwards, singing as it soars ever higher and soaring as it sings. He compares the skylark to a cloud of fire that rises high (stanza 2). The bird starts its flight early at dawn when the sun is just below the horizon turning the clouds above it into purest gold. It is compared to the light of the moon towards the dawn (stanza 5). Hidden in the light of the day, it pours forth a flood of song as from behind a lonely cloud in the sky the moon rains down a flood of light.

Annotations

Stanza 1

- hail to thee : the poet greets the singing bird.
- blithe spirit : cheerful and jolly. Refer Keats's nightingale singing in "full throated ease". It has never known "the fever and the fret of human life".
- pourest..heart : unrestrained flood of melody along with the joy that filled the bird's heart is being poured. Refer again Keats's Nightingale "pouring forth thy soul abroad."
- unpremeditated art : song that is not cultivated, strained or artificial

Stanza 2

- blue deep : the blue sky or the space. Not referring to sea is conventional.

Stanza 3

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West Wind', 'To A
Skylark'

sunken Sun : rising sun in the morning.
Like...begun : the flight of the bird is compared to the birth of a new joy. Shelley is fond of etherealising material things; he loves to visualise concrete objects as abstract things.

Stanza 4

pale purple : refers to faded light of the evening.
shrill delight : the shrill and delightful song of the bird.

Stanza 5

keen : sharp, bright
the rays of moonlight : these are called arrows also, perhaps because the moon is represented as a huntress in mythology—Diana.
silver sphere : the moon
intense lamp : bright light
narrows : gets dim

Stanzas 6-12

In order to describe the joyous and emblematic quality of the Skylark's song, Shelley uses the medium of human perception. Perhaps Shelley was influenced by Plato who claimed that the material world around us provides dull suggestions of a world of ideal forms which lies beyond our sense perception. The intimation of immortality conveyed by the song of the bird is in turn conveyed to us by employing the phenomena of the world which he wishes to transcend to grasp the ethereal quality of the bird's song. A profusion of similes and images in stanzas 6-12 is a faint effort to do so. The raindrops from clouds when there is a rainbow in the sky is nothing in comparison to the brightness of the bird's song. The bird is akin to a great poet who sings spontaneously of thoughts which move the world to sympathise with his hopes and fears. The song is as if sung by a love smitten soul in the loneliness of a tower hidden at night. It can be compared to a glow- worm scattering light in a valley and to that of a rose hidden among green leaves.

Annotations

Stanza 7

rainbow clouds : It happens towards the end of rainy season as in the month of Bhadon in India, that when the sun is shining, some clouds burst forth. Then the drops of rain shine in the light. The melody that is rained by the bird is brighter or happier than the bright drops of rain that come from clouds in the sun when there is a rainbow in the sky.

Stanza 8

This is perhaps the most important stanza in the poem. Here, the poet touches upon the importance and the power of an imaginative poet in the life of distressed humanity. The poet compares the skylark hidden in the intense light of world's sun to an inspired poet who sings sweet songs spontaneously living in the brightness of his own ideas.

Unbidden :	spontaneously, because he feels like singing and not at the command of somebody.
hymns :	songs
wrought :	moved
hopes...not :	These songs of the great poet coming from his distressed soul are so stirring that they rouse the soul of mankind and move them to sympathise with those general hopes and fears of humanity which it had not cared for. This stanza gives Shelley's concept of a poet. He says in his 'Defence of Poetry': "a poet is a nightingale singing in darkness". They are the "unacknowledged legislators of the world".

Stanza 9

high born maiden :	a princess
palace tower :	A quiet, retired place in the palace, suited to the temper of a love-smitten maiden.
secret hour :	midnight, when the world is asleep.
bower :	a shady, leafy shelter in a garden or wood; a literary word.

Stanza 10

dell of dew :	the glow worm is found in places with dew. Unbeholden : unseen (as the lark)
aerial hue :	golden light
screen :	hide
view :	of men

Stanza 11

Embowered :	hidden or covered
Deflowered :	may have two senses: One is that the bud of the rose is opened into a flower as warm winds blow over it and two is that the breeze steals away its fragrance hence it is deflowered.
heavy-winged thieves:	romantic erotic image—the winds that blow over bud stealing its fragrance. It can also be interpreted

as scientific phenomenon rendered poetically. Warm winds are lighter and rise higher: the cold ones are heavy and drop lower.

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Stanza 12

vernal : pertaining to spring

twinkling grass : the drops of rain on the grass in sunlight twinkle like stars. rain awakened

flowers : after a shower, flowers seem to be washed like a child's face, and awakened from sleep.

Stanzas 13-21

In the following stanzas we come upon the characteristically 'Shelleyan' thought contained in the most profound lines in his poetry. He wants to learn from the skylark, be it a bird or a spirit, the source of its ethereal joyousness. He has never heard that love or wine has influenced a poet to such joyousness (stanza 13). Our wedding songs or chants of victory which could very well be expected to be expressive of unalloyed joy and delight are hollow and meaningless compared with the song of the skylark (stanza 14). The poet makes a guess if it is the love of certain beautiful objects of Nature—fields, waves or mountains or the love for its own or, above all, the ignorance of pain which is the source of the bird's delight, expressing itself in this flood of harmony (stanza 15). The bird has loved but never suffered the greatest of evils that result from it—namely its surfeit or the feeling of boredom (stanza 16). The poet is alternating, as it were, between the perception and praise of the bird's joyous song and the effort to find out the philosophical cause of such an unadulterated delight, denied to man. One cause of suffering for us is that we are afraid of death. But the poet believes that the bird must have realised the true nature of death, namely, that it is not something terrible nor the end of life, but something delightful and the beginning of life immortal (stanza 17). As against that, man is torn by regrets for the past and fears for the future; even the sincerest of our delight has a touch of sadness in it and our most touching songs are those that sing the tragedies of life (stanza 18). Scorn and hatred for our fellow men, pride and fear are perhaps the source of all our unhappiness and suffering so thought this angelic poet. But even if mankind could discard all evils, even if he were born never to shed a tear and to suffer, the poet believes, his songs could never approach the bird in purity and joy (stanza 19). The poet would, therefore, be better advised to learn his skill as a singer from the bird rather than from all the hooks of philosophy or the best of human singers (stanza 20). As for himself, if he could have half the joy that thrills the bird, such a maddening music, sweet and delightful, would flow from his lips that he would hold the attention of the world which does not listen to him now, spellbound, as he himself is by the song of the bird (stanza 21).

Annotations

Stanza 13

spite or bird : In the opening stanza. He called the bird a spirit. Here, he shifts his stand a little—the lark can be either: a bird or a spirit.

what....thine :	Which inspires it to sing.
panted forth :	helped to pour out by its inspiring power.
flood-divine :	a flood of rapturous and divine music.

Stanza 14

chorus hymeneal :	wedding song. Hymen is the god of marriage. triumphant chant : song of victory
empty vaunt :	hollow and meaningless boast.

Stanza 15

fountains :	source of inspiration
Strain :	song or music
what....pain :	a significant line. The world to Shelley was callous and hard- hearted. And when one suffers from pain, mental or physical, one cannot sing happily.

Stanza 16

joyance :	joy
Languor :	sorrow or depression thou lovest : its own kind perhaps
love's..satiety :	this is the greatest tragedy of mankind. Love soon becomes surfeited and hence boring. An expression of personal touch. (Shelley experienced this satiety at least with Harriet Westbrook.)

Stanza 17

deem..deep :	you must have understood the true nature of death better than mankind who is afraid of it.
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Notes :	songs
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crystal :	bright and happy
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Stanza 18

we :	mortals
before and after :	to the past with regret and to the future with fear.
and...not :	in the present, that is. Our present is also a source of unhappiness as we long for what is not in our possession.
pine :	longing
saddest thought :	inspired by either personal despair or by the larger suffering and misery of mankind.

Stanza 19

scorn : shed off and discard Stanza 20
measures : songs or tunes scorner of the
ground : the poet regards the bird as running away from misery
in sheer scorn as it soars high.

Stanza 21

harmonious madness: maddening harmony of music.

3.4.3 Poetic Devices

The stanza form with its four short lines and one final longer line and only two sounds is very subtly used, sometimes suggesting the spontaneity of the bird's song and in the final longer line often acts as a statement giving a sense of considered completion to the stanzas which operate as single sentences. Shelley does not observe nature with a "Wordsworthian eye" to its particular features. The bird and what it represents cannot be apprehended directly. He calls the bird "blithe spirit". He writes in similes drawing analogies from the natural world. He compares the flight of the bird to that of a cloud of fire that rises high. Each of the four similes in lines 36-55 (consult annotations) present a hidden source of some beauty which spills into the surrounding world, and Shelley's vision of the Skylark is enriched by association with different but related manifestations of beauty.

Good qualities in Shelley's poetry are described in terms of music and bright colours, light, air, sky, water, wind, fire and natural growth, such as plant, flowers, etc. Most of those elements are included in To a Skylark. Shelley's poetry is full of images and we find a succession of images. His difficulty at all times seems to be to get symbols in every line or a stanza completed before successive images come crowding in. However, the rhythmical ease is marked out as the musical quality of Shelley's poetry comes out strikingly in this poem. There is a repeated use of alliteration such as "And Singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest", "sunken sun", "pale-purple", "silver sphere", "soothing her love-laden soul in secret hour", "dell of dew", "warm winds", etc. Many of his lines have become quotable quotes such as:

We look before and after
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;

The rhythmical ease is also the result of spontaneity of feeling. We find Shelley resorting to conventional poetic diction. Descriptions are derived from the traditions of literature—the traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject. "Blithe spirit" is analogous to Keats' Nightingale where he calls the bird the dryad of the trees. "Pourest heart" refers again to Keats's

Nightingale—"pouring forth thy soul abroad". He refers to the sea as "blue deep" which is conventional, pale-purple and is a reference to evening. The rays

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of moonlight are called arrows perhaps because the moon is represented as a huntress in mythology named Diana. Princess in poetry is a high born maiden. Shelley resorts to unusual word combinations to form word pictures such as “aerial hue”, “heavy-winged” thieves, “harmonious madness”, “pale purple”, “silver sphere”, “and intense lamp” and “rain-awakened flowers”.

Shelley has a scientific way of dealing with phenomena. In stanza 7 there is mention of “rainbow clouds”. It happens towards the end of rainy season as in the month of “Bhadon” in India that when the sun is shining, some clouds burst forth. Then the drops of rain shine in the light. Similarly stanza 11 has the word “deflowered” which can be interpreted in two senses. One is that the bud of the rose is opened into a flower as warm winds blow over it; also the breezes steal away its fragrance hence it is deflowered. He calls the winds “heavy-winged thieves” by giving scientific phenomena. The winds that blow over bud steal its fragrance. Laden with fragrance, the winds become cool and hence heavy-winged, warm winds are lighter and rise higher: the cold ones are heavy and drop lower. One notices archaic words such as: “wert”, “pourest”, “thou”, “springest”, “wingest”, “art”, “thy” and so on. It is difficult for a reader to identify Shelley’s use of archaic words. It seems to have constituted some kind of a fashion among the Romantics to draw on diction that is archaic. Such usage of words gives license to more extravagant emotional reactions that might have been permitted by the then contemporary use of language. Another feature of Shelley’s poetry is that he deliberately and painfully explores a state of depression. The Romantics placed a high value on joy but still a number of their finest poems deal with negative states of mind with the failure to achieve joy or to sustain it and with the fluctuation of their moods. We look “before and after and Pine for what is not” and the “sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught” and “some wretched men are cradled into poetry by wrong.

Check Your Progress 2

1. State briefly the central idea of the poem (100 words).
2. The poem is full of similes. Quote any three in which he gives us the idea of bird’s invisibility.
3. According to Shelley what are:
 - a) The causes of human suffering and unhappiness?
 - b) Hope of happiness for mankind?
 - c) Object of inspiration to a poet?

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed two of Shelley’s most popular lyrics: Ode to the West Wind and To a Skylark. With reference to Ode to the West Wind, we have discussed Shelley’s poetic craftsmanship which consists in fusion of form and content, ease and flexibility of rhythm, striking imagery and thought which make the poem representative of Shelley’s major poetry. In our discussion on “To a Skylark” we have concentrated on Shelleyan thought. The bird’s joyous spirit symbolises divine essence, the aspiration of the soul and the force of inspiration for the poet. Just as Skylark’s song gives joy to its listeners, the World can be

redeemed if it pays due heed to the poet who is the unacknowledged legislator of the world. We also discussed the musical quality of Shelley's verse and profusion of imagery and similes in this poem.

Shelley 'Ode to The West Wind', 'To A Skylark'

3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The image of the sky filled with storm-clouds and the ocean with high waves which the wind shakes as it shakes the trees on Earth. The second image describes a Maenad (L.21). The sky looks fierce like a Maenad whose hair streams in the Wind. The third image is connected with death and the tomb. What is dying is the old year, symbolically, the old world; the sky, completely overcast and black is like the vault of a dark tomb; the year will be buried under the weight of heavy rain and hail, lit only by streaks of lightning. The funeral song will be the moan of the wind and the crashing sound of thunder.
- 2) a) "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth! And, by the incantation of this verse Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind! Be through my lips to unawakened earth The trumpet of a prophecy!"
b) "O Wind, Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; Destroyer and preserver;"
- 3) a) The West Wind is a force of Nature, but it also symbolises the free spirit of man, untamed, free and proud. It also symbolises the inspiration of the poet and becomes the message of the prophet. Shelley was interested in happiness, in reforming the world, so that happiness to all could be secured. Shelley firmly believed that man was by nature good and capable of perfection, but social and political institutions corrupted him. Evil lay not in man's heart, but outside in the State, in Society and, in Religion. Shelley had been deeply influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity".
b) Spirit of the poet which like the West Wind cannot despair. Just as West Wind draws out mighty music from the forest, it inspires Shelley to write poetry, which in turn, serves as an inspiring message to humanity. The poetry, born of the poet's sadness and his hopes will bring joy to mankind.

Check Your Progress II

1. Shelley despairs against the bonds of human existence that tie him down, weak and helpless, when his spirit like the West Wind, desires to accomplish the great task of regeneration of humanity through destruction of evil in man's existence. Shelley saw in the State, Church, Society and Religion, evil. Priesthood taught men to believe in superstition and monarchy concentrated all power in its hands and exercised authority. Shelley craved for a world free from tyranny and slavery of superstition where freedom would reign supreme.

To a Skylark is representative of Shelley's thought and style in his major poetry. Shelley seeks "in this natural world" for analogies by which he wants to

assure himself that regeneration follows destruction and there is yet hope for the world if it will pay heed to the “unacknowledged legislatures of this world” by which he means the poets. He contrasts the perfect happiness of the bird with the sad state of man whose “sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought”. The bird’s joyous spirit symbolises the divine essence, the aspiration of the soul and the force of inspiration. The possibility of world’s salvation is through the power of human thought when it is given memorable expression in poetry.

2. a) Thou dost float and run; Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
b) Like stars of Heaven, In the broad daylight Thou art unseen.
c) Like a glow-worm golden In a dell of dew.
3. a) Humanity is distressed because joy is short lived. “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts”. Suffering is caused by apprehending death. Regrets for the past and fears of the future, scorn and hatred for our fellow men, pride and fear, love which becomes surfeited and hence boring, longing for a future which is not in one’s possession are some of the causes of human suffering.
b) Songs of the great poet coming from his distressed soul are so stirring that they rouse the soul of mankind and move them to sympathise with those general hopes and fears of humanity which it had not cared for.
c) The bird’s joyous spirit symbolises the divine essence, the aspiration of the soul and the force of inspiration. The possibility of world’s salvation is through the power of human thought when it is given memorable expression in poetry. Swinburne called Shelley “the perfect singing bird”.

3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 4 KEATS: 'ODE ON A GRECIAN URN', 'ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE'

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 John Keats
- 4.3 A note on Keats's Odes
- 4.4 Ode to a Nightingale
 - 4.4.1 Text
 - 4.4.2 Interpretation
 - 4.4.3 Poetic Devices
- 4.5 Ode to Autumn
 - 4.5.1 Text
 - 4.5.2 Interpretation
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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss two odes of John Keats: Ode to Nightingale and Ode to Autumn. After completing the study of this unit you will be able to:

- discuss the development of Keats' thought in the two odes
- appreciate Keats' sensuous imagery which is the characteristic feature of his poetry and his poetic craftsmanship.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier units of this block, we have discussed Romantic poetry with special reference to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley. In this unit which is the last in the series on romantic poets, we shall discuss Keats' poetry which is marked for his skills in word painting, rich sensual imagery, and verbal coinage. We shall also discuss the development of thought in the two odes.

We would like you to first read the poem. Then you should read it again with the help of glossary, interpretation of lines and words given in the unit. After you have followed the interpretation, read the note on poetic devices. After you have read and understood the poem and critical comments, write down

the answers to the exercises. Your answers should then be checked with the answers given by us at the end of the unit.

4.2 JOHN KEATS

John Keats (1795-1821) is one of the most sensuous poets in English whose poetry is remarkable for its colour and imagery. The distinctive quality in Keats is the ability to convey his vision as a sensuous experience. He focuses on several sense impressions relating to an object and thereby gives the reader a full apprehension of it. His early works (particularly *Endymion*) were harshly criticised, but by the time he was twenty-four, he had won recognition for his great odes—*On Melancholy*, *On A Grecian Urn*, *To A Nightingale* and *To Autumn*. All these odes were written in his most creative year of 1819. Seriously ill with tuberculosis, Keats died in Rome when he was just twenty-six.

4.3 A NOTE ON KEATS' ODES

In the introductory unit of Block 1, you studied about different forms of poetry. Can you recall what an ode is? An ode is a form of lyric, a poem of address of an elaborate structure. Here in these two odes, Keats is addressing a nightingale and the season of autumn respectively. The poetic device he employs is known as the apostrophe (a figure of speech in which someone absent or something or an idea is addressed as though it is present and able to respond to the address).

Keats' odes are ten-line stanzas with the first quatrain rhyming **abab** and the following sestet having a **cdecde** rhyme scheme. His odes are remarkable for their fusion of intensity of feeling and concreteness of detail and description. They also possess a dramatic quality for we are made aware of the presence of two voices engaged in a lyrical debate. Can you identify the two voices in the "Ode to a Nightingale" keeping in view the outline we have given in 11.4?

The first voice pays rich tribute to the song of a nightingale. It speaks of the poet's identification with the bird. The voice at the end is sceptical and it questions whether the poet had genuinely experienced heightened feelings of ecstasy or was it but a subjective half-dream. The dramatic tension in the poem is built around the poet's initial identification with the bird and his later separateness from it.

4.4 ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

Ode To A Nightingale is a poem in eight stanzas.

Stanza I describes the poet's excitement as he listens to the song of a nightingale. Stanza II & III express the poet's wish to enter into the world of the nightingale and thereby remain oblivious of the weariness and fretful stir of human existence. He asks for a draught of wine that can induce in him a state of drunkenness so that he can fly far away into the blissful world of the bird. Stanza IV records the poet's recourse to poetic fancy as an alternative to aid him in his flight into the realm of the nightingale. The poetic fancy leads him to the bird in its perch high up among the tree tops where he can see the moon and the stars. But this does not last long and he wakes out of it to return to gloom and darkness on earth. Stanza V shows the poet's separateness from the bird. This appeal to poetic fancy has not liberated him from the human world of pain and misery, but has

helped him to respond with delight to the naturalistic world, full of colourful flowers. Stanza VI expresses Keats morbid impulse to die at that very moment of experiencing an intense joy and empathy with nature so that he can cease to experience pain hereafter. The poet says that it is rich to die in his present state of heightened ecstasy. But alongside this death wish comes the still greater painful awareness that death marks not only severance from the pains of life but also from the bird and its sweet song as well.

Stanza VII affirms the permanence of the bird's song in this world. It is not that the bird is immortal, but its song is. It had thrilled successive generations in the past and shall continue to thrill successive generations in the future. Stanza VIII shows the poet waking up from his fancy and becoming aware that the nightingale has fled and he can no longer listen to it. The poem concludes with an unanswered question regarding the reality of his experience. If it was a genuinely heightening experience or whether it was all just a vision and a dream.

The movement of the poem is related to the poet's movement

- i) from the ideal happy world of the nightingale to the dull everyday world of pain, misery and suffering and
- ii) from a state of ecstasy to a state of forlornness (desolation)

The turn of these two movements comes at the end of the fourth stanza. The first four stanzas assert the poet's identification with the bird and its song and the latter four stanzas lay emphasis upon the poet's separateness from the bird. The bird is present only in the first section and it is absent in the rest of the poem. Before we begin our analysis of the poem in detail, let us look at some aspects of Keats' Odes. This note (11.3) is applicable to both the odes in your course of study.

4.4.1 Text

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:

Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, (5)

But being too happy in thine happiness,

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,

In some melodious plot

Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease. (10)

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora an the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,

(15)

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
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:
Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow,

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;

But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous Blooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Where with the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;

White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

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:
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
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The same that oft-times hath

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

Glossary

(7) Dryad: a wood nymph, a beautiful goddess who inhabits the forests

(11) vintage: wine of excellent quality

(13) Flora: Goddess of vegetation and flowers

(1) Hippocrene—a mythical fountain in Greece, sacred to get

(51) Darkling: in darkness.

4.4.2 Interpretation

Lines

1-4 express the poet's longing to lapse into a state of forgetfulness so that he can give up the world and its attendant pain and fly into the world of the nightingale. Can you pick up the words that stress upon the impulse to seek oblivion? "heart aches", "drowsy numbness", "pains", "dull opiate", "hemlock" (poison) and "Lethe-wards had sunk"—all these express the poet's wish for a state of oblivion and thereof, for a movement into the world of the nightingale.

The physical sensations of aches and pains are juxtaposed with the state of drowsy numbness and a drugged state. How does the poet reconcile a state of conscious pain with that of inertness and insensibility? Why does he do so? Both the states—of pain and numbness—have a common source in the ecstatic joy of the nightingale. The poet's mood is one of drugged languor and has been occasioned by his empathetic response to the happiness of the bird. The poet wishes to merge his identity with that of the bird. In these opening lines, the identification is not total; he is aware of his self (which explains his pains and aches), but gradually the self-consciousness fades as a drowsy numbness overtakes him and the possibility of total identification is on the rise as the later lines in the stanza explain.

Lines

- 5-10 these lines explain what had given rise to these strange, morbid feelings in the poet. The poet says that the feelings of depression in him are not due to envy of the bird's happiness, but because he is "too happy" in its happiness. The poet's earlier mood of despondency seems to be perverse in the context of what gives rise to it. The mood in the opening quatrain contradicts the latter mood in the sestet.
- 7 "light-winged Dryad": "light-winged" refers to the bird's quickness in flight. It also refers to a spirit of light-heartedness in contrast to the heavy drugged feeling of the earlier lines.
- "beechen green": the green colour of the beech tree which carries associations of freshness. "shadows numberless": "shadows" suggest thick foliage which casts the shadows.
- "summer": in England summer is associated with colour and warmth (Recall Shakespeare's use of the word in his Sonnet 18)
- "full-throated ease": is in contrast to the cares and pains of the world as though the bird is immune to all suffering.
- 0-20 Here the poet seeks a prolongation of his happy state by asking for a beaker of wine from the South (of France). But towards the end of the second stanza (19-20) his wish for a fate of intoxication is to forget his conscious self and thereafter to fade away with the bird into the forest.
- 12 Do you recognise the alliteration here?
- "deep-delved" almost suggests the strokes of spade digging the earth. It also suggests the cooling effect on the wine made out of grapes grown in the warm south as a result of storing it underground. Keats is remarkable for his attention to concrete details in this description of the vintage wine. He associates the wine with Flora (goddess of vegetation and flowers), country green, Dance, Provencal song (song of Provence in medieval France), the warm South—all associations of warmth, high spirits and excitement.

“Hippocrene”: a fountain in Greece, sacred to the Muses and Apollo.

To drink off the Hippocrene is to get poetic inspiration.

Can you trace the progression of thought and imagery in these two stanzas? “Throat” and “summer” from the preceding stanza (1-10) lead to thoughts of wine produced in the South of France. The longing for the “warm south” leads him backwards in time to the song of the medieval poets of Provence and still back into the classical age when the poets used to drink from the fountain Hippocrene to get inspired. The poet desires that wine and poetic imagination together might help him escape into the world of the nightingale. Ode to a Nightingale is the supreme expression in all of Keats’ poetry of the impulse to imaginatively escape that flies in the face of knowledge of human limitation. (Stuart M. Sperry: Keats the Poet).

This impulse finds concrete expression in Stanza IV (L.31-33) Keats is one of the most sensuous of the English Poets. Here in this description of the vintage wine from the warm south-cool and heady, bubbling and purple-coloured, Keats is at his sensuous best.

21-30

(stanza III) reiterate the poet’s desire to fade far away and forget the fretful fever and stir of the world. Wine is sought as an opiate to support him in his desire for oblivion so as to forget all the painful experiences of life which include a poignant reference to his brother Tom’s death (L.26) and “where but to think is full of sorrow” (27). The poet imagines the bird to be happy because it does not belong to the world of the humans. To be human is to experience “the weariness, fret and fever” of existence.

The poet is also aware that he is human and therefore even if he were to fly away into the nightingale’s world, he cannot forever stay there in happiness. His depression is thus implicit in his desire for escape. Keats is seen struggling against the inevitable impermanence of human beauty, youth and happiness. He is striving for some enduring principle of permanence which he associates with the song of the nightingale.

31-40

(Stanza IV) The thoughts of sickness, old age and death make him seek an alternative to wine in his search for a supporting aid to wing him to the happy sojourn of the nightingale. The poet turns to poetic fancy to bridge the division between him and the bird. The creative activity arising out of his appeal to poetic imagination limits itself to a three-line ornate composition at the end of which Keats is back on the ground again, far away from the nightingale’s habitation. Initially, he soars high on the wings of poetic fancy to the tree tops where the nightingale perches, but before long he is back on earth where there is no light other than what flickers of the moonlight through the branches and the leaves of the trees.

33 “viewless wings of poesy”: Keats speaks of the wings of poesy as invisible, because the flight (of imagination) is too high for a vision of the earth to be visible. The poet expects to soar high into the far distant, almost ethereal world of the bird aided by poesy.

“poesy”: Keats uses the word rather in an affected sense to mean poetry. There is something of a self-conscious effort in the description of the moon and the stars.

34 Human brain cannot take in the broad sweep of poetic fancy. Despite its retarding effect, the poet’s imagination takes him swiftly to the abode of the nightingale on tree tops.

38-40 But poetic fancy cannot last long. It is just as temporary as the effect of wine on him. He is grounded on earth where there is neither light nor darkness, other than whatever filters the moon and the stars through the leaves of the trees.

41-50 (Stanza V) Keats’ response to sensuous beauty of the physical world is at its best in this stanza. Despite the semi-darkness around, he is able to imagine the flowers and their colours through their sweet scent. Keats said that when the primary sense of sight is absent, the other senses are intensified and provide “much room for imagination”. In this stanza, you can recognise Keats’ olfactory sense, his auditory sense and his sense of taste at work even as he confesses that “I cannot see what flowers are at my feet”. (41) The sound of the buzzing flies, caught by the auditory sense is expressed through the employment of sibilant words like “murmurous”; “Flies”, “summer” and “eves”. These words give the onomatopoeic effect of the bees buzzing around.

Identify the sensuous imagery in this stanza. What are the adjectives Keats employs to evoke sensuous excitement? Phrases like “soft incense”, “dewy wine”, “white hawthorn”, “pastoral eglantine” and “fast-fading violets” convey concrete physical details of the flowers.

Stanza VI

The colourful flowers, the musk-rose and dewy wine conjure up thoughts of luxury and inebriation which for Keats are portentous signals as they once again lead him towards thoughts of death. The line of thinking in this stanza bears a close resemblance to stanzas II and III. As he listens to the bird’s song in darkness, he feels that it is the opportune time to die, “to cease upon the midnight with no pain”.

He says that it seems rich to die at that very moment when he is at the heights of ecstasy, experiencing a rich and sensuous excitement. To descend from that state of total bliss will be only painful, analogous to a death-in-life state. (You can now recall his earlier description of a state of numbness in stanza I.) Hence the poet seeks an alternative life-in-death state where to be dead at

this moment is to preserve for posterity this unsullied moment of ecstasy and glory.

Line

62 “half in love”: Why does Keats say that he is only half in love with death? Read through the stanza. You will discover Keats’ offer of explanation in the last two lines. Keats is painfully aware that after his death, he shall not be able to listen to the bird’s song which will continue to be heard in the world. Who is dead will be no more than a requiem.

“easeful death”: (1) Painless death

(2) death that releases him from pain and gives him peace and rest.

At this moment of total surrender to sensuous excitement, Keats becomes aware of his separateness from the immortal bird.

Line

Stanza VII

71-80 the stanza begins with an ambiguous statement when Keats addresses the nightingale as the “immortal bird”. But he corrects himself in line by turning attention to the voice of the bird for it is the voice that had been heard in the past and shall continue to be heard in the future even as it is presently heard by the poet. Tracing the perennial voice of the nightingale, Keats moves from the present to the past (“emperor and clown”) through the Biblical times (“Ruth”) and then to remote world of fairies (‘charmed.... faery lands’). The generations pass, but the nightingale’s voice continues.

76 “The sad heart of Ruth”: Reference to the Old Testament story of Ruth, the kind and devoted daughter-in-law of Naomi of Moab near Jerusalem- Ruth instead of turning to her father and mother after the death of her husband, accompanied her widowed mother-in-law to the land of Bethlehem. She worked in the field of Bo’az to earn her living and ultimately was rewarded for her devotion and kindness to her mother-in-law. Keats reference here is to Ruth in the fields of Bo’az where she stood gathering the sheaves of corn. She is sad and lonely having moved far away from her native land to work in alien fields.

79 Keats opens up the world of the legends, of fairy tales—a world that is in the subconscious and present in all of us.

80 “forlorn”: Why does the poet describe the faery lands as “forlorn” These faery lands are forlorn because they are not for men. They have become inaccessible for no man can ever return to them. The word “forlorn” connects this stanza to the next and the final one.

STANZA VIII

Keats: 'Ode On A
Grecian Urn', 'Ode
To A Nightingale'

81-90 With the anguished expression of being “forlorn”, he is back to his state of painful awareness that the earthly and the eternal can never be bridged. All his efforts at identification with the bird have proved to be of temporary value. As the bird flies to the next valley and as its song fades, the illusion of oneness with the bird dissolves. The song that Ruth had heard reminded her of her separation from her home and the song that had thrilled Keats reminds him of his separation from the bird. As the song recedes, the poet moves towards his forlorn self. The poem ends with a question about the validity of such a heightened experience when it leaves him with a sense of loss and depression. Keats raises a question that operates on two levels. It can pertain to the genuineness of that thrilling experience which the song had given him. He wonders whether it was all a vision or a dream. He sounds sceptical thinking that the song had given him just an illusion of ecstasy. On another level the question may relate to the poet’s perception of the just idle a symbol of permanence. Such a conception may be just idle whimsies on his part.

The conflicting tendencies towards mortality as expressed in stanza VI- of attraction and fear are developed in the last two stanzas. Each one of them is given prominence separately. Stanza VII pays tributes to the immortality of the song and thereby stresses the poet’s fascination for death so that he can remain in that ecstatic moment of identity with the bird. Stanza VIII contradicts this desire for death as it registers man’s limitations that can never give him permanent joy as he imagines to have experienced. The poem thus maintains the dramatic debate between two voices of the poem. It completes a full circle as it begins with the experience of the heart and ends with the questioning of the heart. The exciting song sounds no more than a “plaintive anthem”, keeping in line with the earlier description of it as “high requiem” (L.70).

4.4.3 Poetic Devices

- 1) This ode is remarkable for its varied allusions—literary, biblical and mythological. The references to “Hippocrene” and “Bacchus” take us back to ancient literary works. The Biblical allusion to Ruth and mythological allusion to “charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas, in fancy leads forlorn” (79- 80) reinforce the permanence of the nightingale’s song and juxtapose it with the forlorn misery of human beings who experience nothing but “the weariness, the fever and fret” of existence.
- 2) Keats’ craftsmanship is remarkably displayed in this poem. He is not a poet of all embracing sensuousness. He rises from the sensuous to the ethereal and spiritual dimensions and thus has a close affinity with the Greek ideal of Beauty.

In this poem we find Keats's skill in word painting and verbal coinage. A good example of this is seen in the phrase "full-throated ease" (L.10). The song of the nightingale is described in visual imagery. Yet another example is in the description of the wine in terms of "the blushful Hippocrene" and "Purple-stained mouth"—where the taste is expressed in visual terms. Other examples of his skill in verbal coinage include "leaden-eyed" (28) "Viewless wings of Poesy" (33) "embalmed darkness" (43).

- 3) Alliteration: "Deep-delved", "beaded bubbles"... "the fever and the fret".
- 4) Diction: Stanza V is remarkable for Keats poetic diction. You can notice the contrast between such homely words as "the seasonable month" and "soft incense", "dewy win" "embalmed darkness". Though Keats is literally referring to the scent of the flowers, these words conjure up thoughts of luxury and wine.

We can see a similar kind of contrast in stanza VII between the enchantment and mystery suggested by "charm'd", "magic", "faery" and the emotionally disturbing associations of "perilous" and "forlorn". All these are in close link with the homely word "casements", a word that returns the poet (and the reader) to reality.

In lines 71-72, out of 18 words that Keats employs, only two have more than one syllable. The succession of monosyllables is intended to produce flat, prosaic reality.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Give examples of Keats' skill in word painting and verbal coinage with reference to Ode to Nightingale. (50 words)
- 2) Discuss the development of thought in Ode to Nightingale?

4.5 ODE TO AUTUMN (FOR ADDITIONAL READING)

To Autumn is ranked as one of the finest odes by no less critics than F. Inglis, Walter Jackson Bate, Douglas Bush, Harold Bloom, Leavis and Robert Bridges. It was written during the sunny September of 1819. What inspired Keats to write this ode was a quiet Sunday walk through the stubble fields near Winchester.

Immediately after finishing the poem, he wrote in a letter to Reynolds (21 September, 1819):

"Yesterday....was a grand day for Winchester How beautiful the season is now—How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking chaste weather—Dian skies—I never lik'd 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".

Though it seems generally agreed that "To Autumn" is a rich and vivid description of nature in as much as Keats lets the rich store of sense impressions

be absorbed and transmuted in an act of calm, meditative wisdom in a stanzaic pattern, we can discover that the poem is not only rich in pictorial and sensuous details, but that it has a depth of meaning. It is an affirmation of faith in the processes of life and change. Only thing is that the affirmation is not made by asserting it, for that might constitute poetry with "a palpable design" upon us. It does so by drawing us into experiences that are self-explanatory.

The poems runs in 3 stanzas, each concentrating on a dominant aspect of autumn and bearing relationship with others.

- Stanza 1 describes natural objects at their richest and ripest stage. However, there is a slight implication about the passage of time in "later", "warm days will never cease" and reference to summer already past.
- Stanza 2 adds an imaginative element to the description in the form of personification of the season in several appropriate postures and settings
- Stanza 3 presents the paradox of the season both lingering and passing. While the stanza is descriptive, its latent theme of transitoriness and mortality is symbolically dramatised by the passing course of the day.

To Autumn shares a feature of development with the Ode on Nightingale. Each of these poems begins with presentation of realistic circumstances, then moves into an imagined realm, and ends with a return to the realistic.

Keats's genius was away from statement and toward description and in autumn he had the natural symbol for his meanings. To Autumn is shorter than the other odes and less complex in its materials, it should be appreciated for its peculiar distinction of great compression achieved in simple terms.

4.5.1 Text

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more. later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

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;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometime like a gleaner thou lost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watches' the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river salallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Glossary

Stanza 1

Season of mists:	during the season of Autumn, mist gathers on vegetation, marshy or wet areas in the moorings.
mellow fruitfulness:	ripening of fruits
the maturing sun:	the warm rays of the sun help in ripening of fruit.

thatch-eaves :	the edges of the roof which overhang the walls-and cast off water, etc. made of straw or rushes.
moss :	a kind of greenish plant growing on moist trees, grounds, etc
gourd:	- vegetables like 'lauki' in India or pumpkin belong to the family of gourd plump the hazel shell: - hazel nuts have shells and the shells swell out when the nut is matured
sweet kernel:	- kernel is the soft part of the hard shell of a nut which is eaten.
O'er-brimm'd:	- over filled
clammy:	- sticky because wet

Stanza II

soft winnowing	- to winnow is to free the grain from chaff or husk granary - storehouse where grain is kept
half-reap'd furrow	- corn is planted in a furrow—a hollow cut in the soil. A reaper half reaps the furrow when he stops work to rest.
hook	- instrument with a curve for reaping corn
swath	- row of corn
gleaner	-a person who gathers ears of corn left over by the reaper cider press - a machine that takes out the juice of apples.
oozings	- the act of passing slowly through pores, etc.

Stanza III

ay	Yes
barred clouds	- clouds with strips like bars
stubble plains	stubble is stumps of grain or straw left by the reaper after corn or straw has been gathered. Stubble plains are fields where stubble is left
rosy hue	- colour of rose (red colour)
Choir	- song sung in a church it means a chorus here
gnats	- insects small in size which fly in marshy places.
river sallows	- willow trees (plants with long leaves) that grow by rivers.
lives or dies	- blows or not blows
hedge cricket	- an insect that chirps in hedges

treble soft	- highest pitch of voice, soft here means sweet
red breast	- a small singing bird with a red patch on its breast. a garden croft - a piece of land enclosed for a garden
swallows	- birds which migrate to warmer lands in winter.

4.5.2 Interpretation

Lines 1-6 The first line recalls the cold of the mists and briskly leads to a description of fruit, the flowers and the bees constituting a lush and colourful picture of Autumn. Sense of ripeness, growth is suggested by “maturing sun” reaching its climax as the strain of the weighty fruit bends the apple trees and loads the vines. “Bless” further states the richness and fertility with a properly religious implication. Thereafter Keats moves to the landscape. The soft ‘f’s’ and ‘r’s’ of—“And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core” make the images bulge softly in the language like the fruit itself.

Lines 6-11 Line 6 curves the lushness of “swell and gourd”. “Plump” is a verb solid enough to touch and puts a restraint on any excess that Keats might have committed after “swell the gourd”.

The autumn of first stanza is description of a process and an agricultural conspirer, plotting secretly with the sun to bring ripeness to a state of saturation. Can you point out words that suggest this process?

As process autumn loads, blesses, bends, fills, swells, plumps and sets budding.

Line 9-11 The only receptive consciousness of all this activity is that of the bees who sip their aching pleasure to such a glut that they think “warm days will never cease”, for the honey of harvest pleasure has “over brimmed” their natural store houses. The fullness of nature’s own grace, her free and overwhelming gift of herself is the burden of this stanza. The low sibilants and thrice repeated ‘mm’ of the last line bring activity into play. Though the sound of bees is drowsy, their work is not.

If you read the final three lines of the first stanza, you notice implications about the passage of time. Can you figure out the words? You must have noticed that the flowers are called “later”, the bees are assumed to think that “warm days will never cease” and there is a reference to the summer which has already passed.

Lines 12-22 The second stanza is a sensuous observation of the consequences of the process initiated in the first stanza. Autumn is now seen not as setting the flowers to budding but as a woman amid her store taking care of the over abundance of harvest. Autumn is no longer an active process, but a female overcome by the fragrance and soft exhaustion of her own labour. She is “sitting

careless", "hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind". She is a passive embodiment of the earthly paradise, a place of repose after the sexual and productive activity hinted at by her having been "close bosom-friend of the maturing sun". But she is also the peasant girl drunk with the odours and efforts of gathering, winnowing, reaping and gleaning. The final four lines of the stanza take us to the very end of the harvest, the gleaner bearing her laden head so steadily as to suggest motionlessness even as she moves. The language catches the gestures and enacts them. The faint breeze ruffles hair in the soft "Ts" of the line and sounds in the repeated syllables of "winnowing wind". The first seven lines are replete with extended vowels—"drows'd", "sound", "fume" and there are no heavy stresses so that leisurely movement is suggested.

The final image, autumn as lingering and passing is suggested in "patient look" with which she watches the last oozing hours by hours. "Oozing", or a steady dripping, is, of course, not unfamiliar as a symbol of the passage of time.

Lines 23-33

We have post-harvest sounds, heralding the coming on the winter. The poet's attitude towards transience and passing beauty is implicit in "Where are the songs of Spring" but is immediately abandoned in "Think not of them, thou hast thy music too". The late flowers and poppies of stanzas 1 & 2 are replaced by the barred clouds that bloom the twilight and touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue. And though the small gnats mourn in a wail-filled choir, the sound of their mourning is musically varied by the caprice of light and wind. The poet's rendering of the wail is light. The "full grown lambs" are now ready for their harvest having completed the cycle. The voice of their bleat comes from a distance "hilly bourne". So also the hedge crickets are heard across the exhausted landscape, the winter singer, the red breast adds his soft treble and the departing birds close the poem. This is acceptance of process beyond the possibility of grief. The last stanza looks back to the concluding lines of Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, where we hear: "The red breast sit and sing Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch Of mossy apple-tree, while the high thatch Smokes in the sun-thaw."

4.5.4 Poetic Devices

This ode is remarkable for its imagery which has two characteristics: comprehensive—using all senses and sensuous—rich in the images of the immediately physical sensations. The richness of the fruit and the fertility of the season is brought about in "to load and bless with fruit the vines that round the thatch—eaves run" (3-4), "And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core" (6) and "swell the gourd" and plump the hazel shells with a sweet kernel" (7-8). The images bulge softly in our mind's eye producing lush and colourful pictures. Words such as "plump", (7), solid and nutty to touch, and "sweet kernel", (8) ready to release the flow of juice in our mouth, evoke a trail of experiences.

Along with the senses of sight, taste and touch already mobilised, the distant buzzing of bees through low sibilants and thrice repeated 'mm' in the last line of the first stanza invoke our sense of the sound.

Keats's myth making powers forefront in "Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store" associating Autumn with its legends and its myths. Keats, as if, reminds us of the mystery of the movement and renewal of the seasons. The season is personified and in contrast to the activities of Autumn listed in the first stanza, word pictures, images of stillness: a harvester not harvesting, the benevolent deity is motionless "sitting careless on a granary floor" (14) or asleep on a "half-reap'd furrow" (16), while its hook "spares the next swath (18), the "gleaner" keeping "steady" its "laden head" (20), "patient look" (21) and stopping to watch the slow pressing of the apples into cider as the hours pass, strike us.

In Keats, the sound echoes the sense in the soft 'f's' and 'r', 's' of "And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core" (6), the drowsy sound of the bees in the thrice repeated "mm" sound of "For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells (11). Alliteration in "winnowing wind" (15) as if mounts the rhythm slowly to suggest activity. The rhyming of "wind will find" as if is to make the language catch the gesture and enact it. The ruffling of hair is suggested in soft ts' of "soft-lifted" (15). The extended vowels - "drows'd", "sound" "fume", produce a picture of leisurely behaviour. The sound in "steady" and "laden" (20) echo firm steps. In the last line of the second stanza we fairly hear the last oozings (onomatopoeia). The ode is an eleven line stanza, the first quatrain rhyming "abab" and the following septet, with a couplet, catching on to an earlier rhyme word, just before the last line. The eleven line stanza is long enough to express a complex modulation of thought but not so long as to run the risk of becoming isolated poem in itself.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness (a)

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun; (b)

Conspiring with him how to load and bless (a)

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run (b)

To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees (c)

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core (d)

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells (e)

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more (d)

And still more, later flowers for the bees (c)

Until they think warm days will never cease (c)

For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells (e)

Though the Shakespearean quatrain remains regular, the rhyme scheme in the septet is made to vary. Thus the ode has a unique combination of a Shakespearean quatrain and a Petrarchan septet with a couplet.

Keats' poetic diction is marked for precision like a molten ore sublimed by enormous pressure. "Barred cloud" stubble-plains, "rosy hue", "wailful choir", "full-grown, lambs", "gathering swallows" in the third stanza are concrete images of life unaffected by any thought of death. The mind is free to associate with the "wailful" mourning of the gnats with a funeral dirge or the swallows gathering for immigration, but these sounds are more confined to autumn than to any lament on death. The diction in Keats retains a restraint on thought. And yet there is no dissociation between senses and the intellect. It is a perfect integration. His nerve ends maintain contact with the intellect, the thinking goes on through these images and receives its precise definition and qualification from images and yet retains a classical restraint on Keats. His Ode to Autumn does not carry a palpable design on us. The poet is himself completely absent, there is no "I", no suggestion of the discursive language in this ode. The power of self absorption, wonderful sympathy, identification with things he called "negative capability" he saw as essential to creation of poetry.

Check Your Progress II

1. The ode is objective and descriptive. Comment in not more than 150 words.
2. In this ode, Keats' pictorial power finds its fullest expression. Comment in not more than 150 words.)
3. Comment on Keats' "negative capability"—(50 words)

4.6 ODE ON A GRECIAN UREN

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt 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."

INTERPRETATION

Ode on a Grecian is a poem that, on the surface, talks about an urn on which is some engravings but at the deeper level the poem talks about much more. These figures carved out on the urn are basically stories. But unlike a typical tale, this tale is being narrated in a different way altogether. The characters of the tales are, unlike in the usual tales relating to human emotions, not subjects of time. To put it simply, the poem operates at two levels: at one level, the poet discusses the beauty of the picture portrayed on the urn, and on the other level, Keats, or the persona, narrates the story that is being told by the carved images on the 'Grecian Urn'. The lovers portrayed on the urn transcend the limitations of time as they are engravings and not humans with flesh and blood. Since they are now captured images, and not living, walking humans, these lovers do not have to be worried about the cycle of life and death. The poet reminds the youth that he should not regret his inability to kiss the beloved because they have become eternal in the frozen time. There is a binary opposition between the temporal and the timeless, physicality and metaphysics. Towards the end of the poem, the poet draws an easy binary between Old age and Youth, when he talks about 'burning forehead' and 'parching lips'. Interestingly enough, the same urn that, by capturing the lovers' images on its body, eternalizes their stories, limits the pleasure of their love as they are tied body-wise. These lovers are bound by space. However, the poem has been amidst a lot of critical dissonance, and there has not been a unanimously favourable commentary, it maybe safely said that Grecian Urn is one of the most finely crafted, and philosophically sound Odes by John Keats.

The poet uses most creative images like 'heard' and 'unheard' memories. The visual images like 'still unravish'd bride of quietness', 'foster child of silence and slow time' are trademarks of tell-tale tradition. From the story of the lovers the poets moves to the world universal world of beauty and love. The movement of the poem microcosm to the macrocosm is the beauty of the poem. And the poem ends with a piece of advice, as also a lesson: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed two odes of John Keats—To Nightingale and To Autumn with a view of familiarising you with

- the development of thought in the two odes
- the comprehensive and sensuous imagery which is the hall mark of Keats' poetry and
- features of Keats' poetic craftsmanship particularly his negative capability,
- varied allusions, myth making, verbal coinage, and alliteration and assonance.

4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Keats diction is marked for its vivid description and restraint of expression. He is good at picturesque compounds throughout the poem. Some examples are: "drowsy numbness", "charmed magic casements", of "perilous seas", in "faery lands forlorn" "Provencal song" and "sunburnt mirth", beaded bubbles and leaden-eyed despair.
- 2) This ode was inspired by the song of a nightingale that had built its nest close to the house of a friend of Keats. The poet experiences perfect happiness in the first song and wants to fade away unseen from the world into the dim forest. At last, he wants to take refuge in wine, but on second thoughts he understands that wine is not potent enough to transport him into the ideal region. Poetry alone shall transport him. The poet describes the romantic forest into which he has a flight of his own on the viewless wings of poetry. He compares the transitions of the individual human life with the permanence of the song of the bird. The voice that the poet hears was heard in ancient times by emperors and clowns. It is then broken; the poet returns to his daily existence and is regretful that imagination cannot beguile him for a long time.
- 3) A rich and vivid description of nature during the season of Autumn without a sadness on the oncoming death as in other odes. The first stanza describes natural objects at their richest and ripest stage such as "mellow fruitfulness" "load and bless with fruit the vines", "And fill all fruits with ripeness to the core", "to swell the gourd", and "plump the hazel shells", "sweet kerner, "to set budding more" and "clammy cells".

The second stanza adds an imaginative element to the description of Autumn in the form of personification of the season in several appropriate settings and postures.

The final stanza echoes post-harvest sounds, is full of concrete imagery, and though the imagination is free to associate "wailful choir", mourning of gnats and swallows twitterings with transience and passing beauty, there is no "palpable design" on the part of the poet to assert the mortality theme on us.

- 4) Keats is known as a poet painter in words. He has been able to represent nature with the help of imagery which is sensuous and comprehensive and pictorial as well. In the first stanza, the ripeness of fruit is suggested by “mellow fruitfulness”, “to swell”, “plump the hazel shell”, “sweet kernel”, “budding”, and nature’s bounty in “clammy cells”, “maturing sun”, “to load and bless”.

Keats: ‘Ode On A Grecian Urn’, ‘Ode To A Nightingale’

In stanza II, the stillness of activity is suggested by words and images such as “sitting careless”, “half-reap’d furrow sound asleep”, “drows’d with the fume of poppies”, “hook spares the next swath”, “steady” and “laden head”, “patient look”, “last oozings”. Finally in the third stanza “barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day”, “stubble-plains with rosy hue”, wailful choir, full grown lambs loud bleat and “gathering shallows” suggest that the day is coming to a close.

- 5) Keats’s distinction lies in his ability to let sense impressions flow upon him and the rich store of sense impressions is absorbed and transmuted into an act of calm, meditative wisdom. The poet is himself completely absent. There is no “I”, no suggestion of the discursive language. The power of self absorption, identification with things, he called “negative capability” which he saw as essential to creation of poetry.

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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