

wind'. The pictures of the reaper in the 'half-reaped furrow', drowsed with the sweet smell of poppy flowers; of the gleaner balancing his corn-loaded form while crossing a brook; and of the patient cider-presser watching the 'last ooziings hours by hours'—all are vivid and life-like, and have a unique emotional and artistic appeal.

The way in which Keats describes the sky and the landscape at the time of autumnal sun-set is truly poetic. Amidst the 'barred clouds' the red sun looks like a blooming flower, and the roots of the corn after harvest gives the 'stubble plains' a masculine look. It also creates a suitable background for the music of gnats which, otherwise, would not appeal to the listeners.

Thus *Ode to Autumn* is a rare specimen of picture-painting in English poetry.

Q.2. Show how Keats brings out the spirit of Autumn through vivid descriptive details?

Ans. In the first stanza of *Ode to Autumn* Keats describes how Autumn is engaged in a sweet conspiracy with the sun to load the vines on cottage roof with fruits and to make the 'mossed' apple trees bow with the burden of red fruits, ripe to the core; and then how she produces numerous new flowers to keep the bees away from rest even after gathering so much honey during the summer that their combs have become 'clammy'. These provide a series of pictures vividly beautiful in their colours and shapes. And from this description we understand that Autumn is extremely generous in spirit, and also very sportive. She enjoys the confusion of the bees who think that summer 'will never cease'.

Similarly, Autumn's activities in the second stanza offer us vivid descriptive details of the rural England during the season, and also throws further light on the spirit of Autumn. The farmer on the granary floor just sits without the slightest care, and Keats draws our attention to the quiet detail of how the wind softly blows through his hair, caressing it, and, perhaps removing some husk of grain from it. Autumn's spirit of freedom and relaxation is evident from the picture. The reaper who is lulled into sleep by poppies in the field, just enjoys a break from his work; and there is no task-master to punish him. Through him is portrayed the spirit of indolence which is a distinctive characteristic of Autumn. The dancing movement of the gleaner, while crossing the brook, reveals the joyous spirit of Autumn. And finally the patient watching by the cider-presser of the slow ooziings of apple-juice from his machine, conveys to us the capacity of Autumn to enjoy unhurried peace, without ever feeling bored.

such imagery. While it is a superb evidence of Keats's romantic appreciation of nature, it also exemplifies his power to correlate nature and humanity.

Truly, 'Ode to Autumn' is a masterpiece of Romantic poetry.

Q.4. 'Where are the songs of spring?'—How does Keats answer this question, and what attitude of the poet is revealed through that?

Ans. After glorifying Autumn's gifts and celebrating her plenitude in the first two stanzas of *Ode to Autumn*, Keats himself raises the question at the beginning of the final stanza. He seems to anticipate such a critical query because compared to spring and summer, Autumn is bound to be criticized as unmusical. It is true that great singing birds like the cuckoo and the nightingale are not heard in Autumn. But Keats is not ready to admit that Autumn has no music. In fact, Keats declared so beautifully in the sonnet 'On the Grasshopper and the Cricket', that 'The poetry of earth is never dead'. So, in answer to the taunting question 'Aye, where are they?' he cites a brilliant list of autumnal music discovered and aptly presented by himself. But he is realistic enough to admit the absence of vernal music: "Think not of them."

Like a researcher he establishes, what nobody knew before, that the monotonous droning of gnats can be musical, presented in the setting of the sunset, among the riverside willows, and, being made alternately high and low in volume 'as the light wind lives or dies'. Keats proves himself as an expert in acoustics as he finds the lamb's bleating all the more fascinating for being echoed on the hills surrounding the valley. The robin red-breast is a home-bird, singer throughout the year, but the poet boldly claims that in Autumn its whistle becomes 'treble soft'. And he rounds off the list of Autumn's songs with the twittering swallows as they fly in the sky.

Such a pleading for Autumn betrays Keats's immense love for the season, whom he does not want to be defeated on any score.

Hi Baba
Ushi Baba

Q3. Write a critical appreciation of *Ode to Autumn*.

Ans. Critics generally agree that 'Ode to Autumn' is the most satisfying and mature of Keatsian odes. It is also the most artistically 'impersonal' of them, and certainly felicitous in diction and musical cadence. From its opening phrases to the closing ones, matter and manner have not only been superbly blended, but every line bears the authentic stamp of Keatsian poetry at its best.

The first stanza is the symphony of colour; the second, the symphony of movement; and the third, the symphony of sound. It is, altogether, as rich in details, as in pattern. C. H. Herford truly says, "The season of 'mellow fruitfulness' wakens no romantic vision, no romantic longing like the nightingale's song. It satisfies all the senses, but enthralls and intoxicates none. Everything breathes contented fulfilment without satiety, and beauty too is fulfilled and complete."

Keats focuses on the richness, plenitude, and peaceful joy of Autumn. Phrases like 'mellow fruitfulness', 'load and bless with fruits', 'ripeness to the core', have an enormous sensuous impact. The climax in this respect is reached with the "O'er brimmed clammy cells" of the bee-hives. But there is something more than naive celebration of plenitude: the very first line refers to 'mists', and soon the bees fondly think 'warm days will never cease'. These are hints of awareness of the coming winter.

The mythical presentation of Autumn through human figures of the farmer, the reaper, the gleaner, and the cider-presser, betrays romantic imagination of the highest order. The imagery is sensuously rich, and emotionally satisfying. The subtle combination of visual beauty and the feeling of compassion fused with a plea for indolence, is remarkable in the lines on the reaper:

'Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers.'

The final stanza begins with the crucial question, 'Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?' This nice dramatic interpolation adds a note of variety to the lyric; and immediately answering to his own question the poet rolls out the special music-sheet of Autumn. The musical mood is facilitated by the appropriate setting and moment. The 'wailful choir' of gnats becomes interesting being 'borne aloft or sinking as the light wind lives or dies'. The bleating of the lamb becomes richer in effect being echoed by surrounding hills. Moreover, the effect is compactly tactile-visual, as in the lines—

'While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubbleplains with rosy hue.'

The ethereal and the earthly, the delicate and the stubborn, the moist and the warm, the blooming and the dying, are imaginatively fused together in

but, like Harriet in The Man of Mode she knows that admission will mean surrender and surrender may mean loss of identity. Act IV Millicent loves Mirabell to a degree that leaves him a daze. And so we come to the bargaining scene. First they come to terms because it is only on the basis of reason, unclouded by emotion, that the foundations of marriage can be built. Millicent bargains - she bargains for her privileges, for her liberty, for her right to privacy, for her freedom to meet whom she pleases. She is fighting for herself and for the rights of every woman, fighting for the survival of the individual.

Act IV The great struggle within her mind does not let anyone know what she is going through, but though she maintains her exquisite facade to the world we can sense a tenseness in everything she does or says. Her restless impatience makes her break one beam and nearly break another. Her speeches are often irresolute. But in all her agitation her love for Mirabell is held secretly within herself for it is too precious to be exposed to public view. She does not even let Mirabell know how deeply she loves him and only once in the entire play she confessed to Mrs. Fainall: "I love him violently." Millicent is undoubtedly one of the great heroines of literature.

One of the most amusing scenes in the play is her encounter with the boorish Sir Wilton when she is reciting to herself some verses to Suckling, of whom she is very fond. She is too refined and subtle for a grosser booke in a situation so absurd.

▣ Millicent's sparkling gaiety delights all who come near her, for her wit is never directed anyone, it is the natural exuberance of her personality. She is supremely confident of Mirabell's love for her and she accepts the adulation of men as her natural due - but with such lack of affectation that no one can take offence. She does not quite possess the urbane poise of Mirabell and, in a sense, is much more forthright. Instead of sparring with her wit, if anything displeases her, she openly states what is in her mind. She coolly rebuffs Witwood when his wit begins to irritate and when Mrs. Mervood makes unpleasant insinuations she decides her to her face.

▣ But Millicent's gaiety is also a front behind which she hides herself. Mirabell had described her faults as 'so natural, or so artful' because he knew that her sophistication sustained her naturalness, it was 'art' which concealed and protected her emotions and deeper self. However charming in company, she must have her 'familiar Solitude' and her 'dancing Contemplation'. It is credible that L.C. Knights in Restoration Comedy: The Reality and The Myth has described her life as consisting merely of 'visiting, awaiting and receiving letters, tea-parties and small talk, for nothing could be gotten the truth.

her. Here she is revealed as the complete belle. She is affectation that is fully conscious of itself, and flippancy that delights in its own irreverence. She is completely sure of her feminine power and Coyness has given her the lines to justify her assurance.

▣ Millicent is much more fanciful and whimsical in her wit, with a lightness of touch uniquely hers, and sensibility extremely refined. It is here whimsical wit that makes her seem so airy. She adopts the same whimsical tone toward Mirabell because she does not want to make a public confession of her love. Mrs. Millicent has a great deal of judgement, though she prefers not to display it as Mirabell does, and she even tolerates Petulant and Witwood, Mrs. Marwood suspects, so that she may disguise her affair with Mirabell. When he blindly accuses her of lacking judgement in conversing with such fools, she answers with the mixture of sense and whimsically that is characteristic of her wit: "I please myself - Besides, sometimes to converse with fools is for my health." Her whimsical wit is a shield which she holds up against the world, against Marwood and Lady Wishfort, and even against Mirabell.

▣ Mrs. Millicent is a highly cultivated woman, so sensitive and fastidious that she wishes to avoid the grossness of concealing and stalling. At times there is almost a touch of pedantry in her speech, as when she says: "There is not so impudent thing in nature, as the saucy look of an assured man, confident of success."

The character of Millamant:

⇒ Millamant is a wonderful character in all English comedy. She hides wisdom, tenderness and love beneath a fanciful mask of acquiescence and affection. She is the first cousin of Mrs. Fainall, considered to be the most charming heroine in a Restoration comedy. The very first reference to Millamant is to her whimsical temperament, to her "humours that would tempt the patience of a stoic." Mrs. Millamant shows the influence of the coming age in her increased sensibility. It is quite false to her nature to characterize her as "the most witty and fearless of Diannas" whose courtship is unmarked "by one moment of real hesitation or by the disclosure of one palpitation of the heart." She has something of the seriousness and sensibility of Araminta, plus a little of the charming affectation of Belinda.

▣ Millamant appears significantly in five scenes - her first appearance, her dialogue with Mrs. Marwood, her scene with Sir Wilfull, the promise scene with Mirabell, and the drunken scene immediately following. Millamant's first appearance is prepared for carefully. When she arrives, trailing her court, Mincing and young Witwoud, she automatically takes the center of the stage as if it is her right, as indeed it is. Her character is outlined in the passage about putting up one's hair: ~~poor~~ would ~~never~~ do, only poetry, a piece of flippancy in which Mincing immediately abets