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(SPECIAL KEATS ISSUE)

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K.S. Misra

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CONTENTS

R.P. Bhatnagar

JOHN KEATS AND THE THEOLOGY OF BEAUTY

With Keats a miracle was born. In 1821 Keats the man to dust returned, but the miracle that Keats was lives on. I do not know of a student of English poetry whose heart does not leap up at the very mention of this High Priest of Beauty.

I want to make a single point in the present essay : the feeling of beauty - like all other aesthetic feelings - has its being in the moment of perception. Cosmic time rolls into that blessed moment impregnating it with a divine thrill, the very quintessence of an epiphanic experience. It is, of course, true that beauty lies in the heart of the experience (the proverbial eye of the beholder); its non-perception does not put its ontology in doubt, but only highlights perceptual opacity and experiential turbidity. The magic of the beautiful is the magic of the moment, undistracted and undiluted by an awareness of the past and the future. Intrusion of what was and impingement by what will be rob the moment of its honey. Everything Keats wrote bears out the veracity of what has been said above.

Even though he did not see the twenty-sixth spring, he is not one of the 'inheritors of the unfulfilled renown.' On the other hand, he illustrates, at its best, the Jonsonian dictum 'in short measures life can perfect be.' It is no small tribute to his artistic genius and poetic greatness that they inspire comparison with none other than the tallest of the tall, Shakespeare and Milton.

I shall start with what may look like a negative proof of the supremacy of the living moment.

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 !

The 'now' of the first line is a single unexpansive point of time (not the use of the present simple in 'seems'), whereas the surrounding state is an expanse of time, reinforced by the use of the continuous form (while thou art *pouring* forth thy soul abroad). The message is clear : for good or worse, all that is vouchsafed to man is to experience the moment. It should surprise no one. In underlining the above truth Keats has but reiterated the profoundest philosophical truth. Being (life) can be predicated only of the moment of iteration. Continued life is a succession of moments, each moment betokening both the beginning and the end - the totality - life (being). In one of his pronouncements Keats has emphasized the above truth through a metaphorically used phrase :

> I scarcely remember counting upon any happiness. I look not for it *if it be not in the present hour.* ('present hour' here is a metaphor for the living moment). The setting sun will always set me to rights, or if a sparrow comes before my window, I take part in its existence, and pick about the gravel.

Even in his early poetry, which undoubtedly betrays the travails of growth and a certain unripeness, his love of beauty is really and truly an original passion. It may even be said that what distinguishes Keats from some of the fellow romantic poets is his disinterested and inclusive love of beauty - both inner and outer, or else he would not have emphasized the essential oneness of beauty and truth. His passionate plea is "Seek ye first" the ideal beauty "and all other things shall be added unto you".

His ideal of beauty was akin to that of the Greeks, a perfect blending of the inward and the outward :

> ...or thy smiles
> Seek as they were once sought, in Grecian isles,
> By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
> - To Maia (Fragment)

Coming back to my earlier theme that for Keats beauty inheres in the moment, I venture to further propose that Keatsian aesthetics was far from being an aberration, a deeply felt conviction which was itself premised on a profound insight into life - very surprisingly so considering his young age. The moment - life as microcosm - is compounded of the twin elements of joy and sorrow, each owing its being to the other. The truth of the above analysis is best exemplified in the *Ode to Melancholy*, the refrain of which is that fullness of joys is dependent on their sharpening into pains :

> She dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die;
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
> Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips;
> Ah, in the very temple of delight
> Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
> Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
> Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
> His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
> And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

For Keats beauty, like Thea in *Hyperion*, is made 'more beautiful than beauty's self' by sorrow.

> But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
> How beautiful, if sorrow had not made

> Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
> ('Hyperion')

Thus the religion of beauty becomes inseparable from the religion of sorrow.

How much a single extended eyeful moment can contain is best seen in the immortal stanza from *The Eve of St. Agnes*

> Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
> And threw gules on Madeline's fair breast,
> As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
> Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
> And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
> She seem'd a splendid angle, newly drest,
> Save wings, for heaven :- Porphyro grew faint:
> She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

It is possible to piece together Keats's several pronouncements where he dashes off theories about the poetic faculty in which central importance is given to the claims of beauty. We often quote the following lines from one of his letters :

> I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity. It should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.

However, it is generally overlooked that they are preceded by the following significant observation

> With a great poet the sense of Beauty Overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all considerations.

in *Endymion* too Keats sings a panegyric to beauty

A things of beauty is a joy for ever :
Its loveliness increases : it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health and quiet breathing.

At this point I should like to state that the passion and the wisdom of a great poet often compel him to telescope eternity into an animated moment. Thus telescoped the moment puts on the hues of a divine celebration.

Browning's lover in his 'The Last Ride Together' fancies one such moment :

What if we will ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity, -
And heaven just prove that I and She
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

A moment pregnant with eternity is veritably a blissful experience, as Wordsworth puts it in his own inimitable manner :

- that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on -
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

And seeing into th life of things implies timelessness. The moment of seeing assumes cosmic proportions, not unlike what Keats experiences in the seventh stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale*:

> 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

That which is not subject to death is everlasting, encompassing all - the past, the present and the future.

The refrain of my argument has been the importance Keats gave to the principle of beauty and the philosophical method of his perception of beauty in the moment. That he treated beauty as sacred as God is evident from his following statement:

> I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of Great men.

The three Odes, *On a Grecian Urn*, *To a Nightingale* and that on *Melancholy*, together with one or two of his sonnets and a few passages in his letters give us an intimate glimpse of Keats's worship of beauty. Unlike Shelley, who celebrated Intellectual Beauty involving a transcendental refinement of love, Keats always regarded beauty concrete, not necessarily external though, and

living in images of the soul at work. It is in this sense that Beauty is the same as Truth. It explains the conviction behind his famous lines

> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' - that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

I can pay no better tribute to what I have called Keats's theology of beauty than to quote a stanza from his own *Ode on a Grecian Urn* which marks the greatest height of his triumphant attempt at capturing eternity in a moment:

> 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!

The urn is 'impressed' by beautiful images which shall for ever satiate the onlooker's hunger for beauty through his identification with the moment of his perception of the blissful scene.

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Kapil Kapoor

SOUND AND SILENCE IN KEATS'S SONNETS AND ODES

More than the pictorial, the aural element predominates in Keats's poetry. And this foregrounding of sound is significant. Criticism has conventionally called him a sensuous poet - but the primacry of aural perception, its nature and the meaning it has for Keats's ontology has not been noted. Perhaps it could not have been noticed, given the western philosophical and scientific tradition which does not posit sound an ontological substance and which lacks a central metaphysics of sound.

In the Indian traditions, on the other hand, sound is an ontological primitive, the primary creative principle. The Indian phoneticists, as against the grammarians and the etymologists, are concerned with the sound substance, which is a tattva, an ontological primitive, for them. For the vaisesikas too, akasa, the dravya of sound (dhvani) is a tattva. For them, the sound 'particle' is the ultimate constituent of the material universe. This very shabda tattva of the phoneticists and the akasa of the Vaisesikas is the prakrti or savabhava of the philosophers and in the order of creation and destruction, this adasa, the vast 'emptiness' or space is the dividing point in which everything originates and in which everything dissolves. It is the paramanika, literally the ultimate sub-atomic particle, the vast 'silence', the sunya, in which dhvani, sound, originates setting in motion a given cycle of creation. This mula, prakrta dhvani is the sabda brahman, the aksara, of Vedas. From mula dhvani to sounds of

nature and of language, to awareness, to knowledge, and then to all this innumerable universe - this is the order of evolution of individual consciousness and consciousness of the universe.

The primacy of the sound substance is argued by the phoneticists with several commonsense facts: (i) in this vast creation, there is no activity, action, state, movement, origin or destruction, that does not first manifest itself as a sound, dhvani; (ii) sound is never absent - when we sit silent, our breathing and our heartbeat are there; (iii) in the external world the wind always blows and everywhere; (iv) no river, ocean, human habitation, forest or field is silent; (v) there is a sound in the footfall of an ant as it walks; (vi) when even a small gear which rotates produces sound, how about the cosmic sound of the earth and millions of cosmic bodies rotating round axes and around other astronomical bodies in a cosmic dance - the universe indeed is sabdamaya, permeated by sound; (vii) sound or space is invariably present in all forms of matter - air, water, earth and fire/ energy; (viii) what is named as knowledge or science or meaning or being or language is nothing but sound in its essence; (ix) someone is alive or not, has intelligence or not is decided by the presence or absence of sound. Many Indian phonetic texts such as the siksas and the pratisakhyas and the older sruti texts enshrine and expound this doctrine of sabda brahman.

It is not to suggest that Keats was aware of this conception - of course not. But to the extent that this doctrine has an experiential and a scientific validity, it is quite reasonable to assume that a deep-thinking, sensitive and meditative poet like Keats could reach or realise this great experiential truth that sound is life, the creative principle of being. There is a marked density of aural experience relative to other modes of perception in his

sonnets (and odes) examined for this preliminary study. To use an expression from his own sonnets (sonnet 1) there are 'unnumbered sounds in Keats' 'poetry' : both manifest and unmanifest sounds, sounds of nature, of men and of instruments. The most numerous are the sounds of nature because as we are informed 'The poetry of earth is never dead' (sonnet 15b). There is an idefinable continuum of sounds - songs of birds, whispering of leaves, the voice of waters, 'the great bell that heaves with solemn sound'. The sounds that fill the cognizable universe get constituted as diverse cognitive acts, what may be called 'structures' of sound - *whisper, hum, rhymes, pealing, hymn, semi-tone, notes, rusting - and there* are variegated sources of sounds - *ocean, insects, spheres, leaves, wind, lute, lyre, soul, nymphs, robins, Philomel and surprisingly or perhaps not so surprisingly, sorrow* - and there is a quality to these sounds and sources - mournful, serene, honied, shadowy, husband, soft-voiced, tender, gentle, musical. The structures of sounds evoke associated states of mind - 'whispering' which betokens a certain mysteriousness, a richness of what the sound suggests or evokes, which is beautiful when it is Raphael's (sonn.11), eternal...'around desolate shores' (sonn.22), gentle and one of this world's true joys when it is between brothers'(sonn.12), ever so light when it belongs to the beloved (sonn.43); 'hum' is immanent in the universe born as it is 'of mighty workings' (sonn.10) ; 'pealing' is the music of the spheres (soon.12) ; 'semitones' are tender (sonn.43) while the 'notes' or Philomel are nostalgic (sonn.b). These are primary, unitary sounds but 'rhymes' and 'hymns' are complexes, man-made artefacts and no one can miss the difference for Keats - the primary sounds, the sounds in nature are affirmative tokens while the man-made compositions are 'dull' (rhymes, sonn.12); of course, hymns are divine for

they are the voice of God.

It is a complex metaphysics - there is a music of sounds, the melody which can be quite 'cloying' but the whisper of the wind which is serene. The primary sounds of nature are joyous and tokens of life, as for example, the bird songs but man-made compositions, the artefacts, the rymes for example, are dull. Man's music may be dull but his speech is sweet and a creator of a new world, of life in its own right (sonn.80). While man's music, a composition of sounds, is 'dull', bird-songs are symphonies. Evidently, for Keats the primary sounds in nature are the affirmative tokens of life, of beings, being alive. To become deaf to them is to be dead - to hear is to be alive : "I have ears in vain - to thy high requiem become a sod." This primary sound manifests 'the great voice' (sonn.12), the 'pealing of spheres' (soon.13), 'the poetry of earth' (sonn.15). This voice 'runs from hedge to hedge' (sonn.15), vests the oceans (sonn.33), it is the voice of God (sonn.12), the 'hum of mighty workings' in the universe. (sonn.11).

How does this sound relate to silence? Silence is sound not audible. Absence of sound is death - not silence. Sound is not something imposed on silence - silence itself is a form of sound, something constructed from the immanent sabda : "On a lone winter evening, when the frost / has wrought a silence..."(sonn.15) there is the silence that inhabits the soul - `the husband casket of my soul' (sonn.38). Manifest sound is our sound and the unmanifest sound is silence - the "faint cracking (of busy fames) o'er our silence creep / Like whispers of the household gods that keep / A gentle empire o'er fraternal sounds. (sonn.12)".

Since sound is silence, one has to listen carefully, Keats says - not everyone hears all the pulsations of this universe - 'listen a while... and be dumb', Keats says in

another context (sonn.11): "Leave melodizing on this wintry day / Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute" (sonn.23) ; "but my food ear.../....; hearkening for a love-sound...." (sonn.25) ; "read me a lesson and, Muse, and speak it loud..."(sonn.24). listening too is ontological - "Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid ! / give answer from the voice..." (sonn.33). The active intelligence of the universe is thus manifest in sound. Therefore, "By ear industrious, and attention meet; misers of sound and syllable..." there you get quite inadvertently, but quite understandably, the aksara, syllable - the indestructible sound substance of the ancient Indian phoneticists.

Light, the visual perception which one would expect to figure prominently in a western poet, does not figure prominently in Keats and not in a significant ontological function - light is a part of the visible objects, constitutes the context and co-exists with dark as *another* element and not as a creative principle:

> Aye on the shores of darkness there is light
> ...
>
> There is budding morrow in midnight,
> There is a triple sight in blindness keen.

Symbolism is also relatively limited - sun and stars appear as its source, mainly sun (see, sonnets 7,16,19,20,26, 28,32,33). But the Odes show the same implicit sound symsiology. `To Autumn' relates the music of autumn- the songs of spring are replaced by its music:

> Then in a wailful choir the small gnates mourn
> Among the river sallows, borne aloft
> Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
> And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
> Hedge-crickets sing ; and now with treble soft

> The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;
> And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, we have the sound of silence — eternity finds expression in the eloquent silence of art - the urn is the "unravished bride of quietness, ...foster-child of *silence*... ".The experience of immortality is enshrined in the `unheard melodies'-

> Therefore, ye soft pipes, play on
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd
> Pipe to the spirit *ditties of no tone*.

In the *Ode to a Nightingale*, sound is the symbol of life and of eternity - there is the 'melodious plot', the bird singing 'in full throated ease', the 'murmurous haunt' of flies, the poet listening to many 'a mused rhyme', the voice he hears, heard in ancient days too -

> Perhaps the self same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth.

The metaphysics of resonance as life and immortality we encountered in the sonnets is recreated in the *Ode to a Nightingale*.

And as if to prove the point, there is no sound in *Ode to Melancholy* and no sound in *Ode to Indolence* - there is light and dark in both but no sound in these passive inert states of Being. Sound in Keats is the principle of intelligence, of alert life and dynamism, very much the ontological sabda brahman of the Indian thinkers - even thoughts are cognized as sounds:

In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where thoughts, new grown with pleasant
pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind;
.....
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy structure will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain...

(Ode to Psyche)

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KEATS'S VIEWS ON IMAGINATION

John keats did not consciously attempt to evolve a theoretical foundation for his poetry, and such criticism as we find in his letters was primarily meant to explain his attitude to life and poetry to himself and his friends. Commenting upon his critical output, Rene Wellik remarks:

> Keats was hardly a professional critic though he wrote one review, published criticism of two performances by Kean, left some marginalia in copies of Milton, Shakespeare and Burton and pronounced on poetry and poets in his private letters.[1]

Keats's critical output is undoubtedly meagre, and ideas on poetry bob up unexpectedly in the following stream of conversational prose. Found in between pedestrian lines in his letters dealing with mundane matters, his pronouncements on poetry appear at time to be quotable lifted out of context, the meaning of which may be always easy to decipher.

The significance of Keats's letters, however, for a proper understanding of his own poetry and of the influences that shaped his creative genius cannot be over-rated. His letters are important for us for another reason as well: they provide us with an implicit poetics which explains his views on creative imagination and the ways in which it may function. Keats "had no theories", says T.S. Eloit, though he was "occupied only with the highest

use of poetry:.[2] Keats's letters are, however, full of "critical or quasi-critical passages of the highest interest" which to Sainsbury are nothing less than "the very Golden Book of Criticism."[3]

Although Keats's letters have intrigued generations of readers, most twentieth-century criticism has endorsed Eliot's claim that the rich aesthetic speculation in these letters renders them "certainly the most important ever written by any English poet."[4] To Susan Wolfson, Keats's letters are "creative events" which reveal significant aspects of his personality.[5] What is even more important, Keats's letters enable us to have a peep into the "interrogative spirit" by which he ventures crucial ideas in his letters and then qualifies, subvertes or reformulates them wherever he deems it essential. Keats's letters owe their significance to the "doubling" spirit, responsible for engendering so much Romantic poetry, which shaped Keats's mind to undertake artistic enquiry into the nature and role of imagination.

Newall F. Ford has made an elaborate distinction between Keats's "prefigurative" imagination in his poetry and "non-prefigurative" imagination in his letters. In poetry, says Ford, Keats is a native romantic dreamer with his faith in "the prefigurative vivacity of blissful imaginings," while in letters he emerges as a "penetrating thinker, an acute judge of life and art—sane, healthy, sublunar, no victim of romantic illusion".[6] We find in Keats's letters, however, more or less the same ideas as are predominent in his poetry. The letters also highlight certain well-marked stages in his poetic development. W.J. Bate and Stuart Sperry have rightly argued for a complex reciprocity between Keats's letters and his poems.[7] A careful study of his letters would reveal the formulation in them of aesthetic concepts like the ones on imagination, `negative capability', and the `mighty abstract idea of Beauty in all

things',[8] that anticipate and help generate similar constructions in his poetry. Some subtle juxtapositions of letters and poems have been developed by David Luke and Susan Wolfson, both of whom have highlighted related patterns in the two mediums and have stressed a creative process of intellectual discovery in the letters which resulted in the poet's creative breakthroughs.[9]

Like most other Romantics, Keats places a high premium on poetic imagination. His concept of imagination served as the foundation upon which he built his poetic career. Essentially, he conceives of imagination as the faculty that enables a successful poet to do away with his rigid instinctive and egotistical identity, to explore his subject thoroughly and capture its intrinsic charactaristic in poetry. To Keats, imagination is the "Genius of poetry" (*Letters*, 243) which broadens and enriches man's knowledge of the world, and all great poems are aesthetic records of the poet's intimate experiences in the complex world.

Attempts have been made to interpret Keats's views on imagination in terms of Associationistic psychology,[10] Bergsonian intuition,[11] Crocean aesthetic,[12] and Platonic 'ideal'.[13] It would, however, be improper to align Keats to any particular approach. His views on imagination should be evaluated independently - in terms of the *Zietgist* of his Age. Keats's thinking, like that of the other Romantics, was a challenge to the epistemological assumption of neo-classical thinking, the central premise of which is enshrined in Dr. Johnson's definition of poetry. In his *Life of Milton*, for example, Dr. Johnson wrote: "Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with Truth, by calling imaginaiton to the help of reason".[14] Keats, on the contrary, would not approve of this position. In one of his letters he writes : "I do not know how anything can be known for Truth by reasoning" (*Letters* 185). He

reiteratively affirms his faith in the "Truth of Imagintion" (*Letters*, 184). Keats's views on imagination represent a radical re-statement with a distinctive slant of his elder contemporaries' faith in imagination as being the highest human faculty.

In its form, poetic imagination is a power which, in Coleridgean terms, enables the poet to bring "the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity".[15] It is this power that accounts for the poet's mature and realistic apprehension and portrayal of human life. Since all poems in Keats's view are expressions of imagination, they reflect the measure of success which their creators have attained in the process of actualising the poetic potential of their imagination.

Significantly, in one of his letters to Bailey, Keats uses Adam's dream as an analogue of poetic activity : "The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream (*PL* VIII. 470-71); he awoke and found it true" (*Letters*, 73). While all dreams are like poetic activities because they are subjective, to Keats not all dreams are necessarily poetic manifestations of imagination. In "To J.H. Reynolds Esq.", he mentions three kinds of dreams. The first and second kinds, which establish the bright and dark conditions of life respectively as sole realities of life, are unpoetic while the third kind is an aesthetic vision because it presents the dark and bright sides of life in relation to each other. According to Keats, dreams of perpetual brightness, dreams of eternal heavens created by fanatics and dreams of `external fierce destruction', as long as they are presented as the only truths of human existence, make their creators `more dreaming things' (*The Fall of Hyperion* I, 168) and not poets. Only dreams informed by broader perspective of human existence make their creators poets because these dreams evince "a regular

stepping of imagination towards a truth" (*Letters*, 98). Keats would call poetic dream a vision, as it is clear from his preference for making "A Vision" instead of "A Dream", the subtitle of *The Fall of Hyperion*. It may also be remembered that Keats makes a clear distinciton in this poem between the poet and a mere dreamer :

> The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
> Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
> The one pours out a balm upon the world.
> The other vexes it.
> (I,II 199-202)

Poetic imagintion, Keats feels, perceives and depicts the world's harmony in two distinct but related ways - the creation of poetic dreams or what he calls 'empyreal reflections', and the vitalization of the 'spiritual repetitions of human life' (*Letters*, 73). The two worlds of the poet's vision and his vitalized reality are brought into a kind of unity in which the distinctive features of the vitalized, real and dream worlds are intensified by poetic imaginaion, which reveals the place of reality in the larger scheme of things. There is nothing in the Keatsian system that prohibits poetic imaginaion from basing its visions on the seamy or unseamy side of things only. In fact, the ability of poetic imaginaiton to concentrate on a segment of truth and explore it intimately without confusing it with the sole truth or other segments of reality is what Keats calls 'Negative Capability' - capability "of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (*Letters*, 77). In Keats's works, both pleasant and unpleasant visions are placed within broader contexts of human existence, and we have an interpenetration of pain and pleasure in them.

Imagination, to Keats, is a higher type of perception. He graphically illustrates how a poetic vision is generated when he compares the activity of imagination to that of a spider spinning a beautiful web from its inside : "almost any Man like the spider spins from his own inwards his own airy Citadel - the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting" (*Letters*, 111). This statement seems to suggest that the poet creates out of his inner self, apparently oblivious of the external world. A careful examinaiton, however, would show that the poet's works have a relation with the objective world. Just as the existence of the spider's web greatly depends on the twings and leaves, so also does the truth of the poet's vision spring from its relation to the objective reality. Poetic visions are not substitutes but creations that enhance the significance of the veridical world by their relation to it.

For its successful working, imagination depends upon a process of intensificaiton and enriching of experiences, which would make 'all disagreeables evaporate;. Intensificaion would ensure actualization of the aesthetic potential of the poet's imagination. Keats avers : "as my imaginaiton strengthens, I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand different world's (*Letters*, 261). The reward of the capability to live in 'a thousand different worlds is reserved for those who make the proper use of imagination. With the help of his imagination, the poet, says Keats, can also partake of the essence of past traditions and customs by re-creating the past generations.

Keats also discusses the modifying power of aesthetic imagination. After "being Surprised with an Old

Melody", he asks, "do you not remember forming to yourself the singer's face more beautiful than it was possible and yet with the elevation of the Moment you did not think so - even then you were mounted on the Wings of the Imagination so high ?" (*Letters*, 73). Imagination, for Keats, can also modify concrete objects or even create entirely new ones from them. He tells Haydon that he looks upon "the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents as materials to form greater things" (*Letters*, 131). Imagination's power of intensifying the aspect of reality being reproduced has been called by Coleridge the `modifying or coadunating power' while Wordsworth refers to it as the `endowing or modifying power'.[16] For Keats, poetic imagination draws upon objective reality in creating things that are subjective but real. It either highlights aspects of its subjects (as in the case of the recall of the singer's face) or uses objective things as starting points in creativity (as in the spider's web analogue).

That Keats believed in imaginaiton's visionary activities is evident from his classificaion of poetic subjects into three heads - "Things real - things semi-real and nothings. Things real such as existence of the Sun, Moon & Stars and passages of Shakespeare. Things semireal such as love, the clouds &c ... and Nothing" (*Letters*, 120-21). Interesting enough, he regards the sun and the moon, his examples of `real' things, as having the same measure of reality as passages of Shakespeare. Passages of Shakespeare represent all great works of art that eternally reflect some valuable part of man's knowledge of the world. `Things semireal' do not exist independent of human consciousness; they derive their existence from the interaction of man with the world. Things that are `nothings' (like dreams and vision) exist

only in the consciousness of man and are virtually independent of the external world.

Emphasizing the interrelationship of Beauty and Imaginaiton, Keats maintains : "What the imagination siezes as Beauty must be truth whether it existed before or not ... for all our passions as of love ... are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty" (*Letters*, 72-73). Essential Beauty is the ultimate aesthetic ideal for Keats, and a state of excitement the only state for the best of poetry. (*Letters*, 407). The truth of an aesthetic vision depends on the effective reflection of the reality of human existence in this world. Keats offers the intensity of sensations to complement the effective reflection of reality. He thinks that "probably every pursuit takes its reality from the ardour of the pursuer ... Ethereal things may at least thus be real". All aesthetic creations, he further says, be they visions or intensified actualities, "require a greeting of the spirit to make them wholly exist" (*Letters*, 120-21).

All great poets, in Keats's view, are "simple imaginative minds" whose lives are based on "sensations rather than thoughts" (*Letters*, 73). This kind of mind is different from what Keats calls "the complex mind - one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits, to whom .. years should bring the philosophic mind" (*Letters*, 74-75). To Keats, a life of sensation subsumes philosophical understanding and makes poetry the "true voice of feeling" (*Letters*, 154, 419). As Trilling points out, for Keats, "sensations generate ideas and remain continuous with them".[17] Although Keats maintains that poetic flights should be propelled by passions, he also insists upon the necessity of knowledge "a gradual ripering of intellectual powers". Only an idea that has been tested on the pulses constitutes knowledge in the Keatsian sense. An extensive knowledge, he says, "takes

away the heat and the fever; and helps by widening speculation to ease the Burden of Mystery" (*Letters*, 407). He conceives of great poetry as being vitally dramatic containing within itself "the knowledge of contrast, feeling of light and shade" (*Letters*, 360).

An imaginative flight unregulated by knowldege is what Keats sometimes calls 'fancy'. In writing *Endymion*, "Fancy is the Sails and Imaginaton is the Rudder" (*Letters*, 55). Fancy, to Keats, is the upoetic manifestation of human imagination. Keats's concept of fancy is quite close to that of Wordsworth and somewhat different from that of Coleridge. Keats implicity endorses the view that imagination is not only a shaping and modifying power but also an associative power.[18] But he disagrees with the belief that fancy operates on "fixities and definites: whereas imagination operates on "the plastic, the pliant and the indefinite".[19] Keats believes that poetic imagination is capable of converting 'fixities and definites' into 'plastic, pliant and idefinite' materials.

Notwithstanding his belief in a fairly systematic pattern of the operations of poetic imagination, Keats recognizes an involuntary or unconscious element involved in poetic creativity. He writes to Haydon : "The innumerable compositions and decompositions which take place between the intellect and its thousand materials before it arrive at that trembling, delicated and shail-horn perception of beauty" (*Letters*, 139). Keats is all for spontaneity in poetic inspiration and expression :

> Poetry should surprise us by a fine excess and not by singularity ... the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural...if Poetry comes not as naturally as the

leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all (*Letters*, 69-70).

The Keatsian view of inspiration may be regarded as a variation of the Platonic theory of inspiration. Keats believes that strong pressures from distinctly defined stimuli can exert inescapable influence on the poet's imagination and lead to some kind of involuntary imaginative activity. It is not for nothing that Keats choses Shakespeare as his 'Presider'— "a good genius presiding over" him whom he calls "the mighty and miserable poet of the human hearts" (*Letters*, 30, 115).

Keats thus has a distinctive concept of poetic imagination, which has been developing in his mind right from the beginning of his poetic career. Endymion's pursuit of Cynthia, to cite an example, can be viewed as symbolic of the nascent poet's quest for the poetic capabilty of human imaginaiton, the poet being, finally, able to partake intimately of the aesthetic ideal which manifests itself in the interrelation of dreams and reality, of the vitalized actuality, the ideal and the actual. For Keats, imagination is the core of experience and a means of incorporating Beauty with Truth in a more inclusive reality. Unlike consecutive reasoning, imagination achieves a fusion of object with mind in such a way that the irrelevant and discordant evaporate : they pave the way for intensity and disinterestedness which would combine the splendour of art and the significance of life. Imagination plays a significant role in Keats's scheme for the education of poets, as is clear from his conception on 'the Chambers of human mind' (*Letters*, 362-65, 155-58). He also refers to "a gradual stepping of the Imagination towards the Truth" (218). In fact, his philosophy of life is not separate from his philosophy of

poetry, and his principle of 'disinterestedness' in life is echoed by the ideal of "negative capabilty' in literature and the principle of Beauty in all things'. A basic question in Keats criticism that deserves to be answered carefully, pertains to the precise nature and quality of his principle of Beauty.[20] When he writes to Bailey that "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination" (*Letters*, 184) he is professing strong faith in what can be regarded as the two basic tenets in his religion of Beauty.

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14. *Lives of English Poets*, ed. George Birbeck Hill, Oxford, 1905, I, p. 170.
15. *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross, Oxford, 1906, II. p. 12.
16. See Shawcross (ed.), op. cit., II,p. 56; T. Hutchinson (ed.),*Wordsworth : Poetical Works*, London, 1971.
17. Lionel Trilling (ed.), *The Selected Letters of John Keats*, New York, 1951, p. 12.
18. In Ch. XIII of his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge calls Imagination that "synthetic and magical power" which "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities" and which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate". Fancy on the contrary, he adds, plays with "fixities and definities" and "must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.
19. According to Wordsworth, Imagination and Fancy are two quite different principles giving rise to two different kinds of poetry. Imagination "recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite. ... Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal". 'Preface to the Edition of 1815', *The Poetical Works*, ed. E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1944, pp. 441-42.
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J.N. Sharma

JOHN KEATS: BEAUTY AND TRUTH

"The excuse for writing at the present day on Keats must lie not in any thing new to be said about him, but in a certain timely obviousness." F.R. Leavis (*Keats*, 1936).

When Walter Jackson Bate called in 1957,"the great odes "the apex of Keats's poetic art" (420), he was simply restating what critical opinion had held for all of the present century until then, and still does. Between 1816, when his first poem, "To Solitude," was published in the *Examiner* and the writing of the great-odes during April-May 1819, Keats had produced a sizeable body of Lyrics, sonnets and the longer poems: "Sleep and Poetry, " "The Eve of St. Agnes" and "Hyperion." Almost all of these poems are best remembered as the poetry of sensuousness, the poetry of vivid, opulent images of loveliness quintessentially romantic. Keats was obsessed with emotional intensities and had an unmistakable predilection for the exotic, for the Middle Ages and with a luxuriance of phrasing. The longer narrative poems, `St Agnes' and "Hyperion" are notable, as well, for demonstrating Keats's talent for creating drama in poetry. There is some good, some really impressive poetry in these long poems, and they are by no means devoid of thought, of a concern with man's or the gods' predicament in this world. But still they are characterised mainly by Keats's preoccupation with the passion of love and with the mythological past.

Then, suddenly, come the odes. Perhaps not so suddenly. As Keats's own production demonstrates Keats,

was always experimenting with diverse verse forms; under the influence of Milton, he out-grew the use of "Weak and fitful devices" (Bateson 417) and acquired a `mastery of idiom and versification' (Bateson 417). so the poet had been diligently acquiring a greater control over the craft, infirmity in which was first driven home to him by the savage reviews of his earlier published verse in *Blackwoods* and *The Quarterly Review.*

If intelligent industry aided by native poetic gift helped him become the masterly craftman the odes reveal, reading in history, philosophy and the great English poets of the past, and personal tragedy spurred his strong self-motivation and a serious turn of mind to reflect steadily and deeply over the complexity,the mystery of life. One of the results of this reading, experience and reflection was his theory of "soul-making, which he set forth in a journal- letter to his brother, George and his wife Georgiana in Febuary-May,1819:

The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is "a vale of tears", from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven. What a little circumscribed straitened notion: Call the world if you please `The vale of Soul-Making. I say `Soul-making'-Soul as distinguihed from an Intelligence. There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in million, but they are not souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. Intelligences are atoms of perception they know and they see and they are pure; in short they are God. How then are souls to be made? How but by the medium of a world like this? This is effected by three grand materials acting one upon the other for a series of years. These three materials are the Intelligence, the human heart (as

distinguished from intelligence or mind), and the World or elemental space suited for the proper action of Mind and Heart on each other for the purpose of forming the Soul or Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity. I will call the *world a* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read. I will call the *human heart* the horn-book read in that School. And I will call the child able to read, the Soul made from that School and its horn-book. Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school and Intelligence and make it a Soul? (Forman 335-336).

As this extract shows, the mature Keats did not view this world as a "vale of tears", from which the favoured ones might be redeemed through divine intervention. He now believed the world. especially its trials, to be a soul-making school, a place where man learnt to comprehend the inevitability of suffering and learnt, as well, to realise the need for his heart to "feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways" to attain an individual identity and dignity. In essence the theory is, after all, distilled from human experience and has wisdom. It is this wisdom that informs the two odes I am going to consider:"Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn".

In the "Ode to a Nightingale," the poet begins, in the first stanza, by acknowledging the blissful life of the nightingale in a world of unvaried happiness. In the second stanza, he yearns for the pleasures of "Flora and the country green/Dance, and provencal song, and sunburnt mirth" and the ecstasy induced by the "blushful hippocrene." Finally , he longs to be in the same state as the nightingale; in other words, he longs to become oblivious, like the bird, of the sorrowful world he inhabits. In the third stanza, the poet catalogues the diverse

heartbreaks that make life impossible to bear. But in the fourth stanza he rejects intoxication as a means of escape from the painful reality and choose, instead, poetry or escape from his own world. The last six lines of this stanza present the world of soothing and pleasurble beauty (that his imagination creates), substituting it for the actual world of pain and frustration. In the sixth stanza he is back in despondency and recalls how often he has been "half in love with easeful death." And that is indeed an improvement in his psychological and emotional state, indeed in his attitude to the actual world. But being at least half in love with easeful death, he is tempted to time his death so that he can die listening to the enchanting song of the bird; die "while thou art pouring forth thy soul a broad. In such ecstasy." As the poet meditates further on the relative situation of himself and the bird, he continues to lament the drawbacks of mortal human life and to envy the immortality of the bird's song.

And yet, in the final stanza, even Fancy is rejected as a means of comfort because even Fancy only deludes— "deceiving elf" and offers no real, permanent comfort. Having meditated enough on the question of happiness and sorrow, on reality and illusion, on escape and acceptance, the poet finally rejects all soft, illusory options and chooses, instead, to return to his "sole self." The phrase "sole self" is, I think, loaded with a double significance. The significance is in the context of Keats's soul-making theory that I referred to earlier. In this theory each human being attains individuality, selfhood, only after his schooling in the world of hardships. The poet at the end of his meditation, after having considered the two modes of existence, his own and the bird's therefore decides to continue with his own mode, with his "sole" (in the sense of "only") identity. I suspect that there is a pun

on the word "sole". "Sole" may also be intended to mean,"soul" which then makes the whole phrase read as *soul self* or the self that has a soul or has to have it through acceptance of trial and suffering in the world. The ode is a meditation on life, on its happiness and its sorrow. The meditation convinces the poet that there is joy and loveliness in the nightingale's song and in the state of the nightingale. the meditation also reminds the poet of what he had always known— that sorrow and suffering are an essential part of the human condition.

The meditation, then enables the poet to measure the wisdom of casting his lot with the bird against opting to belong to a non-human world. As the meditation progresses, the two alternatives attract the poet. But the poet, finally chooses reality, in choosing Beauty over loveliness because Beauty is all-inclusive.

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" begins by acknowledging, again, as did "Nightingale" the superiority of Art or an imaginatively constructed artifact over life: the urn can "express a flowery-tale more sweetly than our rhyme." The second stanza contiues on the same note. The imagined world is superior to the actual one: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." The world of Art speaks to the spirit, not to the physical senses. Imagined life may not find fulfilment- "Bold Lover, never never canst thou Kiss...." But it has eternal hope: "Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair." The third stanza is on the same note. All positives of human life — music, love, Youth — are eternal in the imagined world, in the work of art, in an imagined existence. They are "All breath in human passion far above..." whereas "breathing human passion" only leaves "a heart high -sorrowful and cloyed, / A burning forehead, and a parching tongue." In stanza four

there is *neutral* observing of a segment of the scene on the urn. The scene represents neither joy nor sorrow although at the end there is a note of sadness in the sight of the deserted town: "And what little town by river or sea shore,/ or mountain -built with peaceful citadel, /Is emptied, 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." The concluding stanza strikes me, at first, as a curious mix. In the first five lines, "Fair attiitude" is the only positive thing said about the urn. Everything else in these lines is neutrally descriptive. And we must note that there is even a negative point made subtly in the words, "...with brede/ of marble men and maidens overwrought..." The figures are made of marble, which is an exquisite, opulent material used in the arts of sculpture and architecture. But marble men and maidens are , after all, poor things—lifeless and cold. The impression is reinforced two lines later when the urn, celebrated in the first staza as the "unravished bride of quietness," more expressive of a "flowery-tale" than human language, becomes "cold pastoral." Pastoral, with the simplicity and loveliness of pastoral settings and life but a lifeless pastoral, at best.

Yet, the urn has its uses. It will, generation after generation, remain "a friend of man" by instructing him that "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty," which is to say that the urn in this stazna is a worthy work of art or imagination because of its *message* to man not because of itself for its own sake, the urn is no more than lovely. The distinction, in Keats, between loveliness and beauty, is vital. If the urn is merely lovely until we come to this message, it is a thing of beauty when it silently communicates its message: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." That which is beautiful must also be the truth something

which is real, which has an eternal validity. This real, the ultimately real, is both the pleasant and the harsh, happiness and anguish. Truth for the mature Keats came to mean the real, the actual, the exprience of eveyday life, inclusive of both the pretty and the ugly. But let us take a second look at the urn's instruction: Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Not "Truth is beauty, beauty is truth." Keats might well have written the latter. But the Keats of the "Ode on a Gercian Urn" was too mature in thought and experience to put it that way. Beauty for him was beauty only if it reflected the whole of reality.

"Truth is beauty" as a beginning for that poetic utterance would water down the force of what Keats wanted to say. The poet's unstated conclusion, then is: Accept reality as beautiful, no matter how painful, how harsh it is. The latter half of the utterance "truth is beauty" reinforces the meaning of the first half and makes the identification more emphatic. The poet's meditation in both these odes begins with joy and admiration in the presence of an art object or its equivalent in nature, which is exquisite and immortal. And then the poet compares it with human life-apparently, at first, to the severe disadvantage of life. Then follows a gradual realization by the poet that the work of art is not as perfect as it had first appeared, and attainment of its state through self-deception of any kind through vintage or through Fancy—is not such a good idea. This signifies the poet's realization, alongside, that life has its advantages over art; the real has its pluses as does the world of art, and imagined life has its minuses. Finally, both art and life being found flawed, all of life is accepted for what it is. Art does remain valuable, for it creates loveliness and can create even beauty. The scales, finally, are tilted in favour of Beauty.

The Keats of these odes had acquired what, in a letter to Benjamin Bailey in November 1817, he called "a complex mind," "one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits" - a mind that could exist "partly on sensation partly on thought — to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind ..." (Forman 68). The procedure in both these odes is the procedure adopted by an open mind - the procedure of quest, of consideration, of meditation. Keats had a dread of making up his mind about things in a hurry. Of his friend, Dilke, he writes: "Dilke is a man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his mind about everything.... The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts, not a select party" (Bradley 220). Even in the earlier poem, "Sleep and poetry"; Keats had questioned himself: "And can I ever bid joys farewell?" and responded: "Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life, /Where I may find the agonies, the strife/ Of human hearts..." (ll.122-125).

In comparing Shelley's and Keats's view of poetry, A.C. Bradley observed, some ninety years ago, that "Keats lays far heavier stress on the idea that beauty is manifested in suffering and conflict" (231). In a letter, written just about a year before he composed the great odes, Keats wrote: "I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious and love for Philosophy where I calculated for the former I should be glad-but as I am not I shall turn all my soul to the latter" (Forman 135).

"Do not all charms fly at the mere touch of cold philosophy?" he had asked in *Lamia*. Drawing upon Keats's remarks on the relation between Beauty, Truth

and the Imagination, Sir Maurice Bowra persuasively constructs Keats's theory obout their relation. Bowra then goes on to conclude that the "theory which Keats put forward piecemeal in his letters receives its final form in the last lines of the "Odes on a Grecian Urn" (148)", but finds in Keats's theory not a complete philosophy of life "but a "theory of art, a doctrine intended to explain his own creative experience" ..."The Ode on a Grecean Urn" tells what geat art means to those who create it, *While* they create it, and, so long as this doctrine *is not applied beyond its proper confines, it is not only clear but true*" (all emphasis mine) (148). Bowra believes, then, that the identification of Beauty with Truth in the ode is valid only within this ode or in poetry in general; that Keats did not mean it to apply, outside poetry, to life. Strangely, then, the corollary, would be that a beautiful object is real, is true only within a work of art, not in the life outside it.

In another important reading of these two odes F.R. Leavis thinks that the urn (and by implication and extension) or any beautiful work of art is "the incitement and support to a day-dream" (321). And so, for Leavis, is the nightingale's song for Keats. Leavis discerns an inclination in Keats to exclude the "disagreebless." For Leavis there is also, in Keats, the contradiction that a poet of richness and vitality and one with "so strong a grasping at fulness of life implies a constitution, a being that could not permanently refuse completeness of living" (324).

In his masterful formulation that Keats had too strong a grasping at "fulness of life" to evade "completeness of living," Leavis provides a clue to the direction which his reading of the two odes takes. Keats was moving towards a ripeness in his view of life which, influenced by his readings in diverse religions and philosophies and personal

and pondered experience, was far more inclusive than either Bowra or Leavis himself thinks. At least, in these two odes Keats, with a philosophical profundity evidenced in his letters and his best poetry, totally identified beauty with reality. The urn and the nightingale's song are more than mere incitement and support to day-dreaming, for, in totality, Leavis does not seem to have read the odes as Keats's suggestion that Beauty is simply a means of escape, either short-term or permanent. There is enough in the two odes to suggest that Keats has attained a vision of life that could accommodate all reality as Beauty.

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MONETA'S MOURN: MEANING OF SUFFERING IN KEATS'S POETRY

John Keats is commonly known as a dreamer, a poet of the senses and what emerges most prominently in his poems is the incompatibility of fact and fancy, reality and dream, reason and imagination. Much pain was experienced by Keats owing to the intrusion of reality into dream -"Lamia", "Ode to Nightingale", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", etc. The pursuit of truth of imagination contains a tragic note--failure, failure to achieve the object desired, pleasure, immortality. The suffering inherent in this quest underlines Keats's poetic world and his quest.

What seems to be the strongest note in Keats's poetry thus is the note of suffering, frustration and misery. But he transmuted this suffering into a working philosophy. Keats believed that suffering and misery are necessary ingredients for the making of the soul, particularly the poetic soul. The pleasure-pain dichotomy in Keats serves as a rich ground for the making of the soul or as an imperative source of the mind's turning towards 'a nobler life' through misery. This explains his view expressed as early in his life as in "Sleep and Poetry" where he turns from sleep and joy to a nobler life in order to find the "agonies, the strife of human hearts" to get a vision "into the heart and nature of Man". The lines that follow easily dispose of the oft repeated criticism that Keats was only interested in pure beauty, in sensuous satisfaction and had no message for mankind of a higher nature. He had lofty aspiration as to his mission, but did not see the way at this early stage he was to travel. In the same poem, he

underlines that the great end of poetry should be to soothe the cares of man and elevate his thoughts.

Quite frequently Keats suggests the idea of moulding of soul through suffering :

> Even bees, the little alms men of
> spring-bowers
> Know there is richest juice in
> poison-flower
> (`Isabella')

Man in search of the rich essence of life must drink the poison of suffering. Suffering for Keats has resplendent glow and hence he calls it pleasing woe in "Sonnet to Byron":

> Overshadowing sorrow do not make the less
> Delightful: thou they grief does dress
> With a bright halo shining beamily,
> As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,
> Its side are hing'd with a resplendent glow,
> Through the dark role of amber rays prevail,
> And like fair veins in sable marble flow;
> Still wrable, dying swan! still tell the tale
> The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe.

Keats's aim was to find "the sweetness of my pain"as in Lines on seeing a lock of Milton hair":

> Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
> with old Philosophy.
> And made with glimpses of futurity!

Suffering creates a special state of mind which Keats calls "The wakeful anguish of the soul" `Ode to Phyche'. Until the soul is awake, the poet will not be able

to see the way a god sees `Hyperion'. Hence Keats's most enduring portraits are those of suffering and agonized souls - the Knight, Isabella, Ruth, Apollo, Saturn and finally the poet. Keats's ambition was to be "the miserable and mighty poet of the human heart"[1]

From the experiences of his own sickness and that of his brother Tom, Keats learned that "knowledge is sorrow" and he said "And I go to say that sorrow is wisdom"[2]. This is the mood which pervades "Hyperion," which is a kind of poetry of which Moneta speaks in "Hyperion: A Vision.

> None can usurp this height, returned that shade
> But those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.

After his Scottish tour when he returned to London he was preoccupied, as he watched Tom's suffering, with meditating a poetry which should discover in itself some philosophy of suffering. These circumstance were preparatory to the writing of "Hyperion-A Vision" (1818).

Keats compared life to a large Mansion of many apartments[3] of which two are distinct : 1.The Thoughtless Chamber, which is the life of mere sensations; 2.The Chamber of Maiden Thought, entering which sharpens one's vision into the heart and nature of Man - of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression. From this chamber there opens many doors "but all dark, all leading to dark passages. The greatness of Wordsworth lies, Keats said in the same letter in the manner in which his genius is `explorative of these dark passages' and hence `Wordsworth is deeper than Milton'. Milton did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done.

The word 'feel' is central to Keats's poetics. It is

directly linked with the feeling heart of the poet, the heart that deeply feels for the misery and suffering of humanity and in the process the poet's soul is born. In his letters to Benjamin Railey, he wrote, 'I am convinced more and more every day that (excepting the human friend Philosopher) a fine writer is the most genuine Being in the World'[4] The poet is a philosopher in his own right but a philosopher of the human heart. The process is explained in 'Vale of Soul Making', the finest thing he wrote outside his poetry. Instead of regarding the world a as Vale of Tears, Keats preferred to see it as 'The Vale of Soul-Making'. The world is the medium and, therefore, it can not be neglected. True salvation lies not in God or Christian religion but in a grander system which Keats calls 'Spirit creation.' The world is a school, and men are the souls made from that school. The central argument is:

> Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A place where the heart must suffer in a thousand diverse ways! Not merely is the heart a born book, it is the mind's bible, it is the minds experience, it is the teat from which the mind or Intelligence sucks its identity..... This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity. Seriously I think it probable that this system of soul-making may have been Parent of all the palpable and personal scheme of Redemption, among the Zoroastrians, the Christians and the Hindoos. For as one part of the human species must have their carved Jupiter; so another part must have the palpable and named mediator and saviour, their Christ, their Oromanes and their Vishnu.[5]

Keats did not believe in Christian religion, but he believed in the greatness of Christ.[6] Obviously, Christ's greatness was for Keats, 'suffering greatness' who felt in

his heart the miseries of mankind. The poet's identity is to be made through the medium of the Heart and the Heart is to be shaped by suffering in a world of circumstances.

This abstract ambitious scheme is directly relevant to *Hyperion*. The vale of soul-making marks a shift away from pleasure and towards pain, and Hyperion is pain embodied. The two sections of the poem underline two stages in the Keatsian system of salvation. In *Hyperion: A Vision* Keats is himself at the centre. In 'Hyperion' directly Keats draws our attention to the weeping Apollo, the victorius God who has dethroned Hyperion because of his greater beauty. Book Three is about Apollo. It describes his meeting with the 'awful goddess'. The time is early morning, and Apollo enters listening to the first thrush and the sound of the sea :

> He listened and he wept, and his bright tears
> Went trickling down the golden bow he held.

D.G. James observes: 'We can hardly read the lines which portray the countenance of Mnemosyne without seeing the face of the agonised Christ.[7] He looks at the goddess perplexed. The Goddess is Mnemosyne who is also called Moneta in *The Fall*. She imposes on him the task of painful feeling. Standing beside that altar, he watches the langorous flame of sacrificial fire. With her sacred hands, the goddess parted the veils:

> Then saw I a wan face,
> Not pin'd by human sorrows, but bright-blanch'd
> By an immortal sickness which kills not;
>
> I ask'd to see what things the hollow brain
> Behind entombed; what high tragedy
> In the dark secret chambers of her skull

Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
Her planetany eyes; and touch her voice
with such is a sorrow....
(The Fall of Hyperion)

Both the poet and Apollo feel the 'world's giant agony' on their pulses. This leads to the recognition of tragic beauty. To Apollo the tragic face of the goddess spells out a 'wondrous lesson and discloses 'knowledge enormous'. The poet's essential quality is the power of sympathetic involvement in fact and event, the faculty of compassion and suffering. With this faculty only the poet can earn the title 'miserable and mighty poet of the human heart.' The poet has to move up suffering steps towards the temple of pain and only then the splendour of suffering, the tragic beauty is revealed to him.

This is the essence of Keats's religion which is the 'fellowship divine'. The realisation of the giant agony of the world would infuse holy power in the poet helping him to reach the last step of the temple and to have a vision of the temple. The high priestess, the shade speaks:

None can usurp this height returned the shade
But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.
(*Hyperion*)

The poet asks :

Are there not thousands in the world
Who love their fellows even to the death
Who feel the giant agony of the world
And more, live slaves to poor humanity
Labour for mortal good?
(*Hyperion*. 154-59)

This leads to this distinction between the dreamer and the poet, the former vexing the world, the latter bringing comfort to it. Keats, however, does not provide the necessary elaboration of this contrast and hence there remains something vague about it.

The question now is how the poet can bring comfort to the world. This question preoccupied Keats throughout his life. Is it achieved through the celebration of beauty, or through the satiation of the senses?

Before the poet can bring comfort to the world, he must have spiritual preparation. The first step in this direction is the recognition of the giant agony of the world , which is the sorrowful knowledge. When the poet takes upon himself the sorrows of mankind, and becomes capable of disinterested suffering, then sorrow can be creative. This is the basis of deification of Apollo, a symbolic presentation of the dreamer becoming a great poet. But as Keats said, 'Sorrow is wisdom'. The kind of wisdom and suffering as its medium, of which Keats speaks, is almost Buddhistic in its suggestions.[8] It implies as the first step towards the awareness of the irrevocable law of Nature which is enshrined in the first book of Hyperion. Here is Oceanus `reading of Nature's law which replaced Hyperion by Apollo, the triumph of beauty.

The eternal law a is that "first in beauty should be first in might". In his letter to George too he refers to this nature's law, 'For in wild nature the Hawk would lose his Breakfast of Robins and the Robin of his Worms.[9] This is the knowledge which informs the Odes, the incompetence of fancy to replace reality, art of seiuzing life's tragic beauty and freezing it into moment of eternity, the ever repetitive seasonal cycles, `Thou last thy music too.' This wisdom is gained through sense of loss and experience of suffering following it. Man suffers because of his illusion-based and ego-centered view of the world.

Everything in this world is subject to change and suffering. Inability to recognise this is at the root of suffering (dukhha). In daily life Keats saw that suffering is all around us. On the physical plane, it appears as illness and injury of body - Tom's suffering or the question 'Why should women have cancer?.' It appears as fear and hate and desire. It also appears as ignorance and narrowness of view-point. According to Bhuddhism, 'There should be a genuine acceptance of suffering as a fact inseparable from life!'[10] Humphreys elaborates, 'Our pain we just suffer, learning to remove the constant cause of it.... But other's suffering is more and more our personal concern and it is a fact to be faced that as we climb the ladder of self-expansion and self-elimination, we suffer not less but more'.[11] The poet of *The Fall* and Apollo is seen engaged in this kind of self-expansion. It is through self-expansion that the poet can feel one with the sparrow on the sill of his window or Ruth or the figures on the urn. Compassion generates 'fellowship divine' and thereby a sense of identity with the sufferer. The other aspect is the understanding of the eternal through the creative apprehension of the temporal. According to D.G.Jones, Keats, like Shakespeare in *King Lear*, wished to do this.[12] James observes that it is in *Hyperion* which is a baffling poem though, Keats tried to convey this idea. He further remarks, "Keats desired to show what he believed was the tragic beauty of the world and to reconcile the imagination to the suffering of the world. This suffering, he seems to have believed, when seen under the aspect of eternity, to be evaporated in a universal harmony.[13] To find relief from the fret and fever and groan of pain, from the mad pursuit, from the awareness of the inevitability of death, one has to see life under the aspect of eternity. The evaporation of the self is imperative to move upto this level. Keats believed that the true poet has no self,

no identity.

A poet is the most unpolitical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity - he is continually in for - and filling some other Body..."[14] This is how a poet can reach godhead., This forms the kernel of Keats's idea of 'Negative Capability', a quality which went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature. This is also 'dying i life' like Christ or Apollo to be reborn. In Hyperion, the old gods men of power possessing strong identity. But Apollo, the are new god has no identity, he possesses the quality of negative capability. Apollo is not only superior in beauty but also in wisdom for he has transformed sorrow into wisdom by disinterested suffering. Here sorrow is more beautiful than Beauty's self, the expression used for These Faces, This beauty is severe, a beauty like that of Cordelia.

> Sorrow would be a rarity most belov'd
> If all could so become it
>
> (*King Lear*)

The tragic beauty of Mnemosyne stands for what Keats hoped the human soul might come to through acceptance of a tragic lot and the achievement of serenity in it, through which what is tragic is also seen as beautiful. Kenneth Miur rightly puts that "Beauty, wisdom and sorrow he (Keats) had accepted as correlatives."[15]

In Keats's scheme of salvation, thus, suffering is a creative medium and sorrow generates a resplendent self, causing a new birth through dying into life. The poet has to take on himself the sorrow of mankind, liberate himself from the ego of personality, be one with the other, understand and explain the illusions of life and attain a clam serenity, a poetic nirvana and remain unswayed amidst the facts and uncertainties of life. He has to

develop a bi-polar vision the two extremes of which are transience and eternity. But what is most important is that to achieve negative capability he has to understand the nature and cause of suffering and view life 'under the aspect of eternity'. The following Bhuddhistic poem would help us to sum up Keats's view of the meaning and creative aspect of suffering :

To suffer is to suffer well, to accept
The untoward circumstance, to bear with skill
The weighted balance which the fool, inept
In equilibrium, would strive to kill

With flight or malediction, would he thrust
With hand on will the pendulum of rule
From powered harmony, the law is just
And swings upon the wise man as the fool.
To receive to suffer wholly to digest
The living deeds, implicit consequence,
Here's errors absolution; full confused
The deed dies in the arms of innocence
To suffer is to grow, to understand
The void of darkness holds a preferred hand.
(Christmas Humphreys: The
Bhuddhist Way of Life, p.55)

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BEAUTY, TRUTH AND IMAGINATION IN THE POETRY OF JOHN KEATS

Most of the lines in Keats's poetry that have been subjected to various interpretations and critical judgments are concerned with beauty, truth and imagination--their ontological and epistemological status and their interrelationship. We shall begin our discussion of this topic with the controversial last two lines of 'Ode on a Greceian Urn' :

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty"-that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

In Keats's autograph and transcripts made by his friends, the inverted commas were not used. Garrod, in his Oxford edition, prints these lines without inverted commas. Douglas Bush uses single inverted commas to enclose both the lines. However, in the volume published by Keats in 1820, the poet added inverted commas as shown in the quotation above. If we accept this printing, it would appear that Urn's message is an absolute statement--Beauty is truth, truth beauty--and the remaining portion is an emphatic confirmation emanating from the poet himself. Otherwise, the final two lines of the Ode taken as a whole, would form the message of the Urn. But irrespective of the particular version we may be inclined to accept, the passage will remain ambiguous and it will continue to bristle with serious problems of interpretation.

But for our purpose the important question is whether this dictum is valid only in the aesthetic world or

it has a wider philosophical implication. The issue has been considered in the context of Keats's life and work without reaching any consensus. As a matter of fact the critics find themselves divided into several shades of opinion on this point. At one extreme we have H.W. Garrod, who denies Keats any philosophical preoccupation except his commitment to sensuous beauty: "I still think him the great poet he is only when the senses capture him, when he finds truth in beauty, that is to say when he does not trouble to find truth at all."[1] Arthur Lynch, on the other hand, is of the view that "Keats was a philosopher first, a poet afterwards"[2] Clarence D.Thorpe has devoted a whole book on the study of Keats as a thinker.[3]

There is also a third course open to a Keats scholar: without adhering to either extreme one can look afresh on Keats's poetry and letters with the focus falling on certain motifs repeated and progressively pursued by the poet - to examine the recurring patterns of thought and feeling with an unpredisposed eye. But before that is done, certain preliminaries ought to be mentioned. First, when we take a bird's eye-view of Keats's oeuvre, we cannot avoid the impression that he did cast an enquiring glance at nature and life and was filled with curiosity as to the deeper reality, or truth and the means to grasp it. Throughout his poetry he keeps asking questions which are seldom completely answered and the tone of his writing suggests a tendency towards a search for philosophical grounds. But like Shakespeare, he knew that the ultimate reality of life and art is surrounded by a mystery:

> This much I know that, a poor witless elf,
> I tread on them,- that all my eye doth meet
> Is mist and crag, not only on this height,

But in the world of thought and mental might!

(Sonnet Written upon the top of Ben Nevis)

Secondly, we cannot expect a definite answer from Keats regarding Truth and Beauty. On seeing the Elgin Marbles, Keats was "numbed, awed, and overpowered by the mighty vision of life and truth revealed to him". He wrote in a sonnet :

Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak
Definitely of these mighty things.

The ultimate reality of nature, man, and art is beyond a purely rational explanation and all great artists have pointed to the ambivalence that sits at the heart of things. And there is no philosophical system from Plato to the modern age that is entirely free of elements of self-contradiction and inconsistency. There cannot be; unless it accepts the coexistence of contrary factors in nature and in man and presents an unbiased account of them, as Shakespeare does of man in *Hamlet*. Keats is not an exception as a thinker. For example, sometimes he conceives this world as a place of sorrow, pain, and death, and sometimes he feels that pain is only a means to "Soul-making". Sometimes physical pleasure is the summum bonum and sometimes the poet exults in the disembodied eternal beauty.

In view of the above-mentioned home-truths, which most critics presumptuously brush aside as irrelevant, we shall not seek to assign any internally consistent philosophy of life and art to Keats; instead of that our endeavour shall be to see what kind of ideas emerge from what we actually find in Keats's poetry and letters, on the basis of recurrent or fore-grounded patterns of thought and feeling alone.

It is undeniably true that Keats is naturally inclined to the sensuous enjoyment of beauty; there is an aesthetic strain in his personality. When he contemplates earthly pleasures, he cannot help being totally absorbed by them:

> First the realm I'll pass
> Of Flora and old Pan: Sleep in the grass,
> Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,
> And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees;
> Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
> To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,
> Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white
> Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
> As hard as lips can make it
> ("Sleep And Poetry")

And here's a gluttion's paradise:

> a heap
> Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
> And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
> Manna and dates, in argosy transferre'd
> From fez;
>
> ("The Eve of St. Agnes")

For Keats, "The poetry of earth is never dead"; each season has its music and store of riches. Even

> On a lone winter evening, when the frost
> Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
> The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
> And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
> The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.
> ("On the Grasshopper and Cricket")

The poet's ardent wish is to enjoy his sweetheart's company without end, or to die:

Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever-or else swoon to death

At the same time, right from the beginning, Keats has an awareness of another world, guessed, seen in a dream or revealed in a vision. He frequently suggests the existence of another world and uses terrestrial imagery for the purpose:

Ah! surely he had burst our mortal bars;
Into some wond'rous region he had gone,
To search for thee, divine Endymion !
("I Stood Tip-Toe Upon A little Hill")

According to Thorpe, "a study of Keats's aesthetic leads us directly to a consideration of these antithetical elements in his nature, and to his progress towards their reconciliation:.[4] The antithetical elements meant here are the dream world and the actual. But this appears to be an oversimplification because, in the first place, the dream world is more than a pure illusion; it is, often, a vision of a deeper reality, or so the poet guesses; and secondly there is no clear gulf between the physical and the spiritual worlds because the essence of the former passes into the latter:

What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould,
Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
With after times.
("Epistle to George Keats")

The visions are all fled - the car is fled
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead

A sense of real things comes doubly strong
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness:But I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep strive
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
Journey it went.

("Sleep and Poetry")

In the ode beginning with the "Bards of passion and of Mirth" Keats recognizes three modes of being for the poets: The physical, the spirit which continues to live in this world, and the heavenly or the ideal self. Even flowers and birds have their immortal being in heaven:

Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth.

Keats appears to have developed an intuitive awareness of the world of ideal forms for every thing. It is in this mode of being that "a thing of beauty" is everlasting and "will never pass into nothingness". In the ideal form the nightingale is an immortal bird, "not born for death",

No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown.

("Ode to a Nightingale")

In a letter to J.A. Hessey (Oct. 8, 1818) Keats declared himself to be a lover of "beauty in the abstract" and in another letter he said that he perceived the principale of beauty inhering throughout the universe:

> The mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness[5]

This quest for the ideal form pints in the direction of Plato and the statement quoted above has important implications as regards the relation between beauty and truth. As this declaration reveals, Keats finds the mighty abstract Idea of Beauty in all things, which means that the ideal form of every object is beautiful and by implication, since the ideal form is the truth of the thing, on the ontological plane, beauty and truth are identical.

A Platonist, however, has to face and answer two important questions: How do we gain the knowledge and experience of the ideal world and what is the ontological status of the phenomena of this world? In the context of Keats, these issues are partly explained by Lionel Trilling, and his remarks deserve to be quoted at length:

> More than any other poet-more really than Shelley-Keats is Platonic, but his Platonism is not doctrinal or systematic: it was by natural impulse of his temperament that his mind moved up the ladder of love which Plato expounds in *The Symposium*, beginning with the love of things and moving towards the love of ideas, with existences and moving towards essences, with appetites and moving toward toward immortal longings. But the movement is of a kind that the orthodox interpretation of Plato cannot approve. For it is not, so to speak, a biographical movement. Keats does not, as he develops, 'advance' from a preoccupation with sense to a preoccupation with intellect. Rather it is his characteristic mode of thought all through his life to begin with sense and to move thence to what he calls 'abstraction', but never to leave sense behind.

> Sense cannot be left behind, for itself it generates
> the idea and remains continuous with it.

This is a helpful account of Keats's approach to Reality, but a clearer idea can be gathered only through a more specific description. Keats, we have seen, posits three modes of being which we may designate as ideal, essential and phenomenal. The ideal exists in heaven, the essential, the spiritual core of each object, resides within the phenomenal in this would, but it is a projection of the divine and it continues to be present after the death of the body. Therefore an experience of the essential can give us a taste of the divine.

At this point our exposition seems to come into collision against the view that Keats is primarily a poet of the physical sense: that he is at his best when he is dealing with the sight, sound, touch and taste of the beautiful things. But inspite of Keats's evident fascination for sensuous delight, one can easily identify the passages in his poetry and letters which clearly establish his urge to go beyond the physical pleasure to the inner and supersensuous beauty that is the source of everlasting bliss. We have already referred to this love of the 'abstract beauty'.

An early sonnet begins with the following lines:

> How many bards gild the lapses of time !
> A few of them have ever been the food
> Of my delighted fancy-I could brood
> Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime.

For Endymion and for Keats happiness lies;

> In that which becks
> Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
> A fellowship with essence.
> (Endymion)

In the light of these and many other lines to the same effect, we are compelled to revise our first impression of Keats's well-known statement about physical delight in his letter to Benjamin Bailley (November 22, 1817) in which he exclaims: "O for a life of Sensations rather than of thoughts!" It is important to note that the central theme of this letter is the superiority of imagination over reasoning as an instrument of true knowledge. Keats aligns sensation with imagination and, without being assertive, suggests that imagination gives us an immediate and direct access to truth. We shall dilate on this crucial role of imagination a little later after we have given further thought to Keats's conception of truth.

Strange as it may seen to be, our understanding of Keats's view of truth will be significantly clarified by the theorizing of a later Victorian poet, Hopkins, who began writing as a disciple of Keats. He nature was also prone to physical attributes of things and after becoming a Roman Catholic, his chief problem was how to reconcile the sensuous to the spiritual. Hopkins does not specifically identify the sources of his conceptualization of what he called 'inscape' and 'instress', but indirect evidence suggests that he found the basic thought in Duns Scotus's principle of individuation and theory of knowledge. But it is also surmised that the seminal notions of this aesthetic might have sprouted in his mind before he read Scotus in 1872, because in his prose writings, he has used the terms 'instress' and 'inscape' before this date. Thus, if Scotus's ideas lent only philosophical support to the theory which had already been formed in essential terms by Hopkins, then the most likely source, if any, must be Keats's poetry and letters. Indeed, there is such a remarkable correspondence between Keats's theory of beauty and Hopkins's concepts of inscape and instress taken together

that the letter's system clarified, of course, in the light of Scotist thought on the subject, appears to be the developed form of the former's ideas.

The key-notions in both the systems are 'principle of beauty' and 'intensity' and they can be best understood by reference to the ideas of Duns Scotus, who may be regarded as the common philosophical ancestor of both Keats and Hopkins. Scotus believed that the individuality of an objects is a positive entity and called it *haecceitus*. He elevated the metaphysical status of matter; " the correlative of matter is form, which together with it constitutes the compound or composite 'thing', the concrete substance of the real world. Form is that which communicates to matter its state of being, its actuality and its activity".[6] This means that every physical object has an inner design or pattern or `inscpae' 'as Hopkins calls it. What is important in this ontology is the assumption that the physical being of an object is an extension, as it were, of the essence or inner design. In simple terms we may say that the sensible properties of a thing are inextricably linked to its essence.

Further, as John Pick has pointed out, Duns Scotus through his epistemology, makes provision for a sensuous path to truth: "Scotus, then, would seem to offer a theory of knowledge in which sense and intellect collaborate in one obviously simultaneous act to experience both the `species intelligibilis (the particularized nature or form within) and the `species specialissima (the outward sensible manifestation of the inner form)".[8]

Scotus solved the Platonic problem by claiming that the visible beauties of the universe as experienced through the senses formed a bridge between the finite and the infinite. In fact, in his theology the way to the realization of God consisted in gradually ascending from the sensuous apprehension of things to the eternal being

through the inner form. Finally, according to Scotus, intellect alone is insufficient to lead us to the cognition of God. The indispensable motive force is the will of man which takes the form of love for things as the creations of God, its ultimate object. The best way to present the flowering of these ideas in Hopkins's mind will be to examine his exemplification of the terms 'inscape' and 'instress' and also to consider a couple of poems by him. In his *Journal*, for 1871 he wrote the following on May 9:

> The bluebells in your hand baffle you with their inscape, made to every sense: if you draw your fingers through them they are lodged and struggle with a shock of wet heads; the long stalks rub and click and flatten to a fan on one another like your fingers themselves would when you passed the palms hard across one another, making a brittle rub and jostle like the noise of a hurdle strained by leaning against; then there is the faint honey smell and in the mouth the sweet gum when you bite them.[9]

In the entry for May 18, 1870, we read another account of the bluebells :

> I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace, like an ash (tree)![10]

Here it is important to note that the first passage above projects the distinctive individuality of bluebell in terms of sense impressions: touch, pressure, sound, smell and taste--in short the sensuous feel of the thing. But the second description yields us the inner design or what Keats would have called 'abstract beauty.' And it also directs the mind to the ideal beauty of Christ. In Hopkins's

well-known poem "Pied Beauty", we find all the three successive realizations artistically manifested at one place: the first six lines present a sensuous grasping of natural beauty, the next three lines reveal the inner design and the final lines orientate the mind to the Ideal:

> He fathers forth whose beauty is past change:
> Praise him.

Viewed in the light of this systematic philosophy, Keats's approach to truth becomes easier to understand. The outer beauty is an index of the essence contained within an object and from a grasping of this inner pattern one proceeds to the ideal or truth. More than that, the inner being of every object is beautiful. In the course of time, Keats moved close to Christian mysticism, according to which evil is illusory or accidental: it is not a permanent entity like good, but only either a lack of good or distortion of good: *deprivatio* or *depravatio*. Pain and suffering are only a means to the process of spiritual perfection:

> Do you not see how necessary a world of Pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, It is the Mind's Bible, it is the Mind's experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity - -As various as the lives of Men are--so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence- This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity-[11]

The object of crucial importance in this scheme of

things is the abstract beauty or the inhering pattern and not the stimulation of our senses--the essential beauty in each thing is embodied in the physical form, but is not identical with it; a grasping of this inner beauty leads to the realization of the truth.

After examining Keats's ideas of beauty and truth, we must now turn to the final question: How is this truth-beauty apprehended? Keats's answer is the same as that of the other Romantics: it is neither reason nor sensation that leads us to perceive truth--the power that reveals truth to us is imagination.

Kant had assigned a crucial role to the imaginative power (Einbildungskraft) of the mind in both cognition and poetic creation. Without the synthesizing ability of the mind, mere sensations are incapable of producing knowledge. As Woodhouse has noted, in Kant's thinking, imagination is at the service of understanding in cognition; and in aesthetic judgment, understanding is at the service of imagination.[12] Schelling in his philosophy argued for the unity of nature and mind; he saw creative energy at the root of all being--matter and mind--and in his mature thinking he asserted that imagination as artistic intention is the highest direct instrument of knowledge.

It is a small step from these ideas to reach the English Romantic poet's conception of imagination. As Bowra has noticed "they believed that the imagination stands in some essential relation to truth and reality, and they were at pains to make their poetry pay attention to them".[13] In Blake's view, the permanent realities of all things existed in the Eternal World and we find them reflected in this world of earthly forms. Further, more relevantly, "all things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, The Human Imagination".[14] In an epistemological sense, Coleridge also regarded the human faculty of

imagination as "the living power and prime Agent of all human perception".[15] That is the primary imagination; secondary or poetic imagination, is the same in its action and differs from it only in degree and mode of its operation.

Speaking on imagination, perhaps no writer has gone so far as Keats--so bold is his assertation that the critics fight shy of taking it seriously for philosophical analysis. The statement under reference occurs in a letter to Benjamin Bailey :

> I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination - What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth Whether it existed before or not--for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty--In a word, you may know my favourite Speculation by my first book and the little sond I sent in my last--which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters--The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream-he awoke and found it truth.[16]

Keats here expresses his firm faith in the divinity of the natural responses of the heart and imagination's power to yield truth. "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth"--this statement considered in the light of medieval thought will turn out to have a sound philosophical basis; in fact the principal motif of medieval romance and sonnet tradition rests on a strong conviction of the Schoolmen, who, with a Platonic touch, regarded earthly beauty as containing the element of divinity, or truth; in the physical body, the spirit, which is eternal, shines on the proportioned parts of matter. This insight, perhaps, goes far beyond medieval philosophy, and

springs from an archetypal impression that lies buried in every human mind--hence it is recoverable independently by the sensitive poet.

We have already discussed briefly Duns Scotus's epistemology. Keats's theory implies a parallel thought: from visible beauty one moves on to the inner design (beauty in abstract) which in Platonic terms participate in the Idea or truth and leads us to know it or have a feel of it. The pursuit of the principle of beauty in all things is the function of imagination and not of deliberation, or what Keats called "consequitive reasoning"-- and he has a point there: How can you, by what is essentially inference, claim to know a thing without the actual feel or sensation of it ? Only imagination can give us the sensation of truth-beauty: extending from the most sublime to the minutest stirring:

> Is there so small a range
> In the present strength of manhood, that the high
> Imagination cannot freely fly
> As She was wont of old ? Prepare her steeds
> Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
> Upon the clouds ? Has she not shown us all ?
> From the clear space of ether, to the small
> Breath of new buds unfolding ?
>
> (Sleep and Poetry)

But the ways of imagination which involves intuition and revelation are shrouded in mystery and Keats, like Blake, could not avoid the obscurity of mysticism. However, two important elements in the workings of imagination are unmistakably noticed in Keats's poetry and letters, though not their precise meaning. One of these is vision which, as compared to dream, is felt to be imparting a higher or deeper knowledge; it makes stronger

impact and implicates a superhuman agency. Both dream and visions can occur in either sleeping or waking state, but their respective structural and qualitative differences are clearly distinguished. In a literal sense, the poet Langland, on a May morning, "slumbered into sleep" and, "Then did I meet a marvellous sweven", but in a deeper sense, his poem presents *The Vision of piers Plowman.* Similarly, the second *Hyperion* in its form and content is more than a dream. Garrod is right in using the title, *The Fall of Hyperion: A Vision.* Nearly all the dreams (technically speaking) that occur in Keats's poetry require to be studied as visions prefiguring truth, because that is in Keats's practice the characteristic mode of imagination.

The second attribute of imagination is intensity, without which a word of art fails to work its miracle. In a letter to his brothers, Keats criticized Benjamin West's painting *Death on the Pale Horse* in the following words:

> It is a wonderful picture, when West's age is considered; But there is nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality, the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeable evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth.[17]

Here (and elsewhere in Keats) the concept of intensity is difficult to explain. Like Hazlitt's *gusto*, which became a favourite term with Keats for some time, intensity involves superior excitement and perceptivity. It, perhaps, plays the same critical role in poetic activity as temperature in a chemical reaction. It is also a property of the inner form of a beautiful object, whether natural or man-made. By hind-sight we may suggest that the term is analogous to what G.M. Hopkins called "instress". "Instress", says Pick ,"is a word he attached to the intensity

of feeling and association which something beautiful brought to him".[18] According to W.H. Gardner it is "the sensation of inscape (or indeed of any vivid mental image)".[19] In 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', St. 5, Hopkins himself employed the word in the following manner:

> Since, tho' he is under the world's
> splendour and wonder,
> His mystery must be instressed, stressed.

Here Hopkins is saying that although God as the principle of beauty is present at the heart of things, his divine power must be felt. We must therefore assume that the intensity refers to the sensitivity of the poetic mind. At the same time we have to apply the word to what may be called the energy of being, or the power of truth in every object. Finally, in order to construct a systematic account of the process, we may state that the principle of beauty in all things constantly emits its light; the artistic imagination when fully perceptive and excited captures light in a work of art which may then be said to possess intensity, and this intensity is the property of the highest art that 'moves' the reader or spectator to the cognition of truth-beauty.

A far more intractable challenge is posed by Keats in the parenthetical clause: "whether it existed before or not", and its exemplification in Adam's dream. Jones resolves this issue by suggesting that "dream come true" or "just a dream" is the axis on which Keats's poetry moves, meaning that what is imagined may come true like Adam's dream or may remain in mere dream.[20] But Keats's assertion forges a much stronger bond between imagination and truth than was claimed by anyone before him and some idea of its true import can certainly be

gathered from his poetry. He is very fond of foreshadowing a reality by means of dream, or vision; for example, in *Endymion*, Cynthia is first seen by the hero in a dream and subsequently she appears to him in person. This example is of prime importance because Keats himself mentions it in his letter and also because *Endymion* has been interpreted by many critics, including Shelley, as a poem on the working of the poetic mind. Still, one may object that it is not the case that Cynthia did not exist before--in fact, she is an immortal who descends to earth for love's sake. And this is precisely the point that should solve the puzzle. In Platonic terms, the true world is the world of Ideas; for Keats the divine beings would also belong to this sphere. The essences eternally *are*, irrespective of whether they exist in the common usage of the world or not, whether they become incarnate or not.

Reason has access only to the things of the earth, but imagination, Keats implies, is endowed with a cosmic vision and can grasp the true being directly, whether it has assumed a corporeal form or not. Even if the goddess did not appear to Endymion, he would have known her through the vision, that is, the power of imagination. Perhaps the mystery of imagination has for all time been spelt out most beautifully by Shakespeare, whose lines might have been ringing in Keats's mind when he formulated his difficult idea:

> The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from
> earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> (*A Midsummer-Night's Dream, V,I*)

In these lines Shakespeare's *imaginative* account of the working of imagination has dealt with the subject more effectively than any amount of cerebralization can achieve. Keats was, probably, not thinking of the tricks imagination can play, but of its superior power to envision a truth, or essence, whether, in the worldly sense, it existed before or not; he was interested in imagination's capacity to materialize' "the forms of things unknown".

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KEATS'S DRAMATIC GENIUS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS SHORTER POEMS

To associate the word 'drama' with the poems of John Keats may appear to be rather unusual, if not unjustified. Etymologically, the word 'drama' derived from doing, and action, as we commonly understand it to be, is confined to the physical level. But the hidden springs of action often lie in one's thought and imagination which sometimes become so vivid and powerful as to qualify for deception as the drama of the interior, which can stir a sensitive being like Charles Lamb to almost the same extent, if not more, as physical action can do, as he wrote in his famous essay on the acting of Shakespeare's tragedies. Moreover, in common usage the word 'dramatic' has certain connotations entirely unconnected with the stage as such. Even literary critics do not all agree on what the essence or soul of drama consists in. They variouly lay stress on action, movement, conflict, suspense, surprise, or variety. But not all these concepts are confined to the theatre, for as Ronald Peacock puts it, "there remains much in life that is essentially 'dramatic' but which is excluded from enactment on the stage."[1] What is dramatic can therefore show up not only in life but also in any branch of literature. Thus we speak not only of a dramatic novel but also of a dramatic monologue, or even of a 'dramatic lyric.'[2]

Perhaps among all the major Romantic poets Keats had a mental equipment and an attitude towards poetry which came nearest to the dramatic. M.R. Ridley states that Keats's narrative poems and odes reveal "his

dramatist's instincts", and his later work as a whole suggests "that sense of theatre".[3] Certain aspects of Keats's poems lead A.C. Bradley to conclude that "Keats's hope of ultimate success in dramatic poetry was well founded".[4] Keats's own temperament had many more facets than the merely poetical - his humour and capacity for nonsense, "the flint and iron in him", making him "the full human being, the complete man", about whom it has been said that "the mind of Shakespere at three and twenty may not have been very different."[5] In fact, Keats's well - known description of the `poetical character' (of which he calls himself a `member') almost looks like the description of a dramatist: "A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because it has no identity - he is continually in for - and filling some other body."[6] His theory of `Negative Capability' also places him firmly as a potential dramatist among poets. It is not, therefore, surprising that his avowedly greatest ambition was to make "as great a revolution in dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting."[7] He was also considered fit to take over for a few months in 1917 the place of Reynolds as a dramatic critic on the `Champion' and he did three reviews for it.[8] In the same year he was completing *Endymion*, and in 1818 he began the composition of *Hyperion* after he had written about his theory of Negative Capability. During 1819, his most fertile year, he was composing his play *Otho the Great* as also his famous shorter narrative poems. It is significant that he looked upon narrative poetry as a means to a greater end - "the writing of a few fine plays."[9] For instance, he treated the composition of *Endymion* as "my first step towards the Chief attempt in the Drama - the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow."[10] In the same year he composed his play *Otho the Great* and also the fragment of *King Stephen*. The play and the fragment need not be discussed here in

detail. Suffice it to say that they are both characterized by imitativeness of Shakespeare in action, characterization and dialogue. While *Otho the Great*, written for the popular theatre, contains much that is sentimental and melodramatic, it contains much action, movement and tension, and at places it is magnificently theatrical. Though it is mainly a tragedy of two characters, the Emperor Otho and his son Ludolph, the other characters are also dramatically juxtaposed. Keats shows himself capable of writing beautiful, sensuous and passionate poetry and also that which is simple and direct, in accordance with the requirements of the occasion. The following extract will illustrate the simple but effective use of dramatic speech which brings out not only the knowledge of an important fact by Emperor Otho but also the affectionate and generous nature of both the old Otho and his son who, disguised as an Arab, had been protecting his father in battle in spite of their estrangement from each other:

OTHO. ...But Ludolph, ere you go, I would enquire
If you, in all your wandering, ever met
A certain Arab haunting in these parts.

LUDOLPH : No, my good lord, I cannot say I his time
OTHO Nor let these arms paternal hunger more
For an embrace, to dull the appetite
Of my great love for thee, my supreme child!
Come near, and let me breath into thine ear.
I knew you through your disguise. You are the
Arab !
You can't deny it [Embracing him]
[II.1.117-127]

Another highly dramatic passage occurs when Ludolph, disenchanted by his beautiful wife's deceitful

conduct describes her beauty and faithlessness with a unique mixture of sensuous poetry and pungent irony so uncommon in Keats :

LODOLPH. ...Deep blue eyes - semi-shaded in white lids,
Finish'd with lashes fine more soft shade,
Completed by her twin-arched ebon brows-
White temples of exactest elegance,
Of even mould felicitous and smooth -
Cheeks fashion'd tenderly on either side,
So perfect, so divine that our poor eyes
Are dazzled with the sweet proportioning
And wonder that 'tis so, -the magic chance!
Her nostrils, small, fragrant, faery-
Her lips-I swear no human bones e'er wore
So taking a disguise-you shall behold her!
She's mine by right of marriage-she's mine!
Patience, good people, in fit time I send
A Summoner-she will obey my call,
Being a wife most mild and dutiful.
[V.v. 59-77]

In its plot construction, characterization, dramatic situations and dramatic poetry, the poet in this play holds out, in the words of G.Wilson Knight, a "magnificent Shakespearean promise."[11] Keats's next play *King Stephen* starts in the thick of action and proceeds swiftly capturing the typical atmosphere of camp and court rendered in direct and vigorous speech through characters and situations with immense possibilities of dramatic development. But Keats lost interest in the writing of plays for various reasons like the rejection of Otho the Great, Kean's sailing for America, and the poet's likely realization of his deficiencies as a dramatist like imitativeness, which he could, however, have got over in the course of time. But for success in dramatic writing he chose a rather circuitous path, viz., via narrative poetry.

He wrote about `The Eve of St. Agnes': "Two or three such Poems, if God should spare me, written in the course of the next six years, would be a famous gradus ad Parnasum aitissimum - I mean they would serve me up to the writing of a few fine Plays - my greatest ambition - when I do feel ambitious."[12] Thus, though his formal dramatic career was doomed to remain one of the might-have-been of literature, his ability and aptitude for dramatic writing can be seen as vivifying much of his poetry, especially his shorter poems.

Dramatic element is, of course, a part of the armoury of narrative poetry. But compared with poets like Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope and quite a few Romantic poets, who all composed narrative poetry, we find that, at least, the rift of the shorter narrative poems of Keats is much more loaded with the ore of the dramatic element, both in quantity and in intensity.

Drama is played out on the stage, and even a dramatic poem needs suitable background to set off the action. Like a dramatist writing for the theatre, Keats often visualizes the background of his tales in his imagination and describes them suggestively or graphically, harmonising them with the situations and the emotions of his characters. The background of 'La Belle Dame Merci' consists of utter loneliness, complete silence and dreariness reflecting the mood of the deserted Knight. 'The Eve of St. Agnes' contains a series of appropriate stage-settings - the "sculpture'd dead" in chapel hall, "the argent revelry" of guests in the "The level chambers ready with their pride", "the little moon light rooms, / Pale lattic'd chill and silent as a tomb", the casement with glass panes"Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes" in Madeline's bedroom - a befitting background for the meeting of the lovers. Similarly, both the woods and the hall of the wedding banquet in 'Lamia' are capable of

being rendered effectively on the stage. Keats's narrative poetry thus embodies the emergence of the scene in poetry.

The plots of the shorter narrative poems of keats generally have the Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. Though a poem like 'La Belle' Dame Sans Merci' begins at the end, recapitulating the earlier events through a dialogue, the other tales narrate the stories in the normal chronological sequence. But the pace of action varies throughout these poems so as to satisfy the demands of the occasions. It is fast in the concluding stages of 'The Eve of St. Agnes' where the lovers are fleeing from the castle in haste:

> They glide like phantoms into wide hall;
> like phantoms to the iron porch, they glide,
> where lay the Porter in uneasy sprawl,
> with a huge empty flaggon by his side;
> The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide
> But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :
> By one and one, the bolts full easy slide:
> The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
> The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.
> (St. XL I).

The pace is leisurely in the opening stanzas of the same poem where time moves slowly for the Beadsman saying his prayers or moving through the chapel. The description of the slow, anxious movement of Porphyro from his hiding place in Madeline's bedroom is a masterpiece of the perfect harmony of sound and sense:

> ... then from the closet crept,
> Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
> And over the hush'd carpet, silent, slept,

And between the curtains peep'd, where, lo!
- how fast she slept (St. XXVIII)

The complete halts in action highlighting the dramatic situations are to be found in all the three major shorter narrative poems - Angela laughting in the languid moonlight, Porphyro gazing upon Madeline praying and then sleeping, Isabella deeply immersed in sorrow after her recovery of Lorenzo's head, and the concluding scene of the sage Apollonius's announcement of Lamia's being a serpent from which a few lines deserve to be quoted:

'Lamia!' he cried - and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a harried presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
(II. 260-68)

In variety of their pace, Keats's tales seem to anticipate the modern cinematic technique or the playing of the Video Cassette, the speed of which one can govern at will or halt it at a scene as one likes. Such moments of wordlessness, laughter and tears become highly dramatic, more voluble than any speech can be.

Alongwith the dramatic use of words and wordlessness, there is also the use of conflict, both physical and psychological, and of contrast between atmosphere and character, light and darkness, sound and silence, love and envy, life and death, youth and age, faith and faithlessness, which energize Keats's narrative poems. In them the presence of the author, like that of the Chorus, is also noticeable as a narrator and as a

commentator, with a love ranging from deep sympathy and pity to irony and detachment. The poet's own comments some times obviously introduce or conclude a phase in the narrative, as in the opening lines of Part II of 'Lamia':

> Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
> Is-Love, forgive us! - cinders, ashes, dust;
> Love in a place is perhaps at last
> More grievous torment than a hermit's fast; -
> That is a doubtful tale from faery land
> Hard for the non-elect to understand... (II.1-6).

Or anticipating the events and sympathising with the lovers, the commentator says a little later in the same poem:

> Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings
> Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
> Empty the hunted air, and gnomed mine
> Unweave a rainbow, as it erst while made
> The tender person'd Lamia melt into a shade.
> (II.234-38).

After the lovers in 'The Eve of St. Agnes' have fled into the storm, for good or for evil, the narrator seems to have become somewhat detached from the tale and, while just mentioning the Baron and all his warrior guests meeting the punishment of terriflying dreams, gives to Angela and the Beadsman, so lovingly portrayed earlier, pathetic endings - all in one stanza. The poet just seems to be gathering up all his strands in a hurry to write a traditional 'finis' to the romantic and highly dramatic tale:

> Angela the old
> Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
> The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,

For aye, unsought for slept among his ashes cold. 76

Perhaps there could be no other possible ending. But why make it so unnecessarily and undeservedly horrible? The sympathetic narrator seems to have yielded to a detached writer giving a steely conclusion to his tale. It is clearly a voice other than the poet's earlier one.

In fact, Keats in his poetry is often an objective dramatist of the real - staring at the leash of the purely personal so as to achieve the freedom of merging with the wider reality of human joys and sorrows. In 'The Eve of St. Anges' he not only sympathizes with the old Beadsman praying for the souls of others in cold loneliness but also with the statues of knights - "how they may echo in icy hoods and mails." He empathises with the sparrow at his window or with "the heifer lowing at the skies" in anticipation of his being sacrificed and also enters the nightingale's fragrant world half-lit with moonlight as also that of the Grecian urn with all its intensely rich social and religious background, down to the small town emptied of all its people on that festive morn. Such examples can be endlessly multiplied, but what is of importance is Keats's increasing interest in people and places, as is also apparent from his letters and illustrated by the rich or suggestive scenic backgrounds and by the bold characterization in his narrative poetry. Much more important than the physical appearances of Madeline, Lamia or Isabella are their feelings and actions, which are all differentiated from each other, as are the suggested ones of the cruel girl of 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. They are the warp and woof of which the tales are made. The lovers also - Porphyro, Lycius, Lorenzo and the wandering Knight--are all distinct from each other as they are in their reactions to success or failure in love. Moreover, in the telling of the tales the

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poet's sympathy is not with the frozen traditional or the rigidly moral as against the free current of the natural emotions and instincts of mankind. We are with Madeline in her revolt and, surprisingly enough, we 'have a pity for the love and doom of the serpent-girl, the "angel" whose wings are clipped by the sage Apollonius representing cold philosophy which bungles into and besmears the rainbow world of Lycius and Lamia. In Keats what is glorified is the essentially human. The fount of Keats's 'philosophy of life', if it can be so called, is an interest in humanity, the strife and the agonies of the human heart, which is the root of our drama.

The chorus-like narrator of these poems becomes in the odes the chief, almost the sole speaker. But in them too he often assumes the persons of someone other than that of a receptive poet - e.g. that of an active priest and a builder ('Ode to Psyche'), an incipient social rebel ('Ode to a Nightingale'), a thinker about the eternal verities of life ('Ode on a Grecian Urn'), a convincing philosophically oriented speaker ('Ode on Melancholy'), and a sensuous wrangler ('Ode to Autumn'), who in the words of Bate, indulges in a lyric debate actively moving towards drama.[13]

The objects addressed also are of different types- living beings (e.g. Fanny) animate objects of nature (e.g.nightangale), figures of history (e.g. ancient poets in 'Bards of Passion), or inanimate objects treated as alive (e.g.'Ode on a Grecian Urn'). Sometimes he forcefully addresses the reader himself, as in 'Ode on Melancholy", in which he attempts to initiate the reader into the paradoxical mystery of the relationship of joy and sorrow. Keats's Odes contain not only brief but suggestive responses and evocative addresses but also setting and action. The apparent backdrop may be from the world of reality, but it is soon penetrated so as to reach the deeper layer of imagination - the two existing side by side, with

the poet not being certain which of them is more real. This juxtaposition of the internal and the external landscapes is characteristic of Keats's dramatic imagination which roams freely over the worlds of reality and of dreamy imagination, of emotional responses of pleasure and depression, of the past and the present.

Against this varied background - physical, emotional and chronological - there is much action, partly real but mostly imaginary. The revolving of the urn leading to the slow procession of sculpted images in the two odes on the Grecian urns, the eternal pouring forth of its soul and then the flying away of the nightingale, the slow but steady maturing of fruits, the storing of honey by the bees and the various birds and animals orchestrating their sounds in 'Ode to Autumn' constitute some of the action on the physical plane. But the more powerful drama of the odes is enacted in the poet's imagination through the medium of snapshots of action and movement - "Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth"; "the beaded bubbles" of "the blushful Hippocrene" "winking at the brim", men sitting and hearing "each other groan", palsy shaking "a few sad, gray hairs", the moonlight being blown "through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways", flies murmurously haunting the musk rose; the sad Ruth standing "In tears amid the alien corn"; the opening of "magic casements" on "perilous seas"; the "mad pursuit" of the lover and the girl's "struggle to escape"; the youth piping on its endless song; the "happy lover" "for ever panting and for ever young", the "heifer lowing at the skies"; the imagined amazement of the implied traveler at the empty little town; the lover, imprisoning the soft hand of his mistress and feeding "deep upon her peerless eyes"; Joy with his hand "ever at his lips/Bidding adieu", and so on. The poet seems to have an endless store of such dramatic images for his nights and for his days, and

they are displayed in plenty not only in his odes, but in all his poetry like a tableau of scattered and frozen scenes not yet fully reconciled into an all-embracing vision, the truth still to be squeezed out from what his imagination seizes as beauty.

Keats's odes in particular embody the "wreathed trails of a working brain" not yet daring to philosophize but only teasing him into "Maiden-thought" which still is for him "a lawn besprinkled o'er with flowers and stirring shades and baffled beams".[14] Trying to reach out for a synthesized philosophy, he was watching humanity and "with eternal lids apart" groping through a dramatic interplay of apparent philosophical contrarieties, sometime in the same poem, towards which his imagination leads him. `Ode to a Nightingale', for instance, enacts a drama which, "concerns itself with the changing nexus of relationship of the poet and the nightingale, along with the value system relevant to each and the attempt at the reconciliation of antinomies".[15] Among such objects of contemplation is death - a nasty, fearful reality or a transition into a higher, richer and eternal life. In other poems also such concepts are presented from angles which are sometimes contradictory and sometimes complementary, as in the lines :

"Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd melancholy had her sovran shrine."

Similar stray explorations into the reality of joy, beauty and love can be discovered in Keats's poetry, e.g.

"Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes
Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow"
('Ode to a Nightingale')
"Beauty that must die" (`Ode on Melancholy')
"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"(Endymion)

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"
(`Ode on a Grecian Urn')

All such statements embodying apparent contradictions seem to arise from the fundamental duality of the world of senses and "passions" on the one hand and the world of imagination or contemplation on "permanence" on the other, which leads us to the quality of transience and essential immortality, `Maya' and `Braham', `Prakriti' and `Purush". The poetic articulation of duality and immense variety through the portrayal of the flux of reality in fleeting visual images make Keats what can perhaps be called a dramatist of the divine.

A seeker after truth and with his dramatic aptitude and aspirations, Keats in his shorter narrative poems and odes reveals himself as a dramatist latent not only in his poetic craft but also in the glimpses of the apparent contrarities and variety of life often through visual action or frozen critical moments. Keats, whom Dorothy Hewlett calls "a true damatist",[17] certainly belongs to the mainstream of English dramatic poetry, for his permeating dramatic genius animates much of his poetry like his own "Dryad of the trees" and presides over it like the portrait of the Bard of Avon presiding over Keats's own chamber, for, in the words of Caroline F.E,Spurgeon, "He is, he is with Shakespeare".[18]

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NOTES

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K.G. Srivastava

INDIA AND INDIAN THOUGHT IN THE POETRY OF JOHN KEATS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BHAGVAD-GITA

JOHN KEATS has been projected for long as pure artist, wholly dedicated to his profession of creating beauty through words. The advocates of this view argue very strongly that the imagination was the only goddess that Keats knew and worshipped. Allied to this is another image of Keats — that of the thoroughly British poet who was insular to outside influence, deriving inspiration and sustenance from native sources only. However, both or these views regarding Keats are false and groundless. It cannot be gainsaid that Keats was a true artist and a perfect poet of beauty. But then he was also a truly religious man, with a holy mind and a pure heart, worshipping not only the goddess of the imagination but also other gods such as Apollo and Bacchus. And though by birth, he was a Briton, he was very catholic and broad in his outlook, prone to borrow noble thoughts and ideas from all possible sources. His friend and well-wisher - P.B.Shelley - called him a Greek and with enough justification; the appellation stands justified on the ground that Greek mythology was the one field where Keats found his heart's desires fully realized. The Greek aspect of Keats has been generally recognised but one other dimension of his poetry and philosophy has gone blissfully unstressed and unacknowledged and that is the Indian aspect of his writings.

India was not unknown to Keats : the glamour of the country had captivated his mind and soul. How ardent

and enthusiastic Keats was about India becomes crystal-clear from his letter to Miss Jeffrey of Tegamouth, Devon, that the poet wrote from Wentworth Place, Hampstead, on 31 May 1819. In this letter Keats confessed with utmost honesty and sincerity[1] :

> I have the choice, as it were, of two Poisons (yet I ought not to call this a Poison) the one is voyaging to and from India for a few years; the other is leading a fevrous life along with Poetry - This latter will suit me best: for I cannot resolve to give up my studies.

Maurice Buxton Norman, the editor of Keats's "Letters", comments on the aforesaid letter (on the expression "voyaging to and from India") in the following words[2] :

> The idea was to become a surgeon on a ship to the East Indies, an idea possibly derived from Haydon's medical advisor, Dr. Darling, who had held such an appointment; it was revived later, see letter 212 to Dilke, written some months before Keats left for Italy.

Perhaps this proposed voyage to India is what Keats had in mind when he wrote to his sister Fanny, living in Weltthamstaw, on 26 May 1819[3]:

> Mind I do not propose to quit England, as George (h) as done; but I am affraid (sic) I shall be forced to take a voyage or two. However we will not think of that for some months.

In his letter No.212, addressed to Charles Wentworth Dilke, dated 1 May, 1820, to which Forman calls our attention, Keats wrote [4]:

> I have my choice of three things - or least two-south America or Surgeon to an I(n)diaman- which last I

think will be my fate - I shall resolve in a few days.

It seems that the thought of serving as a surgeon on an Indiaman was haunting Keats's mind, for on 9 June 1819 he wrote to Miss Jeffrey again [5]:

> Your advice about the Indiaman is a very wise advice, because it just suits me, though you are a little in the wrong concerning its destroying the energies of Mind: on the contrary it would be the finest thing to strengthen them-To be thrown among people who care not for you, with whom you have no sympathies, forces the Mind upon its own resources and leaves it free to make its speculations of the differences of human character and to class them with the calmness of a Botanist. An Indiaman is a little world.

The word "Indiaman" occurs again in the same letter a few sentences later. In another letter, addressed to Fanny Keats, dated 9 June 1819, the very day he had written to Miss Jeffrey, Keats wrote from Wentworth Place [6]:

> I have given up the idea of the Indiaman; I cannot resolve to give up my favorite (sic) Studies; so I propose to retire into the country and set my mind at work once more.

I feel fully convinced that Keats was deeply interested in British affairs in India. He makes a reference to the notorious event that took place at Calcutta in 1756, i.e., the episode known as "the Black hole Tragedy" which led to the sack of Sir-aj-ud-daula's Bengal by the British East India Company, under the leadership of Clive. Keats refers to this event in his long letter to Georgiana Keats, the wife of his younger brother George, dated Thursday

13 - Friday 28 January 1820[7] :

> This is a beautiful day: I hope you will not quarrel with it if I call it an American one. The sun comes upon the snow makes a prettier candy than we have on twelvth-cakes. George is busy this morning in making copies of my verses. He is making now one of an ode to the nightingale, which is like reading an account of the B(l) ack hole at Calcutta on an ice bergh.

The measure of Keats's knowledge about India and all that she stands for - her philosophy and religion - is the fact that he knew some of the doctrines of Buddhism which was the least known of the Indian religions in his days. In his letter to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds, dated 19 February 1818, the wrote[8] :

> I had an idea that a Man might pass a very pleasant life in this manner-let him on certain day read a certain page of full Poesy or distilled Prose; and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and reflect upon it, and dream upon it, until it becomes stale-but when will it do so? Never, when Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect, any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting point-post towards all the "two and thirty Palaces". how happy is such a voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence.

Forman's gloss on the expression "two-and-thirty Palaces" reads[9]: "The thirty-two palaces of delight' of the Buddhist doctrine." The learned editor, however, does not specify the "doctrine" to which Keats alludes. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, too, fail to specify the doctrine concerned.[10] I think that the Poet is alluding to the thirty-two signs of really great souls, pointers to their divinity: these have

been called "dvãtrinshata Mahãpurusha-Lakshanãni" in Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, dealing with the life of Lord Buddha such as *Lalitavistara* and *Buddhacharita*. Each of these signs can be regarded as a place of delight. Keats may have found it in Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* (1810) which had supplied the English readers with some information regarding Buddha and the legends connected with him. In any event, the allusion demonstrates Keats's awareness of the philosophical and religious ideas of India, disseminated in the West through the works of such orientalists as Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins, and Colebrooke. That he had a fair knowledge of the basic tenets of Hinduism becomes evident from a perusal of his letter, addressed to Geroge and Georgiana Keats - the largest letter that he wrote in the course of several days (Sunday 14 February - Monday 3 May 1819). In this letter he evinces his knowledge of the Hindu doctrine of the descendence of the Godhead on the earth known as "Avatarvada" when he says[11] :

> It is pretty generally suspected that the chr (i) stian scheme has been coppied (sic) from the ancient Persian and Greek philosophers. Why may they not have made this simple thing even more simple for common apprehension by introducing. Mediators and personages in the same manner as in the he(a) then mythology abstractions are personified - seriously I think it probable that this system of Soul-making-may have been the parent of all the palpable and personal schemes of Redemption, among the Zoroastrians, the Christians and the Hindoos. For as one part of the human species must have their carved Jupiter; so another part must have the palpable and named Mediator and Saviour, their Christ their Oromanes and their Vishnu.
>
> (underlining mine)

In the first underlined statement in the above quotation, i.e. "in the he(a) then mythology abstractions are personified", Keats is in all probability, referring to the tendency of the Vedic seers to personify abstractions, e.g., intelligent speech as "Vagdevata", the natural factor responsible for rains as "Indra", cosmic wisdom as "Brahma", medical science as "Ashvinikumara", and so on. He rightly calls this tendency of the Vedas which he designates as "he(a)then mythology" "the parent of all the more palpable and personal schemes of Redemption". It is needless to assert here that the entire Greek mythology as well as the entire Pauranic mythology of India can be and has been traced to Vedas[12]. The use of the words "Hindoo" and "Vishnu" is a positive proof of the fact that our poet was fairly acquainted with the religious beliefs and practices of India, including her mythology. The way he uses the word "Vishnu" shows that he knew fully well that Vishnu is the saviour god of the Hindus, who had descended on the earth nine times in the past for the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the vicious and will appear once more as "Kalki", the tenth Avatara. As an extra proof of Keats's knowledge of the Hindu pantheon, I should like to call the attention of the readers to 11.239-267 of the fourth book of the Endymion, describing the progress of Bacchus's civilizing campaign all over the world, from Egypt to India. In the 265th line the poet alludes to Bacchus's victory over Brahma. I quote the relevant portion of the description, put in the mouth of the Indian maid who sings:

I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown
I saw parched Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce

The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptress vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail,
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.

Evidently, Keats knew that Brahma is a member of the Hindu trinity or Trimurti, consisting of Brahma himself, Vishnu and Mahesha or Shankara. From his reference of Brahma's "mystic heaven" it is clear that he was aware of the fact that each member of the Hindu trinity had his own heaven called "Loka"-Brahmaloka. Vishnuloka and Shivaloka. And if Bacchus is none other than Shiva, as Sir William Jones had argued,[13] then it is quite possible that the poet was exploiting in the passage concerned the myth according to which Shiva had once vanquished Brahma in the form of "Daksha-Prajapati". Moreover, in the last but one line of the above quotation the expression "his priest-hood" suggests the poet's acquaintance with the fact that the priestly class in India called "Brahmanas" derives its direct lineage from Brahma just as the warrior class called "Kshatriyas" asserts that it is descended either from the sun or from the moon, and is, therefore, designated either as "Suryavanshi" or "Chandravanshi."

References to India and things Indian in the poetry of Keats are numerous, indeed. In the seventh line of the above quotation itself India has been mentioned by another of its names: "Ind" which is a diminutive form of "India". The poem "The Cap and the Bells; or, The Jealousies : A Fairy Tale-Unfinished" (written Nov.-Dec.1819) is full of allusions to Indian objects and things. In fact, that poem is Indian through and through. It opens with these words : "In midmost Ind, beside Hyddaspes cool", containing India's diminutive name "Ind" and the name of one of her famous rivers - "Hydapes" which is a

corrupt Greek form of the word "Vitasta", the other older Sanskrit name of the modern "Jhelum". Though Keats has used a classical name of Jhelum, obtained from his reading of Plutarch, Strabo and Pliny and more immediately of his English predecssor - John Milton, who alludes to Hydaspes in his Paradise Lost Book III.1.436, his characterization of that river as "cool" makes it clear that the poet was aware of the physical feature of Jhelum which belongs to the Indus river-system and being fed by the glaciers of Southern Tibet is naturally cool. The poet uses the place-name "Tibet" in the 645th line of the poem (stanza LXXII), the desert Gobi in I.659 (stanza LXXIV) and the Persian city "Balk" or "Balkh" in I.679 (stanza LXXVI). These references demonstrate Keats' fair knowledge of the geography of India and her neighbourhood.

"The Cap and the Bells" is definitely an Indian poem, written against an Indian setting from beginning to end. In 1.390 (stanza XLIV) we have been provided in the speech of Hum the genealogy of Bertha, the real flame of the Emperor Elfinan, the hero of the poem, "She was born at midnight in an Indian wild." Numerous other details in the poem strengthen the Indian atmosphere of the piece. The British India of the last decade of the eighteenth century has been invoked in 11.190-3 and 11.330-33. As Phyllis Mann suggests, 11.190-3 contain a veiled reference to a valuable ring that Tipu Sultan had sent to France through his envoy with a view to winning French support for his cause (of removing the British from the Indian soil). Similarly, 11.330-33 refer to the life-size mechanical device that the Sultan of Mysore had got prepared for the mockery of the British soldiers. The device, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, has a tiger which, when set in motion, mauls the figure of the English officer, lying beneath him to the accompaniment

of sounds resembling growls and cries. The device had been captured by the officers of the East India Company after the fall of Seringaptam in 1799 and housed in the public reading-room of the East India House in Leadenhall st. Keats has seen the advice for himself at Leadenhall st. and had gathered all the information regarding Tipu Sultan from *The Selected Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries* (trans. by W.K.Inkpatrick, 1811).[15] This fact only goes to prove how deeply the poet was interested in the affairs of India.

It should be a matter of great interest as also of careful investigation if the word "cham" that Keats has used in "The Cap and the Bells" as the name of Hum's father, the inventor of magic, is not ultimately derived from the vedic word "Shambar" which is the name of demon who was the father of magic and black art. According to Miriam Allott, Keats's source for this word was Pierre Bayle's book entitled *Dectionaire Historique* (1695-97, revised 1702). But the poem, being an Indian allegory, the derivation of "cham" ("Shem") from "Shambar" is quite in place and in all probablility Keats knew something about "Shambar" through the orientalists like Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins and H.H.Colebrooke.

The two most significant natural objects of India — the Himalayas and Ganges — seem to have made atremendous impact on the imagination of Keats. The poet mentions the former under its Persian nomenclature of "Imaus" in "The Cap and Bells" several times. In 1.29 (stanza IV) Pigmio has been described as "Imaus sovereign". Again 1.64 (stanza XIX) has the word "Imaus": "will they fetch from Imaus for my wife?" The adjectival form of "Imans"— "Imain" has been used in I.81 (stanza 1X) as well as in I.585 (stanza LXV). The Ganges, the most sacred river of Indian, appears in two major poems: *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. In *Endymion* Book IV.1.33 we

have in the speech of the Indian maid these words : "Adiew to Gangas and their pleasant fields" and later in 1.465 of the same Book occurs the expression "Thou swan of Ganges" for the Indian Maid. In *Hyperion:A Fragmen*t Book II.1.60 we have "By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles."

Of things Indian Keats perhaps felt enamoured of what is called "Bhojpatra", the skin of a tree used for writing in ancient India. Keats lovingly calls it the "wild Indian leaf" in his second Hyperion poem *The Fall of Hyperion : A Dream*, Canto I.1.5. Tulasi, the most sacred plant of India, appears in the sub-title of the narrative poem "Isabella" whose sub-title is "the Pot of Basil", Basil being none other than the Tulasi plant, whose leaves have a great medicinal value and are sacred to Vishnu or Krishna. Apart from Basil or Tulasi, the cloves and pearls of India had impressed Keats very deeply. In his "Isabella" the poet mentions the former in the expression "in the warm Indian clove" at 1.103 (stanza XIII) and the latter in 11.113-4 of stanza XV :

> For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
> And went all naked to the hungry shark;

(Here it must be borne in mind that Ceylon was regarded in Keats's day as part of India, and not as an independent country.)

However, the greatest tribute to India paid by Keats is in the form of the creation of the character called "Indian Maid" in his romance *Endymion*. The lady, as the poet projects her in the poem, is the highest form of beauty; she is ultimately transformed into the moon-goddess Cynthia. It seems to me that through the following words of Endymion, addressed to the Indian Maid, the poet has

given expression to his own appreciation of India and of all that India stands for: her religion, mythology, and philosophy:

> My sweetest Indian, here,
> Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
> My life from too thin breathing.
>
> (Book IV.11.648-50)

With this introduction to and detailed discussion of Keats's continued interest in India and Indian affairs, including her rich mythology, revealed in the poet's references to Brahma and Vishnu and 'two and thirty palaces', it would not be presumptuous on our part to maintain that the poet had read the greatest scripture of the Hindus called *The Bhagwad-Gita* which had become available in London in 1785 in Charles Wilkins's English prose and was the centre of contemporary debate on public platforms at the hands of brilliant intellectuals of the day like S.T.Coleridge whose public lectures our poet used to attend with great enthusiasm. His interest in the Hindu scripture must have been aroused when he heard Coleridge cite a long passage from it in Wilkins's version in his philosophical lecture at the Crown and Anchor, Strand, at eight o'clock on the 31st December 1819. Another source from which he must have derived inspiration to study the *Bhagvad-Gita* was no doubt Robert Southey's Indian epic *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) whose influence on Keats's *Endymion* has been investigated in depth by Dorothy Hewilt in her book *A Life of John Keats* (New York,1950). In the course of his reading of Southey's poem, Keats could not have missed the reference to the *Bhagvad-Gita* in the preface to the poem and in the foot-notes to the text. Since Keats's interest in India was very deep, we can rest assured that his curiosity about the

most significant religious text of India was fully aroused and that he made a serious attempt at grasping the finer points of Indian philosophy enshrined in the "Song Celestial". I agree that Keats does not mention the *Gita* in his writings, so far as I know them, but then, the kind of knowledge regarding Hinduism that he displays, compels us to maintain that he had read it thoroughly and had even imbibed some of its doctrines. Indeed, many of the ideas expressed in his poems and letters can be easily traced to the sacred book of the Hindus. I would like to discuss some of them under the following points :

1) Keats's famous distinction between what he calls "Intelligence" on the one hand and "Soul" on the other, is quite close to the distinction that the Hindus still make and the *Gita* presupposes, between "Jivatman" on the one hand and "Atman", "Paramatman" or "Brahman" on the other. Most of the *Upanishads*, the philosophically mystical portions of the Vedic literature, make no distinction between "Brahman" and "Atman" in their essential nature. However, they do make a distinction between "Atman" and "Jivatman" or just "Jiva". When an "Atman" assumes a body in accordance with its karmic acts and experiences of pleasures and pains of life, it is called "Jivatman" because it is earth-bound. It may have a divine element in it, yet its prime duty is to realize its true identity which lies in its getting emancipated from the shackles of the world through the removal of "Avidya" or ignorance and the establishment of its identification with "Atman" which is hardly different from "Brahman" or "Paramatman", the Supreme Reality. So long as an individual remains attached to the world and does not realize his or her true nature, he or she remains a "Jiva" or "Jivatman". However, the moment it is able to realize its true nature, it becomes "Atman", free from all fears

and all limitations. But it must be made very clear here that a "Jiva" cannot become an "Atman" by eschewing the world and escaping from it like a coward; rather, it must face the harsh realities of life in a very detached manner in order to realize the true "Atman" residing within it, unnoticed and unacknowledged. The central doctrine of the Gita is directed to this end. It asks us to do our work whatever it is with complete detachment and utmost faith in God, the source of all life. When this is done, we are bound to achieve our unity with Brahman, our true self. Keats held, more or less, the same view of the destiny of man when he said:[16]

> The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interpretation of God and take to heaven - What a circumscribed and straightened notion. Call the world, if you please "The Vale of soul-making". Then you will find out the use of the world. (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it). I say 'soul-making', Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence - There may be intelligence or the sparks of the divinity in millions - but they are not souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. I (n) telligences, are atoms of perception - they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God - how then are souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them- so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence ? How, but by the medium of a world is like this ?

Just change the terms "Intelligence" and "Soul" to

"Jivatman" and "Atman" respectively and his theory regarding the world and its use and the real objective of human existence will be found to be precisely identical with the Hindu-world-view that has been presented above. When Keats says intelligences are gods, what he actually means is that they are potential gods, and not realized gods. In order to be realized gods or Soul, those intelligences are required to pass through the vale of "Soul-making', that is to say, they are required to face the problems of the world and undergo the experiences of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, without being affected by them at all. Keats must have found the source of his theory in the 16th verse of the 15th chapter of the *Gita* which runs as follows :

> (dvavimau purusau loke Ksarah ca'Ksara eva ca Ksarah sarvani bhutani kutastho 'ksara unyate)

and which wilkins had rendered in the following words :

"There are two kinds of Pooroosh in the world, the one corruptible, the other incorruptible. The corruptible Pooroosh is the body of all things in nature; the incorruptible is called kootastha, or he who standeth on the pinnacle."

What *Gita* calls *ksara Purusa* is Keats's "Intelligence" and *Gita's* Aksara Purusa is Keats's "Soul". It is very interesting to note that Robert M.Ryan has the following comment on Keats's statement cited above :[18]

> There is evidence that these ideas were commonplaces within his circle of friends. But one cannot rule out the possibility that they resulted from a recent, specific intellectual influence.

I suspect that this recent, specific intellectual influence was the *Bhagvad-Gita* which was being discussed enthusiastically in Keats's day in England. I strongly feel that Keats did not simply use the ideas of the *Gita* as a matter of intellectual curiosity, but also practised the system of soul-making as formulated in the *Gita* by trying to rise above dualities of all kinds. When he declared that praise or blame could not affect him in any way, he was actually claiming for himself the status of Gita's sthita-prajna yogin who had transformed the intelligence (with which he had been born) into a Soul, in other words, he had realized the God within himself. The poet Keats articulated the notion of the stable-minded yogin through goddess Moneta in *The Fall of Hyperion* 11.147-49:

> None can usurp this height', returned that shade,
> But those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.

The kind of mind that according to Moneta can reach her is one that does not believe in plurality but in unity. Clearly, this is a form of Advaitavada or monist view of things, advocated by the *Gita*.

2) Keats seems to have been impressed by the thought expressed in the 7th verse of the 15th chapter of the Indian text according to which individual beings are essentially the fractions of the Godhead:

> (mamaivanse jivaloke jivabhutah sanatanah
> manahsaisthani 'ndriyani prakristhani karsati)

Wilkinds had rendered this verse thus :[19]

"It is even a portion of myself that in this animal

world is the universal spirit of all things. It draweth together the five organs and the mind, which is the sixth, that it may obtain a body, and that it may leave it again."

Wilins's rendering of the verse is not very accurate but Keats's perceptive mind must have grasped the spirit underlying the Sanskrit text. He echoes it in this famous statement of his :[20]

> As various as the Lives of Men are, so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence.

In the context in which Keats makes the above observation, he hints that it is the human heart which contains the real divinity of the individual beings. This thought, too, is derived from the *Gita* (same chapter) which asserts that the divinity of man resides in his heart . Let us have a look at this important verse:

> (sarvasya ca 'him hrdi samniviste
> mattah smrtir jnanam apohanam ca
> vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo
> vedantakrd vedvideva ca 'ham). Gita 15.15

In Wildins's English prose the verse reads :[21]

"I penetrate into the hearts of all men, and from me proceed memory, knowledge, and the loss of both. I am to be known by all the Veds or books of divine knowledge : I am he who formed the Vedant, and I am he who knoweth the Veds."

Now, if the human heart is the seat of the Godhead in man, it follows that memory, knowledge etc. that have

been described as proceeding from the Lord, actually proceed from the Human Heart, the seat of the Lord in Man. Clearly, the greater and purer the heart in a human being, the diviner he is. Perhaps Keats had read this meaning in the above verse of the Gita and that is why he made the following observation :[22]

> Not merely is the heart a Hornbook, it is the Mind's Bible, it is the Mind's experience, it is the teeth from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity.

I am of the firm view that the above statement of Keats is only a paraphrase of the verse of the *Gita* cited just now, in the idiom of the Christians. In place of the Vedas, it has Hornbook and it substitutes Vedant by "Mind's Bible". True, according to Keats, the Human Heart is the cause of all knowledge and experience whereas in the *Gita* it is God who is the ultimate cause of memory and knowledge. But when the Lord Himself confesses in the *Gita* that the Human Heart is His dwelling place, it is not very surprising if Keats ascribes attributes of the Lord to His dwelling place - the Human Heart. And so far as the concept of "Apohana" (i.e. loss of memory, knowledge etc.) is concerned, the sense is that those who are heartless, their knowledge ad learning and all other acquirements are futile. Keats's passage also implies this. Thus, there is a very close and unmistakable affinity between the Gita passage and that of Keats's letter.

3) In his last great but unfinished poem entitled *The Fall of Hyperion, A Dream*, Canto I.11.154-60 Keats advocates work directed towards the human good as the surest path to salvation. This recalls the concept of "Lokasamgraha" or the maintenance of the world-order enunciated in the 3rd Chapter of the *Gita*, especially verse 20 in which the

expression occurs specifically. Just as Keats decries the self-centred self-seekers, *the Gita*, too, condemns such selfish people by maintaining that such a man lives in vain (moghan partha sa jivati). Through the example of Janaka and others the *Gita* asserts the efficacy of the work done for the well-being of mankind. Though a great king, Janaka had ploughed the land for rain-fall in the interest of his subjects and had thereby attained siddhi, a highly exalted moral position. In like manner the self-less people, working for the well-being of the world, attain to the sharing of Moneta in Keats's poem, at least by implication. The poet glorifies the selfless men

> We love their fellow even to the death;
> Who fell the giant agony of the world
> And, more, like slaves to poor humanity,
> Labour for mortal good.

4) The doctrine of divine descendence on the earth for the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil, called Avatarvada, also, seems to have made a tremendous impact on the imagination of Keats. The theory has been propounded in the 7th and 8th verses of the 4th Chapter of the *Gita*, which read as follows :

> (yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharat
> abhyutthanam adhrmasya tada 'tmana srjamyaham
> paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskrtam
> dharmasmsthpanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge)

In wilkins's prose rendering the verses read thus:[23]

"and as often as there is decline of virtue, and an insurrection of vice and injustice, in the world, I make myself evident; and thus I appear, from age to age, for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked,

and the establishment of virtue."

Keats uses the doctrine called Avatarvada as propounded in the verses of the *Gita* cited above in his letter addressed to John Hamilton Heynolds, dated Sunday 3 May 1818. Comparing Milton with Wordsworth, ,Keats observes :[24]

> Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings. He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done-yet Milton as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth-what is then to be inferr'd ? O many things-It proves there is really a grand march of intellect-*It proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human knowledge or Religion.*
>
> *(italics mine)*

Robert M.Ryan brings out the underlying ideas of the underlined lines of the passage cited above, in the following words :[25]

> God's true religion is written in the heart, and wordsworth, thinking into the human heart, is helping to clarify that religion and to make it triumphant. Milton was not as "deep" as Wordsworth because he was content with the dogmas and superstitions of protestantism. Yet in his defence it can be said that he acted and thought as he had to, given the times in which he lived. His task and that of his contemporaries was to help stamp out the greater superstitions of Catholicism-this was their unique contribution to the progress of human enlightenment; this was the special role they were assigned in God's plan. *In Keats's view, the*

> ***development of theology and the development of all human thought is presided over and directed by a "mighty providence" that raise up prophet and reformers in each age to lead mankind toward a purer and a more refined religious consciousness.***
> (italics mine)

Now compare the theory of Keats as clarified in the *underlined* portion of Ryan's comments on Keats's own words with the theory of divine descendence as enunciated in the verses of the *Gita* cited above and see if you can miss the ring of the import of Lord Krishna's consoling words in the letter of Keats to Reynolds. I am sure every sensible reader will recall without fail the thought of "yada hi dharmasya" in the course of his reading of Keats's letter if he has some acquaintance with the Indian scripture.

5) The concept of the *Sthitprajnata* or stable-mindedness, as prominently advocated as a means to salvation, has been beautifully exploited by Keats in the following words of Oceanus, the sea-god, addressed to Saturn in the *Hyperion:A Fragment,* Book II.11.203-6:

> **Now comes the pain of truth, to whom `tis pain**
> **O folly! for to bear all naked truths,**
> **And to envisage circumstance, all calm,**
> **That is the top of sovereignty.**

These words of Oceanus seem to be the dramatic expression of the philosophy of disinterestedness, so strongly recommended in the following verses of the *Bhgavad-Gita* Chapter II :

> **(duhkhesu anudvignmanah sukhesu vigatasprhah**
> **vita-raga-bhaya-krodhah sthitadhir munir unyate. 56**

yah sarvatanabhishnehahas tat tat prapya subhasubham nabhinandati na dvesti tasya prajna pratisthita)[57]

In Wilkins's translation these verses read as follows:[26]

"His mind is undisturbed in adversity; he is happy and contended in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear and anger.Such a wise man is called a Moonee. The wisdom of that man is established, who in all things is without affection; and having received good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one, nor is cast down by the other."

Lord Krishna is explaining to Arjun how he could perform his duties in the most satisfactory way. Disinterestedness is the answer; the Sankrit term for this is *Sthitaprajnat* which implies transcendence of all dualities– joy and grief, success and failure, profit and loss, etc. As if in the spirit of Krishna's favourite doctrine, the Oceanus of *Hyperion* asks Saturn to remain perfectly placid and calm in the face of his abject defeat. In the considered view of the *Gita,* all joys and sorrows are due to the vagaries of Nature, her three strands or modes, called *gunas*. Hence a sage remains unmoved by them saying : "guna gunesu vartante" (the phenomena of pleasure and pain, joy and grief etc. are due to the three modes of Nature) but the fools think they themselves are the cause of those phenomena. (Vide *Gita* 3.27-28). The Oceanus of Keats's poem, quite like the sage of *Gita,* attributes all changes in life to Nature. Mark his words carefully:

We fall by course of Nature's law, not force of thunder, or of Jove.

(*Hyperion* II.181-2)

No doubt, the philosophy of life that Oceanus is advocating here is that of the true sage whom Lord Krishna defines in the *Gita* 13.29 in the following words:

(parkrtyaiva ca karmani kriyamanani sarvasah
yah pasyati tathatmanam akartarm sa pasyati.)

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following manner:[27]

"He who beholdeth all his actions performed by Prakreete, nature, at the same time perceiveth that the Atama or soul is inactive in them."

Since Oceanus conforms to what the *Gita* in the above verse describes as the outlook of a true sage, he should be called an Indian Sage fully realized. Keats's characterization of Oceanus as "Sophist and sage from no Athenian grove" (II168) is very remarkable. I take Keats's words to mean that Oceanus is a sage from the land of the Ganges which has been mentioned in 1.108 of the same book which introduces Oceanus in the *Hyprion.* Moreover, there are many statements of Oceanus which seem to have been borrowed from the statements of the Indian sage Iarchus whom the Greek philosopher Apollonius of Tyana had accepted and acknowledged as his guru as recorded in Philostratus's well-known book entitled *de vita Appollonii (The Life of Appollonius),* written in A.D.210 but translated and published in England in the language of the natives of that country in 1809. According to Miriam Allott,[28] Keats is very likely to have read this book. In any event, he know a lot about Appollonius of Tyana. This is clear from the fact that he has introduced the Greek philosopher as an important character in his *Lamia.* I suspect that the following statement of Oceanus, addressed to Saturn:

> And, first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
> So art thou not the last; it cannot be.
> Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
> (*Hyperion*, II.188-90)

is modelled on and inspired by the words of Iarchus, addressed to Appolonius in the book of Philostratus :[29]

> "Those Achaean sailors were the ruin of Troy, and your talking so much about it is the ruin of you, Greeks. For you imagine that the campaigners against Troy were the only heroes that ever were, and you forget other heroes both more numerous and more divine, whom your country and that of the Egptians and that of the Indians have produced.....

I believe that Keats was highly impressed by the Indian sage Iarchus as projected in Philostratus's eminent book and that he had modelled his Oceanus on that sage who represents *Gita's* philosophy of *Sthitprajnata* at its best. Another fact that leads me to believe that Oceanus is an Indian sage is that like Indian sages or yogis, he has the knack of going into trances which last for ages; in this respect he recalls Shiva, the greatest yogin in the history of India. This aspect of Oceanus has been revealed in *Endymion* III.993-7.

6) Allied to the doctrine of *Sthitaprajnata* is the doctrine of *Nishkamakaram* or Action with the least regard for its fruits; the *Gita* spells it out in verses 47 and 48 of its second Chapter. The verses are well-known and read as follows :

> (karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana
> ma karmaphalahetur bhur ma te sangostvakarmani

yogasthah kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya
siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva samatvam yoga uncyate)

Wilkine had rendered these verses in the following words:[30]

> Let thy motive be in the deed, and not in the event. Be not one whose motive for action is for reward. Let not thy life be spent in inaction. Depend upon application, perform thy duty, abandon all thoughts of the consequence, and make the event equal, whether, it terminates, in good or evil; for an equality is called yoga.

Lord Krishna's brilliant words, it seems to me, had made a very deep impact upon keats's mind. Under the garb of "Disinterested Action", he has propounded the philosophy of *Nishkamakarma*" in a very powerful way in his famous letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated Sunday-14 Feb-Monday, 3 May 1819. In the portion of the letter that the poet wrote on Friday (19th entry) we have the exposition of *Gita's* grand doctrine :[31]

> Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind : very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others— in the greater part of the Benefactors of & to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness—some melodramatic scenery has fascinated them - From the manner in which I feel Haslam's misfortunes I perceive how for I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness—

He further says, this principle was fully exemplified by Socrates and Jesus. In his own life he was striving to

achieve this very goal although in the quotation from his letter, cited above, he modestly says that he is far behind. It would be very interesting to note that the Victorian literary critic Matthew Arnold, who was all for disinterestness not noly in the field of literary creation but rather in all walks of life, had admired both Keats and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, mainly on account of disinterestedness that the one practised and the other preached.[32] It should also be asserted here that the doctrine of *Nishkamakarma* enunciated in the *Gita* had first impressed the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who had formulated his famous ethical theory of categorical Imperative in imitation of *Gita's Nishkamakaram*; from Kant the doctrine was adapted by William Wordsworth for his "Ode to Duty". It is possible that Keats had learnt of the doctrine first from the *Bhagvad-Gita* and then felt inspired by Wordsworth's great ode.

7) The *Gita* seems to be at the back of Keats's words, put in the mouth of Apollo in *Hyperion : Fragment,* Book III.11.113-120. Here Apollo asserts that knowledge is the source of his godhead: "knowledge enormous makes a god of me". Clearly, godhead is achieved, in Keats's view through enormous knowledge. This is a typically Indian view-point. In the *Rigveda* itself men of knowledge have been acclaimed as gods: (vidvanso hi devah). It is said that Pythagoras, after he achieved wisdom from the Indian sages of the 6th century B.C., was declared to be a god and when he returned to his native country, he retained that appellation. Keats must have got the idea from his reading of *de Vita Apollonii* by Philostratus. In this "Life", the Indian sage Iarchus tells Apollonius of Tyana at one place that he is a god because he knows everything.[33] Keats must have been struck by this self-glorification of

the otherwise meek and humble sage when he demonstrated his omniscience by telling Apollonius each detail of the Greek's journey to India- the persons he had met and the kind of conversation he had held with them and so on. It seems to me that when Keats found the same assertion about knowledge made in the holy book of the Hindus, i.e. the *Bhagvad-Gita*, re-affirmed through the mouth of Lord Krishna himself—Krishna whom Thomas Maurice had identified with Apollo, the sun-god of the Greeks, the poet in Keats must have thought it fit to put the words: "knowledge enormous makes a god of me" in the mouth of the sun-god in his projected epic. In the 18th verse of the *Gita* chapter 13, the Lord declares :

(iti ksetram tatha jnanam jneyam co'ktam samasatah
madbhakta etad vijnaya madbhavayopapayate)

In Wilkins's book the verse runs thus :[34]

"Thus hath been described together what is ksetra or body, what is Gnan or wisdom, and what is Gneya or the object of wisdom. *He my servant who thus conceiveth me obtaineth my nature.*"

In the underlined portion of Wilkins's rendering of Lord Krishna's words in the *Gita,* Keats must have found the confirmation of Iarchus's claim that he was a god because he knew everything (i.e. ksetra, ksertrajna, jnana and jneya). It is very interesting that Keats's Apollo enumerates the causal factors of his godhead in the spirit of the *Gita* :

Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,

And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal.
(*Hyperion* III.114-120)

This passage can be interpreted in terms of what *Gita* calls *ksetra* or *prakrti* and *ksetrajan* or *purusa*. "Majestic and sovran voices" can be regarded as the items falling under the head of "ksetrajna" or "purusha" and the rest of the items fall under what *Gita* calls "ksetra" or "prakrti". Since Apollo has understood both *ksetra* and *ksetrajan* completely, he should be deemed as having attained his true identity - the Godhead within, resulting in his elevation to the status of a god.

8) The greatest contribution to the world of thought that Keats had made was, I think, his theory of "Negative Capability", the fullest exposition of which is available in his letter to his two brothers, dated December 28,1817. Much has been written on this apparently ill-chosen term, the most comprehensive study on the subject being W.J. Bate,s *Negative Capability : the Intuitive Approach to Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.,1939) and yet the subject has continued to be debatable. Keats himself explains the term as man's capabiltiy of "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason". The expression "without any irritable reaching after fact or reason". is, I think, the most significant clue in understanding Keats's true meaning. Perhaps Keats is attacking religious dogmatism of the kind we find in the poetry of Wordsworth whereas in really great poets like Shakespeare there is complete avoidance of any dogmatism whatsoever with the result that the great dramatist's religious views could not be possibly ascertained. Liberal, broad-minded, objective and

impartial plus passive acceptance of all views on any given topic is what Keats seems to be implying by the term "Negative capability." This is typically a Hindu outlook which the *Bhagvad-Gita* clearly vindicates by giving approval to all possible ways of realizing God : *Samkhya, Yoga*, and *Bhakti*, recognizing the beauty of all paths. It would be a matter of great interest here to recall that Benjamin Robert Haydon, a friend of Keats, had equated 'Paganism' with 'Negative Capability' in his account of Wordsworth's prejudiced and short-sighted dismissal of Keats's "Hymn to Pan" with the remark that the poem was "a very pretty piece of Paganism".[35] Haydon commented on this reaction of Wordsworth to Keats's poem :"The poet ought to have been a pagan for the time. Being a pagan clearly implies here being a person of catholic outlook, broad-minded and tolerant; responding to Beauty wherever it could be found, without any hesitation and restriction. This is, I think, what Keats wanted to convey through his term "Negative Capability." Since the Hindus, like the Greeks and the Romans, accept and worship many gods and goddesses, they can be Pagans and, in fact, many Englishmen had designated Hindus as Pagans. If Haydon had Hindus in mind while he made the above observation on Wordsworth's dismissal of "Hymn to Pan", he was in all probability conscious of the supreme tolerance of the Hindus, their favourable response to the beauties of all religions and creeds. I suspect that Keats had come to propound his concept of "Negative Capability" after his deep study of Hinduism and specially the greatest religious text of the Hindus, namely, the *Bhagvad-Gita*, which advocates tolerance of all kinds, and pleads for the negation of egoistical temper for the realization of the Ultimate Reality.

9) The theory of Metempsychosis or Re-Birth for which

the *Gita* and for that matter the whole of Hindu philosophy are famous also seems to have found favour with Keats who had been almost an enemy of Christianity. The *italicised* portion of the following statement of his bears testimony to the fact that in the year 1820 at least he had come to believe in another life, another birth, presumably under the influence of Hinduism :

> The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond every thing horrible - the sense of darkness coming over me- I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears - Is there another Life ? Shall I awake and find all this a dream ? *There must be; we cannot be created for this sort of suffering.*

Thus the thesis that I have tried to establish is that India is a very significant aspect of Keats's poetry and other writings, in fact, of his very being. Had that been not the case, he would never have made the Indian Maid a very significant figure in the *Endymion* (Book IV); the fact that he elevates the lady to the status of a goddess and even identifies her with Cynthia, the moon-goddess, speaks volumes for his ardent love of India, her cultural traditions and her philosophy. The numerous details, scattered throughout his writings, pertaining to the rivers of the country, its chief mountain Himalayas, its mythology and some of its philosophical concepts, compel us to conclude that he could not have missed the metaphysical treasure of India, contained in the *Bhagvad-Gita* which was available to him in his native language and was enthusiastically discussed in the literary circle of the day, particularly by Blake, Coleridge and Southey and the magazine like *The British Critic* and the *Monthly Magazine*[36]. It is, thus, not at all improbable that the poet

was fully acquainted with the Hindu scripture and used many of its doctrines in his poetry and philosophical speculation available in his copious letters. I have located the sources of several thoughts of his poems and letters in the Hindu text and I believe there is still enough scope for further research in the field.

Dr. K.G. Srivastava
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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Maurice Buxton Forman, *The letters of Keats*, London, 1992), pp.343-44.
2. *Ibid.*, p.44.
3. *Ibid.*, p.345.
4. *Ibid.*, p.486.
5. *Ibid.*, p.345.
6. *Ibid.*, p.347.
7. *Ibid.*, p.451.
8. *Ibid.*, p.101.
9. *Ibid.*, p.102.
10. *Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, eds., Romantic Poetry and Prose*, New York, 1973, p.771. The relevant comment is just this: "In Suddnist doctrine" (Foot-note no.39).
11. Maurice Buxton Forman, *op.cit.*, p.336.
12. The orientalists of the closing years of the 18th century led by Sir William Jones, had put forward very emphatically this very view. See Jones's Presidential lecture, addressed to the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, entitled "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" available in *Asiatic Researches*, volume one, pp. 221-75. It must also be borne mind here that when Alexander invaded India in 326 B.C. he and his soldiers had identified Dionysus or Bacchus with the Hindu god shiva. See *Ancient India as Described by Magathenes and Arrian*, trans. J.W. McCrindle (London, 1877).

13. Vide Jones's Presidential Address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, entitled "On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India."
14. Phyllis Mann, "Keats's Indian Allegory", *Keats-Shelley Journal* VI (1957), pp.4-5.
15. The work of W. Kirkipatrick is really the measure of the extent of Keats's keen and profound interest in works, dealing with Indian affairs, available to him.
16. Maurice Buxton Forman, *op.cit.*, pp. 334-35.
17. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagwad-Geeta. Or the Dialogue Between Kreeshna and Arjuon* (London, 1785), p.119. All the English renderings of the verses from the Hindu text are from this book which will be hence onward called just "Wilkins'. It must be noted that Charles Wilkins did not supply the Sanskrit text in his translation; he provided only the English prose renderings of the verses quoted are from the standard version, published by the Geeta Press, Gorakhpur. In each case the Sanskrit texts have been transliterated for those who cannot read the Devanagari script.
18. Robert M. Ryanh, *Keats:The Religious Sense* (New Jersey, 1976), p.201.
19. Wilkins, *op.cit.*, p. 112.
20. Maurice Buxton Forman, *op.cit.*, p.335.
21. Wilkins, *op.cit.*, p.113.
22. Maurice Buxton Forman, *op.cit.*, p.345.
23. Wilkins, *op.cit.*, p.52.
24. Maurice Buxton Forman, *op.cit.*, pp. 143-44 (Letter No.64).
25. Robert M. Ryan, *op.cit.*, p.172.
26. Wilkins, *op.cit.*, p.56.
27. *Ibid.*, p.103.
28. Miriam Allott, ed., *The Poems of John Keats*, (Longman, 1970, 2nd impression, 1972). See the notes on *Lamia*.
29. *Philostratus's Life of Apollonius, Of Tyna*, translated by F.C. Conybeare in two volumes, Vol. I (London, 1912), p.269. Keats must have read *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* in the translation of the first Clergyman-B. Berwick
31. Maurice Buxton Forman, *op.cit.*, p.313-14.
32. For Arnold's views on disinterestedness exemplified by Keats, read his essay entitled "Keats" in *Essays in Criticism* (Second Series, 1886) and for his interest in the *Bhagavad-Gita* see his early readings in *The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold*, ed., H.F. Lowry, K. Young and W.H. Dunn (London, 1952), pp. 551 ff. Kenneth Allott believed that Arnold's *Introduction a l'historie de la philosophie*. See his paper "Matthew Arnold's Reading-Lists in Three Early Diaries", *Victorian Studies*, 11 (1958-59), pp.254-66.
33. *Philostratus's Life of Apolloonius of Tyan, op.cit.*, p.205. The Indian sage Iarchus tells Apollonius: "We consider ourselves to be Gods." And when the latter asks "Why ?", the sage replies: "Because we are good men." Iarchus has earlier (.207) maintained that he and other Indian sages know everything because they know themselves.
34. William, op.cit. p.104.

35. Vide Robert N. Ryan, *op.cit.*, p.140 Haydon's remarks are also to be found on the same page.
36. Charlen Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* was received most enthusiastically by the scholarly circles of England soon after its pablication in London in 1985 as is borne out by the favourable reviews of it appearing in the famous periodical papers of the times. See the *Monthly Review* (1950-1, 1770-1800), LXXVI, March, 208-10, 1787, and the *British Critic* (1793-1800), III, February, 1794, p.154.

Seemin Hasan

THE MYTH OF THE GODDESS IN *ENDYMION*

In this paper, I wish to present a reading of Keats's long poem *Endymion* the myth of the goddess as an important sustaining metaphor. In Keats's poetic myths the great goddess occupies a central place. Her constant presence in his poetry provides a unity through the multiplicity of her manifestations. Being a goddess of many aspects, she appears in many forms both in her beneficient as well as evil aspects and helps sustain the poet's mythic vision.

Keats's use of mythology does not suggest a deliberate contrivance for the sake of mere poetic effect. In fact, he recognises and recreates the mental principles which had been present in the mind of the early man. He, instincitively, perceives the communicatiive purpose and through their ficitionalized experience, he seeks deliverance from the oppressive forces that limit his own creative potential.

Keats's doctrine of `Negative capabilty' supplies the basis of his mythic vision. In one of his letters, he describes Negative capability as a state 'when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' and 'remaining content with half-knowledge'[1]. Myths record the primary unconscious process of shaping human responses to the varied conditions of life. In mythology, there is no 'irritable reaching after fact and reason' and the poet's mythologizing imagination allows him to remain 'content with half-knwoledge'.

The dominant mythic motifs of Keats's poem,

among others, include the great goddess as the mother figure, the father figure, the archetypal green bower, the mythical elaborations of the four elements, earth, air water and fire and also the recruitment.

The great goddess, according to ancient tradition, was immortal, changeless and omnipotent and motherhood was her prime attribute. The hearth was her social symbol and the sun and moon were her celestial symbols. She was also linked to the seasons. In spring she was a maiden and gave birth to newbuds and leaves, in summer she was a nymph and bore fruits and in winter she was a crone who had ceased to bear. Robert Graves has traced the very foundation of the Greek mythology to this many-titled great Goddess.[2] Ancient Europe, according to him, had no gods. The concept of fatherhood did not exist in the ancient religious system until the coming of the Aryans who introduced the male trinity.

Endymion represents a quest. Endymion, the mythic hero, seeks the ultimate 'thing of beauty' symbolized in this context by the moon. The moon is a very old and venerable goddess. When the Great Goddess split into three i.e. the maiden, the nymph and the crone, she also symbolized the three aspects of the moon - the new, the full and the waning. She represents 'the spirit of essential Beauty', the 'oldest trees'[3] are holy to her, she can make dead things live, she manipulates the tides of the ocean, and the beasts and birds and the creatures of the sea are under her control. She is a goddess of many names such as Diana, Proserprine, Hacate, Isis, Cybele, Cares, Rhea, Ops and Cynthia.

In *Endymion* she appears in three forms, viz. her celestial form in which Endymion recgnizes her and also as two other maidens, one golden-haired and the black-haired in which he does recognize her. The triple appearance causes the main complicaitons of the plot.

Endymion's progress in love can be paralleled to the essentially cyclic career of the fertility god who dies and is reborn over and over again. The Matriarch mates with her son-consort and then disappears for a time to attend to the agricultural process. The matriarch and the moon are two aspects of the one great goddess. The ignorance of the mortal hero and the mortal reader lend mystery and irrationality to the atmosphere of the poem.

The opening lines of the poem describe a green power characterized by vegetational abundance. In the ancient agricultural ritual which enact the myth of the dying and resurrected vegetation god, the bower symbolizes the seedstage. The bower offers the poet sleep, dream and health away from 'despondence' and 'gloomy days'. The ethereal and secure bode is also symbolic of the womb. Here the poet will continue to sleep, until 'Some of beauty moves away the pall'. This 'shape of beauty' is suggestive of a woman.

To make a beginning, the poet must return to the ritualistic state of vegetative innocence, viz., the seed-state and then after resurrection, he must follow the calendrical cycle of change, viz., birth, ripening and death of vegetation in order to begin, develop and complete 'the story of Endymion'—

> So I will begin . . . .
> Now while the early budders are just new,
> . . . . and as the year
> Grows lush in juicy stalks,
> I'll smoothly steer
> My little boat . . . .
> . . . . but let Autumn bold . . .
> Be all about me when I make an end.
>
> (Pk I, pp.39-55)

The poem begins with a spring-rate for the nature-

god Pan, then follows a pattern of productiveness expressed in Endymion's various encounters with Cynthia and in its conclusion contains an autumnal picture of Endymion's ritualistic death in a dying forest before launcing a new seasonal cycle initiated by the wedding of Endymion and Cynthia.

Endymion in Book I, is introduced to Cynthia through a number of dream expriences in which she appears as the golden-haired maiden; these dream visions provide emotional and imaginative nourishment which is so excessive that it dazzles him into a kind of enchantment that is curtailed by a rude awakening. Endymion's quest begins in BK II. As the hero of the mythical quest, he has to explore the earth, the water and the air before he can attain unity with the sought. The descent into the bowels of the Earth represents an archetypal quest-image. The Earth in the mythologies of the agricultural societies, is necessarily envisaged as a woman, as she is the original producer of food. The seed must be buried in the Earth if it is to germinate. Instinctively sensitive to mythological relationships, Keats guides Endymion into the "Sparry hollow of the world", thus signifying the rooting process of the seed.

During the course of his journey, Endymion reaches the secret underground bower of Adonis which is luxuriant in vegetation. A green bower within the bowels of the earth is a Keatsian invention. Traditionally. greenary in all forms, is the cover for the exterior of the earth. However to sustain the presence of the regenerative goddess throughout the narrative, the poet creates the green bower.

Endymion is admitted by a 'serene Cupid'. In Roman mythology Cupid is the boy-god of love, son of Venus. But here Keats's reference is not to the boy-god but to an attendant of Venus. Cupid offers a feast to

Endymion. The food is delicate and exquisite and evocative of rich mythological associations. The wine evokes memories of Bacchus, the cream is 'sweeter than that nurse Amathea Skimmed' for Jupiter, and the pears have been sent by Vertumnus, the Roman God of Spring. The underworld that Endymion visits has constant interaction with the regenerative forces of nature. The luxuriant vegetational abundance indicates the presence of the life-spirit in the underworld, the feast that Endymion is offered is 'ready to melt between an infant's gums'. In the ritual of initiation, in the primeval religions the fertility god received exotic food before copulating with the Great Goddess. This food and love sequence occur again and again in Keats's poetry. Food serves as sacrament or 'communion' in the ritual magic that makes the earth provident. Though Adonis is the fertility god, the exotic food is offered to Endymion. The food etherealizes Endymion's senses and he begins to 'feel immortal' and is thus propared to meet his dream goddess.

When Endymion continues on his way, once again, he enters 'a vaulted dome' that was 'huge and strange', 'Midst fog and dusk appears Cybele, 'the shadowy queen' seated in a lion-drawn chariot. She silently 'faints away into another gloomy arch'. Cybele is the sinister aspect of the Great Goddess. She is the death-in-life goddess. She destroys her consort as the queen-bee destroys the drone. One of her sanctuaries is a subterranean chamber. This is the malignant version of the love-bower. That Cybele passes him by without any communication suggested that he has imbibed the wisdom that archetypal quest-heroes imbibe in their under-world descent.

Book III represents the second part of the mythic quest. In traditional mythology water represents the life spirit. It is the symbol for creativitiy and the medium of purification. All vegetation is nourished by water and man

is reborn of water and the spirit. As the descent to the underworld was needed for the seed to germinate, the journey through water is needed for the new sapling to flower and fruit. Endymion's quest descends into the land of the dead, but as part of the regenerative rites of the fertility myth which with its associations of the Great goddess is being sustained as the ground myth by the poet.

The original pre-Aryan, Greek goddess has three aspects identified with the three faces of the moon. In another analogue she was linked with the three elements. The maiden of the upper air is Selene, the nymph of the Earth and sea is Aphrodite and the Gone Hecate belongs to the underworld. Aphrodite's sway extends to love, marriage and family life and sometimes amorous intrigue as well. Keats refers to a few of them —

> . . . thou gav'st Leander, breath,
> Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;
> Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;
> (III, 11. 97-99)

Leander, Orpheus and Pluto are figures in classical mythology who braved the sea, the underworld and the air for the sake of love. In fact, the myth of Pluto has associations with fertility rites.

As Endymion continues on his journey, the poet communicates to the reader that the quest is a result of predetermined destiny. Endymion says that the great goddess has been a 'presence' in his life ever since he can remember. When a child, he treated her like a sister. In his boyhood, she was his teacher explaining the changes of the calender to him —

> In souring time, ne'er would
> I dibble take,

Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake.
(III, pp. 153-54)

The agricultural images are evocative of the fertility rites. This is further enhanced in the next few lines where he describes the Moon as the maiden who, in his youth, enlightened him about art and love. She was the 'Sage's pen', 'the poet's harp' and finally 'the charm of women'. By playing the role of both his sister, who in Keats's poetry is interchangeable with the mother, and his beloved, the moon-goddess once again takes on the role of the Great Goddess and Endymion of the fertility god.

The Great Goddess makes a second appearance in her evil aspect in the episode where Alaucus encounters Circe. Circe is an enchantress and a magician. She has a death island, a willow grove and a cemetry. When Alaucus goes in search of her, he finds that 'Aeaea's isle was wandering at the moon'. There is an age-old connection between witchcraft and the moon. The magical efficacy of charms is said to increase on moon-lit nights. A spell of enchantment puts Glaucus in a swoon. When he wakes, he finds himself in a 'twilight bower: Here Circe, disguised as a higly sensual maiden, ensnares him in a web of sexual ecstacy. This bower is a variation of Adonis's bower of love whereas Adonis's bower represents the very nucleus of fertility. Circe's bower represents the nucleus of decay. Circe represents the lesser mysteries of the great goddess. She ensnares, captivates and enthralls. Thus, the young witch, in Keats's poetry is the symbol of lust and sin. We find her performing certain sadistic rites. This is a malignant parallel of the erotic rites that had been conducted in Adonis's bower. She sits surrounded by a herd of animals that had once been men & women and proceeds to torture and torment

them so that the entire congregation groans like 'one huge Python'. Endymion, fulfilling his duties as the youth elect helps to liberate these men and gains the states of a 'new born god'. He leads the congregation of the newly liberated lover to Neptune's palace where the fertility ritual is enacted. Endymion swoons and wakes to find himself back in the forest.

This return suggests that he is still bound to the fertility principle of the Great Goddess. He returns to Mountlatmos in autumn. The calendrical year has come to an end to die once again. The wheel of time must take a full circle before the rebirth of the hero can take place. The final aerial ascent symbolizes the way out of the whirlpool of the time-cycle. The time-cycle loses its significance once Endymion achieves his union with Cynthia and establishes himself in Elysium for life in Elysium is changeless and static. It is characterized by eternal spring and happiness.

To re-establish her contact with Endymion, the lunar goddess uses the disguise of a dark -haired Indian maid. Her lament associates her with the Ganges which, according to Vedic mythology, is the most sacred of all Indian rivers and the spirit of the Ganges is projected as that of a woman. The sacred river is regarded as the cleanser of sins, the giver of immortality and was originally confined to the celestial regions, where it flowed from a toe of Vishnu. When the sons of Sagara, a king of Ayodhya, were consumed by a fire, he was told that his sons would come to life again and rise to heaven when the Ganges flowed to the Earth. It seems that the myth of Ganga provides Keats with a method for connecting the human and celestial regions. The Indian maid, who is Cynthia in disguise, descends to the mortal realms like the Ganges. She frees Endymion from mortality and he, like the sons of Sagara, attains eternal bliss in heaven.

The Indian maid sings the song of sorrow. Her verses define the sorrows of lovers as the essential aesthetic ingredient for the natural world. Maidens die so that roses may bloom. She traces the patterns of death and rebirth in nature. The song concludes with a host of confused familial associations. Sorrow, to whom the maiden's song is addressed, is her mother/And her brother/her playmate and her wooer in the shade. The Great Goddess represents many relationships. She is Endymion's mother, nurse, sister, playmate and lover and Endymion is her baby, brother and also lover.

Endymion retires to the cave of quietude which he describes as —

Happy gloom !
Dark Paradise ! Where pale
becomes the bloom
Of health by due; where
silence dreariest
Is most articulate; where
hopes infest;
Where those eyes are the
brightest for that keep
Their lids shut longest
in a dreamless sleep.
(IV. 11 537-42)

The passage contains a rebirth ritual. It is said that whoever enters the Cave of quietude first takes a cool draught from 'urn'. The draught is richer than anything 'young Semele' drank in her 'maternal longings'. Semele was the mother of Dionysius. When she was seven-months pregnant, Jupiter appeared in thunder and lightening before her. She had a miscarriage. Jupiter, the father-god, saved the baby by putting it into his own

thigh till the end of the natural term of pregnancy. This is the Olympian partriarchal myth established to fit the new orthodoxy once the relevance of coition to child bearing had been admitted and the physical superiority of the male had been recognized. The new myth was a rationalization of some of the mysteries associated with the Great Goddess. The strange double birth of Dionysius offers an analogy for the spiritual birth of Endymion symbolized by his experiences in the cave. The 'spiritual home' of the cave is said to be 'pregnant' to 'save' Endymion. Endymion returns to foetal state in its depths. This is the last sleep of the mythical sleeper. It is both a sleep of healing and a sleep of preparation where physical powers are gathered for the transformaton of the sleeper.

As yet, however, Endymion must remain unaware of these preparations. When he wakes, he decides he has been soaring too high like Icarus and chooses to return to the Earth and lead the tranquil life of a shepherd with the Indian maid. However, this cannot be. The natural cycle at this juncture does not permit a return to the state of vegetative innocence. The leaves of the forest are falling and there can be return to the Green Eden of the beginning. Following the mythological multi-relational concept of the Great Goddess, he invites the Indian Maid to be another sister to him.

Endymion has passed through various ordeals, and now he rests in a green bower in the forest 'and so remain'd as a corpse had been'. This is the ritual death. The Indian Maid appears like the 'Chilly fingered Spring' and before his amazed eyes she is transformed into Cynthia and Endymion too is immortalized. The poem concludes with the following piece of information —

They vanished far away!
Peona went

Home through the gloomy
wood in wonderment
(IV. 11 1002-3)

Marriage is a tradional link in the fertility rituals. Before a new fertility cycle can be launched a marriage must take place. Keats leaves it out of the narrative. Endymion, having returned unscarred from his mythical quest has discovered the sanctuary of the divine regions. Further unravelling of the mysteries of creation are only for his immortal ears. The mortal reader, along with Peona, is left in a state of 'wonderment'.

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KEATS AND TENNYSON

This paper concentrates on the early poetry of Tennyson till 1832. His growth of consciousness from the sensuous to the serious 'bard' is not taken into consideration.

It is highly significant that at Keats's Memorial celebrations of 1894, the words of Tennyson were repeated by a number of speakers. It was this approval that contributed to Keats' fame. Sir Edmund Gosse in his address said:

> Tennyson was more than once heard to assert that Keats, had his life been prolonged, would have been our greatest poet since Milton... Fifty years ago to have made such a proposition in public would have been thought ridiculous, and sixty years ago almost the English but all that is over now. Keats lives... among the English poets. Nor among them, merely, but in the first rank of them-among the very few of whom we instinctively think whenever the characteristic verse men of our race are spoken of.[1]

When Tennyson began to write, the Romantic style had not established itself. Keats and Shelley were under violent attack and even Wordsworth was not regarded as a poet of the poetic establishment. Tennyson could not get an opportunity to have a personal contact with Keats (1795-1821) as he died on 23 Feb. 1821 when Tennyson was only twelve years old. From the available evidence it is probable that Tennyson did not read Keats before entering

Cambridge in Feb. 1828:

> His father's library was well provided with collections of English poetry, but that of the neglected youth of the Cockney School does not seem to have been included. In Tennyson's first volume, "Poems of Two Brothers" (1827) there is ample evidence that he had been reading Byron and Ossion, but no sign of any acquaintance with Keats...[2]

In the *Memorir* there are a number of references and short phrases which show that of all the Romantic poets it was Keats who was the favourite. In discussing the Romantic poets with Allingham, Tennyson exclaimed:

> But the man I count greater than them all--wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, every one of them--is Keats, who died at twenty five--thousands of faults, but he is wonderful...At the same time, he was daimonisch. He was livery stable keeper's son-I don't know where he got it from except from heaven.[3]

Shelley was too ethereal for Tennyson. Some of his poems "seemed to go up and burst".[4] It was Tennyson's opposition which prevented Shelley's lyric, "Life of Life," from appearing in the Golden Treasury. Even Wordsworth, he could describe as "thick ankled".[5] For parts of Coleridge he had great admiration. Yet Coleridge was not the master poet for Tennyson as Keats was. The younger poet was familiar with all the writings of Keats. In a letter to Thackeray urging him to visit him he remarked that the country air "as Keats said is worth six pence a pint.[6] On another occasion when Tennyson went to Manchester to visit the exhibition of a collection of pictures and there he:

> took long walks by himself or with his friends. One

> day he climbed Coniston Oldman with Coventry Patmore, and the two men became so inspired with the contents of their flasks that they came down the mountain "charioted by Bacchus and his pards."

Alfred Tennyson's friends testified that the poet had great admiration for Keats, W.E.G.Lecky in his reminiscences writes:

> Among 19th century poets I think he (Alfred Tennyson) placed Keats on the highest pinnacle. He maintained that he (Keats) had more of the real gift than Shelley, and he thought it difficult to over-estimate the height to which he might have risen if he had lived.[8]

Frederick Locker Lampson in his recollections writes:

> A consciousness of Keats frequently appeared during his travels. One day as he was... admiring Alpine scenery near Murrean, his own enjoyment led him to think of what he aptly called Keats' keen physical imagination. "If he had been here", he added, "he would in one line have given us a picture of that mountain."[9]

F.T.Palgrave, another friend of Tennyson, too testifies to the fact that Tennyson had great praise for Keats. In his "Recollections" he writes:

> "Keats", more than once he said, "promised securely more than any English poet since Milton".[10]

Hallam Tennyson, the poet's son in his *Memoir* quotes his father:

> Keats with his high spiritual vision, would have been, if he had lived, the greatest of us all...and that there

> is something magic and of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything which he wrote.[11]

Hallam Tennyson writes that in support of the above statement Tennyson gave the example of the unfinished "Eve of St. Mark" and quoted the following lines from the "Ode to a Nightingale":

> 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
> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam.
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlon.

If the beginning of *Hyperion* as now published were shorter, Tennyson said, "it would be a deal finer...[12]

Tennyson found himself inferior to Keats as far as craftsmanship was concerned. He once remarked:

> Compare the heavy handling of my workmanhsip with the exquisite lightness of touch in Keats.[13]

Tennyson must have admired Keats not only for his imaginative power but also for his power of expression. He was a poet who looked on fine phrases like a love and who had an immense vocabulary of 8700 words, more than Milton's vocabulary, almost as many words as *Odessey* and Illiad, had together.

The critics of the eighteen thirties recognized the affinities between Keats and Tennyson. A writer in *The New Monthly Magazine* reviewing the 1830 volume of Tennyson's poetry observed:

> It is full of precisely the kind of poetry for which Mr.Keats was assailed, and for which the whole

> world is already beginning to admire him. We do not mean that it contains anything equal...to the *Hyperion*, the 'Ode to the Nightingale' or the Eve of St.Agnes, but it does contain many indications of a similar genius.[15]

Arthur Hallam's review of Tennyson's 1830 volume in "The Englishman's Magazine" also suggested the essential link between the two poets. Hallam compared Tennyson and Keats for their picturesque quality and described them as :

> Poets of sensations rather than reflections...rich and clear were their perceptions of visible forms; full and deep their feelings of music. So vivid was the delight attending the simple exertions of eye and ear, that it become mingled more and more with their trains of active thought and tended to absorb their whole being into the energy of sense. Other poets seek for images to illustrate their conceptions; these men had no need to seek, they lived in a world of images, for the most important and extensive portion of their life consisted in those emotions which are immediately conversant with sensation...hence they are not descriptive, they are picturesque.[16]

In 1831 Hallam wrote to Leigh Hunt that Keats had at last found a successor:

> Since the death of John Keats, the last lineal descendant of Apollo, our English region of Parnassus has been domineered over by Kings of Shreds and Patches. But if I mistake not, the true heir is found.[17]

Leigh Hunt discovered in Tennyson the principal writer upon whom the Keatsian mantel had fallen. He

wrote about Tennyson's 1830 volume-" we have seen no such poetical writing since the last volume of Mr.Keats.[18] "Quarterly Review" observed:

> Keat's poems, steeped as they are in the purest essence of poetry, were peculiarly spiritual in their ideality. His mythological passion breathed a living soul into the divinities of Greece; his solitary wanderings in "Faery lands forlorn" enabled him to throw the spell of enchantment over its dreams and legends; his gleanings from field and forest were fresh, sweet and faithful; and his interpretation of the essential inner life of poetry was conveyed in language which was itself instinct with form and aglow with colour. In all these four points Tennyson was the follower of Keats...and developed to the fruit what Keats had left in the bud.[19]

Tennyson's poetry is replete with Keatsian echoes. Though there is no evidence that Tennyson had read *Endymion* before he wrote the 'Lover's Tale' (1828) yet the poem is full of Keatsian touch. It has the same descriptive details of landscape. It is a world of beauty far from any philosophical, social or political issues. *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) are full of Keatsian expressions. In the "Leonine Elegies" the line "over the pools in the burn water gnats murmur and mourn" reminds us of Keats's "To Autumn" where he wrote —"Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn". In 'Kete' the line "her heart is like a throbbibg star" brings to mind the line in "The Eve of St. Agnes"—"Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star." The picture of Sir Lancelot in the 'Lady of Shalott':

> And from his blazoned baldric slung
> A mighty silver bugle hung

is reminiscent of Keats's Endymion beneath whose breast "was hung a silver bugle". In Geraint and Enid' the following description:

> ...Like a shoal
> of darting fish, that on summer morn... come slipping over their shadows on the sand But if a man who stands upon the brink But lift a shining hand against the sun There is not left the twinkle of a fin...

brings to mind the following lines from Keats's 'I stood Tip-Top":

> Where swarms of minnows show their little heads
> If you but scantily hold out the hand,
> That very instant not one will remain.

Similarly, line 281 in Guinevere "with all their dewy hair blown back like flame" reminds us of Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" "With—hair blown back and wings put cross wise on their breast". In the "Gardener's daughter" the line—"The lime a summer home of murmurous wings" is reminiscent of the "Ode to a Nightingale"—"The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eve."

What attracted Tennyson in Keats was his pictorial quality. Keats's cult of beauty meant emphasis on the pictorial. Both the poets used words as pigments. In fact, it appeared that the younger poet had caught the lamp from the hands of his senior. In the 1830 volume of Tennyson's poems pictorial descriptions recall to mind Keats's graphic pictures. His Marians sitting in the "thickest dark" glancing "athwart the glooming flates" crying "the night is dreary, He cometh not" reminds us of Keats's lines in "The Eve of St. Mark":

All was silent, all was gloom
Abroad and in the homely room
Down she sat, poor cheated soul!
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal
Leaned forward, with bright drooping hair.
(ll.67-71.)

Tennyson must have admired Keats for these pictures. About *Endymion* Keats wrote to Benjamin Bailey on 8th Oct. 1817:

I must make 4000 lines of one circumstance and fill them with poetry. [20]

The poem is, in fact, filled with pictures. Tennyson's early poetry moves in the same direction. In "Oenone" one forgets the laments of Oenone in the setting of Ida. One also forgets Endymion's feelings for Diana in the setting of the poem. Both the poems are superb in pictorial quality. Tennyson is at his best in the "Lotus Eaters" where the pictorial details match with the theme of the poem. Tennyson's *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) were praised for picturesque details. Arthur Hallam found the feeling of art and praised "a perfect gallery of pictures" and effects similar to those of "Venetian Colouring". J.S.Mill in the *London Review* noted Tennyson's "art of painting a picture" and W.H.Fox in the *West-Minister Review* found the "best pictorial qualities of poetry in the 1830 volume. George Gilfillan saw the poems as "vivid and complete pictures". Hogg admired the poet as mighty painter combining the palpable power of Raphael, the grandeur of Michael Angelo, the richness of Titian and the softness of Claude.[21] Tennyson is closest to Keats in being the painter's poet.

Associated with this love for the pictorial, there is

another trait which links the two poets. It is their emphasis on sensuousness. Tennyson's elegiac genius did not allow him those heights of sensations to which Keats could go after hearing a bird's song, yet in poems like 'Fatima' and "Eleanor" there are echoes of Keatsian sensuousness. In

part IV of Tennyson's "Lover's Tale" we have the following description:

> ...wines that, heaven knows when had sucked the
> fire of some forgotten sun
> And kept it thro' a hundred years of glooms.

The lines bring to mind Keats's lines in the "Ode to a Nightingale":

> O, for a draught of vintage; that hath been cooled a
> Long age in the deep delved earth.

In the "Day Dream" Tennyson writes about a "beaker brimmed with noble wine" (l.36) It is reminiscent of Keats's "beaker full of the warm south". In the "Place of Art" (1832 version) the soul delights herself at the rich banquet:

> With piles of flavourous fruits in basket twine of
> Gold, upheaped, crushing down
> Musk-scented blooms—all taste—grape, gourd or
> pine In bunch, or single grown—
> ...Ambrosial pulps and juices, sweets from sweets
> Sun changed, when sea winds sleep.

This recalls to mind keats's "Eve of St. Agnes" heap:

> Of candied apple, quince, and palm and gourd;
> With jellies soother than the creamy curd,

And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
From Fez; and spiced dainties, everyone,
From silken samarkand to cadared
Lebanon.

(Eve of St. Agnes, St.30)

In the early poems of Tennyson we also find the Keatsian lingering over female body. Mariners see "sweet faces, rounded arms and bosoms prest to little harps of gold". (LL. 3-4) In "Rosalind" (1832) the following depiction presents the cheeks of Rosalind:

And your cheek, whose brilliant hue
Is so sparkling fresh to view
Some red heath flower in the dew touched with sunrise...

(LL. 39-42)

In 'Oenone' we have:

Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new bathed in pathian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: From the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and over her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

This is a typical Keatsian representation of the human form with its fulness. Fully approving this sensous element in Tennyson's poetry, Arthur Hallam wrote to W.B.Donne:

"An artist", as Alfred is won't to say, "Ought to be Lord of the five senses"...when the object of the poetic power happens to be an object of sensuous

perception, it is the business of the poetic language to paint.[21]

The sensuous imagery in Tennyson's early poetry shows that if he was not trying to "outglitter Keats"[22] as Lockhart thought, he was certainly following him closely.

There was yet another thing that linked the two poets. It was their conviction that systemized though, has no place in poetry. In "Day Dream" published in 1842 Tennyson wrote:

So Lady Flora, take my lay,
And if you find no moral there,
Go, look in any glass and say,
What moral is in being fair,
...And is there any moral shut
Within the bosom of the rose?

Keats believed that reasoned philosophy destroys the world of beauty. In *Lamia* he wrote:

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
(*Lamia*, ll.229-30)

Tennyson's picture of the sophist in "The Poet's Mind" is an expansion of Keatsian concept:

Dark-brow'd sophist, come not a near;
...The flowers would faint at your cruel cheer
In your eyes there is death
There is frost in your breath.
(The Poet's mind, ll. 8, 15-17)

In his love for pure poetry untouched by the social and political conflicts, in his wanderings in the past, what

Keats called the "faery lands forlorn" Tennyson showed that he was writing under the aegis of Keats. Tennyson's finest poetry was written when he forgot such issues as the feminist movement, the dangers of trade unions and the future of the British Empire. In his early poetry Tennyson avoided all political and social questions.

Tennyson resented the charge of imitating Keats. These accusations goaded him towards independence. He deliberately toned down the sensuous element in his poetry and emphasized the prophetic. The real extent of his independence is found in 1842 volume. He revised most of the 1832 poems. Some of the Keatsian stanzas were removed. One example of revision can be seen in "Mariana in the South". In the 1832 the lines were:

> She moved her lips, she prayed alone,
> She praying, disarrayed and warm
> From slumber, deep her wavy form
> In the dark lustrous mirror shone.

In the 1842 volume this stanza appeared thus:

> Complaining, "Mother, give me grace
> To help me of my weary load
> And on the liquid mirror glowed
> The clear perfection of her face.

Such poems as the "Place of Art", "The vision of sin", "Godive", "Ulysses" showed a disregard for sensuousness. In his later poems it was this appeal to thought rather than `senses' which made him comment:

> One must distinguish Keats, Shelley and Byron, the great sage poets...who are both great thinkers and great artists[23] like Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe.

Keats had said, "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us". After 1842 Tennyson's poetry is full of "Palpable design". Goaded by the `Apostles' to become the `bard'. Tennyson turned away from the Keatsian model under which his finest poetry was written. Some of the best poems of Tennyson are the "Recollections of the Arabian Nights", "The Lady of Shalott","The Hesperides", "The Lotos Eaters" and "The May Queen". All these poems were written under the Keatsian cult of beauty. Tennyson lost much in his effort to be independent. The disappearance of this influence marked the decline of his poetry.

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