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**S. No 14 B.A.Part-1 English Hons, Topic: Critical Appreciation of *Ode to a Nightingale* Dr Umesh Prasad Singh, Assistant Prof of English, D. B. College
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Critical Appreciation of *Ode to a Nightingale*

Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* has cast its enchantment over every audience. Its exquisite music suggests that the song-bird which inspired the poet and made him pour out his heart in such an amazing flood of rapture. Its musical quality is not its only charm. It fascinates as much by its thought structure and poetical qualities as much as by its melody. All the great qualities we associate with Keats as poet are to be found in abundance in this poem. His sensuous delight in nature his consciousness of the horror and misery in life and his passionate longing to escape from the world of sorrow are vividly reflected in this poem.

At first that strikes the reader in this poem is the abundance of felicitous epithets. It might be said that in no other poem Keats has managed to crowd so many epithets: each bright and glowing like a jewel. The very thought of this ode brings to our memory, phrases like *purple- strained mouth, the blushful Hippocrene, leaden-eyed despair* and lines like

Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery land forlorn.

These epithets have a rich economy of effect. The words are not numerous but they conjure up all at once a vivid and colourful picture.

The music of the poem is really unsurpassed. It seems to have been specially designed to suit the atmosphere, so gloriously conjured up by the poet. All the melancholy of the atmosphere, received by the rapturous bliss enjoyed by the nightingale, finds a place in the music. The music may be said to be melodious amalgam of the most profound joy, quite gloom and soft melancholy. The sound is invariably made to echo to the sense. Colour or

perfume is suggested without any apparent effort. Soft incense hangs upon the boughs, the darkness is embalmed; musk roses, hawthorn and eglantine fill the atmosphere with sweet perfume. A line like-

Through verdurous gloom and winding mossy ways.

has a beauty and vividness that seldom to be found in poetry. Even Keats has not often written better line than this. This line is a perfect jewel perhaps the most beautiful line in this poem.

The charge that is usually lodged against Keats's poetry that it is too much concerned with sensuousness and it dispenses with substantial thought cannot be justified here. There is no doubt sensuousness is in abundance here, however, the thought structure leaves nothing to desire. The logic is perhaps defective but it is not sufficient to distract from the value of its thought content. More than in any other poem, Keats has here concerned with weariness, the fever and fret of human life. These have saddened him and he longs to escape into the enchanted region of joy along with the bird.

Judged as whole it may be deemed one of the Keats's masterpiece lyrics. Critics like Sydney Colvin and Robert Bridges have praised this poem extravagantly and all readers seem to join in this chorus of admiration. It is indeed one of the few perfect poems in English literature.