

## Keats - Romantic Poet of Love (10)

John Keats grew in the atmosphere of Romanticism, dominated by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Romantic Poetry is distinguished by its heightened sensibility, imagination, feelings, vate passion, emotion and love for beauty. The Romantics worship Nature and chanker after medieval adventures. Romantic art creates a beauty that is strange, mysterious and uncommon. Keats faithfully carries on the tradition of the Romantics and all the Romantic traits of the early 19th Century find their culmination in his Poetry.

The Eve of St. Agnes is one of the best Romantic poems ever composed. In the fashion of the Romantic Movement, Keats moves in the Grecian world of classical love and beauty. Like 'Endymion' and 'Lamia', the theme of this poem is the love of an adventurous youth for the Lady of hostile house. The action revolves round a medieval belief that a maiden can find her future husband in dream, if she performs certain ceremonies on the Eve of St. Agnes. Madeline, a wealthy maiden, tries to test its truth. She leaves the gay revellers and retires supperless to her bed. In the mean time Porphyro, the passionate lover, crosses the moors and ventures in the hall at the risk of his life. Angela, an affectionate attendant of Madeline, recognises him and helps to elope with his love in shade of pattering rain and storm.

Keats introduces Porphyro as a lover like Romeo. There is enmity between the families of the lovers. If discovered, Porphyro will become a hapless victim to his enemy's wrath. Even then he takes a bold and chivalrous step to have a glimpse of his beloved Angela. She realises the gravity of situation and expresses her amazement.

"Thou must hold water in witch's sieve

And be liege-Lord of all the Eves and Fays

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Porphyro shows his impatience to know about his lady. He proposes a device for an unspeed look of the dreaming Lady. He promises Angela that he will not harm Madeline. He will not not even look at her with his 'ruffian passion' but Angela indicates her reluctance, doubting his sincerity. Then Porphyro threatens her with his self sacrifice.

Good Angela, believe me by these tears;

"O, I will, even in a moment's space

Awake, with larval shout, my foeman's ears

And heard them though they be more fanged than wolves and bears."

Keats suggests that Porphyro is a pilgrim and Madeline's chamber is his heaven. The pilgrim strives to reach his heaven. He even the hall full of blood thirsty enemies, is the hostile world through which he goes to the closet by Madeline's bed chamber. Porphyro says:-

"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!

Thou art my heaven, and I thine emerald heaven."

Madeline's dream of love is a symbol of perfection, for it is removed from reality. It is an imaginative world where a rose may shut and be a bud again. But men live in a world where rose can only fade and die. That is why Madeline is disappointed when she awakes -

"There was painful change, that night expell'd

The blisses of her dream so pure, and deep."

Porphyro's presence in flesh and blood changes the dream land of Madeline into the land of reality. Men cannot leave the real world that is sorrowful and hostile to lovers.

Sensuousness is the paramount bias of Keats' genius. His sensuous description of situation and lyric contemplation enhance the intensity of Love and Beauty. The following lines appeal to the eyes, sense of touch

(12)

Sense of smell and the ears: -

"of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;  
unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;  
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees  
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees;  
Half hidden, like a mermaid in sea weed"

To conclude, here Keats celebrates the joys of young lovers and union of two souls. At the same time, he also reminds that ours is a different age from, the middle ages, where lovers cannot escape from hostility and frustration. Really, the *End of St. Agnes* is Keats' triumph in the world of love.

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