

Introduction – Keats was one of the most important poets of romanticism. His poetry is marked by sensuousness, imagery and love of nature. This poem 'A thing of Beauty' is an extract from his poem 'Endymion: A Poetic Romance.' It is based on a Greek legend in which Endymion, a handsome young shepherd and poet who lived on Mount Latmos, has a vision of Cynthia, the moon goddess.

Love of beauty is the dominant note of his poetry. Beauty was the moving spirit of his life and art. Beauty was his religion.

This poem is a revolt against the commonplace reality. According to Keats the object of beauty differs from an ordinary object. The ordinary object appeals to us only temporarily. Its effect is short lived and its loveliness decreases with the passage of time. But the object of beauty appeals to our senses permanently. It cannot be destroyed by time and space. It is temporal and its loveliness does not fade. It is a ray of light and hope that consoles man in his miseries and misfortunes. Then Keats mentions the objects of beauty one by one. The sun, the moon, the old trees, the daffodils, the clear streams and the forest which is rich with beautiful flowers—all these objects of beauty are a source of consolation in a world. Keats found that a beauty (beautiful thing) is a source of perennial joy and happiness. It leaves an indelible mark on our mind and provides us with eternal happiness whenever we think about it. Our joy increases as we keep on remembering the beauty. It is just like Endymion looking for Cynthia as his everlasting love. (according to Greek myth). The poem is an allegory (a literary composition in which the characters, places and events have symbolic significance.) The poem depicts human soul's quest for ideal beauty. Endymion stands for the poet as a man and Cynthia stands for ideal beauty.

Paraphrase:

A thingforever'- A thing of beauty makes a lasting impression on our mind. The pleasurable memories continue to have a soothing effect on us and become a source of joy for ever.

'Its loveliness increases'- According to the poet, joy multiplies with every beautiful thought. Likewise the loveliness of a beautiful thing increases manifold each time we visualise it in our mind screen.

"It will never pass _____ in nothingness"- A thing of beauty never fades away from our memories. It remains fresh in our thoughts.

"It will _____ us"- A thing of beauty is always fresh in our mind and its pleasant memories are a cool shade in our times of trouble.

"Sleep _____ dreams"- It makes a sleep full of sweet dreams and provides us good health and peaceful breathing. Its memories always give us peace even in times of gloom.

"Quiet breathing"- The reference implies the sense of peace and serenity that one experiences on seeing beautiful things. Beautiful sights act like nutrition for healthy mind and thus refreshes and relaxes us by driving away aggression and restlessness.

"Therefore _____ earth"- Keats as a worshiper of beauty felt that life on earth would not be worth living without its treat of beauty. In this expression he expresses a similar feeling that every morning we weave a string of flowers or memories which help us to support ourselves on this earth and motivate us to live our life which otherwise would have been a pain. Flowers **provide the beholder with a haven of tranquility and solace. It is the beauty of nature that keeps us attached to this earth. Every morning we collect fresh lovely flowers and**

prepare garlands. The fascination for flowers is our bonding with the earth. It helps us steer clear of despondency and disappointments.

“despite of despondent”- Refers to the sufferings and hopelessness of man which he experiences at various junctures of life.

“In human _____natures”- Man is selfish and self-centred by nature. There are only a few who enjoy such nobility of character as to rise above their petty differences and show generosity. On this earth there is shortage of such noble souls.

“Gloomy days”- life is struggle for success. Our path towards success gets obstructed by the selfishness of our fellow travellers. We suffer the pangs of defeat & loss of hope which makes our life sad.

“Unhealthy _____ our searching “ . – To be able to enjoy the light at the dark end of the tunnel one has to cross & transcend the darkness. The unhealthy & over-darkened ways refer to the trials & tribulations, one encounters in this journey of life.

“In spite of all”- This expression refers to all the pessimistic & negative thoughts that obstruct our way to happiness. In spite of the instance of hopelessness & gloom that over shadows & darkens our ways, we are able to find our happiness in the beautiful objects of nature. **Life is full of trials and tribulations and we often find ourselves in the midst of gloom. It is at such depressing moments that a sight full of beauty dispels the pall of sadness from our spirits making room for hope and optimism.**

“Some shape of beauty moves away the pangs”- Nature’s beauty exists in various forms the sun, the moon, the old & young tree, the daffodils etc. These dispel the gloom & brighten up our dull days.

“Trees old & young”- The poet sees the tree whether young or old as a symbol of protection. Nature through the trees showered on us the blessing of shades, protecting us from heat, intensive light of the sun & also from rain.

“simple sheep”- lambs & sheep are envisioned as the embodiments of innocent & serene beauty. Jesus Christ was a shepherd & was seen surrounded by flock of sheep. The poet has made specific reference to the sheep as symbol of divine beauty.

“With the green _____live in “ . Nature’s beauty at its best in the lush green surrounding of meadows and pastures which provide live support to all plants and animals. NO living creature can be happy away from nature and it is in this green world that they find true joy and happiness of life.

“Clear rills”- This refers to the rivers and streams which are the natural source of water. These beautiful sights provide cooling effects in the hot seasons.

“The mid forest _____musk rose bloom”-Nature is beautiful in all its aspects. The poet enjoys nature’s beauty in the thick forest undergrowth which is brimming with the growth of musk-rose flowers.

“And such-----dooms”-We have imagined a grand abode for our powerful and impressive forefathers. The poet says that the beauty of nature matches with the grandeur of the heaven where our grand dead would be going.

The poet has here used contrasting aspects of life. Life is a blend of warmth and coolness; growth and decay. Every season, every aspect of life contrasts with the other and has its own charm and beauty.

“We have imagined-----dead”-The mighty dead refers to those great men and warriors who glorified death by embracing it gracefully. The poet refers to the mighty dead because beauty can be seen not only in birth but also in death.

‘lovely tales -----read’-A glorified and magnificent death gets recorded in the leaves of History. It remains an everlasting source of motivation to all those who read or hear about such great men who achieve glory in death. **These are wonderful tales of our legendary heroes, who lived and died heroically, which inspire us with their matchless beauty. These beautiful things are metaphorically an endless source of nectar that pours down to us from heaven bringing eternal joy for the soul’s grandeur. They are like an elixir of life, a never diminishing source of pleasure and delight, an endless fountain of joy that seems to be a precious gift from Heaven.**

‘Endless-----drink’-The poet draws on the image of an endless fountain to explain how a thing of beauty is a joy forever. Nature is heaven’s gift to us. It lives fresh in our memories and pour on us endless joys that dispel our gloom whenever we are in pain and suffering.

‘Pouring onto us -----heaven’s drink’-Beauty is the greatest gift of God to man which is showered upon us from heaven. This beauty is eternal in whose glory man on earth bask and derive their personal source of joy and happiness. Things of beauty are like an endless fountain pouring on us from the heaven which signifies that God himself has made these beautiful things so that we may happiness, calm and peace in our lives.

- Keats casts a lyrical spell with a perfect rhyme scheme aabbcc.
- Message-The poet, a great lover of nature magnifies the power of nature. He feels that man should discover the beauty of nature as it has great healing power and can refresh and rejuvenate him in his darkened days. The poem is an allegory of the yearning of human soul for ideal beauty.