

## TO a SKYLARK: P. B. Shelley.

"TO a SKYLARK" is an ode composed by P. B.

Shelley, a poet of later romantic generation. He composed this poem in the summer of 1820 while he was in Italy with his wife Mary Shelley. For this composition, he got inspiration from the song of a real skylark and very beautifully transformed ordinary experience into a plea to move beyond that experience to a deeper poetic understanding.

'TO a SKYLARK' is not, however, a description of a particular occasion, or a particular bird, rather it is a search for something ideal and elusive, something which cannot, in the end, be captured in words.

In the poem, "a SKYLARK" is addressed as a "blithe spirit" rather than a bird, because its song comes from heaven and from its full heart pours "profuse strains of unpremeditated art". As the poet visualised the skylark flying higher and higher "like a cloud of fire" in the blue sky and singing at the higher level of sky. Here poet gives thought-provoking picture of the

Skylark. While flying, it sings too, and appears to be in the "golden lighting" of the sun, it appears floating and discerning like "an unbodied joy." As the Skylark flies higher and higher, the poet or the speaker loses sight of it, but is still able to hear its "shrill delight" which comes down as keenly as moonbeams in the "white dawn", which can be felt even when they are not seen. The earth and air resound with the skylark's voice just as Heaven overflows with moonbeams when the moon shines out from behind "a lonely cloud".

The poet says that Skylark is unknown to everyone because it is unique and he further says that even "rainbow clouds" do not rain as brightly as the shower of melody that comes from the Skylark. He compares bird with poet's thoughtful state of mind. The bird is "like a poet hidden / in the light of thought," is able to make the world experience "sympathy with hopes and fears it needed not". It is like a lonely maiden in a palace tower, who uses her song to soothe her love-lorn soul, a glowworm throwing out its beams of light, a rose in bloom diffusing its

scent, and the sound of rain tumbling  
grass are here being compared to the  
flying singing skylark, though human  
songs 'sung in praise of love or wine or  
music played for a wedding or a celebration  
can not compare its loveliness with the  
song of skylark.

What are the reasons that make  
the skylark's song so sweet and  
happy? What accounts for the  
happiness of the song of the skylark?  
It is free from all that gives pain  
to man. It knows what lies beyond  
death and has no fear. Even if  
man freed himself from hate,  
pride, and fear, man's joy would  
not equal the skylark's. The secret  
of its capacity to sing so happily  
would be an incomparable gift for the  
poet. If the skylark could communicate  
to Shelley half its happiness, then  
he would write poetry that the  
world would read as joyful as he is  
listening to the song of the bird.

So, in this poem, Shelley has  
converted the bird or specifically, the  
bird song into a symbol of happiness.  
The poem is not so much about a  
skylark, as it is about happiness. As  
in the first line of the poem the singing  
bird is personified as "blithe" or happy

Spirit. Shelley, in personifying the Skylark, has created a myth, just as in the 'Ode to The West Wind' and 'The Cloud'. He has endowed his Skylark with mind - "Teach us, Spirit or Bird, / What Sweet thoughts are thine". Here, the poet gets the secret revealed of the happiness of the bird. It has a decided advantage over human beings, who know what makes them happy and what make them unhappy. The Skylark knows - what lies beyond death and the nature of what it knows banishes its fear of death.

'To, a Skylark' brilliantly illustrates Shelley's conviction that the human mind and by extension, human society, operates not according to fixed mental or emotional states, but to a constantly changing, and never resolved tension between the body and soul, the physical and the imagined, despondency and optimism, harsh reality and idealism.