

Study Material for Degree I (Hons.), English, Paper-II

Dr. Suman Sinha

Department of English

R. N. College, Hajipur

POEM: TO THE SKYLARK

POET: WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

To The Skylark is a beautiful romantic poem written by William Wordsworth. William Wordsworth is a nature poet. He is thrilled and fascinated by the exquisite beauty of nature. In his poem he expresses his joy on the beautiful nature. In the poem, **To The Skylark** Wordsworth describes a songbird, skylark and praises the unique qualities the bird possesses. This poem gives a feeling of joy, delight and beauty. The poet praises not only the quality of its melodious song but also expresses the sense of faithfulness, love and care the bird has.

A skylark is a small bird that sings as it flies high in the sky. Wordsworth calls the bird an *'Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!* The bird is like a heavenly singer that pours its divine melody from the sky. In the metaphor 'pilgrim of the sky' the skylark is considered as the traveller of the sky. As it soars it sings. The poet wonders about the reason behind the bird's pilgrimage to the sky and asks, *'Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?'* He wonders whether the skylark dislikes the earth where life is miserable due to sufferings and worry. The term *'care abounds'* clearly reveals the tone of unhappiness. The poet further asks the bird that as it mounts high up on its wing towards the sky does it care for the nest that it builds on the *'dewy ground'*. It is believed that the skylark builds its nest on the ground. The skylark is faithful towards its home. The skylark cannot frequently drop into its nest as per its will because the bird will have to fold its wavering wings to slide down the ground. The moment the bird folds its wings the song also stops. The line, *'Those quivering wings composed that music still!'* conveys this idea.

*To the last point of vision, and beyond
Mount, daring warbler!-*

In the second stanza of the poem the poet makes us familiar with some more qualities of this wonderful creation of nature. The skylark is extremely courageous because as a 'daring warbler' it explores the sky and reaches to such a point from where it becomes invisible. This sentence *'-twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond-'* in the second stanza reveals the strong, earnest and everlasting bonding of the skylark to its love ones on earth.

In spite of the height the bird flies, the effect of its songs that are *'love-prompted strains'* thrill *'the bosom of the plain'*. The whole environment, whether it is the sky or the earth, experiences the joy of the sweet musical strain of the bird.

*Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege! to sing
All independent of the leafy Spring.*

The skylark is a bird of unusual and distinct quality. It is the '*might'st*' and has the '*proud privilege*' to sing independently without being influenced by the '*leafy Spring*' season. The song of the skylark is timeless and permanent because it is not bound by the limits of seasons and place.

*Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;*

In the third stanza of the poem the poet compares the skylark to the nightingale and also gives it a superior status. The nightingale and the skylark both are songbirds who love to remain secluded and stay far away from the hustle and bustle of the world. However, one prefers for its abode the dark shady woods and the other loves the '*privacy of glorious light*'. In other words, the skylark sings from the height of the sky that is bright and radiant. The bird from its bright abode enthralled the whole world with its divine melody. The line, '*Of harmony, with instinct more divine;*' reveals the ecstatic quality of skylark's song. With these qualities the song of the skylark becomes more inspiring than that of the nightingale. The skylark is the traveller of the sky that flies high and reaches to highest limit of sky yet remains connected to its home on earth. It is attentive, humble and caring for the love ones on earth, which is its home. The bird is wise because it never forgets to balance between the two extremes, the '*Heaven and Home*' and it does not roam or wonder from the '*kindred points*':

*Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam-
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!*

The poem, **To The Skylark** seems to convey a balance between imagination and reality. The lofty ideals of imagination balanced with the noble and humble thought perhaps make this poem a brilliant and superb work. The poem also communicates a valuable idea of remaining connected to the roots like the skylark. The images taken from nature enrich the language of the poem, as well as, add to the beauty of the poem. Wordsworth effectively portrays the skylark as a unique bird possessing several attributes that make it divine and superb.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Poem:	To The Skylark
Poet:	William Wordsworth
Born:	17 April, 1770
Place:	Cockermouth in Cumberland
Literary Period:	Romantic Age
Notable Works:	The Prelude, Tintern Abbey, Ode on Intimations of Immortality, Solitary Reaper, Westminster Bridge and others.