

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English  
Vol. IV & Issue I (April- 2019)

## Application of *Ala,k<sup>1</sup>ra Siddh<sup>1</sup>nta* in 'Ode To A Skylark' of Shelley

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**DOI: 10.53032/tcl.2019.4.1.10**

### Abstract

Aesthetics "A Science of Fine Arts" is an outcome of the self-realisation, which Indian aestheticians, has attained by their *tap* and devotion (*s<sup>1</sup>dhya*) through their age old experiments by the way of their sensuous power. There is well experimented *siddh<sup>1</sup>ntas* (theories) or processes of judgement with sensuous taste in relishing aesthetic beauty, that Indian aestheticians assure. These *siddh<sup>1</sup>ntas* (theories) can be relished, enjoyed and can be expressed in words. The multifarious process of appropriating words and sentences like syntax, diction, style matures as a result of their cumulative refinement for centuries, till it is appreciated as full fledged doctrine (*siddh<sup>1</sup>nta*) of Indian poetics. These *siddh<sup>1</sup>ntas* (theories) are: *rasasiddh<sup>1</sup>nta* of ,c<sup>1</sup>ryaBharat (theory of aesthetic pleasure), *alamk<sup>1</sup>ara siddh<sup>1</sup>nta* of ,c<sup>1</sup>ryaBh<sup>1</sup>mah (theory of figures of speech), *dhvani siddh<sup>1</sup>nta* of ,c<sup>1</sup>rya ,nandavardhana (theory of suggestion), *r<sup>1</sup>iti siddh<sup>1</sup>nta* of ,c<sup>1</sup>ryaV<sup>1</sup>man (theory of style), *vakrokti siddh<sup>1</sup>nta* of ,c<sup>1</sup>ryaKuntaka (theory of obliquity), and *aucitya siddh<sup>1</sup>nta* of ,c<sup>1</sup>rya K-emendra (theory of propriety). The essence of the Vedic and the Non-Vedic religious, sectarian concepts, philosophical thoughts and doctrine (*siddh<sup>1</sup>nta*) of different schools has considerably enriched and sweetened Indian philosophy; and its scope is so great and the span is so vast, that we find no such line of literary study that is not perfumed with its essence.

**Keywords-** Vedic Literature, Self Realization, Vakrokti, Exaltation

All sorts of literature- prose, poetry, poetics, criticism, drama, dramaturgy, dance, music, vocal and instrumental, painting, sculpture and other allied faculties of arts entertain our sense organs, satisfy our minds and convey happiness to our souls. Happiness comes to the relishable state by the medium of beauty and bliss, which arts and literature of the world always assure. The study of Indian aesthetics closely imbricates with *dar<sup>1</sup>ana* (philosophy) and *vy<sup>1</sup>kara<sup>2</sup>a* (grammar). Grammar (*vy<sup>1</sup>kara<sup>2</sup>a*) plays an important role in the art of poetic composition, the question of language of literature in particular, and the philosophical systems such as *Mim<sup>1</sup>,s<sup>1</sup>*, *Yoga*, *Ny<sup>1</sup>ya* and *Advaita* are central in the formulation of the goals of creativity and the aesthetic effect. *Vy<sup>1</sup>kara<sup>2</sup>a* is a linguistic construct with a creative use of language. According to Indian aestheticians, poets make language creative by the use of these Sanskrit *siddh<sup>1</sup>nta*. These *siddh<sup>1</sup>ntas* which are the result of tap and devotion of Indian<sup>1</sup>c<sup>1</sup>ryashave viability and validity in modern situation as well as they are suited to

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Indian context and universally valid. Considering the work done so far based on the theoretical aspects (*siddh'ntas*) of Indian poetics, Indian Professors of English like Prof. C. D. Narasimhaiah, Prof T R Sharma, Prof. M. S. Kushwaha, Prof. R. S. Pathak, Prof. Kapil Kapoor, Prof K G Srivastava, Prof Awadhesh Kumar Singh, Prof Shrawan K Sharma, Prof Amrita Sharma and such others, Unhesitatingly, it can be said that these *siddh'ntas* can profitably be applied to Western texts.

Keeping this perspective in mind, the aim of the present article is to make an assessment of the poem 'Ode To A Skylark' of P B Shelley by applying *ala,k'rasiddh'nta* (theory of figures of speech) of Indian poetics with the purpose to make an Indian response to the poem of Shelley.

Etymologically, the word, '*ala,k'ra*' (figure) which comes from the *ṛgaveda*, has two components: *ala,+k'ra*. It is born in two ways: '*ala,karot*»*tiala,k'raā*' i.e. anything that embellishes is '*ala,k'ra*' (figure) and *ala,kriyateyanenetyala,k'ra* i.e. a thing by which an article is embellished is called '*ala,k'ra*' (figure). Bh<sup>1</sup>maha, the first aesthetician of *K'vyāṅg'ra* has been accepted *ṅabd'rtha vakrat<sup>1</sup>* (obliquity of word in meaning) or *vaicitriyaas ala,k'ra* (figure). He says, "*vakr'bhidheya-ṅabdoktiri-t'v'c'mala,k'raā*" (Bh<sup>1</sup>maha, 1-37). Da<sup>3</sup>©in has accepted *ala,k'ra* (figure) as attributes of *k'vyā* (poetry). He says "*k'vyāṅg'obh'k'r'n dharm'n ala,k'ran pracchatte*" (Da<sup>3</sup>©in 2/1). According to V<sup>1</sup>mana (9c AD), the beauty of *k'vyā* (poetry) is *ala,k'ra* (figure). He categorically calls it "*saundrayala,k'raā*" (V<sup>1</sup>mana 1/1/2). According to ,c'rya Kuntaka "*vakroktirevavaidadhgyabha,g»bhajitirḍchyate*" (Kuntaka, 1/10).

According to Viṅwan<sup>1</sup>tha (13c-14c AD), *ala,k'ras* (figures) are attributes which increase the beauty of word and meaning "*ṅabd'rthayosthir<sup>1</sup> ye dharm'ā ṅgobh'ti ṅ'yinaā. ras'dinupakurvantoala,k'r'stea,g gad'divata*" (Viṅwan<sup>1</sup>tha, 10/1). Thus the *ala,k'ras* (figures) have been described and analyzed minutely in the two thousand year old history of Indian poetics. From ,c'rya Bharata onward the number of *ala,k'ras* (figures) has gone from four to one hundred twenty-five. It is remarkable to note that some of the *ala,k'ras* (figures) have been divided into hundreds of sub-kinds.

The Indian aestheticians have classified *ala,k'ras* (figures) on the basis of *ṅabdapariv'Ātisaha* and *ṅabdapariv'Ātyasaha*. According to this classification, the *ala,k'ras* (figures) fall into three categories: *ṅabd'la,k'ra* (verbal figure), *arth'la,k'ra* (semantic figure) and *ubhay'la,k'ra* (hybrid figure). In Indian poetics there is an exhaustive list of *ala,k'ras* (figures) which, for the sake of convenience, can be classified in the following way: *ṅabd'la,k'ras* (verbal figures), *ṅ'd'ṅyamḍlak'la,k'ras* (figures based on similarity), *virodhagarbh'la,k'ras* (figures based on difference), *ny'yamḍlak'la,k'ras* (figures based on logic), *ṅra,khal'mḍlak'la,k'ras* (figures based on chain), *gḍḍh'rthaprat»timḍlak'la,k'ras* (figures based on inference of hidden meaning), *vargikara<sup>2</sup>a-bahirgataala,k'ras* (admixture of figures) and *ubhay'la,k'ras* (hybrid figures).

To Shelley, poetry in general sense, may be defined as "the expression of the imagination" (Hutchinson, 667) and the "language is vitally metaphorical" (Hutchinson, 668) and ". . . it marks before the unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension . . . ." (Hutchinson, 523) He further says that "poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight" (Hutchinson,

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613), according to him, it awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. It unveils the beauty of the world which is hidden and concealed. It converts things into loveliness:

. . . it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things”(Hutchinson, 645)

This is why, Shelley calls the poet as the author of the highest wisdom, pleasure, virtue and glory. He is the happiest, the best, the wisest and the most illustrious of men. Shelley’s poem “Ode To A Skylark” is worth appreciating in this regard. Shelley’s skylark is a ‘blithe spirit’, ‘an invisible thing’, ‘a mystery’.

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!  
Bird thou never wert-  
That from heaven or near it  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art

It is an expression of hope, an expression of faith, hence an air of sanguineness blows through it and it is absolutely free from gloom. The poet hails the bird, but then he immediately considers whether the sound that he hears should be attributed to an actual living thing; it may be only “blithe spirit”.. Whatever it is, it is flying near the zenith in the sky and from there is pouring out its feeling in perfect music. The Skylark’s music is like a continuous flood, because the sounds are flowing without interruption. It is spontaneous and natural. The Skylark is expressing its feelings without any preparation. In this poem the Skylark symbolizes the continuity of the poet’s imaginative life. Here, by the use of *sa,deha ala,k’ra* (poetic doubt), Shelley allows the emotion to go its own life and delights in new accesses of thought and feeling.

Higher still and higher  
Form the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire  
The blue deep thou wingest  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest

Addressing the bird, Shelley idealises the singing of the skylark. He finds an inexhaustible joy in him. The poet enjoys the lot of the skylark because the joy hidden in its song is everlasting. Human beings can never enjoy such as delight. When Shelley hears the sweet song of the skylark, he feels the bird is singing and flying in the high regions of the sky. Shelley says it sings its merry note while it flies. And it flies while it sings. In other words it flies and sings simultaneously. Here the poet has used *upmeyopam’ala,k’ra* to show the qualities of singing and flying of Skylark are complementary to each other.

In the reviewed poem also seems to be working of consonantal sounds, the repetition of similar and identical phonemes or sounds, the employment of one, two or more than two sounds,

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and the use of words, phrase, lines and stanzas in various combinations, at varying interval or without intervals in order to intensify emotions, meanings and situations are self-evident in his poem. The repetition of phoneme or sounds has two effects- intellectual and musical. The repetition here is used for emphasis and more repetition is made to work up to an emotional climax. Another function is modulation which is improved by repetition.

Shelley, by the use of free and irregular repetition of similar or identical phonemes or sounds i.e. use of *vĀty<sup>1</sup>nupr<sup>1</sup>sa ala,k<sup>1</sup>ra*, gives texture and beauty to his metrical expression. By using various phonemes or sounds in various combinations, he lifts the burden of metrical freedom. Hence, his impassioned thinking sprinkled with shorter and blither measures, are received by the ear at first with joyful surprise and then with joyful expectancy.

Let us pick up few examples to exhibit the appropriate use of *vĀty<sup>1</sup>nupr<sup>1</sup>sa ala,k<sup>1</sup>ra*. The expression "singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest" "sunken sun" "pale purple" "silver sphere" has the repetition of /s/ a fricative, voiceless and alveolar and /p / sound bilabial, voiceless, plosive sound. Here the soft sounds /s/ and /p / are used by the poet as vehicle to delineate his romantic mood caused by the joyous song of skylark. The purpose of the use of soft sound here is to put the thoughts in tune with feelings. It is purposely at a lower pitch, and has soft and a playful strain to underline the sober close of a splendid time which gives at least as high a pleasure as the language. It is Shelley's single but supreme triumph in the highest kind of lyrical architecture.

John Dryden's words "good poets make their rhyme so properly a part of the verse, that it should never mislead the sense but itself be led and governed by it" are aptly applied to the poems of Shelley who makes his repetitions properly a part of his poems and does not mislead the meaning.

Besides the repetition of similar or identical sounds in various combinations, Shelley also seems to be fond of using the repetitions of similar and identical phonemes or sounds in the end of the line. In the terminology of Indian aesthetics, this repetition has been termed as *a,ty<sup>1</sup>nupr<sup>1</sup>saala,k<sup>1</sup>ra*. Let us have few examples of this *ala,k<sup>1</sup>ra* (figure) from the selected poem i.e. 'springest-wingest' 'loud-cloud' 'hidden-unbidden' 'dew-hue' 'empowered-deflowered' etc.

Shelley's Ode to Skylark is also conspicuous for the creative use of *virodhagarbh<sup>1</sup>la,k<sup>1</sup>ra* (figures based on difference). Shelley's poetic expression "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" is worth noting.

We look before and after  
And pine for what is not  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Here the sweetest song and saddest thought are two contradictory things, animate things at surface level but a careful understanding of the poem removes this contradiction and provides poetic charm to the expression. In the present line the poet has spoken a great truth in superbly musical lines that touch the heart. He has presented a true picture of human life. He looks into the

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future, and hopes that it will bring him great happiness. Besides, even man's truest and best laughter is mixed with a little bit of pain. Even when man is happiest, his memories of pain and suffering never leave him. That is, man's sweetest songs are those that express his sadness and misery. Thus by using the *virodhaala, k'ra* under discussion, Shelley infuses the dark side of life with bright side.

The poem under review is also a good example of the use of *vikalpala, k'ra*, a sub-variety of *virodhagarbhaala, k'ra*. The expressions like "Teach us, sprite or bird" "Praise of love or wine" "Chorus hymeneal or triumphal chant" "Waking or asleep" all are contributing to the vivifying of the poet's sense of bewilderment as to the exact location of the 'Spirit of bird' or to express the emotions that evoke in the heart of poet. One has to remember that the skylark is beyond the poet's range of sight. He can listen only to the 'Chorus hymeneal or triumphal chant' and feels 'waking or sleep' remaining all the while lost in a mystery as to the exact spot or altitude where the bird has taken its station. Considering from the angle, the appropriateness of the use of *vikalpala, k'ra* which are expressive of the poet's feelings together of joy and mystery is appreciable

To conclude, the present poem of Shelley, proves to its mark when put to the test of *ala, k'rasiddh'nta* (theory of figures) of Indian poetics. It bears intensity of music, passions and emotions, exaltation, elevation of transport, the irresistibility of effect and the universality of thoughts and ideas. The secret of the appeal of the ode of Shelley lies in the fact that his ode is based on the fundamental qualities of human life and human nature. It aims not merely to delight but to transport and instruct too. Moreover, it comes from the heart of the poet and goes deep down into the heart of the reader. It can be said that it has unlimited expanse, extra-ordinary power and velocity, unprecedented majesty and universal appeal.

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