

Poetry and Themes: A Study with T.V. Reddy

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Abstract: Poetry serves as a profound exploration of life, delving into the intricacies of human existence, emotions, and the world at large. Through the lens of T.V. Reddy, a recent modern Indian English poet, this exploration takes on a distinct depth and cultural resonance. Reddy's poetry touches upon diverse themes such as nature, societal issues, spiritual reflections, the human condition, offering readers a multifaceted understanding of life. Reddy's poems are deeply rooted in his rural upbringing. He paints vivid pictures of village life, capturing the beauty of nature alongside the struggles faced by farmers and rural communities. Poems like "Thirsty Fields" and "The Mortal Frame" exemplify this. He also uses his poetry to highlight social injustices and the erosion of traditional values. He delves into the complexities of human existence, exploring themes of love, loss, aging, and the search for meaning. He often reflects on the passage of time and the human spirit's resilience. He uses natural elements as metaphors to explore human emotions and experiences. From the serenity of landscapes to the harsh realities of drought, nature is a recurring theme in his poetry. His works stand as a testament to the power of poetry to convey complex emotions and address universal concerns, while rooted in Indian ethos and philosophy. By examining Reddy's poetic oeuvre, this paper aims to highlight how his treatment of themes contributes to a broader literary tradition that transcends geographic and temporal boundaries, making poetry a timeless vehicle for exploring life in all its dimensions.

Key Words: Poetry, T.V. Reddy, exploration of life, human condition, Indian English poetry, nature, spirituality, societal issues, cultural reflection.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The word poetry is derived from the Latin word 'Poetria' which stands for creative writing in literature. It is a form of expression of feeling and ideas with beauty and intensity of emotions. In the words of Wordsworth, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity". However, for our Victorian writer Matthew Arnold Poetry is "criticism of life" and regarded it as "superior to philosophy, science and religion. Poetry might take as the outbursts of a poet's unconscious emotions that mirror the happiness and ugliness of the society in which he resides and leave the readers to ponder.

Poetry is a form of literary expression that uses language, rhythm, sound, and often, metaphor to evoke emotions, convey ideas, and create imagery in a condensed and imaginative way. Unlike prose, which is written in ordinary, straightforward language, poetry often follows a specific structure, such as verses, stanzas, and meters, and may employ rhyme and alliteration. "Poetry, for the Romantics, serves as a vehicle for exploring the self, as a means of expressing the ineffable and giving form to the formless." (Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 74.) and "The poet is a creative agent whose imagination transforms and organizes experience, generating new insights and emotional intensities." (Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 56.)

2. INTERPRETATION OF POETRY BY DIFFERENT POETS

Poetry has been defined and interpreted in various ways by scholars throughout history. **Aristotle**, in his work *Poetics*, described poetry as a form of imitation (*mimesis*). He emphasized that poetry imitates actions, life, and emotions through rhythm, language, and harmony. According to Aristotle, the purpose of poetry is to evoke emotions such as pity and fear, leading to a catharsis or emotional purification in the audience. He believed that poetry originated from two human instincts: the instinct to imitate and the instinct for rhythm and harmony.

Coleridge defined poetry as the "best words in the best order." He emphasized the importance of imagination and creativity in poetry, which he distinguished from mere fancy. He believed the purpose of poetry was to provide a heightened experience of beauty and truth, merging the ideal with the real through the imaginative power of the poet. Coleridge viewed poetry as originating from the creative imagination, which unifies and harmonizes disparate elements of experience and thought.

Edgar Allan Poe viewed poetry as a work of "pure art" that should appeal to the sense of beauty rather than to the intellect or moral sense. For Poe, the primary purpose of poetry was aesthetic: to create beauty and evoke emotions, particularly a sense of melancholy or a sublime feeling. He believed that poetry originated from the need to express the ideal beauty that exists beyond the mundane world.

Eliot described poetry as an "escape from emotion" and an "escape from personality," emphasizing the impersonal nature of poetry and the importance of tradition in shaping poetic expression. He argued that the purpose of poetry was to communicate complex and profound ideas through a disciplined and objective use of language, rather than merely expressing personal emotions. He believed that poetry originated not just from the poet's personal experiences but from the collective tradition and cultural heritage that the poet draws upon.

Robert Frost famously said that "Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words." He emphasized clarity, simplicity, and the emotional resonance of poetry. Frost believed that the purpose of poetry was to explore human experience and emotion in a way that was both accessible and profound, often using everyday language and settings. For Frost, poetry originated from the emotional and intellectual life of the poet, who seeks to give expression to feelings and thoughts through carefully chosen language.

Ezra Pound described poetry as "the most concentrated form of verbal expression," emphasizing precision, economy of language, and the importance of imagery. He saw the purpose of poetry as making the world "new" through fresh, vivid expressions and by distilling complex ideas into sharp, clear images. Pound believed that poetry originated from a deep engagement with language and culture, where the poet acts as a visionary who revitalizes and transforms the world through words. Walt Whitman saw poetry as a democratic and inclusive art form that should be expansive, free-flowing, and celebratory of the human spirit. The purpose of poetry, for Whitman, was to celebrate individuality, the common man, and the unity of all life, often in a direct, unembellished style. Whitman believed poetry originated from the shared experiences of humanity, with the poet serving as a voice for the collective soul of a nation or people.

These varying definitions and interpretations highlight the diverse ways in which poetry has been understood, each scholar bringing their own perspective on its characteristics, purpose, and origin.

Themes of Poetry handled by the Poet of Different Ages

Poetry is incredibly diverse, and its themes can range from the deeply personal to the universally profound. Poems about love explore the emotions and experiences of love, whether romantic, platonic, or familial. They can range from the joy of new love to the pain of heartbreak. Sonnets by **William Shakespeare** often focus on romantic love, as do the passionate verses of **Pablo Neruda**. Nature-themed poetry reflects the beauty, mystery, and power of the natural world. Poets might describe landscapes, seasons, animals, or the cosmos. **William Wordsworth's** poetry often celebrates nature, as does **Mary Oliver's** work. The theme of Death and Morality explores the inevitability of death, the process of dying, and the mysteries of the afterlife. It can also reflect on grief and the loss of loved ones. **Emily Dickinson's** poetry frequently grapples with death, as does the work of **Edgar Allan Poe**. Poems that explore identity delve into questions of who we are, our purpose, and the search for self-understanding. This theme often touches on gender, race, culture, and personal growth. **Maya Angelou's** poems often explore themes of identity, as do the works of **Langston Hughes**. The theme of War and Conflict reflects on the horrors of war, the impact on soldiers and civilians, and the broader implications of conflict. They may also critique or mourn the loss of peace. **Wilfred Owen's** war poetry vividly describes the brutality of World War I, as does the work of Siegfried Sassoon. Time-themed poetry explores the passage of time, change, and the transient nature of life. It often reflects on aging, memory, and the impermanence of existence. **T.S. Eliot's** "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" contemplates time and the passage of life. The theme of Spirituality and Religion address questions of faith, divinity, and the human connection to the divine. They may express devotion, doubt, or a search for meaning beyond the material world. **John Donne's** "Holy Sonnets" and **Rumi's** mystical poetry explore themes of spirituality. Poets often use their work to comment on societal issues, such as inequality, justice, freedom, and human rights. These poems can be powerful tools for activism. **Gwendolyn Brooks** and **Audre Lorde** often wrote about race, gender, and social justice. Poems about beauty and art celebrate aesthetic experience, whether through the appreciation of a painting, a piece of music, or the poetic form itself. **Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn"** reflects on the eternal beauty captured in art.

The theme of Existentialism and the Human Condition explores the fundamental aspects of human existence, such as meaning, purpose, freedom, and isolation. It often addresses philosophical questions about life and existence.



The works of Each theme offers a rich terrain for poets to explore and express their thoughts, emotions, and observations about the world. Existentialist poets like **Rainer Maria Rilke** often delve into these themes.

Poetry can beautifully encapsulate the seemingly mundane activities of daily life—commuting, working, household chores, and other routine tasks. By focusing on these ordinary moments, poets can reveal the quiet beauty or underlying monotony that often goes unnoticed. The intricacies of home life, relationships within families, and the roles individuals play in their households are common subjects. Poetry might explore the repetitive yet meaningful rituals that define our personal spaces and intimate relationships.

Poetry reflecting the social humdrum often critiques or highlights the experiences of workers, the monotony of certain jobs, or the struggles within the labour force. It can also explore themes of alienation, where individuals feel disconnected from their work or society at large. Through the lens of everyday life, poetry can examine social structures, class divisions, and the disparities that exist within society. The humdrum of life often brings into focus the different experiences of individuals based on their social standing. The chaos, noise, and anonymity of city life are common themes. Poetry might explore the feeling of being lost in a crowd, the impersonality of urban environments, or the contrast between the bustling city and the isolation one might feel within it.

Even amidst the busy humdrum of society, poetry can capture the sense of isolation or loneliness that individuals may experience. This theme often explores the disconnect between people despite their physical proximity. In the humdrum of modern life, poetry might reflect on the loss of connection with nature, contrasting the natural world with the artificial environments we now inhabit.

Poetry may critique the societal focus on material wealth, consumerism, and the endless pursuit of more, often highlighting the emptiness that can accompany such a lifestyle. The social humdrum can also reflect the pressure to conform, exploring how societal norms and expectations shape individual identity, often at the expense of personal expression or authenticity. Amidst the humdrum, poetry might explore the search for meaning or moments of transcendence that break through the monotony of daily life. This could be through art, love, nature, or spiritual experiences.

On the flip side, poetry often finds beauty in small, everyday moments—a fleeting smile, a shared laugh, or a quiet moment of peace—that punctuate the routine and give life its richness. Thus, poetry may be taken as unfolding of inner life as its role is to explore and express the depths of human consciousness, emotions, and personal experiences. This perspective on poetry sees it not just as an artistic or aesthetic endeavour but as a profound investigation into the internal world of the human mind and spirit.

Poetry from the pen of T.V.Reddy

T.V. Reddy, a Prominent poet of modern Indo-Anglian poetry was a writer who was born and brought up in the village and continues to live there, he presented the true picture of the typical Indian village in a very realistic way. He raised some of the surprisingly revealing and unconventional topics through his poetry.

As he belongs to a village, his themes as well as ideas are a true delineation of the in-depth picture of nature and human nature. As a writer and poet, he believes that one must be “honest in thought and expression” and whatever a writer presents should be realistic. He boldly acclaims, in his interviews with prof. A. K. Chowdary editor, ‘Kohinoor’, “Exploitation of the poor by the rich landlords is one side of the good old picture which most of the writers’ relish to present as they are unfortunately unaware of the other side of the picture i.e., the exploitation of the rich by the poor or the poor by the poor which is indeed the order of the day now. Most of the writers are deliberately blind to this stark reality which is bitter truth.”

As far as T.V. Reddy has a distinguished career as an Indo-Anglian poet with over twelve published collections to his name. His poems are known for their blend of traditional and modern styles, exploring themes of social consciousness, rural life, and the human condition. Reddy's poetry has received critical acclaim for its lyrical quality, social commentary, and craftsmanship. He has won several awards for his work, including the International Award of "Excellence in World Poetry" in 2009. His poetry is known for its exploration of several themes and its unique blend of style.

Reddy's poems are deeply rooted in his rural upbringing. He paints vivid pictures of village life, capturing the beauty of nature alongside the struggles faced by farmers and rural communities. Poems like "Thirsty Fields" and "The Mortal Frame" exemplify this. He also uses his poetry to highlight social injustices and the erosion of traditional values. In the Poem “Empowered Woman?” Reddy satirizes the pathetic condition of modern working women or so called empowered women. He sings,

Even before sunrise she does rise
with aching limbs, yesterday's price...
She prepares her two naughty children...



half exhausted like a running machine
hurries to office...hurries home in crowded bus in a bid
to refresh her restless waiting kids...yielding not a grain of gratitude (Reddy 106)

He delves into the complexities of human existence, exploring themes of love, loss, aging, and the search for meaning. His “Syntax of Love” and “Retirement Reality” presents the two Shore of Wide river of life.

He delves into the complexities of human existence, exploring themes of love, loss, aging, and the search for meaning. He often reflects on the passage of time and the human spirit's resilience. Nature imagery plays a significant role in Reddy's work. In the poem “the Balmy Smile” poet sings,

A drop of rain,
Frays the furious sun;
A ray of the sun caresses the frozen snow....
The smile of a child
Laces the clouds of gloom” (Reddy 3).

He uses natural elements as metaphors to explore human emotions and experiences. From the serenity of landscapes to the harsh realities of drought, nature is a recurring theme in his poetry.

Reddy's poems are characterized by their accessibility. He uses clear and concise language, making his poetry relatable to a wide audience. However, this simplicity doesn't diminish the emotional impact of his words. Reddy's poems come alive with rich and “striking imagery and phrasing” that appeals to the senses. He paints detailed pictures of rural landscapes, human emotions, and the beauty of nature. He employs symbolism to add depth and complexity to his poetry. Natural elements, objects, and actions often carry deeper meanings, inviting the reader to interpret and connect with the poem on multiple levels.

Reddy's style bridges the gap between traditional and modern poetry. While his poems are accessible and often rooted in everyday experiences, they also incorporate elements of modernist techniques like symbolism and experimentation with form. By exploring these themes and utilizing his unique style, T.V. Reddy creates poems that are both thought-provoking and emotionally resonant.

T.V. Reddy through his evocative and thought-provoking poetry often reflects social, cultural, and philosophical themes with critiquing injustices and highlighting the struggles of the marginalized. He explores themes of poverty, corruption, and the human condition, offering a voice to the voiceless. In “The Gipsy Woman” he very beautifully portrays the dilemma of life of a Gipsy woman and sings; by telling sweet and sensible lies/interspersed with generalization/she fills the hearts of maids/with honeyed thoughts/they gain a parcel of sweet dreams/while she her remorseless morsel” (Reddy 19).

The volume of his poem “When Grief Rains” presented ‘a thrilling journey from distress to recovery’ with the poems such as, “Civilisation”, “Thirsty Field” to the “Balmy Smile” and many more. The Volume “Broken Rhythms” ‘depict the plight of human beings, their miseries and obstacles’. “The Fleeting Bubbles” presents ‘the transitory joy of life’ “Melting Melodies” expresses his anger at the exploitation and neglect of rural people by politicians and administrators’ and so on. In this way he is covering every aspect of life whether it is inner life or show-off of modern life in the poem “Beauty Parlour”.

3. CONCLUSION :

Poetry often contemplates the nature of existence, exploring what it means to live, to be conscious, and to experience the world. This can include meditations on the essence of life itself, the beauty of existence, and the complexity of human emotions. Life is synonymous with change, and many poems reflect on the process of growth—whether it's physical, emotional, or spiritual. This theme often intersects with ideas of transformation, maturity, and the journey of self-discovery. Central to the theme of life is the exploration of love in its many forms—romantic love, familial love, friendship, and even self-love. Poetry captures the joy, pain, and complexity of relationships, making this a deeply resonant theme. Life's challenges, such as pain, loss, and adversity, are common themes in poetry. The poems often explore how individuals cope with suffering, find strength, and ultimately, resilience in the face of hardship.

Reddy's poetry reflects a deep contemplation of the meaning of life and the pursuit of truth. His work often delves into philosophical questions about life, existence, and the human soul. Reddy's work celebrates India's rich heritage while also questioning and challenging cultural norms. Every collection of his poetry has a catchy title and it has the ability to make the reader ponder over.



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