



## SOCIAL AND RURAL THEMES IN THE POEMS OF Dr. T.V. REDDY

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### Abstract

This paper explores the social and rural themes prevalent in the poetry of Dr. T.V. Reddy, a contemporary Indian poet writing in English. Reddy's poems are deeply rooted in his rural upbringing. He portrays the beauty and serenity of village life, while also highlighting the harsh realities faced by farmers and rural communities. Reddy's poems capture the essence of village life, depicting the struggles of farmers, the impact of drought, and the changing social fabric. Poems like "Thirsty Fields" and "The Mortal Frame" exemplify this. Reddy critiques social injustices and the erosion of traditional values. Poems like "A Pinch of Faith" and "Wounded Sky Frowns" address these concerns. Nature imagery plays a significant role in Reddy's work. He reflects on the beauty of nature while also expressing concern about environmental degradation. This paper discusses Reddy's unique poetic style, characterised by Simple and evocative language and Vivid imagery and Symbolism This paper presents that Dr. T.V. Reddy's poetry offers a valuable perspective on rural life in contemporary India. His poems not only celebrate the beauty of nature but also raise awareness about social issues faced by rural communities. This makes his work a significant contribution to Indian English poetry.

Dr. T.V. Reddy, born in December 1943 in a village near Tirupathi, got his post graduation from S.V. University, Tirupathi, A.P. in 1966. Since then he had worked as lecturer and Reader in English and retired as principle of Govt. College in A.P. in December 2000. He was awarded Ph.D. for his thesis on Jane Austen and he received the Awards of International Eminent Poet in 1987, Hon.D.Litt. from the WAAC, San Francisco in 1988, he also bagged Best Teacher Award at the college and

University level from the Govt. of A.P. IN 1990, Best Poetry Award for his poetic collection The Fleeting Bubbles from Michael Madhusudhan Dutt Academy, Calcutta in 1994, the prestigious UGC Award of National Fellowship in 1988 (as visiting Professor for two years). One more feather in his cap is added with much cherished 'excellence in World Poetry Award' in 2009. His biography is registered in American Biographical institute (USA), International Biographical Institute (Cambridge), Reference

India&Asia(New Delhi) and Sahithya Akademi(New Delhi). He is a renowned poet, critic& novelist of international repute. His poems appeared in French journals in Paries. The following are his Poetry publications: *When Grief Rains*,(1982), *The Broken Rhythms*(1987), *The Fleeting Bubbles*(1989), *Melting Melodies* (2005),*The Gliding Ripples* (2008), *Echoes*, and *Blighted Lights*.

T.V.Reddys poetry presents the graphic picture of the rural Indian life which is the life of Indian villages. His poetry focuses mainly on presentation of rural settings; Reddy re-creates the rural ethos and depicts the villages, the farmer, the tiller, the corn reaper, the fields which lack water, the snakes ,charmners, the sparrows which are becoming extinct now –a-days, men & women folk in villages, with a special reference to the farmers. The readers who are fed up with Diaspora can heave a sigh of relief with the fresh whiff of breeze replete with fragrance of the ripened crops, unlike the suffocating atmosphere of the ivory towers, chilled by the artificial conditioning of the a.c. machine. Versifying the life of country side is a rare choice in Indian English poetry. Very seldom poets choose to write rural poetry as they themselves have never enjoyed the bliss in country life. They are living in metropolitan cities in post independence period. Their scope has been confined to narrow living rooms and narrow lives. The English speaking elite is restricted to metropolitan cities who try to mimic west in lifestyle, the writers with one foot here and the other in Europe have one common theme that is Diaspora.

Among the recent contemporary poets who have started writing poetry with roots in India, I.K. Sharma, D.C. Chambial, Dr.P. Raja, P.C.K.Prem, and Dr. T.V. Reddy have published several works highlighting the bliss and beauty in country life. Of these poets Dr. T.V. Reddy occupies the top slot as the rural muse. He hails from a tiny village near Tirupati, the abode of lord Venkateswara, the fast growing urbanization did not cast its spell on the poet,

and he remained loyal to the country, and committed to its surroundings. The beauty, serenity, and chastity are among fast vanishing qualities in the fast growing urbanization. The true love of a poet to his mother village touches the readers with his simple scenes and rustic characters. Probably young Indian generation is forgetting the past life India was rich once, the opulence of the rural life has faded away in the wake of civilization. It is apt to remember the words of K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar “by recreating the scenes and atmosphere of the village life fills a void in Indian English poetry which remains unfilled for a long time” (Poetcrit 1999).

T.V.Reddy has portrayed the poetic scenes with remarkable style consisting apt vocabulary rendering the musical quality as music evokes naturally from his lyrics. It is this quality that makes the poet a cynosure of rural muse. His free style in depicting the simple scenes endows his poetry with the rarest qualities of beauty and excellence lacing with a touch of satire and irony. The similes and metaphors he makes use are very apt and at once touching. His poetry becomes unique with the spiritual and philosophical bent he has shown in shaping his verses.

His first collection **When Grief Rains**, which was published in 1982, reflects this specialty in him. Most of the poems reflect his philosophy of life. “**When Grief Rains** is his maiden book of verses wherein an ardent reader of poetry can discern poet’s particular sensibility of brooding melancholy at the face of this world full of its sick hurry and divided aims”. The very first poem “The Balmy Smile”, reflects the mood and theme of the whole collection. The twelve lines show the contrast in nature that makes the human life wholesome. Summer showers caresses the sun burnt souls, while the rays of sun breaths life in to the icy dullness of human lives, both sun and rain are contrasting essentialities of life, like the fire, and the breeze, the last two lines .....

“the smile of the child

Laces the clouds of gloom. (p1. WGR)

These poetic lines justifies the tone of the complete collection, the theme is pathetic, yet lacing with the silver lining. The poem "To Love" elucidates poets selfless love, to him jilting love is like squeezing the throat of a dove, or pushing a lamb in to a lion's den. He says he loves "love" and treasures it in the locker of my heart. The innate romanticism is obviously discerned even to the most un romantic reader. The next poem "Dreams" brings forth the unrealized dreams the poet ever dreamt to realize, he hears the sorrowful dirge echoing in his heart, commemorating the disappointment the dreams have left with in him. Poem "Life is a Desert" shows the spiritual dryness in human life, revealing the reality of life. The situation the poet portrays is experienced by everyone with a heart, amidst all the kith & kin, and amidst the dear ones one feels lonely ness, though shocking it is the reality of life, kith & kin are becoming worldly wise and develops envy, the dear becomes dearer, every relationship is economical, the search for oases is an eternal search amidst the never ending mirage.

Dissembling mirage tantalizes me,  
thirsty man with a parched tongue.  
Life is an elusive endless desert,  
Full of sands and storms, no oases. [WGR,P:52]

This is the life of a common man in the country side, metro life does not permit time to peep in to the lives of neighbours or relatives, in the villages, people lost their innocence and started becoming wise, they envy, mimic west to become civilize, forgetting the broadness of civilization they become narrow, outcome is that those who are broad hearted becomes alien. As their roots are in the village they cannot stay away from this narrow kith and kin, at the same time one cannot confine themselves to loveless metro life in the cities. Those who have heart have to alienate themselves.

The poem "Civilization" mirrors the true civilization that is spreading in the speed of a snail. It is a fact that civilization has lost its inner meaning and it is just imitation of the economically developed nations. They forget the social conditions in which people live there, forgetting the age old traditions, people mimic west. Institution of marriage is slowly losing its significance, living together without marriage, is slowly spreading in India also, the metaphor of thorns in thick forest is very apt.

"as the Amazonian forest  
Full of prickly thorns,  
Venomous snakes  
.....swiftly tolling the knell  
To the nutritious value of human life. [WGR,P:45]

The poem "when the Grief Rains", which stands the prototype of all the poems in the collection, reflects the perplexing grief the poet is enduring, he says when gales of sorrow, wrecks his surging spirit, the mystery of being perturbs him. Grief rains incessantly, he wishes to drench himself in the incessant down pour. The last lines reveal the last hope the poet nourishes,

"Still somewhere in me  
A dim desire creeps unaware  
To posses the instinctive mackintosh.  
[WGR, P: 64]

Being a true son of the soil, the poet knows the value of the drop of the rain in his region which is drought-affected. According to K. Srinivasa Reddy, "The Balmy Smile", and "When Grief Rains" expresses some of the truths of nature in an emotional and sentimental vein", the poem starts with the lines:

A drop of rain  
Frays the furious sun [WGR, P.9]

The poem "In Memoriam", though the title brings T.S. Eliot's memory, the poem gives an obvious account of short life human beings lead,

once they pass away their memory is like the letters swept of the slate, he says 'a drop of water wiped the board clear, like the memory of the departed, the kids know their parents well, their memory is as green as a leaf, grand fathers memory is not that keen, he says recollection of ancestors, the departed souls, is as dark as the tomb that hides them. The poet's skill in versifying the emotions with apt words is impeccable, at the same time one wonders at the intensity of the philosophy the writer delves, for his maiden collection. The last four lines make the poem memorable.

Our lives, when we depart,  
are letters swept off the slate;  
Death in a sense is the only reality,  
And the dust, the earth, the only  
eternity. [WGR,P:71]

Royalaseema, which is a part of Andhra Pradesh to which the author belongs is a drought-hit region. The lands are full of rocks and mountains. People would be waiting for rains days and months together. The realistic picture is portrayed by the poet in his poem "Thirsty Fields". In the words of S.A. Rahim, "the title is very significant in the sense that inanimate fields are metaphorically presented as beings that feel the dire need of life giving water to quench their thirst. the poem 'Thirsty Field' presents the real predicament of the farmer in the country, who brings loan to till the soil, and toils to sow seeds, and looks at sky for rain!, alas! The sky is dry without clouds. The soil with seeds need water to sprout, though thunders, and lightning eludes the farmers the shower, which is so scarce can never make the crop grow. The dark luscious clouds that jilted the farmer evasively move to some other place to deceive farmers there. The sun -burnt crop stands alone to give the witness to the suicide of the poor farmer who lost life willingly as he cannot pay the piled up debts since years as his crops failed continuously. This has become the order of the day, though the politicians promise,

to cut the previous debts, by the time they come to the throne, rules may change and there are few who gets benefited by these schemes. Poor are becoming poor by the interest on the loan. The last four lines shows the realist in Dr. T.V.Reddy; the slimily he used is very apt as the sun-burnt crop resulted in suicide of the farmer.

Jilted by crafty clouds  
the sun-burnt crop looked  
like a dissected corpse  
on the postmortem table [WGR, P:55]

The poem 'The Mortal Frame' succeeded in portraying the realities of life in a miniature frame. The beads of sweat that drain over the gloomy brow of the tiller fails to give warmth to the dried up fields of the farmer. The pearls of tears that travel from the sunken eyes of the starving beggar, the blades of dry grass that slay the torpid tongues of famished cattle, as cattle is deprived of the green grass due to the failing rains, the parched petals of frosty flowers that feel the fatal kiss with the neutral dust, takes the readers to watch the sordid and bitter reality; life is a gamble in the hands of the destiny as it lacks both sunshine & raindrop.

'Life is a gruesome game full of stink and stench with neither sunshine nor rain drops to guide to the shore. [ WGR. P:60]

The poem 'My Soul's Agony' reflects the penitence of a dear husband who is far away from his counterpart. Every loving husband identifies himself with the forlorn husband who has to stay away from home for his profession. With all the love he asks her to forgive him as she awaits his arrival like a wick in the lamp with the light of hope to see him. He says he worships her in his heart, and his heart does not beat without her thought, but the distance deprives him of her tender touch, though his heart is full of gratitude towards her, he could not even comfort her. The distance made him 'dead' as he is far. She is all alone like a dove in the nest. A loving wife clings to her husband like



an ivy, her touch opens the doors of Elysium, which he does not know, such a transcendental touch full of concern!, in return man can never return the hundred folds of her love showered on him, the poet express the truth, saying 'I measured you with sugar spoons and coffee cups', a cruel arithmetic indeed. A man recognizes his wife only in her absence. When he consumes the food in the hotel or motel, which is deprived of the ingredient called 'love'.

When shall I come to you to place  
The remnants of my heart at your feet?  
A tedious journey full of regrets  
on the soil through the dust to dust.  
[WGR, P:61]

The poem 'Sparrow' is one of the most remarkable poems in English poetry as Dr. B. K. Dubey feels, "If Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats wrote unforgettable lines on the Cuckoo, the skylark and the nightingale then Reddy has certainly written immortal lines on the sparrow." It is at once both a nature poem and a social poem. The poem symbolizes the pathetic state of the little bird which is becoming extinct and it also depicts the gross injustice meted out to the helpless people. The bird patiently builds its nest pooling the blades of grass and fiber with its beak, with an intention to protect its young ones, but they fall prey to the crouching crow. The crow symbolizes cruel and blood thirsty exploiter and killer, while the little bird, representing the helpless weaker sex.

Wove a nest  
With its beak  
To hatch the eggs  
The ominous crow  
Invaded the grassy womb and  
The lone sparrow fled. [WGR. P.15]

The poet makes a verbal attack on the corrupt and unsocial elements in the poem 'Wounded Sky Frowns' in the society. The wounds made on moral values are poetically reflected in the

blue sky above which is devoid of its usual peaceful serenity and its present scarlet colour stands for the inhuman activities. The sunset is tinted with reddish hue as it represents the bloodshed caused by blood thirsty leaches. The interpretation of social themes is obviously seen in the poem 'A Pinch of Faith' in which the poet laments over the loss of faith of people in morality in the present day world. It is an undeniable truth that most of the people with scant regard for morals have been indulging in lustful activities with their ill-gotten money. Even a pinch of faith has become a scarce commodity in the society now. The exploiters think that they can buy all pleasures with their currency.

Legions live after death  
On the tomb of profit  
Satiating their lustful  
hunger.[WGR,P.26]

India is competing with China unknowingly in ranking first in population. China has got its own way fighting with population while India, is becoming vulnerable as the population explosion is leading to other problems like unemployment, scarcity of food, water and shelter. The terrific rise in population also lead to terrific traffic jam in metropolitan cities, the traffic jams are making people restless and they never knew when they can reach their destination in time. The poem 'At the Cross Roads' we walk among the teeming humanity, we become one with creatures engulfed who breathe on this planet earth. To be alert is to save one's life in the turmoil of life as expressed by Rosemary C. Wilkinson,

Jammed traffic  
A second hesitation may overrun me;  
One way or the other I must decide, to  
avoid the assault  
'At the Cross Roads'[WGR, P:20]

The poem 'Awakening' awakens the sober readers and satirizes the materialistic nature of

the priests and purohiths who stand before the idols of gods in the temples and religious places. While the innocent devotees come to temples with wishes and also to offer their prayers by burning camphor and breaking coconuts, temple priests seem to be busy in counting the coins and preserving the costly offerings given by the devotees. In view of Prof. K. Venkatachary, "The satirical vision of Dr. Reddy does not fail to notices the mercenary feelings of the priests inside the temple and the luxurious habits of the sanyasis in this holy sub-continent." Instead of spreading spirituality the priests are interested in material aspects.

The pious farmer lost his petty self  
But the priest counted the shining coins  
Awakening [WGR, P;40]

The poem 'Transience' is a philosophical portrayal of the man's greedy desire to conquer the world. In this conquest of land man forgets that he will not carry this riches in to the other world, he also thinks that he is eternal and tries to amass wealth in all the mean ways. He exploits the poor and needy to acquire wealth. For such ambitious men sky is the limit. In his blind pursuit he forgets that his stay on earth is a temporary one and he only needs a small piece of land measuring six foot.

All the land under the warm sun  
Seems usefully inadequate  
For the man who feels eternal,  
And when the end seizes him.  
He has no voice to claim  
Even a mere six by two. [WGR. P:29]

In the view of Rosemary C. Wilkinson, "T.V. Reddy's poem 'Transience' reminds us of the nil we can reap when climbing, for it is all for naught in the eternal. It is said we will be rewarded for our love, more so than our works." Man never realizes his ego in his blind desire of conquering the land. He will never realize that his life is uncertain and the only certainty is that

he is going to leave the world and final end is decay.

Great deeds are writ in water

All glories lead only to dust [WGR, P.29]

The poem 'Chaos in Cosmos' is a remarkable poem that pasteurizes anarchic state of affairs present in the society. In the modern world the technically advanced man has not left even the sky free and safe from danger on account of the terrible fights of aero plane, jet planes, Rockets and Space ships. By the skilful use of myth and legend the meaning is projected with extraordinary power and brilliance. In the past world was divided in to East and West whereas now it is divided in to uncountable bits emotionally, intellectually and economically. Moreover there is no safety even for people who travel by air. The last lines of the poem refer to the terrible air crash at Santa Cruz in Bombay before 1980. Even after that there were many tragedies, these tragedies creates a feeling that the mythical hell is better and safer than this dangerous earth. The poets skill is evident in making use of the apt symbolism and imagery.

yama says he has quite reformed hell

Let us go to hell then, if it is a better place

Catch the caravelle from Santa Cruz

Alas, at the gates of hell, there is a air crash[WGR,P.39]

"Dreams" reveal the bolted up emotions in the poet. Human beings are endowed with power of expression, as they sleep they dream. But human beings express them. There are a quite handful people who are lucky to realize their every dream. There are quite many people whose dreams never come true. Dreams remain nightmares for some more; the poet has poetically expressed his disheartened expectations. These expressive introverts could symbolically express their sorrow. Readers are at once struck by the experiences the poet would

have faced that he had expressed in his maiden attempt.

So many dreams

have dried up in my heart

Like beads of tears

On burning cheeks [WGR; P:22]

The poem "Realisation" reveals the retrospection of the poet, he feels that he has finished half the journey and he never understood how he has finished it. The middle age is such a stage where people retrospect their past and tries to cherish their happiest moments for a few people there wont be any happy moments as they would not have enjoyed their lives happiest moments yet. Career occupies most of the quality hours of any employee, if recognition eludes the employee, then career seems to be a waste land, and a dreary desert full of sand. The author worked as Lecturer in Govt. Degree Colleges and retired as Principal. Perhaps he was not satisfied with his career. It is difficult to work in government sector with sensibility and sensitivity. At times one has to swim along the stream to work in such a set up. Only a handful of people get their opportunity to seek the bliss in working. He only recalls the blessed part of his life, i.e. child hood, he says

I recalled I was a boy yesterday

Playing with others by the river.

I see now on the horizon

A vast stretch of silent cemetery. [WGR. P:30]

Every successful man might have come across a particular point where they doubt their confidence, lose their self esteem. At one point they would be afraid of their reflection in the mirror. God will not bless human beings with both successful marital life and ever green career. Only a handful is lucky to enjoy the bliss in life. A few people have to lead lonely life despite their successful career. The poet had lost his beloved wife, probably this loss made him

lonely and alien in this world, when somebody loses their dear ones even the cool breeze will become uncomfortable and baneful. They lose the soothing sleep and thereby loss the capacity to dream. As loneliness pervades his own voice is hushed and feeble.

I look in to the time mirror:

Alas! It already broke in to hundred odd pieces;

Million images run away from me in dread,( Futility) [WGR.P:32]

'The Dying Wick' is another poem which appears to be a continuation of 'Futility'. In the thunderous midnight when the dark night is scaring, in the midnight silence his loneliness jeers at him. The night is still noisy, frightening the child from the cradle. The lightening is blinding and illuminating the whole Milky Way. He says he does not know where this darkness leads to, like the lonely glow worm his loneliness is disturbing him.

I do not know, to be true,

Where this darkness leads to;

It invades my desolate spirit

And saps my sinking soul. [WGR.P:34]

'the Mortal Frame' is another poem which unveils the social consciousness of the poet. the poem is a miniature of the poverty present in India. Farmer in rural India is always subjected to risks and he will be left with tears, which is an outcome of his failure to feed his family. Once farmer was the feeder of the nation, now he stands with empty hands. The cattle is deprived of the grass as there are no drizzles. The petals are parched and the flowers reach earth with a fatal kiss. As the author is isolated life seems to be a game full of stink and stench.

In an abstruse way lead us to the bitter truth: Life is a gruesome game full of stink and stench With neither sunshine nor raindrops to guide to the shore. [WGR.P:38]

The last poem of his first collection is about the last journey. The last poem "The Last Journey" shows the last stage of human life, death is the end to everything, the haughty human frame is inflexible, the dainty skin hard, the lips cold and wry, legs which climbed many ups and downs are stiff like logs of wood, the voice that once thundered is silent, the once expressive eyes that sent tremors now beguile, in a far off land which is strange and unknown, lies the body of an unknown man, covered with cloth, passers-by throw coins to meet his last journey. When the mortal flame is put out, one does not know where one ends.

When this mortal flame is put out  
We do not know where we end up.  
[WGR. P.43]

His first collection *When Grief Rains* deals with various subjects ranging from social and personal to religious and spiritual aspects and to the presentation of nature. As a poet of nature he is seen at his best in the poems such as 'Wood is Calm' and 'The Lake at night'. In the words of Dr. Dubey, 'The Wood is Calm' can be compared with the poem 'Stopping by Woods on a snowy evening' of Robert Frost. While Frost gives a calm motionless picture of the woods and the lake on a snowy evening, Reddy presents an animating picture of the wooded hill and smiling streams swiftly moving across the rocks.'

Yonder the moon, an orb of cheese  
The lake is calm, quite is the night  
Blanches the earth with her milk-white  
fleece [WGR.P:32]

T. V. Reddy's poetic growth spanning over three decades is one of spiritually inclined, quite contrary to others who write romantic stuff he started with philosophical poems and turned to social. In his first collection he sounds subjective, contemplative and philosophical

while in his second collection *The Broken Rhythm*, he appears objective.

The second collection, *The Broken Rhythm* is published in 1987, the second collection has brought a slight change in the mood and tone of the poet, the first collection was steeped in melancholy, while the second collection seems to be written in lighter vein, the poet seems to be very realistic and down to earth in portraying the realities of life. The earlier poetic collection brought out the dark and gloomy side of the poet, the second one brought forth lighter side of the poet. The style and the diction remains unchanged exhibiting the writer's command over the language and the subject he has opted to write. All through his collection the poet seems to be unperturbed, and relaxed; he presents the realities in a simple and direct manner. While presenting the common sights of the villages, he sounds more native in tone and thoughts rather than anglicized Indians, as we come across in *Diaspora*, a more native, and unadulterated Indian poet writing in English, he could sustain the poetic tempo with lush green surroundings of the village, probably the nativity made him different, those poets who reside in metro and write about villages, lacks this nativity, one can feel the fragrance of the wet soil, expressing the pain and pleasure in the lives of farmers, and villagers.

The very first poem "Thousand pillars" gives a fitting tribute to those sculptors who have constructed the 'Ramappa Temple', at Warangal. The popular temple was constructed by the Kakatiya kings in 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was destroyed by the army of Alauddin Khilji in 14<sup>th</sup> century. The tourists and the visitors get struck by the beauty and the engineering excellence, at the same time the artifacts which were brutally mutilated, touches one's hearts. The skilled sculptors who chiseled delicate sculptures and made them lively have breathed their last, but their work is eternal. The potentiality in the intricate patterns which the sculptors have employed often fell in to oblivion. Yet the other says "still the pillars outlive the pillage" which



shows his positive attitude towards life. Every mutilation in the sculpture pains the heart, the barbarity shocks, and reminds that it is a blot on humanity. The last lines knock at the consciousness of the readers.

The speck of every tiny wreck  
Is an indelible blot on humanity,  
The negation of any noble creed;

While divinity throbs the stone

The ruins preach the self-same  
gospel.....(p85, TBR)

In the view of K. Srinivas Reddy, "T.V. Reddy's poem 'Thousand Pillars' is a remarkable song that combines lyrical note with elegiac strain; there is spontaneity and depth of feeling. The success of the poem is that its poetic beauty matches the sculptural beauty of the ruined temples."

The poem 'Fortune-Teller', reminds a very common sight in the country. The fortune teller, wearing bright coloured dress, and amulets, and with vermilion marks on the forehead, sits beneath the banyan tree. A little cage consisting of a parrot, a bundle of palm leaves, and a pack of cards are his possessions. He sits beneath the Banyan Tree, awaiting customers, who come in search of their fortune. When some one approaches, they ask their green winged partner, the parrot, a captive to come and for tell the future of the fortune seeker, by picking a card amongst the cards displayed before them. The bird with crimson coloured beak picks a card and hands it over to its master, who discloses the result of the dip. The client goes satisfied with hope flying higher than the parrot which fore told the fortune, unaware of the duplicity involved. He cannot judge the truth in the prophecy of the bird, which is unaware of its own future, which is bereft of the freedom of flight, decides the destinies of others. The fortune-teller is also unaware of his own fortune tomorrow, counts his days earnings today. The usual satirical style of the poet is obvious from the following lines:

The client goes gratified

With winged hope at his door

Unaware of the dear duplicity;

The bird blind to his fortune

Of flying freedom in the green sky

Decides the destinies of  
others;.....(p86, TBR)

These common sights in country cannot be seen in metro life, where life is restricted to ivory towers and racing cars.

The poem "The Naked Tree" is a symbolic poem, the tree is personified as 'goodness' which is made helpless. Life has become competitive where ambitious people survive. Once the motto was 'survival of the fittest' now-a-days it is 'survival of the crookedness.' when people kill those who helped them without any emotion, then they do not spare trees, they saw the tree to save their 'space', they forget the days when they climbed it to pick fruits, they have played with it, they have enjoyed their fruits, now they sell it. The tree is all 'giving' when human beings know only one thing that is 'taking'. The country side has a few trees at least, when cities are deprived of them to facilitate the modern life style.

The mango with all its past glory

Succumbs to the unkind blows

Of the ungrateful hands

That cut the hand that fed them. [TBR,  
P:42]

The poem "The Train" is a reflection of the poet's past memory, where train was the only source of journey. In olden days when trains were running with coal or steam engines, they used to emit thick smoke and even pieces of coal is emitted from the chimneys of train. In twenty first century when science got sophisticated, instead of coal engines or steam engines, electric engines are pulling the trains. In fact the train journey is indeed interesting. People from far and wide represent the Indian

nation could be seen in the compartments, for a while, we travel together and depart at destinations. While travelling, it appears as though it is the earth that moves, not the train; but the truth is that it is the train that moves and not the earth. The last four lines as usual are note worthy

Men may come and men may go,  
Grey heads die and babes tumble  
But the train translates on parallel rails  
As time sprints forever on invisible  
tracks.....(TBR,P89)

The poem 'Travel by Bus,' also signifies the journey in country side. Villages have less bus frequency, one does not know, the right timings of the only bus, which comes to the village, neither it comes on time, nor does it reaches destination in time, much crowd and more cargo, as the author rightly says. People are not mannered, their wooden faces without emotions blend with wood, and wooden faces. Wood cut in the nearby forest, and wood like faces. The journey is a herculean task, as it is over loaded. The author sat with his heart in his palms, uncertain whether he could reach his destination. A huge bang sound he says, perhaps the tier would have burst, and the author senses went in dismay.

The poems 'Farmer' and 'Pensive Farmer' both printed one after the other represents the present atmosphere in villages. It mirrors the awful plight of farmers, who till the land is left with sweat and soar; nothing saves him from debt, neither the promises of aspiring politicians who promise fund all his debts, nor the unfriendly atmosphere, which spoils the crops by untimely rains. The farmer is poor and made poor by the environment, as agriculture is gamble in rain. T.V.Reddy says 'Farmer' wears a loin cloth around his waist and a soiled towel, the only cover for his sun-burnt back, he drew his wearied feet to his field, and the poet's comparison of the field to a still-born child is very apt, as the field is yet to grow. As it is the

common plight in A.P., the wells are deprived of water, with the exception to coastal Andhra. The next lines give the simile of transplanted field to a 'transmigrated' soul. The strength of the author lies in striking and touching similes and metaphors. The farmer's life becomes a fallow field, full of thorns and weeds, still he pulled his life on and on like a dumb bull that ploughed, looking every day up the sky for the deceptive clouds with a sigh.

With a loin cloth around his waist  
And a soiled towel, the only cover  
For his sun-burnt back  
He drew his wearied feet  
To-his field- a still born child [TBR,P:9]

According to D.C. Chambial, "Reddy also describes dispassionately the sorrow of a farmer in poem entitled 'Farmer'. The fruit of his labour depends on rains. Howsoever hard he may grub, if it does not rain, all his sweat and toil go down the drain. Though he works very hard in his fields, yet he owns only a soiled towel as his only cover. Drudgery seems to have become his fate-all sun and no shade." More over scarcity of rain leading to continuous shortage of water has become a permanent menace to the farmers of Rayalaseema region in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Compared to coastal region Rayalaseema region is subjected to draught. It becomes quite common for the farmers to look up to the sky for deceptive clouds which often play hide and seek with the people of this region. The life of the poor farmer is faithfully mirrored in the following lines.

Still he pulled on the drudgery  
Like the dumb bull that ploughed  
Looking every day up in the sky  
For the deceptive clouds with a sigh  
[TBR,P:9]

The poem 'Pensive Farmer' seems to be the continuation of the poem 'Farmer', the farmer plods his way with his bare feet, full of soars, his

pair of famished bulls limping desperately in front of him, balancing the bundle of hay on his head to feed his bulls. He reaches home after the day's work, his spouse awaits his return to share his lot, struggling hard before the hearth to cook a morsel of rice, with dried twigs. He comes at last and takes bath, they share the ordeal of having the food, which lacks vegetables, it is indeed an ordeal to have the food with tamarind chutney and butter milk. Finally he stretches himself on the mat, the bulls reluctantly bite the dried hay, and lie under the tree. Life has to go on, thus they get ready for procreation. The barrels to store the grain is empty, like the future of the unborn child. when the farmer suffers the bulls which sustain him also suffer; when the fields become dry and barren, there is no food for the people and even the cattle have to suffer for want of green grass and hay. The poet presents the picture of rural poverty so graphically that empty -clay barrels and empty granaries pitifully stands before the readers. S. A. Rahim says, "in a simple, lucid and forceful style reflecting the simple lives of the villagers the poet succeeds in evoking the rural atmosphere and the simplicity of the living habits of the peasants." The rural picture becomes realistic with the image of the word 'Tamarind'. Not only people suffer from poverty, even cows and bulls becomes victims of this poverty and they are famished to a large extent;

The pensive farmer plods his way  
With his feet bare and sore  
His pair of famished bulls  
Limping desperately in front of him.  
[TBR,P:10]

'The Village' is yet another poem that mirrors the common sight of a village, it is difficult to trace such a refreshing fresh whiff of air filled with the fragrance of earth, made wet by the emotion, the sun rises in the east, the rays of the sun seems to touch the giant mango grove, at the outskirts of the village. The crow draws its

satisfaction by pricking the back of cow, the neighbor's pleasure and the owner's dismay at the hurt got by the cow. The women next door shouts and swears at the cock, which had spoilt the rangoli designs on the floor. When the sun is in his high, showing his fury of 'mid summer', at the fields the neighbor shouts at the buffalo which grazed his fields, the author has tactfully incorporated the awful rustic language used in the countryside, he says "a war of words, a shower of filth", at dusk all the people gather under people tree, on the stone; they talk, whisper and even conspires, even the conspirators of Caesar would fade in to insignificance when compared to the village conspiracy, more poisonous than the string of scorpion.

Like an oil lamp before the uneclipsed sun;

Their panchayat is a crafty cobweb

Pregnant with potent portion.....[TBR,P:39]

The above lines give an actual account of the village life which has become corrupt and degraded ever since Panchayat elections entered the village life. The system of panchayat raj, as the poet feels, has introduced unhealthy groups and factions in the narrow circumference of the village life. The large and elevated platform around the people tree in the center or in one corner becomes the virtual place of gossip. Often it becomes breeding center of conspiracy within the frame work of the panchayat. Even for trivial things neighbors hurl abuses and rebukes. The poets use of the image 'a crafty cob-web' for Panchayat is very appropriate, as the image brings back the unhealthy association of all the unhealthy trends. In the view of S. A. Rahim, "the poem 'the village' is a realistic picture of the village life that holds a mirror, as it were, to the present day rural atmosphere mixed with hatred, envy and enmity".

Dr. Reddy's social themes are blended with compassion for the afflicted people, no

matter whether it is of physical or economic nature. No other poet dared to show sympathy for lepers and disabled persons in quite obvious manner. The poem 'A Leper; strongly illustrates this statement. In the words of Dr. Bijay Kant Dubey, "the poem 'A Leper' by Reddy can be compared with that of Nissim Ezekiel. Ezekiel sees a leper leaning against a poster-ridden wall of some railway platform, while Reddy sees him as a blemished mass wrapped in rags. Egekiel meets two lepers at the station one is silent while the other singing with zest the song of god. While Ezekiel's observation and depiction are at superficial level, Reddy's observation and depiction are at deeper and more horrible than the former's." a leper is subjected to detestation, lepers are the 'real' untouchables, they get infected by the cruel fate and become out castes in the real spirit; they lose all the social life and in turn lose contact with the near and dear. Some lose their body parts, hands and feet appear mutilated. Such lepers walking on the streets with stretched begging bowls are a common sight in cities and towns. Their life becomes so awful that even a dog's life is better than that of lepers. A real portrayal has been poetically drawn by the poet.

A blemished mass wrapped in rags  
That hardly cower the reeking ruins  
Shivers as vibrating turning echo  
From the hollow deep haunting-  
Begging alms from every pedestrian  
[TBR, P:8]

As the name suggests 'Reign of Terror' is a satire on the existing rule of political parties. It is indeed a political satire and a social satire. The crime rate has been triggering higher and higher. By the time the poem has been written the crime rate would have been comparatively lower. The ruling parties support day light robberies and anti social elements who are trying to spread the pall of dread on social life. Repeated 'Nirbaya' episodes, murder, and robbery have become the order of the day. More

over the criminals who commit crimes are more comfortable than the sufferers. At times ruling parties and opposition parties encourage some criminal activities to have their hold on the others. Criminalization of politics has become the burning topic in the present society. When the rulers themselves defy all the rules and violate the ethical norms, there cannot be any bright future for the country. The poem sketches the dark and gloomy life by making use of powerful imagery such as black cobra, a prowling wolf and a crown of crimes.

A prowling wolf  
.....stealthily  
A reign of terror  
With a crown of crimes [TBR, P:20]

The poem 'Toiling Ants' is a short account of the ants 'zest for life'. The poem 'Naked Tree' is a realistic picture of the Rayalaseema region. His poem is a realistic painting of the existing plight of draught. The poet says do not take your eyes of the "naked" as it is as dry as the skeleton of a cow, whose carcass is punctured by the steely beaks of vultures. Tired of giving life the pond by its side is dry; the tree stands as a victim of the betrayed hands which looted its fruits. The tree which yielded delicious mangoes once stands dry and succumbs to the axe blows of the unkind hands. the poet's pain at the sight of the barren and shorn mango gardens are remarkable for their straight forward narration.

Betrayed by those that relished  
Its fruits in raptures  
The mango with all its past glory  
Succumbs to the unkind blows  
[TBR,P:23]

Dr. Reddy however wanted to be a simple and humble villager with purity and innocence. He does not wish to follow or practice any set formula, set by the so called sadhus. The poem 'Convert' reveals the spiritual bent in him. There are innumerable pseudo



sadhus in Hindhu religion who preach every day. The poet feels that the real transformation should come from within and it cannot appear in the false colours of borrowed robes, and the real conversion is far away from our known conversion tables. The poet insists on honesty and integrity where there is no room for hypocrisy or any act of dissembling:

Real transformation

Flouts all flavoured formulae

Of all pseudo-sadhus and babas

I shall be myself

Without any dissembling [TBR, P:16]

The poem 'Swamiji' seems to be a continuation of his 'Convert'. In today's so called modern society, spiritualism is getting much publicity and many pseudo-swamiji's have come to the picture in order to encash the religious sentiments of the people. They look like swamiji's in their outward appearance in saffron robes and by growing long and flowing beard. Many of the affluent class compete among themselves in visiting swamiji's so as to win their favour and blessings. Prof. K. Venkatachari, compliments that " T. V. Reddy's 'Swamiji' is a poem steeped in satire, where the poet subtly satirizes the dress and address of the Swamiji who typifies the whole tribe of pseudo-swamijis. India, the proverbial land of saints and swamis is not free from the pest of such pseudo-swami's." the present poem brings forth one such pseudo swamiji who gets out of an expensive car, though dressed in ochre coloured robes, his fingers are radiant with rings, and wrist with imported watch. He is surrounded by the choicest beauties of fairer sex. His income swelled like elephantiasis; rolling in physical comforts he preaches spirituality.

Swamiji spoke on man, god and soul,

The potter and clay were his easy victims;

The stunned audience were all ears.  
[TBR, P:52]

T. V. Reddy's poetic growth spanning over three decades is one of involution. A keen observation and a critical appraisal of Indian English poetry reveals that Dr. Reddy contradicted the other poets in being intensely subjective, contemplative and philosophical in his first collection to social in his later collections. In his second collection *The Broken Rhythm*, the poet seems to be relaxed; he seems to have moved away from being intensely melancholic and gloomy in his first collection to the mundane elements. In all the poems included in this collection, the poet's tone appears to be mild and unprovoked. T. V. Reddy succeeds to a large extent in presenting social themes in his poems in general. The poems in his first two collections i.e. *When Grief Rains* and *The Broken Rhythms* reveal his social awareness not only in choice of the subject but also in its treatment. He pairs with Nissim Ezekiel, I. K. Sharma and D. C. Chhabial in presenting social realism in his poems.

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