



## Book Review

### The Poetry of T. V. Reddy - A Critical Study of Humanistic Concerns

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The book under review is an anthology of critical essays on poems written by T. V. Reddy and edited by Dr. P. V. Laxmiprasad. In the preface of the book, Dr. P.V.Laxmiprasad offers a brief historical analysis of Indian English Poetry. After introducing the poets from the pre-independent and post-independent eras, he places T.V. Reddy among the contemporary Indian poets like D.H. Kabadi, I.K. Sharma, I.H. Rizvi, T.V. Reddy, DC Chambial, PCK Prem, R.K. Bhushan, R.K. Singh and others. What differentiates Reddy from the other poets is his emphasis on rural life. In other words, he is very much rooted in his origins. As a poet, T.V. Reddy can cover a wide range of issues in his poems spanning from personal to social. The book contains thirty research papers written by scholars across the country.

Shobha S. Nair in her essay “Angst of an Aging Heart: Surveillance of Subjectivity in the Select Poems of T. V. Reddy’s *Golden Veil*” uncovers how subjectivity is a predominant characteristic in the majority of T.V. Reddy’s poems. However, he also maintains an objective approach and hence, the poems never become expressions of idiosyncrasies. Many of his poems are on ageing and “Time and Tide wait for none” is a significant one among them. The collection of poems entitled *Golden Veil* is about ageing and all the disappointments and frustrations associated with it.

In poems like “Old Napkin” Reddy deliberates the old age as a state where old people are unwanted and considered as a waste like a napkin. Yet the poets reiterate the need of the old to guide the young ones of the modern age to keep them on the right track.

The chief concern in all the poems in the *Golden Veil* is ageing and a person’s troubles in accepting and going through it. The notable things in some of the poems are the metaphors and the images that the poet uses to display the ‘Indianness’ of Reddy. For instance, in the lines like “when cattle graze in another’s rice field/ a strong stick does the angry farmer wield;/ when leaves and buds are infested by pest,/ till pesticides are applied do, we simply rest?” we can discern his rootedness in his village. It inspires him to use these agrarian images. The ending of the anthology is not morose and negative. It does end with hope and the poet is convinced that his writings will rescue him from all worries because when he pours over his thoughts on paper with his pen his mind is unburdened and he hopes that his progeny will remember him through “a few humble lyrical notes to recollect” Shoba Nair by comparing Reddy’s poems to Tennyson’s Ulysses shows how the poet too realizes that old age has “the soft sunset glow”.

“Wails of Grief and Waves of Peace in T.V. Reddy’s *Quest for Peace*” by D. Gnanasekharan analyses the poem *Quest for Peace* of 1665 lines with seven segments. The poem is a quest about the meaning of human life. The poet places himself at Kedarnath to reach for that inner peace achieved by the saints and seers. Although he seeks a place to find



inner peace he also describes the unrest and corruption in our so-called modern world. Our society is full of people with polluted mindsets and misdemeanours. We need to purify our mind and body for which Upanishads can be a good source, but that too is misinterpreted by the corrupt pundits. The following lines depict the unpleasant realities of modern life: “Theatres and liquor shops are overcrowded/ while values and ethics are flouted and clouded”. He laments how even the print media also has lost its credibility and objectivity. In this situation of utter dismay he seeks solace in the fringes of the Himalayas: “the rich sylvan scenic beauty of Char Dham, the four sacred Himalayan seats of Parandham, the quiet enchanting snowy silvern heights”. Even those places are not shunned of human evils. He also refers to the terrorist attack on World Trade Centre and observes how the richest nations too are not peaceful. He brings to light all the evil practices in the world from dictatorial colleges which make the employees slog to environmental hazards caused by human intervention. Towards the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> segment, Reddy is determined about the task of establishing peace. He talks about one supreme soul or paramathma and considers peace as a “blessed state of mind”. In the end, he suggests not to wait for a miracle or the ascent of a good leader to lead us to light because external peace is a manifestation of internal peace once that is achieved shanti will reside within.

After informing about the expansiveness of T. V. Reddy as a writer both in the critical and creative field D. C. Chambial in the essay T. Vasudeva Reddy, the poet in his Poetry: A Study of *Golden Veil* (2016) analyses the poem, *Golden Veil*. The poem “In the Shell of Solitude” is inspired by the dictum from *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* “Lead from darkness to light” and explains how boldness and bravery help fight the challenges in life. “Old Napkin” is about the negligence the aged parents go through. The poem shows how the experiences gathered by the old generation can assist in the healthy growth of the youth. The poem “Need of Our Hour” and “Waiting for a Avatar” exhibit the poet’s faith in God who can liberate the world from the clutches of corruption and foul play. However, the poem “Waiting for an Avatar” also reminds the readers of Yeats’ “The Second Coming”. The poet looks forward towards the arrival of a true leader who can free the nation from all negative forces. Poems such as “Forget Me Not”, “Meaning of Life”, “Dumb Toy” and “The Echo” express the poet’s take on the idea of life. He asserts that love can be understood by the one who is in true love but at the same he emphasizes the role of a wife in a man’s life and also reveals how he cannot forget his wife.

The range of poems included in the collection reveals T. V. Reddy’s belongingness to his village. The poems “Sylvan Scene”, “Riverside”, and “Our Thirsty Land” are proofs of that. Poems like “The Middle-Class Man”, and “Water is Dearer than Blood” give the scope to call him a social realist. Reddy through the poems visualizes a place devoid of all prejudices, miseries and vices.

In the essay “Speaking Through Images: A Critical Study of T.V. Reddy’s Poetry” Abida Farooqui discusses the collections *Melting Melodies* and *Pensive Memories*. The poems cover philosophical, political, historical, mythological, and spiritual themes and are known for conveying the senses through images. Another remarkable quality of the poems is musicality. The remarkable quality is to make the ordinary through the poetical qualities extra-ordinary. The poem “A Violent Winter” “wings weak and weary,” “hostile heat”, “soiled sarees” and “raucous rays” bring out the emotional agony and turmoil associated with migration. They look back to their homeland and their past in a pensive way. The experience of migration has taken a toll on their movement. The images like “blunted broomstick”, “contorted contours,” and “grisly, grey hair” in the poem “Ageing Smiles” represent the



boredom of old age. He has written poems on the bicycle, the coconut tree and the crow and even on Sabari, the woman who gave refuge to Rama and Lakshmana. It shows the diversity that the collections cover.

In the essay, “Chronicles of Life and Times: Exploring T.V. Reddy’s Poetry” C.A. Assif explores the Indianness in T. V. Reddy’s poetry. At the same time, he also points out that Reddy by ignoring forms and representing the fluidity of cultures also qualifies to be called a postmodern writer. Poems like “Futility” and “When Grief Rains” talks about the melancholic nature of human beings. “Thirsty Field” is a sonnet on spiritual desolation.

The collection of poems “Broken Rhythms” is the callous attitude of modern civilized citizens towards nature and other treasures. Many of the poems also give a vivid picture of rural life. He also portrays how the spiritual world too is corrupted by the actions of some so-called spiritual leaders. He also includes a poem entitled “A Poem” which is about the genre of poetry. Exploring the qualities of a good poem he suggests that a good poem should endow the readers with “substance of pleasure/ in our scanty leisure”. Asaif concludes that T. V. Reddy seems to believe “A.C. Bradley’s expression, poetry is not for poetry’s sake, but it is to reform and criticize life”.

“A Critical Exploration of the Pastoral Panorama of T.V. Reddy’s Poetry” by K. Padmaja brings to light the significance of the pastoral in Reddy’s poems. She quotes K.V. Raghupathi to stress her point “Writing about common scenes and people in the countryside is a rare phenomenon in Indian English Poetry. Not many poets writing in English have depicted rural life in their poetry.” The writer takes various poems from collections like *When Grief Rains* (1982), *The Broken Rhythms* (1987), *The Fleeting Bubbles* (1989), *Melting Melodies* (1994), *Pensive Memories* (2005), *Gliding Ripples* (2008) and *Echoes* (2012) and discusses the role of pastoral in his poetry. At the same time, Reddy tells how the purity of nature is corrupted by modern civilization. In the poem “her impure state” (*Pensive Memories*) he delineates the Ganges in the following manner:

The Ganges flows deep and drear  
muddy and murky, miry and  
at the divine feet of her Lord Viswanath

Farmers, Hunters, Labourers and elements of nature find a befitting space in Reddy’s poems. In “Rainbow or Mirage? Life Beyond and Behind *Golden Veil*” Santosh Ajit Singh comments that the poem in the collection is not organized systematically in terms of themes. The thematic diversity can be understood when we find poems on individual solitude and political diplomacy. The poem “Unmask thy Veil” also throws light on the title of the collection. The poet uses the word veil repetitively in the poem to focus on the falsehood that rules our life. The poem also displays its conflict with the idea that ‘seeing is believing because at many times it gets proven that looks can be deceptive. The collection includes poems on the Indian army entitled “Jai Jawan”. The poem “Avatar” and some other poems also emphasise the idea that a spiritual change is needed for the change of society. In the end, Singh reminds the reader about Reddy’s views on poetry that poetry should disturb our minds and all the poems in the collection successfully stir us back from the state of complacency.

In “Exploring the “Ultimate Truth”: A Study of *Golden Veil* by T.V. Reddy”, Vijaya Babu Koganti projects Reddy as a poet who delineates the effect of industrialization on society. The mechanical lifestyle and consumerism are taking a toll on human values. The bond between nature and humans is lost and man has become an ‘object’ from being a ‘being’. The poet’s lineage belongs to families of farmers and hence he writes many poems on the toils and hardships of the farmers. “Erstwhile Farmer”, “Seeded Soil”, and “Listen to



Our Song” are some of them. On many occasions, the poet uses satire to exhibit the false pomp and glory of people. “Birthday Function” exposes the meaningless artificiality. The poems “A Bird in the Cage”, “Alone as a Bird”, “Sylvan Scene”, “Riverside”, “Look at the Stars”, “Green Canopy”, and “Night Watch” are Wordsworthian in theme and reveal the romantic strain in Reddy’s poetry.

“Poetry as Social Commentary: A Thematic Study of T.V. Reddy’s *Quest for Peace*” by Arabati Pradeep Kumar calls P V Reddy both a creative writer and a critic. The melodious nature of his poems reminds us of Sarojini Naidu whereas his awareness of all social evils like corruption, communal violence, terrorism, nepotism, unemployment, and economic disparity makes him a great critic of the present society. T.V. Reddy’s *Quest for Peace - A Minor Social Epic* (2013) is a long poem consisting of seven sections or cantos with a total length of 1665 lines. Unlike a traditional epic, the poem does not portray the strife in the life of a hero rather it shows the struggle between moral and corrupt forces which acquire an epic dimension. The poem stands out for the meticulous presentation of the social evils existing in society. Nothing gets spared from the critical view of the poet. He points out the VIP culture existing in the temples and also the question of safety for women in the country's capital. He also brings to the readers’ notice how terrorism is a global menace. In this way, he highlights the sufferings of the common people by exposing all social evils.

“The portrayal of Nature in T.V. Reddy’s *Melting Melodies*” by Palakurthy Dinakar focuses on the theme of nature in the collection of poems. “The Kalyani Dam”, “Dharmasala”, “The Fort”, “A Pair of Sparrows”, “Coconut Tree”, “The Cloud”, “The River”, “Rainbow”, “On The Sacred Hills” and “The Supreme Lord” express the poet’s deep love and sympathy of the poet towards nature. Each of the poems delineates the scenic beauty of the places. A poem entitled “Coconut Tree” indicates the selfless nature of the tree. The poem ‘Rainbow’ implies the mystical nature of a rainbow which with its mesmerizing beauty is out of everyone’s reach. The poems can immerse the readers in the serenity of the natural world.

“Poet as Man Speaking to Men: An Appreciation of T. V. Reddy’s *Melting Melodies*” S. Karthik Kumar referring to Wordsworth’s dictum on poetry as ‘a man speaking to man’ Karthik Kumar identifies Reddy as a poet of the people. *Melting Melodies* is a poetic collection of T. V. Reddy which was published in 1994. The collection addresses a diverse range of topics from love to politics and from nature to academics.

“T.V. Reddy: A Study of his Poem *Life is a Desert*” by DC Chambial analyses the poem “Life is a Desert”, the sixth poem of his first book *When Grief Rains*. In this poem, the poet also shows humanity how poor people are despised and forsaken even by their close relatives. *When Grief Rains* was published in 1982. The phrase ‘marooned man’ at the beginning of the poem gives us a hint of the loneliness of the protagonist. He is not only deserted by his kith and kin for his poverty but also is distrusted. The line “I am a lone man in the barren land” shows his helplessness. The poem is argumentative and logical in structure. The concluding couplet expresses the findings in the quatrains. The poet writes the poem in iambic pentameter and uses alliteration.

“A Critical Study of T.V. Reddy’s *Thousand Haiku Pearls*” by G. Srilatha is on his recent recollection of *Thousand Haiku Pearls* published in 2016 written in the form of Haiku. This poem too focuses on various aspects of modern life like education, politics etc. He is horrified by the crime rates and laments that the present education system is not able to disseminate proper values to our youth. He writes:

Corporate colleges in fact



Are big fleecing mills with hard tact  
Soulless minting magnates

The poet also talks about the power-craving politicians who give free facilities to a section of people to attract votes. Through these poems, we come to know about another talent of the poet Reddy who has written 1008 haiku of different ranges and rhythms. He also refers to nature and human beings learning to be calm.

“A Collage of Random Images: The Abysmal, the Angst and the Social Responsibility in T.V. Reddy’s Poems” by Anju S Nair discusses certain poems selected from the anthology *Fleeting Bubbles*. In the very beginning, Nair appreciates Reddy for being a brilliant poet among the Indian English poets using both reason and emotions. Reddy always displays a sense of sympathy and empathy towards ordinary people. The poems like *Woman of the Village* and *The Corn Reaper* discuss the hardships of women who toil at home and at the paddy field. “*The House Wife*” too brings out the position and conditions of women at home and in society. The poem “*Supreme Being*” displays a pantheistic philosophy like Wordsworth. The poet states, “I want to be faithful in what I express. I am not cynical; I am speaking the naked truth. What I have seen all these years, I have expressed in some of my poems. When I write on certain truths that are inevitable components of life, how can I be cynical? I accept life as it is, conscious of its dark clouds and lights.”

“*Rapturous Notes of Melancholy in T. V. Reddy’s When Grief Rains*” by S. Malathy again showcases the affliction in the poet’s mind seeing the sufferings around him. The poem “*When Grief Rains*” mirrors Contemporary Indian village life and the debilitated conditions of the poor farmers. The poem “*Civilization*” throws light on the degeneration of humanity’s loss of human values. The poem “*Futility*” is a thought-provoking one which elucidates the nothingness in life. Quoting Krishna Srinivas the essayist asserts that Reddy is one rare Indian English poet who can explore and depict rural Indian life so vividly.

“T.V. Reddy’s *Gliding Ripples –An Overview*” by Lily Arul Sharmila examines the poems in the collection entitled *Gliding Ripples*. Many of the poems are philosophical talking about the remorseless nature of time (“*Time Spares None*”) but at the same time he is not oblivious to the social realities and sufferings of the people. The poem “*Our Bureaucrats*” presents the hypocrisy of the bureaucrats with sarcasm. The poem “*Ease the Borders*” expresses the poet’s universal love for humanity. P V Reddy with his poetic excellence can convey variegated ideas.

“*Social Consciousness in the Poetry of T.V. Reddy’s Golden Veil*” by V. Suganthi narrates the different social conditions as shown in the poems. The poem “*Old Napkins*” recounts the negligence shown to the old citizens. Despite all modern progress idea of God remains a mystery which is detailed in the poem “*Unsolved Mystery*”. In this way, the poems cover diverse areas of modern life from spiritual, and social to political.

“*Nature, a Healing Heaven: An Ecological Reading of T.V. Reddy’s Golden Veil*” by R. Janatha Kumari outlines the significance of Nature in several numbers of poems from *The Golden Veil*. Many of the poems sketch the mesmerizing beauty of nature and many of the poems are on creatures objects like birds, rivers etc. Reddy spent his childhood in the village and he had a direct experience of the things he wrote. On top of that, he also had felicity with words. The result by reading Reddy we are pushed back to the world of British Romantics. Wordsworth opined that Nature is a teacher and Reddy in the poem “*Learning is Life*” shows that we can learn diverse lessons from each object of nature.

Ecological Concerns in T.V. Reddy’s collection of poems *The Broken Rhythms* by Sr. Candy D Cunha shows the callousness of humans to nature in our present time. However,



many poems in the collection convey the message that we need to conserve nature not destroy it. The poem “The Naked Tree” tells us that just because the tree is not giving us any fruits does mean that we should it. We should preserve it by remembering its past glory. The poem “Toiling Ants” relates how creatures from nature tolerate many hardships. The poet is pained to see the children of mother earth are not showing their gratitude to her.

“Echoes of Native Ethos: A Study of Indian Sensibility in T. V. Reddy’s *Echoes*” by Gobinda Sahoo reports how Reddy’s Indian sensibility is displayed in many poems in *Echoes* published in 2012. The poem “Summer Trip” takes the readers from North to South India portraying its scenic beauty and showing nature’s bounty. Poet even thinks that God also has chosen these places for their tranquillity. “A Journey in the Jungle” gives a detailed view of rural India. The poet uses Indian myths and legends abundantly in the poems. “Lord of the Universe” refers to Vedas and Upanishads. Every poem bears the mark of Indianness both in thoughts and pictorial depictions.

“Manifestations of a Fractured Soul in T. V. Reddy’s *Pensive Memories*” by J.S. Divya Sree evaluates the poems from the collection *Pensive Memories*. The poems chart the sufferings of man and animals on physical, emotional and spiritual levels. He conveys certain notions through the images of birds. “The Crow” unveils how the crow is considered a spiritual agent and at the same time abhorred for its colour. “The Migrating Birds” presents the situations of the people who had to migrate for a famine. “A Pair Doves” demonstrates the love between the poet and his wife. Many poems detail the destruction caused by nature and some also question the accountability of people towards society.

“T.V. Reddy’s *Quest for Peace* and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land: A Comparative Study*” by Poonam Dwivedi compare the poem *Quest for Peace* with *The Waste Land*. The spiritual quest and the decadence of modern life are equally demonstrated in both poems. However, T V Reddy’s poem is more illustrative. As *The Waste Land* ends with an evocation for peace by the chanting of Shantih similarly *Quest for Peace* too illustrates the need for peace.

“Nature: “Fairest Eve in Eden” in T.V. Reddy's *Thousand Haiku Pearls*” by K. Rajamouly sets forth how nature is integral in Reddy’s poems. The essayist views that for Reddy “Nature, the personification of nature, is for the incarnation of beauty and divinity. Her angelic qualities in bounty leave him enthralled:

My heart knows no control  
When Nature's boundless beauty  
Enslaves my soul”.

The essayist observes that in depiction and love of nature, Reddy is closer to the British poet William Wordsworth

“Social Consciousness in T.V. Reddy’s *Quest for Peace*” by Neelam K. Sharma describes how Reddy wanted to restore moral and social values which were gradually disappearing from society. He reminds the reader to remember God’s message from the Bhagavad Gita:

Let’s focus our mind on Krishna’s gospel  
And tread the righteous path in His spell.

In this way, Reddy wants to reform society through the mode of satire.

“India Seen through the Eyes of T.V. Reddy: A Study of *The Broken Rhythms*” by Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya discloses that the poems in *The Broken Rhythms* hold a mirror to real India. It offers an unfiltered representation of the economy and sociology of India.



“Poetic Iridescence of T.V. Reddy” by A.K. Choudhary is a wholesome account of all poetic aspects of T V Reddy. Reddy displayed his dexterity in employing all kinds of poetic devices in all his poems. Thematically too he displayed his social responsibility by propagating universal brotherhood and peace.

“The Vicissitudes of Life: A Critical Analysis of *Fleeting Bubbles*” by Prasaja VP. *Fleeting Bubbles* (1989) is the third poetry collection of Reddy. It comprises thirty-nine poems. As the title suggests it is about the transient nature of human life. The poem covers multiple aspects of human lives and like the other poems, it too shows the poetic excellence of Reddy.

“Exploring Paradoxes and Contradictions of Postmodern Life in *Echoe*’s” by Arti Chandel discusses the poems in the anthology called *Echoes* from a postmodern perspective. The paradoxical and oxymoronic statements, images and opinions are evident in all the poems. The poet comments on different aspects of modern life in a postmodern manner.

“Angst and Despair: Existential Concepts in the Poems of T.V. Reddy” by Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha finds out many existential dilemmas in T V Reddy’s poems. The essayist quotes Rosemary C. Wilkinson who comments on *When Grief Rains* in the following manner, “...Truly *When Grief Rains* (author’s first collection of poems) is an insight into a rare soul longing for the ethereal.” The poem “Life is a Desert” too renders the isolation and loneliness of an individual. Reddy’s poems attain eternal significance because he addresses infinite mysteries of human existence

“Echoes of the Sublime in T.V. Reddy’s *Sound and Silence*” by K. Rajani discusses the collection *Sound and Silence* which is Reddy’s latest work (2017) consisting of 80 poems. The diversity of the poems range from race, and space to hill, seasons, birds and other animals. The poem “Our Race” displays the poet’s annoyance at the slavish attitudes of Indians. Each poem conveys the values of greatness, kindness and generosity.

To Conclude, the anthology of essays on T V Reddy’s poems successfully transfers an all-encompassing portrayal of the poet to the reader. It can aid in giving broader national and international recognition to the poet. Many of the essays depict the poetry of Reddy with thorough intensity in a simplistic manner. This book edited by erudite academician Dr. P. V. Laxmiprasad is another contribution to the field of Indian English critical writing.

### Book Details

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