



THE POETRY OF T.VASUDEVA REDDY: A CRITIQUE ON BUCOLIC REPRESENTATION

P.V. Laxmiprasad

Department of English, University Arts College, Satavahana University, Karimnagar –Telangana –5050002, India
Corresponding Email : laxmiprasad.puram@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Indian English Poetry is replete with both ancient and modern elements. Pre-independent and post-independent India marked two different phases in poetry. Poets predominantly dealt with conventional themes in the past. But, one distinguishing feature of Post-independent poetry has been to portray a diversified representation of multiple themes. A careful analysis of thoughts, feelings, and psyche of the poets not only genuinely but eloquently reveals urban 'cynicism and anguish' and reveals 'hope and anticipation' quite aptly. Poets differed according to the age in which they had lived but ultimately, their poetry became a subject matter of anguish and agony. There have been obvious expressions of urban life in the beginnings but as the poets emerged in the early twentieth century, rural side of the life figured prominently in their writings. PCK Prem observes, "Poetry depicting rural background and the inner world of man is also conscious of the collapse of human bonds and aspirations even as sufferings, struggles, and failures dishearten but carry elements of hope, and thus, infuse a spirit to live life persuasively". (2006: 21) Poetry is not only a study of thoughts or emotions but it also involves reading of a huge poetic landscape, literary yield, political thought process and its evolution, and the social and economic environment. From 1920, after taking into consideration various social and historical facts, one assumes that contemporary Indian English Poetry begins its ambitious journey --- in rising cities and other rural areas, developing towns of various regions to be more specific Indian English Poetry begins its journey. One such element is the delineation of bucolic elements in poetry. India is predominantly a rural country side with 60% of population living in villages. The countryside is a geographic area located outside the cities and towns. Indian villages have low population density and small settlements. The poetry of T.V. Reddy is rooted in bucolic elements. In fact, all his poetry collections carry the hallmarks of rural life, pastoral panorama and idyllic nature. They beautify his poetry against rural background. Rural life in India forms the very basis of economy and essential living conditions. In fact, it is the backbone of development in diversity. Life in cities is always different from life in rural areas.

KEYWORDS: Bucolic element, rural life, Landscape, Images, Idyllic life, Urbanization, Scenery Villages, and Pageant nature

Introduction

In the history of English literature, the portrayal of rural element figured prominently in English poetry. It began right from the age of Shakespeare and the legacy was however continued by the later poets in the eighteenth century. It has profoundly impacted the countryside. There was a time when the English poetry came to be meant as "the English Landscape". Creative writers, in particular, depicted the life of English countryside. It became a standard form of writing for the poets to evocate a memorable countryside of the English countryside. The green pastures and beautiful fields produced a fantastic world for them. Usually, they termed their poems as "Pastorals". These pastoral poems have been set in beautiful landscapes. Poets had a romance to integrate life with nature and nature with life. There are still the best of poems in English which stand for English Pastoral panorama. They are William Shakespeare's "John of Gaunts Speech from Richard II", William Blake's "Jerusalem", William Wordsworth's "I wandered Lonely as a Cloud", John Clare's "On a Lone Spring", Robert Browning's "Home Thoughts from Abroad", Christiana Rossetti's "The Lambs of Grasmere", Thomas Hardy's "Wessex Heights", T.S. Eliot's "East Coker", Phillip Larkin's "Going, Going".

Rural element has a significant history down the ages and significantly influenced other poets in the world to write about countryside. As such, the roots go back to ancient times when rural life becomes a dominant theme. It is an established form of writing in English Poetry. It is appealing and pleasing in the depiction of rural life. The content and structure of the poems remains uniform though the themes are diversely portrayed in different regions and contexts.

Indian English Poetry is typically diverse and innovative in experimentation. Post-independent Indo-English Poetry is noted for these features. Urban settings and themes have dominated the Indian English Poetry in the past. In fact, poets predominantly dealt with urban life. But, rural life came to the fore in IEP. With a few poems by Nissim Ezekiel's "Night of the Scorpion", and Sarojini Naidu's "Bangle Sellers", and a few poems by Jayanta Mahapatra and I.K.Sharma, the rural element is indeed scanty. The research provides an entirely new experience with respect to the Bucolic element in IEP. Yet, rural life remains unexplored till today. The poets have delineated this element in their poetry. In fact, it has unexplored though there are poetry collections by poets across the country. The poets have dealt with rural settings, life-styles and predominantly the long-standing experiences in their native land.



Among the modern poets in Indian English, T. V. Reddy occupies a special place, not simply as a gifted poet in English but more significantly as a poet who has dealt with Indian rural life as no one else has so far depicted the Indian village life so extensively and faithfully with such depth and sincerity. Born and brought up in a remote village in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh, he has felt and experienced all the stresses and strains, all the difficulties, sufferings and problems faced by small and marginal farmers and peasants of the villages. While other writers see the beauty of nature in the villages, Reddy who lives in his village right from his birth has seen the two sides of the rural life, its beauty and ugliness, quietness and turbulence of the village life, the fragrant flowers and the pricking thorns of the rose. It is this keen perception as well as faithful presentation of the village life that distinguishes Reddy from other poets in India. For his contribution to poetry, he received many awards—the Award of International Eminent Poet in 1987, Hon.D.Litt from the WAAC, San Francisco in 1988, Michael Madhusudan Dutt Award for best poetry in 1994, the Prestigious UGC Award of National Fellowship in 1998 as Visiting Professor for two years and the award of “ Excellence in World Poetry” in 2009. He has so far published ten collections of poems. When Grief Rains (Samkaleen Prakashan, 1982, New Delhi), Broken Rhythms (Poets Press, 1987) The Fleeting Bubbles (Poets Press, 1989) Melting Melodies (Poets Press, 1994) Pensive Memories (Poets Press, Chennai 2005) Gliding Ripples (Baltimore, USA, 2008) Echoes (Gnosis, New Delhi, 2012) Golden Veil (Authors Press, 2016, Authors Press) Quest for Peace (Authors Press, New Delhi, 2016) Thousand Haiku Pearls (Authors Press, 2016). His poetry has been explored by critics and reviewers in journals, books and as paper presentations in seminars. Scholars have done research for M. Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. Yet, rural life remains unexplored till today. The poet has delineated this element in his poetry. In fact, it has dominated all the collections.

Critics have argued that the poetry of T. Vasudeva Reddy is replete with bucolic features in the presentation of its rich pastoral beauty and nature's bounty with sylvan scenes, feasting sights, sounds and vernal beauty of the countryside. His poetry is rich with the description of farmers, ploughing oxen and cows and cawing crows and crowing cocks, parrots and pigeons, mango groves and rice and sugarcane fields. At the same time, it heralds a healthy departure with a realistic outlook in the sense that simplicity and artlessness of rural life is contrasted with the artificiality and false values of urban life; the basic moral values of village life are presented in contrast with the market values that rule urban life. We observe the juxtaposition of conventional bucolic life and the superficial manners of the metropolitan life; love of nature and the relatively pure countryside can be seen in juxtaposition with the dissolute city life.

The quiet and contented life of the rural folk is contrasted with the ever busy and restless city life and its competitive world. TV Reddy's bucolic poetry is quite unique in its nature as it is a mixture of both the pleasant and pensive sides of rural life. It presents simplicity and complexity, nature's bounty and difficulties that arise from drought. Along with the helplessness of the toiling poor, the reality of the practical game of the poor by the rich and of the rich by the poor is also presented. Poet's insight into the countryside is perceptive and sensible.

Even now, India is primarily a land of villages, in spite of the fact that large numbers of people from villages are migrating in their struggle for existence in search of greener pastures to the nearby towns and cities. India lives in villages. This is amply exhibited in the poetry of T. Vasudeva Reddy. It is in this context that T.V. Reddy's contribution to poetry in English is to be understood and appreciated. Since generations India has remained as an agricultural country and farmers who cultivate the land form the backbone of the country. Without food grains such as rice, wheat, pulses and vegetables we can't survive and farmers are the people who cultivate the land and produce all these food grains and vegetables. Nowadays the conditions in the villages have completely changed and the existing picture of the present village life is far different from that of the bygone days. Most of the educated people who come from the urban background do not have the proper knowledge of the depressing plight of the poor farmers. Reddy's poems help us in catching the real glimpse of the existing rural scenario when he draws the realistic sketch of the poverty-stricken villagers who are not able to put their little pieces of land to proper cultivation on account of various reasons such as lack of water for irrigation, scarcity of labor which has arisen owing to the appeasement policies of the successive Governments, natural calamities etc. All these various factors have reduced the respectable life of farmers to poverty and penury and hurled them into debt trap. This reality of the rural life finds a faithful expression in all the collections of poems of T.V. Reddy. He embodies the real side of rural life in his poetry. In his critical book on TV Reddy, Raghupathi, an established Indo-English Critic, observes that the predominant pervasive element in TV Reddy's poetry is rural. He is primarily a rural poet as he was born and brought up in a village close to Tirupati, a temple town in Andhra Pradesh, India. Nearly seventy percent of the poems he has written are centered up on countryside life. Writing about common scenes and people in countryside is a rare phenomenon in IEP. Not many poets have depicted rural element in their poetry (2014: 23)

A glimpse of the village life, we can perceive, in some of the poems from his first collection *When Grief Rains* onwards. The poem 'Thirsty Field' straightaway leads us to the land of a representative village where the field is thirsty of water and its tongue is totally parched. The scene is re-created before us in its natural surroundings:

Jilted by crafty clouds
the sun-burnt crop looked
like a dissected corpse on the
post-mortem table. (RM, 65)

The above lines succeed to a greater degree in presenting the dismal drought-like situation in which farmers find themselves from which there is no relief for them. Moreover the power of the language gets intensified with the image of the 'dissected corpse/on the postmortem table'. The use of the appropriate figure of speech is at once functional and natural as well as pictorial. The two poems 'Farmer' and 'The Pensive Farmer' take us directly to the presence of farmers of today and to see the predicament in which they are struggling with no hope of coming out. The poet is a master painter in drawing and painting a living picture of the farmer: '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 :/ with not a drop in the well/the transplanted field /proved to be transmigrated souls.' (RM, 91) The crop in the field without water at the right period becomes abortive and it is aptly compared to 'a still-born child'. These few lines succeed in informing a sense of completion to the painting of the picture of the farmer who stands before us as a rural character brought before us alive. What more do we need to understand the pitiable plight of the small farmers of today? The picture of the return of the water to his humble hut after sunset is realistically presented in the next poem 'Pensive Farmer': 'The pensive farmer plods his way/with his feet bare and sore,/ his pair of famished bulls/limping desperately in front of him,/bundle of hay on his heaving head,...'. To find such skilful use of profound images one has to go through the pages of the imagist poets such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats. Besides the wealth of natural imagery, musical rhythm is a remarkable feature of Reddy's poems and the fact that his lines are rich in melody is undeniable. The poem "Pensive Farmer" concludes like: "the village is quite the graveyard / veil of darkness concealing its flaccid face" (10) Slices of life from the rural scene are the bulk of his poetry. Even a train journey in Indian scenario is realistically portrayed as in: "Much Crowd and more cargo" (7) and they could be seen on board and they are" a barbarous blend".

The very next poem 'The Village' presents the present day atmosphere that has turned unpleasant with jealousy and ennui leading to irrational quarrels and factions prevailing in most of the villages now: 'Your buffalo has grazed my crop,/son-of-a-bitch' cries a rustic wretch;

Alas! A war of words, a shower of filth,/a cloud of stench from the puddle;/' "Caesar's conspirators pale feebly here/like an oil lamp before the uneclipsed sun;/their Panchayat is a crafty web/pregnant with potent potion.' (RM, 93).

What a stark realistic picture is this! The poet with his first hand knowledge presents this real picture of most of the modern villages where the erstwhile pleasant atmosphere has been vitiated with divisions and petty factions, created on the basis of caste, creed and political affiliations by our political parties and the Panchayat elections. "Thirsty Field" is a poem that gives us the outline of his rural sensibility in vivid terms and it is that the image of the post mortem table is matchless. 'Jilted by crafty clouds/ the sun-burnt crop looked/ like a dissected corpse/on the post mortem table' (WGR, 28). His third collection, *Fleeting Bubbles* is a collection of thirty –nine poems with greater focus on themes related to rural life which was hitherto totally ignored by almost all of our well-established poets in Indian English. 'Women of the Village' makes a deep impression on our mind with its realistic sketch of the life of rural women. A few lines are real sparks that are impressively portrayed. "Beneath the pale peepal tree/ by the fast dying pond/ In that double roasted hamlet/women stand like expiring candles" ("Fleeting Bubbles", 1). To quote what Padmaja, a well-known critic, "A through reading of his poetry with a focus on his poems of nature and rural setting guides one to categorize them according to the major recurrent themes in these poems. His poems celebrate the beauty of nature and also mourn the loss of the pristine quality of nature because of the irresponsible and negligent acts of humanity" (2018:33). The poems like "Our Thirsty Land" and "Today's Rural Life" depict the rural life in its entire vicissitudes. While the poem like "Our Thirsty Land" describes the topography and surrounding vegetation that is covered by "crescent shaped range" of hills with forests that keep on changing moods. DC Chambial, an eminent critic, observes that "the poem is a realistic picture of the suffering of the land and the people who live there" (2007:18). In "Today's Rural Life" (62), he describes the political intrusion and pollution of the innocent life of rural people and their life by the rich and cunning polity. The poem ends in rhetorical questions like "Can we ever breathe the rich harvest breeze, / can we ever see the good olden days with ease". In yet another burning problem about the farmers in his home soil, the poet portrays the sorrows of the farmers of the rural India. These poems are "Erstwhile farmer", Seeded Soil and "Bankrupt Clouds" showcase the farmer's plight in clearing debts to the Banks and subsequently committed suicides. These suicides have become a national issue in Indian Parliament and State Assemblies. Here, the readers are reminded of twenty first century life as projected by T. S. Eliot in his magnum opus, *The Waste Land*, in which people suffer from despair, disappointment and frustration. T. V. Reddy presented the despairs of Indian farmers who feed the entire nation and who are miserably dead.

The problem of scarcity of drinking water is presented picturesquely in 'Women of the Village' the opening poem in his third collection *The Fleeting Bubbles*. The picture of the women of the village walking all the way to the distant drying pond beside the pale peepal tree, filling their earthen pitchers with water, 'weaving desires in the plaits/of their cobra-long hair/covering staring breasts/ with their sari-ends' is quite a common situation in many of the villages in the Rayalaseema region in Andhra Pradesh. Reddy's poem reminds us of a similar poem with the title "Indian Women" by the established modern poet Shiv K. Kumar. While Kumar describes the woman's hair as 'Mississippi-long hair' by making an incongruous combination of an essentially Indian theme and American imagery, Reddy describes her hair in a typically Indian style as 'Cobra-long hair' which is quite in tune with Indian sensibility. While Reddy's portrayal is natural, Kumar's presentation reveals an element of artificiality and the nature of superficial treatment. The poem 'The Corn Reaper' is quite a remarkable word-painting of a young rustic woman reaping the ripened rice crop in the scorching sun: 'she cut the corn patiently/sitting like a flower under the foot/thinking of her wailing child at home/and of the volley of the blows on her back/given last night by her drunken lord.' (RM, 139). She is presented as a monument of patience with overflowing affection for her wailing child at home. It is reasonable to compare this with another poem 'Lapicide' by D.C.Chambial from his book *Perceptions* (20) where Chambial describes a stone-cutter with the baby by her side crying with hunger and when the mother kisses her child 'both smile away the fatigue'. Here the stone-cutter has the scope and liberty to keep the child with her whereas the corn-reaper has no scope to bring the child with her and as such her agony is more since the land lord would not allow her to work with the child by her side. Chambial's poem is a good instance of the poet's keen observation of sufferings of humble workers and the odds against which they work to keep them away from starvation. The poem 'Corn Reaper' reminds us of Wordsworth's popular poem "The Solitary Reaper"; while Wordsworth's poem is purely a romantic poem set in the background of nature, Reddy's poem is at once romantic and realistic; the former piece may soon fade away from our memory, but the latter one with the power of its gripping theme stays and lingers long in our mind creating a feeling of empathy to the corn reaper. The readers are reminded that the soul of India lives in villages whose occupation is primarily agriculture.

Poems such as 'The Toiling Woman' and 'The Tiller' in his next collection *Melting Melodies* (RM, 163&164) give us the sketches of the toilers and tillers of rural background who are not able to make both ends meet in spite of spilling their sweat and working in the scorching sun. According to David Kerr, "In T.V. Reddy, India has a potential voice that expresses in simple, moving terms the plight of the village people—India's silent majority."

Himself from a village background, he has observed people closely and suffered with them. He views his characters as acting out universal themes. His anger at the exploitation and neglect of the rural poor is given vivid expression in such poems as "The Hospital". His dominant note is affection and empathy. "The Toiling Woman" reminds one of "Woman of the Village" (Foreword, *Melting Melodies*). To quote the views of PCK Prem, "TV Reddy often finds strong affinity in Indian soil and here, rural backdrop inspires him to cultivate niceties of life where rural-oriented background turns out religious for him. (2016: 70) There are poems that depict nature such as "A Pair of Sparrows", "A Bubble", "The Cloud", "The River", "The Coconut Tree", and "The Tiller". Several poems carried pictorial quality in deftness and fairness. The village girl carrying the pot "at her waist's curve/ balanced her lonely way and carried the dusk away", but for the poet the image has "lingered long in my mind's stream". Likewise, a pair of sparrows with their "unintelligible notes/ steeped in the balmy nectar of love" has provided the poet "vibrations of serene joy" ("A Pair of Sparrows"). The coconut tree "throbs the poet and thrills the lover" and has given the poet "concentric circles of joy / and unfading halo of aesthetic delight" ("The Coconut Tree"). In the poem "The River", the poet laments saying: "My full freedom has been curtailed / by tying my legs with dams wide and wild." Even nature is not spared by man as he is envious of her freedom. "The Mystic rainbow" for the poet is the "gorgeous garland of haunting hues" ("The Rainbow"). Thus one finds within this collection a remarkable range of expression on pretty small things. KV Raghupathi, a critic, observes that 'these things have enchanted the poet as much as the Romantic poet, William Wordsworth. The range of tones and subjects is extending and developing; and the poet has rendered them in melodious tunes' (2014:8). The poet recollects the school days that his father had spent as a student in the village school in "My Father's School Days" (157). It is a poem rooted in rural India where the schools are virtually ill-treated and negligently ignored. It is known for a few particular phrases like "toiling waist", "mild lad", and "bare feet" to represent the glimpses of schools in Rural India.

The poet writes that, "It is an open school beside an earthen street / where cows would low and sheep would bleat / under the open sky that served as school vault" (157). The picture of school is thus presented in a gripping but realistic account as the poet intensely rural conscious: "when the teacher went inside the thatched hut / pupils were left free to play with a sportive cut / oblivious of the coming of the orthodox teacher / whose presence united sternness and silence" (158). Two generations ago, people in remote villages were mostly illiterates. Educational levels among villagers who are 40 years old and older. But the poet presents an early-morning image of a rugged but illiterate peasant pulling a plow fades before the newer reality of village children walking to schools in the hundreds.

Rural India has poorly maintained schools then and literacy rate fell down considerably. The poet lived and experienced them and as such, he makes a nostalgic journey through creative writing. It is better to live in the past because the present is mostly sad. The poems give us the rare opportunity of experiencing the real feel of seeing the rural life and enjoying their simple pleasures of everyday life. One such instance is the presentation snake charmer which is quite a common sight in the countryside. The poem "The Snake Charmer" creates before our eyes a captivating three-dimensional picture of the poor tribal man with his basket in which the snake is kept securely closed by a lid and with his gourd pipe which is his traditional musical instrument. What is remarkable is that Reddy succeeds in presenting the scene faithfully in its natural colours in such an impressive way that it makes the scene alive in front of our mind's screen and we feel as though we are hypnotized along with the snake by the charming music of the tribal man. "Squatting like a skinny skeleton / beneath a canopied tamarind tree / a lone sentinel amid a cluster of huts" 31) While it is an entertainment for the rural folk and particularly for the children of the village, it is the means of livelihood for the poor tribal man. Reddy's adroit use of the striking image is revealed when he compares the cobra whose venomous fangs are removed to the mighty Samson who lost his strength temporarily with the loss of his locks of hair. As Dubey remarks, "The poet's skill for the use of apt imagery is quite evident when he compares beautifully the cobra with blind Samson. The cobra emerges from the basket like vanquished Samson and dances to the tune of the musical sound." It is the ending of the poem that makes the poem linger long in our memory: 'for all the risk he courted/he got a handful of rice.' (1998: 29) While the poem is a powerful presentation of eye-catching bucolic scene, it is at once a natural portrayal of the age-old poverty of the tribal people, constant victims of pangs of hunger even in this advanced modern age.

In this poem ("Toddy Tapper") the poet gives us an opportunity to taste the aesthetic beauty of nature in the countryside thereby enabling us to see the nature's plenty in rural life in all its beauty and pristine glory. Toddy tapper is yet another common rural sight in the countryside rich with green fields, palm groves and coconut gardens. It is a poem packed with precision of details and word music surprising us with its lilting melody springing from rhythmic cadence. In the words of Harikrishna, "The poem 'Toddy Tapper' is invested with extraordinary poetic beauty, amazing precision of expression and a higher degree of photographic presentation". (2019: 112)

The sight of the toddy tapper climbing the tree swiftly with ease with the help of the twisted rope around his waist attracts others passing by that way and it is a matter of astonishment to see the tapper climbing the palm tree with such speed and ease. The poet writes about the toddy tapper, "Half naked at every dewy dawn / in sweat or shiver morn / he stands at the feet of the tree / at a wink he is at the top in a spree / to tap and collect fresh toddy / in the art of tapping he is tardy"(75). The poet surprises us with the freshness of his striking imagery when he compares the rope around his waist to 'a blushing bride's golden girdle'. The act of cutting the shoots of fronds and placing pots on their tender blossoms to collect the toddy the next day in the morning makes an indelible impression on the observer. Toddy that is extracted in small pots is sold to the customers and while his master gets all the money the toddy tapper, who is the real worker gets meager amount for all the hard work he does as his daily wage to eke out his livelihood.

The village atmosphere of the pleasantness and quietness of the days of the past finds expression in the poem 'Watching the Field at Night' in his recent book *Golden Veil* where the poet recollects the nights he spent in the field along with shepherds and their flock of sheep that stayed there to make the field fertile with their natural manure: 'Flocks of sheep are brought for hire to rest/ for three nights to restore strength to the soil;/ green manure would chase the prowling pest/Fresh plantation may yield more with our toil.' (GV, 68). Reddy's stress on eco-friendly cultivation of the land is to be borne in mind as it indirectly states that fertility of the soil is getting quickly reduced with the constant use of chemical fertilizers. That is why he insists on the use of natural manure available from sheep and cattle and green manure which is abundant in nature. But now the poet regrets to say all this is a thing of the past, because the contemporary picture is totally discouraging and depressing. It is all due to the one-sided policies of the successive Governments and their vote-harvesting manifestos which have resulted in the conversion of respectable farmers into daily workers and coolies. In the name of progress the Government has pushed the small and marginal farmers into debt trap leading suicidal deaths: 'A tale of the past, a gray silver line on barren trees;/now sky-high costs drown farmers in crushing debts,/With freebies workers sit and sip the honey of bees,/ Erstwhile hamlets of hard work turn into idlers' nests'(GV, p.69).

The poet, who is even now very much a part of the soil of the village, has the moral courage to present the stark realities of the rural scenario and he has drawn the picture in bold and vivid colours. Bayapa Reddy while reviewing T.V. Reddy's *Melting Melodies* observes that "The poet excels in depicting the plight of the vast majority of the village people and he presents the rural scenes in simple and moving terms.

It is the presentation of the rural scenes that he excels other poets in the same field, the veracity of which is certifiable by the moving lines of the poems such as “The Toiling Woman” and “The Tiller”. The practical difficulties and the horrors of drought experienced by small and marginal farmers are painted in true colours by the poet.” (2012:109-111). The poetry of T. V. Reddy deals with the cross- section of the Indian society. Rural life is his soul. He looks at the countryside as a typical farmer and an observer. Life moves on experiences. His minute observations are a portrayal rural life in diversity. His poems sing about the farmers, fortune tellers, drunkards, saints, and unhealthy Indian political situations. (2018: 291) A poem like “A Fortune Teller” is highly satirical though the tone is rural and contemporary in Indian Countryside. A layman’s hankering to acquire fortune is very beautifully expressed in the lines. It is realistic and touches the readers at its best. The lines “To touch the tip of Fortune’s toe/ even in dream is bliss in woe” (2). His fine poetic sensibility is revealed in his description of the astrologer and his “green winged captive, a parrot” (92). The typical air of sarcasm spreads throughout the poem, yet it is subtle and pleasurable without any malice. There is an element of humor when the poet describes that “the astrologer armored well with amulets” and the parrot is ‘his friend, philosopher and guide’ (2). The sheer beauty of the poem is presented in the last three lines typically in a satirical tone makes it uniquely Indian as the poet described that the fortune teller who does not know what is going to happen to him in the future “ counts his easy earnings on the canvas “ (92) which he has gained for predicting others’ fortune. In another similar fashion, the poet writes about the fake ‘Swamijis’ and ‘Babas’ who resort to gullible tricks in minting money from the devotees.

*The potter and clay were his easy victims
The stunned audience was all ears.
They all praised his spiritualism and simplicity
For he ate only apples, Cashew nuts and dried grapes
Drank pure milk and juices brought by fair sex. (“ Swamiji”,13)*

These lines satirize and vindicate the modern hermits’ weakness for fair sex, luxurious life style and food habits and are indeed praiseworthy as it very well performs the task of exposing the mask of such fake saints and thus reveals the truth behind such religious exploitations and thus tries to create awareness in the religiously fanatic Indian society. Reddy’s poems also display his sympathy for the afflicted section of the society. No one can deny the fact that farmers are the indispensable backbones of India and a couple of his poems especially ones titled “Farmer” and “Pensive Farmer” describe the plight of the farmers. “Farmer” praises the farmer, who in spite of poverty and poor rainfall, clings on to his profession. He aptly compares his life to that of “a fallow land” and his dry field is beautifully alluded to a “still born child” (9).

Yet, he is very optimistic and “looking everyday up into the sky / for the deceptive clouds with a sigh” (9). “Pensive Farmer” on the other hand registers the daily ordeal of a farmer. His impoverished state of living being conveyed through lines that speak about his “bare and sore” feet and” his pair of famished bulls” (10). After a day’s hard work the farmer returns home to enjoy a very simple diet of rice added with “tamarind chutney and butter milk” (10) with his wife. They live with a very few possession as cheap as empty clay barrels. However, they are reconciled to their destiny and decide to engage themselves in providing food to the world. He immortalizes birds and their songs and the cultural associations with them. Sparrow is a recurrent motif in his poetry. Urbanization has made this grain feeding as well as home and farm dependent bird disappear. In this poem “The Sparrow” (54) it is presented as a symbol of growth of life and fertility.

*Wove a nest
with its beak
to hatch the eggs. (54)*

And with the arrival of crow, which is nothing but the onset of urbanization that has destroyed everything that is natural, “the sky squawked in requiem” (55).He uses sparrows as a symbol of love when he says,

*two twittering sparrows steeped in love
vied with each in showering its essence
their beaks became one at its peak; ...
Their unintelligible notes
steeped in the balmy nectar of love
touched our hearts (178)*

“The Crow” which was shown as the invader of the lives of sparrows is presented as the friend of man. This poem is full of the Indian idiom representing the village life and culture. Thus the crow is presented as “rouses the drowsy rural folk / to go to the furrow with the yoke (210)

The poems ‘Erstwhile Farmer’ and ‘Seeded Soil’ (GV, 76-78) present the contrast between the living conditions of the past and present village life. The picture of a typical village with thatched huts with mud walls with bamboo fences, surrounded by tamarind trees, palm and coconut trees, is aesthetically presented. Bulls in front of their huts and hay stacks give a sense of completion to the portrait of a village and village farmers. In addition to that, the poet takes extreme care in describing their food habits too that naturally reveals the simplicity of their life. Their midday meal consists of one small ‘ragi’ ball with gongura chutney totally free from the shadow of modern junk foods which are invading even the villages nowadays.

His poem 'Nature' written in simple diction aims at delivering the priceless message of the value of preserving the pristine glory of nature and any attempt in spoiling or destroying nature would automatically spell the doom of the humanity: 'Nature gives us fresh water; don't pollute/ Nature gives us fresh air; let us salute/ As we walk, let us feel as a bird fresh and light/ It keeps us healthy and makes our minds bright' (GV, 83). Reddy's presentation of the rural situation is an eye-opener to the environmentalists and particularly to the selfish forces that are destroying the ecological balance. The intensity of eco-consciousness of the poet can be gauged by the observation that even while writing miniature poems like haiku he is never unmindful of the implications of the ecological imbalance: 'Trees perish/if underground springs vanish; /Rains refuse to visit'. (THP, Haiku no.635, 86) 'Unscrupulous felling of trees,/the evil result of our endless greed,/forces us to feel the ecological need.' (THP, Haiku .648, 87). A sequel to what PB Shelly wrote about hope in despair is seen in the poem (Harappa) when he describes the ruined state of Indian Culture.

The poet laments how the great Indian cultures like that of Harappa are ruined by the selfish politicians who merely shout "the shallow slogans" and loot India and her riches in the name of so many "conflicting isms" (36). Reddy is very faithful in reflecting the political scenario of his times when "much is talked about" but unfortunately "righteous action is scarce" (37). The multicultural temperament of the country is nearing extinction because of the disharmony which shatters the huge country in the name of religion, class and caste. Yet, Reddy seems to be optimistic like Shelley, for he too like the romantic poet hopes that unity may be restored. The following lines bring about his vision and wish:

*Unity in diversity
is a fascinating word
like seeking water
in a summer mirage
Still after scorching summer
Can rains evade for ever with elusive
clouds? (37)*

These lines remind us the final couplet of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" which reads "If winter comes / can spring be far behind?" Reddy laments how the great Indian cultures like that of Harappa are ruined by the selfish politicians who merely shout "the shallow slogans" and loot India and her riches in the name of so many "conflicting isms" (36). Reddy is very faithful in reflecting the political scenario of his times when "much is talked about" but unfortunately "righteous action is scarce" (37). The multicultural temperament of the country is nearing extinction because of the disharmony which shatters the huge country in the name of religion, class and caste.

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Village, of all the places, is the most revered and loved one for the poet. He, the one who saw the beauty of village life as a child, now sees the downfall of the innocent pure rural ways of life. He expresses helpless acceptance of the way of life in villages and employs a thorough critique. "My Village" (296) is a moving account of the loss of all those things in villages once that made the people live wisely and comfortably. They are now either transformed or mutated in such a way that the changed faces of villages reflect the greed of man. The constant juxtaposition presents a glaring contradiction of the once "pristine glory" (297)

*canopied trees once sentinels strong
are felled by pitiless souls doing wrong;
Most of the huts and thatched cottages...
now stand erect in concrete avatar
Most men now move feebly like famished
cattle (296)*

However the poem "The Village" (93) is a scathing attack on all those evils that people reflect even while amidst pure innocent rural surroundings. The rural folk show their true colours in their curses of fellow humans.

*your bastard cock has spoiled
flour designs of my house'
curses she showing her loud fangs...
A war of words, a shower of filth
a cloud of stench from the puddle; (93)*

He presents a similar portrait of women in the "The House Wife" where he contrasts the dreary, lifeless unproductive landscape and environs with a housewife who eagerly awaits her spouse "with a wick in her eyes", again a typical Indian idiom, and also "with fond hopes of blank future; (P.140). His "Village Girl" (172) is the embodiment of rustic beauty who "keeping the pot at the waist's curve" balanced "her lonely way" (172).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hold that the poetry of T. Vasudeva Reddy is a mirror of rural life in wonderful depiction of verses. Perhaps, no other Indo-English poet has given so much impetus to this relatively neglected theme as T. V. Reddy abundantly dealt with it in all his collections of poetry. A poet of profound knowledge in rural life, he has presented the panorama in pageant and colorful and painful descriptions.

Thus the poems of T. Vasudeva Reddy become page turners of rural settings and countryside life and the readers reap the fruits of the pleasure in reading the poetical lines of T.Vasudeva Reddy who has devoted greater space for poems on the life led in the villages of the present day. Though we find occasionally a few poems by a few poets on rural life we cannot get a comprehensive picture of rural life which we can feel and experience only in the poetry of T.V. Reddy. As Srinivasa Iyengar rightly remarks, "His poetry, by re-creating the scenes and atmosphere of the village life, fills a void in IEP which remains unfilled for a long time. His significant contribution to Indo-English poetry is his faithful presentation of rural scenes and characters." (1985: 197) His observations and experiences of rural life are simply superb and genuine. He lived in the villages, and experienced them as a farmer and presented them in verses. He represented the soul of India through his beautiful verses as no other Indian Poet has attempted it. "The poet takes the readers into the soul of India, the villages and rural life which are the backbone of the country – that speaks of volumes his commitment to bucolic element and makes people come alive in his poetry" (2018 : 218). Natural rhyme and rhythm of the poems creates the pleasing melody. Clarity of thought and lucidity of expression, splendid imagery and marvelous melody are the hallmarks of his poetry. In conclusion, his poetry is a bucolic study of his native land, landscapes and rural settings.

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