

Indian Poetry in English
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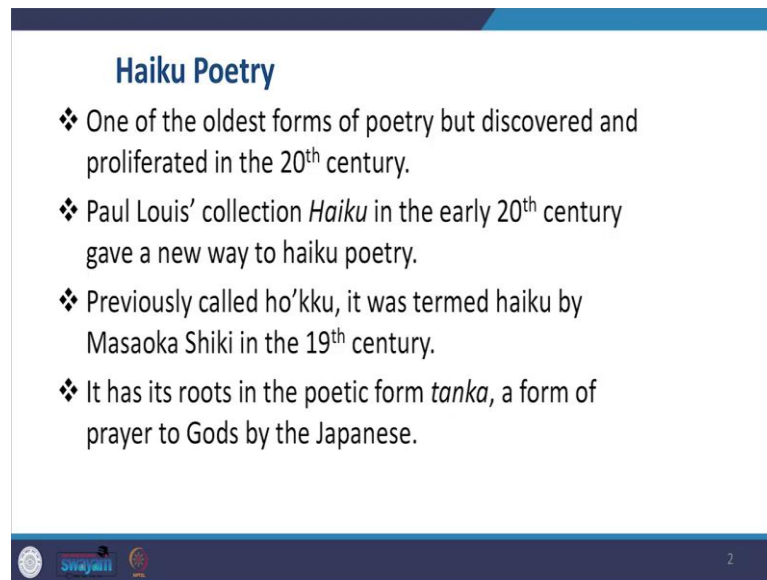
Lecture - 32
T. Vasudeva Reddy

Good morning friends and welcome back to NPTEL online certification course on Indian Poetry in English. My dear friends you will all admit that we have come a long way in this course, but has the longing for poetry stopped? I think not. You are enjoying these lectures and the lectures are being delivered by Binod Mishra. Now, today we are going to enter a new phase of Indian English poetry.

Dear friends, Indian English poetry has witnessed several revolutions, several changes and it has not kept quiet. We have already read pre-independent Indian English poetry, post-independent Indian English poetry. And now we are going to talk about a new development in Indian English poetry and that is the writing of haikus. Now naturally when I say haiku many of you are suddenly taken back to Japan because this haiku form of poetry was developed in Japan.

And that is why you find that even in Indian English poetry also we can find that many Indian English poets of late have taken to writing haikus. Though it was Rabindranath Tagore who had first tried his hand at haiku writing, but today we shall see what haiku is and who are these Indian English poets, who are trying their hands at haiku writing.

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Haiku Poetry

- ❖ One of the oldest forms of poetry but discovered and proliferated in the 20th century.
- ❖ Paul Louis' collection *Haiku* in the early 20th century gave a new way to haiku poetry.
- ❖ Previously called ho'kku, it was termed haiku by Masaoka Shiki in the 19th century.
- ❖ It has its roots in the poetic form *tanka*, a form of prayer to Gods by the Japanese.

As I told you earlier my dear friends, that haiku is one of the oldest forms of poetry which was discovered and later on promoted and proliferated in the 20th century. Paul Louis' collection *Haiku in the Early 20th Century* gave a new way to haiku poetry. Previously it was actually called hokku and it was termed haiku by Masaoka Shiki in the 19th century. Haiku has its root in the poetic form *tanka* which is also a form of prayer to Gods by the Japanese.

Now, poets like Basho and Issa in Japan made it very popular. And even some English and American poets also started trying their hands at haiku writing, namely American poet Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell and T E Hulme adopted this poetic form in the Western world. Now what actually are the differences between the haiku form of poetry and other forms of poetry? It actually has a different syntactic structure.

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- ❖ Poets like Basho and Issa made it popular in Japan in the 17th and 18th century.
- ❖ Any 17-syllable poem written in the 5-7-5 syllable pattern is called Haiku.
- ❖ “Hai” - denoting amusement, “ku” - the versified form of a sentence
- ❖ Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and T.E. Hulme adopted this poetic form in the Western world.

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Any 17 syllable poem which is written in 5-7-5 syllable pattern is called haiku. Most of you might have come across a haiku which actually consists of three liners and you know even though they are short, but they are full of meanings. And they, at times, surprise you--- the beauty of a haiku lies in the first and the last line. We will find that how this a poetic form of haiku has been developed across other languages as well.

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- This poetic form has been adopted across languages.
- “Next, the rules of grammar- eliminating all the possible uses of gerunds and adverbs, little use of pronouns, ending the haiku with a noun, avoiding too many/all verbs and prepositions.” (Rajni Singh)
- In modern times, poets have experimented a lot with this poetic form. They do not follow any specific pattern.

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Haiku does not believe much in the rules of grammar and it also can eliminate all forms, though in poetry, we can say that poets have got a sort of license and they can create


their poetic form in the form that they want. But haiku itself is completely different if we take or look at the modern times we can find that poets have experimented a lot in this poetic form. And many of the Indian poets writing in English they have also started trying their hands and many of them have actually blossomed forth also very beautiful haiku poems. Now, as I told you earlier that it was Tagore in India who started.

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- In India, Rabindranath Tagore is considered to be the first poet who wrote haiku poems.
- When Tagore first visited Japan in 1916 then he translated some haiku poems of the Japanese poet Basho into Bengali.
- “We don’t find three-line poem anywhere else in the world. These three lines are enough for their poet and the readers. The heart of the Japanese people does not sound like a waterfall; it is quiet like a lake.” (Tagore)

“Oh! Japan thy oceans are restless
Thy land is calm
Mountains are deep and steep
Thy landscape is soft and green.”



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And who is also considered to be the first poet who wrote haiku poems it was such that in 1916 when Tagore had visited Japan, he also translated some haiku poems of the Japanese poet Basho into Bengali. Tagore has himself said, that we do not find three-line poem anywhere else in the world. These three lines are enough for their poet and the readers. The heart of the Japanese people is quite worthy to note here, what Tagore says about haiku. The heart of the Japanese people does not sound like a waterfall it is quite like a lake.

And so, is the case with haiku. So, haiku has got the scope to convey everything, but it has got a sort of quietness like that of a lake. We can take a sort poem here—“Oh Japan thy oceans are restless/ thy land is calm/ mountains are deep and steep/ thy landscape is soft and green.” Now, we can also take the example of some of the haikus which were written by Basho then Issa fine. Now let us have a look at how haiku is created.

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Some Haikus

"The Old Pond" by Matsuo Bashō
*"An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond—
Splash! Silence again."*

"A World of Dew" by Kobayashi Issa
*"A world of dew,
And within every dewdrop
A world of struggle."*

Sonia Sanchez "Haiku [for you]"
*"love between us is
speech and breath.
loving you is
a long river running."*

"In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound
*"The apparition of these faces in
the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough."*

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The three lines are there. "An old silent pond/ a frog jumps into the pond--/ splash silence again", fine. Ezra Pound the name I mentioned-- Ezra Pound in a haiku entitled-- in a station of the metro says—"The apparition of these faces/ in the crowd/ petals on a wet black bough." So, the last line appears to be like the falling ones and they actually provide you with a sort of meaning which actually conveys a lot.


We can also take for example, though time cannot permit us if time permits we can also take the example of Tagore's haiku poem, but at present let me tell you who are the famous Indian English poets who have tried their hands at haiku writing. One such is T. Vasudeva Reddy and the other one that we will also talk about in the lecture to follow will be R K Singh. These two people apart from being Indian English poets even though they have written a lot of poems in other fields, but what they have attracted their attention is by their beautiful haikus.

So, what we shall do is we shall try our level best or to talk about some of the poems and then we will perhaps concentrate more on their haikus. Because, we are in the phase of Indian poetry in English, where, many Indian poets have tried their hands at haiku writing. Now who was Vasudeva Reddy and what actually are the qualities that made Vasudeva Reddy a poet.

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T. Vasudeva Reddy(1943- 2020)

- Born on 21st December, 1943 in a small village of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.
- A Ph.D on Jane Austen, Reddy is a poet, novelist, and a critic.
- Was the Secretary of the GIEWEC (Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and critics), which was established in 2011.
- Credited with 12 poetry collections, 2 novels, and 3 critical books.
- A prominent poet from India who is popular for his haiku poems.
- A poet who celebrates rural life and searches for a life outside this world in the world of spirituality.



The slide features a portrait of T. Vasudeva Reddy, an elderly man with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt, set against a textured, golden-brown background. The slide also includes a footer with logos for Swajathi and a small number '8'.

And then after all a haikuist, Reddy was born on first 21st December 1943 in a small village of Tirupati of Andhra Pradesh India. So, in the temple town a Tiupati as many of you are familiar with T Vasudeva Reddy was born. T Vasudeva Reddy was a PhD on Jane Austen, before doing his Ph.D he did his M A in English. And then followed by this he did a Ph.D on Jane Austen he was actually professor and he had several awards to his name.

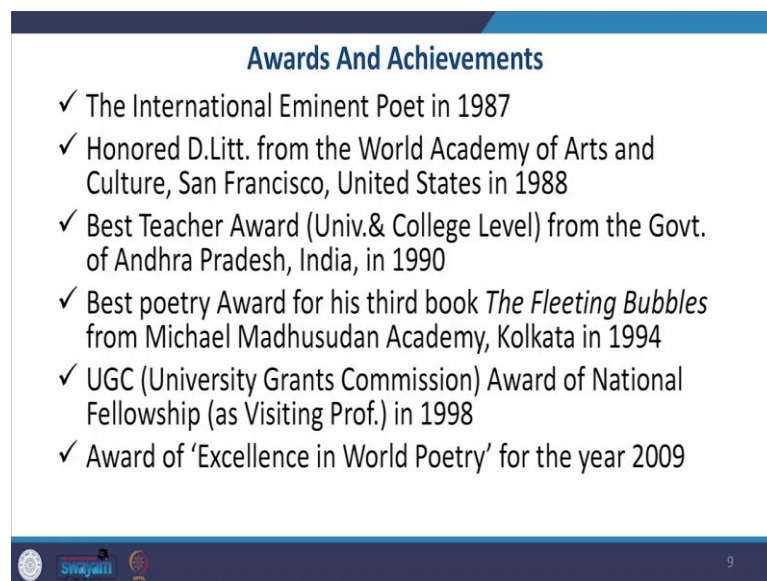
But actually in Indian scenario the irony is that despite being such a wonderful poet T Vasudeva Reddy has not got the attention that he actually deserves. And that is why my dear friends, in this course on Indian poetry in English I have also tried to bring or accommodate those poets who have got a lot of substance in them and they require a wider attention. Actually, it is quite ironical to note that many such Indian English poets have got themselves recognized in other countries, but in Indian scenario they have not been given that much of space that much of attention.

This is actually a sort of you know irony of situation and the regions may be galore. T Vasudeva Reddy was the secretary of the guild of Indian English writers editors and critics, Reddy had started writing just during his college days and the very first poems that came out were in some of the journals and then he started writing in English and he has to his credit 12 poetry collections, 2 novels and 3 critical books.

He is actually a prominent poet as I have been telling you, who is considered to be one of the famous haiku writers in Indian poetry in English. What is actually more significant about this poet is he does not have that much of limelight. Born in Tirupati and he confined himself to Tirupati. And that is why if you have a look at the poetic world of a T V Reddy you will find that majority of the settings of his poems are in the rural landscape in the rural landscape.

So, he is such a poet who celebrates rural India and searches for the outside life in the world of spirituality. Of course, it was very cruel of God to have snatched T Vasudeva Reddy only last year, in 2020, T Vasudeva Reddy left for his heavenly abode. And let me also admit that I was in association with him and then the day I talked to him only after 3 or 4 days, suddenly somebody gave me the message that professor T Vasudeva Reddy is no more. So, that was very sad on my part.

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Awards And Achievements

- ✓ The International Eminent Poet in 1987
- ✓ Honored D.Litt. from the World Academy of Arts and Culture, San Francisco, United States in 1988
- ✓ Best Teacher Award (Univ.& College Level) from the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, India, in 1990
- ✓ Best poetry Award for his third book *The Fleeting Bubbles* from Michael Madhusudan Academy, Kolkata in 1994
- ✓ UGC (University Grants Commission) Award of National Fellowship (as Visiting Prof.) in 1998
- ✓ Award of 'Excellence in World Poetry' for the year 2009

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Now, T Vasudeva Reddy had several awards to his credit several achievements he got the International Eminent Poet Award in 8 1987 his poems actually had such an effect on the outside world. That he was given honored D.Litt. from the world academy of arts and culture san Francisco US and then he also was recognized as one of the best teachers. And then he got Michael Madhusudan award.

Even after retirement he was living in his own village and composing poems and he had also got a UGC award of National Fellowship as a visiting professor in 1998 and in 2009

he had got award of Excellence in World Poetry. Now, T Vasudeva Reddy has got 12 poetry collections to his name and it will be very difficult to touch upon all the poetry collections. But in a way I will try to touch upon some of his major works, but my focus here will be my concentration on his haiku poems.

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His very first collection was *When Grief Rains*. Then came *The Broken Rhythms*, *The Fleeting Bubbles*, *Melting Melodies*, *Gliding Ripples*, *Echoes*, *Quest For Peace*, *The Rural Muse*, *Thousand Haiku Pearls* which we will give more attention to. Then *Golden Veil*, *Sound and Silence*, *The Pulse of Life: Essential Readings* and then last year only he had published *Light Eternal: A Spiritual Poem*.

And perhaps this *Light Eternal* was a sort of call to the eternity and he had to leave he had to has a journey for the eternity. So, these are the names of his collections. Now we will try our level best are to discuss some of the early collections and then we will come to the discussion on his haiku poems. As I have been telling that he was not only a poet, but he was a novelist and he has also written some critical books.

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Novels and Critical Books

☐ *The Vultures*

☐ *Minor Gods*

THE VULTURES
(A Novel based on the Real World in India's Past)

T. Vasudeva Reddy

Golden Books of India (Publication)
2017, Central Board of Secondary Education
Delhi-110 022

- *The Vultures* has the rural settings of Andhra Pradesh.
- *Jane Austen: The Dialectics of Self-Actualization in her Novels* (1987)
- *Jane Austen: The Matrix of Matrimony* (1987)
- *A Critical Survey of Indo-English Poetry* (2016)

Two of his novels namely *The Vultures* and *Minor Gods* were published. *The Vultures* once again like his poetry collections has got the rural settings and he also wrote *Minor Gods*. So, in a way if you look at the titles, you can find that there is a sort of melancholia in this poet and majority of his works are also rooted in despair. There are only some rays of delight, but then they are very scant. The poet is very much dipped into despair and the despair is not only personal, the poet actually makes a journey from the personal to the impersonal.

The poet actually tries to look at the scenario of India from being an insider and also tries to look at as being an outsider as well. So, since he had done his Ph.D on Jane Austen. There is also a book entitled *Jane Austen: The Dialectics of Self-actualization* in novels. That might have been perhaps the conversion of his Ph.D thesis and then another book that came out *Jane Austen- The Matrix of Matrimony* and then he also had one critical survey of indo English poetry.

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General Themes of Reddy's Poetry

- Rural Life, Shift from local to global
- Deteriorating Moral Values, Spiritual Quest
- Memory and Loss
- Autobiographical elements

"His poetry is a pleasant blend of the traditional and the modern, the realistic and the romantic, the symbolic and the imagist, the urban and the rural, satirical and lyrical streams of poetry." (Introduction, *The Pulse of Life*)

Now, what are actually the themes of Reddy's poetry. Reddy was a person who even after retirement had actually become a principal and then he was a UGC visiting professor fine. But then he was living in his small temple town of Tirupati and most of the time he used to go to his village that is why one can find the landscape of, you know, rural India in his poetry.

But then he had his eyes for even the common subjects. It is often said that, at times, one can find the plight of the poor people in his poems- then the miseries, the obstacles. One can also notice some amount of outburst or outburst of anger at times and these outbursts, at times, many people say that at times T V Reddy was not able to control his own emotions.

And that actually erupted and many of the poems are very harsh that is why some of the poems are very satiric, very ironic. So, in the world of T. V. Reddy one can find the picture of rural India and they just shift from local to global. There are all sorts of aspects depicted in his poetry city life, village life-- you know then the life of the farmers, the life of the village women, the life of leaders, the life of youngsters, the life of academicians.

And you know, it is no wonder to find T V Reddy at times satirizing how the libraries are being neglected, fine, and he at times says---- It has become a mortuary of books; mortuary of books. And then at times also when he makes comments after comments you

know actually T V Reddy was to a great extent very straightforward he did not carry any ill will against anyone, but then he was a realist. So, he cannot control himself you know.

He cannot control himself, at times, speaking at the degradation of moral values. One can also find there is a progression from one collection to another there is a progression towards the spiritual quest. And it was only this spiritual quest when he wrote the eternal light, then perhaps there was a call from the almighty and he had to leave. So, there is also a picture of memory and loss in many of his poems. Sometimes many people also say that there are instances of personal losses and these personal losses avoid pictured or coloured with the loss of his own spouse.

So, at times he became very romantic, but then he was sardonic also. He was influenced by many of the poets, but then he has in many of the interviews said if he had to pick up only one literary character who could it be and T V Reddy a very you know simply says it was hamlet in which one can find all sorts of pictures. So, Reddy's poetry if we take something from the introduction of the pulse of life his poetry is a pleasant blend of the traditional and the modern, the realistic and the romantic the symbolic and the imagist.

You can find plethora of images pervaded throughout Reddy's poetry the urban and the rural satirical and lyrical streams of poetry. Now what are the features apart from his poetry being rooted in the rural surroundings, there is a sort of suggestiveness in his poetry. And another quality that T V Reddy has his grasp over humour- his grip and grasp over humour. Reddy tries to fuse personal with a universal, he is satiric no doubt.

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Features of his Poetry

- ✓ Rural surroundings and Nature
- ✓ Suggestiveness
- ✓ Humour
- ✓ Fuses personal with the universal
- ✓ Substantial impersonality
- ✓ Satiric but not devoid of universal truth
- ✓ Transition of mood

"In that double roasted hamlet
women stand like expiring candles,
water moves in concentric circles
like their daydreams
wearing desires in the plaits
of their cobra-hair."

(Women of the Village")

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But then one can also find the picture of varying moods. So, you cannot say that he is simply confined to one theme or one subject. One can find variety of colours in the world of T V Reddy we can take one some of the lines from one poem entitled “Women of the Village,” where you can find how he uses, how he makes comparisons and then how very metaphorically when even when he is talking about the boiling and the toiling of the village women he says.

“In that double roasted hamlet/ women stand like expiring candles,/”. See the use of the simile here-- like expiring candles. So, very suggestively he says how women are they are just like expiring candles.


A thing from which you get all sorts of sources all sorts of delights, but then they are just like expiring candles. Water moves in concentric circles like their day dreams, a women carrying water. So, “Water moves in concentric circles/ like their day dreams/ wearing desires in the plaits/ of their cobra hair; in the plaits of their cobra hair.”

So, very beautiful use of simile and metaphor. So, the comparisons that you come across in the poetic world of Reddy actually suggest a lot. So, let us take the very first collection entitled “When Grief Rains.” It is said that the very first collection had a deep imprint of melancholia fine and if you read the lines you can find how the poet uses melancholy.

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“When Grief Rains”

When gales of sorrow
Wreck my surging spirit,
Misery storms my being,
And grief rains incessantly
I wish to drench myself,
Depart from these ills
And enter the pores of the earth
With drops of rain that seep.
Still somewhere in me
A dim desire creeps unawares
To possess the instinctive mackintosh.



The slide features a poem on the left and a photograph on the right. The photograph shows a person standing at the end of a long, narrow wooden pier that stretches across a calm body of water. The scene is shrouded in a thick, pale mist or fog, creating a somber and reflective atmosphere. The sky is a uniform light blue-grey, and the water's surface is still, mirroring the sky and the pier.

Swajati 14

“When gales of sorrow/ wreck my surging spirit,/ misery storms my being/ and grief rains incessantly.” The poet actually tries to put, you know, even you know life in inanimate objects and then he says—“I wish to drench myself/ depart from these ills/ and enter the pores of the earth.” The poet is so dissatisfied with the sort of, you know, unusual situations around him, “with drops of rain that seep/ still somewhere in me/ a dim desire creeps unawares/ to possess the instinctive mackintosh.”

The poet is amid sorrow-- the poet is amid grief, but he always wants himself to be covered by a mackintosh, by a raincoat, by something that could protect him. So, while he is talking about some of his personal experiences, but then he has always man in his vision. We can also take because it is very difficult to touch upon all the poetry collections, but let me take *Gliding Ripples* and some poems from the *Gliding Ripples* because my intention today is to talk about specifically the haikus of T V Reddy.

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The slide is titled "Gliding Ripples(2008)". It contains the following content:

- The first section has 57 poems, the second has 100 haikus.
- Contemplative
- Social consciousness

Two poem excerpts are highlighted in blue boxes:

"Oh America"
Roads and lanes look spick and span
unclean and uncivil ways people ban;
No piece of paper or butt or pup's litter
Unending lines of racing cars glitter
Sky high towers and huge shopping malls
Fill our eyes with thrills of Niagra falls.

"My Village"
"...most of the huts and thatched cottages
symbols of nature's simple life for ages
now stand erect in concrete avatar
of terraced buildings of brick and mortar
cemented by greed and jealousy, and hate."

Below the "My Village" excerpt is the line: "The sun sets in the West only to rise in the east."

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for Swajathi and a page number 15.

So, this *Gliding Ripples* which came out in 2008. So, this *Gliding Ripples* also talks about the ills of the society. One can also find some amount of contemplation- serious contemplation. The poet as a social thinker we can call T V Reddy he is not only a poet because as he himself says. That a poet is of course, a poet, but then we can find a thinker in T V Reddy who actually cannot confined his eyes to the grim reality that are surrounded around him.

So, the first section of these *Gliding Ripples* has got 57 poems and the second has got 100 haikus being our subject. We can take some of the poems because you know here he talks about both the pictures. There is one poem entitled "Oh America." Now on the one hand, he talks about how beautiful is America and how everything is quite clean, how everything is very systematic, but on the other hand he also talks about the other side of it.

For example, if we take some lines from this poem "Oh America" where he says— "Roads and lanes look spick and span." Look at his phrasings very beautiful. "Unclean and uncivil ways people ban/ no piece of paper or butt or pups litter /unending lines of racing cars glitter/ sky high towers and huge shopping malls/ fill our eyes with thrills of Niagara Falls." So, here he talks about the beauty not only of the Niagara Falls, but the systematic ways of life that Americans lead, but on the other hand.

As the poem progresses, he also talks about how with the progress also comes some amount of; some amount of evil things and then he says if you are not insured in America, if you suddenly fall ill, then you know what will happen.

Because ‘there are high tech robbers’, so in order to say something or wage a war against what is being done in the name of medicine and all he says they are high tech robbers. So, if you suddenly fall ill, it is always better to move to India where as he says—“The sun sets in the west only to rise in the east.”

He says that whether it be medicine or whether it be Ayurveda or whatsoever it is only in India that you can get a better treatment. So, on the one hand, he talks about the systematic ways of life, the manners of life that people are living in America, but on the other hand, he says, but if you are not insured perhaps you will be looted by these high tech robbers.

And then let us take some of the lines from another poem entitled “My Village”, where he says the poet since he is from the rural areas, nature is predominantly working in majority of his works. So, he says how with the progress we are losing some of the glories and that is why the *Gliding Ripples*. And he says—“Most of the huts and thatched cottages/ symbols of nature’s simple life for ages/ Now stand erect in concrete avatar/ in concrete avatar of terraced buildings of brick and mortar/ cemented by greed and jealousy and hate.”

So, there the poet also hints that these builders who in a way try to provide you a sort of comfortable life. But behind that their greed and their jealousy they rule the roost and we are also losing the glorious thatched cottages which were actually the symbols of nature’s simple joys.

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Varying Moods

When Grief Rains

Jilted by crafty clouds
The sun-burnt crop looked
Like a dissected corpse
On the post-mortem table. (WGR,28)

The nothingness around me gapes and gasps;
It hardly breathes ---baneful breeze. (WGR, 24)

Still somewhere in me
A dim desire creeps
To possess the instinctive mackintosh. (WGR,25)

Barren lands
Vanishing sounds
Elusive clouds
Depressed crowds
Dried streams dying dreams. (GR,19)

Gliding Ripples

They are castaway, the untouchables
Innocent offspring
Poor victims of
Their aged thoughtless creators. (GR,13)

Monarch of eerie clammy nights
an unkind despot blood-thirsty
Fond of pond and puddle dark and filthy
A nagging source of uneasy fright to all on the earth
that happily breathe
Old or young with or without teeth. (43)

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The poet in T V Reddy as I have been saying, he has got varying moods and in one poem after another you can find. Now, for example, as I had been talking about the academics here we can take from *Gliding Ripples* where he says about the library these they are cast away, the untouchables innocent offspring, poor victims of their aged thoughtless creators. Actually, Reddy is satiric at times and sometimes he is realist also.

When he says, when he looks at the pathetic picture of the farmer's condition the pathetic, you know, condition of farmers when he says. And you know what is very significant of Reddy is he will have a small lines, sometimes the 2 liners, but then it will have a very magical effect. "Barren lands/ vanishing sounds/ elusive clouds/ depressed crowds/ dried dreams, dying dreams."

Look at these lines—'barren lands', he has been able to say everything about how nature has been playing a sort of hide and seek with the rural farmers, vanishing sounds, elusive clouds come, but they are elusive they leave us no rains, depressed crowds dried streams dying dreams. One can find the use of consonants here and then as I have been saying that he is also a poet who brings in his poetic oeuvre-- the touch of humour.

So, there is a depiction of birds, there is a depiction of animals, there is a depiction of fruits, there is a depiction of trees, there is a depiction of garden, there is a depiction of tears, there is a depiction of love, there is a depiction of how people are cheated in love

as well, there is a depiction of youth, there is a depiction of old days and there is also a depiction of the spiritual progress.

But at the same time the poet actually in a very manner of humour, when he talks about mosquitoes you see how what sort of adjective he uses to mosquitoes. ‘Monarch of eerie clammy nights/ an unkind despot bloodthirsty/ fond of pond and puddle dark and filthy/ a nagging source of uneasy fright to all on earth/ old or young with or without teeth.’”

So, even though a mosquito is toothless yet it is dangerous, but then the poet says ‘monarch of eerie clammy nights.’ So, the poet makes us laugh also, but the poet also makes us realize. Then in one poem after another you can find here is this poem entitled “The Gypsy Woman”, I would not be able to read the entire poem, but I will simply come to the last lines of the poem where, what the poet actually wants to say that how when somebody is in a state of you know in a state of poverty, how he or she tries to take certain roles.

What matters is the satisfaction of the belly whether by a true means or by false means.

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“The Gipsy Woman”

With a basket Woven of palm leaves Balanced meticulously On the disheveled head She walks along the street Treading the scorching ground With her bare tripping feet; Her silver anklets and bracelets Vie in arresting heaviness. Her broad bangles jingle, Garlands of patches on her sari Host the molesting sun, Pieces of mirror sewn on her dress Reflect the piercing rays While her arms move In tune with her slender waist; She cries with an assured voice— “I can tell your fortunes—	Hear my ‘sode’*, know thy future Sode amma sode, hear my sode”, Pauses at each door –step Feels the palm of rustic maid With her wondrous wand And discloses the pages of fate In words of musical cadence And earns palmfuls of rice; By telling sweet and sensible lies, Interspersed with generalizations, She fills the hearts of maids With honeyed thoughts; They gain a parcel of sweet dreams While she her remorseless morsel.
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*Telugu word used by gipsy women for telling the past, present and future

Swayamii 17

Here, the depiction of this lady is that of a gypsy woman who how she moves and how she tells everyone you know, “with a basket/ woven of palm leaves/ balanced meticulously/ on the disheveled head/ she walks along the street.” And then when she meets somebody then she says she cries with an assured voice—“I can tell you fortunes-

So, this lady is a fortune teller, fine and she tries to earn her livelihood by telling people about their lives and then she says hear ‘my sode,’ Sode is actually the Telugu word for telling the past, present, and future.

I know everything about your past, present and future. And naturally people throng around her and then “By telling sweet and sensible lies/ interspersed with generalization/ she feels the hearts of maids./ With honeyed thoughts/ they gain a parcel of sweet dreams/ while she her remorseless morsel.”

So, even though she is telling them she is acting as a fortune- teller and telling them some truths or some lies, they are happy, but more than them. Who is happier is this gypsy woman she gains with her remorseless, she gains her remorseless morsels they gain a parcel of sweet dreams.

Now, my dear friends we shall come to our own subject that is haiku and T V Reddy was quite an expert at writing haikus. And in haikus he has taken different subjects in this collection entitled *Thousand Haiku Pearls* he names it.

One critic has gone to the extent of saying and even he has mentioned that they are not only 1000, but then there are more than a 1000 there are 1008; yes, 1008 haikus fine. And he, at times, takes a ride and at times he mocks at times he socks at times he jokes at times he satirizes we shall take up some of the haikus.

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From Thousand Haiku Pearls

World is vast and wide
for the dynamic youth to ride
on the crest of tide.

Your sweet memories
dispel dark clouds of worries_
Light conquers night.

With smiling pearls
you make my dreary life bloom_
the spring chases gloom.

Sun or moon may rise or set
Super powers may rise and soon fall,
but crimes know no sunset.

The once famed pink city_
Royal pink exploded with terrible ink,
city bleeds and stands in dignity.

The rose, razed to the root,
her petals fondly raped and looted,
falls and faints at the door.

Leader stands on the snowy peak,
All the snow flies with a terrible shriek -
seeing his heart, a gory granite.

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“World is vast and wide/ for the dynamic youth to ride/ on the crest of tide.” And what is one added quality of T V Reddy as a haiku writer is-- there is actually a rhythm there is a musicality, fine. Your sweet memories dispel dark clouds of worries, light conquers night fine and you know when he takes a dig at the leaders what he says—“Leader stands on the snowy peak/ all the snow flies with a terrible shriek/ seeing his heart a gory granite.”

So, there he talks about how the leaders what they tell is not actually the truth they are more worried about their own, you know, fame about their own belly. So, their snowy peak, so snow flies terrible shriek seeing his heart a gory granite.

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Contd....

Cricket match_ Idle brains boundaries watch; <u>Reason, clean-bowled.</u>	A bride's blush A parrot's biting <u>kiss fresh</u> <u>On the guava fruit.</u>
Management schools, <u>Beehives with stinging rules---</u> <u>gardens of weeds.</u>	Nude, lush green garden Feels fresh, slim, shy and sensuous--- Fairest Eve in Eden.
Our universities, <u>large stinking academic slums--</u> <u>petty political drums.</u>	<u>Birthdays march</u> <u>Like lamp post on market road</u> <u>With back-breaking load.</u>
	Soon to old age we grow With emotional waste of youthful past; Life of a cawing crow

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We move forward even he also talks about how people become lazy when there is a cricket match. And he takes a ride saying—“Cricket match/ idle brains boundaries watch/ reason clean bowled.” So, reason is clean bowled, there is no reasoning, you know, it is a game of uncertainties. And you see how beautifully the poet says-- reason clean bowled. So, he also takes he also makes the uses of the phrases even from the same world of cricket, but at the same time he says it is such a game. But then idle brains, boundaries watch, fine, and when he talks about universities and all what he says.

“Our universities/ large stinking academic slums/ petty political drums”. Every now and then we are actually blowing our own trumpet, but then we are large stinking at academic slums. Even he takes a dig at the corporate and the management world when

he says--- “Management schools,/ beehives with stinging rules/ garden of weeds”, you will always come across lots of thoughts and in those web of thoughts you are being trapped.

And then at times the poet also becomes very sensuous when he talks about how “A bride’s blush/ a parrots biting kiss fresh/ on the guava fruit.” The poet becomes sensuous that how does a bride blush-- the blush of the bride just like a parrots biting kiss fresh on the guava fruit. He also talks about the celebrations that people make at times and says- “Birthdays March/ like lamp post on market road/ with back breaking load.”

So, the movement of time he talks about here- how birthdays March how we grow like lamp post on market road with back breaking load fine. So, we can continue and once you start reading the haikus of T V Reddy, you will not be able to resist yourself.

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Contd...

Election promises--
Countless pebbles in a near-empty pot
To pump few drops.

Voice is a gift, a lift
To soar or sigh, use it with thrift
A multiple choice.

Words of well wishers though harsh
Are the right remedy our wrongs to thrash;
Chronic ills need bitter pills.

Beware of beauty's power
And its wily weapon of seduction--
Root of character's reduction.

Corporate hospitals
Money-minting unethical machines--
Trading portals.

Most medical doctors
are commission agents and cunning actors;
Amassing money, their only creed.

Religion is a footboard
To reach the divine feet of the Lord
In any form on any road.

Caste and creeds
Are man-made walls; demolish them
And uproot the weeds.

We are impure:
With this heavy baggage, the sinful load
We can't cross the road.

The one Supreme
Is beyond the limits of form and norm;
Let us be calm.

Say for example, he also takes a dig at the corporate hospitals and says, “corporate hospitals/ money minting unethical machines/ trading portals.” So, how you are being looted by corporate hospitals and he also takes a dig at the contemporary situations and the way the leaders are being admired adored. But then the sort of admonition that they require is provided by none other than the poet who says, “Election promises/ countless pebbles in a near empty pot/ to pump few drops.”

So, how false promises are made and they are just like countless pebbles. Then he also talks about the discrimination of caste and creed and he says—“caste and creeds/ are man-made walls demolish them/ and uproot the weeds.” The poet cannot be strait-jacketed in terms of religion and all where he says—“Religion is a foot board/ to reach the divine feet of the lord/ in any form on any road.”


So, religion is helpful in reaching you in making you and you are trying to reach the divine feet of the lord. And then he also in a very metaphoric, very suggestive way says—“Most medical doctors/ are commission agents and cunning actors/ amassing money their only creed.” They do not think about the health conditions of the people, but their only aim is to mint money. And then he says- ‘we are impure’ see the realistic note.

“With this heavy baggage the sinful load/ we cannot cross the road”. So, the poet also here hints that how we want to from this physical world we want to go to this spiritual world we want to attain spirituality. But the sort of load and what is this load like the load is not pure it is already impure my dear friend. Reddy’s haikus are so beautiful that you can find and in a very short and subtle manner at times when he gets depressed he says.

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Reddy's Haikus

<p><small>Depression</small> Who is to whom in this world? There is none whom you can call yours".</p> <p><u>Reality sleeps</u> justice yawns and snores"; The widow weeps. (THP,13)</p>	<p><small>Realism</small> World is wide for the youth to ride on the crest of tide. (On Youth)</p> <p>Birthdays march Like lamp posts on market road With back-breaking load. Soon to old age we grow With emotional waste of youthful past; Life of a cawing crow.(THP, 47)</p>
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“Who is to whom in this world?/ There is none whom you can call yours.” My dear friends, we are all proud of and boast of all relations, but all these relations are elations.

And the poet rightly says, there is none whom you can call yours you are living in a world of *maya* in a world of illusion my dear friend.

Now, again looking at the contemporary tragic picture of the world, the poet says—
“Reality sleeps” there is no one to bother about reality. “Justice yawns and snores”, is there justice the widow weeps there is no one to care for and “the widow weeps.”

So, is this the world we are living and that is why my dear friend, when we make an analysis of the characteristic features of Reddy’s haiku, we not only find that it is soaked in a sort of nativity song. It is actually full of rural atmosphere, but then there is like any typical Indian there is a progression from the physical to the spiritual and that we can find.

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Characteristic Hallmark of Reddy's Haiku

- Rural atmosphere
- Spiritualism at the core of his poetry
- Native ethos
- Celebration of nature
- Economy of expression
- Rhythm is an essential part.
- “..... he is a meeting point of the past and the new-conventional, structured, rhymed poetry and the present, unrhymed free verse.” _ V.K. Dominic

“Search of soul
though it is late, let us start;
a conscious chart.”

Swayam 22

Reddy’s is a meeting point of the past and the new conventional structured rhymed poetry as Dominic rightly says and the peasant unrhymed free verse. Reddy has said “Search of a soul/ though it is late let us start/ a conscious chart.” No, at times we fail what have we done till now what shall we do tomorrow fine and we are reminded of Eliot’s views and you know. When he also ends, I mean, Reddy when he also ends his poem entitled “Quest for Peace”, he also ends it with the mantra of Om, like you know, T S Eliot says Om Shanti Shanti.

If we make a proper evaluation of T V Reddy we can also take into consideration some of the views of the critics.

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The slide, titled "Views of Critics", lists the following comments:

- ❖ "My attention is sometimes arrested by the striking imagery and phrasing. The poet has keen eye to mark the exceptional whether in life or nature." (K.R. Srinivas Iyengar)
- ❖ "Like a gifted sculptor, he chisels his poems with the deftness of a master craftsman." (Nissim Ezekiel)
- ❖ "Subtle, elegant, profound, Reddy's haiku broadens his unwavering focus on the natural and the modern world and turn them inwards to explore the complex realm of the human and the divine." (Patricia Prime)
- ❖ "He remains a native, an Indian in what he thinks about the world in its enigmatic appeal, a pantheist at the core of his heart. His is stuff with a distinctly Indian flavor, the ripe jackfruit and appetizing yellow of mango in a basket." (A. Russell)
- ❖ 'satires traverse from the general to the particular and rise to the universal' (Prof. K. Venkatachari)
- ❖ 'sociological consciousness and earnest concern for the weal of society' (David Kerr)

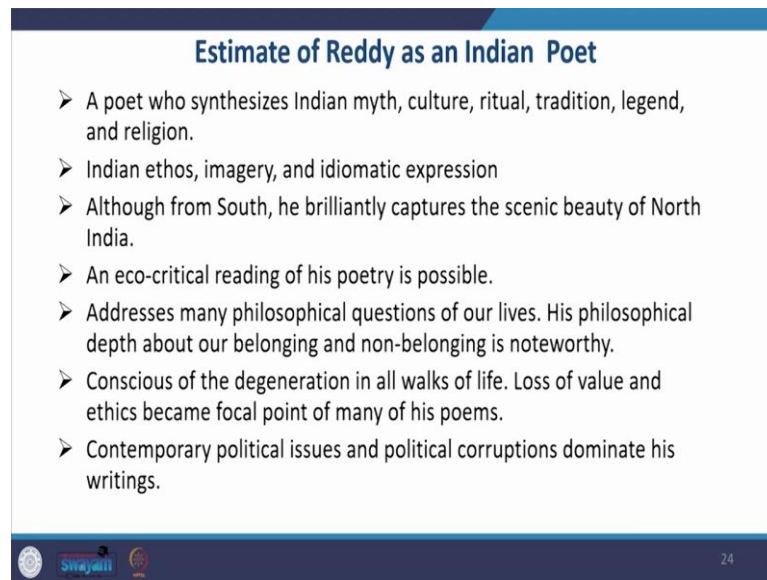
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And in this regard some of them have come up with very meaningful and very subtle and very remarkable comments K R Srinivas Iyyengar who we are familiar with says-- My attention is sometimes arrested by the striking imagery and phrasing. The poet has keen eye to mark the exceptional whether in life or in nature," very closely associated with nature, but then from his being in the nature he also thinks of moving towards the supernatural towards the spiritual.

Patricia Prime in her review of *Thousand Haiku Pearl* says, "Subtle, elegant, profound Reddy's haiku broadens his unwavering focus on the natural and the modern world and turn them inwards to explore the complex realm of human and the divine." There are other comments also given. you can read them at your own leisure and pleasure.

But then Reddy was such a poet who actually also attracted the attention of one of the very famous and significant voices of Indian English poetry namely Nissim Ezekiel who says—"Like a gifted sculptor, like a gifted sculptor he chisels his poems with the deftness of a master craftsman." And of course, Reddy was the master craftsman.

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Estimate of Reddy as an Indian Poet

- A poet who synthesizes Indian myth, culture, ritual, tradition, legend, and religion.
- Indian ethos, imagery, and idiomatic expression
- Although from South, he brilliantly captures the scenic beauty of North India.
- An eco-critical reading of his poetry is possible.
- Addresses many philosophical questions of our lives. His philosophical depth about our belonging and non-belonging is noteworthy.
- Conscious of the degeneration in all walks of life. Loss of value and ethics became focal point of many of his poems.
- Contemporary political issues and political corruptions dominate his writings.

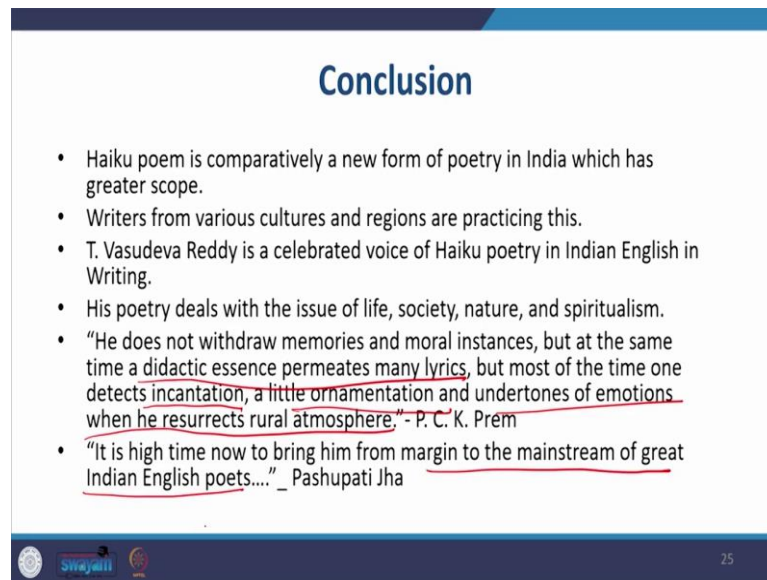
Swajati 24

So, the time has come we estimated Reddy as an Indian English poet. And what is that Indianness prevailing in the world of Reddy, he is actually a poet who not only symbolizes or synthesizes Indian myth, culture, ritual, tradition, legion and religion. One can find one can come across, a plethora of the use of Indian ethos, imagery and idiomatic expressions in his world. One can also try an eco critical reading of Reddy's poetry.

Reddy even though he is a poet who could have simply cultivated his world on his fertile imagination, but then he is a realist and he is just like a reformer who is conscious of the degeneration of humans in all walks of life. Loss of value and ethics became a focal point of many of his poems. Reddy does not hide anything and he in a very straightforward manner he also bursts out at the political issues and political corruptions which dominate his writing.

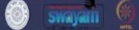
That is why the world of T. V. Reddy is full of the patterns of life that we are living. He actually is a celebrated voice of haiku poetry in Indian English writing.

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Conclusion

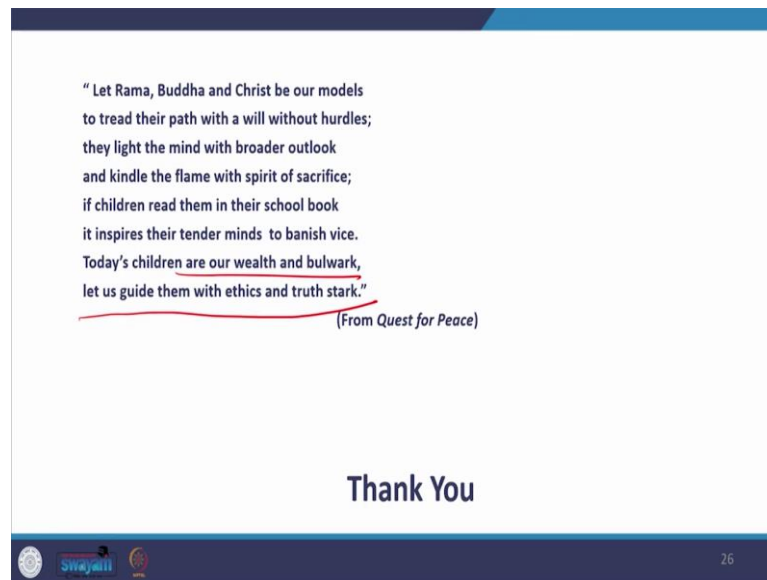
- Haiku poem is comparatively a new form of poetry in India which has greater scope.
- Writers from various cultures and regions are practicing this.
- T. Vasudeva Reddy is a celebrated voice of Haiku poetry in Indian English in Writing.
- His poetry deals with the issue of life, society, nature, and spiritualism.
- “He does not withdraw memories and moral instances, but at the same time a didactic essence permeates many lyrics, but most of the time one detects incantation, a little ornamentation and undertones of emotions when he resurrects rural atmosphere.” - P. C. K. Prem
- “It is high time now to bring him from margin to the mainstream of great Indian English poets....” _ Pashupati Jha

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And it would be worth to quote P C K Prem, who says—“He does not withdraw from memories and moral instances, but at the same time a didactic essence permeates many lyrics”. So, he is a reformer and he instructs, “but most of the time one detects incantation a little ornamentation and undertones of emotions when he resurrects rural atmosphere.” In this regard a contemporary poet professor Pashupati Jha says, “It is high time now to bring him from margin to the mainstream of great Indian English poets.”

My dear friends, we could have gone, we could have explored more and more of Reddy’s world, but then as I have always been repeating we always have constraints of time. But then let us the constraints of time not boil our concerns, but then let all our children.

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" Let Rama, Buddha and Christ be our models
to tread their path with a will without hurdles;
they light the mind with broader outlook
and kindle the flame with spirit of sacrifice;
if children read them in their school book
it inspires their tender minds to banish vice.
Today's children are our wealth and bulwark,
let us guide them with ethics and truth stark."
(From Quest for Peace)

Thank You

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If I have to quote and if I have to wind up this talk let me wind up this talk by some of the lines from Reddy's "Quest for Peace" where he says, "Let Rama, Buddha and Christ be our models/ to tread their path with a will without hurdles./ They light the mind with broader outlook/ and kindle the flame with a spirit of sacrifice./ If children read them in their school book/ it inspires their tender minds to banish vice/ today's children are our wealth and bulwark/ let us guide them with ethics and truth stark."

So, my dear friends, despite all sorts of despair, disappointments, dejections, Reddy's world offers us a hope. A hope which actually binds man to man and man to the superman. And with this note of optimism as Reddy has rightly said 'Let our children make Rama Buddha and Christ and make them their models if they really want to thrive in their lives. And I hope Reddy's words will come alive if the coming generations take heed of it. With these words, let me come to the end of this talk.

Thank you very much I wish you all a good day.