



SOUL'S SEARCH IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD: SPIRITUAL THEMES IN CONTEMPORARY POETIC EXPRESSION

Sunita Rani

English Himachal Pradesh University.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56815/IRJAHS/2025.V4I1.18-23>

ABSTRACT

Humans have an innate affinity for matters of faith; we are homo religiosus or religious animals. Because of the unique closeness that poetry achieves via the interaction of human words with the divine Logos, it is an ideal vehicle for expressing religious experience. Spiritual motifs—drawing from multiple traditions, personal introspection, and philosophical inquiry—are being used more and more by poets to express a desire for transcendence, connection, and inner serenity in the face of fast technological change, cultural disintegration, and existential crises. This study delves into the ways in which contemporary poets convey themes of spiritual longing, estrangement, and the pursuit of self-discovery via the use of language, imagery, and form. This research examines poetry as a mirror of the broken modern situation and a means of healing and transcendence via analyzing chosen works by notable modern poets. It focuses on the interaction between spiritual regeneration and fragmentation. At its core, the thesis contends that spiritual themes in modern poetry mirror a profound societal need to provide our fractured society with some sense of direction and purpose.

Keywords: *Spirituality; Contemporary Poetry; Fragmentation; Transcendence; Modern Poetic Expression; Existential Crisis; Inner Journey.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Thinkers believe that poetry is a wonderful term that is better than everyday language. The structure and existence plan of a poem, together with its components like thinking, emotion, feeling, and imagination, determine the poetry's brilliance and excellence. They refer to it as the best and most outstanding word because of this verse (Barati and Imami, 2014. P. 105). An exciting world of meaning and language expression is shown in poetry. So, a good poet is someone who can express their aspirations and the expectations of society by skillfully capturing the cosmos in their poetry. The poet's consequential effort within society and poetry's intrinsic relevance both become apparent at this time.

Nevertheless, by thoroughly analyzing the poet's poetic works, one may fully grasp the importance of poetry and the poet's responsibilities. This is because poetry is a kind of expressive language that encapsulates the deepest human thoughts, feelings, and experiences, which the poet skillfully conveys to the public. In this light, we may examine the extent to which the poet has met their responsibility by identifying all the human experiences reflected in the poem (Shafiei Kadkani, 1389.p.6).

Poetry has a long and storied past that begins with ancient Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle and continues for nearly two thousand years. Poetry has maintained its centrality to human aesthetic choices, ethics, and spirituality over this long era. People have seen this issue from their unique vantage points, debating its importance and value. Three primary areas are examined in this study: poetry, poets, and the social relevance of poetry and poets. The distinctive viewpoint and presentation of the writers' thoughts in this work illustrate its uniqueness, even if it incorporates the viewpoints of numerous experts from authoritative sources and literature. The fundamental goal of this research is to analyze how poetry and poetry contribute to social awakening. The following are some of the topics covered: what is poetry, how does it function in society, who is a poet, what are poets' goals, how important is poetry, and how poets



contribute to people's awakening in society.

It was discussed in Robert Bridges's lecture titled "The Necessity of Poetry":

Concerning the connection between poetry and religion. Poetry provides the finest expression of true religion, which is the conviction and habit of personal communion between the soul and God. However, true religion is too distinct and possessive of its nature to permit artistic dominance. Poetic depictions of spiritual life can be so powerful that they enslave the mind to false ideals (Robert, 1918).

Two foundational works in Indian literature and philosophy, the Bhagavad Gita and "Gitanjali" by Rabindranath Tagore, explore significant intellectual and spiritual topics. An integral component of the Indian epic Mahabharata is the 700-verse Hindu text known as the Bhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna is Prince Arjuna's charioteer on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, and this ancient book is arranged as a conversation between the two of them. Krishna gives Arjuna advice that helps him overcome his existential and ethical problems as he faces a moral dilemma on engaging in the battle. Among the many subjects covered by this instruction are spiritual knowledge, the nature of reality, obligation, and righteousness. The 103 poems that makeup "Gitanjali" (Song Offerings), written by Rabindranath Tagore, capture the essence of Tagore's spiritual path. Composed in the early 20th century, "Gitanjali" explores ideas of dedication, submission, and the incorporation of the holy into everyday experiences. Tagore's poetry reveals an intense yearning for enlightenment and a great contentment with life. Lyrical beauty and the genuine outpouring of a soul in touch with the divine distinguish these songs. Both books delve into philosophical and spiritual topics, but in opposite ways—one as a contemporary poetry work and the other as an old Indian scripture. Concerning questions of identity, divine purpose, and how to achieve enlightenment, both the Bhagavad Gita and "Gitanjali" go deeply. Both Tagore's more personal and lyrical style and Gita's more organized philosophical discourse lead to important spiritual truths.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The symbolic language and poetic strategies used by Emily Dickinson in her famous poem "Because I Could not Stop for Death" were studied by Sheki (2023). This research delves deeply into Dickinson's use of literary devices to generate emotions and express deeper ideas. This analysis delves into the poem's symbolism and literary methods, including imagery, metaphor, personification, rhyme scheme, and more. This research delves into the theme relevance of "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" and Dickinson's poetic skill by revealing the poem's hidden layers. Furthermore, several symbolic and lyrical elements used by Emily Dickinson in her poem "Because I Could not Stop for Death" were uncovered throughout the examination. The speaker's encounter with Death is described in this poem via the use of sensory imagery that captivates the reader and makes them feel something. Alluding to themes of death and the beyond, the poem skillfully employs metaphors and similes to build meaning. An example of personification in action is Death, who is personified and shown as a kind guide who accompanies the speaker through life's many phases (Sheki, 2024). Conversely, the academic investigation probes the complexities of "Because I Could not Stop for Death," an enduring poem by Emily Dickinson. The research seeks to decipher the content packed within the poems by conducting a thorough examination of poetic techniques and symbolism. Through her distinctive use of metaphor, symbolism, and language, Dickinson takes readers on a metaphysical voyage that challenges their preconceived notions about mortality, time, and existence. Sheki (2023) states that the abstract aims to shed light on the poet's intricate examination of life and death, providing clues as to why this literary work is still relevant and brilliant today.

Throughout its history, escapist poetry has made use of literary elements like narrativity and palilogy to construct fantastical realms where readers might forget about their problems. The use of palilogy by Ezra Pound, a major figure in the development of escapist poetry, gave his works a rhythmic quality and a melodic quality that transported readers to other realms. By focusing on the process of fleeing from reality rather than the end product, Pound used narrativity to emphasize the significance of the voyage. The employment of these tactics by Pound reimagined poetry as an escape mechanism, opening the door for poets to come who would use language creatively to build fantastical worlds that readers might lose themselves in. In the end, escapist poetry is always developing because poets are always trying new things and expanding the genre's limitations, which allows readers to escape from their everyday lives and dream bigger dreams (Abed, 2023).



3. METHODOLOGY

Detailed inclusion criteria were used to choose the literature. Topics of spirituality, transcendence, estrangement, and the inward voyage of the soul were key in the selection of poems and academic writings. Poetry that explores the conflict between the brokenness of the outside world and the need for inner completeness was given priority. For the sake of diversity of thought, the review features poetry by poets from a wide range of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Academic sources, including JSTOR, Project MUSE, and Google Scholar, were consulted, in addition to respected literary magazines and anthologies.

Spiritual themes like a need for connection, mystical imagery, existential questions, and inner change were identified via thematic coding, which led to the analytical process. The poems' content and form were examined simultaneously to comprehend the role that language and structure play in the presentation of spiritual topics. By doing so, the article draws attention to the ways in which spiritual crises in modern society are often reflected in poetry.

The chosen works were better understood using a comparative and multidisciplinary perspective. The research uses ideas from cultural criticism, philosophy, religious studies, and literary theory to put the poets' spiritual issues into perspective. As a result, the intersection of spirituality in poetry with larger socio-political and existential situations might be better understood.

The results were then compiled to show how poets deal with the disjointed nature of contemporary life and where they differ. In light of our increasingly bewildered environment, this article ends by considering poetry as a tool for spiritual resistance, healing, and change.

4. THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL CRISIS

There is a close relationship between religious faith and the religious idea of spirituality. Here, it has something to do with conventional biblical knowledge and Christian principles. A lot has happened in the annals of Christian spirituality. The core beliefs of Christianity, including its understanding of God, Christian values, human nature, and the interconnectedness of these aspects, are a significant component of Christian spirituality's distinctiveness. Belief in God, His prophets, and holy books—specifically, Christian principles—is essential to fulfilling this duty. One way of looking at religious spirituality is as a doctrine. To a large extent, the word "spirituality" is synonymous with religion, which is very significant to the majority of believers. Religion is sometimes defined as a system of structured beliefs centered on a personal connection with a higher power or creator who has ultimate authority over the cosmos and the capacity to determine each person's destiny. In this respect, it often comprises a search for life's purpose and a feeling of oneness with a power bigger than oneself. Spirituality touches the depths of our emotions, souls, and intellects since it is a common human experience. Questions of life after death, knowledge, truth, compassion, and love are all part of the spiritual journey. It encourages devout people to grow in their faith and knowledge, and it is linked to a profound sense of respect for the divine. Here, it refers to the fact that contemporary man is devoid of spiritual principles and genuine affection. This further proves that we are unable to carry out the spiritual duties that God has given to us in our faith. Spirituality in literature delves into the profound connection between human life and the spiritual world. This example illustrates the disintegration of religious, social, cultural, and personal identities, as well as the loss of faith and existential crises. Famous writers who have been deeply affected by spiritual sterility accurately portray this condition in their poems. For example, according to Yeats, contemporary society has become sterile, lusty, innocent, and materialistic due to the loss of spirituality and tradition. Through the trials and tribulations of a Christian who embraces capitalism as his new worldview, his poetry examines the ills of contemporary society. Those who prioritize money and worldly goods above all else will experience psychological estrangement, sexual depravity, and spiritual emptiness as a result of this transformation. Both Yeats and Eliot, in their poetry, portray the moral decay of contemporary man. The Hollow Men (1925) and The Waste Land (1922) both examine the moral and spiritual state of contemporary humanity as well as its disappointment. According to spiritual sources, people in this hopeless situation feel emptiness and a lack of connection to the divine (Hinchliffe, 1987, p. 10). Eliot emphasizes the moral and theological decline, disillusionment, isolation, and hopelessness of contemporary man via the use of shattered language and symbolism. Throughout both poems, we



see the gradual erosion of conventional ideals.

5. THE ROLE OF GOD

In the Bhagavad Gita, God is portrayed in a complex and deep light by Krishna, who is revealed as the Supreme Being, the one who created and maintains the cosmos. The poem delves further into Krishna's divine essence and his expansive position in the universe, offering Arjuna—and the reader, by implication—a thorough grasp of the divine. "I am the origin of all spiritual and material realms," Krishna proclaims in Chapter 10, Verse 8. I am the source of all things. The enlightened ones who fully comprehend this devote themselves to My devotional service and adore Me wholeheartedly (Bhagavad Gita 10.8). All that is visible and invisible, created and maintained by Krishna, is summarized in one verse. It establishes him as the source from which all life and existence flow, highlighting his omnipotence and omnipresence. Additionally, Krishna's statement specifies the proper reaction to this heavenly fact, which is devotion and adoration. The pinnacle of spiritual practice, bhakti (devotional service), is advocated for those who acknowledge Krishna's preeminent status. God is portrayed as the ultimate truth and the wellspring of inspiration and creativity in Rabindranath Tagore's "Gitanjali," which likewise reveals a profound and enduring respect for the divine. A close and emotional connection with God is often emphasized in Tagore's poetry, which often examines the deep interaction between the human soul and the divine. "Tagore writes" in Poem 50:

"I go into the vast expanse of forms in the hopes of retrieving the flawless gem from the shapeless." (Tagore 50)

Tagore uses this metaphor to describe his spiritual journey as an exploration of the material world in all its variety and size, with the end goal of coming face to face with God's shapeless, everlasting essence. Beyond the many manifestations of the material world, there exists a spiritual truth or ultimate reality that the "perfect pearl" represents. In the same way that the Gita portrays God as the source and substance of all forms, so too is this pursuit of divine formlessness. Both writings exhort readers to acknowledge and honor God for being all-powerful and all-present. Through its philosophical and theistic framework, the Bhagavad Gita presents a God who is both immanent and transcendent, who is both a part of and apart from the material universe. Chapter 11's revelation of Krishna's global form exemplifies this duality; it depicts him as the embodiment of all parts of creation at once, serving as both creator and destroyer. Despite being more poetic and intimate, Tagore's "Gitanjali" mirrors this comprehension in its recurrent themes of God's omnipresence and the desire of the soul to be one with God. Tagore's commitment to the divine is as intense as the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita on bhakti—not theoretical, but very personal and emotional. For example, Tagore writes the following in Poem 39:

"Looking at thy face brings tears to my eyes; when thou commandest me to sing, it seems as if my heart would burst with pride." (Tagore 39).

In this passage, Tagore's heartfelt reaction to the heavenly instruction to sing—a devotional act—underlines the deep personal bond between the follower and God, similar to the devotion Krishna promotes in the Gita. Finally, the Bhagavad Gita and "Gitanjali" both stress that God is the center of reality and the origin of everything. While pleading for a life of dedication and spiritual pursuit, they all stress the need to acknowledge God's omnipotence and omnipresence. Inspiring readers to interact with the spiritual essence that is inherent in all things, these works provide contrasting views on the divine via intellectual debate and artistic expression.

6. IMPACT OF POETRY ON SOCIETY

Various intellectuals have put forward different perspectives about the impact and function of poetry in society; a few of them are described below. To start, poetry is not something that happens once and has no lasting impact on culture. Instead, poetry has always been a part of human life since it began and emerged as a social institution in human civilization. Poetry expresses attitudes, sentiments, and aesthetic approaches to the world, and it has also become an integral element of the world and human existence. As a result, this phenomenon is defined differently depending on the era, and its effects on society are also dynamic. If one looks at the worldwide development of poetry throughout time, one will see that there is a huge gap between the old style of poetry that reflects the past and the new style of poetry that



reflects the current person. At times, the difference may grow to a point where it may be easy to mistake it for a phenomenon with separate origins if one does not take into account the continuity of its historical, institutional, and functional aspects. In today's world, it is crucial to understand how people in the past understood poetry from their distinct points of view. Understanding this phenomenon and how it relates to our current situation may be achieved by recognizing the constraints and resources that our contemporaries had. This will help us connect with them on a deeper level. (Rahman, 2013, p. 145). Poetry, according to these critics, is like human religion in that it provides an interpretation of life's truths based on human passion, emotion, and impressionability. Poetry is a tool that can transform life; it can make existence more delicate and lovely than it really is, and it can help the spirit rest. Poetry, as a human religion, will always be necessary, just as religion in heaven is necessary for man. So, poetry is useful because it helps people relax. In reality, this work is a poetic depiction of the realities and beauties of life. What this means is that the meanings and ideas used in poetry reveal its philosophy, and it is these meanings and conceptions that have an impact on others. Poems are creative expressions of life that reveal both the internal and external realities simultaneously. In contrast to the reader, who only observes surface-level details, the poem's audience will get profound insight and a vivid mental picture if they read it in a manner that allows the ideas to permeate their subconscious and become acquainted with them. Additionally, it gains the breadth that is characteristic of an educated and understood pronoun. From this, it follows that poetry is a tool for uncovering life's hidden truths and the mysteries of nature; the poet must first mentally immerse himself in the natural world before he can articulate his spiritual journey via verse. However, the image's profundity will stay hidden from all but the most perceptive viewers unless they are very gifted. A minority of individuals hold the view that poetry captures and conveys the highs and lows of human experience, as well as abstract concepts like ideas, emotions, and intense sentiments. In the poet's imagination workshop, he nurtures these emotions and sentiments, and when he needs to communicate them, he uses beautiful and inventive language to share them with society. What we have here is not just any old utterance; it is a work of literature and art, and it has the power to move people deeply inside. Indeed, high-quality poetry influences readers, either by discouraging or compelling them to take action. This is the result of poetic expressions that evoke strong feelings or are filled with fantastical elements; such poetry has a contagious impact since it captivates readers. As with any creative endeavor, poetry draws inspiration from real-life events. The painter, for instance, makes use of color and line. The artist brings sonic harmony to the piece. Sculptors often use wood, stone, plaster, and clay in their work. The dancer's body moves to provide support. Theater makes use of acting and imitation, while film combines the two. On the other hand, poets and other writers rely on language as a medium to convey ideas that go beyond their literal meaning when crafting literary works, particularly poetry. Hence, the purpose of a poem is not to convey mundane, everyday experiences or historical facts; instead, it is an artistic representation of ideas influenced by nature and life, presented to the public through poetic forms such as lyric poems, odes, masnavis, quatrains, couplets, etc., that are rhythmic, rhymed, and melodious (Rasekh, 2014, p.50). Poems provide a vivid picture of a language and its meanings. If the world is hostile to a poet's efforts to make poetry a summary of the cosmos, then that poet must have some spirituality (Salehi Mazandani, 2009, p. 109). With the use of metaphors and similes, the poet gives the terms "elegant," "melodic," and "brilliant" a more creative and imaginative meaning in the poem. With an idealistic view in his mind and an idealistic vision in his heart, a writer or poet strives to present his ideas and feelings to the reader in the most exquisite and evocative manner imaginable, leading them astray unknowingly. It follows that a poet is someone endowed with such grand and elevated ideas. It implies that one needs a powerful imagination, strong feelings, and high thoughts to pursue a career in poetry or writing. Along with this, a poet or writer also needs the capacity for self-expression, proficiency with creative methods, and knowledge of how to harness their force (Arjang, 2003, p. 35).

7. CONCLUSION

Contemporary poetry provides a deep place for introspection and spiritual contemplation in this period of existential dread, societal breakdown, and cultural collapse. In this study, we have looked at how poets from different traditions use poetic language to explore contemporary life's shattered reality via themes like self-realization, alienation, and transcendence. Crafting lines that seek purpose, connection, and healing, these poets react not just to personal crises but also to communal spiritual holes in their works.





Spiritual themes in modern poetry are not limited to abstract mysticism or religious dogma, as the research shows. Rather, they convey the soul's yearning in a world that seems more and more fragmented, and they often originate from a profoundly individual pursuit of completeness in the midst of turmoil. In a fight against nihilism and a road toward spiritual resilience, poetry becomes via mystical symbolism, contemplative imagery, or existential pondering. This research highlights the lasting significance of poetry as a means of conveying the journey of the spirit. Modern poets provide spiritual wisdom and artistic beauty by expressing the anguish of alienation and the optimism of transcendence; this serves as a reminder that the human spirit is resilient and never gives up on finding and making meaning, no matter how broken our world becomes.

REFERENCES:

- Abed, A. K. "Palilogy and Narrativity into Escapism—Selected Poems of Ezra Pound." *Journal Educational Verkenning*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1–10, <https://hdpublication.com/index.php/jev/article/view/166>.
- Arjang, G. R. *Persian Language and Literature*. 10th ed., Qatra, 2003.
- Barati Marnani, A., et al. "Performance Assessment Indicators: How DEA and Pabon Lasso Describe Iranian Hospitals' Performance." *HealthMED*, 2012, p. 791.
- Bhagavad Gita. Translated by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1983.
- Bridges, Robert. *The Necessity of Poetry: An Address Given to the Tredegar & District Co-Operative Society*, Nov. 22, 1917. The Clarendon Press, 1918.
- Eliot, T. S. *The Waste Land*. Boni and Liveright, 1922.
- Hinchliffe, A. P. *The Waste Land and Ash Wednesday*. Macmillan, 1987.
- Mohajer, M., and [First name missing]. *Towards the Linguistics of Poetry*. Agah, 2013.
- Rasekh, M. S. *Literature Theory*. Saqafat, 2014.
- Salehi Mazandani, M. R. *Poetry Narrated by Poets: Literary Criticism*. [Publisher missing], 2009.
- Shafiei Kandkani, M. R. *Periods of Persian Poetry (From Constitutionalism to the Fall of the Monarchy)*. Tos, 1980.
- Sheki, F. "Analyzing Poetic Devices and Symbolism in Emily Dickinson's 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death.'" *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Fundamentals*, vol. 3, no. 7, 2023, pp. 5–8, <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/jsshrf/article/view/22880>.
- Sheki, R. "Journey Beyond Time: A Comprehensive Analysis of Poetic Devices and Symbolism in Emily Dickinson's 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death.'" *International Journal of Literature and Languages*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2024, pp. 17–21, <https://doi.org/10.37547/ijll/Volume04Issue01-04>.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)*. Translated by Rabindranath Tagore, Macmillan, 1913.