Kumar (1922) remarks, "I wonder why we are a nation of talkers only, with hardly any interest in reading, least of all poetry ------- No takers for poetry at all. But why this sordid state of poetry in our country? Is it because most good poetry, structured ingeniously in complex patterns of thought, image and metaphor remains inaccessible to the reader?"

He goes on to say, "The fault is entirely the reader's. He is too lazy to be stimulated into imaginative speculation by a sensitive poet's unconventional mode of communication".¹

It is a matter of concern for many educationists and writers that there are very few who are interested in reading poetry. Even students at school and college levels are no happy exception to this. Majority of the school-going children read poetry out of compulsion that too only those poems that are included in the language textbooks.

Does the fault lie only with the readers or the teachers of poetry who adopt unimaginative methods to teach poetry and fail to create an enduring interest in reading poetry? Is there ample provision in our curriculum and language teaching programmes to create and nurture interest in poetry?
As poetry gives

"A motion and spirit that impells
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts
And rolls through all things"

poetry should find a lively and enduring place in the school programmes of teaching any language.

2.1 Poetry and Personal Feelings

"Good poetry, like a pearl created in the oyster shell, gathers up delicately in a few words, the finest and subtlest feelings of man's heart", observe Trivedi and Ghanchi (1968) because "poetry is a method of facing life with heightened emotion". Is that reason good enough to teach poetry in schools?

When meaning of words and phrases and the structure of the poem are given undue importance, the poetry classes lose their charm. The students may learn a few more words and their meanings, but they will not appreciate the poem nor enjoy reading it. Poetry in any language is taught in order to enhance the individual student's nature, personal appeal to beauty, sensitivity and appreciation.
According to Maley and Moulding (1985) "Poetry is a special type of English just as scientific or newspaper English is also special - in different ways. It deserves study as much as other types do, perhaps more, since poetry is the type of English which touches our personal feelings most clearly. And special feelings are as important in a foreign language as they are in our own language".3

If the language is that of personal feelings, every reader should be allowed individually and personally to read the poem and experience the feelings as far as possible. The poetry lessons, be it in a foreign language or in mother tongue should facilitate this.

"The language of science represents an extreme degree of specialisation of language in the direction of a certain kind of precision----- The scientist carefully cuts away from his technical terms all associations, emotional colourings and implications of attitude and judgement",4 as Brooks (1960) remarks. But in poetry, feelings form an essential and integral part of the meaning to be conveyed.

2.2.1 Poetry and Communications

A human society needs language for communication and to express and record the many facets of its life that collectively constitutes its culture. In its ordinary, day-to-
day use, language has a communicative function, but it has a cultural function too, which is manifested in literature. Poetry is not a medium invented for mere communication but it has a far-reaching place and role in any society.

2.2.2. Poetry and Message-hunting

There is a popular misconcept that all good poetry conveys a good message. While discussing the confusion between scientific and poetic communication, Books (1960) also warns about this misconcept of "message-hunting, and says, "The value of the poem itself is weighed by the "good advice" conveyed through it. A poem is admired because it preaches". 5

Many good poems do teach and preach but every good poem need not teach. During the adolescent period, boys and girls usually do not enjoy reading philosophical or didactic poems. If the teachers or the students have this view that will come in the way of their appreciation of a poem.

2.3 Poetry and Comprehension

Comprehension is the foundation of appreciation, but comprehension of a literary work is not an end in itself. It is important to remember that poetry is not a thing separate from ordinary life and the language of poetry itself is a specialization of ordinary speech; and is very deeply rooted in human experience, thinking and feeling.
While discussing the basic appeal of poetry Burton (1964) remarks, "Poetry is really only a kind of intensification of the language of literature—every literary experience is essentially a verbal or language experience that approaches to some degree the condition of a poetic experience. Enjoyment of poetry is very closely associated with verbal awareness, the ability to read sensitively".6

Teaching or reading poetry only for its meaning is like reading the music from the printed pages, but not enjoying the melody. Many teachers of English poetry tend to forget or lose sight of this truth and focus only on the analysis of words and phrases with a view to give only the meaning to the students.

Comprehension of a poem is a step, an important step leading to the appreciation, not an end in itself. It is even possible that without understanding every word and every minute detail, a poem can still be enjoyed.

The type of questions that are asked in the examinations are also usually based on the comprehension of the content rather than the appreciation of the poem. Hence, in the usual teaching practices, meaning of the poem and the comprehension tend to get undue importance.

2.4.1 Meaning of words :-

It is true that a poem has to be treated as a whole, a unit by itself and the "gist" or the central idea is more
important than a detailed paraphrase. Yet there are times when the poem could be understood by a sensitive reader and one or two words whose specific meaning is not known need not bother the students as well as the teachers.

Forester (1967) suggests that the teacher should read the poem and decide on the list of difficult words before he introduces the poem to the class. He says that these words should be written on the blackboard (Teacher activity) and the student should be asked to look up the dictionary and write the meanings (student activity). But the investigator opines that if words are taken out of the context and discussed in isolation and then the meaning is transferred into the context, the direct impact and freshness of the poet's language is lost.

A word is not an epithet till it is attached to its object; a metaphor is not a fused image till it lies in its context. A poetic image is a structure built of the details represented by single words and these in isolation have about as much beauty and meaning as a small piece of canvas cut out of a painting would possess. In poetry, a word is emotionally coloured by the rhythm in which it is embedded.

The power of words is not fully perceptible till the mind of the reader not only understands the meaning but perceives the beauty and depth.
One should also bear in mind that at times the meaning has the intensity as the poet felt only in its context, not in isolation. Many words do not possess an independent meaning except the meaning conferred by the context and the human mind.

It is necessary for the teacher to be clear about all the dimensions of a word or phrase. So while preparing a poetry lesson he should look up, not just one but two or three dictionaries, till he feels he has gained an insight into the meaning. But it is unpardonable if he refers to a dictionary in the middle of a poetry lesson or asks the students to look up the meaning of a word or two in the course of the lesson. In such a case, it will come in the way of enjoying the poem not enhancing it in any way.

Many modern poets use simple words from the conversational language, with a different colour or a deeper dimension. In such cases, the discussions should be so channelised as "to throw the burden of discovery on the boys and girls themselves" and this will lead to lively interest, closer analysis of meaning and imagery and deeper understanding. As Fowler (1965) has observed "Emphasis on enjoying, thinking about, discussing and comparing interpretations of a poem will often lead to a much fuller appreciation of poetry" rather than looking up the dictionary and getting the accurate meaning. This leads to a very pertinent question regarding the use of dictionaries in poetry classes.
2.4.2 Use of Dictionaries in Poetry lessons:

Strict adherence to the dictionary meaning as in a comprehension lesson has no place in a poetry class. Poetry is not taught with a view to teach vocabulary. Still, if individual students look up the dictionary, when they are not able to elicit the meaning from the context, the teacher should not discourage them.

But never should a teacher, in the middle of a poetry lesson instruct the students to look up the meaning of a word, nor should a teacher stick to dictionary meaning. For instance, a fern should never be identified as "any of the pteridophytes of the order Filicales, distinguished from other pteridophytes in having leaves that are few in number, that are large in proportion to the stems and bear sporangia on the under surface of the margin".* Then the beauty of the fern is lost.

Students should be encouraged to read a poem with a view to create meaning out of it. They should not be made to combine meaning of individual words in an attempt "to construct the meaning of a poem". The rhythm is the cohesive force holding the words together and the meaning will be revealed through the reading.

If any reader, be it a student or a teacher, constantly refers to the meaning of words in the dictionary, he may learn the meaning of the words, but the poetic element, the

spontaneous response to the words of the poet and the enjoyment that accompanies it are all lost. The teacher should be judicious in the use of the dictionary in the poetry lessons.

2.4.3. Glossary, Notes and word-meanings given in the Text Books:

No doubt these provide guidelines which enhance the understanding of the poem. Sometimes they serve as reference material to the teachers by giving the meaning and other related information. Here again, the text book writers should be cautious with those words and phrases that are suggestive in nature; they should not be reduced to bare definitions that deprive the words of their creative dimensions.

Lines could be explained but never should the summary or the paraphrase be given in the text book.

Hymes (1979) identifies three levels of meaning namely conceptual, notional and functional and they have their own importance in the use of language, be it poetry, drama or an ordinary conversation. According to him, "the actual use of language in concrete situation determines the linguistic relevance, but the poetic depth is jointly determined by the context and the sensitive reader's response to the language".9

2.4.4. References included in the Poems:

Allusions to classical mythology, references to unfamiliar historical events, social traditions, Biblical
events, characters, unusual usage of phrases and idioms, archaic words and usages etc. should be explained because it may enhance a deeper understanding and appreciation.

However, such explanations should not interrupt the initial readings, nor should the teacher pause to digress into the discussions of the reference in more detail than it is necessary for a better understanding and appreciation of the poem or the specific lines.

If the particular poem has a specific autobiographical reference as in John Milton's Sonnet "On His Blindness" it is the teacher's responsibility to provide the additional information that would make the words more meaningful.

2.5.1. Visualization and Poetry

Roe et al (1978) define visualization as forming mental images of the content one is reading. The reader should be able to translate words into mental images. Visual images help the reader not only to understand and remember what he has read but also to have a deeper appreciation of what he has read.

Poetry is full of images. At times even a single word, if read and perceived with sensitivity can enable the reader to form images. This response is mutual. The words of the poet evoke images and the images in turn add beauty, colour and depth to the poem.
The visual image a word, a phrase or a line brings to an individual may differ from person to person depending upon his perception and imagination. Hence it is necessary in a poetry lesson to let individual students have the freedom to respond to the words of the poem. If the teacher believes in transmitting his or her visual image to the class, he curtails the imagination and visualization of the individual students.

2.5.2 Poetry for Creativity

Poetry should be taught for enjoyment, for the sake of rhythm, sound, word-pictures, and ideas. The question is how much of this can we get across to students with a limited vocabulary and an uncertain grasp of the structures of the language, especially when whatever grasp they have is liable to be upset by the inversions in the word order allowed to poets.

Another pertinent question is, as Forrester (1967) spells it out, "How far does poetry remain poetry when it has to be explained to the students? To remain poetry there must be some direct contact between the poem and the students without intermediary explanations".

Whatever may be the method adopted by the teacher, one important point that has to be always remembered is "the need for the maximum amount of student activity".11

If the students have to be prepared for an examination, help must be given to them. "The best that can be done is to
help them get as much out of the poem as possible and to give them brief explanations of those parts which are to them (the students) meaningless". 12

2.5 Poetry for enjoyment:

To enjoy something is to appreciate and to develop a liking and a taste for it. The reasons may vary. The purpose of teaching poetry is to share the enjoyment not to impart any information. Holbrook (1967) emphasises "Teaching poetry is at the centre of English yet it is something you cannot do unless you find joy in it. A teacher can only teach the poem he or she likes...." 13

In other words, one's interest in poetry has a direct relation with his enjoying poetry. There is a misconcept that one should have the poet's sensitivity to understand and enjoy poetry. One need not be the greatest of musicians or artists to enjoy good music or a work of art.

No doubt the reader should be able to comprehend and be sensitive enough to appreciate the poem in order to enjoy its beauty and rhythm.

This leads to two very important questions, namely who can teach poetry effectively? How can poetry be taught effectively?

The experience of delight in poetry is the right of young people in high school classrooms. The teacher who
remembers that poetry is concerned with the deepest feelings and thoughts of men, and who knows and loves poetry will have little trouble convincing adolescents of its meaning for them. As Fowler (1965) says "The path to the poem through sound and feeling can provide the way for enjoyment of an ancient art, and appreciation of the rich heritage of verse in English. The teacher of English alone has the privilege of introducing youth to this heritage. It is a demanding, often difficult, but most rewarding experience". 14

Yet there are no easy, ready-made answers for those questions posed earlier. Many educationists and teacher-educators have tried to find an answer to the question and the related issues.

The present study is an attempt to search and evolve practical, workable methods of teaching English poetry in the Higher Secondary Classes of English medium schools in Gujarat, with a view to enhance the appreciation that may lead to a lasting interest in poetry.

2.5.4. Loud Reading and Appreciation of Poetry:-

Young people can get much pleasure out of listening to poetry which emphasizes sound and even more out of reading it aloud, by themselves or chorally. When students have learned to enjoy poetry by hearing it, they may enrich their appreciation by learning to read it aloud well, by learning how
to read independently for pleasure, and by participating in choral reading.

When the students are not mentally prepared and trained to read aloud in chorus, this activity will lose its purpose and there will be more of chaos. Also, the teacher has to bear it in mind that all the poems cannot lend themselves to be read aloud by a group of adolescents.

As Macleish (1961) stresses, "effective reading makes a good poem come to life". 15

Hence the teacher himself should read the poem aloud several times before he actually introduces it to the class. Every poetry lesson should begin with the reading of a poem and end with the reading of the poem. Poetry, to be thoroughly enjoyed, must be heard. The first one or two readings should be aimed at familiarising the students with the rhythm, the cadence of words and music of the sound lines. At this stage the students may get a glimpse of the meaning or the central idea of the poem. Preferably the pupils listen to the poem without following the written text.

This step can be followed by one more reading when pupils follow the words of the poem from the printed text.

Every teacher must be a skillful and appreciative reader" not necessarily an intensely dramatic reader. Since many poems are meant to be read in "quiet, conversational
manner", one should avoid reading in an elocutionary manner or in a sing-song rhythm.

The tone and tempo of the voice should be adapted to the mood, rhythm and meaning of the poem in order "to convey meaning to the listeners", and to give the same rich experience that the poem has brought to him (the teacher).

Even when a poem is being read visually, the "echo" of the sounds works with the reader. The most striking effects of poetry are achieved through sounds. A fair degree of familiarity with the rhythms and tones of the English language helps a teacher to be a better reader of English poetry.

2.5.5. Reading English poetry vs. chanting

Poetry in many of the Indian languages is generally meant to be recited or chanted and it has to be remembered that the rise and fall of the voice in such poetry is significantly different from the normal patterns used in the ordinary speech.

Also, "stress" does not play a very significant role in many of the Indian languages and the important elements in the meaning of any utterance are generally signalled through "intonation". As a result in the reading of a poem, a good deal of variation in pitch is usually involved. As Jain [1985] has observed, "When a speaker of an Indian language reads a poem in English, he tends to make use of the patterns of reading
poetry in his own language. As a result, the poem tends to become unduly dramatized or exaggerated. English poetry is usually intended to be spoken, rather than recited".16

As Owen et al (1960) have observed, "Poetry, like music, is an experience in listening and one of our jobs is to make attentive listeners out of students---- pitch, intonation, volume and speed are some of the qualities which help a poem to become meaningful when read aloud; tone and attitude are revealed in the expression in the reader's voice; irony and subtle shades of meaning are more easily perceived".17

While discussing the impact of the words on the students, the authors say "A poem, like any structure in language is a psychological experience; words cause reactions in the reader's mind. As a result much poetry is largely a subjective or personal experience. The same poem may be read by two individuals, both will understand it equally well, but because of their natural individual differences, their experiences derived from the poem may be quite different".18

2.5.6. Active reading and poetry lessons:-

Literature itself is a form of "language art", for it goes beyond the level of communication, wherein the sender and the receiver operate almost on the same level of language competency. Of course, an appreciative reading presupposes a desirable level of comprehension.
Authors of each type of literature, specially poets, "organise their ideas into patterns".

The form or the pattern and the ideas or the content and the response or involvement of the readers are essential for rendering the reading of poetry meaningful.

The readers should be "sensitive and alert" to the poet's use of the language, also "they should become so involved with the selection they are reading that they feel as if they were living the story or poem" as Roe et al (1978) insist.

They also warn that if the reading of a poem is broken down into stanzas or smaller parts, the reader will probably not have the opportunity to grasp, to be sensitized or to read actively with involvement.

2.5.7 Mechanics of Reading - Punctuation and Pauses

Untermeyer and Davidson (1969) opine "Poetry is an imaginative medium of representation and communication of significant human experiences, emotions and thoughts in rhythmic word patterns". Hence reading poetry is an experience in itself. Poetry is more compact than prose. A line of poetry often needs several lines of prose to convey the same depth of meaning. A poem should be read clearly, and rather slowly so as to enable the listener "to obtain the thought".
Pauses should be meaningful guided by the punctuation marks, rather than being mechanical as at the end of each line. Pauses strengthen the tone, regulate the modulation, add to the meaning and the rhythm of the poem.

Effective reading is an integral part of a successful poetry lesson. Good prose also has poetic elements and calls for clear, expressive reading. As "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and appeals to our imagination, reading plays a more important part in poetry. Poetry suggests; it does not inform. It is pure exposition.

Martz (1970) says "Poetry is vivid words set in a rhythmic cadence, their meaning emphasized and developed by subtle pauses, creating in us a sense of existence".

2.6.1 Language of Poetry:-

Some readers never quite adjust to the fact that poets, in order to suggest meanings, take liberties with the conventional signs and signals of prose to fit the demands of form and idea. Fine poetry can be derived from the roots of common life and poetry does not dwell apart in some rarefied realm called Beauty, but actually lives and breathes among us. In the same way, the language of poetry is also a "specialized form of the ordinary speech."
Poems are read by men, human beings not by robots. So, they must be able to understand the "implications" of words, phrases and the poem as a whole. It is a man talking to another man. But it has to be remembered in a poem a poet need not talk about himself. Even when the speaker is not necessarily the poet himself, some part of the poet is seen through his words.

Yet as Martz (1970) has pointed out "Both poet and reader have a large measure of freedom. No two readers will ever read any poem in precisely the same way nor will the same reader ever read the poem twice in the same way".  

Reeves (1967) believes "Poetry can never be fully explained. It can be felt but there is always a mystery about poetry. If, it were not, poetry would lose its fascination".  

In the history of English poetry, the reign of Queen Elizabeth had been a distinct period. Every young man from the aristocratic families read poems and wrote poems for interest in poetry was a distinct mark of a gentleman. Hence, much of the poetry was aristocratic in its thought and expression.

Poetry has also been used very effectively as a medium to dissipate religious philosophy or patriotism. Glorious moments of history have been recorded in poetry. Depending upon the theme, the tone and language change. Whatever the theme may be, primarily poetry remains an expression of feelings and experiences.
In India, specially in the last fifty years or so, though English has cut across the class barriers to some extent, what held true in England, does hold good even now. Along with the English language, English poetry too has a special place, almost amounting to veneration and adoration.

2.7 Poetry and Adolescent Learners:

But the adolescent students studying in schools and colleges find poetry difficult, far removed from the ordinary expression. Myers (1963) substantiates this viewpoint. According to him "Wide spread is the complaint among secondary school English teachers that adolescent boys (less often) and girls simply do not like poetry.

Young or inexperienced teachers, particularly, are prone to frustration in their efforts to "sell" their charges on a literary construct that, they maintain, seems artifical to the teenager and totally alien to his culture". 24

He further states that this has led to a belief that "there is something in the teenage mentality or emotional make-up that is inherently opposed to poetic experience" 25 By nature students love word play and they would love to respond to the language of poetry. The teacher's main task is to make the students more aware of what they are responding to, thereby increasing and deepening their capacity to respond to poetry.
Many teachers protest that such a principle assumes too much. There is a strong feeling prevalent among majority of the teachers that the primary school children are interested in the rhymes and simple poems but there is "a natural decline in the child's zest for poetry to a growing negativism towards it on the part of the adolescents" as Burton and Simmons (1964) assert.

The young child's love of nursery rhymes and rhythms in songs is universally recognised. The response to such elements (which are essential ingredients of poetry) is inherent in the human make-up. The common belief that this sensitivity declines in adolescence is not supported by any research.

Adolescents are fond of music; they respond to slogans, jingles and captions more keenly than many adults. If the adolescents do not show much interest in the poetry that is taught in the class, that has to be treated differently, but not attributed to their decline in sensitivity to poetic elements.

2.8 Emotional interplay and poetry:

Poetry appeals to the senses; it also appeals to the emotions. Some teachers believe that adolescence is a period of emotional inhibition because as a child grows older, his emotions retreat further and further below the surface.
Bossing [1970] identifies "the emotional nature of the adolescent" as "a potent influence" that operates to provide integration and directive force in his life.

It is true "our teaching must be adjusted to the levels of emotional and intellectual development of the students we are teaching". (Report on "The Teaching of English in England" 1966). The English Teacher should aim at "Stimulating" the pupils to think, to feel and to become conscious of their own feelings. The teacher cannot and should not "supply" his own thoughts, feelings and emotions while teaching poetry.

Houston (1954) says "Poetry combines the intellectual challenge and emotional appeal" and so the adolescent students would find it interesting, if handled with vision and imagination.

2.9 Poetry in the Higher Secondary Curriculum:

Before assessing the place of poetry in the curriculum at the Higher Secondary classes in Gujarat, a brief survey of the place of languages in the curriculum is relevant. As described earlier (Chapter I Introduction: Page ) the languages are also taught like other subjects and the examinations evaluate the mastery of the content and the students' ability to recall. The students' skill in expression is evaluated incidentally, but the main focus is on grammar and content-mastery of the prescribed prose lessons and poems.
At the Higher Secondary level two languages are taught — one at the Higher Level and one at the Lower Level. In English medium schools, both in Science and General Streams, the languages studied are:

(i) English (Higher Level) Compulsory
(ii) Hindi/Gujarati/Sanskrit (Lower Level)

2.9.1 *Objectives specified by the Gujarat State Board of School Text Books:—

Overall Objectives:
"The main thrust of the course will be on equipping the learner to use English extensively and effectively. The emphasis would be on:

a) further development of analytical ability of reading
b) Ability to use some idiomatic expressions as reflected in the learners' text book.

c) Developing ability of using English as a means of life long education.

Competence specifications:—

The learner

a) acquires the ability to read intensively longer prose passages in English lessons in the prescribed text-book.

b) acquires ability to appreciate poems in different forms from the prescribed text-book.

*Circular issued by Gujarat Board of School Text Books regarding Text Books for English (Higher Level) for Std.XI and XII.
While enumerating the language material to be mastered, some Figures of Speech are mentioned. They are "simile, metaphor, hyperbole, paradox, alliteration and personification." It is further stated "For std. XI a text book at about 150 pages be compiled. This should include

Section I Prose
Section II Poetry
Section III Passages for non-detailed study

Some basic considerations and criteria for selecting the prose passages are spelt out. But there is no guideline nor any specification given for the selection of poems.

2.9.2 Prescribed Text Material

The English Text Book is published by the Gujarat State Board of School Text Books. The English Text Book (Higher Level) meant for English Medium Schools includes three sections:

Detailed study : (i) Poetry

(ii) Prose

Non detailed Study : (iii) Supplementary Reading

The text book has about 170 pages.

Though the teachers are expected to complete the entire text book within the academic session, many say that it is impossible. Teachers have the freedom to sequence the prose lessons and poems as per their choice.
Though there is no fixed rule regarding the number of lessons or poems to be included in the text book, generally about 15 poems and 15 prose lessons and 5 lessons for supplementary reading are included.

2.9.3 Preparation of the Text Book:

A panel of experts form the Editorial Committee. There are no permanent committees. When the next text books are to be compiled, the Board of School Text Books appoints the committees with the members prior consent. An advisor is also appointed and the subject Expert (English) from the Board co-ordinates the procedures and is in charge of the overall management.

Once the text material is selected and finalised, it is submitted to the Review Committee. There is no permanent panel of reviewers.

2.9.4 Selection of Poems included in the Text Book:

The selection of poems to be included in the Poetry Section of the Text Book is left entirely to the editorial committee. The selection is made taking into consideration the following points:

(i) the difficulty level from the point of:
    (a) theme (b) vocabulary (c) structure
(ii) variety in theme and approach
(iii) variety in form and rhythm
(iv) fair representation of different periods in the history of English Literature.
(v) inclusion of Indian and American authors

The poems are selected by individual members of the Editorial Board. Then they meet and discuss the selection and arrive at the final list of poems to be included in the textbook.

The poems are compared with the previous year's selection. There is no specific ground rules for selecting the poems, but attempts are made to include a wide variety—classical, modern, British, American and Indian.

The investigator has been involved in the editing and reviewing of the Text Books for English [Higher Level]. Majority of the members of both editorial and review committees are senior college professors.

2.10 Selection of poems and appreciation:

Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that it is the selection of the right poems suitable for the readers, their age, maturity level, emotional make-up, interest etc. that creates and sustains their interest in reading poems.

As Jain (1992) has pointed out "It is difficult to find suitable poems in English for vernacular medium children. With their limited vocabulary and knowledge of very few basic structures and patterns of sentences, it is hard to find poems that cater to adolescent interest". 30
With English medium students such a constraint is much less. Yet it is a fallacy to think that any poem is suitable to be taught in English medium classes. Especially at the Higher Secondary classes, one must be very cautious about the poems that have to be included in the selection to be taught in the class. However, in the Indian set-up with a centralised syllabus, text-book and examination, the teacher is left with very little or perhaps no choice at all regarding the poems that are taught in the class.

Apart from the poems that are included in the poetry section of the prescribed text book, other poems can be introduced by the English teacher. This enhances the students awareness and paves the way for appreciation. In other words, when the students are introduced to poems, without being unduly pressurised with the fear of preparing for examinations, they would find the reading more enjoyable.

2.10.1 Theme of the poems and interest of adolescents:

Based on the studies of Rose (1957) and Norvell (1950) (1958) the themes of the poems that appeal to the American youth:

(i) Boys at this stage prefer sports and adventure and poems about the sea or tales of heroic deeds.

(ii) Both boys and girls enjoy story telling poems, humorous poems and poems about animals.
(iii) Both boys and girls enjoy story telling poems, do not moralise.
(iv) Both sexes respond well to poems that make the sensory experience immediate.
(v) The older youth are interested in poems which say something about the world in which we live.
(vi) Poems about war have a strong impact on adolescents.
(vii) Girls during the senior high school (equivalent to higher secondary classes) respond to love poems and boys also secretly enjoy many of them. (The adolescents, with their interest in the subject of man's relation to woman, can find, in poetry, attitudes which range from cynicism and irony to adoration or tenderness).
(viii) Poems which explore the nature of man's relationship to God are important during these years.
(ix) During this age, boys and girls are interested in exploring attitudes towards death.
(x) In the senior high school years, boys and girls find challenge in poems and prefer those which offer scope for close analysis and discussion of ideas.

Such studies could be conducted in India and that will help the teachers and text book writers in the selection of the poems.

However, during informal talks with the students of Std.XI and XII the investigator has come to know that many
students like serious poems and poems that have a moral precept to convey. However, they do not appreciate poems on death or any theme suggestive of death. There is a strong feeling among the youth in Gujarat that they are too young to be thinking and talking about death.

Poems that portray a scene or an anecdote or a story are liked by many. Love poems do not fascinate them though many admit that they like to read poems on popular themes like love, friendship and nature. Some students like picturesque descriptions while many find long descriptions unreal and uninteresting.

Themes that are from their immediate sphere of experience appeal to the majority while they would occasionally like to read on imaginary ideas (not fantasy) or themes from distant realms of human experience. The nearer the theme is to their world, the closer they feel to the words and the emotions and ideas portrayed. In other words, empathy is an important aspect of appreciation.

An understanding of the adolescent interests enables the teachers to help them appreciate poems.

Adolescents, by nature like to argue; while giving them the freedom to interpret and respond to the poem, the teacher should be alert that controversial, sensitive issues are not triggered off unintentionally.
Many of the poems that are taught transcend the barriers of culture because they deal with universal themes and hence have a universal appeal. But there are certain poems which are better understood and better appreciated against the backdrop of their own cultural setting. Teachers have to tread the ground cautiously and tactfully because the adolescents are in a highly impressionable age.

2.10.2 Choice of Poems and Vocabulary:

While considering the choice of poems another important aspect that has to be given due place, is the vocabulary. If the poems have many new words and phrases and are difficult to understand, does that ensure a higher level of achievement or better standards?

Fowler (1965) has rightly said "Raising standards is too frequently interpreted as the need to teach college level lessons in the high school ----". If the students at the Higher Secondary level are forced to read poems that are suitable for college level literature courses, that is not to be looked upon as "high standard". Instead, like any other material in a successful English programme, poems too should be selected on the basis of the following considerations:

(i) the implications of adolescent needs and interests
(ii) enhancement of discriminatory tastes in literature.
(iii) development of appreciation of literature, of the ability to read intelligently and critically.
(iv) encouraging students to read to the best of their ability
(individualized reading).
(v) development of an understanding of the humanistic values
as portrayed in literature.

In such a programme of teaching-learning English poetry, the vocabulary plays a minor role, however, not an insignificant role. If the lines of the poems are a string of difficult words and expressions, the restless adolescent mind would lose interest in reading the poem and give up soon. On the other hand if the language is too simple and fails to pose some challenge here and there or to excite the teenage curiosity, the purpose of teaching poetry is not totally achieved.

Popularly it is believed that if there is, on an average one new word in a line, that is permissible. However, it cannot be calculated mathematically, but a few difficult words and archaic expressions will not come in the way of the students enjoying the poem.

Since poems are not taught with a view to teach vocabulary, it is not always necessary for the students to know each and every word used in the poem. However, when the key word or phrase in the poem or title is not understood the teacher may give the direct meaning or simple explanation from which the meaning could be elicited.
2.11 What is appreciation?

"Every act of appreciation is in part a sympathetic recreation of the artist's meaning, in part an expression of the reader's own creative personality", observes Flauncus (1950).

Hence the teaching of English poetry aims at appreciation that is a composite of several levels of reading and comprehension as well as response.

The Barnett Taxonomy of skills recognises five levels of comprehension or response to a text viz.

(i) literal  
(ii) reorganisation ✓  
(iii) inferential  
(iv) evaluative  
(v) appreciative.

Evaluative level of response requires the students to make judgements. This may require him to make use of his own knowledge of a particular subject.

Appreciative reading is identified as the most advanced level of response to a text, the student has to be emotionally and aesthetically sensitive to what he is reading. It also requires some appreciation of literary techniques.

The Barrett Taxonomy of Skills as quoted by Hubbard Peter et al. A Training Course for TEFL (Teaching of English as Foreign Language)
It may be observed that one category blends into another; they are not intended to be separated or unrelated levels. Appreciation of poetry is a blend of all the five levels of response to the text.

2.11.1 Appreciation vs Literary Criticism and Enjoyment:

The first step towards appreciation is enjoyment and none can genuinely appreciate what he hasn’t enjoyed.

Cox and Dyson (1965) echo the words of Henry James "To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish and find a relation with the criticised thing and make it one’s own". 35

They stress practical criticism is best taught by discussing, and view analysis hostile to the spirit of poetry. In the oft-quoted lines of Wordsworth,

\[
\text{our meddling intellect} \\
\text{Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things;} \\
\text{We murder to dissect}
\]

The authors pose some questions that every teacher attempting to teach poetry should ponder over:

(i) Is a beautiful poem to be reduced by the probing intellect, to its bare bones?

(ii) What is to become of its beauty, its charm and spontaneity, once subjected to scrutiny?
"Our reading includes a new sense of the poem's structure and imagery, its tone and verbal delicacy, its precise effects. The practical criticism of a poem is not the opposite to enjoyment. It is not the substitution of an intellectual pleasure for an aesthetic pleasure or the diminishing of poetic understanding to a dull routine."

It has to be remembered that such questions that demand the student's critical appreciation or details of the technical aspects need not necessarily enhance the appreciation. Examples of such questions are given below. It is obvious that the teachers give their own views and make the students repeat them. This is far from the notion of individual's appreciation of a poem.

*Unit 1  Q3 Appreciate Blow, Blow as a song

Unit 2  Q3 Account for the appeal of the poem

Q4 Discuss Pope's use of the language in this extract.

Unit 4  Q4 Comment on Wordsworth's use of the language in the poem.

Unit 12 Q1. Discuss the logical structure of the poem.

Unit 13 Q1. Comment on the style of the poet with reference to the poem "The Professor".

*These questions are taken from the Text Book of English (H.L) prescribed for standard X (New S.S.C) published by Gujarat State Board of School Text Book, Gandhinagar.
2.11.2 Memorizing poems and appreciation

The school programmes for teaching languages have provision for memorising poems. Upto S.S.C level, pupils have to memorise certain poems in English and they are expected "to quote from memory" some of the lines. This question carries 8 marks which means a lot to the students. So they willingly set out to memorise the poems even before they are taught in the class and they are made to write these poems over and over till the time they are sure of the marks. The students are compelled to memorise the punctuations marks also. This entitles them to score full marks, which is otherwise impossible in any question in English literature.

During the course of informal talk and discussion with different students on different occasions, the investigator learnt the following:

(i) On the whole, poems were memorised line by line not stanza by stanza.

(ii) Some poems (especially modern poems) were more difficult to memorise.

(iii) Many students wrote the poems several times before they could memorise them.

(iv) Some students remembered the poems for a very long time, while many had to brush up their memory periodically.

(v) They were not asked to recite the poems in the class, but teachers insisted on written tests.
(vi) They didn't enjoy memorising the poems but did so willingly because of the marks that they were sure of.

Wellington and Wellington (1960) remark "The poetry that really matters, is that which has become a possession, that which we can call up at will or that which surprises us when it breaks the surface of consciousness. Such poetry is truly "learned by heart", the memory provides cold storage but the heart warms what it retains". 37

Hence memorising verses should be "more of a reward than a task". But this has "degenerated into a mark-grabbing" device.

Also the right way to memorise a poem is "to learn it through the ear as we say it aloud, and by making each "unit" a stanza as Wellington and Wellington (1960) suggest. Unfortunately the book-in-hand line-by-line method 38 which is slower and less helpful in the appreciation of poetry is adopted by the majority of the students.

At the Higher Secondary level, memorising poems is not compulsory from the examination point of view. Hence many students do not bother to memorise even one or two lines during the entire course. Very few memorise specific lines so that they can quote them in their answers. They feel this creates a better impression on the examiners.
While arguing that "Poetry is always so individual a matter that one should not make the mistake of treating a class as a set of parrots who must be able to reproduce identical stuff", Reeve rs (1967) suggests that individual students should be allowed to select their own favourite poems for memorising because it will form "a programme of class activity and at the same time be an expression of his individuality". 39

This suggestion may not work in the primary and secondary classes because memorization of poems is treated as a compulsory part of language tests. At the higher secondary level, when such compulsion is not forced on the students, memorization of favourite lines according to individual's choice can be encouraged.

Apart from these, if the teacher himself memorises some lines or striking phrases and uses them during the discussion that is a very good way of encouraging students also to memorise the poem or some lines from the poem.

2.11.3 Paraphrasing and Appreciation:-

The words that a poet uses in any context are unique. But as Mayhead (1969) has pointed out "quite often the initial reaction to any poem may be that the poet is merely using needlessly flowery language to tell us simple facts. Those who can really appreciate a poem will admire a poet's successful use of a challenging form, not simply because of the technical
skill --------- to give the reader a thrilling experience. A poet is actually aware of what words can do and he uses them as deliberately as a painter uses lines and colours".  

A poet instinctively knows that certain words move easily while some others don't. It is the poet's ability to control the movement of his verse which is one of the most valuable and powerful means of expression and that makes reading the poem an experience.

When the poet finds the perfect words to express his thoughts and emotions, they "cannot be translated into words of the same language without severe loss" as Coleridge points out. When "paraphrase" is taken to mean a formal exercise in language testing, one must realise that it imposes a double task, that of understanding the poem and that of finding fresh words for what is understood. Evans and Walker (1969) emphasise "the genuine admiration for the original wording would almost prevent one from attempting to re-word it".  

2.11.4 Paraphrasing as a language exercise:-

Paraphrasing is introduced from Class IX in the English medium schools as part of the language exercises. Even in Hindi and Gujarati that are taught at the Lower Level, paraphrasing of a poem is included right from the Secondary Classes. In Sanskrit direct translation of poems and slokas forms the major part of the poetry examinations. Hence the students are familiar with the concept of paraphrasing.
In the S.S.C. examination of the Gujarat Secondary Board, a question on paraphrasing is compulsory and carries 5 marks. The instruction given in the question paper is worded as given below:

"Paraphrase the following poem in your own words".

The poem selected for this purpose is an unseen, untitled poem of about 10 lines or a self-contained unit of a longer poem. The teachers evaluate the level of comprehension.

The principle underlying such a question is comparable to that of "Precis-Writing". Here also, an unseen passage is given and the students are expected to read the passage and give a summary and suggest a suitable title.

2.11.5 Paraphrasing - The pupils' point of view

The response from the students regarding the question on paraphrasing was disheartening. Many of them are happy and relieved that the Higher Secondary English Examination does not include a question on paraphrasing. Some of them admitted that they never made an attempt to answer the question because the poems are always difficult and the exercise takes too much of time and the marks allotted aren't much (5/100) and even a good answer may fetch only 3 out of 5. Nevertheless, that was the only occasion when students were made to read the poem themselves, though out of compulsion. However, the scope for appreciation is limited, as they are concerned only with
finding the meaning of the poem. Even when they couldn’t understand the central idea of a poem, they would give the meaning of a line here and a line there which still fetches one or two marks. This reflects the sad plight of majority of the students’ interest in poetry—reading.

2.11.6 Paraphrasing Vs discussion in poetry classes

"Paraphrase has a place in language lessons when the pupils have a reasonable chance of making a good version— nearer to verse than to prose" observe Evans and Walker (1969). "A group of lines that offers a challenge" can be put before the class and the teacher may encourage the class to come out with different interpretations and discuss them.

During an interview by the investigator a Method Master of English from the Faculty of Education of a reputed University remarked that in Gujarati (vernacular) medium schools, poems have to be treated like brief prose passages and should be paraphrased. Another Method Master emphasised that a summary of the poem should be given to the students immediately after the initial reading. This summary should precede any discussion of the poem. However, the investigator emphasises in both these observations the paraphrase takes the place of the poem itself and prevents the students from interacting with the words of the poet or the craft of the poem.
2.12 Figures of Speech and Appreciation of Poetry

Though many of the books on teaching of poetry discuss at length the beauty of the poetic language and the poet's use of figurative language, only one or two have mentioned the Figures of Speech under separate heading. Surprisingly some of the well-known Grammar books include a chapter on Figures of Speech giving the definitions and illustrative examples, followed by exercises.

Many other State Boards and even CBSE do not teach Figures of Speech at all. In the Secondary and Higher Secondary classes in Gujarat, about twenty five types of Figures of Speech are taught which include complicated ones like Transferred Epithet, Synecdoche, Antithesis, Litotes, Epigram etc. The students are expected to name and explain the figures of speech. Remembering such technical terms and their spellings and meanings does not in any way enhance the joy of reading poetry, rather reduces it to an exercise. Surprisingly, some teachers and even a Method Master of English feel that finding out the Figures of Speech is one of the ways of appreciating a poem.

From the examination point of view, it is a compulsory question carrying three or four marks. The lines are invariably quoted from the poems included in the text book. A correct identification of the figures of speech fetches full marks and hence teachers tend to drill in and students tend to memorise
them. If the objective of teaching poetry is to enable the pupils enjoy the rhythm and the emotional interplay revealed in the poem, are the above exercises justifiable?

While discussing the necessity of knowing and using technical terms in teaching appreciation of poetry Koestler (1969) says "knowing the right technical term saves time; therefore we should help our pupils to use a few terms intelligently. The fewer we use, the less the danger of thinking that poetry can be accounted for or measured by technicalities. "He goes on to specify, "Simile and metaphor and alliteration are indispensable terms. Others like "transferred epithet" can be discussed briefly after an example has turned up in the normal programme and not before".43

Through the interview and informal discussion with the teachers of English teaching at the Secondary and Higher Secondary level, the following observations were made:-

(i) There was no rigid way of teaching figures of speech. Some teachers believed in explaining the figures of speech while discussing the poem.

(ii) Some teachers completed the teaching and then set out to pick out the figures of speech because they felt stopping in between to discuss the figures of speech breaks the continuous flow of the poetic thought.

(iii) Many were doubtful whether knowing the figures of speech helped in the appreciation of the poem.
(iv) Some teachers felt that the figures of speech are more of a distraction than being instrumental in understanding or appreciating the poem.

(v) Different figures of speech are attributed to the same expression, depending on the interpretation. Hence there is more of discussion and argument, over them than about the poem.

(vi) Some figures of speech like paradox, metonymy, anticlimax etc. are too difficult and complicated at the school level.

2.13 Evaluation

Testing and Teaching:

Heaton (1975) comments "It is unfortunate that so many examinations in the past have led to a separation of testing from teaching. Both testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other". This has narrowed down the scope of teaching learning activities in the classroom.

Memory has a key role in the conventional examinations. What is tested is the "content mastery" and the candidate's ability to recall the content. Heaton (1975) observes "standardised tests and public examinations generally exert such a considerable influence on the average teacher that they are often instrumental in determining the kind of teaching that takes place before the test".
Since poetry is creative, teaching of poetry should be creative and testing of poetry should be creative and focus on the creativity and literary appreciation. As Coutts (1966) insists "Any test in poetry should test "skill and appreciation "rather than memory". Also the test itself could be part of the learning activity and lead to deeper understanding and appreciation.

Remembering the poet's name and recalling the summary is not learning poetry. Relating poetry with one's experience and feeling is learning poetry. A resourceful poetry teacher can find various ways and methods to achieve this.

2.14 Teaching Aids in Poetry Lessons:

Teaching aids are more frequently used in Science Classes. Teaching aids in language classes, if at all they are used, are mostly in the form of charts or pictures. However, in poetry lessons such teaching aids will delimit the learners' imagination and instead of adding a new dimension to the understanding and appreciation of the poem, they come in the way of the reader's direct response to the poem. Parallel poems, similar poems studied earlier or anecdotes or stories that can be related to the theme of the poem may be used with discretion.

2.14.1 How to use Teaching aids in Poetry Classes:

They should be used during the "warming-up" or introductory stages or after the discussion of the poem, it can
be compared and constrained with other poems or prose passages or related to characters or plots or stories. These should never be taken up during the discussion of the poem. The teachers should be cautious that the kind of teaching aids they select, should not curtail the imagination of the readers.

By and large, the course of the poem is comparable to the movement of an ice-cube when placed on a smooth, hot surface. When the surface is warm enough, the ice-cube melts and moves on its own. An external element may come in between the words of the poem and the response of the students. Hence, use of teaching aids should be extremely judicious and reduced to the minimum level possible.

2.15 Conclusion:

Words are nothing but symbols - Symbols made of sounds or letters. A poem is not a mere cluster of words, but poets use words to echo sense, feeling and emotion. Hence the responsibility of a teacher teaching poetry is to enable the students to hear in the mind the voice of the poet and live through the experience. Like the musician, the reader of poetry also should turn the symbols on a page into songs and emotions which can be heard, felt and enjoyed. This is possible only through suitable techniques adopted in the poetry classes.

The present study is an attempt in this direction.
CHAPTER II

TEACHING OF POETRY - A PERSPECTIVE

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