INTRODUCTION

Literature is a mirror of life. Poetry is one of its forms. Poetry reflects life, the feelings and the mood of the poet. The principal object of poetry is to arouse pleasure and cultivate emotions, feelings etc. It has both a literal, superficial, deeper and often metaphorical meaning.

Poetry fastens upon an object and turns it into a shape of beauty, or it sees eternal beauty in ordinary and common things. It raises the material world to a higher state. A true poet is a genius, who speaks in a new language and inspire his fellows, and to expound to them to the age in which they live.

The value of teaching poetry in English language course at the secondary and higher secondary level is immense. It leads to an all round development of the whole personality of pupils, particularly the emotional, imaginative, intellectual, aesthetic and intuitive aspects. By teaching them the best poetry that is within their reach, we are giving our pupils a means of emotional expression and aesthetic perception in a state of heightened awareness and sensitivity, that is generated by striking imagery, rhythm, rhyme and devices of pattern and arrangements.

Poetry has tremendous appeal for children, it is the best way of arousing their love for the language. It is not fully realized how near, the child is to the poet. Poetry has special appeal for the aesthetic and intuitive sides of the child's personality.
Poetry educates our emotions and increases our powers of imagination. We can compare prose to walking, moving from one place to another on the surface of the earth, getting world's daily work done; poetry may be compared to dancing, rising above the surface of the earth, perceiving its relations getting a fuller view of its reality.

It has cathartic value because it helps in expression and training of emotions. According to Billows,

"There seems to be a special value in poetry in foreign language in opening up the fantasy and give release to inhibited and excessively introverted type." 1

1.1 Significance of the Study:

Students come from vernacular languages at +2 level. At school level they study English as L3 particularly in the form of lower level. But at junior college they have to study it as uni level. English is difficult for these learners coming from vernacular medium hence it becomes difficult for them to comprehend many things related to poetry because of lack of vocabulary, exposure to language, and their cultural background.

Poems at school level are easier in language, in theme and cultural background. In vernacular language, schools such as Marathi, Urdu and Hindi medium they are not taught poetic devices. According to new syllabus they may be teaching poetic devices but they are not sufficient. When they come to junior college they find it very difficult to comprehend English poetry due to poetic diction, poetic devices and poetic prosody.

Even various forms of poetry are not taught to them. They are not able to recognize particular type of poem given to them.
They are unable to comprehend the deeper meaning of the poem. The imagery used in it, unusual order of words and the archaic words used in the poem. The teaching method of poetry in schools and colleges are not appropriate. This again leads to lack of comprehension and lack of interest for poems among the students.

Every teacher of English knows that it is not easy to teach English poetry to Indian school-children. The difficulty of the task is increased by the complication of the external examination. To prepare pupils to face questions on poems in external examinations makes it almost impossible to teach the subject properly.

Leaving aside this for the present preparation for an examination, the first thing we have to do if English poetry is to be properly taught, is to decide what our aim is when we teach poetry. The aim before the school teacher will be different from that before the university professor.

At junior college level the aim of teaching poetry is for pleasure and thus in future it will lay the foundation for an adequate appreciation of English poetry, which may come later.

Pupils like poetry only when they understand it easily. Poetry must be taught and read really for pleasure. The poems prescribed for schools or junior colleges must be easy to understand according to the stage they have reached. If poetry is taught because it has to be prepared for an examination, then most of the pleasure will disappear. Pupils generally agree that they find the questions set on poetry in the S.S.C., or H.S.C. examinations to be more difficult than those set on prose. This naturally depends on the type of questions set. But there is no doubt that as a rule, questions which are asked for explanations of difficult words and lines and stanzas in poetry or for paraphrasing are more
difficult than the same type of question set on prose passages. Questions testing comprehension are also more difficult to answer. Even the students are not able to answer the questions in correct sentence form as they do in prose. This is mostly due to the language used in the poem, unusual order of words, and even unusual words strong metaphors, imagery etc. English poetry, often deals with matters which are quite outside the ordinary life experiences of the pupils.

The language and idioms found in poetry are not those used in ordinary life, it requires more time to understand the meaning, though exercises in comprehension are useful, they are often too difficult for the slow learners of the class who therefore get very little help in learning English from the poetry lesson or understanding poem itself.

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

"Difficulties in comprehending English poetry - a case study of junior colleges of Aurangabad District."

1.3 Design of Study:

The present research work is an attempt to analyse the difficulties faced by the higher secondary students in comprehending different aspects of English poetry and suggest certain remedial measures to overcome the problems or hindrance encountered by them.

1.4 Objectives of the Study:

- To investigate the problem areas of comprehending English poetry of XII standard students.
- To assess whether the students are able to find out rhyming words and
scheme from a given poem.

- To assess the poetic devices known to the students.
- To investigate their knowledge about different forms of the poem.
- To assess the poetic diction known to the students.

1.5 The Hypothesis:

- Students at +2 level are unable to recognize various forms of poetry.
- They are unable to understand poetic diction.
- The students at +2 level come from vernacular medium schools and are not able to understand rhyming scheme of a poem.
- They are not able to understand and recognize poetic devices.
- They are unable to understand the theme of the poem.

1.6 Method of Research for Data Collection:

The study adopts the survey mode of research. The gathering of evidence relating to current conditions. The term survey is generally used for the type of research that one intends to consider here, the research which proposes to ascertain what is the normal and typical condition or practice at present.

The survey type of research is not peculiar to education or other social sciences. It is a significant mode of attack in any field of knowledge where the objects or any class vary among themselves. The survey approach to educational problem is one of the most commonly used approach.

It is followed in studying local as well as state, national and international aspects of education. It goes beyond mere gathering and
tabulation of data. It involves interpretation, comparison, measurement, classification, evaluation and generalization all directed towards a proper understanding and solution of significant educational problem.

1.7 **Coverage of the Present Study:**

To study the significance of teaching poetry the researcher has decided to focus the study on rural population as compared to the urban area of Aurangabad district, few colleges of Aurangabad city will also be taken for study.

The survey tries to analyse the difficulties faced by the students of junior colleges in comprehending English poetry. As rightly said by Billlows:

"To leave poetry out of a language course is to pronounce an extremely effective and labour saving method of absorbing useful language. It is also to abandon opportunities to humanize and warm what otherwise may be very dry and chilly traffic in words and information. It is to renounce the hope of delivering us from pedestrian writing - if not attitudes of the text-book writer. It is to neglect an important and powerful link in establishing in the pupil's mind a favourable mental set. It is to stop short of what might be most rewarding in the pupil's experience of language."\(^2\)

From the above recommendation of Haddow and Billlows, it is evident that teaching poetry in English language course has immense value at the secondary and higher secondary level. It intends to develop the emotional, imaginative and aesthetic side of student's personality.

This investigation will help the teachers to know weak areas of the learners in comprehending poetry and to modify their method of teaching poetry at +2 level and to meet the needs of the learners.

1.8 **Selection of Population and Sample:**

In ordinary usage population is usually thought of as consisting of
human beings. In the statistical sense population may consist of any kind of members whatsoever. The entire group from which a sample is chosen is known as population.

A population is any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common which are of interest to the researcher. The population may be all the individuals of a particular type or a more restricted part of a group.

A population may be defined as any identifiable group of individuals or as any collection or aggregate of comparable measures. A sample is a small proportion of population selected for analysis. By observing the sample, certain inferences may be made about the population, contrary to popular opinion, samples are not selected haphazardly but deliberately so that the influence of chance or probability can be eliminated.

1.8.1 Sampling:

Several types of sampling procedures are there to obtain a sample representative of its population.

Sample refers to the investigation of a part of the whole population or universe. A sampling procedure is a technique of selecting a sample from a given population.

A statistical sample according to Calvin:

"is a miniature picture or cross section of the entire group or aggregate from which the sample is taken."

According to Calvin two major characteristics of a good sample are:

1) A good sample must be representative of the universe or population.

2) A good sample also must be adequate in size in order to be reliable.
A sample which is not reliable is known as biased sample. During recent years sampling has been increasingly used in education to necessary ascertain information in answering certain questions about a specific population.

1.9 **Selection of the Sample for the Study:**

For present study the researcher has selected the following ten junior colleges of Aurangabad District. The researcher has adopted Random Sampling Method.

**Table 1.1: Showing Names of Junior Colleges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Junior College</th>
<th>Medium of Instruction/ Stream</th>
<th>No. of Students Selected</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Junior College, Kannad.</td>
<td>Marathi/ Arts &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Maulana Azad High School and Junior College, Khultabad</td>
<td>Urdu/ Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Maulana Mohd Ali Jowhar Urdu and Junior College, Sillod</td>
<td>Urdu/ Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Nehru Memorial Jr. College, Ajanta</td>
<td>Urdu/ Arts</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Pratisthan Mahavidyalaya, Paithan</td>
<td>Marathi/ Science</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Vinaikrao Patil Mahavidyalaya, Vaijapur</td>
<td>Marathi/ Com.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Shri. Muktanand Junior College, Gangapur</td>
<td>Marathi/ Arts</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Dr. Rafiq Zakaria College for Women, Aurangabad</td>
<td>Urdu/ Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Govt. College of Arts &amp; Science, Aurangabad</td>
<td>Marathi/ Sci.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Zakir Hussain Junior College, A-bad</td>
<td>Urdu/ Arts</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 1.1: Showing the Random Sampling Analysis of Various Junior Colleges of Aurangabad District
1.10 **Variables of the Study:**

For the present study sex, region, economical position of the parents, parental education and medium of instruction have been taken as variables.

**Table 1.2: Showing Population and Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Sub Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1. Male - 571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Female - 429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>1. Rural - 07 Junior Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Urban - 03 Junior Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Economical position of the Parents</td>
<td>1. Low income (below 5000) Rural 310 and Urban 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Middle Income (5000 to 10000) Rural 229 and Urban 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. High Income above 10000 Rural 150 and Urban 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Parental Education</td>
<td>1. Literate - Rural 250 and Urban 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Illiterate - Rural 250 and Urban 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Medium of Instruction</td>
<td>1. Marathi - 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Urdu - 500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only content area will be probed by the researcher and the population will be restricted only to Aurangabad District students of standard XII.

1.11 **Tools for Data Collection:**

For present task the tool selected to gather data through survey method is mainly a questionnaire. Questionnaire technique is used because it is supposed to be the most flexible technique and much better
and effective tool to collect information.

In general the word questionnaire refers to a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills in himself.

Barr, Davis and Johnson rightly define questionnaire as:

"A systematic compilation of questions that are submitted to a sampling of population from which information is desired." 4

A questionnaire consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form (or set of forms). The forms are usually mailed to the respondents who are expected to read and understand the questions and reply to them in writing in the relevant spaces provided for the purpose on the said forms, the respondent has to answer the questions on his own i.e. totally unaided.

1.12 Preparation of Questionnaire:

Two questionnaires for the students of standard XII and one questionnaire for teachers teaching these colleges were prepared.

The first questionnaire was based on poetry items like on various forms of poem, poetic diction, poetic prosody, poetic devices and comprehension of the poem. The questionnaire was of 70 marks and of 60 minutes duration.

Second questionnaire was about the personal information of the student. The items were classified as under:

1) Name of the student.
2) Name of the college.
3) Percentage of marks at S.S.C. level.
4) Marks obtained in English at S.S.C. level.
5) Medium of instruction at S.S.C. level.

6) Father's educational qualification.

7) Father's occupation.

8) Mother's educational qualification.

9) Father's income per month.

10) How many members are there in the family?

11) Do you read any English newspaper?

12) Do you like poems?

13) Do you understand poems?

14) What difficulties do you face while comprehending poems?

The questionnaire for the teachers included items related to the personal details. Their proficiency in the subject, their educational and professional qualifications in service training, training in E.L.T. teaching experience.

Their interest in poetry, types of poems they like, their method of teaching poetry, their views to develop interest of the students in poetry and teaching aid they make use in teaching poetry.

1.12.1 Procedure of Administration of Questionnaire:

The questionnaires were sent to the selected Junior Colleges of Aurangabad District to obtain the responses from the students of these colleges as well as the teachers teaching at these colleges. The researcher also went personally to some colleges to administer the test.

1.13 Validity of the Test:

A test, in plain, ordinary words, is a method of measuring a person's
ability or knowledge in a given area. A test has the purpose of measuring.

A test is valid if it measures what it claims to measure. Therefore it was better to get the content validity of the test confirmed by experts. The researcher circulated the test among 10 English teachers who were teaching at +2 level to confirm the validity. They approved the content validity of the test.

1.13.1 The Tryout (Pilot Study):

In order to obtain a group of rationally representative average students of standard XII of different stream, Dr. Rafiq Zakaria College for Women was selected for the try out test.

1.13.2 Reliability of the Test:

There are many methods in which reliability may be tested. The most popular and probably the best technique is to retest the same individuals with the same test and if the results of the two administrations are highly correlated it could be supposed that the test has reliability.

The researcher administered the test to the students selected for the try out. The students were given the first test on 2nd August, 2008 and the second test was conducted after an interval of 15 days that was on August 18th, 2008 believing that the time was sufficient to reduce the factor of memory. The reliability co-efficient of the test was (0.05). This means that there was consistency in the student’s responses to the test items. This shows that the test had an acceptable level of reliability for the purpose of research.
1.13.3 The Final Administration of the Test:

The purpose of the test was to survey the difficult areas of comprehending English poetry faced by the students of standard XII. It required a representative sample in order to realize the research results. Junior Colleges having representative sample of rural and urban population were selected. The questionnaires were sent to the selected Junior Colleges of Aurangabad district. The questionnaires were sent and collected during the academic year 2008 - 09.

1.14 Limitation:

There is no limit to human imagination but human endeavours particularly in the field of research are subjected to limitation. The researcher experienced the following limitations:

1. Only poetry could be explored.

2. From Aurangabad district only 10 colleges are covered, 7 at taluka level and 3 from the city. Since Aurangabad district is very large with many remote colleges, all could not be covered.

This present study entitled “Difficulties in Comprehending English Poetry - A Case Study of Junior Colleges of Aurangabad District,” consists of the following chapters.

Chapter I – Introduction: The introductory chapter of this study begins with a general introduction on poetry. Then it describes the significance of the study of poetry, then design of study, along with the statement of problem, objectives of the study, the hypothesis, method of research for collection of data, coverage of the study, variables of the study and limitations.

Chapter II – Status of English in Maharashtra: The second chapter presents a general view on language, importance of English language, its historical
perspective, the status of English in India from the British period till present time, then it states the status of English in Maharashtra with special reference to higher secondary stage, development of new curriculum, objectives of teaching English at higher secondary stage and conducting oral test.

**Chapter III – Analysis of Data:** The third chapter deals with analysis of data on poetic form, poetic diction, poetic prosody, poetic devices and comprehension. It defines the various forms of poems. It differentiate the language of prose and poetry. Then it proceed with the definitions on poetic prosody, devices with tables and graphs. It also analyse the responses of the teachers teaching English at +2 level on poetry.

**Chapter IV – Conclusion and Suggestions:** This chapter presents hypothesis which has been proved, conclusions and suggestions of teachers at +2 level. At the end it gives relevant remedies for problems.
References