



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

**A Critical Analysis of the Select Poem of A K Ramanujan with
Special Reference to Indianness in Modern Indian Poetry**

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Abstract

English Indian literature has traditionally focused on India, its culture, and people. These compositions have always been imbued with a sense of longing for one's homeland. India may be viewed in all of its hues and shadows, whether dazzling or drab. The poetry of A.K. Ramanujan is a part of this tradition. His reputation as a world-renowned folklorist, linguist, translator, and astute intellectual is well-established. And as a poet, he is not just a seminal representative of post-independent Indian English poetry, but also a seminal representative of the third world Diasporas. This essay aims to visualise how A. K. Ramanujan reconsiders his Indian ancestors and displays them through his tremendous words.

Keywords: Hinduism, Indianness, Ethos, Modernity, Culture, Family

Lead In:

As a foundational representative figure of English poetry in modern India, A.K. Ramanujan has always been remembered as a poet endowed with a deviant poetic sense and blessed with a treasure trove of recollections that defied the passage of time. He is a prominent poet who has carved out a significant niche for himself in the field of Indian English poetry. As a skilled technical artist and as the master of striking the appropriate balance between tradition and modernity, he is recognised with retaining his originality while being subjected to a barrage of Indian and Western influences. While the majority of his poems are extremely personal, they nevertheless have a universal dimension. Ramanujan's poetry is mostly concerned with family, love, misery, frustration, alienation, existentialism, and death. They are brimming with irony, humour, paradox, and unexpected reversals. Two of his poems are discussed here in relation to their Indianness in relation to his subject study.

As an ardent follower of Hinduism and Indian sensibility, Ramanujan has woven certain elements throughout the poem *A River*. *A River*, as a moving poem, authentically depicts the current sociopolitical climate. It is important noting that Ramanujan writes simply as a detached observer, exhibiting full insularism and making no conscious attempt to affect or move his readers. While pathos is the poem's fundamental theme, Ramanujan makes no attempt to evoke his readers' pity. He only informs the readers of certain facts, allowing the facts to have the desired effect on them. Rather than employing any particular tactic to create readers' feelings of pity, he deploys the weapon of irony against poets who compose excellent poetry but take no real measures in the subject. Even among poets, only the elder ones dealt with floods in



their works, whilst the younger poets have no space in their poetry to describe or refer to the carnage wreaked by the annual flood. The new poets only quote the older poets and make no reference to the horrors associated with floods. More irony occurs in the last line, in which Ramanujan declares that the river has enough water to inspire a poet to write a poem about it, while just passingly acknowledging the harm caused by the flood waters in the first half hour. This is a critical appraisal of this poem's thematic aspects.

Sorrow's Representation

A. K. Ramanujan's poetry acts as a mirror, revealing the face of Indian tradition as well as a variety of other things. His poetry reflects the vibrancy inherent in Indian tradition and culture, as well as the structural changes that have occurred in Indian society. Ramanujan's subtle irony pervades his examinations of Indian society's ancient ideals and customs. *A River* is an evocative and moving poem. Pathos is the poem's central theme. Ramanujan deploys sarcasm against poets who addressed floods in the poem but did not express the destruction wreaked by annual floods. The poets made little reference to the horrors associated with flooding. Ramanujan is the one who recounts the havoc created in the first half hour:

Of the pregnant woman

Drown, with perhaps twins in her,

Kicking at blank walls

Even before birth (*A River*)

Thus, poets and people were concerned with their own pleasure, profit, and prosperity. They are even indifferent to the innocent souls of twins in the womb of a mother who perishes in the flood. Ramanujan even mentions the cows Gopi and Brinda by name. Thus, Ramanujan depicts the contemporary modern scenario of people's indifference and disinterest in individuals who have suffered loss, destruction, pain, and suffering in this poetry.

Satirical Poetry:

A literary artist is expected to present a mirror image of the culture and environment in which he or she lives. It is his moral role to accurately depict what exists in society, both vices and virtues. A. K. Ramanujan attempted to portray a realistic image of the river Vaikai. He has not only depicted *A River* in the summer as,



A River dries to a trickle,

In the sand.

Baring the sand ribs,

.... ..

The wet stones glistening like sleepy

Crocodiles, the dry ones

Shaven water – buffaloes lounging in the sun. (*A River*)

But the pain and suffering of the loss of anonymous mass due to floods in monsoon. The floods create, not only human catastrophe but also affect the living and non-living stocks.

An Answer to the Indian Orthodoxy

As previously stated, Ramanujan mocks the superstitions and rigidity prevalent in southern India. In *A River*, he provides a picture that is antithetical to humanism.

In India, *A River* is regarded as a sacred site. The river is revered as a mother by the locals. It is very natural to show proper respect for the river, which provides us with two of our three fundamental requirements, air, water, and food. However, some discard the artefacts of their ritualistic ceremony out of simple blind belief. Additionally, they feel secure from any gloom. Thus, people adore the river on the one hand and pollute it on the other.

Straw and women's hair

Clogging the watergates (*A River*)

Additionally, there is a tinge of Hinduism's dogma opposing universal humanism from a practical standpoint. The poets and the people of Madurai, as well as the officials, praise the gathering and witness the water increasing.



The poets only sang of the floods.

He was there for a day

When they had the floods.

People everywhere talked

Of the inches rising. (*A River*)

As a result, the poet only sung of the river's beauty during a flood, and people gathered in awe, measuring the increasing water at every inch. Even the authorities, any of the three, were unconcerned with the river's cleanliness and purity during the dry season, and they were unconcerned about the people and livestock displaced by the flood.

Existential Philosophy in the Poem

One of the key topics of Ramanujan's *The Elements of Composition* is existentialism. The identity dilemma in Ramanujan's poetry defies easy description. The battle between the inner and exterior forms the basis of the poet's work, who was born and raised in the Hindu way of life and has educated himself as a world citizen. D. Ramakrishna makes a comment,

It will be more appropriate to say that while the Hindu or the Indian milieu constitute the 'inner' substance of Ramanujan's poetry, the Western milieu shapes the 'outer' substance, and the two co-exist. (Ramakrishna 13-14)

As a result, Ramanujan's poetry adheres to the modernist notion of free verse, a new type of poetry that disregards traditional rhyme and metres. The inner content is based on Hindu philosophy and the notion that the human body is made up of five fundamental components found in nature. Sumana Ghosh makes a point,

Ramanujan is neither a nostalgic traditionalist nor an advocate of modernisation and westernisation. He is a product of both and his poems reflect a personality conscious of change, enjoying its vitality, freedom and contradictions, but also aware of memories which form his inner self, memories of an unconscious 'namelessness', which are still alive, at the foundation of the self. (Ghosh 190)



Ramanujan divides the subject into two opposing parts of existence. On the one hand, he feels 'tangled' into worldly activities when he is not separated from others; on the other hand, he feels life with moving eyes and moving objects when he is not separated from others; on the one hand, he feels life with moving eyes and moving objects when he is not separated from others; on the one hand, he feels life with moving eyes and moving objects when he is not separated from others; on the other hand, he sees constancy, lifelessness in it.

Social Relations

For Ramanujan, one of the major metaphors with which he thinks is the family. In his book *The Poetry Encounter*, Parthasarthy says. To describe his relationships, Ramanujan employs a unique method. Many good poems owe their origins to the poet's recollected personal feelings, and there are many good poems that owe their origins to the poet's familial ties. The poem is about his relationship with his mother and the dubious freedom that life provides. Family and its interactions are considered native Indian culture, sentiments, and ethos by G. Somaseshu. The archetypal topic of Ramanujan's poetry, according to him, is family and its ties from many perspectives. Nostalgia, sadness, irony, humour, and sympathy are all present in these relationships. His poems depict a secure relationship between the poet and his family, which he really required after settling down in Chicago. Thus, a hallmark of Ramanujan's poetry is the connecting of familial experience with history and tradition.

Ramanujan can't help but include this topic in *The Element of Composition*. Ramanujan's grief is expressed in a tinge of sarcasm when he says that he exists because of "Father's seed and mother's egg." He remembers being with a mixed family as an important aspect of his life as a Hindu believer. Those were the days of awe and delight. But, eventually, he matures and realises the meaninglessness of the situation. The poet is terrified by the anguish and suffering of being apart from loved ones, as well as another chaotic situation that a friend has had. Mankind's wrath in the form of riots might be communal, racial, or political in nature. The riots have the power to erase the existence of a place, ethnicity, or culture from history. The same fear is expressed here.



... a dated newspaper map,

Of a place one has never seen, may be

No longer there

After the riots, downtown Nairobi

That a friend carried in his passport

As others would (*The Elements of Composition*)

Thus the irony of the line: the person who should be carrying a woman's photograph is instead holding a map of a place that no longer exists. Ramanujan cannot avoid referencing his family and connections in *The Elements of Composition* as well. He's more sentimental and melancholy about the circumstances in which he's witnessed them.

Conclusion:

To summarise, every great poet, and Ramanujan is no exception, demonstrates supreme technical talent. He pays homage to his muse by sculpting his lyrical art in the most exemplary manner. He appears to have a knack for finding the right word and term to communicate his emotions and ideas. In addition, he employs a variety of literary elements, such as simile, metaphor, alliteration, assonance, imagery and symbols, and so on, demonstrating his mastery of the craft of creative writing.

What makes Ramanujan so special is that he does not convey hybridity consciously. He is unconcerned with the location. He is more interested in discovering the universality of the topics that he addresses in his poems. Ramanujan looks to have the most certain poetic approach of all his contemporaries, as he never falls into romantic cliché. His consistent sense of rhythm is a perfect response to those who believe that the only way to achieve true inwardness with language is for a poet to write in his own tongue. Despite the fact that he writes in free verse, his poem is exceptionally well-crafted.



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