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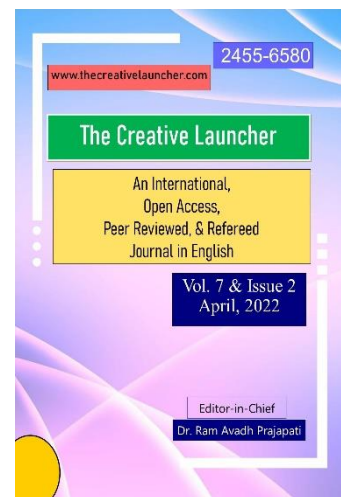
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☞ Research Article

A. K. Ramanujan: A Leading Indo-Anglican Poet

Dr. Rituraj Trivedi

Guest Assistant Professor

Department of English,

PSSOU, Bilaspur, C.G., India

Email: riturajtrivedi.bog@gmail.com

ORCID Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5589-9365>

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Abstract

Ramanujan is one of the prominent Indo-Anglican Poets. Some critics consider him to be one of the three great Indo-Anglican poets, the other two being Nissim Ezekiel and Kamala Das. Ramanujan's poetry is largely autobiographical and thought-provoking. The themes Ramanujan considers in his poetry are limited in scope, but some other passages of his poetry largely compensate for that inadequacy. Inversely important as a theme in Ramanujan's poetry is his Hindu heritage. Ramanujan has shown a sharp and intense textual sensitivity in his poetry. Ramanujan is one of the most competent and professed craftsmen in Indo-Anglican poetry. Among the silent features of Ramanujan's poetry is its cerebral literalism. His poetry abounds in boons of world and expression. Ramanujan generally writes in free verse without the

importance of punctuation, but he does relatively frequently introduce rhyme and assonance into his poems. Another striking point of Ramanujan's poetry is the ascendance in it of irony. Irony too is a device that is employed by nearly every Indo-Anglican poet, but Ramanujan makes use of this device in nearly every poem. Ramanujan's poetry contains distinctive and distinguishable imagery from the imagery of other Indo-Anglican Poets.

Keywords: Compensate, Inadequacy, Inversely, Craftsmen, Cerebral, Distinguishable

Introduction

A.K. Ramanujan is certainly one of the greatest masters of English literature among Indo-Anglican poetry. Most critics accept that Ramanujan has a great deal of control over English literature. His poetry is both delicate and complex as the spiral line of the shell. Ramanujan has shown rare originality in the use of words in his poetry. His poetry is full of joys of word and phrase. His expression is distinguished for excellence, epigrammatic brevity, austerity, and classical simplicity. Ramanujan is widely read in India and the West and his Western influence is prominent in his modern Indian poetry. This unexpected fusion of different roots in Ramanujan's poetry is true of the point of view expressed by him. He is a master of words and every word in his poems is used tactfully, precisely, carefully, and economically. They have derived their poetic techniques from ancient Kannada and Tamil poetry and today's poets have synthesized oriental and western models into new forms. A.K. Ramanujan's poetry is to believe in the immense human potential. A distinctive feature of Ramanujan's poetry is that it is family-oriented. The family occupies a prominent place in his poems. Another distinguishing feature of Ramanujan's poetry is the pervasive Hindu outlook. His Hindu heritage is an important motif in this poem. Ramanujan's poetry is characterized by psychological realism. Of course, the poetry of many other Indo-Anglican poets also has this quality; But in Ramanujan's instance, this quality is of special importance. This quality is especially attested in such poems as love poems, ecology, conventions of despair, and self-portraits for a wife. Ramanujan's sense of rhyming gives a fitting answer to those who believe that complete intimacy with language is possible only for a poet in his mother tongue. Although Ramanujan writes openly, his verses are very strongly constructed. Indian ethos permeates Ramanujan's poems and the poet himself uses Indian ethos in his poem. The reality of the poet's plight is the reality of a universal plight, that is, the search for personal identity.

Awareness of his Hindu heritage and modern western culture in the poetry of Ramanujan

In Ramanujan's poetry, we find the most interesting and interesting blend of modernity and conservatism. Ramanujan is such a poet who most of the time thinks about the ancient heritage, and who also keeps on doing the behavior, nature, and actions of his relatives. It has been well said that the family is one of the major conceits with which Ramanujan thinks. His poetry is full of references to his father, mother, family, woman, relatives, nephews and aunts, etc. Uniformly important in his poetry is his emphasis on his Hindu heritage. He has his roots in Hinduism which is an ancient religion; and he cannot escape from the strong mindfulness of his heritage indeed though his fustiness, acquired, nearly against his will through his prolonged

contact with American culture has made him inversely apprehensive of the excrescencies and faults of that ancient religion, the principal excrescence being the superstitions like the belief in hell and the tortures of hell which dominate the Hindu mind. Ramanujan's poetry derives its depth and viscosity from this mingling in his mind of western fustiness and oriental fallacy. (We're using the word "oriental" then to mean Hindu rather than Indian or about the east in general).

The opening lines 'Conventions of Despair' show Ramanujan's strong mindfulness of the conditions of fustiness. Ramanujan's domestic poems as forming a separate group while poems like 'Conventions of Despair' belong to the order of poems in which the conflict in Ramanujan's mind between his Hindu Heritage and his notion of fustiness is the theme. The family motif dominates in similar poems as 'Of Mothers, Among Other Things'; 'Love Poem for a Woman I'; 'Love Poem for a woman II'; 'Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House'; 'Obituary'; Snakes; and 'History'. In the other group of poems, it's the conflict of the pressure between Ramanujan's strong sense of his Hindu Heritage and the intrusion of ultramodern values into his sensibility which constitutes the theme. Ramanujan's Hindu Heritage has told his poetry profoundly, and to a great extent. We can indeed affirm that his poetry is steeped in his Hindu Heritage from which, he could at no time escape in malignancy of the fact that, piecemeal from the first thirty times or so of his life, he has lived always in the U.S.A. in the megacity of Chicago where he has been performing as a professor at the university there. He has been told by western life and by western culture but the traditions of Hinduism, the religion to which he belongs, and the artistic values of Hinduism have always cleaved to him, with the result that there has been a short of uneasy pressure between the fustiness of western culture and the fallacy of ancient Hindu culture, and with the farther result that this pressure has made its way into his poetry.

Ramanujan's family-oriented poetry

The Family occupies a prominent place in Ramanujan's poetry. The family can be considered one of the major themes of his poetry. The Family is one of the central allegories with which Ramanujan thinks. He just can't forget the family. Both pleasant and unpleasant memories are stored in his mind and whatever the subject or theme of the poem he wants to write, he uses the family as background or some of his experience in the context of his family for the education of an idea. Most of the poems in the second volume of Ramanujan's poems deal with Ramanujan's memories of their relationship and the vague freedom of life away from him. Ramanujan believes that living amid relationships binds or binds a man's feet. Being away from relatives means a feeling of deprivation, but living among them curbs one's freedom. Ramanujan's poetry is rooted in the family. He is constantly reminiscing with various members of his family as well as various objects from his earlier life during his stay in India. Ramanujan's interior landscape is filled with many family figures and objects. In verse after poem, Ramanujan takes back childhood experiences of his childhood or his life in southern India. Remembered in adult peace in Chicago (where he lived and still lives for many years) these experiences, an indelible mark on the mind of a sensitive, growing boy, now pulsate in life and permeate his poetry. Ramanujan's Self is the theater in which the events of the past are staged,

and in which many people, such as his father, grandfather, sister, mother, wife, and cousin, re-live and live. He remembers his mother in the poem entitled *Of Mothers, Among Other Things*, his father in *Obituary*, his wife, and many other relatives, both hers and his own, in *'Love Poem for a Wife I'*. From this point of view, the poem *'Small-Scale reflection on a Great House'* is even more important because here he brings to life many of his relatives, and sends one of them (a nephew) to his death. This poem is full of memories of his past because the great house is his own ancestral house. Family is so prominent in his poetry.

Psychological realism in Ramanujan's Poetry

The main features of Ramanujan's poetry are its psychological realism. Of course, the poetry of Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, and many others is psychologically realistic and reassuring; But the point here is that this quality is not only absent in Ramanujan's poetry but also much evidence here. *'Looking for a cousin on a Swing'* depicts child-psychology as well as adult-psychology, in which sexual instincts are an active force in both a child and an older individual, although in childhood it is passive and never apparent. is not explicitly expressed. In the poem *'Of Mothers Among other things'*, Ramanujan depicts his reactions to his mother at various stages of his life, and the various stages when his ultimate reaction is when they are four. Still wiser sees fingers picking up a grain of rice from the kitchen floor. The poem *'Love Poems for a Wife'* is a sharp analysis of the speaker's mind, his wife, his father, and various other relatives, and his mind. *'Obituary'* expresses to us the mind of that person's father and the person's reactions to him. The personality is Ramanujan himself, of course, here and in some of the other poems above.

Excellent Craftsmanship in Ramanujan's Poetry

Ramanujan is different from most Indo-Anglican poets concerning his craftsmanship. Ramanujan is one of the most important poets of India, introducing poetry and harmony to his verse with his colloquial brevity, his consummate skill, his sharp and crystallized images, and his disciplined handling of language. Ramanujan has been highly praised for his craftsmanship, and rightly so. He is certainly one of the greatest masters of the English language among Indo-Anglican poets. Apart from the themes and motifs in his poetry, he ranks very highly among Indo-Anglican poets for his use of the English language to express himself. He has shown rare originality in his use of words, and he has shown an extraordinary talent for phrase-building. There is a limit to words and phrases in his poems. In the poem of the mother, among other things, we have such basic phrases as the diamond sprinkles a handful unnecessarily; And the rain binds and sews the braided light logs of the tree with the broken threads. In a love poem for a wife, we have the following phrase that strikes us greatly: The wife's father has become 'irreversible in age'; The wife and her brother start "one of your old drag fights"; and "Sister-in-law and I fit empty cut-outs in our respective slots in a room." When he describes Snake as "writing a sibilant alphabet of flurry on my floor," he uses mixed imagery and word music perfectly. Although he writes mostly in free verse, his poetry is tightly constructed. Examples are found in *'A Snake'*, *'Looking For a cousin on a Swing'*, yet another *'Of mother'*, and *'Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House'*. Yet another tactic, the repetition trick, is used with effect by Ramanujan in many of his poems, such as *'A Snake'*, *'A River'*, and *'The Last of the*

Princess'. Furthermore, Ramanujan writes mostly in free verse, yet he uses rhyming—often internal rhymes and vocals—to build his influence. Moreover, many of his poems have a subtle blending of sound and meaning.

The distinctive imagery in Ramanujan's poetry

Ramanujan's poetry is image-oriented. Although there is hardly a poet who does not have imagination in poetry and it is not plentiful, Ramanujan's imagination has certain qualities that set it apart from the imagination of other poets. His imagination is also alive and realistic. He has used images from all categories that power his poetry to evoke a multidimensional experience of life. Images are often complex. An image can evoke visual and auditory sensations at the same time. It is evident in 'A River'; 'Of Mothers, Among Other Things'; 'Condolence Message'; 'Love Poem for a Wife I'; 'Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House'; and almost every other poem by him. Furthermore, Ramanujan often gives us imagery that is not only visual but also auditory and kinetic. This he does more engagingly in his poem 'Snake' where we not only see snakes but also hears their hiss and where we also see the movement of these creatures on the floor: "They with their bodies, curve Lick the room / Writing a sibilant alphabet of panic/on my floor". Another characteristic of this imagery is that it is structural in the sense that the organization of Ramanujan's poetry can be studied in terms of patterns of images. This is typical in poems such as 'The Striders and Still Life'.

Ramanujan's poetry as steeped in nostalgia

Ramanujan's poetry is largely retrospective and evocative. In other words, he keeps looking backward to his once life and writing poems about what stands out in his memory. We may indeed, by stretching the point a little say that his poetry is largely grounded on emotion recollected in tranquility. Of course, we cannot assert that all his retrospective poetry is nostalgic because the word "nostalgic" implies a certain degree of desire for once gests to do again. Nostalgia implies a certain degree of wistfulness or a craving for the once gests to return. Not all the poems, in which Ramanujan gives us his remembrances of the history, are nostalgic because some of his once gests are unwelcome or saddening or grim; and he'd not like to suffer those gests formerly again though he does, in a sense, relive those gests by recollecting them and depicting them most vividly in his poems. 'Of Mothers', 'Among Other Effects' is a markedly nostalgic poem; and it's deeply particular too. Then Ramanujan recalls his mother as she was during her youth, in her middle age and her old age. He recalls, wistfully, of course, his mother's youth when she wore her diamond ear-rings, her middle age when she used to run back from the rain to the crying babies, and in her old age when she bent down to pick up a grain of rice from the kitchen bottom with her four sensible fingers, the fifth having been rendered ineffective by an accident. 'Love Poem for a Wife I' is another personal, autobiographical, and partially nostalgic poem. Here the speaker attributes the increasing unhappiness of his married life with his wife to their unshared childhood. There is a bit of nostalgia in the lines in which the poet says that his wife cannot meet his father who has been dead for some years and that he cannot meet her father who has lately lost his ill-temper and mellowed. He then recalls the occasions when his wife used suddenly to grow nostalgic for his past, and he used to envy her village dog-ride and the mythology of her seven crazy aunts.

‘Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House’ has a large component of reminiscences in it. This poem is a mixture of present and past experiences, but there is little that can be called nostalgic.

The irony, a Conspicuous Feature of Ramanujan’s Poetry

The irony is perhaps the most distinguishing quality of Ramanujan’s poetry. In this respect, we feel inclined to put him indeed above Nissim Ezekiel. While Poets generally use irony for ridiculous goods, Ramanujan uses it to emphasize the sadness, the dusk, and the pessimism of his poems. Almost every poem by Ramanujan is characterized by irony to a lesser or lower extent. In the poem ‘Looking for a cousin on a Swing’, we find a touch of irony when the speaker says that the little girl recounting her experience on the swing with her cousin had remarked that (she and her cousin) were veritably innocent about it; and there’s a further irony when the speaker says that now, as a grown-up girl, she looks for the swing in metropolises and “tries to be innocent about it.” What the speaker wishes to convey to us is the fact that there was, and they’re now also, is commodity erogenous about the girl’s experience on the swing with her cousin sitting against her. Irony too is a device which is employed by nearly every Indo-Anglican Poet; but Ramanujan makes use of his device in nearly every poem that he has written, except a veritably many similar as ‘Breaded Fish’ which is a grave poem. ‘Small Scale Reflections a Great House’ is steeped in irony. There’s irony in the veritably opening lines “Sometimes I think that nothing/that ever comes into this house/goes out.” The speaker, who’s Ramanujan himself, also goes on to say, in an ironic tone. ‘The obituary’ is another completely ironic poem. Then the speaker, again Ramanujan himself, has a good-humored laugh at his father who, at his death, left behind “debts and daughters” and “further than one periodic ritual” for his family to perform. ‘Looking and Finding’ is another completely ironic poem. Seeks one object but relatively finds another, and the speaker gives several exemplifications of this in an ironic tone.

Ramanujan uses irony not only for ridiculous goods but also to aggravate the torture which he wishes to express in his poems. For instance, in a River, he speaks ironically about the Tamil Poets who find a deluge in the river to be a fit subject for writing poems about, but who hardly take any notice of the tragedies which the deluge causes in mortal life, similar as the wiping out of whole townlets and the drowning of pregnant women. In the poem ‘History’ also irony has been employed not only to expose the rapacity of the cousins of the dead great-aunt but also the heighten the feeling of torture which the speaker gests and which he arouses in our hearts too. The woeful effect is enhanced by the use of irony in the poem entitled ‘The Hindoo.’ Then the Hindu reads his Gita and thinks that he can remain calm at all events when the factual data is that a thoughtful man cannot remain calm indeed after reading the Gita regularly because a thoughtful man would see on a little boy’s face clear signs of ancient malignancy and pre-historic wrong.

Conclusion

Therefore, Ramanujan's specialized achievement is inarguable. He has truly gained a lot of praise for his artificer. He's indeed a born poet who has given a new direction to Indo-Anglican poetry. Ramanujan's poetry reveals his deep sapience into the artistic paradigms of both the East and the West. Amid conflicts in the present world, Indian ancient wisdom finds

new applicability in Ramanujan's poetry. He has examined the mortal condition from the combined point of view of East and West. Indian stations and gestures towards mortal problems find a prominent place in Ramanujan's poetry. Through suitable illustrations, he has described the mortal condition, the contradictions, and the complications endured by the people. Bruce King says about A.K. Ramanujan "Ramanujan is widely read in India, along with western and western-influenced modern India poetry in Indian languages. This unpredictable fusion of varied roots in Ramanujan's poetry is true of the attitudes it expresses."

His poetry is a conflation of the best literary traditions of the Indian and Western worlds. The combination of Indian and Western rudiments has added a new shine to his poetry. His poetry veritably successfully exploited the South Indian Brahmin roots and compared it with his ultramodern life in America. Ramanujan's poetry appears to have evolved from Indian experience and sensibility with all its recollections of images, original places, family, history, and beliefs. At the same time, his writings include a modern stance that includes skepticism, irony, and a sense of moment-to-moment in an ever-changing world in which old values and beliefs are frequently viewed as unrealistic. Through his writings, Ramanujan could elicit the warmth of traditional family life and the closeness of long-remembered connections. More frequently he showed conflict, sense, and surprise. He also showed that the contended glorification of Tamil artistic heritage is a fantasy that ignored the reality of history.

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