

R.K. Ramanujan and Nature Consciousness Environmental Sensibility and Awareness as in the Poems of A.K.Ramanujan

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Abstract: *Nature and love for nature is the central theme in the poems of A.K.Ramanujan. This theme provides a holistic cosmic world view which interrelates nature with human community. It is with the advancement of science and technology, the traditional beliefs of Indians in Nature slowly got diverted. The , materialistic culture, competitive attitude and extreme change in the life styles of human beings resulted in the decline of importance given to environment and its impact on human life.*

Key words: *Nature, human community, ecology, preservation and conservation.*

Date of Submission: 04-04-2022

Date of Acceptance: 19-04-2022

Ramanujan is deeply affected by the socio – economic condition of his India. The poems of Ramanujan are finely crafted pieces, and the words shine with depth of meaning. M A.K.Ramanujan is one of the interactive poets in the 20th century Indian English literature. He was born in Mysore, India. He earned degrees at the university of Mysore and Deccan College in Pune and a Ph.D. from Indiana University.

Most of his poems, though intensely personal, have a universal dimension of their own. The main theme of Ramanujan's poetry are family, love, despair and death. They are full of irony, humour, paradox and sudden reversals. His own family life, his childhood memories, his pleasures, struggles, sufferings, love etc. are his objectives. All his poems are written with his own feelings, emotions and memories. He uses a language which is crisp, intense and casual.

In 1976, the government of India honoured Ramanujan with the prestigious Padma Shree, one of its highest civilian awards, for his significant contributions to Indian literature and linguistics. In 1983, he was awarded the Mac Arthur Prize Fellowship.

In the poem 'The River', the poet success in bring out the damage caused to the Mother Earth due to urban construction activities. He makes the readers be aware of ill – effects of littering plastic which chokes the drainage system, railway tracks in cities and cause inconvenience to our own lives. When we read the poem 'The River', we come to know that Madurai is a city of temples, and culture. The poet describes how in every summer, a river that flows through Madurai is narrow stream through the water gates as piles of straw and women's hair obstruct its flow.

'A River' is a poem which can be analyzed using the theory of Eco – Criticism. When we read the poem, we see the river Vikai being in flood. The people everywhere talk about the inch – by- inch rising of water and the number of stone steps submerged at the bathing place.

The world of literature is crowded with works dealing with beauty and power of nature. The type of writing recently caught the attention of the writers. The concern for ecology and the threat it causes if misused has become concern of good many writers. This theory, namely Ec0- Criticism.

People in India lack the awareness of cleanliness and their duty towards conserving the natural resources. The 'sleepy crocodiles' and 'water buffaloes lounging in the sun' are images that convey the lazy, indolent attitude of the people. The basic inertia that stops people from acting is the target of Ramanujan. If this attitude is changed, nature can and will be saved from monstrous hands.

A.K. Ramanujan also talks of a pregnant woman with perhaps twins in her womb, with no moles on their bodies, with different coloured diapers to tell them apart. We can take the concept of procreation as synonymous to creation of nature and the nurturing attitude required for trees and animals to thrive. The woman here symbolizes our mother earth and the twins in her womb can be equated to natural resources and life that inhabits this earth. The pregnant woman is shown drowned in the flood due to the negligence of the people.

“... a river dries to a trickle
in the sand,
baring the sand ribs,
straw and women's hair

clogging the Watergates
at the rusty bars
under the bridges with patches
of repair all over them
the wet stones glistening ”.

The Early Romantic and Later Romantic poets, have written enough about beautiful rural landscapes as a source of joy. Contemporary poets tend to write about nature more broadly than their predecessors. They focus more on the negative effects of human activity on the planet. Environmental poetry explores the complicated connections between people and nature. The poets are more concerned about our impact on the natural world. A.K.Ramanujan advocated for preservation and conservation.

We find the water level rising speedily. It washed away village homes, one pregnant women and a couple of cows almost every year. The destruction and the damage caused to life and prosperity due to flooding is common in India. Nature has its own way of making its presence and power felt.

River is nothing but extended self of Nature. To harm nature is to harm ourselves. Progress is necessary but it should not be at the cost of Nature. Due to modernization and globalization there is a rapid environmental disaster. There are other causes life deforestation, mining and expansion of urban areas.

The ancient Indian Literature and philosophy believes in harmony between man and nature. They believe that earth itself to be a living organization and is capable of experiencing pain and pleasure.

In the poem, ‘Ecology’, A.K.Ramanujan is a perfect example of modernity. In this poem, his mother represents traditional view of ‘Return to Nature’ life. She belongs to the Indian tradition and culture. She worships every aspect of nature. The poem is deeply rooted in the tradition of Indian which the poet is intrinsically attached to.

“The day after the first rain,
Monsoon.

for years, I would home
in a rage,
Interesting. What are you so mad about, speaker?

for I could see from a mile away
From a mile away, on the way home
our three Red Champak Trees
Our three red champak trees
had done it again,
meaning they've done it before

had burst into flower and given Mother
her first blinding migraine
first but not last; blinding because of the extent of the pain she's in in
of the season
these migraines last the whole season

with their street-long heavy-hung
yellow pollen fog of a fragrance
The pollen grains have made the air thick like fog - in fact the air IS yellow with it's heady scent
no wind could sift,
the breeze cannot blow away this fog
no door could shut out
and the doors cannot keep it out either. the whole street in front of them is thick with it; it will seep in through
the gaps
from our black-
pillared house whose walls had ears
and eyes,
begins personifying the house
scales, smells, bone-creaks, nightly
visiting voices, and were porous
pollen will get in through the holes
like us,
self-explanatory: we will breathe in this fog of pollen

but Mother, flashing her temper
like her mother's twisted silver,
giving the mother's anger some physical quality: shiny, radiant, expressive in her temper
grandchildren's knickers
soaked, then wrung (twisted)
wet as the cold pack on her head,
wet because she was sweating - cold sweats
would not let us cut down
a flowering tree
Flowering tree. Religious significance. Bad omen.
almost as old as her, seeded,
she said, by a passing bird's
providential droppings
Taken as a blessing - came from the sky

to give her gods and her daughters
and daughters' daughters basketsful
of annual flower”.

The champaka tree begins to flower after first monsoon. The strong fragrance brings migraine attacks to the speaker's mother but she has developed a kind of associational intimacy with them. The poet wants the tree to be cut but the mother objects. She says that her daughters and daughter's daughter can get the basketful of annual flower from the tree. The mother ignores her personal conveniences. This kind of intense and personal commitment should be shown by every individual towards nature and environment. The world will later face the problem of ecological imbalance if this kind of attitude is allowed to grow.

The poet's attitude to the Champak tree is antithetical to his mother's. The poet represents the modern generation. Ostensibly a very simple poem, the poem reverberates with ecological implications too visible to be ignored. Henry Bunner through his work of art motivates people in plantation **us** it chooses to show the greatness of the man who plants a tree rather than just saying the usefulness of trees. Thus, the poet gives on to highlight the theme of environmental awareness and appeals people to plant more trees in a brilliant way through his poem.

A.K.Ramanujan uses his art as a medium to create awareness of conserving nature. The poet also wants to say that a particular kind of tree may have advantages and disadvantages. But it is our duty to protect and conserve every plant life.

Towards the concluding part of the poem, the mother tells the poet that the tree is as old as she is. Its seed was 'seeded by a passing bird's providential droppings' is a bird; which is a sign of good omen and dropped the seeds of those places. She believes that the bird seeded the plants so that a line of cousins or in other words each new generation may be able to offer its "basketful of annual flower' to God and their daughter (probably during marriage). And for this reason she is all prepared to bear the pain migraine.

Eco poetry investigates both thematically and formally the relationship between nature and culture, language and perception. A.K. Ramanujan has romanticized the lush beauty of India, its vast diversity and landscape. He advocates the need for conservation and protection of our environment.

In the poem, 'Snake', A.K. Ramanujan stresses the diversity between human beings and nature. The relationship is describes in vivid terms. There is reference to snakes, flies and frogs.

“The twirls of their hisses
rise like the tiny dust-cones on slow noon roads
winding through the farmers feet.
Black lorgnettes are etched on their hoods,
ridiculous, alien, like some terrible aunt,
a crest among tiles and scales
that moult with the darkening half
of every moon.”

In the poem 'Snake', Ramanujan points out the touching reality and modern society, the reality of insensibility and indifference. It is among the best poems of Ramanujan. The description is of a snake that induces fear in the minds of all. He gives us the picture of snakes that take shelter in the museums, both shelves, glass –shelves etc.

“Yellow amber
or touching a book that has gold
on its spine”

The poet compares the intermittent hissing of the snakes to the little clouds of dust that arise as one walks along a dusty road. The snake's scales mount with the waving of the moon. The poet also remembers one day a snake man brought a basket full of cobras to the poet's home. The poet watches their bodies what –brown in colour with rings all over. The way they move on the floor looks like a strange alphabet written here and there. The poet's mother feeds the snakes with saucers of milk. The snakes suck the milk. The snake man then wears them in his neck in order to impress the poet's father. The latter gives him money.

A.K.Ramanujan narrates what happens while he walks along the forest path. Suddenly he feels as if he is walking on a slippery surface. It is a snake and writhes in pain. He steps on it until it is dead. He is now not afraid of it. He expects the frogs to hop over the sausage rope without fear of being eaten up.

In 'Striders', A.K. Ramanujan describes the Rabbits and the physiognomy of the insect precisely. He makes an attempt to mock the supernatural powers of prophets. The poet's awareness of man- nature relationship is being evident when he says:

Not only prophets
Walk in water. The bug sits
On a landslide of lights
And drowns eye
Deep
Into its tiny strip
Of sky.

Here, the poet wants to emphasize the fact that miracles are not limited to prophets alone, they can take place even in nature and are worthy of our attention.

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Meenakshy N S. "R.K. Ramanujan and Nature Consciousness Environmental Sensibility and Awareness as in the Poems of A.K.Ramanujan." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 11(04), 2022, pp 8-11. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722