

ISSN: 0976-8165

The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Vol. 7, Issue- 3 [June 2016]

7th Year of Open Access

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

The Criterion



www.the-criterion.com

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Revitalising Myths in Ramanujan's Poems: An Ecocritical Study

Monu

Assistant Professor
Govt. College, Meham

&

Nakul

Assistant Professor
CRA College sonapat.

A.K. Ramanujan is one of the most admired poets in Indian English Literature, whose popularity depends upon his connection to his roots. Among other, Indian poets, whose poetry is concerned with Indian sensibility and Indian background, Ramanujan stands head and shoulders above. Ramanujan is a milestone in the history of Indian English Literature. His poetry is a merging place where historical and cultural aspects of ancient India are fused with a modern perspective which is refined with rational approach and scientific knowledge of modern times. At the same time he is concerned with two different aspects, one is from our past and the second is from modern day reality. In his poetry he revisits his cultural past where he stands face to face with his ancestors and tries to understand traditional Hindu philosophy. He recreates situation and environment in his poetry for the re-emergence of religious and mythological past. It seems that there is something hidden and unexplored in that mythological world which he tries to bring in light of modernity. He tries to understand the exact explanation or a potential explanation of myths from our cultural past. For him, myths contain mysterious explanations which could be a use, as the definition of mythology is given by M.H. Abrams implies:

A system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observations, and to establish the sometimes for the rules by which people conduct their lives. (179)

Though, these myths are attempts from our ancestors to explain the mysteries of nature, and do not have any scientific evidences yet Ramanujan accepts them as the philosophy that contains solutions of our daily life. These myths provide him an answer against cruelties and ill behavior of humans towards nature.

He projects them as guidelines which can show us a path that leads towards peaceful existence on earth. Through these myths, Ramanujan attacks on man's activities which harm nature, as he writes:

The breast she offered was full of poison and milk.

Flashing eyes suddenly dull, her voice was silk.

The child took her breast in his mouth and

sucked it right out of her chest.

Her carcass stretched from north to south. (CP 221)

In this poem, the poet tells a myth that is about God Krishna and demoness Putana. When Krishna was born, after sometime, a demon Kans sent a demoness to kill Krishna. She assumed the role of breast feeding mother and offered her breast to Krishna with poisoned milk in her breast. Krishna being a God, was not affected and sucked all her poison and changed her, “from deadly mother to happy demon/found life in death.” In this myth, God transformed the poisonous demon into a simple human who achieved salvation extricating her poison to be consumed by God. Here, God puts everything in order so that nothing can harm other living beings and creates harmonious environment.

But in present time, situations have changed. Today, man is in role of Krishna and Earth is in the role Putana and with it motives have also changed. Krishna was all benevolent and today it is earth. Earlier Putana was demon and today it is man who is demon. Today, man sucks poison from the depths of earth and spreads it on the surface and pollutes environment and destroy nature. Through this myth, Ramanujan looks back at Hindu culture. How it could be beneficial for humanity? What does this myth mean for us in this present predicament? For the answer he goes back to his roots with a rational mind not in sense of scientific truths but with a rational mind that search for solutions. Akshaya Kumar writes about Ramanujan:

In his treatment of Hindu myths, Ramanujan once again reveals his predicament of being a product of hyper-real constructs of both dharma and postmodernism. Myths as grand fables do attract him, but their grandeur does not remain intact. The archetypal hold of mythology on the poet’s religious mindset and the enticements of post modernism inherent in the Chicago milieu generate a unique poetic mix in which nothing remains insular as unmixed. (56-57)

With the research and innovation in science and technology, humans have achieved unprecedented advantage over other animals and, even nature itself falls under the newly conquered territory of man. Scientific knowledge taught man to understand the forms and behavior of natural objects, so that he can experiment on them and can change them to suit his objectives. Now, nature has lost its freedom and secrecy. Today, we know how to extract minerals, oil and gas from earth, how to get pure element from ores and even we can change basic feature of an element by experimenting on their atoms.

This is too much to play with nature. Being too clever an animal he always tries to conquer nature in surroundings so that he can use it for his needs and can evade a possible threat that may dethrone him. He tries every trick to weaken his dissenters, as King Hiranyakshyapa tries in Ramanujan's poem:

When the clever man asks the perfect boon;
not to be slain by demon, God, or by
beast, not by day nor by night,
by no manufactured weapon, not out
of doors nor inside, not in the sky
nor on earth. (CP 226)

In this poem or myth, King Hiranuakashyapa worshiped the God and God appeared in front of him and asked for a boon. King being a cunning demon as the man is today, asked for a boon in a clever manner that would make his death impossible. But God is above everything else. He has a great number of solutions for such tricks. The boon could not save the king due to his wrong-doings and was killed on the terms which were laid by King himself:

come now Come soon,
Vishnu, man, lion, neither and both, to hold
him in your lap to disembowel his pride
with the steel glint of bare claws at twilight. (226)

So, is in the case of man today. Man has devised unprecedented techniques and methods to evade the doomsday but all his endeavors seem inadequate to save him. Since, nature is all benevolent and it seldom poses any threat to humanity at larger scale, the real danger lies within human brain and his activities. He unknowingly prepares his own grave. The real and great danger lies in destructive activities of man. Global warming polluted resources, extinction of necessary flora and fauna etc., all these imbalances are caused by man's destructive activities. Ramanujan presents an eco-perspective by using these myths in his poems. He neither strictly criticizes them and nor praises them. He puts them in an organism and in such a manner that these myths present a meaning that is a mixture of ancient philosophy and modern rational and logical mind. On this faculty of Ramanujan, Akshaya Kumar comments:

Ramanujan uses folk tropes to generate a double edged discourse in which at one level they serve as markers of his authentic (south) Indian self, at another level due to their inherent subversive nature, they act as postmodernist deflators of the ground and the heroic. Folktales as counter-discourses seem to fit well in the subversive and counter-hegemonic vision of the poet. (99)

Through these myths in his poems, Ramanujan attempts to aware the people of the possible dangers of destructive activities committed by humans. He knows that these activities can lead but to wrong direction. He observed the present condition of nature and natural resources put in a corner as if they are lifeless commodities. For him, myths are strong weapons against the irresponsible activities of man as they were in ancient times used to guide people on important matters concerning religion, philosophy, and explanation of universe and even the rituals of daily life. Ramanujan's poetical force thus derives its structural strength from the narratives available to him from various oral folk traditional and rituals. These mythological stories lend him a grammar of his complex and ironic poetic arguments which dismantle the state of inactivity against due causes. Moreover it is the intense concerns for our whole environment that helps poet to get over the boundaries which literary genre set among them. He is eager for the right cause because he knows the condition of nature:

when mynahs scream in the cages
siamese cats with black on their paws
tiptoe from the sulphur mines of the sun
into the shadow of our hours. (CP 14)

Ramanujan observes the difficult situation of wild animals which are left on their own amid human social establishments where every natural object is absent except man-made objects. That is why these animals feel lonely and scared amid human establishments. They cannot roam freely as they do in woods and if they do so, they inflict danger on their freedom and can be put in cages. Ramanujan wants to help these natural objects by putting inhibitions on human brain/psychology with the help of these myths. In ancient times, people were guided by the same mythological stories. These mythological stories were explanation for what to do and what to not and even the whole process were prescribed in them. Myths are considered as guidelines lay by some divine power so they had great and long lasting effect on human brain and they were controlled strictly by their own inner self bywhom they were connected to some divine power through these myths. On the selection of myths for poetic weapon Ramanujan, Akshaya Kumar comments, "The fact that Ramanujan despite being a compiler of folk tales, chooses poetic form for his creative aspirations need to be paid attention. The choice of poetic form is not arbitrary..." (118). That is why the myths in his poetry has an intense force behind their

influence an readers. His intensity of using myth and the organism which was created to infuse modern rationality with cultural past make his poetry a source of inspiration for both eco-critic and eco-reader.

Works Cited:

Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Handbook of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Cengage Learning, 2009. Print.

Kumar, Akshay. *A. K. Ramanujan: In Profile and Fragment*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2004. Print.

Ramanujan, A. K. *Collected Poems*. New Delhi: OUP, 1995. Print.