CHAPTER-TWO
CREATIVE USE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

All art gets its nourishment from the life. But art is not a mirror-image of the life, nor its objective critique. Art is like a tree which has its roots struck deep into the soil of life and its branches grown out in the air, even in the wider skies. Thus the real art has the best of the two worlds, the inner locale of all felt experience and the outer landscape of all thoughts and ideational encounters. Well, what is mysterious in the nature of art is that these two worlds get integrated and fused into a creative whole by its own chemistry. Therefore, the life of an artist as illustrated in his work, can be hardly historical in process or in perspective. At best, it is a creative anachronism; its relevance is in its felt essence, or in living and creative absence rather than its factual connections and evidences. The creative personality is a riddle and even not answerable to our queries such as why it is this and not that, because our questions do not govern its function or its power. But how it makes itself felt on us, or happens to arouse deeply our natural or considered feelings, is the area of our concern. Particularly in case of Ramanujan, many such puzzles will be rewarding even without unravelling themselves, if we accept and appreciate our role in the just considered category.

Reflecting on the nature of a creative mind, C.G. Jung observes, "every creative person is a duality or a synthesis of contradictory qualities. On the one hand, he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other, he is an impersonal
The forces personal and impersonal that get fused by his creative imagination are what characterise Ramanujan's art, almost in its entirety. But the results evidence a complex pattern more like a kaleidoscope than like any simple and complex deductive formulae. Let us then see how Ramanujan the poet and Ramanujan the artist interact to create many such patterns.

Family and relations are two motifs like two chips in Ramanujan's artistical kaleidoscope. Family is a sustained symbol in his creative consciousness. Though for the ordinary human beings, the family is a locale of intimate relationships which only absorb them, for an artist like Ramanujan it is a way of understanding the self, a means of developing a vision of the vital process of life. With Ramanujan, the familial bond endures but it engenders in him a superior artist. Hence, his detachment from the family and its man is equally important to his creativity.

The memories of the old granny, who is a loving, lovable and non-opposable figure, are enshrined in some of Ramanujan's poems like "The Opposable Thumb", "Lines to a Granny", "In the Zod" and "The Hindoo: he does not Hurt a Fly or a Spider either". Granny’s fairytales or counting of five princes with each of her five fingers in a palm that is mysteriously short of one thumb, or her elephantasis is wonderfully imaged to sustain a child’s curiosity and humour. But the poet in "The Opposable Thumb" seems very often tearing out of a child’s innocent wonder. From a child’s point of view, it is unconvincing and absurd to
see a granny's "rolling leg" likened to "a log in a ruined mill", too sophisticated a metaphor, indeed. For, not by its title alone, but also by its content, the poem is very much a nursery rhyme. "Lines to a Granny" brings a different note in which the poet at his youthful advent of the life, comes to realize that granny's tale of prince and princess in love is merely "no tale but truth". Because youth is a time when the love-life enacts more fantastic but real drama than what many fanciful stories cook up and tell. There may be also an element of Ramanujan's real-life affair here which becomes vibrant in his love-poem "Still Another View of Grace". In the Zoo however, the grey white adjutant storks remind him of grandma's "maggoty curds". Such fond memories of a granny are not so loving in another poem "The Hindoo: he does not Hurt a Fly, or a Spider either". Here the "great swinging grandmother" is seen as sinning against the "great grandfather", whom she once bites "spider-fashion" and from the trauma of which the poor man could hardly recover. In the poem, the old man is a beloved figure, described as "that still man, untimely witness, timeless eye, perpetual outsider" whose spirit, the poet-persona wonders to have internalised, whereas, the old lady is cast in poor and doubtful light as "a suspense of nets vibrate" under her ways.

Nevertheless, Ramanujan does not leave clues for the readers to trace out who exactly are his great grandparents or grandparents. Well, "a" grandmother, "a" grandfather, "a" father or unarticled person or relation is certainly a term capacious to hold many in one. Secondly, Ramanujan's relations remain shadowy with his detached manners, comic ironies, satirical understones and cryptic comments. Moreover, the persons in the poems are not full
portraits but vignettes seen from a distance. These are some of the ways how the poet in Ramanujan has drawn on the man in him, and how his autobiography is elevated to the level of art.

However, quite interestingly, when Ramanujan talks of mother, he means her and no other. He leaves us no room for our misgivings about the loving image of his mother, who at times rises to a universal symbol. The poet’s reminiscences of Mother could be sensuously gathered from "Snakes": "Mother gives them milk/in saucers/she watches them suck/ and bare the black-line design/etched on the brass of the saucer". In the poem, "Of Mothers, among other things", how her sarees do not cling as she picks him up from "the crying cradle" in the wake of rains, or how her "sensible fingers" flex to pick up "a grain of rice from the kitchen floor", are happily recollected by the poet. Again, "Still Another for Mother" depicts the poet’s encounter with a woman, "large, buxom like some friend’s mother" whose act of shutting the door brings alive from his memory lane "that heavy door/of my mother’s black-pillared, nineteenth century/silent house, given on her marriage day/to my father, for a dowry". Usually Ramanujan works through the specifics: mother’s silk saree, her crinkled feet, diamond rings, sensible fingers, crippled talon; "her bare splayed feet, silver rings on her second toes" as in "Love Poem for a Wife" or her "flashing temper" like her "twisted silver" as in "Ecology". The poet has five senses alert on such relation as Mother. And significantly his ironic humour is absent from his depiction of the mother-figure. If in "Still Another for Mother", his memory of a lost mother recounts on silence in repeating synonymous expressions like "quietly", "silent" and the persona re-lives
a heaviness of heart in the lines: "something opened/in the past
and I heard something shut/ in the future quietly/like the
heavy door of my mother's .... silent house,"... in "Ecology"
he senses another lovable facet in her, that is, the ancient
passion for protecting a "flowering tree", that unschooled,
inborn sense of ecology, which has become a valuable asset for
our existence in a world rocked by environmental pollution and
ecological imbalance. But in the poem, as it is, her spiritual
and aesthetic sense outweighs our modern attitude to things, to
a tree. Ramanujan recalls in an evocative manner that "flashing
her temper", Mother "would not let us cut down/a flowering tree/
almost as old as her, ..../ to give her gods and her daughters/
and daughters' daughters basketfuls/of annual flower/for one
line of cousins/a dower of migraines in season".

It may be borne in mind that the past has a fruitful
bearing on the life, and this is vital to Ramanujan's creative
vision. Here, the tree "as old as" mother is a symbol of conti­
nuity. And to me, it appears it is a means for Ramanujan to
realize both past and present together in a continuous flow.
Further, the stanza quoted just above gives us an insight into
Ramanujan's deep rootedness in his ethos and culture. And what
is more, mother becomes a living symbol of closeness and confi­
dence. She reveals to her grown-up son the sad event of his
great aunt's death and how her two daughters cleaned her body,
yet to be cold, of all her valuables before she breathed her
last. The poet-persona's anger and disgust at his dark aunts
have found expression through his bitter irony. Thus, irony has
become a mode of aesthetic distance from the near relations, and this is a tool in the hands of Ramanujan to keep himself in balance and not to let himself go down on the pan of sentimentality or moralise from the particularities of his experience (Chapter-Three).

However, Ramanujan's attitude towards his father is one of mixed feelings. He remembers fondly his father's "wobbly top", his revolving chair, fat physique, "bilious witty" nature. In "In the Zoo" the poet is reminded of his father's baggy umbrellas at the sight of the "noisy and heavy" adjusant storks, of his "smiling money" as in "Snakes": of his "familiar sheep-mouth look in a sepia wedding picture" or, how he "noisily bathed" by "slapping soap on his back" as in "Love Poem for a Wife 1". Surely, Ramanujan's eye is fixed on "the specific physiognomy" of a thing, a person or a situation, which has been excellently commented upon by R.Parthasarathy. Well, his ironic observations on his father are inescapable. His sense of irony saves "Obituary" from becoming a sentimental piece of writing on his father's death and from becoming a crude caricature of his father, which again establishes Ramanujan as a master of subtle irony and detached artistry.

Ramanujan comes to our view as a playful, teasingly affectionate brother to his sisters. He says, "our sisters were of various sizes / one was ripe for a husband/we were not poor" in "A Leaky Tap after a Sister's Wedding". But in his childhood he recalls to have got the fright of his life at the sight of his sister's "knee-long bread" which dazzled like snake-like "scales". However, his bitterness towards some cousin
for professed humanism, the other name of hypocrisy, is not
mined in any manner in the poem "Real Estate"-[R]:

My cousin knows buildings:
he knows them well,
He can even tell
their gender by one look
at the basement.

.

Humanist, he calculates
stress and strain on wood
and steel, on liver and lower brain...
The poet's irritation at an errant nephew, who with "stripes on
shoulder was called an incident on the border" in the Sahara
desert ... finds expression in "Small-Scale Reflections on a
Great House"-[R], which as a poem again is replete with Ramanujan's
ironic flourishes at the family tradition, the ancestors, the
"prodigal" fathers, the curious girls looking at the cows mated
in "the broadday light" and so on.

There are also some poems which exhibit how Ramanujan can
be a loving, caring and anxious father to his children, worrying
for their health or their little games. Once, a dream about his
son "shot" by "bamboo arrows in a jungle trap" disturbs him so
much that he pulls a long face, the whole day. One is aware of
this depression in the persona in "Son to Father to Son"-[SS].
Whereas, "Moulting" invokes a prayer to "Lord of snakes and eagles"-
to cover his son with an hour's shade and to be "a thorn" at a
suitable height "in his hour of change". Well, what is more
interesting for us to find in Ramanujan is that he gets either more worried or more elated, depending on the situation of his inner mind, about his "unborn" children. He would draw some premonition from grandma's yellow daffodils and worry the "very possible" jundice of an "unborn" daughter as in "On the Very Possible Jaundice of an Unborn Daughter". However, in "It Does not Follow, But When in the Street", he would draw some extrasensory perception from a surrounding environment of "yellow laburnum" and would, in a heightened mood, walk in air, water and land, because he is going to have "a sharp gentle daughter". Here, one notices an absence of the logical correlation between what the persona encounters and what he concludes. But, one thing is clear that intuition or premonition, presage or extra-sensory perception has its due place in Ramanujan, and for that matter, in the real life of all ours, which his as well as our scientific rationalism can not simply hiss off. Ramanujan's scientific faith in heredity and its influence on a new-born child is revealed in "Drafts". Here the poet-persona ascribes his "son's green flecks in a painter's eye" to the influence of "mother's almond eyes mixed" with his "wife's ancestral hazel". But the poet is pretty sure of the fact that personality can not be explained fully by the hereditary factors beyond a certain point. Therefore, if the son inheres certain qualities from his mother as well as from his grandmother, "his troubled look is all his own". And here, it is apt to say that a work of art which inherits its sap from the life, can not be its mirror-image. It is something beyond, which points to the mysterious chrysalis of the poet's character.
Ramanujan, the artist remembers outside the gamut of family relations his childhood friends, Gopu and Shivanna. In a rather long narrative poem, "A Minor Sacrifice" he recreates almost a childhood adventure on "a new moon Tuesday" in order to rid the world of scorpions, but by their childish performance of some witchcraft. In an unforeseen, final catastrophe, however, on that very newmoon Tuesday, his friend Shivanna expires in a hospital.

There is ample evidence, of course, in these family poems as dealt with above, that many shreds of irony work into every family portraiture. This fact reveals again that Ramanujan is not all-out praise for his relations, though it is the relations that keep coming into creative consciousness. As a man, Ramanujan is not forgetful of their love and affections, but as an artist, he is not blind to their lapses. From the study of his family and memory poems, one gathers the impression that the family relations are not meant merely for the grubs of affection, or for meeting the obligations, they are such vital bonds as bind man to his family, which he can not escape, which he bears even if he runs away from it. Thus, Ramanujan writes in "Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House":

"... that nothing/that ever comes into this house/goes out".

Family, for Ramanujan, is an enduring symbol, a "great house", a great tradition, into which "things come in every day/to lose themselves among other things/lost long ago among/other things lost long ago". Even after two decades of his life spent abroad in U.S.A., Ramanujan continues to live the inner life of his own, the umbilical cord of the mother-India connections. In this context, Parthasarathy's observation is aptly made that "a man's family never
leaves him” and that “he takes it with him wherever he goes”, because family is “one unchanging event” around which man’s life continues to revolve. Daruwalla has a similar view of Ramanujan’s family poems as well as of his physical dislocation. The critic in his “Introduction” to Two Decades of Indian Poetry says that “the purely physical fact of living abroad” does not tell upon Ramanujan’s creativity, for “his poetry rests in the shade of the family tree”.

In Chapter-One, it is noticed how Ramanujan’s close affinity with his Tamil classics, in terms of idea as well as spirit, has shaped and moulded his creative career as a poet. His enduring motif, family, closely resembles a Tamil classic, Drerulavanar’s idea embodied in his “Relations”, which reads:

Like a hunted deer
on the wide white
salt land,
a flayed hide
turned inside out,
one may run,
escape.

But living
among relations
binds the feet.

Therefore, family occupies an important place in Ramanujan’s art, and his idea of the growth and continuity of an individual personality is closely connected with the family motif. However, his autobiographical accounts as encountered in his poems have transformed his art into something strange and rich. Ultimately,
these accounts become subservient to the marvellous realm of art. Ramanujan is a consummate artist to have transmuted the familial themes and the private motifs into their artistic values which endure.

Love is the most important of all human relationships. For some artists, it is a value which they struggle to live up to, in the life as well as in their works of art. Thus, love's manifold voices unfold in many of Ramanujan's poems. But blatantly borrowed ideas of love, or otherwise its stock expressions would scarcely inspire us to its living touches or livid wounds. What is important in love poems is not the form, nor the finesse, but the fire or the flavour of love, which touches and the touch that never vanishes:

Perhaps it will not pass,
for in that touch I think I stumbled
on a pulse, and wondered like a fool
who has no proper sense of body
if it were yours, or mine,
and wondered if you wondered too.

"A Rather Foolish Sentiment"—S.

Shakespeare, Keats and Yeats are the great names in love's temple, because their crafts are dipped in the fount of their own love-lives. There is always the extended arms of the life behind the great works of love, in painting or sculpture, in music or literature. Well, the man in Ramanujan goes into the making of the creator above him. Ramanujan the creator evokes or explores love's varying moods with his acute sense of the living premises of man's love-life.
But the way the love-experiences and the love-ideas are fused in his poems would raise him as a sophisticated love-poet in modern Indian poetry in English.

One may begin with every individual love lyric of Ramanujan, with a few important general observations, which would reveal the multi-faceted voice of love and also smoothen one’s way through each of them to get at the poet’s vision of the love-relationship. Each love-poem evokes or enacts a drama in monologue. Each moment of time is vital to the poet’s creativity. And each moment of love brings in memory and reflection to play. Well, Ramanujan’s poem takes off from a stumble at a moment: a stumble because it is neither a fall nor a bump, for the life is a continuously changing phenomenon, like flux. This quick moment, seized to invest it with an eternity, is a characteristic feature of the classical Tamil love lyrics. Thus, time and experience coalesce in an immediate thrust of a moment in Ramanujan. The love poems are variously enriched with suggestive association, sudden turns and surprises, comic vivacity and ironic niceties, which again emerge in the nimble moments of life. Characteristically in Ramanujan, love’s moment is awaited.

At the outset, "Two Styles in Love" may be taken up for a discussion. I decide on it first not because of its complex inner pattern of ideas being its validity beneath the seemingly obvious contrasts, but because, as I see, its spiritual blood stream veins through the best ones of Ramanujan’s love poetry. Love is a growing consciousness as the life is. Ramanujan’s inner urge spurs him to capture as many moments of love as possible, for many such instants could possibly approximate to a near total
vision of love. For him, love is a slow process and in reality, it is not realised in haste, it must be awaited with patience:

Love is no hurry, love is no burning
Come lightly, love, let us wait to be found to be lost.

"Two Styles in Love"—S. Ramanujan with his idea of love to be awaited reminds one of his contemporary modern poet Nissim Ezekiel, who in his "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" gives expression to the same:

To force the pace and never to be still
Is not the way of those who study birds
Or women. The best poets wait for words.6

Both the poets start from their theoretical concept, but Ezekiel speaks while standing apart from the process, and Ramanujan voices while in the process. Ramanujan's vision of love grows out of his felt life or passionate understanding of it. His understanding of the love-life, man-woman relationship comes oozing, which is spread over his poems.

It is said that knowledge comes drop by drop. So, one may keep oneself close to the drops of love, its moments, its moods for a better appreciation of Ramanujan’s accomplishment as a love-poet.

A moment in "Breaded Fish" facilitates a peep into the grand, the beyond. This moment of love, the beloved’s affectionate thrust of breaded fish into the lover’s mouth brings into open a vision of universal indifference, that is ingrained in all life-forms: wife’s coldness towards fish, the sea’s indifference towards human being, and no less, a man’s coldness towards his wife’s love. Again,
a little reflection may reveal that love's private moment is not immune to other interventions. Further, the poet's consciousness swings back and forth continuously touching each moment, even living all times at once. This instability of time is also manifest in "Still Life". Here the poet-persona seems to have freezed his awareness of the beloved's departure into a sort of statuesque wonder, "still life". However, it is indeed not as much freezing as ceasing into a ceaseless passion, a subconscious living, a quivering under a cover. Under the cover of a "still life" an anguished living could be perceived in the poem. "A Rather Foolish Sentiment" unveils another facet of love. Imaging himself as a "fool", the poet enjoys a moment of comic expenses at himself. But this self-mockery is self-redemptive: his foolish wondering, dwelling on "that touch", such a stumble on a pulse as "will not pass" discloses the mind of an impassioned lover. Magnificently playing on two recurring words, "pass" and "wonder", he creates a total atmosphere. The poet here transmutes an idea of the primordiality of passion into a living sensation. The image of "caveman's painting" in the poem heightens love's passion and its intriguing beauty, unaided by colour-paints or modern sophistications, nay sophisticated corruptions.

One comes across love's assurance on the face of lover's separation in "Instead of a Farewell"—

how can I say farewell
when farewells are made
only for people
who go away?
The central metaphor here is "square dance", an American folk dance in which each of the four pairs of dancers turns and changes a partner. Love is such a dance where to say farewell is next to impossible. And the impossibility, that is, "squaring" the "ancient circle" of the lovers is achieved but only "in a glimpse", an instant of time. The living paradoxes of the love-life are revealed in the expressions like "meeting before I begin to see,/ seeing after I have done/with meeting,". Because seeing or meeting each other for long does not necessarily ensure the eternal returns of love: love endures, lovers can say no "farewell", for love does not "go away" with farewells even if said. Love's eternal returns evidence only "in a glimpse".

Love's fruition in marriage is dramatically recreated in "Still Another View of Grace". This is a well-knit poem with contrasting ideas, assonances, inner rhymes (priest-beast, treason-story, brahmin-hymns, shook-took) and lyrical epithets. Being "bred Brahmin", Ramanujan took behind the ancient laws of his land, the hand of a Keralite Christian in marriage. The reader has "another view of grace" in the poem. Grace here means self-liberation, freedom from orthodox "commandments", and still another view of it would mean grace does not come with Brahmin's blessings, but it is an inner blissfulness, attained by answering the call of the soul. H.M. Williams rightly observes that "an acute sense of sin and a wry portrayal of human fallibility inform the poem". However, finally this sense of sin melts into a silk-feeling, the feeling of grace.

Love's grace in a marital life is not the end of the road. In the man-woman relationship, problems have a share too. "Routine
Day Sonnet mirrors this odd beat of the love-life. A sonnet, however routined its form, may also embody a stranger idea or greater experience. Similarly, an apparently smooth routine life may spring a surprise now and then, adding quaintness and absurdity to a daily existence. As peace and understanding are in life, so are confusion and doubt, they have their moments, their shares. "I Could Have Rested" is a dramatic monologue on a problem of a love-life, on sexual jealousy. The love-lorn persona finds no way to self-accusation or to shy away from the beloved's larceny, her secret affair now. He shines in the fire of youthfulness, but pressed under a betrayed love, he burns in its jealousy. Well, if security in love is wanted, man should "court a mermaid" because she is "single-thighed" ("Excerpts from a Father's Wisdom").

The sensual content of the love-relationship too gets some treatment, of course, sparingly in Ramanujan. In "looking for a Cousin on a Swing", memory and desire are brought in to lend credence and reality to the obvious act of sex, of course, indulged in at the time of an innocent childhood. But its promiscuous thirst in an adult, conscious age invites Ramanujan's disapproval. King considers the poem as one of "not just psychological insight into evolving sexuality", but like "Love Song for a Wife", a statement about "... the unselfconscious feeling of wholeness". Bringing of these two poems together is a hasty decision, because "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing" is deficient in such an unconscious feeling for wholeness, because the female persona's "to be innocent about it" has all the suggestion of her self-conscious desire for some indulgent acts. What is more, her pretence "to be innocent" here and the male persona's desire for a unity of beings in "namelessness
of childhoods" in "Love Poem for a Wife 1" are worlds apart. In one case, the poet's irony is in the nature of pointed satire, whereas in the other, it is one of the comic humour. In this context, a look at his third person point of view, keeping himself at large from the persona and the cousin as well, sounds unusual in a way. Could it be that Ramanujan does not enjoy a free-will, gratuitous entertainment in writing the physical act of love? This problem may be sensitively looked into in "A Poor Man's Riches 2"-55. Here the poet seems to come alive on the subject of "body" and its throbbing passions. Could it be that an Indian bred as a Hindu Brahmin alone feels why stealing "kisses" outdoors is an act of "committing grand larceny", though this larceny leads to discovering rich and wonderful mines in the life's physical acts?

I discover
at least how a woman is made
as she laughs and makes a man
of me,
teaches me combination, how to pick
locks to raid her richest furs,
and loot the mint of gold and silver even as they turn into common money ...

Nevertheless, the poet's faith and delight in the body are better expressed in symbols: the "haiku butterflies" sleeping in the ear of a "ruined Buddha" is certainly an affirmation of that faith.

But Ramanujan when counterposed with some of his contemporary Indo-Anglians, with respect to living in the body, would come under dimer light. Shiv K. Kumar's "To a Young Wife" opens sensationally:

Arabian horses
snort around our bed
pawing into frosted holes 20.
Dr. K.N. Daruwall's "Love among Pines" would move to the border of the vulgar:

What makes me whisper
destiny lies
in the parting of hair
in the parting of grasses
in the parting of thighs? 11

However, Ramanujan is not incapable of the vivid suggestions, though he desists from the lurid illustrations of love-making: its sophistication is also to taste, its lusciousness is not in the detail but in the concentration of the idea. "Of Curves" 12 has all the liveliness of Ramanujan's living faith in the body-life:

The ancient Arabic word for "sine"
is one which also means
the well-known curve
of Eve's own breast.
It is as if the maleness
of the straightest line
achieves design
and the significance
of tangency
only once:
with the perfect curve's
one caress.

Ramanujan's creative energy emanates from the sudden clashing of the opposites, and its physical immediacy is not missed, its suggestive power illuminates "Two Days" in which the poet says:
But I met some one who gave it pretensions to a pattern: a maplike waterstain steaming upon a stone.

Like yesterday, today was also vain, but today's meeting with a stranger is a turning point, she alone gave at least a pattern-like pretensions to life. Thus for Ramanujan, sex is not merely a sensational arousal of the life, it is a vital property to understand the life's vision. Poem after poem, he explores the multifarious voices of love, of union and separation, marriage and betrayal, indulgence and sensuous longing, its physical aspect and metaphysical contentment. Beneath the voices of love, his probe goes deeper to explore the man-woman relationship, the unity of beings. This is the reason why three important love poems of Ramanujan, "Love Poem for a Wife 1", "Love Poem for a Wife 2" and "Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees" are kept together for discussion. My grouping them together is also not prompted merely by their titular resemblances, but more by their thematic correlation and a growing vision of the consciousness of the self which informs each of them.

"Love Poem for a Wife 1" is an attempt to understand the innate alienness in the lovers and to come to grips with the love-life. Marriage is conventionally understood as the merging of two minds and as the resolution of all contraries that beset the life. Beneath all seeming perfections in a marital life,
what lurks, rather sits deeply entrenched there, is an apartness, an alienation between man and woman. This disconcerting feature of the life is seen by E.N. Lall as a failure of "complete possession of his wife" by the man, in this poem. King considers this as the "problem of marriage". This problem of alienation comes to the surface in marriage, of course, but its root is seeded in the unitary differences of a couple's childhoods. Therefore, the persona's enterprise to work out a unity of two beings, man and woman, within the fold of marriage turns out to be a wild goose chase.

The poem opens dramatically revealing Ramanujan's acute awareness of this alienation:

\[
\text{What keeps us apart} \\
\text{at the end of years is unshared} \\
\text{childhood.}
\]

Thus, to this basic premises of apartness, he suggests two alternative solutions which naturally imply that the marriage once carried back to "childhood" will sort out all differences between man and woman. Therefore, the poet imagines that either the Egyptian legacy of the incestuous marriage, or the Hindu tradition of the childhood marriage in the oral cradle, might resolve such differences.

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\text{... Probably} \\
\text{only the Egyptians had it right:} \\
\text{their kings had sisters for queens} \\
\text{to continue the incests} \\
\text{of childhood into marriage.} \\
\text{Or we should do as well-meaning hindus did,}
\]
betroth us before birth,
forestalling separate horoscopes
and mother’s first periods,
and wed us in the oral cradle
and carry marriage back into
the namelessness of childhoods.
The sharing of childhoods, the common family past is suggested
to dissolve the individual separateness of man and woman. But
interestingly enough, the "old drag-out fights" between the persona’s
wife and her own brother both belonging to a common family part
and a common origin, do not affirm the possibility of resolving
the differences, rather this scene of "drag-out fights" is a wry
and an ironic comment on either of the suggested alternatives.
The poem projects Ramanujan’s deeper probe into the man–woman
relationship and also manifests how this strange apartness is not
fully explainable and how it is not resolvable in marriage carried
back to "the namelessness of childhoods". King’s observation is
apt while he says that wanting "the self-unconscious feeling of
wholeness" supposed to be found in "the namelessness of childhoods"
could only be an exercise in "comic absurdity"16, for the poet,
and that finally the poem is.

This problem is more forthrightly admitted in "Love Poem for
a Wife 2" as the poet says: "We had never known/we would never
know/my wife’s always/changing syriac face". From experience,
the poet learns that the strange existence of the wife has to be
finally acknowledged. But then, the desire of wholeness remains
still a lurking passion. This desire turned now subconscious manifests
in a "happy" "dream", a thwarted reality is realised in a dream vision.
The persona dreams one day that his face is "lost", "cut loose" and his wife's face instead is connected to his body. The persona's new-found happiness "for once" is revealed thus -

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.. : happy for once
at such loss of face,
whole in the ambivalence
of being half woman half-
man contained in a common
body,
androgynous as a god
balancing stillness in the middle
of a duel to make it dance:
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The poem focuses Ramanujan's quest for the unity of being, for the wholeness of the life, is ultimately realised; but this realisation of the wholeness manifests only in a dream, only "for once", for a moment. Ramanujan's idea of the wholeness in "the ambivalence of being half woman and half man contained in a common body" stands a better testimony to the fact that the basic contradictions, strangenesses and alienations sedent in the individual personalities of man and woman can only be "balanced" to a "whole", but not dissolved wholly. This is what he has learnt as the final truth from life. And he has expressed the truth underlying the man-woman relationship in a sophisticated mythical motif (see, Chapter One). The time-element vital for such a realisation of the unity between two beings, man and woman, between the one and the other is a moment, a quivering instant of the life. As we see in the poem, the persona "soon" becomes himself, "the past still there", the alienation again persists. Therefore, the truth
of the man-woman integrated wholeness, for Ramanujan, is not one 
submitting to the other, merging into the other’s being: not losing 
into another. This integration is a "balancing stillness" between 
two beings, between half woman and half man, between the masculine 
principle and the feminine one moulding into a complete principle, 
but for a while. My lingering on this aspect of Ramanujan's search 
and success is to drive home to the readers that we are encountering 
here a poet whose idea of the man-woman relationship closely 
resembles Lawrence's. D.H. Lawrence considers man and woman as 
two poles, two stars or two angels who achieve the creative fullness 
between each other in the way of a "trembling equilibrium", of the 
balance. In *Women in Love*, Lawrence professes his idea of the 
man-woman relationship in a style all his own. Birkin, his alter-
ego in the novel wants a further conjunction than a mere physical 
union with Ursula: he wants a further conjunction, "where man had 
being and woman had being, two pure beings, each constituting 
the freedom of the other; balancing each other like two poles of 
one force, like two angels, or two demons". The relationship 
of unity between two pure beings, this pure relatedness, this 
"quick" is revealed and also re-lived but in a quivering, nimble 
moment of the life. When to "be fulfilled in difference" is 
the whole of Lawrence's vision of the man-woman relationship, to 
"be whole in the ambivalence" is all that characterises Ramanujan's 
vision.

His "Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees" illumines another 
important but related aspect of woman as the symbol of "the other" 
as Lawrence would mean.
I forget at night and remember at dawn
you're not me but Another, the faraway
stranger who's nearby ...

In the poem, there is no more of the poet’s search for a nameless-
ness of childhood, no more either of his insatiable envy for the
wife's syriac face. There is only a realistic acceptance and
appreciation of the life's polarity, separateness, otherness.

Another reason for the poet’s coming to this solipsistic acceptance
of the wife's strange aloofness might be her death, with which
"Some People", an early poem in Second Sight deals, because death
in a final turn of events establishes here strange existence, and
her separate being. The echo of her death is also audible in the
section II of "Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees". And thus,
the section III is the affirmation of Ramanujan's vision that the
woman is not cast in the shape or shadow of her man: she is the
other for the man as the man is the other for her. Like Lawrence,
Ramanujan also means that between man and woman, each being "the
other" for the other, each becomes fulfilled in the other, through
the creative conjunctions from moment to moment. Could it be that
Ramanujan is influenced totally by Lawrence, his vision of the
man-woman relationship? Lawrence's shaping influence on Ramanujan
may be enquired, proved or disproved only by the literary histo-
rians. But as Ramanujan's poems speak for themselves, there is
no dearth of evidence that his is a growing vision. His long
struggle, poem after poem, to grapple with time's nimble moments,
the nature of woman, her strange existence, yields its own fruit,
shapes its own vision. Whether it resembles someone else's or
others is immaterial. No less important is Ramanujan's own
individual search. If one's success brings the similar or same results with another's, could one's labour, sweat and blood be belittled? But then, is Ramanujan's vision simply Lawrentian? Its answer is embedded in the section IV of Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees.

Yet I know you'll play at Jewish mama,
Sob-sister, daughter . . .
even the sexpot next door, topless
tree spirit on a temple frieze,
or a plain Indian wife
at a village well, so I can play son,
father, brother, macho lover, gaping tourist and clumsy husband.

What in quintessence a dear woman is, is summed up by Ramanujan as in the roles she plays at different moments and different stages of her life, of their co-existence, of their vital relationships. It is known that for Lawrence, the image of the beloved as mother (Mater Dolorosa) is an anathema. It is this mother-fixation that results in Lawrence's failure in love as in Sons and Lovers; it is this image of Magna Mater that he simply dislodged from his mind in Rainbow, and this image that is severally discarded (one, Ursula's dance in her pregnancy) in Women in Love. For Lawrence, the beloved is a pure being: the pure-relatedness between man and woman would go thwarted unless the mother-image is undone. So, if Ramanujan is a Lawrentian at least upto a point, he is but himself since then. The dear woman can play the mother, and the man plays the son; she can play the "plain Indian wife" and he "a clumsy husband". The reciprocity of playing the different
roles is real and true to every changing moment of the life. Moreover, such a concept of the woman as appropriates the roles of mother, daughter, wife, enchantress and sister is not alien to the Hindu ethos. Here again, Ramanujan’s root in his ethos is self-revelatory. For him, the dear woman is a complex symbol, more complex than that for Lawrence.

Furthermore, in the love poem, "Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees", the tree-symbol is intricately associated with the woman. As the tree is: strange in character, distant and primordial in origin, so is the woman. But Ramanujan has invested some Vedic nuances to the tree, and its topsy-turviness as associated with the image of woman is another intriguing aspect of her character. It seems to me that Ramanujan has probably tried to disregard the Vedic idea of this material world as entangling man in all illusory activities which steal away from him his true goal, his liberation from this material world. In this love poem, the topsy-turvy tree with its "roots in heaven and branches in the earth", quite reminiscent of the Vedic Banyan tree\(^2\), becomes "the one tree that’s not upside down, its mother root/unfolding in the earth a mirror image/ of every branch and twig thrust deep/into the sky". In this analogy, Ramanujan is of the view that it is the dear woman who helps her man to know what life is, because she alone knows "how to buy the perfect pomfret for dinner in a world of stranded fish, or pluck the one red apple in the garden for dessert ..."

Therefore, how could the man, born to this material world, live without its enjoyment? Perhaps Ramanujan here re-affirms his faith
in the living of life and hence, his living the spirit of this worldly life through the dear woman.

Ramanujan’s art, as we see, unveils the rich ideas, wise and philosophical in a sense, about the life lived within the man-woman relationship. However, one important and allied aspect of this life needs to be explored here.

Self at the centre of all search manifests itself in Ramanujan’s art from the very beginning of his creative life. And the artist has all through assumed an elusive character till his vision clears; well, but his vision is gained through experience. His vision of the self permeates most of his elusive poems, the poems which have so far been faulted on one count or another. First, the one comes to my mind is "The Striders", which is not by chance, the first poem of Ramanujan’s first volume of poems, and this volume The Striders is also entitled after this poem. Ramanujan’s concern with the self and hence his idea of the individuality of beings is very much there, but misted with an uncanny subject like Waterbug and more, gone veiled under an objectivist style of the moderns. "The Striders" to Ramanujan is a uniquely personal experience, such an experience as characterises $K_{MNC}^4$ in Grandfather’s Shaving Glass. These two poems, among many others, are not as banal as they are made out to be. The style adopted in the poems is peculiarly a Ramanujan-device to serve best his slowly evolving vision of the self. In the first poem, the poet emphatically focuses on the miracle performed by the strider, a tiny creature, which always escape our grand-seeing eyes. The poet means what he says: "No, not only the prophets walk on water". He recognises the strider, he recognises the self. It is said that John Keats could smell the
beautiful even in the garbage. But it is Ramanujan who senses merit in the smallest. Well, with Ramanujan, it is not so much the case of appreciating the observed, the outward as an act of inwardising what is seen, what is encountered: there is always some symbiosis between outward observation and self-exploration. Such symbiotic relation is natural to the poet, to the artist, the sensitive soul; but to us, normal us, it only sounds absurd.

"The Striders" is a dramatic self-exploration, a quest for "a tiny strip of sky", for a little space of one's own in a vast world, infested with the masters, the "prophets". Thus underneath an objective mode of seeing minutely a strider's miracle, there is a deliberate, hidden, absorptive dwelling on the self. The strider's "perch" on "the ripple skin" of a stream gives an easy idea of its stability, fixity. But a close look would reveal how the waterbug adapts continuously to the rippling stream, in order to keep itself steady on the continuously changing phenomenon. It is imaginable how beneath a stable picture of cinematography there are a hundred continuous, swift snaps of photographs, juxtaposed mechanically to give an idea of the living. Thus, instability underlies the life's seeming stability: the self can not endure fixity; change and flux neatly describes the self's stable truth. Therefore, a strider is a symbol of an individual self, while the ripple skin of a stream is a metaphor of the flux of being. "Towards Simplicity" is also another poem of Ramanujan in his search for the self and to understand its physical nature, in particular. It is roughly designed in a 'sonnet' form, which I quote in full:

Corpuscle, skin,
cell, and membrance,
each its minute seasons
clocked within the bones.
Millions grow lean and fall away
in the hourly autumn of the body.
But fertile in fall, ending as others begin,
to the naivete of death they run.

From the complexity
of reasons gyring within reasons,
of co-extensive spring and autumn,
into the soil as soil we come,
to find for a while a simplicity
in larger, external seasons.

The image of gyre here reminds us of W.B. Yeats and his idea of human history changing and resulting in all sorts of changes, qualitative as well as quantitative. Ramanujan's quest here is limited in scope, limited to the level of body which is such a mysterious house as embodying "co-extensive spring and autumn" and inside which millions of cells, tissues, and corpuscles die their "hourly" death: they are "fertile in fall, ending as others begin". This poem is an attempt on the part of the poet to understand the "co-extensive" changes, the continuously changing phenomena within this human body, within the self on its physical level. Birth, growth and death characterise the nature of our physical existence. But this is too simplistic to understand the "hourly" deaths and births that go ceaselessly within us; too deductive to comprehend "the complexity of reasons gyring within reasons". (Again, the growth of this self and the process of this growth are to be envisioned in $\text{KMnO}_4$ in Grandfather's Shaving Glass). We have to mark very closely how "a tall water column of clarity" which receives "a drop of potassium permanganate" turns into "pallor" till "pallor pales
into transperency", but the watercolumn gets "blued by a past sensation". And finally, with the addition of another drop of \( \text{KMnO}_4 \), the water goes "brewed to winedark". The poet is not merely re-enacting a child's wonder, here. But then a child's wonder is not for nothing being elucidated in a language of a mature man. A watercolumn of "clarity" to its "winedark" marks the process of change onto its growth, the process of which would also depict the change and growth of a human being, of the self from a childhood to a stage of manhood. We can also notice and feel how sensitively the poet describes the unravelling of \( \text{KMnO}_4 \) in living terms of human and plant proximity: vein, tress, and filament: past sensation, capillary roots: loosening skein and winedard. Thus, Ramanujan's interest is evidently not of a chemist's in this poem as his interest is not of a biologist's in "Towards Simplicity". These poems are his inner concerns to understand the vital process or processes that are integral to the moulding or making of the self. Therefore, to dismiss \( \text{KMnO}_4 \) in Grandfather's ..." as not worth a poetic experience is an error on the part of the critics (see, Chapter One). Moreover, every experience leaves its scratch on the self, which our common intelligence or scientific rationalism hardly understands, the least notices. The poet in the above poem could sensitively mark how a drop of \( \text{KMnO}_4 \) plummets into the watercolumn "lensing a scratch on the wall". And not only that, this self also gets somewhat affected by each and every encounter, every experience, each past action, as the watercolumn slowly achieves a clarity but remains "slightly blued by a past sensation". Therefore, every event, each experience shapes our consciousness, shapes our vision; by this I pertinently mean that a new experience does not simply displace our past
experiences, nor dismiss our past consciousness. All consciousnesses result from their self-absorptions, and consequent inner changes, all changes shape the consciousness and the self. More often, a change is not visible because it happens with "the faintest current of stillness" as a drop of colour in the water unravels but "slow-motioned by the element".

"Elements of Composition", the opening poem of *Second Sight* introduces the readers to Ramanujan's idea of the self, its composition out of many elements, its process of change through a reciprocal giving and taking, and its sudden transformation to a completely new, unforeseen life-form, "caterpillar". This poem, to my mind, is a culmination of Ramanujan's long search for the identity of the self, its nature and its reality.

Composed as I am, like others,
of elements . . .
father's seed and mother's egg
gathering earth, air, fir mostly
water, . . .
into a chatering self tangled
in love and work,
scary dreams . . .

But into the making of one's personality, many incidents, many experiences go like scary dreams; uncle's eleven fingers playing childhood games; the riots of Nairobi; the lepers as well as the goddesses of Madurai; the Muharram tigers and the epileptic saints and all. The self is affected by them, as they are affected by the self. This self evolves, develops and grows through many divisions, decompositions ("Towards Simplicity"-S) and not only through
additions of experiences or elements. It will not be wrong to suggest that Ramanujan's vision of the self comes close to Henri Bergson's vitalism as illustrated in his *Creative Evolution* (1911). Life for both the creative artists, is to certain extent a mechanism, moulded out of "father's seed and mother's egg" and other elements added to them. But beyond this psycho-chemical phenomenon, the self remains a mystery which the mechanical theories fail to explain, as it embraces "the complexity of reasons gyring within reasons".

Bergson explains lucidly:

... our personality shoots, grows and ripens without ceasing. Each of its moments is something new added to what was before. We may go further: it is not only something new, but something unforeseeable. Doubtless, my present state is explained by what was in me and by what was acting on me a moment ago. That the life is a creative evolution, and that every moment for this evolution is vital, are also fundamental to Ramanujan. The importance of a moment in Ramanujan's art is also sensitively reflected on by King as he observes the artist's sense of "living from moment to moment." The critic comes almost near the point but misses it as Ramanujan's vision eludes him. The vitality, the creativity of every moment as enshrined in Ramanujan's art can also be explained in Bergsonian terms:

Each of them (moments of the life) is a kind of creation. And just as the talent of the painter, is formed or deformed in any case, is modified under the very influence of the works he produces, so each of our states, at the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the
new form that we are just assuming. It is then right to say that what we do depends on what we are; but it is necessary to add also that we are to a certain extent, what we do, and that we are creating ourselves continually\textsuperscript{24}. Ramanujan explains the phenomenon of mutual exchanges between the self and other forces –

\begin{quote}
I pass through them
as they pass through me
taking and leaving
affections, seeds, skeletons ...
\end{quote}

Bergson also reflects on "these mutual exchanges, like those between two vessels separated by a porous partition", while on the biological inner process, he has to observe:

"Life does not proceed by the association and addition of elements, but by dissociation and division"\textsuperscript{25}. To this, Ramanujan's awareness is kin and he has to say:

\begin{quote}
... even as I add,
I lose, I decompose
into my elements,
into other names and forms,
past and passing, tenses
without time ...
\end{quote}

Thus, like Bergson, Ramanujan views the life's continuity and discontinuity as fundamental and like the former, he also admits that the change beyond all mechanistic logics or Darwinian adaptation to the circumstances is sudden; it brings a new, unforeseeable form of the life, "a caterpillar on a leaf, eating, being eaten". This change is not a complete dislocation but the continuation of
the same impetus, that suggests that "change" might be sudden, but the "tendencies" in the life towards this change are always up on toes. Bergson emphatically states: "We said of life, that from its origin, it is the continuation of one and the same impetus, divided into divergent lines of evolution". And human life is one divergent force, the most valuable one in this planet.

As evolution moves into no fixed ends, and as it is the expression of a creative urgency to be fulfilled in some novel ends, inventively generated in the process of time itself, Ramanujan's metaphor of "a caterpillar on a leaf", a primitive, elemental life-form whose origin is a mystery and whose transformation into another form is more mysterious (butterfly), is very apt. The idea of the self's sudden disconnection brought about by its own chemistry gets a clear expression in Ramanujan's "Looking for the Centre". He thus says:

Suddenly, connections severed
as in a lobotomy, unburdened
of history, I lose
my bearings, a circus zilla spun
at the end of her rope, dizzy
terrified,
and happy.

Therefore, terror in a sudden decomposition and happiness in a new form are simultaneous processes in the life's inner circle. Change is a necessity for the self to endure. And as Bergson says, "... a psychic state which remains the same so long as it is not replaced by the following state does not endure either".
As the critics fail to see Ramanujan's meanings as embodied in his poetry, he satirises them in "Connect":

But my watchers are silent as if
they knew my truth is in fragments.

This process of the self growing, changing and evolving, also informs Ramanujan's idea of memory. Without a little reflection on this aspect, the artist's vision, I fear, may remain either incomplete in our understanding or taste half-boiled for our watchers, me included.

Memory occupies a seminal place in the art of Ramanujan. The family poems almost invariably give the impression that memory is their indispensable part, which makes them livelier or more disturbing. That apart, it is also closely associated with Ramanujan's vision of the self. Here, many questions raise their heads. Is memory in Ramanujan or dead deposit, wherein all the present like the past would rush and get dumped? Is it like a memory bank in a computer? Or, is it a graveyard from which time's ghosts are conjured up to be exorcised by the psycho-analysts? In order to answer these question, one needs to consider Ramanujan's concept of Time which again is intimately linked with memory. 'Un a Delhi Sundial' helps us understand that Ramanujan grieves for a "sundial time" as opposed to the modern idea of it: 'four and twenty ghostly circles'. The poet says:

But who, among tourists
on a five-day tour, can put the clock back
and run into sundial time?

Sundial time is for the poet, a real and living concept, and
Or, as in "Loving for the Centre": this real time is realised "suddenly", on a point of time, when all the "connections" are "several" from "history" to bring about a completely new and strange beginning. The importance of a moment for Ramanujan's creative consciousness is already dealt at length in this chapter. With Ramanujan as with Bergson, real time is a flux, a continuously flowing phenomenon: it is a living as well as lived fact of life and not a dead concept. Therefore, time past is not a time passed for all time to come, as it reveals to the sharpened consciousness of all sensitive artists, time and again.

Memory, such as commonly accepted as a store-house for the times past, for the experiences done away with, is not the concept to which Ramanujan subscribes. To Ramanujan, memory like time is, for ever, "real". "On Memory" would soon reveal this point on a little reflection:

Memory,

in a crowd of memories, seems
to have no place

at all for unforgettable things.

"Memory" to have "no place" for unforgettable things" is something that sounds very self-contradictory. How are things "unforgettable" if they are not called up by memory? The fact is that Ramanujan by such a statement on memory as mentioned above does not intend to emphasize a self-contradiction. On the contrary, he brings to light a living paradox which is immanent to the true nature of a living memory. This can, of course, be substantiated only in the
light of the entire poem. Here Ramanujan suggests of two kinds of memory: the one is of facts, of history, of datas, of informatory knowledges gained through reading and recalling; the other is of intimacy, of experience, perhaps mingled in the "blood beat". While the first kind gives away its "tangent" answers, the other kind of memory, very distinct in scope and nature from the first, cannot bring up sudden, readymade "images" or exact answers. This is because the living memory has undergone some imperceptible change in the process of being mixed with the other felt experiences. Memory hardly keeps into original reality. Thus, its successful evocation is truly creational with much of its original simplicity or complexity as being shred, but its original impetus not completely obliterated. Ramanujan reflects in the poem "On Memory":

\[\ldots\ but\ not\]
\[\ldots\ for\ all\ my\ blood-beat\]
\[\ldots\ my\ will\]
\[can\ I\ hold\ or\ keep\]
\[one\ face\]
\[and\ those\ words\ random-thrown\]
\[in\ a\ tumble\ of\ your\ multiple\ faces\]
\[as\ they\ turn\ in\ this\ day's\ dazzle\ .\ .\ .\]

However, Ramanujan's "The Past" anthologised in P. Lal's Modern Indian Poetry in English (1969) is more revealing on this aspect of memory. I quote the full poem:

The cavern's sculpture quickens
an actinic process
in the eye.
But it's frozen again
into the stone's oblivion
as the moment's retina roves
and moves
in the white suspense
of all the stalactites of remembrance.

A sight turning inward into experience and finally moving into the domain of a living memory is an entire process of the life's growing vision itself. The concept of real memory and the vision of the self informing it are also embodied in "Carpe Diem", another poem of Ramanujan which features in P. Lal's anthology. In the poem, the poet by means of the metaphors like 'tree' and 'fruit' explores the living continuity of real memory as well as of the self; he says that a fruit when plucked does not forget the tree's inverted image. This also affirms the fact that no single moment can be separable from real time, the flux. Memory is all the time alive there as the time past is always present, if not in our consciousness, but in our subconscious psyche. Ramanujan's "A Lapse of Memory" also illustrates this truth about real memory and suggests that the lost memory of an amnesiac is not lost really, perhaps gone asleep or gone suppressed "somewhere".

Many of the myths and legends, that some of Ramanujan's poems enshrine, unravel another significant facet of living memory, which pertains to the "collective unconscious" in Jung's phrase. For, the memory of the family relations is not the only type, individually lived or consciously presented in Ramanujan. No less important is the memory which comes from a distant past, perhaps even from time immemorial. "Prayers to Lord Murugan" and "The Difference"
among others disclose such a memory. In "The Difference" the poet says:

But today, out of the blue,
when Vishnu

came to mind, the Dark One you know
who began as a dwarf . . .

Therefore, real memory can also synchronise the time span of a thousand ages (Dwarf: the Vaman avatar of Vishnu may be traced back to a pre-Ramayan era) to a point of the present. Thereby, memory is a way to realise how the past persists in life, in the present. Ramanujan comes near Bergson again in his concept of memory. Bergson says, "Memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present". He further elucidates that man's "mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration . . .". An uninterrupted change really inheres in each of Ramanujan's concepts like memory, time or self. Our scientific intelligence, our rational mind could see only an interruption here or a dislocation there. But the truth remains, as the poet means, that we change without ceasing. The fact that our life is not a reality divided between times is substantiated by Ramanujan himself in his interview to Rama Jha. There he answers:

Because you can not entirely live in the past, neither can you entirely live in the present: we are both these things. The past never passes . . . It is with us, it is what gives us the richness . . . understanding, the richness of expression . . .

Ramanujan's statement can be supplemented by some textual evidences also. This persisting of the past into the present is present in
Our night’s pomegranate mines
that cast
their ember seeds
into the future and the changing past
of files, charts and last year’s twins.

And, in "A Poem on Particulars", the poet, aware of the continuity of time as well as of an imperceptible presence of the future in time present itself, writes:

... every one of these (oranges)
had an absurd, almost human umbilicus
at the top
where once the Tree
had poured its future
from forgotten roots

From our discussion so far, it is now increasingly obvious that memory and time in Ramanujan are a twin concept rather than two separate ideas. Memory which conveys to us, the idea of real time as a flux and that of the self as a ceaselessly changing reality is, to Ramanujan, not a dead deposit, nor a graveyard, not even a mechanical unit. It is also not a means of "protecting his Indian psyche", as Devendra Kohli would find it. Memory constitutes Ramanujan’s interior landscape and is "a means of self-exploration" as G.N. Devi rightly points out. Bruce King also aptly considers that memories in Ramanujan are "at the foundations of the self" and they "form his inner self".
In this chapter, my study focuses on how Ramanujan has turned most of his autobiographical elements into a vivid creative art. While exploring many facets of love in Ramanujan, it is established that his concept of man-woman relationship resembles Lawrence's to a significant point of difference. My study here has also taken into account Ramanujan's vision of the self which has close affinities with Bergson's vitalist idea of the self. How in the poet, memory is real and a means of exploring the self, is also looked into. One can come to a conclusion at this stage of our discussion on Ramanujan's art that he is a serious artist and he is not intellectually incompetent. This would finally answer Prof. Nagarajan's doubt on Ramanujan's artistic competence. Ramanujan's art is one of serious volition, but it does not run into the domains of the tragic vision.

Endnotes
3. ibid p. 189.


13. ibid, p. 445.


16. ibid p. 212


18. ibid p. 224.

19. ibid p. 224.


25. ibid p. 99

26. ibid p. 60

27. ibid p. 6.

28. ibid p. 366

29. ibid p. 4


