CHAPTER – 3

POETIC IMAGINATION
POETIC IMAGINATION

Anandavardhana speaks of Imagination/ pratibha in relation to dhvani theory or the suggestive pattern. There are some apparent contradiction between imagination and reason. The imaginative process deals with the factual condition and the data of experience. Reason discards the traditional experiences. The poetry appeals our mind by the process of emotion that is the absolute domain of imagination.

The word imagination suggests the making of images—images in the mind's eyes which more or less resemble the images which are there when an object is seen; and in the simplest use of the term nothing more is implied. From this stand point the imagination is a peculiarly vivid form of memory.¹

If memory is the prime force for the process of imagination, the poetry of A.K.Ramanujan comes very near to the vision of Indian poetic; for the entire poetic process of A.K.Ramanujan is filled with the process of memories. There are many poems in which Ramanujan uses particular image to a common reality of life through the power of his memories:

For Ramanujan memories which are perceptions that live through time, are a means to explore the nature of time. Through memories he is not seeking his roots (in the areas of darkness) nor is he exploring the wounded or healthy Hindu Civilization. He is using them simply to explore the existential problems of time and what it does to life.²

Memory thus becomes a process of self-exploration in the entire bulk of the poetry of A.K.Ramanujan.

The term "poetic" becomes objective in the case of Indian poetics. The poetic process not only recalls past sensations, but adds to them and
subtracts from them, making from the materials thus finished, new images which have no precise counterpart in nature. Thus, the poetic imagination is something different from the subjective knowledge; it objectifies our ideas and emotions:

'The Poetic imagination is creative. It not only reproduces the remembered images of the senses, but compares them by the emotions, combines them into new vivid wholes and leaps to conclusions which remind us of the laborious conclusions of the reason, yet are quite different in methods and results. 3

Ramanujan's Poetry explores the obsessive memories of childhood with analytic intelligence of the west. Obviously, there is a recurrent search for roots in his poetry which takes the form of memories of childhood and maturity as they have been distanced by his stay abroad. The terror felt at the sight of wriggling snakes and the shock received when he saw the corpse of a scantily clothed woman on the beach are but a few examples. The recollection of such incidents was mainly done while he was in America. His frequent visits to India seem to have been for the purpose of renewing his roots. As Vandana Datta opines:

No wonder, a large bulk of Ramanujan's poetical works deals with the Indian past. Memories of childhood cover the whole range of his imagination. In a number of poems there is an accurate representation of certain instances. 4

The poem "Of Mothers Among Other Things" is one of the nostalgic reminisces of his childhood wherein he fondly recalls the image of his mother as she flits about the house doing her household chores. Bowed down with the pressure of domestic work, she has hardly any time to cater to her looks. The poet describes her uncared for physical appearance thus:
her hands are a wet eagle's two black pink-crinkled feet,
one talon crippled in a garden trap set for a mouse. Her
sarees do not cling they hang, loose feather of a one-time
wing.\(^5\)

The activities of his mother have been indelibly imprinted on his
memory. That is why, even years later being thousands of miles away from
home, he can vividly see the happenings of yester years before his mind's
eye. He remembers his mother tending to the needs of babies crying in
cradles, stitching ragged clothes with deft fingers and also keeping the floor
of the Kitchen spotlessly clean. Thus he writes further:

My cold parchment tongue licks
bark
in the mouth when I see her four
still sensible fingers slowly flex
to pick a grain of rice from the
Kitchen floor.\(^6\)

The Archetypal image of the mother as a symbol of patience,
endurance and self sacrifice is evident in the poem. The domestic
experiences continue to enslave her. In this repressed atmosphere, she loses
her individuality and her identity is lost amidst the familial duties.

In 'Still another for Mother', the poet describes a certain incident in
London which recalls a flood of memories from his own past. In the Hyde
Park Street, as he slowly tried to adapt himself in the alien land and
gradually came to be accepted as one of the inmates of the place, the sight
of a plump and comely woman and of a good looking, short stature man
reminds him of situation in his own life. In his subconscious mind, the poet
identifies the large buxom woman, who may have resembled "same friend's
mother with his own mother". "The handsome short-limbed man with a five
finger patch of gray laid on his widow's peak"\(^7\) probably the lady's son
reminds the poet of himself. As the man walks away from his mother without turning back, the poet recollects his own separation from his family. He muses:

Perhaps they had fought.

Worse still, perhaps they had not fought.  

The poet walks away from the scene pretending that neither he has the woman in question was really affected but in the innermost recesses of his mind.

Something opened
in the past and I heard something shut
in the future quietly
Like the heavy door
of my mother's black Pillared,
nineteenth century silent house, given on her marriage day
to my father, for a dowry.  

The 'heavy door' of his house that closed behind him when he left for the U.S.A. is perhaps symbolic of the door of childhood that was clamped shut as he stepped in to adulthood, journeying to the west, leaving behind his native soil. In this context, Lakshmi Raghunandan says, 'It is the same symbolic door of dissociation from others that closes in the future too for his alienation from mankind is envisaged.'  

Lakshmi Raghunandan's assertion, however, must be taken with some reservation as the 'dissociation' she speaks of was never complete. Bruce King, writing in Modern Indian Poetry in English says, "In Ramanujan's The Striders (1966) and Relations (1971) Poetry seemed to grow out of Indian experience and sensibility with all its memories of family, local places, images beliefs and
history while having a modern stance with its scepticism, ironies and sense of living from moment to moment in a changing world in which older values and attitudes are often seen as unrealistic.\(^{11}\)

An experience gets transformed through "a time exposure" into an apparent pattern. In "of Mothers, among other things" he is not speaking specifically of his mother, but of mothers in general, of human life in general, of the passage of time which brings in the aging process. Memories are used to explore the aging process from youth to middle age and then to old age:

I smell upon this twisted  
Black-bone tree the silk and white  
Petal of my mother's youth.

In "Still Another for Mother" memory holds together the past and present and the future and a general truth about what time does to man-woman relationship in course of time is hinted at. "Perhaps they had fought/Worse still, perhaps they had not fought/........ something opened/ in the past and I heard something shut/ in the future, quietly". Then there is a characteristic modern obsession with clocks, clock towers, watches and sundials in Ramanujan's poetry:

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

Time is the central reality in the Existentialist ontology within which Ramanujan's poetry has its existence and being, there is no God no faith, no hope, no transcendence (as in the Kierkegaardian Variety of Existentialism), no political and social action (as in Sartre's variety). In
'Prayers to Loral Murugan', for example there is neither bhakti nor faith; there is only irony and existential angst:

Lord of lost travellers,
find us. Hunt us
down.
Lord of answers
cure us at once
of prayers'

Politics is a matter of fun for him:

The dumb and the Colour-blind rise
rapidly in politics…
(compensations).

In' An image for Politics' he is bitterly satirical about politicians:

once, I'd only heard
of a Chinese fancy dish
of fish
that rots
till it comes alive
and a maggot-spaghetti squirms
where once a mackerels
gasped for worms;
cannibal
devouring smaller cannibal
till only two equal
giants are left to struggle,
entwined,
like wrestlers on a cliff.

H.W. Williams is very near the truth but misses it when he speaks about Ramanujan's main unifying view of life as one of "Philosophic
detachment modified by a cool, analytic, scientific spirit that borders upon a total agnosticism, and also when he speaks of his 'total disgust with human behaviour especially in political and social behaviour'. That he misses the truth is proved by the fact that Williams thinks that Ramanujan's anti romanticism, which resembles T.S.Eliot's Christian'pessimism' has its source in his being a Hindu (Saivite) and that he has an acute sense of sin and of human fallibility. Atheistic Existentialism without Sartre's ethical passion (is it the result of his long stay in America?) is, I think, the right description of Ramanujan's world-view and to describe it in any other way involves strange and unconvincing explanations.

The role of memory is directly linked to time and space theory. Memory as time past adjoins with time present. In Indian poetics the theory of dhvani comes near to the perception of memories which finally create the sense of imagination, Kuntaka and Mahimabharta believe that the important elements of poetry can be expressed through Anumana (inference). This naturally raises the problem whether Nature Poetry or Svabhavokti can be called a figure of speech at all worth the name. He answers the question in the affirmative and supports his position by advancing the following arguments:

Things in the world of nature have indeed a two-fold aspect-the universal and the special. The former admits of varieties in contradistinction to the latter which is unique in its own way. It is this special aspect which is capable of being perceived by the senses and which also forms the subject of Imaginative Poetry.14

Now what is this Imagination in the Poet? It is the intuition which arises, out of the acquaintance for the nonce with the real nature of things, in the mind of the poet in concentration as a result of the contemplation of word and sense in keeping with the sentiment to be depicted. It is indeed
extolled as the third eye of the great god Siva who is known to perceive things, past, present and future, by its aid. So even commonplace things, when they come out of the poet's imaginative mind attain the high status of poetry, so Svabhavoktican rankasa valid figure of speech when the thing described is so picturesquely presented to the mind of the reader that he feels he is actually beholding it in every detail.

To define the process of poetic imagination is to reveal the process of Creation.

The Indian poetics stresses repeatedly the connotative and denotative meanings in the comprehension of the poetic art. Apart from the connotation and denotations the poetic bulk of A.K.Ramanujan works out its oblique nature oblique in the sense that it reveals in details the range of his memories. The range of memories in his poetry becomes the imaginative part in his poetry for memories reveal the concept of time and space.

Poems in 'The Striders' which treat of memory and the relationship between past, present and various emotions, especially anxiety, fear, sexuality and nostalgia include 'Breaded Fish', "Looking for a cousin on a Swing", Small Scale Reflections On a Great House', 'Snakes' and so on. Memories of Childhood crowd the wide gamut of his imagination. In several of his poems, there is an accurate representation of certain instances. In the poem, 'Snakes', Ramanujan is often reminded of these wriggling creatures in mundane situations. Not only that, he can also trace a similarity between snakes and his sister's plaits. Thus, as he is:

Walking in museums of quartz
of the aisles of book-stacks,
looking at their geometry
without curves
and the layers of transparency

62
that make them opaque,
dwelling on the yellowier vein
in the yellow amber
or touching a book that has gold
on the spine,
I think of snakes.\(^{15}\)

He also draws a comparison between the snakes and his sister's long braids:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{........the weave of her knee long} \\
\text{braid has scales,} \\
\text{their gleaming held by a score of} \\
\text{clean new pins.} \\
\text{I look till I see her hair} \\
\text{against.}^{16}
\end{align*}
\]

He has a sub consciousness fear of snakes which is traced back to an incident when a basketful of ritual cobras' had come to his house:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Their brown-wheat glisten ringed} \\
\text{with ripples.} \\
\text{They lick the room with their} \\
\text{bodies,} \\
\text{curves} \\
\text{uncurling, writing a sibilant} \\
\text{alphabet of panic} \\
\text{on my floor.}^{17}
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly, the suppressed memory of a half-naked dead woman on a sea beach is pushed on the surface when the poet is served a dish of breaded fish in the poem entitled 'Breaded Fish'. He was unable to concentrate on the delicacy before him as his mind raced back to the time when he had seen:
A dark half-naked
length of woman, dead
on the beach in a yard of cloth,
dry, rolled by the ebb, breaded
by the grained indifference
of sand.\(^{18}\)

As the incident flashed before his mind, he was greatly unsettled as he mentally rushed "For the shore, my heart beating in my mouth". \(^{19}\)

The way in which childhood experiences assume a different shape in later life can be felt in 'Looking for a Cousin on a Swing: This recalls a trivial incident of sharing a swing with a girl cousin and after wards climbing a blossoming tree with her. The pleasant experience shared by the close proximity of a premature four or five year old girl and a slightly older boy of six or seven years was completely of innocent then:

When she was four or five
she sat on a village swing
and her cousin, six or seven,
sat himself against her;
with every lunge of the swing
she fell him
in the lunging pits
of her feeling;
and after wards
we climbed a tree.\(^{20}\)

Having given this description of innocent fun, Ramanujan is quick to shift the scene from the village of the past to the city of the present in which the same little girl, having now blossomed into a mature young woman is on the look out for companions to gratify her passion:

64
Now she looks for the swing in cities with fifteen suburbs and tries to be innocent about it.  

Here, we see how sin and corruption have seeped through the years of innocence, leaving their tainted imprint on the pristine experiences of life. Like Eliot, Ramanujan too feels that a world of innocence has been lost irretrievably.

The Poem 'Small-Reflections on a Great House' narrates the wonderful assimilative and digestive powers of the ancestral home that has an insatiable capacity not only to absorb the good things but also the unworthy actions. On the one hand, it offers a warm welcome to the various guests, son-in-law, wives coming from a poverty stricken background, sons returning with a brood of grand children and nephews who have laid down their lives while defending their country. On the other hand, it has no qualms about roping in other cows and keeping borrowed library books for more than the stipulated time. Thus, he writes:

Sometimes I think that nothing that ever comes into this house goes out, things come in everyday to lose themselves among other things lost long ago among other things lost long ago.  

In a humorous manner, Ramanujan shows the callous indifference of the people who have no scruples about keeping things belonging to other people:

Neighbours' dishes brought up with the greasy sweets they made all night the day before yesterday for the wedding anniversary of a god, never leave the house they enter, like the servants, the phonographs, the epilepsies in the blood.
The ancestral house is seen as a symbol of the past about which the poet does not harbour any feelings of pride or sentiment. The idea that is reiterated in the poem is that the house has an infinite capacity not only to contain things and people but even new ideas lose their identity as they enter its threshold:

And ideas behave like rumours, once casually mentioned somewhere they come back to the door as prodigies born to prodigal fathers.\textsuperscript{24}

The poem mentions many other diverse things like a beggar coming to the house carrying a violin, grand children reciting Sanskrit verses, uncles regaling the younger folk with interesting incidents centred around the older generation and the holy water of the river Ganga brought with care in a copper vessel. Finally, it ends with the description of the dead body of a nephew killed in was at the border, being brought to the house, without disturbing its inmates. There is also a casual jibe at the inefficiency of the Indian postal services:

The dead body of the relative was
brought back in plane
and train and military truck
even before the telegram reached,
on a perfectly good chatty afternoon.\textsuperscript{25}

These seems to be an air of idle complacency about the house and the post office which stores everything in its womb, and detests any form of change.

Regarding Ramanujan's reminiscence of childhood memories, K.R.Srinivaraal Yeager says:

Ramanujan Summons from the hinterland of memories buried moments of suspense, surprise or agony and then
turns them into disturbingly vivid poems. The mutilated beggar, drowned woman—they are caught in their contortions and misery, like the denizens of Dante's Hell.  

In an litter view with Rama Jha, A.K.Ramanujan stressed the fact that the feelings which are there in the innermost core of our heart are often penned down in verse. One does not follow any particular dictum regarding the subject of poetry. In his own words:

All kinds of relationships there are, but one writes about what once feels one know best, Not what one wants to. You see, these are two very different things. It may be true, I ought to be writing about pollution, about ecology and the rest of it. If you truly feel about it, it will there some where, because one does not write according to doctrine. As I said, one does not know whether one writes even to be published.  

The poems 'Love Poem for a Wife I' and 'Love Poem for a Wife II' are intensely personal in nature and concern conjugal relationship. The poet regrets those years of childhood which he spent away from his wife. He feels that this fact has alienated him some what from her.

Really what keeps us apart at the end of years is unshared childhood. You cannot, for instance meet my father. He is some years dead. Neither can I meet yours; he has lately lost his temper and mellowed.  

The poet cannot forget the fact that it is because of the precious period of childhood which unfortunately remained unshared that he is a stranger to certain domains of his wife's past. His resentful voice is heard as he says:

Only two weeks ago, in Chicago
you and brother James started
one of your old drags-out fights
about where the bathroom is
in the backyard.
North or south of the well
next to the Jackfruit tree
in your father's father's house
in Alleppy. Sister in law
and I were blank cut-outs
fitted to our respective
slots in room.²⁹

Thus, we see that for A. K. Ramanujan, shared experiences in
care childhood become a prerequisite for a meaningful and complete emotional
attachment in adult life. He is so much obsessed with the idea of a shared
past that he shuns any negative feelings towards incestuous relationships
even. So, he further writes:

Only Egyptians had it right: their kings had sisters for
queens to continue the incests of childhood into
marriage.³⁰

The role of imaginative in Indian Poetics is what T. S. Eliot says
"Individual-Talent". Past merges with the present, forming a new matter i.e.
poetry which fully describes the emotions of man. Kuntaka a great
theoretician regards imagination as "pratibha" and T. S. Eliot regards it as
"Talent". It is no doubt that the range of imagination is creative faculty of
an artist. Being endowed with the power of imagination the poet can easily
embody what he sees in concrete images. He can picturize the common
things of life for two major functions of the poetry to amuse and to instruct.
Thus the faculty of poetic imagination makes a poet the creator of the
realistic and the abstract new points. To quote Kuntaka:
Pratibha or imagination is the Key stone of the poetic arch, whatever charm there be in poetry, all that is attributable only to Pratibha, The various elements of poetry such as Rasa, Bhava and Alankara have the poet's imagination for their soul and particularly in the case of Alankaras, this is very well pronounced.\(^{31}\)

Ramanujan's poetry on the soaring wings of tradition as the range of his imagination becomes a poet of modernist view points. Ramanujan is essentially "a modernist committed to an ant historical depoliticized transnational consciousness and to stylistic experimentalism, like say, imagism and expressionism".\(^{32}\)

Ramanujan displays wide range and great assurance so far as his use of the medium is concerned. He seems to write with effortless case and yet there is a certain leanness and taunt ness about his lines. He is capable of giving his words myriad dimensions of meaning. Regarding Ramanujan's poetic craft, Kurup opines:

> It is to the credit of Ramanujan that he could reach out from such a predicament to a state of creative freedom by means of cultivating a uniquely personal idiom.\(^{33}\)

Ramanujan's style is not just derivative. It has an individuality of its own. As is evident throughout his poetry, in his style too, one notices Ramanujan's strict adherence to his roots. In his desire to portray the minutest details of everything that is Indian, he at times attempts to describe 'the indescribable' to use an expression used by Kurup. In fact, to quote Kurup again:

> Such a poetic Process not only helps him achieve a remarkable precision and subtlety in describing the indescribable but it also helps his poetic self, preoccupied
with the desire to discover his roots, to catch the subtle
nuances of vibrations of his Hindu sensibility.\textsuperscript{34}

As an eminent Indian poet in English, A. K. Ramanujan enjoys a
position of high acclaim. On the one hand, he delights in experimenting
with language, while on the other his academic background in linguistics
enables him to handle language with felicitous aptness. He is a poet who
can give vent of his feelings and experiences just the way he wants to.
Nowhere do we find him groping for the correct words for expression. At
the same time, his poetry betrays a picture of lucid transparency. One does
not have to read in between the lines to have to comprehend the meaning.
His poetry boasts of a crystalline quality. C.L.L. Jayaprada quotes with
approval Chirantan Kulshreshtha:

Chirantan Kulshreshtha has aptly commented that
Ramanujan's poetry shows a "chiseled workmanship".\textsuperscript{35}

The Poetic, Craft of A.K. Ramanujan incorporate a number of
elements. An apt choice of words, vivid imagery, picturesque
representations and a tendency for precision and detail are the hallmarks of
his craftsmanship. In this connection it would be pertinent to quote the
noted critic Taqi Ali Mirza.

\textbf{\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots a word of two about Ramanujan's
accomplishments as a craftsman. The terseness of his
diction, the consummate skill with which he introduces
rhyme and assonance into the verse, the sharply etched,
crystallized images and the disciplined handling of
language make Ramanujan one of the most significant
poets in India today. The image, no doubt, plays a key role
in Ramanujan's art but...he does not rely solely on the
image for the effectiveness of communication...}
Ramanujan appears to be quite fond of skillfully creating tableau-like effects in many of his poems. In another poem titled 'Still Another View of Grace', Ramanujan gives an oblique reference to a woman's irresistible sex appeal. He admits to having been totally roused by her dishevelled hair, which appears to be like lustrous strands of silk to his passionately awakened carnal instincts:

Her tumbled hair
Suddenly known
as silk in my angry
hand, I shook
a little
and took her behind the laws
of my land.

Day and night are traditional symbols associated with life and death respectively. 'Some times', a brief poem, consisting of three couplets describes day and night as a passage of time with the dark night predominating over the bright day. The idea implied in this poem corresponds to the fundamental principle of Hindu philosophy, that is, the fruits reaped in the present life are actually the consequences of the actions of a previous existence:

every morning
is a morning after,
only night has a roof
and the day has weals
on her back; as if
she had slept on a rafter.

The tree is a recurring image in Ramanujan's poetry. He explains the symbolic value of the tree in his poem entitled Christmas. 'Christmas, the festival which commemorates the birth of Christ is celebrated in December,
the very month which signifies the death of the calendar year. This Juxtaposition of birth and death is symbolized by the tree as it is paradoxically dead and alive at the same time. The tree is compared to an angle that is shut at one end and opens at the others. He describes the contradictory nature of his tree in these lines:

Bare
with December,
open
and shut
as an angle
a skinny Janus,
my tree is two in one.39

In warmer climates, the tree presents a sight:
of greens,
a shock of leaf
upon Christmas eyes.40

The bare branches of the tree and for a moment he loses his own identity. Like the new born parrots he is in a dilemma:

For a moment, I no
longer know
leaf from parrot
of branch from root
nor, for that matter
that tree
from you or me.41

Through the image of the tree the poet conveys that the same Life Force, (an expression popularised by Bernard Shaw) Permeates in all living things.
The tree symbolising the essential unity of creation is again seen in the poem 'One Reads'. The Picturesque description of the tree's shadow merged into the beggar's reflection is again an awareness of the basic oneness of all beings:

the sunlight beggar squatting
on his shadow, clotting
the antlers of bare. April's trees.\(^{42}\)

In the famous poem 'A river', Ramanujan gives a different image of the river. Unlike most poets who are mesmerised by the gushing flow of the river, he draws our attention to the immense destruction caused by it. Thus, one can say that though Ramanujan does have his pick of imagery from nature, he gives these images a completely different dimension.

Apart from nature city-life also forms an important source of imagery for A.K.Ramanujan. "An Image for Politics" is a case in point. Here, he expresses his contempt for the so-called civilized men of society. He uses an image of a man eater to lay bare the true selves, of politicians, who in their struggle for power, have no scruples about treading on each other's feet. To quote Kurup:

The poet attempts an objective correlative to the politics of sheer cannibalism by presenting the image of the eater who finally gets eaten up.\(^{43}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cannibal} \\
\text{devouring smaller cannibal} \\
\text{till only two equal} \\
\text{giants are left to struggle} \\
\text{entwined} \\
\text{like wrestlers on a cliff} \\
\text{and at last} \\
\text{only one}
\end{align*}
\]
omnipotent
maggot creaser who sent
his rival and lived. 44

The inaccurate focus of the lens results in the formation of a
distorted and blurred image:
    half man, half tree,
    the left above the right,
    they slide to meet
    in a symmetry. 45

The image and symbol serve as powerful tools in the poetic
craftsmanship of A.K.Ramanujan. Here, it will not be out of place to quote
the critic A. N. Dwivedi who calls Ramanujan as:
    A poet of striking imagery and perfect language with "an
eye for the specific physiognomy of an object or
situation.... 46

Ramanujan makes use of various poetic devices most effectively. He
incorporates the various poetic devices in his poems with great precision
and detail. One of the foremost among these is his subtle use of irony. In
his poem, "A River", Ramanujan leaves no stone unturned to express his
resentment against the indifferent attitude of poets to human misery. The
river Vaikai in Madurai presents an ugly sight in summer. It fails to arouse
the poetic Muse in any way. Poets prefer to describe the turbulent mood of
the river when it is flooded with water. Ramanujan satirises the insensibility
of these poets who pay no heed to the immense wreckage caused by the
overflowing river. They prefer to sing only of its swelling bosom:

In "some Indian Uses of History on a Rainy Day", the poet
mercilessly satirises the professor in Sanskrit Caught
between the Eastern and Western cultures. The irony of
the professor struggling with the German Language and feeling at home in English is accentuated by his "assimilating/the Swastika/on the neigh bour's arm."  

The 'Swastika' has no religious connotation. It is merely the symbol of fascism. There is plenty of wit and irony in the poem, 'Small Scale Reflections on a Great House' also. The poet not only appreciates the assimilative nature of the traditional joint family system but there is also a tinge of sarcasm when he describes that once an object, be it animate or inanimate, enters the portals of the house, it remains within its premises forever. In 'Obituary' too, we notice that the tone of the poem is comic, ironic and anti-romantic. Here, he does not mourn his father's death as an irreparable loss but in a matter-of-fact manner, gives an objective picture of the consequences of the death. Pragmatism, which is a hallmark of Ramanujan's poetic craft, is evident in the lines:

he left us
a changed mother
and more than
one annual ritual.  

The cool impersonality of Ramanujan's poetic self enables him to treat his subjective experiences with an air of objectivity and detachment. To quote Harriet Zinnias in this context:

Although Mr. Ramanujan writes frequently about his childhood Indian experiences and thus flavours the poems with images of fig trees, mynahs, snakes, Madurai, a Delhi Sundial, he is completely western in his language, diction and attitude towards the object.  

But to say that Ramanujan completely ignored the subjective aspect of memory would not be a dispassionate viewpoint. In fact more often that not, he aims at a fusion of the subjective and the objective aspects into a
unified poetic experience. One cannot really accuse him of being an unmoved observer of the varied situations and human experiences in life. The poet himself mocks at such cool, Philosophical detachment in 'The Hindoo- The Only Risk':

At the Bottom of all this bottomless enterprise to keep simple hearts gain beat the only risk is heartlessness.\textsuperscript{50}

Actually, Ramanujan plays the role of a detached critic in an attempt to present an objective picture of his experiences without being emotional or Judgemental.

The expression 'Pot bellied/bud' occurring in A Poem on Particulars' is one such example. A similar expression used in the same poem is "a finger-print of green".\textsuperscript{51}

Hyphenated words and expressions are common features of Ramanujan's poetry. This proficiency in languages and his mastery in linguistics enable him to form compound words with remarkable ease. Thus, his poems abound with expressions like 'linen dolls', "shop-windows", "bridge-parties", "fancy-dish", "Slit eyed-Chinaman", Willow-Pattern plate", "bead-eyed", "needle-pines", "tree-tasseled light" and so on.

One often notices in Ramanujan's verse an intelligent play on words which is employed not just to create an impressive effect but it serves as a subtle aid in conveying the desired message to the reader. In 'Snakes' he writes:

\begin{verbatim}
The snake man wreathes their writhing round his neck for father's smiling money a clockwork clicking in the silence within my walking. the click shod-heel suddenly strikes and slashes on a snake.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{verbatim}
In Looking for a cousin on a swing; he says:
  not only in the crotch of a tree
  that looked as if it would burst
  under every leaf
  in to a brood of scarlet figs.\textsuperscript{53}

Another example is evident in "Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House:"
  they come back to the door as
  prodigies
  born to profligate fathers.\textsuperscript{54}

Ramanujan handles this repetitive device with laudable ease and grace, without lending an air of monotony to the poem. A few examples are given below:
  dwelling on the yellower vein
  in the yellow amber."
Snakes
"City of temples and poets
who sing of cities and temples"
A River "
yellow trees bind over broken glass
and the walls of Central Jail
drip with spring's labumum
yellows, yellow on yellow"
It does not follow but when in
the Street.
"Down there, blacks look back
and whites, they look blacker"
Take care.
Though Ramanujan is consciously anti-romantic, there are certain rare glimpses of a soft, shimmering quality, which one may dare to call dream-like in his poetry. The poem "Lines to a Granny", describes the age-old tale of the Sleeping Beauty:

He will break
with sesame words
Known only to the birds,
the cobweb curtained door,
and wake
the sentinel the bawdy cook,
Let him, dear granny,
shape the darkness
and take again
the princess.\textsuperscript{55}

A study of Ramanujan's poems reveals that the area of his vocabulary are as varied as his themes are. There is hardly any sphere which he leaves untouched. Thus, we have images and expressions relating to as diverse fields as science, geography, geometry, mythology and religion, to mention a selected few. He is particularly fond of borrowing imagery from geometry-like 'Parabolas of hope'(Anxiety), "Parallax of several eclipses" (on the very possible Jaundice of an Unborn Daughter) "trapezium faces" (small town, South India) "routine rectangle" (Christmas). Several words are borrowed from Botany. We find expression like 'Sausage-head (The opposable Thumb). "The half eaten Sandwich", "Lettuce and Salami" (still life), "fancy-dish/of fish and" maggot sphagetti" (An image for politics.)

Ramanujan has not neglected the Geography words like "brackish", water layers 'Sea bed (small Town, South India) and 'island' (No man is an Island). In his poem 'Christmas, he employs geometric figures to establish a
link with Euclid. Euclid, the noted mathematician, though not present in physical form, lives through his books on mathematics. Similarly, the poet too is dead and alive at the same time:

Euclid's ghost
arrest
life for me.⁵⁶

Above mentioned sources, Ramanujan borrows ample words from various other areas as History, Religion, Nature, Animal World and so on. Thus, the list is endless.

Another aspect of Ramanujan's poetry, which deserves to be mentioned, is his use of the narrative mode to portray the nuances of particular experiences. The experience of the poet is introduced in the poem usually through a simple and reflective statement, which subsequently grows into an image delineating a detailed description through visual and auditory specifications. Some critics are of the opinion that this mode of writing is probably the result of the Tamil influence on him. To quote Chirantan Kulshreshtha:

The authentic Voice of the poet, his true "Language"..... does not solely depend upon the tongue which he chooses to express himself: the landscapes, the personae, the appropriate moods, all become a language within language. Like a native speaker, he makes "infinite use of finite means", to say with familiar words what has never been said before; he can say exactly what he wants to, without even being aware of the ground-rules of his grammar.⁵⁷

His poetic technique themes and stylistic devices of Kannad and Tamil Literatures are harmoniously blended. The classical tone in these media of Literature inspires him to maintain a sense of history, precision
and accuracy, whether in the evoking of an idea or emotion or in giving picturesque descriptions of an object or place. Speaking of the indomitable influence of Indian Literature on Ramanujan, Bruce king opines: Ramanujan's poems have a high degree of inter-textuality with Indian Literature.  

Most of Ramanujan's poems do have an Indian significance attached to them, directly or unobtrusively. His poems are, however, different from those of Ezekiel or Moraes. According to Bruce king:

The echoes are similar to the echoes in the poetry of T. S. Eliot in bringing the resonances of a cultural tradition to bear on the words.  

Ramanujan has not placed a barrier between his knowledge of native vernaculars and that of the alien English Language. They are harmoniously synchronised in his personality. Each has exerted a positive influence on the other. In an interview with Rama Jha Ramanujan himself asserts:

............ my English has affected my knowledge of Indian languages, and my knowledge of Indian Languages has affected my English Language.  

In Indian poetics, the real talent of the poet lies in what Mathew Arnold regards that a poet should use the touch stone method. This method is used freely the rich store of tradition. Poetry in Indian poetics is not merely an intellectual pursuit. The interpretation of poetry as appealing to the emotions by means of the imagination is common even to the critics of English Literature. Ramanujan in the entire bulk of his poetry uses the symbols of house, snake, river and other childhood signifiers by which he calls bock the memories of the past. As a linguist he too often works on the oblique manner of poetry, and more especially in Hindu poems for he reveals his cognized mode of the past and cringes for the future.
REFERENCES

1. **K. Krishnamoorthy**, *Essays in Sanskrit Criticism*, Dharwar: Karnataka University Press, 1974 (P.189)


8. Ibid. P.16

9. Ibid P.16


81
13. Ibid.
14. **Mahimabhata, Vyaktiviveka, II** 116-120
16. Ibid P.5
17. Ibid P.5
19. Ibid. P.7
21. Ibid P.19
23. Ibid. P.97
24. Ibid P.98
29. Ibid P.67
30. Ibid  P.67

34. Ibid P.187


40. Ibid P.32

41. Ibid P.33


43. Kurup, P.K.J., Op cit., P.197


