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**Ramanujan's Indian English Poetry: An Analysis of Hindu Deities, Myths and Legends**

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Attipat Krishna swami Ramanujan was born of Tamil family in 1929 and brought up in Mysore. Of all the English Indian poets in the post independent India, A.K. Ramanujan is unquestionably an outstanding name. There are many poems of Ramanujan dealing with myths and legends, Hindu gods and goddess. Prayers to Lord Murugan are a unique poem of Ramanujan in which Indian rich cultural heritage gets full expression in the light of modern urban initiative culture.

Lord Murugan is a master of red blood strain but the poet knows that our blood no longer remain red, its lost its purity and became 'brown'. Only external purity is maintained whereas corruption pervades the society and prevails in every step of our existence. There is an endeavor to convince as if 'other lives' lives beyond this live. Ramanujan extols his Lord Murugan as a God of twelve hands because his actions are correct. Modern society is full of complexity callousness and full of indifference and constantly throughout the poem the poet attacked these ills, Ramanujan is concerned about rigid caste system of our society. He emphasis for the for awareness of self realization and spiritual birth and until unless this is understood, the lost person to be born on earth would not have fulfilled his purpose.

In the concluding prayer, Ramanujan crystallizes the two basic necessities of self realization namely decent of divine grace and the individual lack of self interests that prompts prestigious prayer:

Lord of lost travellers Find us, Hunt us Down

Lord of answered Give us at once of prayer -Prayer to Lord Murugan

A.K. Ramanujan is a skilled craftsman and his technical skill is matchless in Indian English poetry.

## INTRODUCTION

Attipat Krishna swami Ramanujan was born of Tamil family in 1929 and brought up in Mysore. Of all the English Indian poets in the post independence India, A.K. Ramanujan is unquestionably an outstanding name. There are many poems of Ramanujan dealing with myths and legends, Hindu gods and goddess. Prayers to Lord Murugan are a unique poem of Ramanujan in which Indian rich cultural heritage gets full expression in the light of modern urban initiative culture. The poem has eleven sections and the poets begin with an invitation to Lord Murugan to arrive “with cockfight and banner, dance “the poet feels enthusiastic to see the observance of such rituals. Generally, Lord Murugan’s temple is situated on the top of the hills. Pilgrims goes there to visit to visit the Lord with their offerings. Their dresses are generally orange colored and blue trumpet flowers symbolizes unselfish conscious ‘Bhakti’ Ramanujan in his poem Prayer to lord Murugan depicted his beloved ancient Dravidian God who has many peculiar features and attributes.

But such awesome description of Lord Murugan can be understood only with self realization of his divinity like his six unforeseen faces. His each face has different aspect of divinity. Lord has twelve hands and each hand has its own name, and meant for different modes. His six faces obviously caused to have twelve eyes. He is the Lord of spring and he is the one who protects the green things from all destructive forces.

The poet is sad to see the way ill planed cities are growing day by day and those cities have no place for flowering flowers like gulmohar. Ramanujan followed the contemporary version on Tamil poem ‘Thirumurug Athupata’ (A guide to lord Murugan) of 5AD – an ancient Dravidian god of fertility, joy, youth, beauty, war and love.

Following the old tradition of describing Lord murugan, Ramanujan also describes how Demonessus dance, when lord Murugan cuts down the heads of Asuras while the lord, himself is surrounded by celestial damsels. How the faces of Deminesses are still brightly colored, have been vividly described by him in the following lines:-

White haired witches who wear Three colors even in sleep.

-Prayers to lord Murugan.

Then suddenly the poet switched over from describing Lord Murugan to the contemporary society. Today’s society is full of hypocrisy and selfishness. The vein of the country has fallen in the hands of week rulers. They can’t even maintain what their truly brave kings had achieved. They look like ccibet cats and hyenas as if it is the tiny form of tigers and Leopards. They pose in false photographs with corps of silken nine feet tigers, which were probably killed by their sycophants. They feel themselves very proud of their legends deeds, whereas these lazy successors relax under their country farms. All that is left of these memories to waving snakes skins the slough discarded after it has served its purpose or ‘cloud of steam’ that evaporates rapidly.

In modern India, instead of belief, actions, feelings, knowledge and achievements there are false memories, legends, false medicine and pseudo-science. Instead of our scientists learning how to recycle waste in a

spaceship, a leading politician advocates how to recycle fluids by drinking his own urine, which is obviously an ennerous concept that arises through misunderstanding of meditation as an universal panacea of all man's ills. There is a dislocation between the inner culture and the outer forms, it pretends to take as:-

Our blood is brownOur collarswhite

-Prayers to lord murugan

Lord Murugan is a master of red blood strain but the poet knows that our blood no longer remain red, its lost its purity and became 'brown'. Only external purity is maintained whereas corruption pervades the society and prevails in every step of our existence. There is an endeavor to convince as if 'other lives' lives beyond this life.

Ramanujan extols his Lord Murugan as a god of twelve hands because his actions are always correct.

In his prayers to lord he addresses murugan as 'Lord of head lines' and from he wants to get the power to read the lines, - lines of fate written on forehead and head lines of newspapers. In this section of the poem Ramanujan conveys double meanings .He requests the Lord to bestow him the divine power to understand the destiny of man. Lord Murugan has six senses whereas man has only five senses but man has lost his ability to utilize these five senses also. The poet thus invokes to give us back our five senses. Lord Murugan is omnipresent and prayed to deliver us from proxies and absences.

Modern society is full of complexity callousness and full of indifference and constantly throughout the poem the poet attacked these ills, Ramanujan is concerned about rigid caste system of our society.He emphasis for the for awareness of self realization and spiritual birth and until unless this is understood, the lost person to be born on earth would not have fulfilled his purpose.In the concluding prayer, Ramanujan crystallizes the two basic necessities of self realization namely decent of divine grace and the individual lack of self interests that prompts prestigious prayer:

Lord of lost travelers

Find us, Hunt us

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-Prayer to Lord Murugan.

Prayers to lord murugan has been compared with T.S. Elliot's Ash Wednesday by N.K. Naik.

He observes that the spirits of prayers to lord murugan is poles apart from the endless humanity of **the** mode of Ash Wednesday "It creates a feeling that the poet is simply using lord murugan as a peg to hang his ironic flourishes on" In this poem Ramanujan quiets to discover the self.

“Zoo Garden Revisited” is a poem similar to “Prayers to lord murugan” except in this poem, the prayers to lord Vishnu in place of lord murugan. It is a prose poem and Ramanujan called Lord Vishnu as “Lord of lion face”, as he appeared in the world in guise of many creatures.

The poet no longer can bear the tortures on the animals in zoo. These animals are in the bondage as they need some liberty of movements. Now the animals suffer at the human hands as visitors to the zoo “shrewdly” set the tail feathers of ostriches on fire or feed monkey with bananas. Natural world has been destroyed today. Due to new research, experiment, the officials get pleasure to crossbreed different animals to get the new results.

The final prayer is made to lord Vishnu who is preserver of existence. He has been called as ‘Lord of lion face’ indicates ‘Narsingh incarnation who saved the world from the hands of the “Hiranya Kashyap”, the tyrannical father of the boy Prahlad, a great devotee of the lord. In another place, he has been referred as ‘Bour Snout’ means his varaha shape which he took while lifting the stolen earth from the deep water, and freed the world from the demon thief. The lord also took the shape of Matsya- “the fish eyes” in order to save Manu, the progenitor of the human race, from the great deluge. Lord Vishnu also saved once the life of Gajendra from the jaws of a powerful crocodile.

According to Hindu myths at the time of churning Ocean between gods and demons. There was a tug of war for which mountain Mandara was tied with the great snake solved the purpose of rope and Karma’s back was used as pivot. Lord continued to appear in different incarnations to maintain the existence of the world.

In Zoo Garden Revisited, Ramanujan uses Indian Literacy material and the images significant to both Indian and Western Culture- In this way he has transcended the local for the universal and familiar for the mythical.

The difference is another poem of Ramanujan published in his volume “Second sight” narrates the myth of Lord Vishnu. The Lord took the shape of “Vaman God” and appeared as a dwarf beggar in front of king Moradhvaj who was famous for his world renowned generosity. The Vaman begged three steps of earth from the king and with his three steps Lord covered “heaven and earth” and as well as the underworld. To test the supreme level of generosity the lord asked the noble king to feed his chariot, the fresh flesh of his only lovely son. His chariot was terribly hungry and the king had nothing to offer then his son’s flesh. But the lord put a condition that their son should be slashed into two halves and that action, be performed by the royal couple. Without shedding even a drop of tear. The royal king knew that this is a severe painful test for them but they were helpless. They closed their eyes and put the saw on the head of their son and were about to cut when Vishnu lord appeared in his true mettle and restrained from their act. The lord was happy to see their generosity and pronounced their glory and lasting fame.

Ramanujan uses Gita and Upanishad for unfurling Hindu myths and legends. His three Hindu poems are mentioned here, “The Hindoo” is a passive believer of karma. The uses “oo” is a place of “u” in a spelling Hindu comically a Hindu is so peaceful that he watches his wife raped by his enemy ; he does not hurt a fly or a spider either as he reads his Geeta and calms at all events.

Ramanujan in his poem “The Hindoo” he reads his Gita and calms at all events expose the self deception of Hindu who conical their violet agitation during the moment of crises but pretend to show the outward calmness and placidity. Ramanujan who himself is a Hindu observes purely rational and analytical approach not does has a false sentiments.

Ramanujan in his poem “The Hindoo the only risk” comes out with the conclusion that the inherent ideal of philosophical calmness of the “Sitapanjana” many times degenerate into callousness and indifference.

Ramanujan’s poetic is intensified in his poem “The Hindoos he does not hurt a fly or a spider “either because in this poem the speaker is the poet himself. The poet hints the name and spirit of his inefficient grandfather who is unable to control his wife. His grandmother displays his outward calmness at the time of critical situation, as he is a Hindu he ought to follow the names of Hinduism to be calm at all events. But he disguises his violent agitation of mind and suppresses his rage at the illicit relation of his wife with the fishermen lover. The affair resulted in a tragic sexual drama.

His great Grandfather that still man was a helpless victim and a passive spectator of adultery of his wife. Ramanujan ironically remarks that his great grandfather has decided to control his emotions and be calm because he must have read Geeta, which suggests being calm at all events even though this shows his great cowardice than anything else. The element of self deception in his attitude is highlighted by the concluding lines which projects rather explicitly “an eruption of sexual jealousy and mental violence ill- concealed by the calm assumed by the persona”.

When it happens is a fine poem of Ramanujan in which he explains the concept of good and evil that is taught in Christianity and not gives a convincing reply to good and evil. They are two poles of behavior influenced by the angel or the devil. If Christianity is unsatisfactory in this regard, Hinduism can give more applicable answers, which has been explained by Ramanujan in his poem Some times. In his poem Ramanujan explains that sin or wickedness, a man suffers in this life is due to one ill effects of previous birth. He uses day and night as a symbol of life and death.

Ramanujan uses Hindu myth and legends in number of his poems No Amnesiac king is a well known poem of Ramanujan, which tells the story of king Dusyant. King Dusyant married to a forest beauty Shakuntala, the adopted daughter of Rishi Kanva. The king committed an act of crime, by not recognizing. Shakuntala, when she came to the court of at the time of her expectancy, for seeking identity. The Amnesiac king failed to recognize her because she lost the wedding ring, which the king offered her at the of their Gandharva marriage. While taking bath carelessly, the gifted ring was fallen into water and was swallowed by fish. Later, the fish was caught by a fisherman and offered to royal cook. When the fish was cut for preparation, the lost ring was recovered from the belly of the fish and brought to the notice of the king Dushyant. Soon he could remember all events of their relationship and repented for the behavior he rendered to his beloved Shakuntala. After the narration of the story of legend Dushyant, Ramanujan gives a turn to his poem to give a modernistic touch for which he has always an obsession.

“A Minor Sacrifice” is another poem on Hindu myths and legends. Here, Ramanujan starts with the story of Raja Parikshit, and his son Janmejya. Raja Parikshit killed a snake in order to garland a

sage's hack with the cold dead thing. The sage got angry and cursed the king an early death of a snake bite.

Janmejya, the son of king Parikshit tried all possible means to save his father from that eventuality and ultimately he:

Performs a sacrifice,

A magic rite

That draws every snake from everywhere.

-A minor Sacrifice.

As a result of that Yagna. The sacrifice, all kind of snakes started rushing towards the miraculous power of magic rites and getting destroyed in the holy pyre. But one poisonous snake, names Takshak managed to save himself from that destruction as he struck to the leg of Lord Indra's throne. That Takshak bites the king and the king dies as his destiny was decided.

After introducing the legendry story of Raja Parikshit, the poet again changed over from a myth to contemporary incident in which his uncle killed a poisonous Scorpion with his ivory dragon-head walking-stick, in order to save his son Gopu. Then his uncle calls everybody and shows the ripe, yellow poison bead of the Scorpion just behind his string, Grandmother narrates another story that a pregnant scorpion generally hides itself in a warm place and at the time of delivering its offspring's its back burst out to bear a number of baby scorpions and then instantly it dies. His uncle also describes how the color of scorpion changes as it grows up. Everybody become aware of many facts of Scorpions.

A superstitious boy, named Shivanna comes to the boy-pact in that very afternoon and suggests the way to get rid of the world of scorpions of all varieties, He suggests that with the help of witchcraft and black art it is possible to overcome the problem of scorpions. A minor Sacrifice is to be performed to feed and sacrifice the twelve handed god of scorpions, who demands one hundred live grasshoppers / caught in a new moon Tuesday. This sacrifice is to be performed when the sun is in scorpion the eight sign of Zodiac which operates during the months of November and October and performance will force the scorpions to come rushing at the bidding into the hole of the sighing neem tree.

With such incident, Ramanujan draws the parallel incident between the superstitious belief of Shivanna and performance of legendary king Janmejya, the son of great Raja Parikshat. However the boys arranged three jars in which hundred grasshoppers to be stored. All children goes out to catch the grasshoppers and by the evening they could get ninty-nine of them but the hundredth eludes from them for some times but the Gopu, the son of poet's uncle solved the problem by adding the last one and complete the tally. They put these Grasshoppers in three jars, they arranged and vested the responsibility of watching on Gopu's head. All the children dreamt about the occasion and could not sleep well in anxiety. Next morning they all went to see Shivanna, the planner of the whole scheme and carry the jars on their backs to their shocks and amazement they are informed by his mother that :

He is in hospital

Taken sick with some strange

Twitching disease.

–A Minor Sacrifice

In a review of “Second Sight”, Elizabeth Ruben comments that this poem in particular is “terse with understatement and that it narrates the story of childish cruelty and retribution worthy of that ugly Biblical incident of Elisha and the Bears.” Ramanujan pictures a superstitious belief in this poem and conveyed a message at the end of the poem that Humanity should love all creatures, big or small. Human being should not show cruelty to inferior creatures due to his power and blind belief. In “The last of the prince” Ramanujan describes the hardship of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last emperor of mughal dynasty. It is a pathetic poem in which Ramanujan shows the slow and sure disintegration and ultimate dissolution of mughal emperor. After Sultan Aurangzabed, the dynasty started decaying in the hands of weak successors. The poet describes pathetic sufferings, the later successors endured in poverty. The great dynasty once had its glittering glory started losing its existence. Some of the princes were confused due to bewildering and cunning politics of Englishmen and they could not come out from the influences of Englishmen.

Some of them opishly initiated current trends, imported wine and women. The princess lost their identity. Ramanujan ironically says that only one or two princess demonstrated heroic valour in war and such acts were celebrated in songs and ballads. Ramanujan precisely and lucidly describes the cause of disintegration of the dynasty as:

Some of bone T.B.

Others of London fog that went to their heads

Some of current trends, imported wine and women

One or two heroic in war or poverty

With ballads to their names      -The Last of the princess

Death and decay consumed everyone and all passed away except the royal last prince, Bahadur Shah Zafar who suffered a lot and had breathe his last days in exile in Rangoon the last prince was so unfortunate that he was buried in exile.

Ramanujan is very sympathetic to the last prince who was surviving in great memory of his great ancestors and proudly talks about them to others. His wife was so pathetic and painful that in his illness he could get proper treatment due to his poverty. The pathetic and poverty ridden condition of the last Mughal Empire is statched by Ramanujan in the following lines:

He lives long, heir to long  
Fingers, faces in painting and a belief Inauspicious  
Snakes in the skylight, he lives on to cough.

-The Last of the princess

His two daughters named Honey and Bunny were sent to school on half fees. He had no capacity to pay the fee even His wife, who had only one heirloom pearl in her nose ring was pregnant again. His first son has undertaken a job of a trainee in telegraphy. His son was also suffering for lack of money. How pathetic was the financial condition of the last prince of great Mughal dynasty can be found out from the following lines of Ramanujan.

His first son, Trainee  
In Telegraphy,  
Has Telegraphed thrice already for money

-The Last of the princess.

“The Last of the princess” indeed a heart touching poem in which the poet describes the complete tragedy of decline and fall of the Mughal Empire precisely and economically.

A.K. Ramanujan is a skilled craftsman and his technical skill is matchless in Indian English Poetry. His subject matter and expression is superb and flawless. His poetry is the poetry of specific culture. The greatness of Ramanujan lies in his ability to translate his own experience in another culture and presented in a universal form.

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