

Enduring Spirit of Nature and Womanhood foran Individualistic Self: A Study on “A River” and “Of Mothers; Among Other Things” by A K Ramanujan

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ABSTRACT

The growth and survival of human civilisation has always depended deeply on nature. Natural environment provides means of livelihood, namely water, food, and land. Humans’ necessities are broadened with commitment to oneself, and community building in anthropocentricism. Although the eco- consciousness is present, the course of anthropocentric activities marginalises the consciousness. The poem, “A River” by AK Ramanujan is analysed from an eco- critical perspective, centering on marginalisation of eco- consciousness in anthropocentricism. The events depicted in the poem are reflections of marginalised eco-consciousness. Eco-consciousness exists in sustainable accommodation of spiritual faith, in which community building leads to strengthen eco-consciousness. Marginalisation of eco-consciousness happens as the enduring spirit for it is faded in anthropocentric circumstances. Eco-consciousness is not always recognised with fulfillment of human necessities but prevails with reclamation of natural entity. The longer eco-consciousness is marginalised, the more the natural environment is destroyed. In due course, the spiritual faith for enduring eco-consciousness will be derailed from human consciousness. On parallel grounds, human beings will live in memories. Reality has challenging phases where the aspect of endurance is entertained. The spirit of endurance has its traces of origin from nature and womanhood. Nature acts as a metaphor in form of tapestry in womanhood. Nature reflects internal emotions in a woman. Nature acts as an interconnectedness of

emotions in womanhood. Flashback technique is the liveliest form of living reality through emotions. These emotions sustain the self for enduring the present state of mind. The poem “Of Mothers; Among Other Things” is analysed from a perspective of enduring spirit. Motherhood has an enduring spirit. Nature, in its eternity, keeps alive the enduring spirit. Motherhood sows the spirit of eternal love in itself for endurance. Nature, over its cycle of season, is correlated with endurance. The paper discovers the enduring spirit existent in poems “A River” and “Of Mothers; Among Other Things” by AK Ramanujan. River, as a part of Nature, and Mother, as a phase in womanhood, signify the enduring spirit.

Keywords: Individual self, Enduring spirit, Motherhood, Nature, Spiritual faith.

A Spirit that Sustains Individual Self

Water as a medium is the savior of humankind. The daily routine is catalysed on sufficient account in the usage of water. The settlements of humankind happened along the river basins. Later, in due course of time, the water bodies were densely encircled with residents. The notion of eco-consciousness plunges when the consciousness of water based on necessities is lavishly utilised, and later the urban settlers forget the benefits enjoyed. Eco-consciousness focuses on sustainable consciousness in anthropocentric region. Anthropocentrism portrays eco-consciousness as a co-dependent prospect in natural entity. Eco-consciousness is revealed at each stage, whenever the human needs are fulfilled in the usage of water. Hence anthropocentric eco-consciousness thrives on the sustainable necessity based on human needs.

The commitment of Anthropocentrism towards the natural entities is superfluously handled in urban region. The existence of natural basins is evident in anthropocentric arena. The eco-consciousness to extract from the entity is also undertaken on stern prospects. These actions prove the presence of consciousness in fulfilling the needs of humans with water. Bruce King states that “Ramanujan’s poems had a highly accomplished, understated symbol and narrative” (21). The events

portrayed in the poem are the epitome that the eco-consciousness is marginalised in Anthropocentrism. The city of Madurai is known for its spiritual glory. Nature, as a spirit in disguise, endures a faith in spirituality. During natural entity, in its reclamation, humans are emphasised to endure spiritual glory. When spiritual faith is traced, eco-consciousness becomes a sustainable consciousness. During the times of natural entity's reclamation, eco-consciousness endures in anthropocentrism.

The new poets still quoted
the old poets, but no one spoke
in verse
of the pregnant woman
drowned, with perhaps twins in her,
kicking at blank walls (Ramanujan, "A River" 28-33)

The people fondly admire the flow of water during floods. Eventually, the benefits experienced by the people because of the water from the river are forgotten by them. This shows, in anthropocentrism, that eco-consciousness exists on the basis of short-lived account. The existence is bare minimum, as the people are engulfed to satisfy their needs from the bounteous blessings from nature. During flood, the loss is inevitable. Any natural calamity has an unavoidable impact on lives. Here, the loss of human lives is highlighted, which expresses anthropocentric nature. At the same time, the lives of other living creatures are expressed to add extraneous focus on human lives.

Poets and people often explicated on the lives devoured by natural calamities. In fact, natural calamities are the eco-consciousness endurance of natural entities. People are obliged to accept the happenings from an eco-centric view, and not from an anthropocentric perspective. The loss of lives is enlightened by a pregnant woman who might have died with a twin. It also extends a contradictory picture where a woman survives with four children, and has her necessities fulfilled each day in the

spontaneity of river flow. The enduring spiritual faith of eco-consciousness is marginalised in anthropocentricism. The entire livelihood supports and thrives itself on natural entity with eco-consciousness. The endurance for natural entity to be a sustainable consciousness relies on spiritual faith endurance in eco-consciousness. Madurai is a city located along the banks of the river Vaigai. It is geographically found at the southern part of state, Tamil Nadu. The presence of temples and poets symbolises the admiration of natives towards the environment. "In Madurai, / city of temples and poets/ who sang of cities and temples" (Ramanujan, "A River" 1-3).

The intermingling of nature in faith and spirituality reflects the hope for endurance in hurdles. As the city is in a tropical region, the season that dominates is summer. The scorching heat of the sun is inevitable during summer. At the same time, the implications of summer are distinctly revealed in the poem. The ground of riverbed is dry with bareness. The riverbed has in-depth cracks. The presence of Watergates indicates the heavy flow of water in the river during monsoon. The dryness of river has an equivalent effect to its heavy flow of spontaneity in monsoon. Here as natives, people must engulf themselves in spiritual faith.

every summer

a river dries to a trickle

in the sand,

baring the sand ribs,

straw and women's hair

clogging the water gates

at the rusty bars (Ramanujan, "A River" 4-10)

On the other hand, this dryness is the result of a wealthy flow of river during monsoons. The cracked ground beds were once drenched in the swamiest of mud with river water. The clogged hair of

women depicts the bath and entertainment had by women in the monsoon season. People, in their way of prioritising to fulfilling necessities, have foregone their eco-consciousness. The fulfillment of necessities is the essence of anthropocentrism. Eventually it is marginalised on anthropocentric region. Although people are conscious of absence in eco-centeredness, the necessity to regain the benefits is predominated.

Pain and suffering delve into perseverance. The source of sorrow begins from the loss effected by natural calamities. On parallel grounds, thoughts endure past events to add upon the suffering. At this stage, the necessities fulfilled in the past must be recognised. Conscious awakening happens in recognition of necessities fulfilled. It interlinks with the dependence of natural entity. This marks the prevalence of eco-consciousness. The people who have benefitted by the water from river hold the highest responsibility in eco-consciousness recognition. As to accomplish the responsibility, each aspect of sustainable consciousness left behind must be looked upon with reverence. The reverence inculcated in oneself, should put forth the spiritual faith. Spiritual faith is glorified in concealed reverence.

under the bridges with patches

of repair all over them

the wet stones glistening like sleepy

crocodiles, the dry ones

shaven water-buffaloes lounging in the sun (Ramanujan, "A River" 11-15)

Eco-consciousness reflects from recognition. The awakening of recognition happens at a delayed stage, when people undergoing perseverance wait for the next set of necessities to be fulfilled. This shows that the seasons have a circle of way. Season itself evidently proves that nothing is

stagnant and it takes a swirl of circle. This marks the enduring process of eco-consciousness. The enduring process of eco-consciousness leads to sustainable consciousness.

There is an eternal conflict between recognition of consciousness and sustainable capacity of consciousness. The poet observes this conflict leading the path of the river backwards. The river originates from mountains where the dwelling place of God is found. This mingles with the spiritual strength deriving from nature. The end of river is again a mark of eternity with the sea. This eternity unifies the relationship of mortals. As depicted in the poem, both scenarios portray the absence of eco-consciousness from the minds of humans. The consciousness of fulfillment in human necessities is predominant, while eco-consciousness is forgone. This depicts the marginalised trait of anthropocentric eco-consciousness.

Eco-consciousness fades when the necessities of human nature are left unfulfilled. "The environment designed to be used exclusively by humans, to serve the needs of humanity, is in the profoundest sense, humanity's source and support: its ingenious, inventive life-giving matrix" (Rowe 106). This indirectly proves that the anthropocentric activities are not satisfied by natural entity upon the expectation of humans. Here eco-consciousness is deviated from its primary notion of sustainable consciousness. Eco-consciousness is supported by fulfilling necessities of human needs, rather than the eco-consciousness meant for natural entity itself. As a natural entity, river basin has its own occurrence in procurement of water. In the presence of fulfillment of human necessities, eco-consciousness is well-utilized, but not well-recognised.

Childhood phase is an everlasting phase in the lives of humans. The memories created through laughter, friends, family and even tears, have a lasting impression that humans carry in their hearts to their graves. As a child, humans are always pampered and expressed with love and joy. The people who encircle them are often known acquaintances, namely the first circle of humans, in the form of family, friends and well-wishers. As a child grows up to a young adult, there is a need to have exchange

of civilities with strangers who later become friends, lesson givers, caretakers, or even people who teach the toughest of lessons. The phase of childhood is gone all of a sudden and a young adult is treated as an individual. This transition to an extent seems to be a harsh aspect thrown by life. The dependent self is necessitated to turn to be an independent self. The matter of ignored human is the first impression of self. Any addition to make oneself a sufficient individual becomes the hardest task. Self-reliance, without a capable and self-sufficient notion, leads to barren emotions. At this stage, individualistic self is discovered. The possession of self-sufficient form of individualistic self is focused.

Womanhood stands as an epitome of resilience and strength. Women attain the state of womanhood through their children. The bond between mother and child becomes a non-negotiable cherishment. The significance of a mother is the inner emotions that are the effects of sacrifices made for her child. Nature endures through varied seasons. Each season impacts the lives of humans who are dependent on it. Women and nature have a unique bond. Women undergo various emotional expulsions. Motherhood is defined by children through reminiscence. Children are loved and pampered by their mothers in their younger days. The younger days form the base for the adulthood. Adulthood in general is termed as the stage where individualism is predominated. Humans as individuals, must undergo challenges and hardships. Each time the stage of helplessness is attained, womanhood in the reminiscence stage has the enduring spirit to lead forward. Nature, as it expurgates on each season, leaves a hope for betterment in future. This trait is reflected in motherhood reminiscence. Women endure toughness to lead a smooth livelihood. Thus, the enduring spirit is identified. "I smell upon this twisted/ backbone tree the silk and white/ petal of my mother's youth" (Ramanujan, "of Mother" 1-3)

Nature and Womanhood, Unique Entities - River and Mother

Nature, with its natural entity as rain, is metaphorical with woman in the poem. The rain comes with a fragrance upon the land. This sense of fragrance has co-relevance with the scent of the young mother of the poet. The symbols of silk and earrings are found to be a part of instinct that brings forth

the past in a flick of moment. This also states that the poet has attained his individualistic self to encounter the challenges of life. The warmth and comfort he cherished with his mother has innately been delved in him. All these events take place during a monsoon. The mother swirls like a storm in monsoon to take care of her children.

The motherhood epitomises empathy, which is endorsed in individualistic self. The natural environment has a sensible touch to human beings. The poem acts as a reverie of the poet's mother. The aura he experiences has an enduring spirit in him, to lead himself ahead each day. Similarly, the enduring spirit of his mother's motherhood has reflections of the enduring spirit of nature. Women, through their lives, have significant effect on people around them. The seasonal changes have correlating effects on events that take place around them. The poet, owing to career development, has transformed from family confinements to work life where the only world he lives is within himself. The memories of his mother act as an enduring spirit. The individualistic self has the highest range of endurance. The exploring of new arena to gain experience and knowledge stems from individualistic self. Scholars have noted that women have been known to struggle with motherhood, as multiple and conflicting roles are carried out when mothering (Lorén et al). These struggles make the phase powerful enough to be revered as an enduring one.

Necessity of Individual Self

It is a confirmed belief in society for a mother to be totally in tune with her child in terms of knowing its needs and wants, be an expert in managing and raising her child, do her best in selecting and carrying out activities that enhance her child's cognitive abilities, sacrifice her time, body, needs, finances, and work commitments while raising her child, and carry out all other mothering duties in an attentive manner (Schmidt et al.) This is sustained through an enduring spirit. Enduring spirit happens through memories, and it is strictly gained from past experiences. The past experiences may not often

be a glorious event. In each of past experiences' recollection, the emotional stability is scrutinised. This emotional stability is attained with the assistance of an enduring spirit.

An enduring spirit is an eternal reverie of emotional stability. This is developed at a young stage of human lives, namely childhood, where innocence of human senses is at the purest form. This enduring spirit is either fed by natural environment or through the bond of the relationship one cherishes with womanhood, in the form of motherly affection. When a human is deprived neither of these endorsements, the concerned individual struggles to identify the enduring spirit. Nevertheless, an enduring spirit is an intuitively amalgamated emotional stability. As an individual, the individual self succumbs to various hardships in life. The hardship an individual faces leaves them in a state of helplessness. The state of helplessness is a void self, which has an emptiness of thoughts and further leads to poor actions.

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