

**Chapter Four**  
**RELATIONS**  
**AND**  
**RELATIONSHIP**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RELATIONS AND RELATIONSHIP

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION :

A.K. Ramanujan and Jayanta Mahapatra are two of the most eminent Indian poets in English. They have become the milestones in Indo-Anglian literature because of their peculiar styles of writing. Bruce King has rightly pointed out the peculiarities: "The use of private experience, and especially the inner world of memories and the continuities and discontinuities with the past, can be seen as the basis of many of Ramanujan's poems..... They are not Mahapatra's metaphysical meditations on the relationship between the creative impulse and the world outside the perceiving self. They are memories of a past which shifts while the self and others change".<sup>1</sup>

Mahapatra's world is filled with personal pain, guilt, remorse, hunger, desire and moments of renewal, his environment is filled with symbols of belief and by the ordinary lives of the people of Cuttack, the temples, the Hindu festivals, the ancient monuments; while Indian myth and history, her people and customs, her rich cultural and spiritual heritage form the dominant themes of Ramanujan's poetry. And so, we can say, that both of these poets have handled the same Indian subject-matter in different styles.

In this chapter, I wish to concentrate on certain points of similarities and differences in Ramanujan's and Mahapatra's themes and styles in the context of Relations and Relationship. In these two works, there are common

themes like - the relationship with family, society, religion, past, present and also with the dream-world and nature, the relationship with the self and the themes of alienation. Ramanujan's Relations presents fragments, whereas Mahapatra's Relationship is a single poem divided into twelve parts. Ramanujan uses the family as a central metaphor and Mahapatra identifies himself with the sun temple of Konaraka to explore relationships.

#### 4.2 POET-FAMILY RELATIONSHIP :

Poet-family relations are elaborately picturized in Ramanujan's poetry. The poems: 'Of Mothers, among other things', 'Some Relations', 'A Wobbly Top', 'Obituary', 'Love Poem for a Wife-1' and '2', 'Real Estate', 'It Does Not Follow, But When in the Street', 'Any Cow's Horn Can Do It', 'Routine Day Sonnet', 'History' and 'A Lapse of Memory', explore the poet's relationship with different members of his family. In Mahapatra's poem, there is not much emphasis on the familial relationships. In Section Two, Three and Nine he considers these relations, but only vaguely.

##### 4.2.1. Mother-Son Relationship:

Ramanujan has drawn a portrait of his mother in the poems: 'Of Mothers, among other things' and 'Obituary'. He is very much attached to his mother. In the former poem, he informs us about her tender motherly instincts which compel her to run back from the rain to 'the crying cradles', her unerring sense of domestic responsibility as is clear from her picking of 'a grain of rice from the kitchen floor'. Although, the language is charged with

power and intensity bordering on the line of difficulty in comprehension, he is unable to convey his feelings and thoughts. In 'Obituary', he portrays her as a widow, wearing white dresses and scorning ornaments, perfumes and vermilion marks on the forehead and on the head. As consequence of his father's death, he had to accept 'a changed mother'. Ramanujan' expresses his inner attachment with his mother through the poems.

In Mahapatra, this inner attachment is found in a different manner. In section Two, when he watches through the window his mother's grave, it evokes the memories of 'the white terreces' of his childhood. And in Section Three also, he expresses his attachment with his mother. When he watches the violence around him, he expresses his helplessness to fight against it, for his 'hands are weak for the violent life'. But the blessings of his mother support his dream of peace and silence. In Section Nine, Mahapatra speaks of the mother-child relationship as a mysterious one, because he cannot understand

'the unexplained feeling  
of mother  
when she gives her breast  
to her dry neighbour's  
bawling child.'

The attachment to their mothers is similar in both the poets. But, Ramanujan focusses on the individuality of the mother and Mahapatra regards his relationship with the mother as complementary to his main relationship with society. He comments, also on the general motherhood.

#### 4.2.2. Father-Son Relationship:

The relationship with the father is found in the poems of both the poets, but Ramanujan stresses it by giving more details. In Section Two, Mahapatra describes his father in brief:

"Now like my quickly aging father  
my mind fumbles at the frail substance of ash  
and my memories are rats scampering in  
the dark  
growing at rotting paper,  
twisted metal and foul flesh,  
and my blood becomes to share his curse"

He wishes to share his father's curse of quickaging perhaps, because of his occupation of the School Inspector. Again, Mahapatra emphasizes the relationship of man with the Divine Father. He is burdened by the responsibilities of society handed over to him by the Divine Father :

'Burden of your peace, Father  
Theme-Song of my life that burns my tongue  
Voices of children always wronged'

[Section Four]

Ramanujan's father, as presented in the poems, is a strict person who gives a wobbly top to his son (the poet) after the quarrel, for reconciliation. Children are afraid of him. As the head of the family, he carries various responsibilities, which, after his death, are left to his son. His position in society gains for him, after his death, two lines in an inside column of Madras newspaper. The poet seems to have little regard for his father, for

the whole narration reveals a lack of emotion. ('Obituary').

The similarity lies in the fact that Ramanujan is burdened by the familial responsibilities handed over by his father and Mahapatra is burdened by the social responsibilities given by the Divine Father.

#### 4.2.3. Father-Daughter Relationship:

This delicate relationship binds both their poets. They are fond of their daughters. In Section Two, Mahapatra describes 'the stillness of my [his] gentle daughter's skin', which reveals his tender relationship with his 'gentle' daughter.

Ramanujan has also developed similar relationship with his daughter, for he tells her bedtime stories. He feels happy when he is with her and he is a careful father because:

"Sudden knives and urchin laughter  
in the redlight alley  
add now  
the men in line  
behind my daughter'

[Entries for a Catalogue of Fears]

Ramanujan has expressed the concerns of a loving father expressed the concerns of a loving father and he is much attached to his daughter.

Both the poets boast 'gentle' relationship with their daughters.

#### 4.2.4. Husband - Wife Relationship

Jayanta Mahapatra does not speak of his relationship with his wife at all, while Ramanujan focusses

the estrangement between him and his wife. In the poems, 'Love Poem for a Wife-1' and '2', 'Routine Day Sonnet', and 'It Does Not Follow, But When in the Street' he expresses his feelings for her. In the poem, 'It Does Not Follow, But When in the Street', he says,

'..... I walk on air,  
I walk on water, can even bear  
to walk on earth for my wife...'

It is his wife who makes him 'walk on earth', though, as he says, he is capable of walking 'on air' and 'on water'. The poem, 'Routine Day Sonnet' displays hatred for her -

'.... I wake with a start  
to hear my wife cry her heart  
out as if from a crater  
in hell: she hates me, I hate her,  
I am a filthy rat and a satyr'

The two 'Love Poems for a Wife' are evocations of his alienation from her. They cannot, and would never be able to understand each other, because of, he thinks 'the unshared childhood, ('1'). The shared childhood would have added spices to their emotional attachment. But in 'Love Poem-2', we don't find this ironic twist any more. A.N. Dwivedi has rightly commented: "Accordingly, the 'mood of bitterness and disappointment gripping the poet in the first poem now evaporates into the air. It seems that he bridges the emotional and cultural gaps between himself and his wife, with a kind intellectual relationship".<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.2.5. Other Family Relationships:

In other familial relationships, Mahapatra includes





represented by the daughters of the grand-aunt, after her death. When the grand-aunt died, her two daughters, unknown to each other, 'picked the body clean' of all the jewels, diamond ear-rings, bangles, anklets, the pin in the hair, toe-rings, everything except the gold tooth fillings and silver g-string of which they did not know. In the poem, 'The Hindoo: who doesn't Hurt a fly or a spider either', the poet tells the myth of his grandfather and grandmother, in which, he describes his patient grandfather who watches his wife's adultery calmly and believes in Hinduism. And the poem, 'Small Scale Reflections on a Great House', describes the traditional joint family where cousins, brothers, sisters and in-laws, all live together in one big house. The poem represents almost everything - India, Indian languages, literature, philosophy, customs and traditions.

#### 4.3. POET-SOCIETY RELATIONSHIP :

The relationship with society is focussed on by both the poets. Ramanujan paints a representative picture of Madurai, while Mahapatra picturizes Cuttack. Both point out the violence in the Indian Society, but Mahapatra expresses the need for removing violence in society in order to reform it.

Ramanujan's poems, 'Old Indian Belief', 'Army Ants', 'One More after reading Homer', 'Eyes, Ears, Noses and a thing About Touch', 'When It Happens', 'Compensations', 'Smalltown, South India', 'The Last of the Princes' and 'Time to Stop', portray the picture of Indian society.

'Smalltown, South India' and 'Small Scale Reflections on a Great House' represent the Indian social life. Ramanujan comments on the evil traditions like child-marriage system, myth making and Paradah system and, at the same time, marks the peculiarities of the joint family system, festivals and farming dependent on monsoon in India. The problem of untouchability is attacked in the poem, 'Eyes, Ears, Noses and a thing About Touch'. He expects humanistic attitude in each human being. Man's change to heartlessness is brought out in the poem 'Time to Stop' and the unhealthy relationship with the surrounding is satirized with a hope to change it positively. The corrupt political scene, the changed social system where knives, bombs, scandals and cowdung fall on a newly married women, and the faulty education system are humorously pointed out and criticized in the poem 'Compensations'. He sums up the contribution of Gandhiji to India. Further, he says that the destruction and death, in the forms of war, famine and riot, are present in society. And the other major role of destruction is played by man himself, who is 'two handed, two legged normal us/in a periodic transfer of power'. This destructive power is foreseen in the poem 'One More after reading Homer'. With the help of mythological characters like Cassandra and Appolo, Ramanujan proclaims the prophecy of the destruction of society.

In accordance with the Hindu philosophy, he believes that evil in the society is the result of men's previous actions ['When It Happens']. He puts the ideal of

'ant community' before the human beings where each ant works for 'the community' - "And the work," as they say, "is the workman at last". The poems, 'Old Indian Belief' and 'Army Ants', compare the human society with the ant community. A peculiar tendency of boasting found in Indians is represented in the poem, 'The Last of the Princes'. The destructive power in the Indian society is often marked and satirized by Ramanujan.

Unlike Ramanujan, Mahapatra has a strong involvement with the society. He does not see it from the third-person point of view. He watches the violence around him and expresses, with great regret, his helplessness to fight against it, as his 'hands are weak for the violent life'. He seeks support of his mother's blessings for his dream of peace and silence when 'the sky [is] full of fallen birds' [Section Three]. In Section Four, he asserts that today's disturbed social morals make him restless, and the restlessness increases because of his inability to struggle. But he does not let himself calm down by using drug-drops or anyone's help. So he chooses to shed blood through poems. He wants to be strong enough to reach his goal - the peace of the world. He says:

"Burden of your peace, Father,  
Theme-song of my life that burns  
my tongue

Voices of children always wronged"

Mahapatra contrasts the present picture of violence with the peaceful nature.

Both the poets explore their relationships with the

society, but their expressions are different. Ramanujan picturizes and satirizes the social conditions and systems from the third-person point of view, whereas Mahapatra feels that it is his own responsibility to change the picture for which, unfortunately, he is too weak.

#### 4.4. POET-RELIGION RELATIONSHIP:

Hinduism is the chief current of Indian social life. The main streams of the poetry of Ramanujan and Mahapatra are deeply rooted in it. They form their identities by keeping themselves in it.

Ramanujan, born in a traditional Tamil Hindu Brahmin family, discusses the chief tenets of Gita. And Mahapatra, though born in a Christian family, identifies himself with the sun-temple of Konaraka to seek ultimate salvation. They have realized that the complete devotion to the Omnipotent God only can provide them with the peace of mind and can rescue them from the fear of guilt.

Ramanujan's three 'Hindoo' poems - 'The Hindoo: who reads his Gita and is calm at all events', 'The Hindoo: the only Risk,' and 'The Hindoo: he doesn't Hurt a Fly or a Spider either', discuss the Karma theory, the theory of Rebirth and the concept of Sthitaprajnya. The other poems like 'One, Two, Maybe Three Arguments Against Suicide', 'Obituary', 'Prayers to Lord Murugan', 'Entries For a Catalogue of Fears' and 'Man and Woman In Camera and Out' discuss the Hindu philosophy which rejects the 'suicide' and believes in the total surrender to God.

In the first Hindoo poem, the Karma theory, according to which the present life is the result of past

actions, is applied to those people who suffer. But he questions Gita when he does not understand the reason of his own suffering. He knows that his state of Sthitaprajnya would be misunderstood as the heartlessness, which is the only risk to be a true Hindu. The theory of Rebirth is explained in the poem, 'The Hindoo: he doesn't Hurt a Fly or a Spider either'. He suspects that the spider and the fly could be his real Grandfather and Grandmother, so he does not hurt them.

'Suicide', death by accident, murders are not accepted in Hinduism. The person does not get salvation through it. So, the poet wants -

"not to be caught

dead at sea, battle, riot, adultery or hate

nor between the rollers of a giant lathe"

['The Hindoo: the only Risk']

He makes three arguments against suicide. He tries to keep his neighbour's hand away from kitchen knife for he knows that the person who commits suicide, goes to Hell.

The rituals after death are given in the poem, 'Obituary'. He expresses himself as a devotee to Lord Murugan in the poem 'Prayers to Lord Murugan'. He prays to him to give him strength in this weakning world at present. He requests, firstly, to give men power to read small prints of their 'headlines' or 'Fate'. Secondly, as men have lost their powers to use their five senses back to them. Thirdly, he asks the 'Lord of Solutions' to provide flexibility in the time of several problems. As self-surrender is essential for God-realization, he wants to

surrender his self to the Lord and to follow the way of prayers for the ultimate salvation :

"Lord of Lost travellers,  
find us. Hunt us  
down.  
Lord of Answers,  
cure us at once  
of prayers."

Jayanta Mahapatra's realization of God is sought from the identification with the ruined Sun-Temple of Konaraka. At the very beginning of the poem, Relationship, he relates himself with the Earth, one of the five elements [Earth, Light, Air, Sky and Water] of the cosmos : 'Once again, one must sit back and bury the face in this earth...' Like Ramanujan's "Prayers to Lord Murugan", Jayanta Mahapatra prays to God to send the message of peace. He undertakes the responsibility of the peace of the world;

" Burden of your peace, Father  
Theme- song of my life that burns my tongue  
Voices of children always wronged ".

He realizes that, for the peace of the world, he has to work for others and at the same time, he must analyse himself. He can not alienate himself from the world around and he has to find out " five shadows " and " six blind men " in him. The "five shadows " in Hinduism, are the five senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. One must utilize these senses rightly as Ramanujan has explained in " Eyes, Ears, Noses and a Thing about Touch ". One should

not create the social problems like untouchability by misusing them. And the " six blind men " in man are "Shadripu", i.e. six enemies, such as Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Mada, Moha and Matsara (Lust, Anger, Greed, Pride, Temptation and Envy).. He has to conquer them all. And the martyrdom is endowed on those only who find out these five shadows and six blind men.

As in "Time and Time Again", Ramanujan explores the supremacy of the Omnipotence all over the world, Mahapatra identifies himself with the temple of Konaraka and goes to the power of creation of this earth; i.e. "Yoni". With his own inner strength, he can reach to that power, but he cannot take it out to show others. It seems to him inexplicable. In Section IX, he seeks his relationship with various myths such as the myths of happiness, death, sleep, action and of colossal temple. Everywhere he discovers honesty and interconnection of man to man. The basic feelings of humanity become mysterious to him, when a mother gives her breast to her neighbour's bowling child. It is a typical Hindu instinct found in Ramanujan's " The Hindoo : the only Risk", where the poet tries to keep his neighbour's hand away from kitchen-knife.

In Section Ten, he overcomes the fear of silence, when he sees "the sage of troubled mien sitting under the peepul tree, all alone". Ramanujan has acquired this silence in the form of "Sthitaprajnya". For him, Hinduism is the way to ultimate salvation and for Mahapatra, the meditation by identification with the temple is the way to it. Both the poets refer to the God of destruction, Shiva.

Mahapatra refers to his marriage procession to contrast it to the present marriage system and Ramanujan uses Him as a God of destruction in the poem "When It Happens".

The fear in Mahapatra's mind is of silence, solitude, for in silence he confronts his inabilities and weaknesses to fight against the evil and the violence in society. And the fear in Ramanujan's mind is worldly, i.e. of his feather, his status, about his daughter, and at last, of losing his existence after his death.

Mahapatra wants to be immortal by being held up by 'dark daughters' of the temple, in their space which is timeless. And Ramanujan feels that he would remain in this world 'by staying on the roof', after his death, 'as a peeping - tom ghost.'

thus, Ramanujan and Mahapatra have expressed their relationships with religion in different manners. Rabindra K.Swain compares the attitudes of Mahapatra and Ramanujan towards Religion :

"Even the poet leaves the stones to speak."

His strangled silence' comes out of his willful indulgence in "the three kingdoms/the mineral, vegetable and animal" in giving play to all his senses to go through sattava, Rajas, and Tamas; and only then one can feel the fever of love', 'a deeper undulation of the earth'. He cannot remain detached like the ancient sages those figures of the fable. Even A.K.Ramanujan can not. In his poem, 'The Hindoo, who reads the Gita and is calm at all events," Ramanujan says :

"Yet when I meet on a little boy's face,



the prehistoric yellow eyes of a goat,

I choke, for ancient hands are at my throat"

Jayanta Mahapatra is a reasonable human being with all the fellow feeling to rejoice in the well being of his neighbours; a good Samaritan indeed. He questions in Relationship

"would meaning remain

in merely that a thing exists, in a single plain, in the helpless sips of loneliness we have made marooned on the stone, on the dark chariot of Sun whose fevered granite wheels claw desperately at the strangles earth in our lives ? "

He himself is "a flame which sings on the altar of the dead"<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4.5 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE DREAM-WORLD :

Both Ramanujan and Mahapatra try to connect the present with the past. The past is there, in their poetry, in various forms. Ramanujan looks at the past with the eyes of the present. He paints the picture of the changes India using the old canvas and it is his imagination that tries to bridge the glorious past and fractured present while Mahapatra enters in the past with the body of present and loses his existence in it. In the end, temple is the witness of history and symbol of the past.

At the very beginning of the poem, Mahapatra feels it necessary 'to sit back' and try to understand the mythical references of the past. And so like a 'solitary traveller', he tries to grasp 'the brilliant colors of the

past/in the ocean's strange and bitter deeps'. He realizes that his existence lies in the stones and goes forward to find out the mouth of the earth. Sometimes, he finds that the past is a magician's show where various performances of memories take place.

His past also contains the historical references such as the war of Kalinga, Emperor Ashoka symbolizing past cruelties and the 'meritime ancestors' who sacrificed themselves for the peace and glory.

His identification with the temple makes him trace his past. The temple,

'The gleaming skin of the three kingdoms,  
the mineral, vegetable and animal,'

acts as the door to the past and the wheels of that chariot seem to be entering in our lives. He goes to the secret order of creation, Yoni. But as it is rooted in the long past, he cannot take it out to show others. He also finds his own roots in it. He, lost in the past memories, gets alienated from the present world and present time. As a result of it, his friends and others leave him.

He returns from the ruins, the past, to the present happy life, in the end. He realizes that to be possessed by the past is not permanent. What endures and will continue to endure is a world that comes up out of love. He feels that when one gets rooted in the soil, his tendrils grow up in the present, to the future. His quest is fulfilled by understanding the fact that he has to continue his journey to the happiness in the present. Further, he wishes to be timeless by being held up in their space by the " dark

daughters" of the stone temple. He wants to be like the temple, as it is the witness of the past, the present and also will be of the future. G.Sundari and K.S.Ramamurti comment on this relationship between the past and the present in Mahapatra : " The poetry of Mahapatra represents the voice of one who is powerfully distracted and deeply disturbed by the past, by the antiquity of the cultural tradition of his land and also by the modern present ".<sup>4</sup>

Ramanujan's picture of the past is glorious, so, he tries to live in the past. This view of the poet, to the past is perfectly expressed in the poem. "The Last of the Princes", where that Last Prince lives in his glorious past. Unaware of the present poor condition, he wastes his energy in telling his ancestry. He does not care for the present or the future. Ramanujan's present is fractured. He is not happy in it. So, he tries to contrast it to the past. The "yellow" colour in the poem, " It Does Not Follow, But When In the street", stands for the diseased present in which he is living with the dreams of the happy future only.

This relationship with the past and the present is better explained in the poem "Entries for a Catalogue of Fears", where he asserts his desire to look for the "presence of the past" in the present by "staying on the roof" after his death, "as a peeping - tom ghost". The contrast between the past and the present is brought out in the poem, "Some Indian Uses of History on a Rainy Day". The history is used to focus on the glorious past, for the head clerks in Madras tell each other how old king Harsha made

ten thousand monks stand in a queue", to give them/and the single visiting Chinaman/a hundred pieces of gold/a pearl and a length of cloth " The three pictures in the poem disclose the gulf between the present and the past.

Ramanujan contrasts the present to the past, whereas Mahapatra moves from the long past to the present and further to the happy future.

The dream-world has special significance for both the poets. They seek help of it to run away from the dark realities of the present. The dream-world stands for the hopeful, happy future for them. Mahapatra finds " the miracle of living" in it. He continues his dreaming, for he knows that centuries have been passed by, like a mist towards the land of vision. For him :

" This sleep is a song

that is heard from all sides continuously".

His dreams are unfathomable like the clouds and powerful as storms, in which he himself gets frightened. It seems to him that the dreams are scattered throughout our lives "like leaves, filthy and veined with blood". He comes out of the dream-world to search his own identity.

Ramanujan's dream world is related to his unhappy present. To escape from it, he enters into the dream-world. He dreams of his happy life with his brilliant daughter. In his dream, he wants to share

" a language, a fire, a clean firest floor

with a hill in the window; and eat

on an ancient sandalwood door"

His dreams are contradictory to the present like

"a bullock cart/in an Eskimo dream". And he has the vision of a changed India. He prays to Lord Murugan for a happy, green, prosperous and glorious India of his visions.

#### 4.6 RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE:

Nature has different meanings for both these poets. Ramanujan's nature is symbolic, whereas Mahapatra uses it for a hopeful, happy future.

Ramanujan uses the animal world as a metaphor to express human lives. The ant community brings out the similarities between human life and insect life. He finds out that there are common constructive and destructive power in the societies. The animals like Lizards, Crocodiles and Turtles in the poem 'Some Relations' metaphorically represent the alienation in men. The three Sections of this poem explore his relationship with his family. The poem, 'Poona Train Window' enlists his experiences of nature in his travel in Poona Train. The feelings of attraction and repulsion are expressed in it. He feels curiosity for

"....rise and fall  
of hills in two sets  
of windows, faces, a rush  
of whole children, white  
hair in a red turban."

The existence of the omnipotence in the world is expressed by the invisible clock work in the sky. In the

poem ' The Hindoo: he doesn't Hurt a Fly or a Spider either', the spider and the fly stand for the poet's real grandfather and grandmother.

Mahapatra expresses, unlike Ramanujan, his hope in future through wonderful, green and fresh nature descriptions. The background to the poem is of the sea shore. So, the sea appears frequently in the poem. There are also references to the moon and the moonlight which express the quietness and calmness in life, he says,

"....the voices of frogs  
bending the white wet moonlight into embraces  
Through the strange fires that carries him down  
from the tranquil hills in the rain"

(Section II)

And in Section Eleven, he writes

"And at last there  
where the day sweeps its aggressive yellow curves  
like a serpent woman's tail,  
is the space, defiant, waiting,  
and the iron sea of years ago curling about the feet,  
a phosphorescent glow, an essence divine,  
small yet huge enough to fill  
with the velvet storms of pink lotuses."

The blue sky somewhere provides depth to his thoughts and the birds soaring in it, take him to the world of the past.

Nature in Mahapatra exists merely as nature which helps his imagination to fly deep into the heart of thoughts.

#### 4.7 RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF:

One of the chief purposes behind their poetry, for Ramanujan and Mahapatra is search for self identity. They have followed different ways to acquire it, such as Ramanujan's deep meditation about the Hindu philosophy and Mahapatra's identification of himself with the Sun-Temple of Konaraka.

Ramanujan searches his Hindu self which he seems to lose in the foreign land. He tries to be a true Sthitaprajnya and follows the theories of Karma and rebirth. When he finds himself lost, he prays to Lord Murugan,

"Lord of Lost Travellers,  
find us. Hunt us  
down".

This modern world of violence makes him lose his identity and to regain it, he prays

".....Lord  
of faces  
find us the face  
we lost early  
this morning"

He, also, examines himself as a son, a father and husband and finds himself as a careful father, a dutiful son and an unhappy husband. His estrangement with his wife, expressed in the poem "Love poem for a wife-1", gets converted in understanding in the poem, 'Love Poem for a

Wife -2." as he asserts,

"I dreamed one day  
that face my own yet hers  
with my own nowhere  
to be found, lost, cut  
loose like my dragnet  
past.'

Then he identifies his life with the animal world and as Laxmi Ragunandan has pointed out, " In his search for affinities to identify the self, Ramanujan seeks to explore these similarities of human, to insect societies. In fact, for Ramanujan it is the insect world that is most satisfying."<sup>5</sup>

But for Mahapatra, being trapped in his dream world, it takes much time to be aware of himself:

"....who is standing there.

alone by himself in the witness box  
of shackled pink muscle? "

(Section VII)

And his meditation concludes that martyrdom is not given to those who live and work in deserted lands where self consciousness, desires get hurt. It is given in finding out our 'five senses' such as sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste and destroying 'six blind men, i.e. shadripu namely lust, anger, greed, pride, temptation and envy. His search for these 'five shadows 'and ' six blind men' in himself, expresses his self assessment which finally takes him to the deep rooted loneliness and sadness. This, further makes



him identify himself with the temple of Konaraka and he reaches to the power of creation. He finds out that, unlike the modern people, he is deeply rooted in the past. At last, the beauty of nature gives him his self and awareness of his rule over the days.

Thus, the search for self identity, in both the poets, is expressed in different ways.

#### 4.8 ALIENATION

The feeling of alienation, in Ramanujan's mind, caused by the familiar problems he faces and in Mahapatra, it is caused by his deep interest in the past.

In Ramanujan, alienation is caused by his wife who comes from different family background, having no common childhood experiences. Her quarrel with her brother James about the location of the bathroom in her grandfather's house in Allepiy, makes him and his sister-in-law left out. The theme of alienation is described in more details in the poem 'The Lapse of Memory'. For an amnesiac, there is no use of memory. He is away from all relations. But according to Ramanujan, alienation is not a reality, it is nothing more than a mental state, as real perhaps as a dream. In the 'History', the poet expresses the lack of affection between children and parents caused by alienation and in "obituary" the same lack of affection in his heart for his own father is expressed. The concluding lines of the poem.

"And he left us  
a changed mother

and more than  
one annual ritual"

express his undertone of resentment at the meaningless customs.

In Mahapatra, deep attachment to the nature, the past, the present, the family and the Society, except to friendship, is expressed. He is alienated from his friends. As Rabindra K. Swain marks out "The tale of his friends is a lingering ailment of history- a history analogous with any history, and there is no history without 'sloth and arthritis and neglect' The universal history is a piece of work and the history of the poet's friendship is translation of it".<sup>6</sup> Mahapatra has alienated himself from the modern world in the beginning when he enters into the past. But soon he overcomes it and accepts the new life happily.

The theme of alienation in Ramanujan is more striking because his alienation is deeper. But like him, Mahapatra also states that the alienation is momentary and not permanent.

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