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VANDALIZATION OF INDIAN EPISTEME: A READING OF  
"SMALL SCALE REFLECTIONS ON A GREAT HOUSE"

S. PREETH VAITHEESWARAN

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Thiruvalluvar College, Papanasam



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Abstract

The present paper attempts to deconstruct the colonial historiography of the Eastern civilization from the perspective of a victim. The novel ideas presented through this article talks about how the West has invaded the East and looted the innovative as well as scientific ideas of the nation to claim that as their own. The paper analyses the poem "Small Scale Reflections on a Great House", written by A K Ramanujan after the colonial era. The poem is analyzed from a postcolonial perspective and tries to bring out the hidden as well as forgotten past tradition of our nation.

**Keywords:** Episteme, Vandalism, Post colonialism, Deconstruction.

The world is witnessing a drastic development in science and technology in the past few decades. As we move closer and closer to the use of technical aids, we move far away from the natural environment. Further, this leads to the dependence of the technical aids for everything. Though the development of such technical aids saves a whole lot of time, the physical involvement of humankind has gone in the descending order. But, the technologies that we use in the present world are the ideas of our generations old ancestors that are taken abroad by the colonizers and given to us as their ideas. This was understood by the people of our country a little later and then it got reflected in the works produced by them. Such representations in the work of the well-known Indian writer Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan's (shortly known as A K Ramanujan) poetry "Small Scale Reflections on a Great House".

Unlike from the formalistic view of a text that allows the readers only to look the meaning of the

text from the text itself and not from the intentions of the author. This poem was analysed from the new historicist perspective with the view of a historical dimension having the contemporary society of the author in the mind during the production of this text. Moreover when this poem is analysed in a new historic perspective, the reader can understand that it is not just a poem only for reading for pleasure sort of poem but also the poem that has summarized the two centuries of history of the Indian subcontinent. When the reader is aware of the background of the freedom struggle of colonized India, this poem would definitely give him/her a feel towards the country. Roland Barthes, a post structuralist critic, in his essay *The Death of the Author* (1967) has said, "the author still rules in manuals of literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men, anxious to unite by their private journals, their person and their work..." But the fact is a little different that it is not the author who rules the manuals most of the time but the history behind the work does it so as

the history behind the text gives the life to the text and when the reader is aware of such the text would attain its purpose. With this dimension in mind the poem *Small Scale Reflections on a Great House* is analysed to give the following findings that we can associate with the history of the colonized India and its characteristics. If we fail to analyse this poem without knowing the contemporary society of the author, it will only give us an outward meaning to the poem that may not serve us the core purpose of the particular poem.

Thought most of the critics analysed this poem to give the meaning that this poems talks about a family's personal history, there is another dimension for the poem can be given that is the poem has talked about the history of the colonized India. The Great House mentioned in the poem can be taken as the Indian subcontinent. In this poem, the poet tries to bring out that most of the goods produced by the colonized countries have used the raw materials from India. But the fact is that these goods were sold to the Indian people for higher prices. They not only loot the raw materials from India but also they looted along with them the great ideas and concepts of the colonized. For instance, the concept of atom was said to be proposed by John Dalton in the early nineteenth century. Wikipedia says, even before John Dalton ancient Greek philosophers like Leucippus and his disciple Democritus (fifth century BC) coined the term 'atomos'. The word in Greek means something that cannot be cut. But in the Indian context, Thirumoolar in his *Thirumandhiram* has appropriately pictured the concept of atom in the verse, which start like 'Anuvil Anuvai Aathipiranai...' while talking about the creation of God. Another great poet Ouvaiyaar, from Tamilnadu when praising the *Thirukkural*(Couplet) says, "Anuvai (atom) Thulaiythu elukadalai puhuththu kuruhathariththa kural " which means that the couplets written by Valluvar is composed with a lot of messages within just two lines. Not only the poem has one meaning alone, but it also gives us a wide range of meanings when compared with the similar happenings. Hence from the other works of the literature, we can compare similar things that are found in some particular text. The people from the continent also

started to believe that the ideas are of the Westerner's and so it would cost a lot more to purchase their goods. They started to imagine the ideas, ideologies and the life style of the Colonisers to be far superior to their culture. This slowly degraded their respect towards their own culture and practices. Most of the people tried to imitate the Colonisers and their way of life and so they could not take over their culture and tradition to the next generation. They felt elite when they imitated the practices of the Western culture. The Western Colonisers take advantage of this situation to earn a lot by making the so called great house as their market. Almost all the concepts and ideas that they brought in to the country are taken raw from here and modified according to their style.

Similarly, the concept of Airplanes in the western countries was introduced only during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But even before that, one of the great Indian epics, *Ramayana* has dealt with the concept of Pushpak Viman, a heavy aircraft shaped as an eagle and Jain texts also have some mythological idea of Airplanes. Even before the westerners thought of some scientific ideas our people have written epic literature on such concepts. Even before Herbert George Wells' *The Invisible Man*' the concept of camouflaging is found in the script of Siddhars of our country when they researched on the herbs from the mountains of southern India. Most of the medicinal formulas used in the Allopath today are believed to have used the base formulas of Siddha and Ayurveda medicine.

There is a popular saying in Tamil "*Vaantharai Vazhavaikkum Thamizh Naadu*" which means that the people of the south Indian state Tamil Nadu welcomes and helps everyone to lead a better life by providing them with various opportunities to take up the jobs and sources to do various types of businesses. But this saying is not only restricted to Tamil Nadu alone as it is suited to the whole nation. Most of the ideas that come from the outside of the house stay here are beliefs. It all started with a small thing that is the Europeans came here for the purpose of taking pepper with them as they have no such delicious spices in their continent. This search for the small pepper has created a

number of changes in the history and geography of the Indian subcontinent. That is why when the foreigners came to India to trade the people of our country accepted them which later became a game changer of history of the county. Slowly the traders became the rulers and they took all the ideas and resources from the land of India. The ideas that they took from the Indian subcontinent, were travelled overseas and returned the same place with many alterations and this alterations caused a lot of money from the people of the mother India.

Though the ideas are taken from India, the end products being sold in India itself for higher price and the most painful thing is even the people also are in duress that they have to accept them as it is. The end product that returns to the country becomes a hybrid that shows us that most of the things in the colonial period became hybrid of the native culture and the culture of the colonizers. The poet A. K. Ramanujan picturizes these through the lines

And also anything that goes out  
will come back, processed and often  
with long bills attached,  
like the hoopedbales of cotton  
shipped off to invisible Manchesters  
and brought back milled and folded  
for a price, cloth for our days. ("Small Scale  
Reflections on a Great House" 22)

Through the ninety lines of this poem, Ramanujam has summarized the status of British India. Ramanujam has written this poem in free verse without any rhyme which can be considered as the image given to the India without any happiness. When there is no rhyme to the poem, the poem loses its musical pattern. When there is no freedom, the country loses its own way of life. The British government made a lot of laws that were against the growth of Indian people. But some people argue that whatever advancements that we have today are all because of them including the railway. In fact the railway lanes and other advancements are made only in order to support their trade in to the Indian subcontinent. With these advancements they plundered all the wealth from India and made profit out of it. At the end of the

poem, the examples that the poet has given takes a darker turn. The poet has used much alliteration to enhance the quality of the poem thereby making the readers to get involved in the poem.

The main goal of them is to make profit out of their colony countries. For this purpose they made many laws and rules, which would support the welfare of their supporters and pave way for the discouragement of the people who oppose them. Many leaders started to revolt against the cruelties of the colonizers and many people supported these leaders. There were many writers who supported and stirred the emotions of the people towards freedom through their writings that includes prose, poetry, drama, etc. these works contained the greatness of our country and how these greatness were contaminated by the colonizers of our country. One such poetry is *Small Scale Reflections on a Great House* by A. K. Ramanujam. One who has real patriotism only can analyze the condition of the people of his/her country and the inevitable things that are happening there. Even though it is just a ninety line poem, it talks about the age old history of a great nation for around three hundred years. It shows us that through the powerful lines of a poem, the real history of the nation. It is necessary to understand the atmosphere of the poem to cherish the meaning of the poem to the core. When the author of the text is gone, converting the code given by the author into text is useless. Only when we give the author to the text, the text would be explained. That is the discovery of the author and his hypostases would pave the way for the understanding of the original meaning of the particular text. Moreover, comparing and analyzing the similar works from other literatures are also one of the major steps to fish out the hidden meanings from the text. The search for the author's hypostases would take the reader to the underlying meaning of the work of the author. Hence, the new historic perspective of the poem gives us the purpose that the author has intended when writing the poem.

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