

*...amnesia is a curse*

**RAMANUJANIAN NOTIONS OF IDENTITY AND MEMORY:  
A READING OF THE DIALECTICS OF REFLEXIVE/SELF-  
REFLEXIVE, CONTEXT-SENSITIVITY/CONTEXT-FREE IN  
SELECT NON-FICTIONAL PROSE OF A.K. RAMANUJAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The trajectory between contexts of living or cultural moorings to identity formations always seems to be a focal issue for a diasporic writer like A.K. Ramanujan. In all his general essays on literature and culture, the writer seeks to develop a number of innovative theoretical paradigms to deal with questions of identities as a plural category, specifically in postcolonial nations like India where culture itself is seen 'singular at the top and plural at the bottom'. Incorporating the trajectory between *reflexivity/self-reflexivity* and *context-sensitivity/context-free*, the theorist goes on to vindicate the interconnectedness of civilizations, cultures, traditions, textual productions along with individual identities as categories of having internal tension and dialogism. For the writer, if *reflexivity* conjoins one culture, text, individual to another and *self-reflexivity/context-sensitivity* denote specificity of character, then *context-free* urges leads culture or an individual towards the route to universalisation. Whereas memory is intrinsically related with formations of identities depending on contexts of living and cultural moorings, memory also provides the scope to be intimate with ancestral root, primordial culture and tradition i.e. the *context-sensitive* urges at present. In constituting the mentioned notions of identity and memory, Ramanujan follows the postpositivist realist theory of identity. The present essays is a critical evaluation of Ramanujan's innovative but less institutionalized notions of identities and memory, as strategic categories vis-à-vis the mentioned trajectories as revealed to us through his non-fictional prose. For the same, the researcher has incorporated Ramanujan's general essays on literature and culture as well as well-recognized notions of identity and memory in academia and has sought to draw the peculiarities of what can be said as typical Ramanujanian.

**Keywords:** Identities, Memory, *reflexivity/self-reflexivity*, *context-sensitivity/context-free*, postpositivist realist theory.

One remembers in order to forget...Only awareness, recollection, re-membling, rising beyond one's 'natural' tendency to forget and erase, only such act of knowing can release one from the thrall of repetition and rebirth...So amnesia is a curse, a form of alienation from one's self, for one's self is largely constituted by memory.

(Ramanujan 85-86)

Prior to the publication of the two posthumous anthologies namely *The Collected Essays of A.K. Ramanujan* (1999) and *The Uncollected Poems and Prose* (2001), Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan, almost universally known to his associates as Raman, was basically known as a renowned poet, a folklorist, a translator and a distinguished linguist working in Indiana University of the United States as a professor in linguistics. The main reasons of this paradoxical position are that, firstly, notwithstanding his periodical publications of literary and other seminal essays in well-recognized journals and magazines before and during his departure to the USA as a Full-bright Scholar or as a diaspora, all his poetry collections starting with *The Striders* (1966) and translations with *The Interior Landscape* (1967) were published meticulously in quick succession by the well-known publishing companies, before the mentioned posthumous collections. And secondly, Ramanujan himself did not publish his non-fictional works in compiled volumes during his lifetime, except the Forewords, Afterwords and Introductions to his translations; and thirdly, right from the beginning of his literary career to till now, in the academic and intellectual worlds, only his poetic works are thoroughly institutionalized and incorporated in the curriculums of higher studies, but not his non-fictional works. As a poet, he is not only recognized as a representative figure of the post-independent Indian English poetry, but also a seminal representative spokesman of the third world Diasporas. Even he is prestigiously incorporated in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) as the only representative figure of Indian English Poetry with three selected poems. But as a sagacious intellectualist with innovative approaches and exceptional theoretical paradigm or as a philosopher with classical scholarship or as a postcolonial thinker encompassing the trends of Western and Eastern epistemologies, Ramanujan is still well-known mainly to the highly educated fellows and intellectualists. He is still overlooked as a theorist by our academicians instead of his sophisticated innovative literary and culture related theoretical paradigms that the thinker has promulgated in his non-fictional works. Our Academic Orientalism, which I mean the dominating tendency of curriculum designing paying homage to the Western and other foreign epistemological and philosophical trends, specifically English literature as a discipline till has been ensnaring many more Ramanujan-like theorists and scholars within the ambit of 'other'. The best example can be given of the famous semiotician Umberto Eco whose written output is too staggeringly large and wide ranging, but basically who is known as a novelist working as a professor at the University of Bologna in Italy. The anti-canon movements as emerging trends in literature and philosophy still have not incorporated and made justice to the third world intellectualists paying them their deserved values. Like Umberto Eco, A. K. Ramanujan's literary output is too all-embracing and intellectually embedded in both the Western and Eastern epistemological scholarships along with various disciplines. Addressing the multidisciplinary entrepreneurship of Ramanujan, the general editor of the *Collected Essays* Vinay Dharwadkar critically remarks:

The combination of movement and recurrence that gives a critical edge to the essays in this volume is linked closely to the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary dimensions of Ramanujan's scholarship... (He) moved effortlessly through different disciplines and different types of material...by fashioning a distinctive scholarly style. He designed and wrote his essays so that would work upon his readers as much by allusion, echo, and suggestion, as by the force of explicit argument. While each piece was structured simply, so that it never strayed far from its state theme, it was also surrounded by a field of multiple resonances, leading the reader outward in several directions at once. (x)

The comprehensive scholarship of Ramanujan paved the way for incorporating various texts, insights, themes and trends within a single piece without discarding the internal structural pattern and beauty of his topics. He was such an exceptional intellectualist among the Indian born scholars who was academically trained in all sorts of paradoxical epistemological branches of the academic world: the modern and classical scholarships, foreign (English) and vernacular (Kannada) languages, literature and linguistics, poetry and prose, practical research and fictional works and so on at the same time. It is because of intertextuality of his essays that fascinates the author to combine direct "topicalisation with indirect articulation" within a single work (ibid). Darwadkar has termed this ability as the "self-effacing critical intertextuality" which can make able to make a scholarly text a living organism speaking for own sake (ibid). Hence in many times, his non-fictional works are termed as "anthological essay" emerging out of a series of inter-text, meta-text, counter-text and pre/post-texts equally as context and catalysts of production. On the other hand the intellectual arena of his essays was not

solely composed with linguistics or literature. The methodology of his theoretical paradigm, as Edward Dimmock and Krishna Ramanujan have said, was “influenced by de Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Freud, Jung, Chomsky, and Derrida, but in the way he had of blending the disparate, of use as a result of necessarily, he was not bound by any one of them” (xvii). The basic reason of that conglomeration and making him free from the ultimate trap of those discursive philosophers was to create a group of readers who would be to be free from the trap of the text and not be the implied readers.

Considering thematic varieties and distinct topicalisation, Vinay Dharwadker has summarized all the essays of Ramanujan within four different categories: ‘Essays on Literature and Culture’, on ‘Classical Literature’, on ‘*Bhakti*’ and ‘Modern Poetry’, and on ‘Folklore’. For the present study of typical Ramanujanian notions of identities and memory politics, the researcher has incorporated only the general ‘Essays on Literature and Culture’ where the writer decisively speaks about the mentioned issues considering the dialectical relationship between *context-sensitivity* and *context-free* as two dominant universal forces analogous to centripetal and centrifugal forces respectively apparent in all societies at large. It should be worth mentioning that Ramanujan considers these two forces are not instrumental in constructing identity of individuals only, but also in the case of textual productions from classical ages to the present context. However, the writer has too recognized the fact that in constituting identity, the trajectory between *context-sensitivity* to *context-free* plays a different role vis-à-vis memory or therapeutic re-membering. In this present paper, however, identity is not considered like as a single unitary product an essentialist arising out of the reciprocal relation between the “ascriptive” and the subjective identities; rather, as Ramanujan himself believes and espouses, identity is considered simultaneously as a product and a process without any stable relationship between the “ascriptive” and subjective identities (Moya 97). It is a dynamic plural product which incorporates various types of contingencies and processes depending on the context of living or production and subject positions. In this reciprocity, the “ascriptive” one is not totally free from the subjective one and vice-versa.

## IDENTITIES AND MEMORY:

The general consensus regarding all sorts of identity theories is that without the social dimensions of subjective and collective identity formation processes, individuals cannot constitute respective identities without ‘others’ recognizing them. In this dialectical relationship, as the postpositivist realist theory of identity opines, there cannot be any “final agreement between the individual, on the one hand, who seeks to express his/her identity and the collective, on the other hand, that offers the symbolic tools to do so” (Dusche 84). The symbolic representation of identity, as Michael Dusche says is never stable and always striving towards negotiation. Hence, the famous social science theoretician Paula M.L. Moya negates the unitary term identity and accepts its plural form and defines the same as “the nonessential products that emerge from the dialectic between how subjects of consciousness identify themselves and how they are identified by others” (Moya 96-97). The same theorist in his influential book *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles* (2002) defines them as “socially significant and context-specific ideological constructs that nevertheless refer in non-arbitrary (if partial) ways to verifiable aspects of the social world” (2). These processes of identities formations are not inward but always moving towards opposite i.e. outward encompassing social relations and social structures. Hence, in his sophisticated reading of the processes of identity formation namely *Ethics of Identity* (2005), Anthony Kwame Appiah conceives that “identities arise from a structured field of relations” and that are only consequences but not the cause of conflicts (64). It is the reason why all identitarian theories consider social locations of individuals along with “politics of location” always vital in constituting identity/ies (qtd in Mankekar 63). Hence, the well-known philosopher David Harvey in his epoch making creation *Spaces of Hope* (2000) explicitly remarks that identity “cannot be understood outside the forces that swirl around it and construct it” (16). Identities formations, as ideological and social processes are dynamically constituted by cultural, economic and political forces which apparent in all societies and are mutually dialectical in nature. Hence social locations and identities are always reciprocal and inseparable.

In its broad categories, in general, identities are divided into two distinct categories: “Ascriptive” or objectives identity and subjective or personal identity. Moya describes “Ascriptive” identities as those which we consider as imposed identity or “social categories” and which are “inescapably historical and collective” (ibid). It always comes from outside the self through those processes we are positioned by others. In a capitalist society, such identities arrive through distribution and consumption of social goods and other recourses. As an antithesis of the “ascriptive” one, subjective or personal identities refer to individuals’ own perception and sense of the self, experiences, personal relations and location as well. For Moya, it implies “various acts of self-identification, and thus necessarily incorporates our understanding of ourselves in relation to others” (98). Hence in comparison to the other one, subjective identity is more personal and under control of individuals, albeit it’s various contingencies and uncertainties. Although their internal differences, both types of identities are always

considered as epistemic resources of multifaceted empirical knowledge and acquaintance as they provide unique perspectives and insight vis-à-vis one's historical, cultural, material and ethnic positioning. In our various positionings, we need basic understanding of the dialectical relations in-between the two along with the essentialist, idealist and realist categories and perspectives of identities to make ourselves free from the trap of imposed identity.

As it is already indicated that for the present study, I have indisputably considered 'identity' as a plural category considering the postpositivist realist theory of identity as the main theoretical paradigm which too Ramanujan incorporated in most of his essays. The postpositivist realism, as Jose David Saldivar remarks in relation to Paula Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia's edited book *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the predicament of Postmodernism* (1997), deals with "philosophical, cultural, and literary interpretation that situates "identity" in both a "radical universalist" and a "multiculturalist" world view" (qtd. in Saldivar 155). As early indicated, it is because of this dialectical relationship, identities are always considered as hybrid indeterminate categories not socially determinate but too not fully free from social forces. Hence, transformation of society and of the living context can mark the change of identity and identity politics simultaneously in case of transnational or border communities and individuals. And along with transformation of identities, identity contingencies are too invoked with transitions. It should be worth mentioning that this postpositivist realistic approach is always intimate with Ramanujan as a representative spokesman of transnational or border category in a rapidly changing world where the writer was strictly involved with multiculturalism and resistance to homogenizing forces of globalization (which Moya and Garcia considered as "radical universalist" world view) as tools to discard uprooting and to create new identities. The writer himself right from his early ages was raised in a tri-lingual environment and which was culminated with multicultural dispositions as a diaspora and an expatriate too. In the introduction to the *Collected Essays*, Edward C. Dimmock and Krishna Ramanujan have remarked that when Ramanujan "spoke to his father on the second-floor study of the family's three-storey house in Mysore city, he used English. Downstairs, with his mother in the kitchen, Tamil was spoken. And on the streets outside, he communicated in Kannada" (xiv). And later on in one of his memoirs, he considered him as the hyphen in-between the phrase Indo-American. Hence being a dislocated individual in a displaced location or being continuing the hyphenated existence as a diaspora, questions of identity and identity politics always remained vital to Ramanujan.

If identities are socio-spatial categories or positioning/positionalities, then definitely one's own positionality i.e. one's "imagined relation or standpoint relative to that positioning" cannot go beyond one's belonging and memories related to that belonging (Sanchez 38). Because right from the primitive times to a rapidly changing globalised world, we global Diasporas not only invent locations but also carry memories with us. When identification or 'Ascriptive' identity is imposed from outside, the personal one is always seems agential and agency cannot be created without memory. Agencies are categorized by experiences and which in turn categorize individuals. Considering the dialectical relationship between identities and experience, Dominick LaCapra remarks:

...a complex, process oriented notion of identity formation does not exclude the importance of difference and differentiation with respect to experience, the experience of both self and other, or analyst...and subject of study—an issue that is especially important in the study of the past or of other cultures and that may be obscured when the subject and object of research are presumed to be identical... (229).

Hence, one needs memory in order to have "objective knowledge claim" and to be intimated with the historiography of group and personal inherited environment. For a balanced identity politics there should be balanced reciprocity in-between public and personal memory. When the memory obtained from personal experience will be varying from the memory of historiography, there arise various sorts of strategic maneuvers in case of memory and identity politics. Hence, LaCapra remarks that "when memory is mentioned, identity and identity politics are never far behind" (240).

Due to this reciprocity and dialectical relationship, questions of identity and memory are seen to be an indispensable in all types of writings for a writer/poet like Ramanujan who as an academician and as a writer has been appeared as a diaspora right from the beginning of his poetic career with *The Striders* in 1966 and has remained the same until his death in 1993. The polyphonic double voiced discourse in his personal and creative lives emerging out of the heteroglossia between the inherent primordial culture/epistemology and alien cultures/epistemologies is explicitly vindicated by his own comment on "Western and Indian conceptions of self" where Ramanujan finds a striking parallel between "the *Gita* and Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' in their conception of 'a double self', as actor and as object" (Singer xiii). This double perception resulting out of his concept of "a double self", as one of the dominating themes of his poetry, is also a conspicuous element of all his essays concerning literature and culture. Because of this double perception, the poet often seems



lamenting over his uprooting from the primordial home and ancestral culture on the one hand and in some moments goes for celebrating, revealing the postmodern urge of celebrating fragmentation, plurality of identity and displaced existence. His notion of “a double self” provided him the awareness of what he lost and gained as a diaspora. This inseparable trajectory is further vindicated by the dialectic of *context-sensitivity* and *context-free* urges which the writer finds very crucial in textual productions as well as in individual identity formations. Discussing the great Indian play namely *Sakuntala* by Kalidasa, Ramanujan in his celebrated essay “The Ring of Memory: Remembering and Forgetting in Indian Literatures”, which was posthumously published by his wife Molly Daniels-Ramanujan and Kieth Harrison, discusses the art and psychology of memory in constituting the artifice of identity. Ramanujan always believes that one’s perception of the self is predominantly determined by his/her power of remembering and memorizing the past and collective/personal history. Madness is a kind of a “disorder of memory”, because “one’s self is largely constituted by memory” (The Ring of Memory 86). However, as the writer says, “remembering is not a mere skill to show off, it was the means of enlightenment and salvation” (ibid 85). It is a means of ‘salvation’ because through remembering one can able to master over the past and thereby can able to get rid of it. Hence, there will not be imposed identity. A proper sense of history makes one to aware of repetition and in turn opens the door to improvement. Drawing attention to Freud, Ramanujan remarks that “Freud thought something similar when he thought that where one cannot or will not remember, one is afflicted with a compulsion of repeat” (ibid 85-86). In the process, the historical positioning and objective identification which can equally be understood as the hegemonic discourse of identification can be discarded by the art of memory. Giving the reference of the relationship between experience and memory, Ramanujan quotes Edwards S. Casey: “All experiences ‘leave their mark’. Such experiences come marked: marked *for* memory and marked *by* memory. They are marked to be remarked; they are made to be remembered” (qtd. in The Ring of Memory 98). Throughout the essay, the writer has incorporated a bundle of quotations and intertextual references to show how memorizing as a tool to be linked with the self has been persisting as focal point of discussion from classical to the modern times.

Although, in the artifice of memory in mapping experience, the big question that arises is that in the process of negotiating and manipulating memory and identities, is there any essential or inherent authority within the many selves that one possesses? It has been already mentioned that right from his childhood, Ramanujan has to encounter with various kinds of thresholds as means of maintaining the internal commerce between languages, cultures and contexts of living. Those thresholds, as sites of producing meanings and identities can be seen from Homi Bhabha’s perspectives as “signifying practices rather than actual in-between spaces” which ultimately constitute notions of discrete identities (qtd in Thieme 144). However, such thresholds are unique in case of an individual only; for Ramanujan, anything Indian constitutes such thresholds within the very essence irrespective to animate or inanimate nature of things. In his seminal essay “Where Mirrors are Windows: Towards an Anthology of Reflections” revealing the view of plural Indian traditions, Ramanujan espouses the notion that “Indian traditions are organized as a pan-Indian Sanskritic Great Tradition (in the singular) and many local Little Traditions (in the plural). Hence it is inherently “singular at the top and plural at the bottom” (7). In understanding the diversity of Indian traditions, Ramanujan has put forward a holographic perspective towards the Indian traditions that every little tradition is the true representative of the essential Indianness or the Great Indian Tradition. And it is the conjecture between the singularity and plurality of tradition where the dialectic between *context-sensitivity* and *context-free* comes into carnal of the discourse.

Although in his reading of the plurality of tradition and culture, Ramanujan negates the deteriorating conditions of the little Indian traditions resulting out of colonial encounter and alien assimilation, still he accepts the conflicting nature of these traditions. Considering the mentioned dialectic, the writer firsts mentions that the so called conflicting nature is organized through *context-sensitivity* and *reflexivity*. What we call Brahminism, *Bhakti* traditions, Buddhism, Jainism, tantra, tribal traditions, folklore and modernity itself are some prominent forms of this system. He remarks:

Reflexivity takes many forms: awareness of self and other, mirroring, distorted mirroring, parody, family resemblances and rebels, dialectic, antistructure, utopias and dystopias, the many ironies connected with these responses, and so on (Where Mirrors Are Windows 8).

Individuals inherit root identity and ancestral cultural identity through *reflexivity*. However, in case of textual productions depending on intertextuality, the writer finds three different kinds of *reflexivities*: (i) responsive, where text A responds to text B in ways that define both A and B; (ii) *reflexive*, where text A reflects on text B, relates itself to it directly or inversely; (iii) *self-reflexive*, where a text reflects on itself or itself or its kind. In consequence of (i) we get co-text, (ii) counter-text and (iii) meta-text. Within the ambit of Indian textual productions irrespective to written or oral modes of production, we can get this “intricate but open network of such relations” (ibid). In all sorts of postcolonial writings in English, for example Indian Writing in English, where questions of identity always operates as vital one, this system of *reflexivity* or the ‘network of relations’

may occur as shield to identity crisis and criticisms of Indian nationalists and Western critics. Through *reflexivity* and *self-reflexive* modes of writing, any text, poem or even genre respond to other respectively in such a way that any writing cannot be said as alien to other writings, even if that piece is written in an alien language.

Throughout his all general essays, Ramanujan is explicitly seen to be incorporating the Bakhtinian perspective of dialogism in reading tradition and civilization with the urge to show how the historiography and the present realities of civilizations are actually in dialogic relationship with one another. The writer believes that contradictions, inversions, multiple views affecting one another and all these are ways traditions relate to one another. In is through his dealing with the reflexive nature of traditions with which Ramanujan tries to defend the notion of uprooting and thereby to propagate an affirmative view regarding the interconnectedness of traditions at large. As it has already been mentioned that identity formation is a dialectical cum dynamic process and as Dominick LaCapra remarks that “process-oriented notion of identity formation does not exclude the importance of difference and differentiation with respect to...the experience of both self and other” (229), Ramanujan too conceives the fact that “[W]ithout the other, there is no language for the self” (Where the Mirrors 26). Following the postcolonial deconstructive perspective, Ramanujan believes that in the binary of self/other or subject/object, the other is always instrumental in constructing identities for the self—the other provides the required structured field of relations in the path of constructing identity.

As *reflexivity* relates one tradition, individual or civilization with one another, and *self-reflexivity* denotes the peculiarity of the same, then there definitely we need to face a vital question that ‘is there an Indian way of thinking?’ The most prominent essay of Ramanujan having this title deals with this question incorporating the dialectic of *context-sensitivity* and *context-free*—as two vital socio-cultural forces apparent in all societies at large. Ramanujan firmly believes that all things are “substantial” and this substantiality operates in a materialistic way particularly in Indian societies (Is there an Indian 46). He believes that Indians are by birth material minded because they believe in substance—“there is a continuity, a constant flow of substance from context to object, from non-self to self” (ibid). And it is this substantiality or the continuity which relates one society with another. Hence the writer remarks in an affirmative tone that “[A]ll societies have ‘context-sensitive’ behaviour and rules—but the dominant ideal may not be the ‘context-sensitive’ but the ‘context-free’” (ibid 47). Modernism is the best example of the revolutionary movement from *context-sensitivity* to *context-free*. The *context-free* movement means the “erosion of context” or values (ibid 49). The inter-cultural commerce or Western/Eastern cultural reciprocity is always seen through this dialectical relationship. In today’s global context, where every individual becomes local diaspora in his/her own locality, the *context-sensitivity* is seen a mere theoretical concept only. *Context-sensitivity*, as the writer says, always tends to rule and govern and thereby seeks to bind one with another and one with collectivity. But as Foucault says that the subject is an active agent, rather a docile body, who is endowed with the “technologies of the self” to make different “operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and the way of being” in order to transform themselves or to reach a “state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”, the basic urge in individuals is not *context-sensitivity*, but *context-free* (Technologies of Self 18). The subject’s main desire, through this transformation, is not to find an essential inner identity, rather the myriad of potential identities. It is the strategy that enables individuals to constitute themselves as ethical subjects having the ethical power to transformation. At this point Foucault saw individuals “as self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society” (McNay 4).

However, the basic hindrance towards such kinds of thinking is the multiculturalism of this country itself, where secularist, cross-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-communal ‘harmony’ is found in the carnal of every society. In such a situation, no unitary perspective can operate the internal as well as the external structure of every cultural community. Although, against this ‘drawback’, Ramanujan still believes that such inconsistencies are not the result of inadequacy of education or lack of logic. Against the excessive of multiculturalism and secularist thoughts, particularism too plays a significant role in Indian societies. He believes that “each class of man has its own laws, its own proper ethics, not to be universalized” (ibid 40). Because universalisation means, as he says, “putting oneself in another’s place” (ibid 39). But in a country like India, where behind the plurality of traditions, the basic scaffold is always singular, there always we can see cultural determinism as prime agent of identity or insight motivator. This singularity of tradition, i.e. the Great Indian Sanskrit tradition has the authority of manipulating other traditions. The writer remarks:

I think cultures...have overall tendencies...tendencies to *idealise*, and think in terms of, either context-free or the context-sensitive kind of rules. Actual may be more complex, though the rules they think with are a crucial factor in guiding the behaviour. I cultures like India’s, the context-sensitive kind of rule is the preferred formulation. (ibid 40-41).

It is the reason why the famous psychologist Alen Rolland says in his book *in Search of the Self in India and*

*Japan: Towards a Cross-Cultural Psychology* (1979) that Indians carry their family context wherever they go, feel continuous with their families. Even in a colonized country, despite the continuous cultural exchanges, a man cannot be completely free from dominant cultural laws and ancestral history.

In India, *context-sensitive* behaviour and thinking give rise to more complicated sets of standards such as Laws of Manu, by which appropriateness depends on various factors of identity and personhood birth, experience or religion. Ramanujan stresses that this difference in philosophical outcome is not a symptom of irrationality, but a different kind of rationale. Hence the writer remarks that “no Indian text comes without a context” (ibid 41). The great epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* often speak of *context-sensitivity* instead of their dubious historiography. In India, space and time may be not uniform or synonymous, but the context of dwelling speaks the specificity. It is the context that affects the character of textual creations as well as individual personality.

However, for Ramanujan it does not mean that in India, *context-sensitive* behavior always dominates the universalism of Indian ways of life and thinking. In all the Indian societies, despite the dominant *context-sensitive* rules and behaviours, universalism operates as the unifying force in the kernel of every society. To give the example of context-free-universal Indian ideology, Ramanujan desperately gives the example of Indian concept of life which is divided into four different stages—*brahmacharya*, *grahasthasrama*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*. In every stage, the dominant context changes uniquely and at last, in *sannyasa*, the context ends with *context-free*. Hence in Indian conception of life, an individual can have both the dichotomies—*context-sensitive* and *context-free*.

Ramanujan's non-fictional prose thus espouses the fact that despite those liberal humanist movements and *context-free* urges of modernism, there always lays a definite bias for *context-sensitivity*. While the *context-sensitivity* biases resulting out of the centripetal forces of culture and tradition is the mediator of definite identity formation, the *context-free* one can be the causal factor of multiplicity of identities, which is at once hybrid and plural. In *context-free* situation, memory plays an important role in obtaining sense of identity and belonging. Hence, if diaspora is a route to context-free, then memory is the mediator or bridge to arrive at *context-sensitivity*. But in case of diasporic situation, again identity will not be singular like native one. In India, if nativism is in direct clash with multiculturalism, then in diasporic situation alienation or dislocation will be the hindrance towards identity formations. In the arena of such progressive outlook, the development in terms of extension and transition of a culture incorporates the continuous tension between the *context-sensitive* and *context-free* urges. In a postcolonial nation, nobody can be free from this tension. All sorts of cultural and literary borrowings incorporate these processes of individualization and universalisation at the same time.

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