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THE LITERATURE OF SRIRANGAM SRINIVASA RAO - AN INQUIRY INTO THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Srirangam Srinivasa Rao (1910-1983), popularly known as Sri Sri, is recognized as the revolutionary wave of modern Telugu poetry and the father of Abhyudaya poetry. When we examine his works, especially his magnum opus Mahaprasthanam (1950), the influence of English literature is seen not only in thought but also in form, structure and style. This research paper examines how English and Western writers like T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Walt Whitman, P.B. Shelley, Louis Aragon, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud influenced Sri Sri's literature. The paper also gives additional examples from Khadga Srushti, Maro Prasthanam and his English translations. Finally, this paper proves that Sri Sri did not merely imitate English literature but digested it and transformed it into revolutionary Telugu poetry suited to Telugu soil.

Keywords: *Sri Sri; Mahaprasthanam; Influence of English Literature; T.S. Eliot; Abhyudaya Poetry; Free Verse.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Sri was born on 30th April 1910 in Visakhapatnam. Though he did not do M.A. in English, he had a close relationship with English literature from childhood. He studied at Madras University and worked in All India Radio, Andhra Prabha and Andhra Jyothi, introducing world literature to Telugu readers.

After Kandukuri Veereshalingam, the next major change in Telugu literature was brought by Sri Sri. Before him, Telugu poetry was Bhavakavitvam and bound by classical metres. Sri Sri converted it into free verse and people's poetry. English

literature was the main reason behind this change.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To study Sri Sri's English educational background.
2. To analyse the influence of modern English poets on Mahaprasthanam.
3. To examine English influence on Sri Sri's free verse technique.
4. To study the influence of Western thinkers on his progressive ideology.
5. To give additional examples from his other works.

3. ENGLISH EDUCATION AND BACKGROUND

Sri Sri read widely from childhood. He studied Romantic poets like Shelley, Keats, Byron, modern poets like Eliot, Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, and American poets like Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg.

He himself wrote poems in English like The Way of the World and translated many English poems into Telugu. He was also deeply influenced by Western thinkers like Marx, Engels, Freud and Darwin.

4. MAHAPRASTHANAM AND T.S. ELIOT - WITH EXAMPLES

The influence of T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922) on Mahaprasthanam is very clear.

Example 1 - Urban Despair:

Eliot wrote: "Unreal City, Under the brown fog of a winter dawn"
Sri Sri wrote in "Nagaralo Vana": "Chettu ledu, putta ledu, guttale konni trushna" - the same feeling of a dead city.

Example 2 - Technique:

Eliot used mythical method, mixing past and present, fragmentation, use of punctuation and line-breaks.

Sri Sri's famous line "Maro prapancham, maro prapancham pilichindi" - the repetition and breaking of lines is directly from Eliot's style. He also used the mythical method like Eliot, combining puranas, history and present.

Example 3 - Allusion:

Like Eliot, Sri Sri uses sudden allusions to history, puranas, and English literature without explanation.

5. W.H. AUDEN AND FREE VERSE REVOLUTION - WITH MORE EXAMPLES

The influence of W.H. Auden on Sri Sri is the highest.

Example 1 - Political Consciousness:

Auden's September 1, 1939 says: "I sit in one of the dives, On Fifty-second Street, Uncertain and afraid"
Sri Sri's Jayabheri says: "Artham kaani aasha vadi, Asha vadani artham kanu" - same political anxiety.

Example 2 - Anti-War:

Auden's *The Shield of Achilles* criticizes war and totalitarianism. Sri Sri's "Akashaniki Eguru" and "Jyotulu Veluguni Needalu" also have anti-fascist, anti-war tone.

Example 3 - Confession:

Sri Sri himself confessed in the foreword of *Khadga Srushti* (1966): "I was influenced by Auden". Auden, Spender and MacNeice brought free verse revolution in English in 1930s by leaving traditional metre and writing in spoken language. Sri Sri brought the same revolution into Telugu.

Additional Example - Louis Aragon:

French poet Louis Aragon's influence is seen in Sri Sri's "Maro Prasthanam" where he writes about Paris Commune and revolution.

**6. WALT WHITMAN AND SHELLEY
- WITH MORE EXAMPLES**

Whitman Example:

Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) has long lines, "I" voice, catalogues, and celebration of common man.

- Whitman: "I celebrate myself, and sing myself"

- Sri Sri: "Nenu Saitam Prapanchagni ki Samidha nokkati aahutichchanu" - same "I" as representative of humanity, long free lines.

Whitman's line "I contain multitudes" is similar to Sri Sri's "Vyaktini na nenu Vishvam, Vishvanni na nenu".

Shelley Example:

P.B. Shelley's *Ozymandias* (1818) and *Ode to the West Wind* (1819) have revolutionary spirit.

- Shelley: "O Wind, If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

- Sri Sri: "Pata vaibhavam pade kaviki dooranga, Kotta lokam pilustondi" - rejection of past glory, call for new world. Sri Sri considered himself as Telugu Shelley.

Additional Example - Mayakovsky:

Russian poet Mayakovsky's stepladder verse and loud slogans influenced Sri Sri's slogans like "Padandi Munduku, Padandi Thosuku".

**7. WESTERN IDEOLOGICAL
INFLUENCE - MARX, FREUD**

- Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) concept of class struggle is seen in *Mahaprasthanam*

call: "Koolilu, raitulu, sramikulu levandi, samara bheri moginchandi".

- Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams (1899) influence of dreams, subconscious is seen in Sri Sri's "Avataram" and "Mamathalu" poems where dream and reality mix.

Additional Example:

Darwin's theory of evolution is used in Sri Sri's poem "Parishodhana" where he talks about man coming from ape.

8. STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

Before Sri Sri, Telugu poetry was full of Sanskrit compounds and metre-bound. Like Veereshalingam brought simple prose like English prose, Sri Sri brought simple, forceful, emotional free verse like English free verse. He introduced techniques like enjambment, internal rhyme, alliteration, repetition - all from English poetry.

Example of Alliteration:

English: "The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew" (Coleridge)

Sri Sri: "Urikki, Urikki, Urikki padutondi"

- same sound repetition.

9. CONCLUSION

Srirangam Srinivasa Rao did not just translate English literature, he assimilated it. He took modernity from Eliot, progressiveness from Auden, free verse from Whitman, revolution from Shelley, class consciousness from Marx, and dream technique from Freud, and moulded them according to Telugu social and political context. He remained not a translator but a creator. That is why he is the pathfinder who showed Mahaprasthanam to modern Telugu poetry.

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