



A study of myth and beliefs in the novel chemmeen by thakazhi sivasankara pillai

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Abstract

Every fishing village in India has a myth of its own, there is a direct relation between the occupation and beliefs of the people. The myth in the novel is associated with cultural beliefs and behavioural pattern and fisher folks' beliefs are strongly ingrained in the tradition and customs that validates the cultural nuances, that are adhered to the social and religious beliefs, deeply rooted and ingrained in myth. The strict adherence to the rules and beliefs are wide spread phenomenon, beliefs in the sea goddess, a fisherman's wealth is his fisherman's virtue. Virtue is the most important thing, purity of the body and mind are sea side propriety.

Keywords: myth, tradition, customs, belief, virtue

1. Introduction

The story set in rural coastal Kerala, is about the faith and belief system of the fishing community and about a misfortune of a woman named karuthamma, in the novel, life of karuthamma is as delicate as a fish. As the novel progresses karuthamma state of mind is fish out of water. The moment she leaves behind her love and village, to her husband's place, the memories of her ill mother and dear ones keep on hunting her and the guilt that she carries with her and an age old moral code of community is passed through generation and it is that which acts as a barrier and a conflict it brings, is seen throughout the novel.

2. A fisherman's wealth is his fisher woman's virtue (Chemmeen-chapter 1. p. 9)

The belief that an unfaithful wife, will kill the husband in the sea, is a strongly seen in the novel. the life of the man who goes out to sea rests in the hands of his woman on the shore. (c.1.p.8) unfaithfulness, is condemned very openly in the community. Although, many commits adultery in private, the community banish such people from the seashore or gets outcasted. Women are always been an object of moral standard of right behavior, women in all culture have been focus point morally, purity is the foremost aspect for a woman, chastity is upheld as a true virtue that is clearly seaside's propriety. chastity is considered the appropriate behaviour for both Man and woman in all religion, this is the mirror of virtue.

3. Belief

The popular belief that the fishing community doesn't economically prosper because they have the curse of the fishes, the fishermen are disintegrating the fishes from their dear ones and disrupting the family by catching them every day. So, they will never prosper economically is a strong belief. Do you know why the sea cries at times? (c1.p9) the sea knows that if the sea mother gets angry, all will be ruined. But if she is pleased; she will give everything. There is gold in the sea.

4. Friendship

In the novel karuthamma friendship with pareekutty is against dictates of the community. A woman born and bred on the seaside is an inheritor of a long tradition of sea lore, breaking the code will results to ire of the community. Chakki remained karuthamma that an age-old moral code of the community was vested on every woman of the fishing hamlet. The childhood friendship between karuthamma and pareekutty, develops into attraction leading to gossip on the seashore, it is this, that leads to trouble for karuthamma.

5. Children of the sea

Every fisherman believes his wealth lies in the sea, the whole expanse of the sea. A boat and nets are for the people on the shore. A poor fisherman spends his lifetime dreaming to own a boat of his own, it is this dream, which motivates him to a life of hard work on the high seas, owning a boat and nets is the ultimate high point for a fisher folks. The fisher folk's faith in the sea mother, who will take care of their need, little ball of rice for each mouth, reinforce their faith in the sea goddess. A strong envy, to possess what a fellow fisherman acquires is a conflict, which divides them into separates factions, resentful to an advantage enjoyed by others is their gossip. The economic and social condition of fisherman is an open secret, any mobility upwards or downwards is the talk of the seashore. The children of the sea have a dictate of the seashore and a community which binds them, within this frame work, they leap and trode to their prosperity. The rhythm of the seashore- turned and tossed, season of rains, gusty winds, dense grey clouds, tranquil sea, are the rhythm of the fisher folks. A strong and enduring barricade built of an age-old and sacred moral code of the children of the sea, dictates the seaside's propriety.

6. Chastity

Only because a chaste wife had stood on the seashore, praying and waiting for her husband's safe return" (c1.p8)

that fishermen returned home safe every day. this belief is more based on subjugation of women rather than on religious sentiments. This is way of controlling a woman, using traditional customs. Women in fishing hamlets have always been treated as second class citizens by their male counterpart.

The gravity of life becomes upside down when a woman loss her chastity. Is becomes the talk of the seashore. Unfaithfulness is banished and scorned upon; the tradition of the sea bound the people to react that way. There is a direct relation between the custom and tradition that dictates a woman's life.

7. Patriarchy

Throughout the novel patriarchy is reinforced, the women of the seashore, are both oppressed and suppressed by their male counterpart. The main character chembankunju is typical example, whose only ambition and desires of his wife and daughter. The more money he acquires, the more insane he acts and behaves. Palani and pareekutty are both representation of two types of male mind set, Palani represents the softer side of an effeminate, who doesn't behave or react in a violent manner. The myth in the novel elaborates that the first fisherman Aadi mukkuva, who went out to fishing got stuck up in a furious storm but was saved by the kadalamma only because of his chaste wife, waited, prayed and did penance for him on the shore, whole night. Chastity of the woman is synonymous with purity. Patricentric clutch on women to restrain is clear enough, although, faithfulness and chastity is a dwell of social morality. All myths question the chastity of woman as a symbol of virtue and purity. Some myths are incorporated to values of culture, with in the self as conscious or subconscious guiding principles through learning or socialization. Patriarchy reinforces certain myths through cultural practice, beliefs or in the mode of socialization. the over emphasis and belief over the myth by the community represent the mindset of the fisher folk. Patriarchy reinforces myths to exercise and measure the femininity of women.

Conclusion

Myth in the novel is associated with cultural belief and behavioural pattern and the fisher folks belief, is strongly ingrained in customs and tradition, that validates the cultural nuances, that are adhered to the social and religious beliefs deeply rooted and ingrained in myths, to become social conviction that leads to superstitious beliefs that become powerful symbols which dictates norms of the fisher folks. The novel binds myth with customs, these traditional laws dictates the seaside propriety.

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