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The Vision (Philosophy) of the Oppressed in the “Urvara Sangeetham” (Fertility Music)

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Abstract

The Indigenous people of each Nation were those grew up along with Nature knowing (feeling/experiencing) its rhythm, protecting and caring for it. The Indigenous people of India also grew up in a similar manner. But the caste system evolved consequent to the Aryan invasion, segregated the Indigenous people as Adiyalar and Keezhalar (the Oppressed). The section of Brahmins which possessed by the supremacy of Knowledge politics, trapped the indigenous people under their control. They signified the Indigenous people as Demons and Barbarians stamping them as the ones who do not give comfort and convenience to the life style and custom of the Brahmins. In this age in which the oppresses builds defence recognizing his own real roots surmounting all these situations, it becomes visible in art and literature. The play ‘Urvarasangeetham’ written by K.V. Sreeja and EC Dinesh Kumar based on the ‘Pulappaattu’ a myth related to the heritage of the Kanakka Community of Eranaadu, transforms the inner instincts of the Oppressed, into a theatrical text. The article “The Vision/ Philosophy of the Oppressed in the Urvarasangeetham is an enquiry into it.

The Indigenous people of the Nation became excluded from the knowledge politics supremacy evolved in the country as a result of a transformation into a subordinated state the regional heritage of India by the Aryan Invasion. The Brahmins who invaded, trapped the Indigenous people under their control. The knowledge possessed by the Indigenous people about soil, water, air, agriculture, medicine, medical treatment, art and such environmental knowledge was exploited using intellectual strategies by the Upper Caste or the Oppressing section. They stamped the Indigenous people assuming them as Barbarians, people devoid of culture. They gained supremacy over them in the name of “Priestly – knowledge system”. The migrant Brahmin became the authority with supremacy on the Indigenous people using the primacy of such words as Dhyana, mananam, tapas, arshdanjaanam and so on. The Oppressing class acquired fame as the producers of the wisdom after recording and presenting the Natural wisdom obtained from the Indigenous people. The Indigenous people were labelled and signified in the written literature of the Brahmins, as Demons, and Barbarians who spoiled the serenity of the lifestyle of Brahmins. Thus the Kshatriyas used their kingly power and authority to ensure comfort to the Brahmins either by annihilating

the Indigenous people as a whole or by making them subordinates (or subservient people) (or slaves). When the concepts of Nation and State evolved, the superior classes of each place became the Authorities and their signs became the National signs. (Desarashtravum Hindu Colonialisavum p. 12)

Just as superior Authorities evolved in India in the name of casteism, superior authorities evolved at the global level in the name of monopolistic Imperialism. The western knowledge system gained supremacy empowered by the knowledge heritage squeezed from various Eastern communities making them inferior. And thereby the Westerners possessed and made their own, the basic power to say the final word and verdict on the world knowledge.

The superior sections of each Nation evolved and transformed on their own, into power domains of modern knowledge built upon mechanical logic. There upon the Oppressed had to carry on themselves a new kind of ignorance. The Indigenous people were the ones who lived in tune with the earth feeling the pulses and rhythm of – Nature – Universe. They found the soil and its fertility with reverence. During the peak time of Homosapienism, it was the arrogance of humans who had dared to enslave the soil and indigenous

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inhabitants, which gave (presented) to Nature the experience of destabilized or imbalanced eco-system. In this Andropocscen age, an awareness has evolved that humans should be ready to listen to the soul, essence of the soil again. Man has realized that the Nature would conquer all his thoughts of superiority otherwise.

The thoughts and movements for the Indigenous people evolved in the world Nations consequent to the recognition that the destruction of the Indigenous people and environment would destroy the future of humanity. The new construction of knowledge of the post-modernist intellectual context is perceptible in the dialogues and discussions related to Andropocscene. The Vision about the age namely, Andropocscene caused in cultural domain the formation of the lessons about self-awareness in man to protect Nature and the attitudes which claim and demand that the dalit and woman have the right to determine themselves.

The Oppressed community which used to remain silently through Ages in the socio-cultural domains of India, has begun to intervene in the building of knowledge and defend the Elite, and demand sharing the power and authority. This is a progress in the contemporary social system. The Academic studies on the experiences of the oppressed in the post-colonial period, and the Dalit Movements, all are the signs of resurrection of the Indigenous people subordinated as the oppressed.

There have been plenty of works presenting the cross sections of the life of the oppressed in the fields of Art and Literature in Kerala. The plays of Kavalam Narayana Panicker have depicted the unique experiences in which the folklore culture of Kerala has been incorporated. The plays 'Ravunni' and 'Kadukka' by P.M. Thaj, 'Nattugaddhika' by K.J. Baby, 'Kuruthi' by Joy Mathew, 'Uratti' by Manoj Kana, 'Thendikkoothu' by Ramachandran Mokeri are plays which support the defensive values created by the oppressed in Theme and Theatre language. (Uravum Kanavum. P197).

'Urvarasangeetham' which won the citation of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy shares certain hints at the Philosophy of the Oppressed which has not been pointed out in Malayalam so far. This play which has been staged since 2012 by the Kala padasala of Arangottukara was written jointly by KU Sreeja and E.C. Dinesh Kumar.

The basis of the play Urvarasangeetham is a myth related to the heritage of the Kanakka Community of Eranaadu. There is a custom in the Kanakkar community of singing the 'Pulappaattu' on the occasion of the rituals on the 16th day after the death of a person. It is their belief that the soul of the departed is placed with ritualistic ceremonies on the occasion. When 'Pampadi' the singer of the Pulappattu finishes the singing of the 16 songs, it might be dawn. The themes discussed in the Pulappattu are planting paddy seedings, & sowing of seeds of ellu, searching for calf searching for bride, bundling firewood and so on. In the songs, Kanakka women are presented as the bold women who bundle up firewood using "pullani cobra", a kind of poisonous snake. It is also described that after cultivating ellu, giving the oil of the Palakkad Brahmin after getting it processed from the procured Ellu or Sesame. The oral heritage of Kanakkar contains elaborate Knowledge about Nature, Agriculture and Social Structure.

The Origin of Kanakka Community, the beginning of paddy agriculture and so on are elaborated in the Story-song of Pulappattu about the "Thiruvullam Chaathan and Kalivan Kotti" The structure of caste, Stave master relationship etc. also are explained in it. It is a sub-tedtual variant of this story-song that becomes visible in the 'Urvarasangeetham'.

The Elements of story and politics in 'Pulappattu'.

During the time humans subsisted only on fruits and roots, they were not aware of grains. It was the Kalladi section of the cherumar community who used to cultivate roots. The Cherumar did not know to till and prepare the soil neatly for cultivation. One day, a cheruman who during his time of rest had gone to draw water from a nearby well heard the sound of farmer plowing the soil using the oxen. He saw a long haired, soil coloured boy with no clothing on his body, tilling the paddy field very symmetrically. He narrated this story to the landlord. The landlord told him to pick the plowman by holding his long hair. The next day the cheruman, hiding under the guise of a peacock, got hold of the boy and handed him over to the landlord. The landlord, who got the boy from the soil made him a supervisor for tending the cattle and agricultural work. One day he fell ill. The girl from the Tharavadu, gave him a medicine which had a bitter taste. Because of the bitter taste he could not swallow it and he spat it out. It fell on her body and consequently the girl was

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driven out of her family. But he married the girl. He lived with her on the Thiruvullam kunnun, which was gifted to him by the landlord. Their names were Thiruvullam chathan and Kalivan kotti. Kotti who was pregnant went to the river to drink water. She had the labour pain then and she gave birth to a baby while in the river, and the newborn baby drow new in the river. Kotti used to frequent the river prompted by the thoughts of her baby. One day while she was weeping on the riverside thinking about her kid, a snakehead fish jumped out of the river. The fish told her that it was her son and asked her to bring his father next time. He told him also to bring 'Kongan' knife and a stick. When they came, the fish took them for a voyage on its back and led them to a land of ripe paddy field. The fish told them to reap the paddy and gather it in the basket. They did accordingly. While returning with paddy they saw on the way ripe millet. When chaathan took a handful from it, millet said: "If I am thrown into a ploughed furrow I shall sprout. Thus chaathan returned to the village with corn. The snakehead fish reminded him that he should not try the corns and grind it. It told him also to begin agriculture. But chaathan did not obey the advice of the snakehead fish. The Landlord could get the smell of the trying of the corn. He immediately took the possession of the corn. Chaathan was left with only the right to cultivate.

What is seen in the Pulappattu is the power of exploitation of the fair-skinned upperclass who subordinates the oppressed as his own dependent and forcing him to work on meagre payment. The upperclass can be seen in the Pulappattu as the one who possessed using his intelligence, the ownership of the grains and the labour of farmers. The kanakkan who was got from the soil (the first Kanakkan of the Kanakka community is Thiruvullam Chathan) when transformed as the inheritor of agriculture the upperclass man assume himself as the paddy brought by him and also the customer or user of the harvest which is the product of his labour. He encroaches upon the ownership of paddy also and brings it into his own possession, quite deftly. He gives them generously, the pet names Valyaalan and Harijan and brings the sons of the soil under their protection and control. This upperclass Man appears as the spokesperson of the supremacy politics which snatches away the right of self-determination. This is the political nature which underlies in the story of Pulappattu.

The Theatrical Portrayal of the Life of the Oppressed visible in Urvarasangeetham

The play Urvarasangeetham has been structured deleting and adding certain elements of myth in the Pulappattu. The play opens with a violent rhythmic dance of a Man and Woman of the oppressed community as part of a ritual enacted in a village temple or Kaavu.

The song goes like this :

Ominathom polimakkale

Kettolinkala Kettolinkale

Ningalogo anthalanu

Ningalago inchiyallanu..

The devotees in the frenzy of devotion continue to receive blessings. The scene is decorated using the agricultural signs of the village. The Dalit couples dance as the symbols of Aadimatha and Aadipitha. The Father (Sun) who is the sky, feed with food, the children, the living creatures. It is because of the grace and blessing of these that cultivation takes place. The play has been manifested in the customs of the oppressed in which, songs, rhythm, verbal utterances and rhythmic steps are essential parts.

After the rituals at the Kaavu, Father and Mother go home to bring the daughter home. During the journey the daughter gets frightened in darkness. On reaching home Father and Mother enact the story of Kalivaan Kotti and Thiruvullam Chaathan, in dance form. In the Pulappattu of the Kanakka Community, the concepts of father and Mother do not exist. Such a concept was incorporated in the play perhaps to universalize the theme. The Snakehead fish, the eldest offspring crossing the sea with Chathan and Kotti is not mentioned in the play. The second child was taken away by the wind. She became a bird. The third one was cherukotti. When she reaches maturity and the age of marriage, the Snakehead fish her brother and the elder sister who is a bird, enters the scene to perform the rites of inheritance. They introduce her to paddy and cultivation. The powers of Nature, her brethren helps her to cultivate paddy and reap the harvest. The birds and other creatures which joined in cultivation, take away their share. The agricultural life style, in

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which men and soil inhabit together in mutual knowledge is mentioned here.

“Cheru kottye... kathiru moornathe

Ante kaiyanenkilum kadam kaatya...

ente kuttiyolkullatha muppori athu

ijje modakkenda... (Urvarasangeetham)

Cherukotti gladly accepted the words of her father. Time passed. Cherukotti, the younger sister, breached the advice of the Snakehead fish not to try the newly reaped paddy. The Man attracted by the smell, while she was processing and milling paddy, (This part has been incorporated as a different element of story, distinct from the Pulappattu). He came there enamoured by the smell of rice and the woman, and took into possession both the woman and cultivation. He, who was an invader, assumed himself as a fair skinned superior with all powers. He couldn't tolerate the claims of snakehead fish and the Bird for the share of Cultivation. He poisoned the air, aiming the bird, and the water to destroy the snakehead fish. The intolerant, self-centered man's face is visible in him who cannot tolerate living beings inhabiting together with a sense of equality. All fellow beings were destroyed using pesticides and transfers. And, declares emimity to Nature thus on this occasion, to the husband of cherukotti, who is the representative of man, the words of Thiruvullam chathan and kalivan kotti risc in the play.

Aarennu ketta njan kalivan kottinan

Nte mannillum madinjilum maanathum

Paithangale pettu njan thanne...

Mannayi piranna njan thanne...

The essence of these lines is that, all born on earth, all living beings are fellow beings, and one should not subjugate or destroy and there.

Urvarasangeetham deals with the differences in approach to Nature happened to the humanity. The subservience of woman oppressed by Male supremacy, and the subservience of the Indigenous people who subsist on Nature, squeezed under the Brahmin

supremacy should be ended. This concept is thematized in this play. Woman is portrayed in the play as one who lives knowing the mind of the soil, and is against the male selfishness rooted in consumerism. 'Urvarasangeetham' upholds the reality of life of the Tribal Tradition which moves forward in association with the fellow beings against the selfish face of contemporary life.

In the tradition of the oppressed Folk Arts, Ritual Arts and Ritual plays are enacted not on the stage but on exterior stages. Similarly, the Aarangottukara Kalapaadasala performs on the stage, with people's participation making open environmental spaces as stages.

In the myth of Kanaka community which inspired Urvarasangeetham, places the ideology of the superior caste in the place of the culprit. But, instead of such an approach that myth is re-read as the universal theme of a reminder of the biobondage between Man and Nature. However, it remains a truth that the Urvarasangeetham has not succeeded to theatricalize precisely the new attitude which should evolve in the society towards the Indigenous man who was forced to be the oppressed and the social justice he ought to have received.

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