



Research Paper

Educational and Literary contributions of K. P. Karuppan in Kerala Society

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ABSTRACT

Basically, Kerala was a caste based state. Lot of castes and sub-castes existed and each one had its own boundary, which was never allowed to cross. There were certain social customs to be followed even at a man's birth, marriage and death. Pandit Karuppan vehemently reacted against such social injustice and evils. Pandit Karuppan used his literary ability to fight against casteism and social injustice. He campaigned for the rights of lower caste people. He criticized the evils and atrocities suffered by people in the name of caste through his literary works. This article is a sincere effort to trace the role played by Pandit Karuppan in the educational and literary field.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The early decades of the 20th century witnessed the beginning powerful social reform movements in Kerala. The social reformers, teaching of the saints, the press and the ground for change. Their activities helped the downtrodden people to realize their rights and duties towards society. A number of social reforms of the 19th and 20th century helped the marginalized section of Kerala to liberate themselves from the clutches of casteism. The Brahmins imposed their hegemony on the indigenous people. Eventually they divided the population into various castes by placing them sever at the top of the hierarchy of wealth, power, position and privilege. This made the condition of the marginalized people deplorable in Kerala which resulted widespread resistance against caste hegemony. The social reformers used their literacy skill and organizational ability to combat literacy, social injustice, casteism and superstitions. They devoted their entire life to the betterment of the discriminated communities. They fight for the common good of the people.

Kerala had the most rigid and elaborate caste structure in India. A lot of changes took place in the society as a result of the impact of various socio-religious reform movements. The Kerala society was awakened from its age long slumber by the activities of the various social reformers, and the society started showing the symptoms of a social renaissance. The co-operation given by colonial hegemony provided a new impact for the social reform movement in Kerala. The most important aspect of the social reform movement in Kerala during the 19th century was the awakening of the lower caste people and their struggle against the evils of the Hindu society. The freedom that we enjoy today is the joint effort of so many renaissance leaders. One of the prominent figures associated with the socio-religious movements in Kerala was Pandit Karuppan, otherwise known as Kerala Lincoln.

K.P Karuppan (Kandathilparambil Pappu Karuppan) was a legendary personality who dedicated his life to the upliftment of the society. He was born in 1885, March 24 at Cheranallur near Ernakulam. He always stand for the well-being of his own community and Pulaya community. It was very challenging and extra ordinary thing to support the cause of Pulaya people at that time period. Karuppan belonging to Vala group of community a backward community during that time.

Pandit (The scholar) Karuppan was very renowned as a poet, social reformer and a great teacher. His status as a great teacher should never be ignored. The lions share of his life is spent as an active teacher. He had achieved greatness in every field in which he worked.

Pandit Karuppan started his career as a teacher at St. Theresa's High School of Ernakulam. He taught Sanskrit and Malayalam. During this time the state Government appointed in the fisheries Department. He discontinued in this profession because he has a disinterested passion towards it. Later, he was appointed as a Sanskrit scholar and master at V. G. High school, Trissur. Again he was transferred to children school at

Ernakulam. He had been working for a long time here. The school was particularly known as Cast Girls High School. The girls belonged to Higher castes were only allowed to study there. The scholar Karuppan being a backward community person allowed to teach there mainly because he was such a scholar beyond all segregations. Later he rose to the position of the Malayalam scholar and master at the Maharajah University College. Almost all of the literary and cultural activities are held at Trichur and Ernakulam while he was the master in various schools and colleges.

The scholar Karuppan was concentrated in his teachings and he was capable to deserve love and admiration of his co-workers. He was complimented and congratulated everywhere by the authorities. He had never been frustrated and disgusted in his activities whatever it may be engaged. As a teacher his activities are honorable and absolutely sincere.

The chairperson of cast Girls High School at Ernakulam Mrs. Ambadi Karthiayani Amma held her opinion about Karuppan the historical hero, that after some years of teaching the government gifted him the membership in the legislature. His words, at the gathering to compliment him at the school are very memorable "He had declared on those days that he didn't believe the position of a member of a legislative assembly is nobler and greater or useful than the position of a dedicated master. Even on the day of the gathering of legislative assembly he used to come to the school at sharp 9'O clock in the morning and giving classes on Sanskrit. It showed that he had the dedication, dutifulness and he had sincere love and affection to his students. He had a lot of students who were fortunate to hear his attractive and melodious reciting of Sanskrit poems and the simple interpretation of those poems. He had the special quality to behave very patiently and politely even to the lazy students. Because of the limitations of space, the Sanskrit classes were conducted at the varanda. He hadn't been complaining about the hazards and hurdles on the way of his dutiful activities". It is very helpful to understand the scholar Karuppan's dedication to the profession of teaching.

Our historical hero was very ideal in the eyes of the critics. As a result whether there were, may certain human weakness they hadn't been ridiculous or misleading the society. Honourable Karuppan master was not a person who regarded the profession of teaching as just a means to get remuneration. He was very careful to the total development and redemption of those who are listening him. During the time when he was teaching the girls school at Ernakulam he created songs and plays to be performed in the annual day celebrations. Besides, he wrote plays and directed those plays to be staged as he was teaching at the V.G. High School, Thrissur.

The historical figure Mr. Karuppan, transferred to the Maharaja's University College from Girls School Ernakulam. He started his career as Sanskrit Scholar and Professor in the Department of Malayalam. Professor P. Sankaran Nambiar who had been the honourable chairman of the girl's school at Ernakulam made certain reference to scholar Karuppan. "Mr. Karuppan was an eminent person. He wrote poems including beautiful and suitable arguments with ideas appropriately mixed with them. He had never used words laboriously to gain the beauty of singing. There were great poets who had pictorial power and musical verbatim. Their poems were entertaining and enjoyable. Mr. Karuppan was very famous among them".

Pandit Karuppan was very keen in the profession teaching and so he was honored and loved by the students and others elsewhere.

Karuppan's contributions

According to caste system prevailing in the society Karuppan belonged to laymen community. He had victimized many sufferings and miseries caused by the caste system and its segregation. He was very sad on seeing the miseries of his own community and other lower caste-people. Mr. Karuppan started to act properly against segregation. As he started to work against caste system he didn't oppose the apostles of the caste system, but he had appropriately tried to describe the absurdity and meaninglessness of the caste-system. He used the meaningful and rational thoughts in passionate and powerful language which infused thoughts and thus he made a revolution in the thoughts of spoke men of caste system. His aim of the extermination of caste barriers was designed through all possible means.

There is clear evidence available of when the prominent poet did start to write poems. From the history of his early life one should make out that he was a born genius writing poems during the youth.

Pandit Karuppan's creative works are: Jathikkummi, Udyana Virunnu, Shakuntalam Vanchippattu, Balakalesom Drama, Lalithopaharam, Shakuntala, Thirrunalkummi, Samudayika Ganakalalal, Dharma Kahalam, Sthothra Mandaram, Samatisaptaham, Arya Prashasti, Chitraklekha, Druvacharitham, Panchavadi Mahasandhi, Sri Buddhan, Acharabhooshanam, Dheevara Tharuni etc.

Jaathikkummi

'Jathikkummi' is the most famous work of Pandit Karuppan. It harassed the bad and vicious impact of caste system. This work is written with the aid and support of his own experience. It consists of a lot of autobiographical elements.

'Caste' is the curse of Kerala. Once there was a society in Kerala without caste barriers. This fact is unknown to the majority of Keralites. It is well said in the 'Sangha Works'. In those works, there is no direct or

indirect expression of the world 'Jathi'. Pandithpath, Purananooru are works of 'Sangha' period. There is no reference of caste or 'Jathi'. After the driving away of Buddha religion there came Bhramanareligion and segregated people according to their 'Chathurvarnya' system. Castes are thus established here forever. "Untouchable, unjoiners and unseeable". These kinds deformed ideas come into being in 'ShankataSmruthi' we have found about 64 blind and deformed rites. In the state of Kerala, we found the drastic rites exist more powerfully than in any other state in India. A pulaya person will stand feet away from the Bhramin. The pulaya and the paraya will keep off the Nayar. The Theeyar will stand a loof the 'Shudra'. The theeya who comes closer to the Shudra will be killed at once. But Shudra does not touch the Bhramin, but he can go near the Bhramin. Yet the pulaya has to bath if the Shudra touch Pulaya sans saying. Thus the evils of chathurvarnya was stronger in Kerala than that of any other states in India. PanditKaruppan had raised his voice against the wicked caste system with others who think like him.

'Jathikkummi' should be regarded as the prominent work written by PanditKaruppan who thought that the upliftment of the down trodden was his ultimate aim in his life. This work reveals the absurdity negligence of segregation of caste system. Daringly set out to redempt the community through literature. Thus, we find that PanditKaruppan is the first revolutionary and patriot. We didn't get information that there, were any work in our language like 'Jathikkummi' which questioned the absurdity of caste system. This was created at the time when he was a youth. 'ManeeshaPanchakom' of Sri Shankaracharya (1080) was translated by the poet including Pandit's experiences with good intentions he named it 'Jathikummi'. It was printed and published in 1087. The flash of the poet's genius and deep acumen emerge crystal clear in this work.

The caste barrier which becomes deep rooted through literature should be exterminated by the powerful weapon of literature itself. PanditKaruppan, the historical hero found it through deep insight. So for the purpose of annihilation of caste system he wrote 'Jathikummi' and several other works and spread his views in the midst of the society and community.

The worth of Jathikkummi is the ManeeshaPanchakom of Sri Shankaracharya. It is comparatively a small poem and 'Jathikkummi' is the liberal and broad and a very simplified interpretation of ManeeshaPanchakom. To inspire the uneducated and attract them a folklore meter is also included in it is known as 'Ammanakkummi'. The idea are express in such a way that it is understandable to the illiterate society. Through the interpretation of the 'ManeeshakaPanchakom' the caste at lowest rung of the ladder of caste, such as pulayas and parayas whose diabolic is pictured humorously under the cover of Maneeshakom. The Pandit and poet is used his pen for the communal friendship and co-operation. PanditKaruppan enlightened the 'heartprint' of Malayalam in the right way in the right manner. In the form and texture this work is something new and mountable heights in literature.

The brought number of evidences in 'Jathikkummi' that the caste segregation had come into being recently. The reference about Kali Arayathi (Sathyavati). The ascetic vyasa, the king Santhanu, Vallikurathy, ShisoonuSubhramayan. PanditKaruppan told their stories in Jathikummi.

The poet repeatedly reflects the sufferings and miseries inflicted by the untouchability and the low – caste casted away people. The miseries of untouchables and meaninglessness of the idiotic and hyperbolic rites exists Kerala.

The poet and PanditKaruppan had written the Jathikkummi Kollam Era 1080 and printed and published in 1087. This work was by hearted by the untouchable especially the pulayas and parayas in Ernakulam, Idakkochi, Kodungalloor, Mulavukada and several other place. Like the HarinamaKeerthanam of Hindus it has also been singing in the houses of the untouchables and they enjoyed the Jatikummi during the closing of the day. Thus this work infused in the downtrodden people's mind, the desire for freedom, self respect and other good feeling entered into their soul without being known to themselves and it gave an overwhelming feeling and it became dazzlingBalakaleshomNatakam

BalakaleshomNatakam is another famous and prominent work of the scholar poet PanditKaruppan. It is written during the nasty caste system over rule the society in viruluous manner. It is touching the whole human communities in Kerala, and it contains the revolutionary ideas.

Sources of the play, Balakalesham

During the beginning of the 20th century Cochi was ruled by a scholarly and large hearted king. Later he was renowned as a Maharaja who sacrificed his royal position. His 60th birth anniversary was known as 'Shashtyabdapoorthy'. It was 1912 and in comemmoration of the celebration, the authorities decided to create a play placing the king as the central Character. The play which comes to the first place will be gifted a conciliatory award. Several poets' and dramatists have participated in this contest. But our historical hero – PanditKaruppan's play, Balakalesham was chosen as the first and the best.

The creation of the play was done in hurly burly because PanditKaruppan had heard about him contest just 10 days before the last date fixed for receiving the play. It is play written on behalf of the renowned kings 60th birth anniversary. So it should be satisfying the king and the royal circle. It should be grand in its narrative and its theme. Moreover PanditKaruppan wrote this play for the redemption of the down trodden people and it

should be inspiring for revolutionizing the rules and regulations of the government. As a result the plot of the play was constructed in 4 days. And Karuppan spent three or four days to complete the creation of this play throughout the day and night. Then the play was handed over to the convener of the judging committee Mr. C. Achuthamenon and it was the poets close friend Mr. K.P. Peter was given the duty to hand over the play to the convener.

Pandit Karuppan's Balakalesham was chosen as the best play and he was awarded for this play. But the play became very problematic. So Kerala Varma Valiyakoi Thampuran, A.R. Raja Raja Varma, Dr. Palpu and others read the play and praised as the best. Ulloor had also praised the play and congratulated the poet and playwright.

The Balakalesham play is constructed in three acts. The names of the hero and heroines had given to the play as the title. 'Bala-Kochi' the heroine of the play is Kochi country. Kaleshan means king and he is the hero of the play. Thus the play had got a symbolic frame.

The play follows the tradition of Sanskrit plays. At first comes the 'Nandi' or the prologue and then comes the chorus and talks with heroine in which he says "Pandaram Chollidattoru Puthiya Tharam Natya Mishradiyogam". Thus the novelty of this play is cleared. Then the first act begins. The heroine Bala has just pasted with her husband and is suffering from the pain of pasting. She enters with her royal friend (Thozhy) Suneethi. Their conversation reveals that the prosperity has lost a few and they praise the ruling efficiency of the Maharaja. Then the Kaleshan enters to the scene. At this context the heroine Bala asked to Kaleshan: The rule of the kingdom Kochi will be changed according to the time. The importing of employees from abroad will be stopped. The downtrodden people will be freed from the barriers of caste system and raise them by giving them education. In the administration the king will realize the desire of the people. The untouchability and other bad rituals should be banned by law. Here the poet uses the heroin to make clear the gap between the employees of abroad and of the inland.

One can understand the idea of the first act is very amusing and amazing. The poet is using many metaphors and similes that are extremely interesting and meaningful. 'Kakans' means crow refers to the lower caste people. They are uncivilized and should confine in the 'koodar' of education and it is essential for the goodness of our kingdom.

In the second act of the play a Lord of caste, who is a Namboothiri from a 'Mana' which has no name and address. His life is pictured with sound timely humors and statistically created his activities. The idiotic Namboothiri's character implies that there should be up-to-date changes are essential in the feelings and thoughts of the people. After the crowning of the king, the introduction of train, pipe water, industry, education, city cleanary and sanitation should useful all subjects with any distinction of caste, high or low.

The Karnor of bad habits and rituals like the Namboothiri of the second act gives a lot of laughter and wit in the third act. The Poliparampan, Thenekkodan, Kshamachetti are the characters signify their names. Breaking the law of the king, the Karnor and his gang tortured Kochaluppulayan. Then the king tried the Karnor and his gang. By the pressure of the circumstance Kochaluppulayan is asked to sing Maneeshapanchakom Kummi. Later the king invited the executioner to hang the cruel Poliparampan and Thenakkodan. After this sentence, the Maharajan sentenced to send Karnor to some uncivilized savage land and Kshamachetti to be exited to the island of Andaman. All these events evoke thoughts and laughter alike.

Towards the end of this act, the Kaleshan, Bala queen with their children arriving. In their conversation they refer to changing the Ernakulam River into a harbor and prepare the harbor invite ships. They talk about establishing a samajam (committee) to solve the quarrels between the lords and people. The king decided to hear the opinions of the people and received a written document of best wishes in Durbar. Later the king offered several reforms for the betterment of the subjects. Then with the best wishes the play ends.

The play satisfies the Indian tradition of ending with the best wishes. Let us stand with heart – felt salutation to the poet and dramatist, Pandit Karuppan. However, the play has invited the rebellious opinions from many wicked people. Sri Ramakrishnapillai had degraded the play. There are many differences of opinions about the printing and publishing by Cochi Sahitya Samajam. Rama Krishnapillai ridiculed Balakalesham by calling it 'Vala Kalesham'. By calling this he ridiculed Karuppan's community. According to Ramakrishnan, Karuppan is a Valan. Valan's communal job (Dharma) is fishing. A Valan help doing his work, touched literature. It is 'Adharma' he is thinking that it will destroy the community. Ramakrishnan is a slave to the Bhramins and so it was unbearable to him. So turned against Karuppan with his sword hurling like a member of suicide squad (chaver).

A play aiming at the social revolution has never been written before and after 'Balakalesham'. V. T. Bhattathiripad wrote "Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekkku". M.P. Bhattathirippadu wrote 'Rithumati'. But they are not dealing with any social reformation but they are written for their community's revival. Those plays are written after many decades of the creation of the play Balakalesham of Pandit Karuppan.

Balakalesham was acclaimed by the king's like Kerala Varma Valiyakoi Thampuran, A. R. Raja Raja Varma. It is written against the vicious caste system. But the kings and royal figures haven't disclaimed the greatness of the plays like Jathikummi, Balakalesham of the historical personal, Pandit Karuppan.

UdyanaVirunnu

It is of the monumental work of the playwright PanditKaruppan who wrote Jathikummi and Balakalesham. Here we can have the unselfishness as well as his love for his community.

‘UdyanaVirunnu’ or the complaints of a dheevaran. (OruDheevaranAvalathi). It describes an event which is the sum total of pangs of pain of heart inflicted upon the self-respectful poet. The king who ruled over the kingdom of Kochi from 1895 to 1914. During the end of 1914 the king sacrificed his position and became famous Ramavarma is one of the most memorable great man. The people of his kingdom decided to set up a statue of the Maharaja at Ernakulam. But unfortunately the World War 1 brokeout and therefore the raising of the statue were not happened. After the war, gifting 1300 caret gold a sculptor was asked to sculpture the statue. Thus a metallic statue reached at Kochi from England. It was decided to set up the statue on October 13th of 1925. The governor of Madras, Lord Khoshan was invited to reveal the statue. The same statue is still remaining at the Pajoormaidan. A royal feast was arranged at the Irvin Park in honor of the governor. At the banquet there came the political agent Mr. KottenDwara, the Paliatt big father and several officials and officers. Most of MLA’s in Kochi had also been invited. But Karuppan being one of members of the legislature was not invited. It has been a great pain to PanditKaruppan ad this compelled him to write ‘UdyanaVirunnu’.

Through the work UdyanaVirunnu the author uplifted the nobility of his community. Through the gem of manikkom buried in a pit, its colour and glamour will never be reduced. There were many among the Arayas and Valas who enjoyed high positions, when the king and his train travels in Royal boats (Palliyodoms), to lead the canoe and go escort there were many Arayas and Valas are appointed. They are called the ValiyaArayans. The ValiyaArayas held the unsheathed sword will escort the Palliyodoms. Pointing out these features, the poet held the nobility of his community so high.

When the crowning of king takes place in Kochi, it is right of the Arayas to present the royal gift to the king. This is called, “Thirumulkkazcha”. When the flag of the festival in the temple is hoisted, there should have the presence of the ValiyaArayan. It is an unwritten rule. There are many bewildering assertions and interrogations are in the Garden Feast of PanditKaruppan.

Lalithopaharam

It is one of the wonderful contributions of PanditKaruppan. It is a hymn song written in praise of the idol of the temple of Chottanikkara, Lalitha Devi. The poet here praises his grandmaster T.K. Krishnan also.

Acharabhooshanam

It is one of the revolutionary works of PanditKaruppan. It is published for progress and development of the downtrodden communities. There were many unwanted rites customs and system among the low caste communities for the liberation of them he adopted many things such as: Bath at the dawn, morning prayer, women should recite prayers in the closing of the day. He had insisted “Sandhyageethapirap and pervilly’. Delivery of the women, marriage, matrimonial rites, garland (thali), dress, feast, dishes polive, marriage on one direction, feast, rights, death and burial ceremony and the rites after the burial and several rights will be refined and purified. This work is written for the persuasion. Here, his name is elliptic Devi Dasan in pseudonym is used instead of PanditKaruppan.

Shakuntala: The neglected heroine

Shakuntala, rejected by her husband is the subject of poetry in the third conference of ‘SahithyaParishat’. In this contest of poetic creation, PanditKaruppan hadn’t taken part. Later because of the urge of his friends and well-wishersPandit wrote this poem, Shakuntala, the neglected heroine. This poem is conjoined with meaningfulness and voice melody. It divided into three completed parts.

ShakuntalamVanchippatt

This work is written in two or three days, which supposed to have sung in the fourth gathering of Bharatavilasom conference under the presidium of the great poet, Ulloor. In it the poet concise the events in the second part of the Shakuntalam. There are many enthusiastic narratives. Here described the events until the ‘GandharvaVivaham’.

The song art tradition of Kerala

It was PanditKaruppan who undertook the series of speech held at Maharajah’s College, Ernakulam one behalf of BhashaSahithyamandalam in 1934, of Chathupanicker memorial speech. The subject was the communal arts in Kerala. PanditKaruppan very much interested to collect the old songs. So he was capable to describe the subject very beautifully.

Pandit had conducted many researches for the sake of this. He had invited the pulayas, Cherumar, Pulluvar, Parayar, Velan, Ammanattakar from the north and south. They were asked to sing their song, present their arts. Ask them to rehearse and teach those songs and arts to others, her corrected mistakes and spelling

faults. He rectified all of them took down those artistic creations: Chenemarpattu, Vattiparrtu, JnathuVelappattu, vadakkanPattu, Ivarnatakam etc. were preserved.

The historical figure described about Cherumarpathu and Ivarnattakom. His memories of the king is a wonderful prose with the qualities of poetry. Three parts of KairaliKauthukom, Chitralamkarom 6 parts, jubiliganam 3 parts. PadhyaPadavali of Kerala VarmaPadhyamanchari of Ulloor. These are all created for the purpose of study. The thullal of Kaliamardhanam, the drama Lankamardhanam, Edward Vijayam drama are all the writings of his childhood. Druvacharitam, Saudamini, Panchavadi, KattileChettan, Shakuntalam (IInd part) are written to be played by the students.

The universal truth and the inborn beauty of the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore's poem 'Urvasi' was translated into Malayalam by the eminent and the prominent poet PanditKaruppan. In 1924 this poem had published in KavanaKaumudi. It is still existing with being changed a little bit.

The poet extracted certain part of 'Manu Smruti' and translated it into the form of Kilipattu. 'Naishdham' is a poetic drama with dance and music.

There are many poems written complete stanzas published in periodicals and have been forgotten. The poetic genius and talent of PanditKaruppan can be seen in those poems. Kanyakumari, To TheKaithappovu, Pulayar, Dheenarodhanam, Mangalamala, Chanchankutty and several others are in case in point.

II. CONCLUSION

K.P. Karuppan used his pen as a sword and fought for the downtrodden communities and people. He fought an endless battle for the social redemption and against the nasty caste system. He is the greatest social reformer who wrote poems, plays, songs, and essays for the upliftment of the people who had been tortured physical, mentally and spiritually sometimes morally. Such a social reformer must be admired or adorned even like a God by the downtrodden people. Karuppan master is well known as a literary personality, scholar and protector of the depressed people. He was a selfless humanitarian a great leader relentlessly worked for the development of the backward communities in Kerala.

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