



Research Paper

A Postcolonial Study of the Select Tamil Folktales.

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Abstract:

Folklore is considered to be a part of the culture and heritage of Tamil Nadu. Folklore being a part of it, brings out the essence of it. Tamil Nadu being the colonised parts of India, these stories can be viewed in a postcolonial perspective, and the story line proves the existence of colonial impact still.

Keywords: *folklore, folktales, culture, colonised, postcolonial.*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

India is a country filled with folklore variety and it is available to offer homegrown folklore materials. It is filled with humungous cultural and traditional practices linked with religion and society. Since the number of practices are countless, having to keep everything in a written record became a challenging task, and it still remains to be so, leaving more culture, tradition and practices in certain places and parts of India only alive in and through oral literature, i.e., Folklore (folk literature). Possibilities of traditions and culture of India being extinct is high, and the folk literature is one of the prominent reasons that it is at the least endangered.

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Post colonialism examines how the societies, governments, and people of the world's former colonies experience international relations. The use of 'post' by postcolonial scholars does not mean that the influence or influence of colonial rule no longer exists. Rather, it emphasizes the influence of colonial and imperial history in shaping the way colonial thinking about the world and how Western knowledge and forms of power marginalize the non-Western world. Post colonialism is not only interested in understanding the current state of the world, but also in understanding what the world should be like. Pay attention to differences in global power and wealth accumulation, and why some countries and groups wield so much power over other countries and groups. By asking such questions, post colonialism raises questions that are different from other international relations theories, allowing not only alternative interpretations of history, but also alternative views on contemporary events and problems.

II. SUMMARIES OF THE SELECTED FOLKTALES:

Fraternity unity:

Fraternity unity is a tale about the unity of brothers. It starts with three brothers who plan to separate the assets after their father's death, and shows about the greed of the eldest brothers. Though, his elder brothers gave the worst land, house and field, the youngest brother does not hate or complain about them, despite of his wife's complaints, and accepts that it was given by God. When he needed to sow seeds on a rainy day, the youngest brother being foolish and naïve, threw fried sesame seed on his field.

The ants help the youngest brothers by eating those seeds and replacing them with the seed sowed in his elder brothers' field. When the seeds sprouted, the youngest brothers' field was filled with it and the other two had nothing grown on their field. They asked for advice and were told to fry the seeds before sowing them. They did so and the ants ate them all. After harvesting, the youngest brother gave each of his elder brothers a share of it. Without being selfish.

One day when the youngest brothers' wife found seven pots of gold, he refused to take them, since he believed that, "if it's God given, it will come through the roof." She informs the other brothers to get the gold.

But when they get to the pots, they find snakes and scorpions inside it, instead of gold. They planned to put the pots inside their youngest brother's houses, to kill his family and they drop the pots through the roof. But when it hit the floor, the snakes and scorpions turned into jewels, rubies, gold and coins. The brothers waited to see their lame young brother and his wife dead. But when they were not, they were scared and ran. But their youngest brother called his two eldest brothers, forgave them and gave a share of the gold to each of his brothers'.

A Brahmin Makes Good:

This folktale is about two brahmin brothers' life and luck in one's life. Amongst the two brothers, the older brother learned astrology and practiced horoscope, and the younger brother didn't. After his wife's constant push to learn astrology, the older brother goes out to learn with the five rupees and food given by his wife.

After he left his house, he drank *kallu* from a toddy shop, and sat there, since he did not know what to tell his wife about spending the money. He wrote down the things he saw while he sat. "I saw a white rat dig a hole." and "I saw a spotted deer leap." He ate three candies after he left that place, in the shape of eyes, mouths and tongues. He returned to his house, proving with what he wrote about the white rat and spotted deer, that he has learnt astrology, making his wife proud.

The same day a washerman approaches the brahmin since his wife lost their donkey. The brahmin's wife recommended the washerwoman to seek help from her husband, since he learnt astrology. The brahmin looked for it all night and as he promised the washerman, he tied the donkey before sun rise, proving he found it using his horoscope practice.

A necklace was stolen in the palace at the same time by three servants who work there, named, "Mrs. Tongue", "Mrs. Nose" and "Mrs. Eyes". They buried the necklace to take it after their work. The washer woman informed the guards who were searching for the necklace, to approach the brahmin to help them find the necklace.

The brahmin was given eight days to find the necklace by the Raja, and was not allowed to conduct any poojas. When the eighth day arrived, the brahmin lost all hopes and was sure he will be beheaded, since he did not find the necklace. All he could think about were the candies he ate and he exclaimed, "Oh Nose, Oh Mouth, Oh Eye! What will happen to you!" when the three servants heard it, they surrendered to the brahmin (*aiyar*) and confessed, showing him the place, the necklace was buried in. The *aiyar* placed the necklace to be found by the guards the next day as he promised to find where it will be, and he was rewarded. The *Raja* made him the royal astrologer.

The Bouquet:

A *raja* and his minister had a son each, in a kingdom. The *raja* asked his son to be married before the prince was crowned. The prince wanting to see the world before that, is sent out with his young minister, the son of the *raja's* minister, with money and horse for both of them, and the young minister, is asked to protect the prince from all harm that could possibly befall.

After visiting places, they plan to sleep in front of a temple. The young minister laid his prince's head on his lap while he slept just as the *Raja* asked for to take care of him. After dawn, he went around the temple and saw a beautiful sculpture while he was strolling around the temple. A sculpture of a woman offering flowers.

The young minister knew if the prince saw it, he will never leave. And so, he tried to prevent the prince from seeing the sculpture. When he returned to the prince, he told him not to go to the north wall. But when the prince strolled around the temple, despite the young minister's request, he went to the north wall and saw the sculpture, and he started to ask for the flowers the sculpture had in her hand.

The young minister came looking for him and finds him fallen for the sculpture, just as he imagined it, and waiting for it to give the bouquet of flowers to him. And the minister wanted to rectify the situation.

Two days later, the young minister, leaves the prince in the hands of the temple priest, to find the girl in the sculpture, and the sculptor. The priest tells him to cross seven seas to find the woman. And the young minister rode for very long. He saw a cobra eating two hatchlings while he was traveling in a nest. The birds of the nest lay two eggs every day and they get devoured by the cobra every day. He killed the snake and turned it into a high mountain.

The chicks, who can speak, helped the young minister by making their parents agree to carry him across the seven seas. When he crossed the third or fourth sea, he asked the birds to let him down for he wanted to go to the toilet and he filled his pockets with jewels that he saw down when he flew above. The birds carried him again, after he picked up the jewels.

The birds promise him a ride back when he needs, and gives him a ride to call them back. A *chettiyar* and his daughter, who the young minister was searching for, allowed him to stay in his house after he sold his jewels to him.

The young minister built a home with the jewels he had, saying that he wanted a place when his wife arrived from the village, and built a tunnel underground, from his house, connecting the room, where the *chettiyar's* daughter rested. She fell in love with him, when he arrived to her room through the tunnel and the *chettiyar's* daughter visited the young minister's house often, which was never known by her father.

When the *chettiyar* was called to the young minister's house to dine with him and his wife, he couldn't recognise his daughter, who was the young minister's wife. When the time arrived for the young minister to

leave the place, he called the *chettiyar* for a final time to dine with him, and the *chettiyar* was suspicious, of the young minister's wife. The *chettiyar* planned an act to find out if it was his daughter. But the plan was found out by the young minister and it was rectified, by the cunningness of the minister, and the *chettiyar* believed that the young minister's wife was not his daughter. The *chettiyar* bids them farewell and after the birds carry them away, finds out that, the young minister's wife was his daughter and he felt cheated.

The young minister brought the *chettiyar*'s daughter who was the woman from the sculpture, and told her to give the bouquet of flowers to the prince when he asks for it, and to tell him that he is dead. She did as she was told by the minister and the prince died crying for the minister and the woman died beside him. The *pusari* who was supposed to look out for the prince commits suicide after seeing the three bodies.

POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE SELECTED FOLKTALES

FRATERNITY UNITY:

The thought of exploitation of the father's assets of the two elder brothers from the youngest brother and the cunningness of the brother can be seen as the colonizer, exploiting and manipulating the economic and the social well-being of a colonised area. This can be seen as one of the significant characteristics of the colonisers. When the story is viewed in such a perspective, the branding of the younger brother's foolishness, points out the "colonial disclosure" of the colonisers, in this context the two elder brothers.

Exploitation and manipulation of the younger brother, denotes the tenure of colonization period. Abduction of the best things in the colonized area can be seen in the folktales. Even the younger brother was exploited, in the end he did good to his brothers by sharing his good and jewels with his brothers, showing the valorisation of cultural identity of one's self. The culture and tradition of Tamil Nadu, of giving others, even though they are not friends proves that there was culture and the history even before the colonizer colonized the area. '*Vandharaiyaazhavaikum Chennai*', which means Chennai lets people to live their life, who visits it, applies to the whole of Tamil Nadu. This view of Fraternity unity can be considered as a meta-narrative, since there can be different views in single folktales.

A BRAHMIN MAKES GOOD:

The practice of astrology makes sure of the fact that the colonized area did have its own history and culture. Practicing horoscope was and is one of the occupations followed in Tamil Nadu. This valorises the cultural identity. And legitimates the fact the colonized area has its own practices.

Kallu shops can only be seen in the southern parts of India. It is a beverage made from palm trees. A *kallu* shop is mentioned in this folktale, which puts forth the view of looking at the text in a different context. This proves that there was a culture and practice followed before the colonizers set foot on, the land they planned to abduct. Proving the characteristic, "Rewriting history."

The mentioning of the caste name '*aiyar*' also shows the various castes seen in Tamil Nadu. Kingdoms and castes were both in India, before the colonial period. The stories about kings and wars, legitimates that fact.

The necklace was demanded to find, by the brahmin, and he had no escape and enough time given. Yet he got out of his situation through his luck and wit, which depicts the situation between the colonizer and the colonized during colonialism.

THE BOUQUET:

'Decolonization' is a struggle faced by every colonized nation. Since the time of colonization, the philosophies and structure of colonialism has blinded the people who were colonized. This is well depicted through the prince who gets overwhelmed by a beautiful sculpture which was not real. Though he doesn't know the true nature of the sculpture, his mind makes him believe it is a woman.

The act of the young minister who took the girl away without her father's permission but with his wit and cunningness, gives us an insight of the way the colonizers took hold of all the things from the land they colonized. The cobra trying to devour the hatchlings can also be seen in a postcolonial point of view. The snake can be seen as the colonizer here, the one trying to take the life of the helpless hatchlings, believing there is no one to save them. The constant death of the new nestlings can portray as the exploitation of the colonizers, of the land and sucking the life out of the colonised people.

The young minister in this part of the story, who slays the cobra, can be seen as the better part of the colonised period where the freedom fighter fought their way out of the colonizers.

The bouquet that is offered to the prince depicts the western life that the colonizers offer. The blindness of the prince shows that, the want of the westernised world and the practice of the colonizers, without knowing the impact of it, which leads to the loss of the culture and tradition. The acceptance of the flower, represents the acceptance of the colonizers culture, leads to the death of the prince, the young minister and the priest. Though acceptance of the western culture does not lead to the death of people, but in this context, the death of the three characters as the death of the heritage and history of the place.

III. CONCLUSION:

Tamil literature is translated, to be known worldwide and they are getting known as there are a lot of translated literary works that have captured people's attention. Not only the people of other countries but also the people of Tamil Nadu who are getting raised, abroad. This gives them a way to be connected with the legacy the ancestors left behind, making them to be a part of it.

Though there are faults and drawbacks from translating the works from Tamil to English, when compared to the power and unique advantages it has, the disadvantages do not catch the eye. The perspective in which the folktales are viewed, can help one to understand the depth of postcolonialism and ecocriticism, inbuilt subconsciously inside every person in a colonised nation or land. This view can help the people who does not know the history of a particular place to know the truth about it, no matter who the target audience might be.

Tamil Nadu is filled with cultural practices and traditions embedded in it. The stories told by the people is also filled with various colourful practices such as different occupation, or about cast and creed. But the inevitable part of every colonized nation is, the influence of the colonizers. The mentioned folktales, shows that the colonial period has subconsciously soaked itself inside the colonised period, which in turn is portrayed in tale and stories in various forms.

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