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Socio-economic matrix of *Chengannooradi*

Shamshad Hussain KT

Studies in Kerala Folklore have made a big leap in the past few decades. Some of the regional forms of folk lore have been brought into limelight from oblivion. Many such songs are capable enough to influence the prevailing concepts and nature of folksongs. Exploits of the heroes of yester years predominantly form the themes of these labouring class. They come under the category called epic folk songs. Edanadan Song is one such epic folk song. It has many variants; and *Chengannooradi* seemed to be the most popular. The paper explores the socio-economic implications of *Chengannooradi*. Before explaining *Chengannooradi*, let us have a quick look at the division of folk songs.

Keywords: *Chengannooradi*, *Edanadan*, Folk song, Kerala culture, Northern song

Folk songs are divided spatially such as Northern Songs, Southern Songs, and Mid land Songs. Besides the spatial division, many songs are associated with agrestic labour. These songs are sung by labourers to make their work more comfortable during field activities. Northern songs primarily consist of agricultural songs, are often sung by those working in the fields. These songs are especially used for strenuous tasks like grinding and pounding, commonly performed during wedding celebrations. Referred to as Toram Pattu, their main purpose is to ease the burden of labour. The southern song, called Villadichal Pattu, is linked to a ritual practice. It has close relationship with some kind of art form that uses bow as a musical instrument. Midland songs are heroic story songs. These songs are

sung by both men and women during work. They narrate the brave tales of figures such as Thacholi Othenan, Unniyarcha, Thalakkal Chanthu, Poomathe Ponnamma, and Matileri Kanni. The narratives are rich with stories of heroic deeds performed by both male and female characters. In general, when examining the folk legends of Kerala, mid land songs haven't received the same level of attention as Northern and Southern songs. The paper aims to explore Edanadan folk songs as a representative model of folk legends in Kerala.

Edanadan Pattu gets its name due to regional distinctions, involving both Southern and Northern songs. In earlier literary histories, the Midland song was grouped with the Southern Song. However, a later approach separated them into three categories. The name Edanadan is, referring to the main hero in the songs of this region.

In the tale of the birth of the hero named Edanadan in the Edanadan song, he is born when the thranikudam (womb) breaks while his fully pregnant mother is traveling in a boat. The baby is named Edanadan because of being born in a lake along the way. Similar to Edanadan song, Manikyam Penne, and Eda Nattilaathi Chengannur Aathi, many songs are associated with this region. Among these, the most renowned and fitting for the model of folk epics is that of *Chengannur Athi*. There are considered to have 21 *Athis*, with some studies suggesting more. Ancestral names such as Poovingalathi, Ulavanthurathi Ezhappanathi, Athimallurathi Karimallur Athi, Kunnuvanachan, Athirampuzhayachan, Mankompilachan, and Kariyampanikkar Eriya Panickker are some prominent names in it. Kunnuvanachan Kariyampanikkar Eriya Panickker, are mentioned and involved with the most significant being in the song about Chengannur Athi itself. (Sajitha KR, VV Swamy).

Kunjati's mentor is Kariyam Panikkar, who appears in the form of Kariyathan Pullu. Once, while playing, Kunjadi sees Kariyathan Pullu being carried by Eriyathan Pullu. Kariyathan Pullu falls in front of Kunjadi. When Kunjadi brings the injured bird to his father, he suggests taking care of it. Kunjadi's father advises him to inform his mother, who encourages him not to give up and provides guidance on treating the bird. Following his mother's advice, Kunjadi

prepares medicines, tends to the bird, and catches small beetles and worms to feed it. Once the bird recovers, Kunjadi's mother suggests releasing it into the wild. Eventually, the seemingly ordinary grass reveals its true form as Kariyam panikker, a teacher. Subsequently, Kariyam Panikkan imparts all his skills to Athi.

Later, Athi completes his studies. When he gives Dakshina, the Guru predicts that Chengannur Athi would master 18 Kalaris and meet his end on the 19th Kalari. Despite the warning from the Guru about the danger at Illuvankalari, Athi is forbidden to go there.

It is told that Chengannur Adi journeyed to numerous forts, winning battles with the blessings of Kariyampanikar. As the war commences, a large flock of birds appears in the sky, signaling the Gurus blessing. when he departure of to the illuvam kalari' and it is foretold that Chengannur Adi will lose without the Guru's presence. he never seen birds in the sky. He then announces that he will die in this war and he requests illuvan adi to send his body to the Paluva woman. Illuvan Adi informs everyone about Adi's death, concluding the story of Chengannur Adi. The narrative is presented in a formulaic poetic style, yet each story is distinct. Adi conquered 18 kalaris in different reasons.

He off to Athirampuzha fort just to visit it. He went to Moovakal seeking revenge for the killing of 12 uncles. To Paluva region his journey was in search of a Paluva girl, and Ati brings the talismaned kunnvam pennu on an elephant.

So, the courageous Chengannur Adi conquered 18 forts and ultimately met his demise at Illuvankalari. Some songs indicate that he is buried on the south side of the house, while in others, the Guru's name is revealed at Ilankukalari, marking his death.

Analysis

The prominent aspect that stands out in the song is the inclusion of caste references. *Edanadan Pattu* is sung by the Paraya community, traditionally considered the lowest caste group in Kerala carries this song tradition. Given that the Paraya tribe has first-hand experience with caste-related issues, these songs often contain numerous references to caste and its associated hierarchies. The

song delves into the caste system and portrays its conflicts on various levels.

My dear queen of my mind plz hear

Is this the Paluvam paraya hut (Paramatam)?

Worry not if you lack it, Don't be deceived by the name Namburi Monastery.

This is the practice of Chengannur Adi.

Paluvam Pennu displays the untied Valumuram from the house and trying to prove it is Paraya house, which Kollan's Alelum also possesses, But it is denied by the person named Elamte Muram. Blinking is evident, Kanya Kanicheri with a twinkling eye. Kuttipoliya Kurumpoliya is depicted with box beans, So to the one who approaches, turn towards him. Paluvam went to the yard. (Ex. 125)" thus he ensure this is a paraya house. He don't want to enter in to illam that a brahmins house. That's why he asking many question.

Those from the Paraya category portray a run-down state to affirm it as a dwelling. Chengannur Adi enters only after ensuring this. As Chengannur Adi walks through Orungi, Lord Paluvan perceives Tekum Kutti as the symbol of the Great Lord. Palu Vam Koi stands by, performing all the rituals required by the Lord. However, "I don't desire rituals, I am a fly-by-night guy," replies Chengannur Adi.

Observing Adi standing prepared, the mother acknowledges that seeing him now is akin to witnessing the Lord's Elambada. Despite Adi's attempts to avoid conflict, they confront him with caste names, insults, and Adi triumphs, moving forward. "I am going on my caste courtesy pilgrimage. Did I break the ritual? Koi paluvam koi, don't hit me anymore. I will not be beaten anymore" - Adi's warning. (120)

In Kuttanad, like any other region, numerous sub-communities and sub-cultures exist, and their differences are evident. Strife is prevalent, extending beyond material aspects to various spheres of life. However, the folk song unveils a social capital that binds them together. This underscores the contemporary social relevance of this work. In this way, this song presents the looting, exchanges and litigations between different caste communities

Another feature of this song is the importance given to labour. When Aadi decides to go to Chengannur Yatra, his mother prepares food for him. Mother took the key of Kanjirapara room, opened the door, opened the door, scooped rice into it, scooped rice into it, measured it in chengzhi and nazhi, pounded rice, washed it, walked around the mother's kalaveli, picked and threshed vegetables, and all this can be seen in this description.

*The carpenter scraped the wood he had cut
Carpenter rubbing with the toe
The carpenter threshed rice with a threshing wheel
Kollam is the poonanulaka that he has flowered* (Ex. 114)

It is also mentioned here that those tools were made. Its varnas also deserve special study. An important thing is its closeness with nature, although it can be seen in folk songs in general, it expresses the characteristics of the nature of that area and the life relationships of the society with them.

He went on a journey to find out that a mosquito had fallen in the yard

*Consider the dark clouds
I think that the maiden will jump on the dignity
That is why he is going on a journey* (verse 119)

When it is mentioned that Machinga is rolling down, it implies not just the speed but also the energy and excitement of Chengannur Adi. Consider the rhythm from the flow, It's akin to a fish game, That's why he remains indifferent, As if seamlessly severed with water. (119). The similes employed here also encapsulate the distinctive ecological characteristics of Alappuzha. It is suggested that Adi's journey to Chengannur was absorbed in the school of fish near the fish trap. In this context, people draw similes from the nature they witness and the environment they inhabit, singing along with these natural elements. Besides being a spiritual expression, this folk song elucidates the societal living system, the community's observation of nature, and their interaction with it. The churika on the chest sprouted on the back. (123)

Here, even the tearing of the body and the movement of the weapon are likened to sprouting. This metaphor offers a poignant description of the hardships associated with agriculture. In the Veera legends, the narratives convey the tales of Veera Rasa, Purusha, and Patavetti. It's intriguing to explore the expression of feminine nature within these legends. Similar to Chengannur Adi, Palu Penna is also a woman well-versed in martial arts.

He glanced back and uttered, Then seized the Churikak and hauled him to Parishak. Floating and flying, he remarked, She carved the horn into the scythe. "Do you fly with Vetta Vattiku Laki?

[———] Where did you acquire this seed, sweet girl? Malan learned Kalari, did I also learn. Those who go with two walls, Those who journey to Chengannoor's backyard. (610)

In Chengannur, women undergo weapons training in the same kalari where Adi studied, and they are proficient in using them when necessary. Pandimel Achan and his disciples observe Palu Vam Penn carrying Karimbana. Eventually, Pandimel Achan requests Paluvam Penn to bring the veeraliputta she has tied on Karimbana.

Moreover, when Adi was young in Chengannur, he witnessed an Iramallu woman with a talisman going out for business. Adi jumped into the canoe she was rowing. This illustrates women's roles as both fighters and traders. Additionally, the song highlights the significance attributed to the labor of women inside the house, exemplified by the mother's preparations for making food.

In the same social system, sharing ecological resources and engaging in the same profession, there's no need to ponder over gender equality between men and women. While mainstream literature during this period often overtly expressed patriarchy and supremacy, parallel to it, unique literary forms and ways of life were articulated in folk epics. Thus, this poem reflects not only the differences among women but also the inequalities ingrained in the caste system.

Conclusion

As a folk epic, the depiction of God in these narratives warrants special analysis. Chengannur Adi calls upon God when embarking on a journey and preparing for battle. "Chatore" means

“Poore,” and he also pays homage to the Guru who taught him the weapon. In these folk epics, the gods are portrayed as the fathers and mothers who lived and died among us, setting an example. The song establishes a new value system wherein the surrounding nature, the ecosystem, and those who live and die are all deemed important.

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