



Historical Monuments Of Karunagappally Taluk - A Historiographical Analysis Of The Work Pracheena Malayalam By Chattambi Swamikal

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ABSTRACT

Kerala Society had seen a revolutionary change in the socio political sphere. These were led by the social reform movements pioneered by Social reformers like Vaikunda Swamikal, Thycud Ayya, Sreenarayana Guru, Chattambi Swamikal, Vaikom Abdul Mavulavi, Ayyankkali. They fought the orthodox dogma of untouchability and social injustice that existed in the society. The social reform movements like Vaikom satyagraha, Guruvayur Satyagraha, later the temple entry proclamation and finally the Indian constitution in its Article 17 Untouchability was made illegal. Chattambi Swamikal in particular led the revolutionary change especially in the Nair community of Kerala. Nair community in particular was a stalwart in the renaissance movement of Kerala. The caste system in Kerala had not only the roots in manusmriti but also the brahmin claim that the Kerala land was granted to the Brahmins by Parashurama. This was asserted by the brahmin priests through a cornucopia of pseudo historical works. 'Pracheena Malayalam' is a monumental work on the historical insight into the formation of Kerala. Through this work Swamikal rebutes the works forged by Brahminical hegemony that imposed a cruel form of Kerala's caste system. However, more than a social transformation work 'Pracheena Malayalam' has a historiographic importance. He used folk tales, geographical information, scriptures, old names, common usages etc to argue against the hegemonic grip that brahmanical literature held on to the historical documentation of Kerala History. It was controversial when it was published in 1913, it is still controversial. In Addition to the waves it stirred in the socio-political arena, it also stirred the hornet's nest in the field of historical research of Kerala.

Key words: Chattambi Swamikal, Pracheena malayalam, Kerala historiography

Chattambi Swamikal

Chattambi swamikal was born near Kollur in Ulloor Veedu on 25th August 1853. His father was Thamarashery Vasu Deva Sharma, mother was Nanga Devi. His real name was Ayyappan. His father was a brahmin who worked as a priest in a small temple. His mother was the breadwinner of the family who did household work in nearby Brahmin family. The Mother was a nair (sudra low caste compared to brahmin), while Father was a brahmin. Their marriage was illegal by the social norms of the times. Since the children were born to low caste woman, they cannot fully claim to father's brahmanical privilege. So by birth and by upbringing Ayyappan was born to a surrounding that was in itself anti- caste. This helped him a lot to grow up to question the legitimacy of the caste hierarchy. Ayyappan got primary education by the will of his father, he got admitted to Kollur Madam, where his mother worked as a maid. He learned to read and write from Velu Pillai Ashan ('Ashaan' means teacher) By the age of 15 he joined Pettayil Raman Pillai Aashan's study center. There Ayyappan was appointed as the monitor of the students. Thereby earning him the name 'Chattambi'. The name will stick on to him for eternity.

He couldn't continue his studies for long because the dire poverty in the family forced him to leave studies and he had found dignity in all kinds of work, whether manual or white collar. He once proudly claimed that he was the one of the workers who carried the stones for the construction of the secretariat building during the Diwanship of T. Madhavarao. Later he got a job as an accountant in Kollur Madam and also as a clerk for an advocate. Then in Neyyattinkara a documentation writer. Being a polymath and well versed in the scriptures made him a reliable source for dispelling doubt even among the many educated intellectuals of his neighborhood. Ayyappan with his bearded face and deep insight into the various fields of life and his ability to solve tough problems and his ability to express complex concepts in religions and life in simple terms made him a respectable member of the community. They began to call him 'Swamikal' meaning 'revered one'. He became known as 'Kunjan Pillai Swamikal'. He later shifted to Bhootha Pandi, where he got an opportunity to study the scriptures, epics and the art of debating. There by his knowledge multi-plied in many folds. Later he resigned from his job and went to Thiruvananthapuram. Later he joined as a clerk in the Kerala government during the time of T. Madhava Rao. However, he couldn't continue his work for long.

SOCIAL WORK

Chattambi Swamikal after resigning the work in Government, he joined 'Janana Prachagaram Sabha'. That helped him to focus on the ills of society. He also got the opportunity to get acquainted with the stalwarts of the age like Thykud Ayya, Mano Maniyam Sundaram Pillai, Swami Natha Deshikan. These associations helped him deepen his knowledge of the Western philosophy, Tamil scriptures and Sanskrit scriptures. In an age before the information revolution where knowledge was massed in small pockets, such acquaintances are necessary for the cultivation of a refined mind.

Chattambi Swamikal got his higher education in the field of theology and philosophy from the Subha Jadapaadi of Thirunelveli District. There Kunjan Pillai got the opportunity to access the rich library of the Subha Jadapaadi's archives, which contains many ancient manuscripts written in the vattezhuthu and ancient tamil. In addition to the volumes of materials available to the Kunjanpillai he also had the chance to engage in the debates which made him strong in stating his views openly. He stayed in Thiruvelli for more than 6 years After his stay in Kallidaikurichi, he became a disciple of Kumaraswami. He taught him the art of Marmma Vidya and Sage Agastya's yoga Vidya. While there, he stayed with a Christian priest who studied Christian theology. In Kanyakumari, his studies under the tutelage of Islamic scholars gave him valuable insight into sufism, sharia law and the quran.

After this Swamikal led a life of wandering hermit. During this period he traveled widely; from Kanyakumari to Badrinath, from Bhuvabeshwar to Surat. He even meditated in the Marathuva Caves of Kanuakumari. While back in Thiruvananthapuram, he happens to see a Sadhu eating the leftover from a marriage ceremony. Swamikal followed this Sadhu and while in the wilderness that Sadhu gave him the Wisdom of Brahma.

His disciples consisted of Bhodeshwaran, , Perunelli Krishnan Vaidyan, VeluTheri Keshavan Vaidyan, Kumballathu Shanku Pillai, Neelkanda Theertha Pathar.

SOCIAL WORK OF CHATTAMBI SWAMIKAL

First and foremost Chattambi Swamikal was an intellect and searching for knowledge was the activity he always dwell upon. He used his knowledge to work against the ills of society. He used the advaita philosophy of Adi sankara to expose the fallacy of caste system in his work 'Vedadikara Nirupanam'. Swamikal dealt with the tough subjects like religion and theology, he then published works that dealt with these complex subjects in a lucid and vivid language that even the layman can understand them with ease. His works were done in malayalam language, without the influence of sanskrit. In fact his works were the first of its kind in malayalam language that dealt with subjects who had no other option but sanskrit. He also stated in his book 'Adi Bhasha' that glorifying Sanskrit is nonsense. Apart from criticizing the ills of Brahmanical hold of the society he moved his pen against the works of christian missionaries, who take advantage of the poor and downtrodden in the society. So that they could convert them to their sect. Swamikal criticized this in his 'Christumatha Chedhanam'. He brought to light the discrimination of the historical works, which highlighted the work of the upper class of the society. This made the lower class alien from history and their by alienating them from the achievement of the fore-fathers. Swamikal wrote 40 works dealing with various fields of knowledge and matters that matter to the society..

Some of them are Adhi Bhasha, Vedadhikara Niroopanam, Pracheena Malayalam, 'Vedandtha Saram, NInjananda Vilasam, Bhasha Padma PuranaBhiprayam, Christumatha Chedanam, Jeeva Karunya Nirupanam, Sree Chakra puja Kalpam, Advaita Chintha Padhathi, Pillathalolip, Sarva Matha samarasyam, Keralathile Sthalanamangal, Prapanchathil Sthree Purushanmarkulla Sthanam, Tamilzakavum Dravida Mahathmyavum etc these are a few works of Chattambi Swamikal.

Chattambi Swamikal died on April 22, 1924 in Panmana Ashram, Karunagappally Taluk of Kollam District. Kerala Archaeology department had declared this Ashram a historic monument on 03.12.2004.

In this article we are closely examining the work ‘Pracheena Malayalam’ to find how much historiographical insight we can obtain from this monumental work.

PRACHEENA MALAYALAM

This work on the Kerala history by Vidyadhiraja Chattampi Swamikal came about in August, 1913. Even if this is a more than hundred years old, it can hold a candle to any work of contemporary historical analysis. The position of ‘Pracheena Malayalam’ is concreted with the fact that it had given its readers scientific attitude and fact by fact analysis in the formulation of the Kerala’s ancient history. Rather than formulating a glorified and over the top imaginary past, he had build a wall history which he build by placing facts upon facts cemented by logic.

Chattampi Swamikal in November 1912 in a letter to Neelakanda Theertha Padar mentions ‘Pracheena Malayalam’ being given for printing in a press in Kollam and he is staying in Kollam for this purpose. In 1910 in another letter he also mentioned ‘Pracheena Malayalam’. On April, 1913 When he was in Panmana Ashramam, Swamikal in a letter to Neelakanda Swamikal, he mentions that on his 60 birthday and in the memory of ‘Pracheena Malayalam’ to set an ashramam at Ezhumattoor.

Indian history is myriad in myths and legends or Indians tend to assume myths and legends as history. According to Al-Biruni, not only was the available literature on Hinduism insufficient, it was also misleading. “Everything which exists on this subject in our literature is second hand information which one copied from the other, a farrago of materials never sifted by the sieve of critical examination.” (Taraq Al Hind). He also complained Indians of being over exaggeration and speaking in riddles when arguing against them. To write an accurate history is close to impossible in the Indian context. The lack of source material is dire, one has to salvage out of a myriad of speculation and myths. So Indians always had a bad reputation when it comes to historical literature. This even when we had two mythologies and a library of religious literature written during the early iron age. We are left with some speculative inference. Another complaint regarding Indian historiography is the lack of chronology, a notable exception being Kalkhana’s Rajatharangini, the chronology of Kashmiri Kings.

In Kerala, the story was not different. Kerala’s genesis was for a long time grounded on the Myth of creation of Kerala by Avatar of Vishnu; Parashurama. When he hurled his axe into the sea. Then afterwards he gave this land to the Brahmins as a penance for slaying Kshatriyas 21 times.

Kerala being the part of Tamil Sangams. So we can trace the history of Kerala to Tamil Sangams. However, the origin story of Kerala and its brahmadeya by Parashurama reinforced a Brahminical centric society with Brahmins enjoying all the privileges.

With his thirst for knowledge Swamikal decided to get to the bottom of Kerala's genesis myth and Pracheena Malayalam was the result of this relentless investigation. By the time he was researching for this work. Indian historiography was in its infancy. Indus civilization was not in the picture. The Vedic civilization was the farthest in time we had for Indian history. History of India was mostly influenced by the work of Indologist and civil administrators of the British Raj. The history of India was studied and presented by the vested interest of the people who are studying and documenting history. They had completely forgotten about the history of common people and their contribution to history.

This was the time when Chattampi Swamikal decided to write ‘Pracheena Malayalam’. Swamikal used the geography, tribal history, traditional folk tales, traditions, language history, myths and ancient migration patterns to piece together a coherent argument that blew away the story of Kerala’s genesis which was painted by a brahmanical ulterior motive. He also gave the spirit of self-esteem to the nair community who were the original tribal inhabitants who had claimed the land for themselves through settlement and occupation.

When we delve into the book, it consists of two volumes. The first volume consists of 10 chapters and the second volume explains the Brahman names, their origins and truth behind these names; this was added later. The first volume chapter 1, Dhanakarana Nishedham, recalling the background which is mentioned in the Skandapurana in the Shayadri gandham, Bhargava Raman aka Parasurama the avatar of Vishnu cleansed the earth of Kshatriya Rajas. The sins he had accumulated by this massacre could be purged by giving land to Brahmanas. Which he did. However, this caused Bhargava without any land of his own to dwell. So he created his own land. This land is situated south of the Vaitarani river and North of Subrahmanyam, from the Sahya Mountains till the sea in a sail shape. It covers an area roughly 100 yojanas in length and 3 yojanas in breadth. Parasurama settled in the nearby mountain. For Shradha Muttu and doing yaga he invited Brahmana. Nevertheless, they did not come. This made him furious. He happened to find some fishermen folk and went to them. Impressed by them he took their fishing wire and made sacred thread from this. Thereby making them all brahmins. He then made them settle in a place called chaturangam. He gave them a wish that he will be back whenever they wish. When they tried to test this boon. He got angry and cursed them to be Dhurvaidyanmar, Nindyanmar, kulsithanmar, dharidranmar etc. According to legend, when Parasurama left Brahmana became the victims of this curse. After some time a king by the name Mayoora Varman saw the plight of these brahmanas and gave them 32 villages for them to settle. (Sahyadri Ghandam). This origin story is explained in the Kerala Mahatmyam, Keralolpathi. With this background in light Swamikal rebutes these works by brahmins by stating the motives of Parasurama to give land to brahmins. These works state that he

was reeking in sin because of his killing spree of Kshatriyas. Parasurama was a great sage. He is endowed with the virtues of Tapas, Yogam, Janam. To have these values in oneself, he must be devoid of sin. This contradicts the acquisition of Virakhitya Dosha. Thus its a the brahmanical literature is contradicting itself. Swamikal uses verses of Bhagwat gita, Brahma Sutra, Sutha Smahitha, Manusmriti, and Kaushaki Upanishad to reinforce his argument that being a rishi with brahma knowledge makes him devoid of sin.

അശ്വമേധ സഹസ്രാണി
ബ്രഹ്മ ഹത്യാ ശതാനി ച
കുർവന്നപി ന ലിപ്യേത
യ ദൈവകൃത് പ്രപശ്യതി

From Sutha Samhitha

Which can be translated as ‘One with spiritual well being will be unscathed by sin even if he does a thousand ashwamedha sacrifice and even he killed one hundred brahmins’

Parasu rama was a rishi well endowed brahmin with so much spiritual endowment, he got his education directly from Lord Shiva. So no way he would be affected by the sin of murder. It was his karma. In this chapter Swamikal dispels the notion of Parasuram giving land as gift to Brahmin folk to dispel the sins he accumulated due to the mass murder of Kshatriya race.

In the next Chapter three Swamikal argues against the case of Parasuraman bringing in Brahmanas from outside for giving land as penance for the sins he committed by mass killing of Kshatriya race. The myth that formation of strata among malayali brahmins is due to the brahmadeya by Parasu rama. This is mentioned in the Kerala Mashatamyam, Keralavakashakramam. In this they mention that the main reason for the stratification of Malayalee brahmins is due to the Land grant by Parasu Raman the other changes in the society came only latter with the flow of time. He humbles brahmana by saying the notion he got their divine qualities only after getting land from Raman. He argues against the opinion in the Kerala Mahatamyam regarding the divine powers of brahmana before they came to Malayalam.

The Brahmins getting divine powers from Parasu Raman. This was got from Parasu Rama himself, However, he dispels this myth by stating the fact that, this is uncommon and can only be found in Kerala’s myths not anywhere else. So it is unlikely that lord Bhargava Ram will contradict his own deeds elsewhere.

In the third chapter he formulates how Parasuram never gave Kerala to Brahmins in the first place. This he states from observing the fact that the scripture gives 64 brahmin villages to whom he gave the land as gift.

The he ask how the different groups inn the Kerala brahmins came up,

The brahmins give the reason for the stratification in the brahmin community because of the land grant by Parsurama. Those who got the land became the lower brahmins. Those who didn't were relatively upper brahmins. However, this contradicts the fact that all Kerala Brahmins came about from the 64 Villages to whom Lord gave the land grant.

അഖിലാഹ്നം കേരളീഹ്നം ഭൂമീം ബ്രാഹ്മണേഭ്യ ദധ്യുപ്രഭുഃ

ചതുഷ് ഷഷ്ടിത മേ ഭ്യ സ് തു

From Kerala Mahatmyam

This can be translated as “All Kerala Brashmins came about from the 64 brahmin villages to whom Parasuraman gave as land grant”. This is contradicted by the fact that many Kerala Brahmins were landless.

In the fourth chapter he makes the claim that Malayalam land never belonged to Parasuram in the first place. In the Sahyadri Khanda mentions the land from the south , Subramahnyam in the North, to the west of Sahya mountains to the East of the sea. Lies in an oblong shape. Lies land of Bhargava, as mentioned in the Shayadri Khandam Uthardham

വൈതരണ്യത്തു ദക്ഷിണേത് സുബ്രഹ്മണ്യത അതത്യാത്തരേ

സഹ്യത്യാഗര പര്യന്തം ശുർപ്പകാരം വ്യവസ്ഥിതം

This is the geographical extend of the Land owned by Bhargava. He asked Brahmana to come and settle in his land but they refused. This made him furious and cursed them that they will wander as landless. When asked to revert the curse, Parasurama replied.

അസിപ്രസ്ഥാവനീസ്ഥാനേ ശ്ജാലനീയാ ഭവിഷ്യഥാ (Sahyadri Khandam)

Translated as - go and settle in a place called 'Asiprastham'. Swamikal then used geography to explain the verses of Kerala Mahatmyam and Sahyadri Khandam the migrating brahmins reached the northern banks of the Mangalapuram river. The Same Sahyadri Khandam mentions the brahmins after the flood in the Mangalapuram river - Shukthimathi. These brahmins who got cursed by Parasurama, had to settle and spend their time on the land inhabited by the Nagas.

Another book by the name Malayali Mahatmyam mentions the boundaries of Malayalam land Kanjirottu river in the North, In the south Kanyakumari In the west Arabian sea and in the East Malaya Parvatham (Sahyadri Mountains). The same text gives the description on the Governance of the Malayalam land. In this manner

അസിഹസ് തൈ രക്ഷിതയാൽ പ്രഭു ഭിന്നാക നാമകൈ

അസിപഞ്ജരിതയാച്ച അസിപ്രസ്ഥമഗാടകം

Swamikal interprets the above verse as - the land mentioned is ruled or governed by lords who carry swords. These lords are called by the name nayakas and they are renowned for the use of swords they carry. This is the reason why the land of Malayalam is also known as 'Asiprastham'. Thus 'Asiprastham' is the other name of Kerala. This is the land the cursed Brahmins were asked to dwell, which was not in the ownership of Parasurama.

In this chapter Swamikal also examines if Malayalam land truly belonged to Parasurama. It should have traces of that lineage mentioned in the land names and land usages of the old. If all the land belonged to one person the great variety of names. For example - Pandaravaka Thottam, Pandaravaka Otti, Pandaravana kanam, Pattam, Sangeatham, Thuram, Poruthi, Yirippu, Viruthi, Japthi, Panam, Thanathu, Udama, Arappuswamma etc. These are some of the land usage types that existed in various places and at various times in Kerala. There are no mention of the land owned by Parasurama. It is not mentioned in the land documents, tenant documents, devaswome land , royal lands, Fallen lands, none mentions of once owned by Brahmins or Parasurama. Swamikal then gives a point by point argument to and against the fact that Malayalam land didn't belong to Bhargava Rama.

In Chapter five of the book Chattambi Swamikal looks into the belief that the position of Nair community was given by the Parasurama. This is mentioned in the text Kerala Mahatmyam which reads,

സമന്താനാം ദ്വിജന്ത്ര ദീനം നായക പരിചാരിക

Translated as Nairs are servants to Samanthas and Dwijas. Swamikal argues against this belief by asking if the Nairs were below the brahmins, Why this is mentioned, it must have been taken for granted that Nairs are de facto servants. He then proceeds to explain with examples of some traditions where Nairs were given the prominent position and they were respected even by the brahmins. One was during the Temple Flag raising ceremony where the elder member of the nair family must come and sit at the prominent position and all the brahmins sit only at the behest of this nair elder. The flag raising ceremony got delayed, because of the later arrival of the nair elder. The brahmins shout out "When will the master arrive?" Then only when he arrives, will they proceed to raise the flag.

Another case is, Nairs' elders are chief invigilators of Brahmins. During the vedic education evaluation, the Nair conduct the examination of Brahmins, only when they find the brahmin worthy he is given a thousand para grains and other perks, if not he will be banished from the land. In the Chapter 6 Swamikal proceeds to explain that he had proved the fallacy of Kerala's origin story and legitimacy of Brahmin hegemony. He claimed that Kerala was governed by the Nair community. If this were true, it will also be true that anything belonging to the Kerala Brahmins were once belonged to nairs. Again Malayalam Brahmins were Sudras themselves.

In chapter 7, He exalts the nairs community by quoting the description of the community by historians and foreign travelers since antiquity. First he mentions the Tuhfatul- Mujahideen by Sheik Sainudeen translated by Rolandson in 1833. Where he explains the nair warriors annihilate the enemy. If they killed their leader. 9th century Arab chroniclers explain the ceremony that creates 'Chaveer' aka Suicide squad nair warriors and how they proclaim their allegiance to their overlord the King. In the census report of 1891 of Madras State, H A Stewart says that Nairs are dravidian group. This is elaborated by the Malabar District Gazetteer. He refers to the extract from Johnson's 'World's Well known nation' where it mentions how nair prepare for war.

In chapter 8 Shudra Shabdham "The word Sudhra ", Swamikal is trying to reimagine the word Sudhra because this is the word used to describe the nair community. He explores the origins and implication of the word. He

discovers that Parasuram never mentions any such word to describe the people he brought within him. It was absent in describing them even when he brought them to Malayalam land, This is as described in the brahmanical work regarding the origin of Kerala story. There was no use of 'sudra' in any of these works. He mentions even the place names have no sudra name in it. For example Padanayar Kulangara, 'nayarkulam, illainarkulam (Ernaulam) etc bear no sudra in their name, only nair syllables. However, in the register of Travancore state some 50 years (ire by the time of writing the book) he mentions the use of the word sudra. This is attested only in the Travancore region. However, the origin of the word sudra can be traced to the four varnas.

ശുഭ്രാഗച്യആവരവർണ്ണഗച്യ

വ്യ ഷലാഗച്യജാലന്യജാ

This extract in malayalam which was taken from the book Amarakosham, Which in translation gives the many names of lower caste sudra. So The origin of the word comes from the Chaturvarna. In the ninth chapter Swamikal examines the Chatur Varna or the Four Castes, The Caste system. Sweamikal explains it is based on the caste the Kerala society called nairs as sudras. This classification is merely an arbitrary external influence on Kerala society. This habit came from the North and the Kerala society at the time was devoid of any caste. The introduction of the caste was detrimental to all the sections of the society. In the chapter he explains that the caste system has good and bad practices. The good practice explains its practices in detail with scriptural works as reference.

In the 10th chapter he explains the correlation between the Four caste system and Brahmanaical religion. There he corroborates the fact that the caste system was fluid. In the Manu Smrithi, it is stated that the A sudra woman who marries a brahman and their daughter also marries a brahmin if these go on for the seven generations that generation will be pure brahmin. The same is said for each caste. For this we need to identify the caste of the person, How can these be determined? He explains that this could not be possible because the categorizing based on the skin color is ambiguous. So there is no means of differentiating who from whom.

Swamikal then mentions about the fluidity of the caste by quoting from Mahabharatha, Vishnu Puranam, Bharatha Hari Vamsham, Vishnu Puranam, Maha Bharathaam Hari Vamsham and Kaushithki Brhmanyam, Sahyadri kandha of Skanda Purana mentions of the Brahmins and other varnas. In the appendix of the first book which is divided into 6, he gives an explanation to the omissions and poetic expansion.

In the second book of the Pracheena malayalam he explains the origins of the malayali brahmin names. He explains in the 64 villages Brahmins are called by the names Embran, Namboothiri and Potti. He explains that the names are not used in the major works which explains the origins of Kerala Brahmins. Like 'Kerala Mahatmya' didn't mention any of them. In Keralolpathi the immigrant brahmin from the Aryavardha was called by the name Namboothiri. In Kerala Vakasha Kremam and in the Jathi Nirnayam Embran was used. In Keralolpathi these three names are used

The use of these names are not found outside of Kerala. In the places mentioned in these brahmanical texts, there was no use of these names. In the next chapter named Embran he explains the origins of this name. In the chapter Namboothiri he rebutes the myth that the word Namboothiri have a divine expression. It is derived from the term Ohm Nama Shivaya. He explains When Letter n got more privilege than the other four. The chapter 'Potti' Potti means to feed. So it has a Malayalam root word. So it is a Malayalam word. In the chapter Moosath He questions the reasons for the downgrading of these castes. Even if they are traditional healers.

The chapter Sastra Namboothiri he explains the decency and professionalism in each job. He questions the downgrading of these sections by asking the existence of Dronacharya and Ashwathama, who were brahmana but fought for Kshatriyas. Sangeetkar are the brahmins who were brought back to Kerala after their departure from Parasurama. They do the tasks of being sthani, cooking, Shapagrasthan, Illyathu, Moothathu, Anthralam these anthralar constitute the temple people

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

Chattambi Swamikal mainly aimed at dispelling the myths that Kerala belonged to brahmins. He closely analyzed the literature that gave birth to these myths. These myths could be easily dispelled because these myths were created on an in situ basis by the conquerors who happened to take hold of these land after the fall of the second chera empire. Before and by the time of the second chera empire that had its capital at Mahodayapuram. Land of Malayalam had no caste system or one like the Brahmins had established later. After the chola invasion and fall of the second chera empire, the prominence of brahmins became more

prominent. The myths of Parasurama as mentioned in the Keralolpathi established the truth of brahmin migration not only that, it was created to legitimize the hegemony of brahmin to subjugate the local nair population.

“a large number of Brahmin Community migrated into Kerala from Kolhapur and other neighboring areas in the 8th Century A.D. There were instances for taking up arms and carving out small principalities... In the subsequent centuries they fabricated a myth according to which Parasurama hurled his axe into the sea... and Kerala emerged as virgin Land”. (A History of Malayalam Language & Literature by Krishnan Chaitanya.)

Thus the victors of a war carved out land for themselves and they created a myth in situ to legitimize their claim. Because these myths were created for a purpose and it was forced. These myths at many instances contradicted the main hindu scripture. Chattambi Swamikal with his encyclopedic knowledge discovered these contradictions and unfolded the truth that was hidden to most of the people of Kerala at the time. According to the Historian Keavan Veluthat ‘these kind of origin stories existed all along the coast of India from Gujarat to Kanyakumari.’ The brahmin carried these myths wherever they went, to seek legitimacy for their land grab. The brahmin monopoly over the land in Malabar was upheld by the Malabar High court during (mentioned in the Travancore State Manual by T.K Velu pillai).

The criticism to raise against the Pracheena malayalam is that it completely over looks the Sangam literature and that civilisation all together. Kerala;s history is intertwined with the sangam age . The early records of Sangam were unveiled even before the 1840s and Chattambi Swamikal had his education in Tamil Nadu and not to mention this Elephant in the room could be intentional. However, it might be of good intentions. It could be mentioned here that this work of his was a spear thrown at the upper caste of the Kerala society. It was aimed not only at the Brahmin hegemony of the society but also the Brahmin-Nair nexus to subjugate the rest of the society. He insists the Nair community of the value of self respect and self reliance. He makes it clear that the nair society don’t need Brahmin approval of their self worth but they only need to take a peek into their past. They only need to look into themselves for their enlightenment. He might have avoided any mention of the other caste because the other caste have to discover it themselves. Or that might be beyond the scope of one book or this particular book. All the attributes Swamikal gave to the Nair community can be given to the other community, for there were rulers of other communities who governed Kerala at times. Many rituals that can be attributed to these lower communities. Truth be told a Scholar name Suresh Madhav have uncovered a hitherto unknown work of Chattambi Swamikal ‘Mokhsapradeepa Niroopana Vivaranam’. in this work he sheds light onto the Dravidian literature and how they shaped the Kerala’s taste and art,

As a book of historical literature, the method of his analysis was a logical and mostly experimental hypothesis. He identifies one logical fallacy and tries to dispel them by comparing it to a similar example in the established literature. If this fallacy somehow contradicts the logic of the original literature or common sense, he calls them out. According to Prof. Hridayakumari opines that Pracheena Malayalam is not only a good example of Swami’s logical arguments but is the earliest example of application of hypothesis and fixed methodology for historical studies. Swamikal is a firm believer of tradition and traditional practices. He understood action speaks louder than words. That is how he gave a lot of traditional practices that existed in the temples to dispel the myth of what has been written in the Brahmin literature.

CONCLUSION

Pracheena malayalam by Chattambi Swamikal was a tour de force to dispel the brahminical hegemony of Kerala. With this work he broke the spell that held Kerala’s lower caste especially, the nairs by preying on their own evils and of the brahmins themselves. For this end he used his knowledge and logical thinking to cut a path of enlightenment and renaissance. It is a method of historical literature that can be emulated by any historian to uncover the truth. The ‘Pracheena malayalam’ is a benchmark of historiographical literature in malayalam and Kerala history. The history of Kerala was brought to the realm of the common man. This landmark event in the history of historical literature of Kerala historiography. This work by swamikal is historiographical equivalent to Ezhuthachan’s work during the 9th century, where he achieved the socio-literature revolution known as the Sudra-mochanam. Chattambik Swamikal achived the same feat with his ‘Pracheena malayalam’.

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