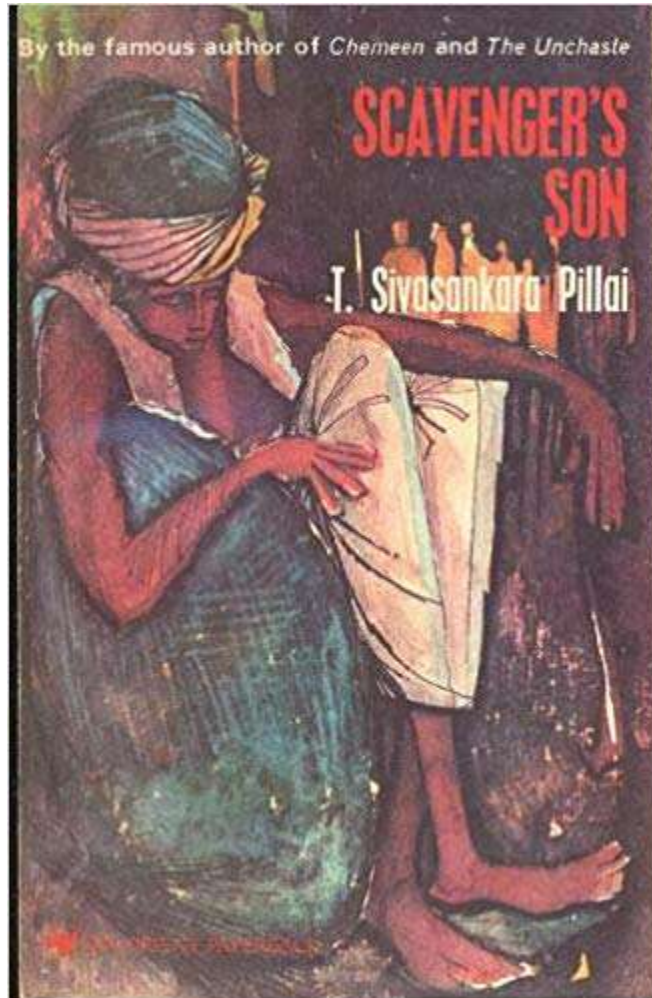


**Resuscitation of Identity in Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's
*Scavenger's Son***

P. Kalaivelmani, Ph.D. Research Scholar



Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.com/Scavengers-Son-Thakazhi-Sivasankara-Pillai/dp/0892530251>

Abstract

The paper aims at an investigation of the novel *Scavenger's Son* by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, by focusing on the theme of Identity. This paper also explains the key concepts of Intra diaspora through The Enemy System theory, which deals with group behavioural pattern, deep rooted psychological need to dichotomise and to establish enemies and allies and behavioural traits. Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai structured the novel in both positive and negative aspects of

Identity. Even though *Scavenger's Son* is judged as a socio-political document, identity plays a pivotal role. The novel covers the story of three generations of scavengers. Ishukkumuthu served as a scavenger in Alleppy municipal town for thirty years without earning anything; then comes the death of his wife leaving him and his only son alone. He half-heartedly wants his son to continue his work. Chudalamuthu takes up his father's work willy-nilly. He is the principal character, who fights for his individual identity. Though he fails in his attempt to move up the social scale, he wants to make his son Mohan someone other than a scavenger. The paper tries to answer the question why the equitable revolution has failed because of revitalizing an individual identity and posteriorly it succeeds when the personal idea is transformed into a collective idea.

Keywords: Intra Diaspora-Behavioural Pattern, Behavioural Traits, *Scavenger's Son*, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Individual Identity

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and *Scavenger's Son*

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Scavenger's Son* came out in 1947, the year of India's independence, as a great literary revolution. Thakazhi wrote this novel when he was thirty-three, the age of mature youthfulness and unfulfilled social dreams and idealism in a man's life. The sources of incidents in this novel are the unforgettable experiences of his life. He imbibed his attitude of compassion to the downtrodden from his own experience in the municipal wards of Alleppey. The novel tells the story of three generations though the novel is short; it has the time span of saga. The story starts with the last days of Ishukkumuthu, Chudalamuthu's father and it ends with the death of Mohan, Chudalamuthu's son, by police-firing.

Political Argument?

Many critics considered *Scavenger's Son* as a work which is used as a medium to project a political argument. This paper aims to investigate the *Scavenger's Son* by focusing on the theme of identity which also brings a political dialectics. The research paper also tries to explain the key concepts of intra-diaspora, a new view of this novel. The paper tends to explain intra-diaspora through the enemy system theory which explains the group behavioural pattern, deep-rooted psychological need to dichotomise and to establish enemies and allies and behavioural traits.

Chudalamuthu

Chudalamuthu the principal character of the novel *Scavenger's Son*, does not like the detestable work of a scavenger; however, he is forced to take up the work when his father falls ill. When his father dies, Chudalamuthu cannot find the money required for the burial. The dead body is buried in the night soil depot, from where it is pulled out by dogs. His father's death turns out to be a lesson. So, he cherishes the ambition of moving up the social scale. He keeps himself away from fellow scavengers.

In India there are two types of societies - one is distancing themselves from the majority with their superior complex in the name of caste, and the second is discarded by the whole society and marginalized in the name of the same caste system as a lower caste. In this novel Chudalamuthu is already brushed aside by the society. He wants to uplift his social status; due to this desire, he gets rid of his own clan and tries to behave like, to imitate the upper caste people.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:7 July 2018

P. Kalaivelmani, Ph.D. Research Scholar

Resuscitation of Identity in Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Scavenger's Son*

The experience that he had on in his father's death pushes him to the state of isolation. He builds a hut apart from the depot where the other scavengers dwell. He forced his wife Valli not to speak with their neighbours and he didn't like the aunt of his wife coming to his home, who brought her up from childhood.

To Make His Son Someone Other Than A Scavenger and Misplaced Acts

His ultimate aim is to make his son someone other than a scavenger, so he didn't sit and eat with his son Mohan. He refused to touch his son when the mid-wife asked Chudalamuthu to take the baby. Later he took the child, and then he immediately gave it back. Never before had he felt such an aversion to himself being a scavenger. He tells himself that his son must grow up without coming close to a scavenger. Chudalamuthu grooms himself not as an ordinary scavenger. He never drinks, and he takes baths daily and wears a neat vest and shorts unlike other scavengers. These qualities differentiate him among others. This gives him a chance to lead his own clan and render them goodwill. But Chudalamuthu has his own plan.

Chudalamuthu has decided not to continue as a scavenger and his generation not to become scavengers. When he got a chance to lead a union, with the plot of overseer Kesavapillai, he dissolves the union; he spoils the dreams of the whole clan for his own. As per the enemy system theory, Chudalamuthu's behavior is different from his own people that give him repute. But he makes his own people as his enemy. Humans have a tendency to discriminate which leads to the establishments of enemies and allies. This phenomenon happens on the individual and group levels. When the scavengers band together to form a union, they tried to establish their enemies. This is the crux of the world dynamics. Through this the scavengers tried to question their superiors to give them their actual wages.

Betraying the Interests of His Own Community

Chudalamuthu tries to get out of the scavenging one way or the other. He thought that the association does not help him to get out from scavenging; it is useful for those who remain as scavengers. So, he joins hands together with the president and overseer, who are as his clan's enemies and exploiters. With the order of the president, Chudalamuthu and overseer Kesavapillai put their heads together to demolish the union. Behind this action of Chudalamuthu is the deep rooted psychological problem, that the society forced him to do the scavenging, and he does not want to remain a scavenger. This urge makes him to dichotomise himself from his people and join hands with authorities. He believes in his superiors, thinking only they can release him from the hateful work, but they have no concern about his desire. Instead of treating them as his enemy, for his selfish reasons he makes them his allies. But the superiors are clear in their idea of scalping the scavengers.

Pichandi's Effort to Unite Scavengers Spoiled by Chudalamuthu

Since Chudalamuthu wants to maintain relationship and goodwill with the authorities, he refuses to talk with Pichandi who stood with him in all his good and bad times. Pichandi tries to reunite the scavengers to form a union. He is aware of Chudalamuthu's goal, the reason for the breaking of the union, and how he let everyone down for his selfish ends. Pichandi agrees to set up a union again. When Chudalamuthu comes to know this he feels relieved, but the overseer Kesavapillai forces him to disrupt the union. Chudalamuthu circulates fake news that Pichandi

has committed a theft in Reddiyar's house. This news spreads rapidly as fire and the fellow scavengers are cut down again by the deceptive words of Chudalamuthu.

The tricks played by Kesavapillai work very seriously. Pichandi runs away from the village, leaving his wife and children in the hope that his fellow scavengers would take care of them. But they are ignored and left alone, the family scattered and ruined. This is not new to this people; they have seen the downfall of numerous families in the night soil depot. Most dishonestly Chudalamuthu let down the simple people who had pinned their faith on him. Pichandi is most loyal to him, and to put him down, Chudalamuthu makes an agreement with his superiors constantly working in collusion with the agents of oppression and tyranny.

He lost all his moral values because of his unawareness of his own identity. Noting this, the president and overseer used him to dissolve of the union.

Dream Vaporized

Chudalamuthu's dreams are vaporized within a day, when cholera shows its terrible face in Alleppey. When Chudalamuthu is gleeful that he has become a watchman in the cemetery, the delectation was not sustainable. Chudalamuthu and his wife Valli also become victims of the grievous disease, and they die leaving their only son Mohanan alone.

Son Mohanan Works as a Scavenger and Leads the Fight

Mohanan becomes a scavenger; unlike his father he is aware of his identity and he is clear in fixing his allies and enemies. He is wise to make a distinction between the exploiters and exploited. He has an eidetic memory of his father's money, hoarded by the president. Mohanan immolates the president's new building. Next day he leads a procession, now Pichandi's son and Sundiran's son are with Mohanan. They concur with the leadership of Mohanan.

Thrust of *Scavenger's Son*

The main thrust of the novel *Scavenger's Son* is education. The protagonist of this novel Chudalamuthu is not aware of the union which bestows the welfare of his clan. So, he acts against his own clan. But Mohanan, unlike his father Chudalamuthu, is aware of adversaries and allies. Chudalamuthu has his own reason, a deep rooted psychological need to detach himself from his clan, which was engraved in him after his father's death. He never thinks about the people who are all in the same boat. But Mohanan is very aware of his establishment, of his opponent and allies.

To Conclude

Thus, we are made to realize how a meagre change brings a transformation in the society. This is the record of the changes which occurred in the social order of Alleppey municipal town, which spread like wild fire. In this novel the protagonist Chudalamuthu stands for individual identity and his son Mohanan stands for collective identity. In this novel Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai has shown how an equitable revolution had failed because of revitalizing an individual identity, while it succeeds when the personal idea is transformed into a collective idea.

=====

Works Cited

- Habib, M.A.R. *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory: A History*. Wiley Blackwell, 2008.
- Paniker, Ayyappa. *Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai*. University of Kerala, 1988.
- Pillai, Thakazhi Sivasankara. *Scavenger's Son*, translated by R. E. Asher. Orient Paper Backs, 1975.
-
-

P. Kalaivelmani
Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of English
Govt. Arts College, Salem – 636007
Tamilnadu
India.
smart.kalai.88@gmail.com