

Women and Children Glorified in the Poems and Songs of Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram

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Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram (1930-1959)

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pattukkottai_Kalyanasundaram

Abstract

The paper aims at presenting the status of women and children as depicted in the writings of Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram. The poetry and songs of Kalyanasundaram heighten the status of women as both mothers and wives and highlight them as responsible individuals of the society. Recognizing the threat from the narrow-minded anti-social forces, he adorns woman as a goddess and as the embodiment of chastity. Pattukkottai believed that children chiseled in the proper way are

certain to build up a healthy and progressive nation. The article identifies elements of social reformation in the writings of Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram.

Keywords: Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram, poetic works, social concerns, women's status, progressive ideas, social reform, cultural revolution, women's rights



Courtesy: <http://www.pattukkottaiyar.com/site/?p=819>

It is said that Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram was born with poetry in his blood. He may be said to have lisped in notes before musical notes came to him, for his father himself was a poet given to the composition of folk songs. His poetic caliber coupled with his love of dramaturgy, went a long way in portraying the plight and predicament of the masses. Kalyanasundaram has been a Jack of all trades for he experienced all the ordeals through which he had to pass before he became a poet of the Tamil masses. His close association with the day-to-day affairs of the society is said to have planted a seed deep in his mind out of which spouted the best fruits of poetry. He had first-hand knowledge of the living and laboring conditions of the tillers and toilers exposed to unrelieved pangs of hunger and exploited by the inhuman landlords. Endowed with a social awareness, not only did he sing about the indignity, injustice and ill-treatment meted out to the weaker sections of the society, but also expressed rather excellently his views on women and children.

Kalyanasundaram thought and considered women and children as the important organs of a nation. Acting as a poet-philosopher, he has said that when a woman is the great source of a man's life, a child at the same time is the good citizen of a country and went a step further in personifying woman as Goddess Sakthi – the embodiment of strength. Truly speaking, woman as both mother and wife has a greater responsibility of making her life more beneficial to the individual and more useful to the society. According to him, if the society is to prosper, both the women and children should be taken care of. Poet Bharati, as it is known to one and all, was the only one in Tamil Nadu who more beautifully sang about the elevation of women in the social strata. He did obviously emphasize the

point that women, like men, should be given equal opportunities to represent grievances and also to take part in various competitions and works. Truthfully speaking, Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram more or less became one with Bharati in expressing his views on women and children. Creating a favourable response in the minds of the people of Tamil Nadu regarding the legitimate claims of the women and the people at the lowest strata of society, he chose poetry as the best medium. The blackest part in the India history is that both Sultana Russia and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who took charge of their posts in Delhi, in various times, had to face the same end at the hands of men. All over the world, as it is in India only women have been pushed down to the secondary position, rather than Africa. Such is the worst scenario in India, especially for women and that is why the poet sings:

(Pandian 81)

[Man originates in woman
after dancing at all levels
he retires into the soil].

No doubt, poet Kalyanasundaram is a philosopher – poet as is well-known to all, all human beings invariably originate in the womb of woman. They begin to opt for all kinds of professions only after women give birth to them. If women do not do so, then it is highly unimaginable to think of a real human world in which we all live. Even if men put themselves in various positions, both physically and mentally carried out, at the final stage, the same men, after their death, have to enjoy the eternal peace only under the soil.

Great men like Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Jothi Babu, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Bharati, Bharatidasan and others have expressed very powerfully their strong views about the elevation of women. They even led different movements for this purpose. The same old antiquated customs which are still alive in the form of superstitions, had once completely shut the eyes of all toward the position of women in India. The position of women in Tamil Nadu has been much worse than in other parts of India, for the women had been subjected to innumerable tortuous traditions and the suffering that followed. Of course, the women were able to breathe their independent air in the current days because of the highly elevated thematic poems of Bharati about women. Next to him comes our Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram who wrote poems in a simple style. There is no denying the fact that cinema was considered to be the best mass media through which the poet Pattukkottai could very effectively project his major ideas into the minds of the people. Those who branded women variously as evil, ghosts, devils, wicked and so on, were completely browbeaten before Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram. There is not even a single trace of colloquialism and vulgarity in any of his poems. In his opinion, enjoyment, strength, achievement, success, celebration are all possible only with the help of women. Strength, which means Sakti is more suitable and applicable to women only. When it is so, the woman seems to be the main source of strength to man. Success and failure, in the present day life situations, are mostly caused by the women only. There seems to be no alternative to it, but it must be accepted as it is. He sings:

(P 87)

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Woman provides
boldness to even a coward
A woman is someone
Who remains un-plucked

A woman plays various roles in a man's life. She, as a wife, can even change a coward into a soldier. In the past no one ever dared to speak about the elevation of women. Now the time has completely changed. Such old brutalities and cruelties imposed on women have been absolutely uprooted from the mainstream of the society. The unwanted stories about women are slowly stopped. The poet writes:

(P 87)

After wife's death, even the old grandpa
has the right for remarriage;
The widow though extremely beautiful,
has only 'the right to die at the end'
In that, the people would come together
To spread Scandalous stories

The women are, according to the poet, found to be ignorant of many things, especially the capriciousness of this world:

Women with both beauty and wisdom,
though born genius, narrow-minded
men never cease to destroy.

Even if women are in many ways useful to the economic building of this nation, the antisocial elements with their narrow-mindedness plot a number of evil designs to disturb the peaceful life of women. This is very well explained by the poet in the above quoted poetic lines. The poet portrays the character of a village girl as the main source of inspiration to a farmer. A farmer who becomes very tired after his hard work in the field is very happy, at the sight of his wife. Here in the following lines, the poet beautifully describes the arrival of a village girl;

(Pandian 81).

You will come with porridge, pleasure
You will give in the pot.

In the poet's words, women are considered to minister comfort to their husbands. Truly speaking, there is no life at all without women for men. Even India is pictured not as our father but only as mother called "Bharathmatha". Woman is considered the embodiment of beauty and happiness. Philosophically speaking, woman according to the Hindu Puranic tradition, is being

adored as ‘Sakthi’ which means strength. For illustrating these points, the poet Pattukkottai portrays woman as the goddess and also as the embodiment of chastity:

(P 91)

Woman is the foundation of chastity
the Vermilion without impurity;
Light is the symbol of woman the goddess.

He not only glorifies women in all respects, but also talks high of children who are considered the great national properties. Just like women, children are instrumental in promoting national growth and progress. The poet wants the children to be:

(P 11)

Oh boy! It is enough to grow
as a good boy with strength.

He stresses the point that the children should be disciplined and bold in their character. It is only then they can be well assured of their self-confidence in building up their personality and the society as well. His poetic lines here are quoted almost as a boost of advice to young boys:

(Balakrishnan 281)

Don't seal don't steal, Oh child!
Never be scared of poverty;
Forget not the potential within you.

This particular poetic stanza by the poet indeed serves as the best morale booster for the entire population of children in society as a whole. It can be concluded that the poet Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram was not only a poet but also a great social reformer for he glorifies both children and women as two eyes of a well-disciplined human society and a well-developed nation.

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