

Love vs. Myth in *Chemmeen*

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Abstract

Chemmeen is a novel originally written in Malayalam by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and published in 1956 under the same title. It got name and fame to the author. It won the National Sahitya Akadami Award in 1958. It was also adapted into a Malayalam film of the same title in 1965 which has celebrated its 50th Anniversary of the classical movies in 2015. It has been translated into as many as seventeen languages of the world. It was translated into English by Anita Nair in 2011. In this novel, the novelist portrays the love affair between Pareekutty and Karuthamma, a young couple. They love each other truly. The first belongs to Muslim community while the latter comes from the Hindu folk. Their love could not touch the heights of fulfillment because the girl was married to Palani. The novel also discusses the emotional aspects of the love-triangle where true love has to win at last. Like many love stories of the world, this novel also ends with the death of the true lovers. They could not be one on this earth but they die with the impending hope of unification in the next world.

Keywords: Fisherman, Love, Money, Life, Sea, Boat, Net, Ruin, Death

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Introduction

Introduction: Myth is a "folklore genre consisting of narratives or stories that play a fundamental role in a society... The main characters in myths are usually gods, demigods or supernatural humans" (Myth-Wikipedia). The theme of the mentioned novel is associated with a myth prevailing among the fishing communities along the coast of Kerala in South India. "The myth is about chastity. If the married fisher woman becomes infidel while her husband is on the sea, the sea Goddess (Katalamma literally means Mother Sea) consumes him. It is to perpetuate this myth that Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai wrote this novel." (Chemmeen (novel), wikipedia).

"The mythical women like Sati and Savitri are hailed as the epitome of ideal women and these mythical characters uphold their chastity and are always at the service for their husbands by adorning them. . . . The myth develops as such that the first fisherman, Aadi Mukhuva who went out to the sea for fishing, got stuck up in a wrathful storm but was saved by Katalamma only because his chaste wife waited, prayed and did penance for him in the shores the whole night" (R. Bhagyalakshmi, 2019, p. 248). The mentioned novel portrays the love between Pareekutty, the son of a Muslim fish trader and Karuthamma, the daughter of a poor Hindu fisherman. They love each other truly. Their love could not touch the heights of fulfillment because the girl was married to some other man named Palani. According to the myth prevailing in the coastal area of Kerala, Karuthamma must be faithful to Palani. But the love takes her in the arms of her lover. The goddess Katalamma takes revenge upon her and consumes her husband and the lovers are also found dead on the sea shore two days later. Thus the myth finds its strong impact on the life of the people of coastal fishing community of Kerala.

The Research Paper

Chembankunju and Chakki are living on the sea-shore of Neerkunnath. They belong to Mukkuran caste of Hindu fishing community. They have a beautiful daughter named Karuthamma. She is in love with Pareekutty who happens to be the son of a Muslim fish trader on the same shore. Chhaki comes to know about their love affair. She warns and reminds her daughter about the life they lead within the boundaries of strict social traditions. "But what was certain was that Chakki was a fisherwoman born and bred on the seaside. And an interior of a long tradition of sea lore" (Chemmeen, p.7). She has heard a story about the myth of sea goddess which states as:

*On a mere Plank of wood, the first fisherman had rowed
through waves and currents to a point beyond the horizon.
While on the shore his faithful wife had stood facing the west,*

waiting. A storm blew up and churned the sea. Whales with their mouths gaping open gathered. Sharks beat the water into a frenzy with their tails. The undertow dragged the boat into a whirlpool. But he miraculously survived all these dangers. Not just that, he returned to the shore with a huge fish.

So how did he escape that tempest? Why wasn't he swallowed by the whale? How was it that his boat didn't shatter to bits despite being battered by the shark's tail? The whirlpool dissipated; the boat moved on . . . How did all of this happen? Only because a chaste wife had stood on the seaside, praying and waiting and waiting for her husband's safe return. And that was the lode of hope the women of the seaside clung to (pp. 7-8).

This is the nugget of faith that Chakki mends into her everyday life and has become habitual of making it her very own. Her daughter Karuthamma loves Pareekutty who does not belong to her own community. So she warns the girl as ? "He is not one of us. A Muslim. And he probably doesn't realise any of this" (p. 9). And that "night Karuthamma couldn't sleep. She wasn't angry with Panchami (her younger sister) who had let her secret out. She didn't even feel any resentment. How could she? Was that because she felt guilty?" (p. 10). This was "an age-old moral code of that community was vested in her too" (p. 10). This is the moral code of conduct which every woman of the fishing community of that shore has to follow. "And perhaps that was the way she was scared of straying" (p. 10). Karuthamma listens to her mother's advice and tries to be away from Pareekutty. But power of love brings them together now and then. Chembankunju and Chakki become aware that their daughter has become young. She is not a little girl now. They become worried that if their daughter goes to a Muslim boy, the social status of the family will go down. They will face social hatred and degradation. It is sure that they will not marry Karuthamma to Pareekutty because of his being a Muslim. Karuthamma thinks again and again about Pareekutty. One thought comes to her mind that he belongs to other community. "A Muslim" (p. 9). She has discerned that she should not have loved Pareekutty.

Karuthamma stops going outside to meet Pareekutty. She begins to keep herself indoors. Then one evening she hears "a song wafted in from the seashore filling Karuthamma's ears and trailing her, wrenching the very earth from under her feet" (p. 10). She listened to the voice which is coming from a short distance. She acknowledges the voice. "The singer was Pareekutty. He wasn't a musician. But he sat in the boat singing" (p. 10). She understands that he is singing for her. For no one else. She becomes restless. She wants to

go out to see him but suddenly a thought enters her mind that "he was a Muslim" (p. 10). This is against the moral code of conduct of the fishing community. Love has no room where there are communal feelings dominate all other considerations. She tries to suppress her desires. Her emotions for Pareekutty have no scope in the vast sky of casteism and communalism. She becomes worried about her love. "Like she was consumed by her need to offer penitence. Pareekutty continued to sing. His voice cracked" (p. 11). She shuts the door of the room and weeps.

In the adjoining room her parents are discussing about her marriage. Chakki reproves, "You are a father, are you? I am glad that you remember that! Your daughter will be led astray" (p. 11). Chembankunju retorts, "I will have her married before that happens" (p. 11). Her mother again opines that "who is going to marry her without money?" (p. 11). She again warns her husband that ? "A Muslim man will end up seducing your daughter. That's what's going to happen" (p. 11). And "in the distance Pareekutty continued to sing" (p. 12). From "the next day Karuthamma didn't step out of her home" (p. 13). And in "the evening, after having disbanded his workers, Chembankunju walked towards Pareekutty. Karuthamma watched them converse for a long while. What could they be talking about? She wondered. Perhaps her father was asking for a loan." (p. 14). The next night after supper, Chembankunju step out. Chakki tells Karuthamma to go to sleep. But suddenly "she woke up with a start. Someone was demanding. 'Is Karuthamma awake?' It was a voice. She knew. . . . It was Pareekutty" (p. 15). But Chakki tells a lie and speaks? "She's asleep" (p. 15). Karuthamma hears the embarrassment in her mother's tone. She rises and peeps through a slat of the makeshift door. "She saw Pareekutty, Chembankunju and Chakki stand in the front yard deep in a whispered conversation" (p. 15). The next day Pareekutty comes and tells Karuthamma, who is all alone at her hovel that "I have given the money for the boat and nets!" (p. 16). There comes no answer from her side. He asks her about the reason of herself keeping silent. She rejoins that "my bossman, you are a Muslim! Pareekutty didn't understand the relevance." (p. 17). He thinks what if he is a Muslim. Karuthamma quivers in fright. She tells him, "It's wrong! It is a sin!" (p. 17). He does not comprehend the reason behind her hesitation. He asks, "Karuthamma, do you like me?" (p. 18). And she replies instantly, "Yes, I do!" (p. 18). And he goes away.

Chembankunju and Chakki discuss about the money they have with them given by Pareekutty. The money is not sufficient for buying a boat and nets. Chakki asks him how he will arrange the required money. He tells her that "let the little Boss give us the rest too." (p. 19). Karuthamma listens to her parents secretly. And:

In the next few days, Pareekutty's shack was busy. Fish were dried and put away in baskets. Karuthamma knew the reason for the

frenzy. In a few days Karuthamma had learnt the measure of the world (p. 19).

After getting the sufficient amount of money from Pareekutty, Chembankunju becomes ready to fulfill his longing ambition of having a boat and nets. Chakki announces, "The sea mother has blessed us" (p. 19). Karuthamma asks, "Ammachi, why cheat that naive man to by a boat and nets? It is cruel" (p. 19). Chakki tries to pacify her daughter and tells that they are not cheating Pareekutty. But the young girl has understood the dealings. So she asks, "If your intentions were so honest, why bring the dried fish in at midnight? Why not do it during the day?" (p. 20). Chakki becomes embarrassed and rebukes her saying that "who is that Muslim boy to you? Why do you care so much?" (p. 20). Chakki curses her and announces that – "will this girl bring doom upon the seashore and the fisherfolk?" (p. 20). This is the most useful trick played by the parents on their children. It is believed by the fisherfolk of Kerala that if a girl goes astray against the social norms of the community, she opens the doors of ruin of the whole community. The same fear is put before Karuthamma, but she daringly declares that – "I won't break any rules" (p. 20). Her heart becomes heavy with the tension for Pareekutty. She speaks with heavy throat that "you will ruin him. He will have to tear down his fishing shack and leave?" (p. 20). Chakki tries her best to pacify Karuthamma but she has understood that her parents are looting her lover. It is his love for Karuthamma which has made him a scapegoat on the altar of Chembankunju's desires who is slowly and steadily sacrificing him. And on the same day Karuthamma sees that "that night Pareekutty came laden with several baskets of dried fish again. And Chembankunju took it from him without any hesitation. He didn't even mention when he would return the money" (p. 23). He sells the fish and goes to buy a boat and nets. On the same day some fishermen went to the shore master and complain, "Chembankunju has a grown-up daughter. He hasn't yet married her off. She frolics on the shore. . . . The girl is determined to ruin our shores" (p. 36). It is customary that if someone from the fishing folk has to buy boat and nets, he has to receive permission from the shore master. And it is also a custom among the fishing community that they have to marry their daughters off on appropriate age so that they do not ruin the whole community. It is a myth that the sea goddess becomes angry if a woman goes astray on the sea shore. And the whole community has to face the devastation by the goddess. The shore master calls Chembankunju in his mansion and asks him about the complaints. The latter offers some bribe and the matter gets settled. He promises that he will marry his girl as soon as possible.

Chembankunju and Chakki search for a suitable bridegroom for Karuthamma. They find at last. He is Palani. He is an orphan. She is married to him. They go to live on the sea

shore of Trikunnappuzha. But:

In a solitary moment Karuthamma's mind wandered. She loved Pareekutty. There would be no place for another man in her heart. She wished she could forget him, their relationship for just one moment. For she was born a fisherwoman. And she would have to die as a fisherman's wife. That was how it should be, she knew. So shouldn't she have to forget Pareekutty? (p. 73).

Karuthamma loves Pareekutty but she is married to Palani. She gives birth to a girl. Chakki falls ill and after sometime she dies. Palani somehow gets acquainted with the relations between Pareekutty and Karuthamma. He does not allow her to go to her parents. Chembakunju marries another woman. She does not like Karuthamma's younger sister Panchami. One day Panchami feels disappointed with her father and step-mother and runs to Karuthamma. The fishing business of Chembakunju declines. His ambition to become a rich man cannot be fulfilled. He becomes mad. Palani also faces problems. Some fishermen speak ill-will about Karuthamma. Palani is thrown out of his work, where he has been working on a boat for a long time. He comes home and complains to Karuthamma, "You are a fallen woman. So they have declared I am unfit to go to sea" (p. 179). It is believed that if some fishermen go out in the sea with a man whose wife is unchaste, the sea goddess will swallow the man and with that man others will also be swallowed. Thus the other fishermen denied to work with Palani. He asks Karuthamma, "Didn't you know you are a fisher girl? So why then in your childhood did you frolic and play with that Muslim boy?" (p. 179). This is true. She humbly accepts it as her fault. With tears in her eyes she beseeched, "It happened. Please forgive me!" (p. 179). He forgives her. She feels relieved.

Pareekutty's fishing trade declines as Karuthamma goes away from him. He is ruined. He becomes a bankrupt. Now he is a penniless fellow with no money and no business. He has been cheated by Chembakunju. It has been expected by Pareekutty that if he gives the required money to Chembakunju for buying the boat and the nets he will sell his fish to him and he will recover his loss after some days. But the greedy Chembakunju begins to neglect Pareekutty after owing the boat and the nets. This is unexpected and painful to Pareekutty. Slowly and steadily, his business declines as he has no money to buy fish from other fishermen because he has given all his cash to Chembakunju for buying the boat and the nets. On the sea shore of Neerkunnath where Pareekutty was the Boss, his shack has been ruined. And:

It [Pareekutty's shack] crumbled into dust. On that shore there had been other shacks and some that had been ruined. The ruined shack

owners were never seen again. But he [Pareekutty] to live on this shore. Didn't he have another place to go to? Perhaps not.

In the twilight, he would be seen walking on that shore with a downcast face. As if he was searching for something lost among the grains of sand. Wasn't that the truth? A life was lost in the sand. It had to be sought for and found. Once or twice he had been the subject of discussion. Each time there had been rumours about his having enticed and seduced Karuthamma. . . . So many shack owners seduced so many women, and then left these shores No one took it very seriously. No one knew the gravities of that relationship. Could a Muslim shack owner be in love with a fisher girl?

. . . Hence no one had heard about the shattering of that love (p. 215).

And it is heard that, "Even today when the boats drew to the shore, Pareekutty would go there. He would watch the trade. He would eke a living out of brokering some deals. That was how he lived" (p. 215).

Pareekutty has not met Chembankunju for a long time. Whenever he sees him, he takes a detour. What is the nature of his crime against Chembankunju? Only he knows. One day he sees that Chembankunju is standing before him. He doesn't know when he came to him. He gets perplexed. Chembankunju asks Pareekutty, "How much money do I owe you? He has no idea. But there is one thing which he knows. What was the real nature of that give and take? Pareekutty was in love with Karuthamma and Karuthamma had loved him in turn. That was truth. And that love was without a blemish" (p. 216). He couldn't understand the real meaning of that deal. "So had he meant to have her parents obliged to him to facilitate the smooth progress of that love? To blind them with cash? Bribing them to get the girl! . . . Pareekutty had never sought to entice or seduce Karuthamma, he hadn't even tried to" (p. 216). Although it is true that:

For lack of that money, he had been ruined. Not just ruined, but completely penurious for he only had the clothes on his back. His house and land were no longer his. Nothing was left in Pareekutty's life. There was neither a purpose nor a goal. Couldn't he start a shack in a small manner? Make something of his life again? If for nothing else but to keep him going till death. Karuthamma would never be his. He should forget that episode in his life. Faced with

harsh experiences and impediments in life, men changed, became different. But even today he was that hapless lover (p. 217).

Chembankunju puts a pouch of money on Pareekutty's palm and says that "you gave me the money then only because of my daughter, isn't that right?" (p. 217). Although it was true. "If Pareekutty wasn't in love with Karuthamma, none of this could have transpired" (p. 218). The sea wasn't angry, the wind didn't rise, had such a love story ever been played out on these sea shores? He blames Pareekutty that it is his love for Karuthamma that has ruined his life. The humble lover Pareekutty does not know the implication of his crime rather it is Chembankunju's voice which goes on to speak out everything like a recorded sound. Pareekutty doesn't speak. He "was still as a statue. Sans any emotion, sans any thought" (p. 218). Chembankunju's complaint doesn't stop and he goes on shouting as:

'You don't know, you really don't know but how would you? You are a demon.' . . . 'You wrecked a family. Ruined it. Turned my life into nothing. Do you know how many lives you have destroyed? Chembankunju's voice quivered as he spoke, 'My Karuthamma who like Chakki had played and frolicked on this shore . . . you ruined her. It began since then . . . isn't that what this is all about?'

Chembankunju said, 'I only have one liability left. Your debt. The money you gave me to seduce my daughter and ruin me . . . Here!'

He stretched out the money. . . . Here . . . here take it!'. . . Pareekutty stretched out his hand mechanically. Chembankunju put the money into his hand.

. . . 'This is all there is. I don't know what I owe you. That only my Chakki knew. If it is less, there is nothing I can do' (p. 219).

Chembankunju speaks out his emotions and goes away from Pareekutty. The talk seems mechanical. Pareekutty feels stumbled. Although the words spoken by Chembankunju are true altogether but Pareekutty feels himself unable to discern the depth of these words. Is he responsible for all this ruin? He stands there for a long time clutching the money. He is dazed and confused. Sundry thoughts come to his mind and he tries to contemplate the situation. He thinks as:

What did he need money for? What need for money for someone who lives off what he made every day? How much money had he lost? Just money? He has lost his very life itself. He had money for the day's food. So when life stretched ahead, wasn't this sizable

sum of money a huge thing? An old debt was being paid back (p. 220).

Pareekutty gets puzzled. He looks at his hand in which he is having the money given by Chembankunju. The ends of the notes are fluttering in the breeze. He tries to think that what will be the use of this money to him? Amidst the train of thoughts he suddenly hears a laughter from a short distance. He identifies the man who is laughing without any cause. It is Chembankunju. He has become mad. The laughter of Chembankunju is piercing his heart. It is a cold and mirthless laughter.

Time passes itself. Panchami, the younger sister of Karuthamma, goes to Trikunnappuzha. She informs that 'Amma' has died. Palani tries to know the reason of her arrival to Karuthamma but he asks nothing about Neerkunnath. Next day when Palani goes out to sea for fishing, the two sisters begin their discussions about their parents and Neerkunnath. Panchami tells her about the bouts of Chembankunju's madness, the death of their mother, the arrival of the new woman to their home and the decline of their father's fishing trade. Chakki dies and Karuthamma has not been informed. She complains to Panchami. The little girl tells that it was their father who denied to inform her. She becomes angry and says, "That fatty [Chembankunju] said that you were seduced by that Muslim and ruined the shore!" (p. 225). But Karuthamma feels pity for her father and says, "Poor Achan! He went mad . . ." (p. 225). And she is lost in the old thoughts about her life at the sea shore of Neerkunnath. "Karuthamma went numb. Her ears buzzed. Her eyes glazed. Panchami kept talking. So all of that was still a matter of gossip on that shore. It was still being discussed. And her proud father too had come to know about it. Would her father ever forgive her?" (p. 225) and then the discussion comes to Pareekutty. Panchami narrates the young man's pathetic tale. She tells, "He has nothing, chechi. He is a pauper. And he keeps wandering on the shore. You'd think he's a mad if you see him. It is really very sad!" (p. 225). Karuthamma shows no interest in the matter but she feels eager to know all about Pareekutty. So she let Panchami to speak everything without any interruption. "If circumstances had been different she would have asked about Pareekutty herself" (p. 226). Karuthamma's love begins to come out from the depth of her heart. She begins to swim in the old and sweet memories of her childhood. Be the witness:

She too was perhaps seeing in her mind the little boy dressed in a yellow shirt and trousers, wearing a cap, a handkerchief knotted around his neck and clinging to his father's hand. The shell that she had gifted him One by one each scene from the romance played itself out in front of her eyes.

A valuable life had been wrecked. It was falling apart. No it had been destroyed. Unconsciously she asked Panchami, "Does Little Boss still sit on the boat and sing?"

Panchami responded, 'Ah . . . sometimes he sings!' . . . Karuthamma asked, 'Do you ever see him?' 'Sometimes!'

'Does he then ever ask you about echechi?' Karuthamma's voice quivered.

Panchami said, 'When he sees me, he smiles!' 'And sometimes he would ask a about her!' A voice that had never been heard before spoke up. Palani stood in front of them. Panchami and Karuthamma leapt to their feet. Karuthamma's secret was out (p. 226).

Palani comes to know the secret feelings of Karuthamma's love for Pareekutty. Everything is out now. There is nothing to say. Nothing to explain. Nothing to conceal. Nothing to reveal. Karuthamma discovers a strange courage to face the situation. After this moment she begins to change herself. Now she is not a timid woman. A hazy but definite plan begins to formulate in her heart. She begins to develop dreams of her own. But nothing comes out. It is Panchami whose presence gives her the strength of life. The life of her own self. Now she has nothing to hide so there is nothing to fear. She recollects:

A Pareekutty who has lost everything in life and now wandered though the shore like a mad man singing his song. 'I will always sing this song; I will sing this song so it is heard at Trikunnapuzha'?? the word pounded within her ears. 'When you have your boat and nets, will you sell your fish?' (pp. 227-28).

Karuthamma's love for Pareekutty surpasses all other worldly affairs. Now she is true to the best of her emotional heart. Palani asks, "Were you in love with him?" (p. 227). Karuthamma rejoins, "Yes, I was in love!" (p. 228). He asks another question, "Did you bid farewell to him?" (p. 228). There is no reply. He asks one more question, "When did you tell him that you would see him next?" (p. 228). She answers, "I never said anything like that!" (p. 228). She always tries to be a faithful wife to Palani but now the other woman inside her body has begun to pledge silently that what is the value of mere rituals of marriage if there is no value of true love.

Next morning Palani goes out to sea for fishing without speaking a word to anyone. In the afternoon he arrives and Karuthamma asks, "I want to go to Neerkunnath once" (p. 228). Palani doesn't respond. She again requests, "My father has no one" (p. 229). But he

doesn't reply either to this. In the evening of the same day he goes to the sea for fishing. T.S. Pillai's portrayal of the myth of chastity finds an evidence here. Karuthamma proves to be an infidel woman. She becomes the pavement of Palani's ruin. In the evening of the same day he goes to sea for fishing. He comes to combat with a dolphin. He cries for life. His cry tears the sky. Palani feels fear in his heart. He tries to escape from the impending clutches of death. His wife is chaste no more. She performs no prayer on the sea shore. The mythical goddess of sea i.e. Katalamma becomes furious. "There was a whirlpool somewhere. . . . Palani's boat was being dragged away by that current. He rowed against it. . . . In that sea, a commotion could be heard. . . . A seagull had been snapped by a shark. Palani put out his fishing rod" (p. 231). He struggled for life. He cried ? Karuthamma! But there was no one to hear his cry. "She wasn't chaste enough to hear that [cry]" (p. 230).

The darkness of night embraces the sea shore. Panchami falls asleep amidst their talking, but Karuthamma doesn't feel easy in her heart. She feels:

A wind with a song that had never been heard before. Karuthamma felt as if traces of Pareekutty's song had merged with that wind. She listened, she listened hard and so she flowed into that past of her life entitled Pareekutty.

Her fisherman was at sea all by himself. He was putting out bait in the far sea. And so like that first fisherman she ought to stand on the shore praying for his safety. Instead, she thought of Pareekutty.

It was not done consciously. She was not asleep nor was she awake. Pareekutty was a nice man, a good man, a loving man. These were all definite facts. She could not forget Pareekutty in this life. Nor would she do so. Pareekutty was hers and she was his.

. . . In that trance, she murmured: She was waiting. Pareekutty would come; Pareekutty would call her. She would heed her call.

Which was why she was awake.

She suddenly listens the sound of her name as:

'Karuthamma!'

Once again the call. 'Karuthamma!'

Only one man had ever called at that time of night at her door. It was a call that came every night. Palani would call when he

came in from the sea. . . .

'Karuthamma!'

Was, it his voice? Who else it could be? She called out, 'Yes what?'

The voice didn't ask her to open the door. Usually he would ask her to. But still she rose, opened the door and stepped out. Unlike any other day a stormy wind blew. A wind with a certain savagery to it. . . . There was no one in the yard. She went towards the west of the house. Towards the shore. To gaze at the sea. A man stood in the moon light. It was Pareekutty. . . . He walked slowly towards her. She looked at that figure carefully. This wasn't her Bossman. He had become very thin (p. 232).

It is beyond expectations. It is against the social custom of the fishing community of that sea shore. "Nevertheless when Palani was out at sea, should she be standing there at night speaking to a man?" (p. 233). All of a sudden the vast web of past life comes to her little mind. And:

They stood looking each other. She had ruined this man who stood before her. Deep in her soul Karuthamma knew that he loved her and would do so forever. No matter what happened to him, no matter when and how, he would always love her. And he would always forgive her. She could do him the worst harm. And he could bear it for her (p. 233).

In this short period of time, Karuthamma forgets everything. Her family. Her society. Even her husband who is at seat. Now she doesn't feel herself a defeated and timid woman. Rather she feels herself a woman having a great wealth. "A wealth that no other woman had! As she had once thought that she was under the care of an able man; as she had once her life was secure. She was confident about life. . . . All of this had given her confidence. Her Palani was strong. And his spirit too was formidable. A man loved her. She would always be a beloved to him. And it was the one who loved her so standing before her" (p. 233). And:

She moved into his out stretched arms and laid herself against his chest. She raised her face to his. He whispered in her ears, 'My Karuthamma!'

'What, my dearest?'

Pareekutty asked, 'Karuthamma!'

. . . 'Who am I to you?'

She cupped his face between her palms and with half closed eyelids whispered, 'Who are you to me?' Why, you are my pot of gold!

Once again they were one. In rapture, she whispered sweet nothings into his ear. She was not able to break or move away from that embrace (pp. 233-34).

All this happens at the sea shore of Trikunnappuzha but in the sea there happens something dangerous. A shark attacks Palani's boat and drags it at the speed of wind. It seems to him as if all the waters have gathered into his boat. He makes his grasp to his boat strongly to save his life. And he screams the name with full strength ? 'Karuthamma!' But "why was he calling for Karuthamma? Wasn't there a reason for that? The goddess who protects the fisherman at sea is his fisher-wife at home and so it was to her, he was appealing for prayer as that first fisherwoman had prayed for the safe return of her husband. . . . Palani too believed he would return. He had a fisherwoman. And she would pray for him. Hadn't she promised him this that very day?" (p. 237). He could not get any thought for his safety. "Again the boat rose above a wave. Palani lay on his belly over it. He was still holding on. . . . Was the merciless act of annihilation complete? Caught in a cross current, the boat stood erect like a pillar and then sank" (pp. 238). Palani is swallowed by the sea waves. "Because the goddess of sea, Katalamma demands a strict observance of moral codes in life. It is this fear . . . that keeps the people away from such violations. . . . The superstitious beliefs of the fishermen are typical of villagers in india. . . . Katalamma is sacred to them and even the act of fishing is a ritual for them." (Magdaline Dyana, R., *Depiction of Society in the Novel Chemmeen*, 2013, pp. 1-2). Thus Palani dies. And:

On the sea shore Panchmi wept, holding the baby who was screaming for its parents. Her brother-in-law who had gone to sea the night before hadn't returned. And Karuthamma who had gone to sleep with her was not there either. She wept and tried to console the baby at the same time.

Two days later, the dead bodies of a man and a woman locked in an embrace came to rest on the sands. Karuthamma and Pareekutty (p. 238).

T.S. Pillai postulates the myth of chastity by portraying the love between Karuthamma and Pareekutty. Karuthamma becomes unchaste so Palani dies at the sea. But the two are also not spared by the sea goddess and the sea water swallows both of them. The true love appears as a sin in the novel and all the persons associated with the sinners are

punished as well by Katalamma, the sea goddess. Thus myth of chastity annihilates love for its preservice on the sea shore of Neerkunnath and Trikunnapuzha.

Conclusion

Karuthamma and Pareekutty love each other but their love cannot touch the heights of success because of caste and community differences. The myth of chastity and love prevailing in the fishing community eats up their love and develops the way of their ruin and devastation. The feelings of their love find no shelter in this cruel world and they die embracing each other and hand in hand. Life keeps them separate but death unites their two love-sick hearts. "The novel acquires the quality of a fable in which life in the fishing community is depicted with great emotional detail. The customs, the taboos, the beliefs, the rituals and the day-to-day business of living through the point of stark existence come alive magically through T.S. Pillai's Pen" (Nidhi Malik, *The Fall of Customs*, 2015, p. 88) in this novel. "There are chaos and disharmony when these traditional laws and customs are breached and overstepped. The novel validates this by portraying the tragedy of characters who have transgressed" (Malik, 2015, p. 89).

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