

Cultural aspects expressed in *Cilappatikaram*

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Literature as the mirror of time can fall through human life. It reflects civilization, culture, policy, doctrine and customs. These reflected aspects are flexible and they change according to time. Culture is the most important expression of these aspects. It was defined earlier as the symbols, language, beliefs, values, and artifacts that are part of any society. Moreover these cultural aspects are considered the important determinants of a human's social status. In this way, literature can be considered the expression of culture and culture can be considered the determinant of social status of human beings. Nevertheless, many Western scholars have mentioned poets as liars and literature as a fictional fantasy about human life. Thus, it is necessary to examine the true nature of literature. *Cilappatikaram* is the first epic among the five in Tamil literature with a story set in Tamilnadu. Tamil ethnicity has a unique culture compared to other communities. So it is important to find out whether *Cilappatikaram* reflects actual culture or not. What are the cultural aspects it contains and how does the influence of cultural aspects determine social status of both man and women? The objective of this study is to critically examine the reflecting cultural aspects and influence of those cultural aspects on determining the social status of both man and women by using the epic *Cilappatikaram* as a primary source. The cultural aspects expressed in *Cilappatikaram* are analyzed and a sociocultural approach is used to critically examine the influence of cultural aspects on determining social status of both man and women. 'Katpu' (Chastity or Conjugal fidelity) is a manifestation of the Tamil culture of being one for one, hospitality, admiration, during the marriage reveals culture such as providing dowry, allows the couple to live as single family and waiting for the husband are some rituals can be finding in *Cilappatikaram*. These are only for women. The traditional performing art and theatre of art belonging to Tamil People is expressed through the character *Madhavi*. She was an accomplished dancer. She represents the lives of *kanihaiyar* and their lifestyle. The woman who is not associated with marriage will not be respected by others, marriage had impact to consider *kannagi* as chaste god. She got the right to fight for *Kovalan* but not to *Madhavi*. However, when *Kannagi* was alone, *Kovalan* and *Kannagi's* family supported her but *Madhavi* was alone. The essentiality of the *Tali* is exposed by *Kannaki* and the significance of *cilambu* is exposed by both *Kannaki* and *Paandimadevi*. These jewels can only be worn by a married woman. Likewise, the cultural epic *Cilappatikaram* reflects the cultural aspects with the message that both nonmaterial culture and material cultural aspects have an impact on determining women's social status more than men's social status.

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