

A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF *RAGUVAMISAM* ON THE EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE OF SRI LANKAN TAMILS

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The *Raguvamisam*, one of the Tamil epics in Sri Lanka by *Arasakesari*, was composed during the period of the kings of Jaffna. It was written by adopting the major epic *Raguvamsam* by *Kalidasa* in Sanskrit. *Arasakesari* is believed to be a descendant of the *Aryachakravarthy* Dynasty that ruled the Kingdom of Jaffna. This epic consists of three cantos, twenty-six chapters, and two thousand four hundred and four verses in *Virtutham* meter. The history, valor, and generosity of the twenty-nine kings who belonged to the Solar dynasty are expounded in this epic. Among them, the history of the Kings *Ragu*, *Ayan*, *Thileepan*, *Dasarathan*, *Raman*, and *Kusha* are elaborately related in this epic. The challenging diction and the style utilized in this epic would demand deep contemplation even for scholars who are well-versed in traditional poetry. However, this epic secured importance during the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries. It was ardently studied and discussed among traditional scholars and students. Besides, it was included as a textbook in the traditional educational heritage. Therefore, it is necessary to study the reason for the in-depth learning of this epic and its influence on the educational and literary heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils. But so far, only a few primary and introductory studies have been conducted on *Raguvamisam*. They just deal with the background of its composition and structure. This study aims to comprehend the impact of the first Tamil epic, *Raguvamisam*, on the educational heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils. This study is based on the descriptive methodology encompassing the analytical and comparative methods to identify and evaluate the impact of this epic. The epic *Raguvamisam* and its commentary are taken as primary sources. Literary appreciation notes and articles on *Raguvamisam* and previous studies on the educational heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils are taken as secondary sources. The findings indicate that the inclination to prioritize the first Sri Lankan Tamil epic, sound knowledge of Sanskrit, and the influence of the epic *Ramayanam* are the prominent reasons for the intensive reading of this epic. Therefore, *Raguvamisam* was included in the curriculum of the traditional educational heritage of Sri Lankan Tamils, and commentaries and appreciation notes were written abundantly. Besides, it was paraphrased by some scholars in prose, and its influence could be traced to the subsequent literary compositions composed in the following years.

Keywords: *Raguvamisam*, *Arasakesari*, kings of Jaffna, Tamil educational heritage