

ECOFEMINISM: A STUDY OF NATURE AND WOMAN IN PERUMAL MURUGAN'S ONE PART WOMAN

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Abstract:

Ecofeminism emphasized on relation or interconnection of nature and woman. Nature has been played role like a woman so it is described as feminine. Nature and women both have similar qualities one among all is to give, to give and to give without any expectation. Present research paper tries to study the interconnection of nature and women in Perumal Murugan's novel Madhorubagan, first published in 2010, later translated to English with the title One Part Woman. In 2016, Sahitya Academy Award was given to this novel. One Part Woman focusses on the false beliefs, customs, unwanted believes and rituals which disturbs the society, can destroy everyone's life. Ponna, and Kali lovable couple become the victim of cultural practices. Culture and social practices are relevant to the social order as in our society social order means social status is depended on the word Male. Patriarchal society is influential in every field even in family matters like having children, in that again male or female.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Nature, Gender discrimination, Religion, Disparity, Cultural Dogmas.*

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Introduction:

Literature plays vital role to lead humankind. Literature records past, mirrors present and shows pointed towards future. Feminism or feministic issues are nothing but the inseparable part of literature. Ecofeminism has gained main focus in the present era. Progress in the science and technology is beneficial in most of the fields but are proved harmful to nature and women to some extent.

Perumal Murugan is a contemporary Tamil writer and lecturer working in Government Arts and Science College in Namakkal district. People described in the novel are more insane about their caste and religious believes. Murugan describes more about caste and religious believes through his novel. Murugan is strictly against the caste orders. Murugan through the novel penned the nature, pets and emotional attachment and reflections of nature in the human life.

In the beginning of the novel, Kali plucked a flower from the portia tree, he couldn't control himself, but later feels sad for his act, "The sight of the flower on

the tree was more beautiful than its scent."¹ This sensitivity towards nature is shown but he couldn't help his life as an infertile women.

He feels the pain of the tree, when some of its branches were trimmed. These branches are trimmed because they had outgrown. Kali felt so sad that he says, "....it looked like a 'deformed body part', "....he stood looking at the tree's wound for a while." ² The deformed body part he felt that he failed to impregnate his wife, because of which he has become an object of ridicule.

This symbolizes the 'patriarchal' notion of societal norms, where even the 'man' has to suffer and woman has to suffer a lot in the family and in the society.

Culture plays an important role in human life. Some cultural practices are responsible for discrimination and intolerance not only about female but about human life on earth... In an interview with UN News Centre, Paulo Coelho, the Brazilian novelist states "Culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to

overcome the economic and political barriers. But first they have to understand that their neighbour is, in the end, just like them, with the same problems, with the same questions”³

Ponna and Kali, childless couple tried a lot to search the reason for their infertility. Continuous questioning about Kalies manhood is main reason of annoyed nature. Kali's mother suggested them to visit Kaliyur astrologer. When these people meet the astrologer, he says “There is some curse that you have inherited. Everything will be all right if we find out what that is and make offering for appeasement” (20). Meeting with astrologer is a misleading path and from there misery started. This suggestion of astrologer influences their psychology and they started to search their ancestor's history, They came to the conclusion that they have three curses from Kali's family. In this worst situation Kali find a relief in nature.

Murugan, the author himself has faced religious violence in his own place by the publication of the novel *One Part Woman*. In 2010, the novel *One Part Woman* was first published. In 2012, the novel is translated into English by Anirudhan Vasudevan. Author and novel faced several controversies by political and religious parties, claiming that it greatly humiliates their God Madhorubaagan and the females of the particular region.

The temple has a unique ritual of the chariot festival in which the childless women of the community without any restriction are allowed to have relationship with any man for a night. The children born out of this particular ritual are considered as God's children. Morgan has expressed his views in an interview through book but he became victim of controversies He declared that his intention was not to criticize God but criticize senseless rituals followed by people in the name of God.

In *One Part Woman*, Kali and Ponna have been married for 12 years. They are without being able to

conceive. Kali and Ponna have tired of their family and community's pressure to have a child and so avoided spending time with their parents. After many years of pressure they decided to visit Ponna's parents during one of the weeks of the chariot festival.

The novel begins with Kali sleeping under the portia tree he planted outside his in-laws' home shortly after marrying Ponna. He always felt some sort of resemblance with the portia tree. Even Kali's in-laws felt “What the son-in-law had given them was certainly a gift!”⁴

While he rests on the cot, Ponna cooks him food, and Kali's mind wanders deep into his past. Looking at the healthy portia tree, Kali wanders why he and Ponna have still been unable to conceive. He remembers the litany of rituals, ceremonies, and spiritual feats he and Ponna have performed in an attempt to appease the gods and become fertile.

Kali feels heavenly joy in the natural environment in his barnyard. Kali also feels comfort under the Portia tree at Ponna's courtyard. It is another symbol of his ‘happy place’ mentioned in the novel. There is a close emotional attachment between Kali and the Portia tree can be seen. He feels happiness in the ‘cool shade’ of Portia tree. He was so attached to it that his in-laws named it ‘the son-in-law's dowry.’ He planted it while it was a stalk and “Kali's mind could see the tree it would grow into one day...” (p2)

This feeling of tree should grow in one day symbolizes the feeling of fruitfulness not only about tree but also in his life. Karuppanan is character in the novel who started to chase Ponna while going to farm. Not only that but he had even gone so far as to come to Kali's house in the afternoon to play cards with his friends, smiling lustfully in order to gain her favor. Kali had an old habit of coming home from the farm and knocking on the door, but now everyday she has a fear that it would definitely be kali or someone else outside the door. This night symbolizes the worst situation. She

decided to spend night in the farm. This decision to spend night in the farm symbolizes the comfort and security in the farm means in the nature. That night Poona opened heart and cried a lot and says, “I don’t have children, that’s why people look at me like this. If I had been blessed a child, would I have had to endure such suffering? Every dog in the village thinks I am a stone, lying on the road, come and go, rubbing my body....” 107. Stone image of nature in this novel used here to indicate emotionless and senselessness. The next day, kali tried to meet Karuppan, he went and met him. As usual, his words were full of taunts and cursing, “Hey, my friend, you only have two coconut trees, but you don't even water them properly. Hey! look at that new foliage, it's drying up....” 5These lines are the sarcastic remark on infertility of Kali but Kali instead of any argument says, “ Karuppanan , You have no idea how I add water, didn't you give your sister to Rachi? Ask her, she'll tell you. Why do you think she keeps coming here to her mother's house?

You think she's coming to see you, her brother, but the truth is different.

Go away, poor! You're just wandering around the village playing cards in the square. Your wife is breaking stones in your name. Ask her what kind of work is good for you.

Don't worry about my coconut trees, limit your play to this square. Got it.” These lines symbolizes that agony of infertile man. Kali wants to prove that he is well as a man. Coconut tree is a symbol of fertility. .

Conclusion: In the *One Part Woman* writer has interwoven theme of nature issues and Women issues are similar where Patriarchy is dominant. The novelist

has penned clearly a relationship between social conventions and its influence on personal life somewhere it influences surrounding and has great impact on nature also. Murugan's shocking imagery and his sensitive portrait of the couple and rituals stirred the society and forced to rethink about such rituals. Murugan's translator Aniruddhan Vasudevan says, "Childless couples, especially the women in these marriages, suffer untold humiliation even today. If anything deserves to be banned, it is this control over women's sexuality.” There is more importance to fertile land, fertile trees and fertile women in our society but somewhere there is a need to change point of views for the betterment of humankind.

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