

## The Status Of Childless Women In Socio-Cultural Society: A Study Of Perumal Murugan's One-Part Woman

S.B. Suganthi <sup>1</sup>, Dr. T. Deivasigamani <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>\*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu-608002,  
Email: hrithik10071983@outlook.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Annamalai University.

### Abstract

The present research article highlights how Perumal Murugan's novel *One Part Woman* delineates the customs and practices of Kongu region people, especially Gounder communities, and how women become victims of the patriarchal society. The background of this novel is knitted with the issue of the childlessness of a young couple, Kali and Ponna, who wait for almost twelve years for a child. To get this kind of identity, Ponna is advised by her mother and mother-in-law, who are uneducated and superstitious, to have sex with another man in the name of god on the occasion of the chariot festival celebrated in honour of Lord Siva, who is seen in the form of half- female and half male - Ardhanarishwara. It is practiced from the 18th day of the chariot festival and is regarded as so dear to Lord Shiva, and so pious for people to fulfill their unfulfilled desires and wishes, and that day all the existing social customs are relaxed in all aspects. Hence, anybody can sleep with anybody, because every macho man is a god on that day. Hence, women, who suffer from childlessness and want to have a child of their own, can mate with any man unknown to her, because such a man is devotionally viewed and believed to be a god on that particular day. Thus, it was the belief of people who lived in that particular region about a hundred years ago. The novel ends with Ponna's visit to the chariot festival. Kali's love, concern, and affection for his wife is unfathomable. Because of the societal issues, he decides not to see her in his life again, and she too prepares herself to indulge in an action, which is not dear to the heart of her loving husband. Not just for him, but for anybody such suggestion will be very painful; the idea of sharing one's wife with someone else for whatever reason is unimaginable, and is tantamount to death.

**Keywords:** childless, socio-cultural, Kongu region, Gounder, patriarchal society, belief

### Introduction:

Perumal Murugan is a contemporary Indian Tamil novelist, short story writer, poet, and above all a committed teacher. He has written twelve novels, six collections of short stories, six anthologies of poetry, and many non-fiction books. His novels were originally written in Tamil language and ten of his novels have been translated into English by other academicians such as *Seasons of the Palm*, *Current Show*, *Pyre*, *One Part Woman*, *A Lonely Harvest*, *Trail by Silence*, *Poonachi or the Story of a Goat*, *Resolve*, *Estuary*, and *Rising Heat*. His writings speak about the socio-cultural issues and the status of Dalits and Gounder communities in the Kongu Region of Tamil Nadu. Murugan's *One Part Woman* is based on a possible ancient cultural practice among people living around Tiruchengode. It is the story of a childless couple with a strong desire to have a child as depicted with admirable sensitivity, anguish, and gentleness. The novel was originally written in Tamil under the name *Madhorubagan* and then translated into English by Aniruddhan Vasudevan. The story is set in his native town of Thiruchengode and deals with a couple, Kali and Ponna, who were the subject of social stigma and humiliation for their inability to have a child. The novel portrays their eventual participation in a chariot festival to honour the god Ardhanareeshwara. On the 18<sup>th</sup> day, the local community in the novel relaxed taboos and allowed free relations between men and women. The protests by some outfits were continued by the local units even after they lost momentum at the state level.

Murugan's *One Part Woman* reveals two different layers of caste hierarchical structure it oppresses women from the same caste for not having a child and at the same time, it oppresses the other castes. The couples' social activity is also been restricted, they are prohibited from all the auspicious occasions in their neighbourhoods. Though the couples are very loving, and caring of each other and mate with utmost desire and zest, they still fail to have a child of their own and their efforts become futile. The community people and family members are accused only of Ponna, not Kali, and the child is a symbol of the identity of married couples if they do not have a child they are not eligible to get a family name and asserts. The cultural practices, beliefs, myths, and way of life are depicted in the flow of the story. The blend of culture and the story is inseparable as in the factual life of a human being. Living in their own birthplace of culture the couple cannot escape the social & religious aftermaths and the cruel attitude of people. The long-preserved aura and glorious tradition of the Kongunadu region are vividly explained in every part of the novel. Even though certain religious practices of the specific community mentioned in the novel provoked controversies, it must be understood it is a work of fiction that records or portrays the practices of ancient culture. Historians can never be questioned and so must be the author of the novel as his imagination does not always go hand in hand with the factual evidence. The research paper attempts to

investigate the status and experience of childless women in the name of customs and culture of the Kongu region of Tamil Nadu, India.

### Objectives of the Study:

The objective of the study traces how Village people are giving more importance to the customs and culture through Perumal Murugan's novel *One Part Woman*. It revolves around how the loveable couple, Ponna and Kali break their nuptial promises and choose their own decision and way of life. The writer gives a message that unwanted beliefs and rituals can distract everyone's life. This research paper focuses on the following objectives:

- To investigate the culture and social identity of the major characters in the novels and how this ancient culture causes the people in their day-to-day lives.
- To explore how a community's pathological obsession estranges a loving couple and breaks up their happy marriage
- To highlight the stratification of Indian society along caste lines, which is brought out through the concept of untouchability.
- To understand the emotional sufferings, agony, and humiliation caused to them by society due to their childless stature.
- To investigate how this cultural belief and moral values followed by the people of Kongunadu affect a childless couple.
- To understand a saga of atrocities and a difficult journey without a child in this orthodox patriarchal society.
- To delineate how people denied to follow the cultural rule are humiliated and have been ignored by the society.
- To help the readers know the God and Goddess who are worshipped, the way they should live, and their moral values.
- To find a real picture of South Indian cultural practice by recording the changing social issues and problems and how the protagonist Ponna is isolated from her husband's love and affection,

### Scope of the Study:

The scope of the study is to explore how Murugan's novel *One Part Woman* weaves various issues such as caste issues, societal expectations and intolerance, gender roles, familial relations, patriarchy, and complexities of the simple rural life, and also mainly focuses on the relationship between society and cultural practices as well as rituals. The novel examines how customs in India turn women into victims of gender essentialism. Women are expected to conform to a fixed female identity, and Ponna's failure to do so results in the repression of her self-identity. It also explores the condition of marriage and gender roles within it. The couple Kali and Ponna remain childless for twelve years, and the husband Kali' is recommended by his relatives for a second marriage, almost naturally placing the blame on the woman. In the patriarchal society, a man has a wider space in which to function, and a woman is constantly constrained. The novel also describes how patriarchy leads to the oppression of female sexuality, by viewing it solely as a means to motherhood and the benefit of her husband and progeny alone.

### Review of Literature:

Riessman, Catherine Kohler (2000), in her article "Stigma and Everyday Resistance Practices: Childless Women in South India" analyses married women's experiences of stigma when they are childless and their everyday resistance practices. As stigma theory predicts, childless women deviate from the "ordinary and natural" life course and are deeply discredited, but contrary to Goffman's theory, South Indian women cannot "pass" or selectively disclose the "invisible" attribute, and they make serious attempts to destigmatize themselves. Social class and age mediate stigma and resistance processes: Poor village women of childbearing age are devalued in ways affluent and professional women avoid; differently situated women challenge dominant definitions and ideologies of family in distinctive ways. South Indian women are creating spaces for childless marriages within the gendered margins of families and culturally prevalent definitions of womanhood. The findings contribute to rethinking Western assumptions in Goffman's theory and suggest new directions for research on power and everyday resistance.

Sudhagee,(2015), in her "Book Review: *One Part Woman*" reveals that the novel has a simple storyline, draws its name from the principal deity at the main temple situated on the hill, and is known as Madhorubagan or One Part Woman. Another familiar name for the deity is Ardhanareeshwara or the half-man, half-woman form of Shiva. The novel is very visual and each scene unfolded just like a movie. Aanangur, the village where Kali and Ponna stay, their farm, their barn, and the cows and goats they raise, the portia tree at both Kali's house and Ponna's house. Kali and Ponna's life, their little tiffs and sulks, the nosy people around them, and Kali's irascible and eccentric uncle Nallayappan all became very real. We could feel the sting of arrack that Kali's mother had to steady her nerves before telling him of the 14th night of the chariot festival. The readers can feel Kali's despair at the latest 'solution' being offered for childlessness and Ponna's blind acceptance of whatever her husband decides for her. We feel that Ponna is hurt at being called barren and being left out of fertility rituals. We also feel Kali's shame at being considered as impotent by his friends. We wonder at the stigma of being childless and you also notice a parallel theme of the stigma of being single. Most of all wonder what happens in the end as the novel ends in a very intriguing manner.

Sujatha S. (2020), in her article "Feminine Quest for Freedom: A Rereading of Ponna - Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman*" highlights a sensitive portrayal of the disappointment and gender discretion experienced by a woman named Ponna. In this novel, Ponna throws out the fretters showered upon her by the patriarchal forces in society and experiences the taste of freedom. Ponna speaks for those who suffer silently a lot and also for those who always become a disparaged

figure. The novel drew the rage of the self-declared protectors of Hindu culture. The novel was burnt and he was subjected to continuous persecution. Hindu mythology which for all time prefers gender equality presents Lord Shiva as an epitome of gender equality that he has given equal importance to his counterpart. His vision of oneness created out of the binaries is conceptualized in the image of the Ardhanareeswar. It signifies the man who has given the left part of his body to his consort, Parvathy. On the Thiruchengodu hill, lord Shiva sacralised in this mythical form and it is said that it is the only place where one can see the idol of lord Shiva in this form. The author portrays the story of the people around this hill.

### Discussion and Findings:

Murugan's *One Part Woman* explores the sad tale of a young couple, Kali and Poona, who are married for twelve years back, and childless. The present research concentrates on the sensitive issue of childless and examines it from many cultural perspectives. Tamil custom expects that a woman should be pregnant within the first months of marriage, and at most by the end of the second year. If she fails to do so activates fertile minds and sets tongues wagging, casting aspersions, firstly over the woman's ability to reproduce. This is not an insignificant issue for a woman in Tamil society where motherhood is central to the identity of women. In Kongu Region, women without children are referred to as 'barren,' an unpleasant enough word in the English language, and a highly derogatory and ugly term in the Tamil language. Indeed, such women can be considered inauspicious and bearers of misfortune as was the case when Poona went to the fields: her proximity to newly planted seeds was thought to bring bad luck in the form of a poor harvest. In the novel, the novelist's storytelling addresses the impact of childlessness on the man. Kali ultimately becomes the butt of nasty comments and innuendo concerning his masculinity: his sexual potency and virility are called into question.

The love between Kali and Ponna is intense and they have a sexually satisfied life. The surroundings intruded on their happy life. The external forces and socially constructed norms are the reasons that create conflict between the couple. The want of a child to make a complete family life is a genuine desire for any normal couple. A constant reminder to a woman that she cannot give birth to a baby can at times be quite exasperating. They have done all the pujas and penance to fulfill their only wish to have a child. They have left no stone unturned to make their dream come true. Despite a sexually satisfying life, their efforts to conceive a child go in vain. They leave no stone unturned, trying every herb, remedy, ritual, and sacrifice. Starting from her mother-in-law's bitter concoction, a tarot reading, and the sacrifice and Pongal offered at the temple on top of the hill, Kali and Ponna do everything in their capacity to become pregnant. The real test of their conjugal life comes when Ponna is urged by their family members to participate in the chariot festival at the temple of Madhorubagan, the half-female god. Their fate depends on that one night when every single rule is relaxed and a consensual union between any man and woman is sanctioned.

The life of an Indian woman without a child is worse than a dog. A woman after marriage lives a life of tension and dilemma until a baby comes their way. The pathetic condition of Ponna is the pathetic condition of many other women in India and across the world. A childless woman is not respected and treated well especially in India and worse is the situation in the village. It is not only in India but even in other countries itself the same experience experienced by women. For example, Buchi Emecheta also highlights the same position of women in her novel *The Joy of Motherhood*. In the novel, the protagonist Nnu Ego married twice to have her high-priced son, even at the cost of not liking the man she married. Ego was overburdened with the fact that she was not able to birth to a baby boy and with the guilt that she would bring down her family name. In most cases with childless couples, women are made to feel that they are responsible for not having a child. Here, the protagonist Ponna made to believe that she is responsible for the childless marriage.

The depiction of the festival of Madhorubagan, with the ritual of consensual sexual union between strangers. The mockery of society would make the childless couple like Kali and Ponna attempt any rituals like even circumambulating a risky mountain supposed to cure barren women to bear children and live peacefully in society. Unfortunately, the wrath of the Gods was too furious to be convinced. The more radical solution offered to the couple was at the annual chariot festival, a celebration of the god Maadhorubaagan, who is one part woman. On the eighteenth day of the festival, the festivities culminate in a carnival, and on that night the rules of marriage are relaxed, and consensual sex between unmarried men and women is overlooked, for all men are considered gods. The solution has torn apart the loving couple and led to devastation in their life. Culture reveals itself in the character, setting, language, and entire plot of the novel. The beliefs, myths, and practices of the society are reflected through the terms in the native form. The broad range of meanings is expressed only with the representation of the terms in their original form.

Ponna is treated in an ordeal manner when it comes to the subject of childbearing by almost everyone in society. The culture in the name of customs and beliefs validates the irregular behavioural pattern of the childless woman. The happy customs of society become a torment for Ponna as she is humiliated by her fellow women. Kali also witnesses and experiences many humiliating incidents but society handles him the other way by often emphasizing him to remarry whereas the woman was blamed for being barren. The seeds seem fertile and the fertility of the land is attributed to the greatness of the seed. Even if the sown seed is imperfect the fertility of the soil is questioned. The remarks of women characters are more than the other gender.

This childless woman smells a child's as and squirms at the sight of a sight of a child's shit. How does she expect to be blessed with a child? Ponna broke into sobs. Kali did not know what to do.... Had she handled a child before, she would have done better. She did not know. That does not mean you call her barren. (OPW 158).

An individual develops a sense of fear in facing society and becomes prey to irrational beliefs.

Ponna and Kali performing the ritual of circumambulating the *maladikkal* risking their life intensely articulates the behavioural change of the characters concerning the society. But men do not benefit from this prayer, only women do. Ponna was told by an old woman who had come one day to weed their field of groundnuts. She says:

Any woman would be blessed with a child if she walked around the barren rock.... If Ponna felt scared on seeing the spot and someone came along, it might give them something to talk about. 'She said she would walk around the stone but she took one look at it and came back without doing it. (OPW 51)

In the Kongu region of Tamil Nadu, the inheritance of wealth becomes a major concern for the childless couple whose wealth awaits the pondering kith and kin. The earnings and the wealth of a childless couple attract the entire attention of the village as they perceive it goes in vain. They accentuate that a child is needed at least to inherit the wealth. Ponna's sister-in-law claims: "What are you going to do by saving money? Eat well, wear good clothes, and be happy." This infuriates Ponna and she feels humiliated with these derisive remarks. The real longing of Ponna and Kali's psyche for a child does not perturb their happiness but the society's remarks and the mere negligence in a ceremony ruin their contented marriage life. The thought of eighteenth day festival haunts Kali and he openly states:

He won't be able to live happily with Ponna and God's child. I simply cannot touch her after that. I cannot even lift and hold the child. Why do I need all that? I am happy lying around here. I don't want a child so desperately. Moreover, all of you will call me impotent and laugh at me. So let it go. (OPW 140)

The solace for the childless couple is the character of Nallayyan, Kali's uncle and a revolutionist soul who refuses to obey the uncanny rules of society. He never believed in marriage and begetting a child. He wants to be free from commitments and has never been in the ties of societal culture.

The depiction of culture in the simple story of a young couple, deeply in love and anxious to have a child, with the complexities of convention, obligation, and, ultimately, conviction leaves the reader with profound thoughts about the importance of culture. The Societal pressure has made Ponna fall prey to the age-old custom and the confounded state of Kali. Kali's incensed response to his brother-in-law, Muthu's suggestions of sending Ponna to the festival is drawn from experience rather than reason, for he is a religious man: When you and I went, were we gods? All we wanted was to find some decent-looking women to fuck, didn't we? Did you ever think of yourself as a god? .... It happened because people were ignorant in those days. Who will send their women now? Will you send your wife? (OPW 138). When he calls Muthu "old-fashioned" he argues citing the prevailing custom of monogamy. The divine figure presiding over the festival of chariots, the climax of which is the night of sanctioned free love, is the Ardhanariswara a figure represented literally and metaphorically as half woman and half man. There are several explanations for the existence of the Ardhanariswara in Hindu mythology, most of them centered around the idea that the original man was split into a male and a female form to procreate, thus giving birth to humanity. The male and female principles of divinity are thus part of a single unified whole. Interestingly, one of the explanations for this fused form is that the goddess Parvati was suspicious of the philandering ways of her husband, the god Shiva, whereupon Shiva ensured that she was always present with him to assure herself that he was up to no mischief. In the novel, Ponna is asked and forced to have sex with somebody not known to her to get pregnant and have a son to save the family of her husband Kali. She is prepared to do it with her husband's permission. She says to her spouse Kali: "I will if you are okay with it" (OPW 117). She does not think of her personality and character. However, her intention is only to save her husband from humiliation and the nagging of others who find fault with her and her husband for not having children. During the time of the Mahabharata or the twenty-first century, the status of women remains the same. They are ready to relinquish their personality and fidelity to protect the clans, dynasties, and heritage of their husbands.

The patriarchal society marks the concept of infertility as a woman's problem and it has too many norms for women to follow to lead an 'honourable' life within this social structure. It pressurizes the most important norm, i.e. 'being a woman with fertility'. The concept of fertility always questions and doubts the physique of a woman, it never questions the male member in the society. In India, being childless is perceived as a 'social evil' where women become the major victims. The conversation between Muthu and Kali exposes their notion of caste, even though the protagonist Kali is not ready to send his wife to the temple festival. He is afraid that men from untouchables also touch his wife:

Even related castes were fine. But if she went with an "untouchable", they excommunicated her. Is that how it works today? We insist that a woman should be with just one man from the same caste.... More than half the young men roaming about town are from the "untouchable" castes. (OPW 140)

Ponna belongs to an upper caste community, she accepts the patriarchal norms and customs especially for 'childless' women in the society. She experiences rejection and she is alienated from the civil society, as she does not have children. Society makes Ponna responsible for all evils that occur to the family. People used to accuse Ponna, "That barren woman ran up and down carrying seeds. How do you expect them to grow once she has touched them?" (OPW 115). Chellappa Gounder clandestinely personifies Ponna with the cows of Kali which are incapable of conceiving. "She felt as though a huge rock had been pressed against her heart" (OPW 11). The only reason is she is childless and also she encounters

insults and is repeatedly judged by society which alienates her from the social happenings and she estranges herself from other people. Hence, she is socially stigmatized and faces serious personal and social consequences.

Generally, the married couple's major happiness depends on the individual's will to beget a child or remain free. But society strictly influences the survival of every individual. Even though Kali says no to the eighteenth-day ceremony, Ponna's mother and mother-in-law convince her and she is sent to the festival without Kali's knowledge. Ponna goes to the festival and the trauma she experiences in the chariot festival vocalizes the mental dilemma. She could not find God in the humans who were present there and she took the opportunity to roam around the festival with free will. She gazes at the shops and watches Mayilattam, Oyilattam, and others like a small girl. When he was approached by a few men she ignored them and walked away but she was God-fearing and felt that she would never be blessed with a child since she rejected two men: "Had she earned his wrath after having rejected two of the Gods? Is this a crowd of Gods too? Is he watching me?" (OPW 221). She often gets the image of Kali in her mind and cannot accept any other man in his place, but one gentle touch could make her feel the presence of God and she relates Kali in every touch of men but this time she: "jerked her head to get Kali off her mind and his image receded and vanished." She felt the God in Sakthi, a goatherd whom she had known at a young age. "He is my God. My job is to go where he takes me" (OPW 225). She yielded to the society's persuasion and decided to go with her God. Meanwhile, Kali comes to know the fact and he utters: "You whore! You have cheated me. You will not be happy. You whore! You cheated me (OPW 237)" and he was found breathless. The pressure on both husband and wife can well be imagined. The couple is still in love and desires each other, but not even the most passionate lovemaking can ensure pregnancy.

The emotional pain of enduring social aspersions and deriding of their worth consequent to their childlessness compels the couple to resort to any means available in a bid for Ponna to conceive. Thus, Ponna and Kali turn to home remedies and promise every god imaginable eternal debt should Ponna become pregnant. Ultimately, the idea of a second wife is put to Kali for him to at least have another shot at becoming a father, the presumption being Ponna's infertility, a proposal he outrightly rejects. Such an idea adds to the tension and thus begins the unraveling of Kali and Ponna's passionate and loving relationship. Ultimately the couple's two mothers, themselves the perpetrators of innuendo, take the unusual step of collaborating in a bid to get Ponna to accept the extreme measure for getting her pregnant: a night of sexual freedom for Ponna with the young men available during the last night of the annual temple festival in the area. Kali rejects the idea of Ponna attending the festival, but relatives plot to take him away from the house while the two mothers escort an unknowing Ponna to the festival only to abandon her to the throng of people and the desires of a young man at the event. What is interesting at this point is what we learn of the faithful Ponna: not only do fantasies of a young man to whom she was attracted before marriage come flooding into her mind, but she quickly falls into the swing of things at the festival and seems to quite enjoy flirting with the young men eyeing off potential partners. In that sense, the author is clever at hinting that married women might find men other than their husbands attractive, an issue not easily accepted.

Ponna's husband Kali knew well from his participation in the event before his marriage, that the purpose of young men attending the festival had nothing to do with religion. The novel depicts the impact of culture with the carefully selected vocabulary and the linguistic excellence of the novel is highly appreciated. Desperate, the families of both husband and wife suggest resorting to a local custom in a last-ditch attempt at having a child: on the last night of the chariot festival in honour of a god worshipped locally, a childless married woman is allowed to sleep anonymously with a man usually a stranger in the hope of conceiving. Naturally, this raises psychological and moral questions to which there are no easy answers. The husband and the wife are torn. Kali wonders whether Ponna secretly harbours a desire for a sexual dalliance, for why else would she agree? And Ponna is beset by guilt. As the events unfold, Ponna visits the temple during the chariot festival. The chariot festival is one part of the mythical age-old customs followed in Tamil Nadu. Here, the novelist shows the desire of the typical Indian woman in need of a child, with her caste-based rituals, and ceremonies to have a child. The novelists viewed and valued, not for who they were, but for their ability to attain motherhood and their commitment to the family unit.

Trichengode Kailasanathar temple is the main refrain in this novel and its adoring, methods, capture the psychological and emotional conflicts that annoy the couple, making them tear apart. There is no male without a female and no female without a male. The world goes on only when they come together it is said by the great philosophers. In search of motherhood, Ponna followed the old custom of having sex with others in the name of the festival and their family allowing and encouraging her to do so except for her husband Kali. Finally, Ponna went to the chariot festival. She had a sexual union with a stranger. It was only in the morning that Kali came to know about it. The novel is ended about whether Ponna does conceive, and whether Kali will accept this or not. A suicide is hinted at. The novel ends abruptly as Kali learns that Ponna has gone to the shrine despite him not being very prepared for it. It brings out the stigma faced by a childless couple in the society of India. The condition of a childless woman suffers a double jeopardy. She faces the taunts of society, including both men and women. In the end, the desire to fulfill the demands of society leads the couple to the crossroads of their relationship and finally, they suffer a broken marriage. Both Kali and Ponna were victims of the society's plot. A sense of the real pathos involved in the story can be seen in the following statement:

The humiliations she had had to suffer because of this one problem were endless. She could not even go to their fields during sowing season for fear that others would broach the topic. So she would lock herself inside the house. Couldn't he understand these things? (OPW 113)

The tragedy is imposed from the outside. There is no catastrophic flaw innate in Kali or Ponna. No one senses the larger tragedy of society in constructing a solution to a problem. Childlessness is not a problem. If childbearing is natural, so is childlessness. Both are natural and time immemorial. The real problem is the problem of the pseudo space offered to women as one equal with men symbolically. In actual life women enjoy no space other than as pleasure objects and as machines of production. The refinement of praises given to women hides the compulsive no space that is offered. However, Murugan's apparent radicalness in acknowledging a woman's acceptance of a sexual encounter outside marriage for the purpose of conception and Kali's apparent sympathy for his wife in her attempts to find solutions to their childlessness is undermined by Kali resorting to a typical male response when he learns of Ponna's presence at the festival and calls her a 'whore'. Ironically, as Ponna gets a whiff of the alcohol on the breath of young men as they whirl and twirl to music at the event, we never do learn if Ponna does have sex with the young man with whom she is holding hands and reference to her as a 'whore' maybe unjustified.

### Conclusion:

The novel *One Part Woman*, is dealt with the status of women besides dealing with the custom that once prevailed in a particular region. Ponna going to the temple festival was the only option left for them since they lived in the interior village with no access to the modern world and advancement with medical science. Temple festival can be equated with the process of buying a donor egg from someone else in medical terms and it is not considered as betrayal like sleeping with another man as in the case of Ponna. A woman is completely woman when she gives birth to a child that is the old traditional myth, which is followed in Tamil Nadu and all over India. Ponna is not an exceptional case of a woman, her struggles make her follow the old traditional, mythological view in her life, this decision is not making happy to Kali her husband. So, the villagers living in India believed in a myth-based life. In the novel, Murugan condemns the social pressures and offenses that society thrusts on the couple for not fitting in with their perception of a family. It explores the individual and the collective with great detail and points out the power held by the collective over the individual. Using a simple and distressing narrative technique the author explores highlighting features of the village life with all its archaic traditions and notions without romanticizing the past he criticizes the engraved ideologies that wreck the relationship of a childless couple. The lack of knowledge and ignorance by the mob condemned the novel as their traditional views on marriage and women did not match with Murugan's characters. Topics like sex and caste which remain taboo in Indian society served as triggers to go against the novel. The real solution to social progression is to develop the individual, to continue the evolution of freedom inward until mental liberation leads to political and religious liberation. This requires breaking social boundaries that restrict knowledge and thinking and expanding consciousness beyond the limitations of any culture.

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