

Exploring Social disability in Perumal Murugan’s *One Part Woman*

Kowshigan K.¹, Dr. K. Sindhu²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India

Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 05 May 2024; Received in revised form: 02 Jun 2024; Accepted: 10 Jun 2024; Available online: 20 Jun 2024</p> <p>©2024 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Social disability, Infertility, Stigmatization and Social exclusion, Impact on Personal Relationships, Psychological emotional consequences, challenging social disability.</p>	<p><i>Feminists generally view One Part Woman by Perumal Murugan as a critical examination of the patriarchal and caste-based pressures on women’s reproductive roles. The novel portrays the intense societal expectations and stigma faced by childless women, highlighting how their worth is often reduced to their ability to bear children. The rituals allowing Ponna to conceive with a stranger further underscores the lack of agency women possess over their own bodies. The book is seen as a powerful critique of how deeply entrenched patriarchal norms impact women’s lives and choices. Disability Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that examines disability as a social, cultural and political phenomenon, rather than just a medical or individual issue. It aims to shift the perspective on disability from a focus on limitations and medical diagnoses to understand the societal structures, attitudes and barriers that create or exacerbate disability. Disability studies also examines the meaning, nature, and consequence of disability. Disability Studies in literature explores how disabilities are represented, experienced and interpreted in literary works. It examines how authors depict characters with disabilities, the societal attitudes and perceptions towards disability and the impact of disability on identity, culture and society. The term disability covers all impairments, activity limitations and participant restrictions that affect either organs as body parts of a person life.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

The Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights law enacted in 1990 that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. It covers various aspect of public life, including employment, public services, public

accommodations, telecommunications, and transportation. The ADA aims to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, promoting equal access and inclusion. There will be here some models in disability:

1.1. Medical Model Disability:

The medical model views disability as a problem inherent to the individual, caused by an impairment or a medical condition. It focuses on diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation with the goal of “curing” or “fixing” the disability. It focuses on medical solutions, treatments, and interventions to address impairments. Main goal of the medical model, to manage, cure, or reduce the impact of disability through medical means. This model has been criticized for pathologizing disability and overlooking societal factors that contribute to disability. For example a person who uses a wheel chair is seen as having a problem that requires medical or therapeutic intervention.

1.2. Physical Model Disability:

Physical model, sometimes called the “functional model”, considers disability in terms of physical and functional limitations. It focuses on the physical and structural aspects of environments, recognizing that physical barriers can limit access and participation for people with disabilities. It focuses on physical barriers and accessibility in the build environment. Main goal of the physical model is to ensure that physical spaces and infrastructure are designed to be accessible and accommodate various abilities. For example designing buildings with ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and other features to ensure they are physically accessible to people with various disabilities.

1.3. Social Model of Disability:

The social model of disability views disability as a social construct. It suggests that disability is not caused by an individual’s impairment, but by societal barriers, discrimination, and exclusion. According to this model, people with impairments become disabled when societal structures, attitudes, or environments do not accommodate their needs. This model focuses on removing societal barriers, promoting inclusion and changing societal attitudes towards disability. The goal of social model disability to create a more accessible and inclusive society by addressing discrimination and ensuring that ensuring that public spaces, policies, and practices are designed to be accessible to everyone.

Here I am going to examine social disability in *One Part Woman*:

One Part Woman novel by Perumal Murugan centers on Kali and Ponna, a childless couple in rural Tamil Nadu. Despite their deep love for each other, they face relentless societal pressure and ostracism due to their inability to conceive. Desperate and influenced by their families, Ponna considers participating in a controversial temple festival ritual where she can asleep with a stranger to conceive a child. The novel explores themes of social stigma, marital strain, and the oppressive cultural norms surrounding fertility and womanhood.

In *One Part Woman*, Perumal Murugan captures the harrowing discrimination faced by Kali and Ponna, a childless couple ostracized by their community. The novel deeply explores their emotional and social suffering, making readers feel the couples pain and discrimination.

II. COMMUNITY SCORN AND PERSONAL SHAME:

Kali and Ponna are constantly belittled by their community, which measures a woman’s worth by her ability to bear children. Ponna’s internalized shame is palpable: “What are you going to do by saving money? Eat well wear good cloths and be happy”(59). This statement encapsulates a poignant moment in the narrative where the protagonists, Kali and Ponna, reflect on their harsh reality. Despite their efforts to save money, societal pressures and the stigma of childlessness cast shadow over their lives. This line highlights their longing for simple joys and normalcy, which are constantly overshadowed by societal discrimination and personal sorrow.

That barren woman ran up and down carrying seeds. How do you expect them to grow once she has touched them? They never found out who said it. Everyone kept pointing of someone else.(115)

This quote poignantly illustrates the cruelty of societal discrimination. The “barren woman” is used derogatorily, highlighting the deep-seated prejudices

against Ponna. The metaphor of seeds not growing after being touched by her underscores the belief in her supposed infertility contaminating everything she touches. The anonymity of the insult reflects the pervasive, insidious nature of such societal judgments, showing how deeply embedded these prejudices are within the community, perpetuating Ponna's pain and isolation.

The famous feminist critics platform, "Feminism in India" the critic Rida Fathima derive her critic in the title of "One Part Woman: The Psychic Burden of Childlessness And Progeny" above this event about his article, Another instance in the book sheds light on the caste superstitions that lurch over infertile woman of the book, Ponna is invited for puberty ceremony of Chellama's daughter the custom was toward off the evil eye wherein all the aunts were called to spin red balls of rice in a large circle around the girl body and then toss it away. Except when Ponna comes forward to do the same, Chellama verbalizes her anxieties.

III. FAMILY PRESSURE AND DESPERATION

Ponna's family, driven by societal norms, pressures her to participate in a temple ritual to conceive a child with a stranger, highlighting the extreme measures imposed by cultural expectations. Kali's mother and brother-in-law, bluntly articulates this pressure:

Ponna, please go the eighteenth day festival this year" said mother in law to her happily. Your brother will take everything. How long can we keep looking at each other's face in this house? Don't we want a child to bounce around in this place? Everything will go well. Be ready tomorrow. (122)

This plea from Ponna's family encapsulates the intense emotional and societal pressures placed on her to conform to the traditional role of motherhood. The request for Ponna to attend eighteenth day festival, where women can conceive a child with a stranger, highlights the desperation and lengths to which her family willing to go to secure a child. The mention of

her brother's involvement suggests a collective familial effort to persuade her, indicating that Ponna's childlessness is seen not just as a personal issue but a familial burden.

This illustrates the intense burden placed on Ponna, reinforcing the discriminatory belief that a woman's primary role is reproduction. According to the famous feminist critic Rida Fathima's statement such ritualistic event defies the conceptualization of where a sexual exploit with a lower caste man would not condemnation, but the child begotten from this affair could seen as a legitimate. Ponna's decision to do so creates a harrowing bridge between the two, Kali's anxieties of raising a son that isn't his, and especially, isn't of his "stature" plagued his hegemonic masculinity one that is rooted in the groundings of caste and virility.

IV. ISOLATION FROM RITUAL, RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

The social isolation of Ponna and Kali is deepened by their exclusion from important rituals and community events. These religious and cultural practices are central to the community's identity and social fabric, and exclusion from them underscores the couple's marginalization.

Kali and Ponna find themselves excluded from religious and social rituals that celebrate family and children. This exclusion reinforces their outsider status and serves as a constant reminder of the perceived failure. The couple inability to conceive often leads to their exclusion from community rituals and celebrations centered on fertility, such as naming ceremonies, religious festivals, and other communal gatherings. This isolation serves as a constant reminder of their perceived failure to fulfill societal expectations.

"If a childless woman did the rituals, would it make the girl barren?"(112). Kali's close relative Chellama's daughter puberty function event took place. Ponna joined with them was ready to participate in some traditional rituals followed by their community. Some of her relatives criticized her saying

that above statement childless woman did ritual girl becomes barren.

This line captures the intense societal prejudice and superstition faced by Ponna. The implication that her participation in rituals could somehow infect others with barrenness highlights the deep rooted stigma against childless women. This belief not only isolates her but also strips her of her identity and worth within the community.

Isolation and Pain feel by the couple, exclusion from participating in rituals a key aspect of communal life, intensifies Ponna's isolation. Rituals and religious events are moments of collective identity and belonging, and being barren from them underscores her alienation. This exclusion is not just physical but deeply emotional, making her feel unworthy and disconnected from her community.

The couple's inability to conceive often leads to their exclusion from community rituals and celebrations centered on fertility, such as naming ceremonies, religious festival, and other communal gatherings. This isolation serves as a constant reminder of their perceived failure to fulfill the societal expectations.

According to radical feminist, Shulamith Firestone, views pregnancy as enforcing dependence of women on men, and she emphasizes how the route to liberation is to conceive outside, through technology. Thus, simply because Ponna cannot bear children, it still doesn't cannot that she is resisting the patriarchal system as she does not live in an epoch where technology can enable her emancipation.

V. CONCLUSION

One Part Woman received critical acclaim for its sensitive and bold portrayal of social issues, particularly those related to infertility and the associated stigma. However, it also faced significant controversy and backlash, reflecting the very societal tensions it seeks to critique.

One Part Woman is a profound narrative that sheds light on the concept of social disability through the experiences of Kali and Ponna. Murugan's

exploration of infertility, gender roles, and societal pressures provides a compelling critique of how rigid social norms can marginalize and disable individuals emotionally and socially. The novel is a powerful reminder of need for empathy and importance of challenging oppressive societal expectations.

One Part Woman is a heart - wrenching exploration of the concept of social disability through lens of infertility. Perumal Murugan masterfully depicts the emotional and psychological toll on Kali and Ponna, showing how societal expectations can destroy personal happiness and self - worth. It is a poignant reminder of the need for empathy and the profound human cost of rigid societal norms. It's a story that's stays with you, a tearful testament to the resilience of love in the face of relentless social adversity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, all kind of 'Disabilities' who supported the implementation of this paper. I hope that this paper can be useful.

REFERENCES

- [1] Culture and Woman in Murugan ,Perumal. *One Part Woman*. Paper by Wilfred,Sheena. M.Phil. scholar, Department of English, Holy Cross College(A), Nagarcoil. JETIR, June 2019, Volume 6, Issue6. ISSN;2349-5162
- [2] *One Part Woman ; A Review*. By Dr. Nongmaithen,Anuradha. Assistant professor in English, National Institute of Technology Agartala Jirania, West Tripura. (IJRSSH) 2017, Vol.No.7 ,Issue No.1, January - March.ISSN; 2454-4671
- [3] *One Part Woman* by Murugan, Perumal. and Vasudevan ,Aniruddhan. (Tr) in comparison with the Mahabharath; A critical Study by Mrs.Sunita.K. Assistant Professor in English at VIBIT, Hyderabad. Quest journals, Journals of research in Humanities and social science. Volume6 ,Issue 12(2018). ISSN;2321-9467
- [4] *One Part Woman; The Book on Trail for Acknowledging The Invisible* by Jose, Brijji. International Journal of science and technology Research Volume 8, Issue 10Oct2019. ISSN;2277-8616

- [5] Post colonial Feminist Reading of Murugan ,Perumal. *One Part Woman* with its Resistance in the context of myth and Culture. Halder,Poulami. Research scholar, Department of English, Visva- Bharathi University. An Interdisciplinary journal of Literary and Culture Studies, published by Department of English, SKB University, Purila, W.B., India. Volume-II, Issue II, July,2022. ISSN; 2583-2875
- [6] The Pseudo space of Women in Murugan,Perumal. *One Part Woman*. by Dr.Ganaraj,Daniel.Assistant Professor, Urumu Dhanalakshmi college, Trichy. ISSN ; 2349-5162. (2019)JETIR March 2019, Volume6, Issue3.
- [7] Unveiling Socio-Cultural Layers in Murugan,Perumal. *One Part Woman* Novel by C,Jofilda. Research Scholar and Dr. Kethrapal,c. Research Supervisor, Assistant Professor, St. Johns college, Palayamkottai. UGC CARE Listed (Group I) Journal Volume 11, Dec 2022 .ISSN; 2319 1775