

Identity-Crisis Under the Compulsive Social Forces in the Novel One Part Woman by Perumal Murugan

Deepshikha Sharma

(Assistant Professor)

Department of English

Govt. SPMR college of Commerce

Canal Road Jammu

Abstract: An identity crisis is a psychological condition in which a person feels profoundly unsettled about their self-identity, values, and beliefs. It frequently happens during times of big life transitions, such as adolescence, young adulthood, or significant life changes like career moves or personal problems. People who are experiencing identity crises may wonder about their identity, values, and place in society or their social circles. Anxiety, uncertainty, and a sense of being lost might result from this internal battle. While overcoming an identity crisis can be difficult, it can also be a chance for personal development and self-realization. Individuals can benefit from support from friends, family, or therapy to get through these uncertain times. "One Part Woman" by Perumal Murugan expertly explores the profound identity crisis that Kali and Ponna go through while being suffocated by obnoxious social pressures. The novel deftly illustrates how social pressure, moral difficulties, and traditional gender roles influence the identities of its protagonists. The purpose of the study paper is to assess "One Part Woman" from the perspective of a married couple experiencing an identity crisis. It also looks at the societal customs that are so ingrained in the human psyche that they undermine the joy of marriage. The current study work employs a qualitative methodology, using various techniques like content analysis and interpretive.

Keywords: *Identity-crisis, compulsive force, insecurity, and anxiety.*

Introduction:

A person may go through an identity crisis, which is a psychological phenomena in which they are profoundly unsettled about their self-identity, values, and beliefs. It frequently happens at times of big life transitions, such as adolescence, young adulthood, or significant life upheavals like professional changes or personal difficulties. An identity crisis can cause someone to question who they are, what they believe in, and how they fit into society or their social groups. Feelings of worry, uneasiness, and disorientation might result

from this internal conflict. Erik Erikson, a psychologist, popularized the idea by arguing that a successful resolution of identity crises is essential for a child's psychosocial development. Individuals can eventually get a greater grasp of their identity and a more stable sense of self through reflection, investigation, and self-discovery. Identity crises can take many different forms, including adjustments to one's relationships, job, or personal style as a person tries to match their self-concept to their changing self-understanding. While dealing with an identity crisis can be difficult, it can also be a chance for development and self-awareness. Individuals can benefit from support from friends, family, or therapy to get through these uncertain times. "One Part Woman" by Perumal Murugan expertly explores the profound identity crisis that Kali and Ponna go through while being suffocated by obnoxious social pressures. The novel deftly illustrates how social pressure, moral difficulties, and traditional gender roles influence the identities of its protagonists. The internal conflicts that Kali and Ponna face as they attempt to balance their needs and wants with society expectations demonstrate the significant influence that social standards have on human identity. The purpose of the study paper is to assess "One Part Woman" from the perspective of a married couple experiencing an identity crisis. It also looks at the societal customs that are so ingrained in the human psyche that they undermine the joy of marriage. The current study work employs a qualitative methodology, using various techniques like content analysis and interpretive. The text has been used to gather primary data. Additionally, research papers and articles are used to acquire secondary data.

Review of Literature:

The issue of identity crisis is one that literary authors frequently tackle in their writings because it offers a rich and challenging setting for the creation of characters and narrative. A character's internal struggle to define who they are, comprehend their place in the world, or resolve competing aspects of their identity is often the focus of an identity crisis in literature. This motif can appear in a variety of ways:

Coming-of-Age Stories and novels frequently follow young protagonists on their quests for identity as they age from youth to adulthood. The difficulties of forming an identity during this crucial stage are explored in works by authors like J.D. Salinger ("The Catcher in the Rye") and J.K. Rowling ("Harry Potter" series).

Writers frequently explore how people struggle with their cultural or ethnic identities, particularly when they feel pulled between conflicting worlds or encounter cultural confrontations. A good example is "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao" by Junot Díaz.

Gender and Sexual Identity-Writers like Virginia Woolf (in "Orlando") and Jeffrey Eugenides (in "Middlesex") explore gender and sexual identity, presenting individuals that challenge, rethink, or transcend conventional ideas of identification.

Existentialism and alienation: Works by existentialist writers like Albert Camus ("The Stranger") frequently explore themes of existential angst, loneliness, and the quest for meaning, which are crucial to the identity crisis.

Psychological Inquiry: Some authors, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald ("The Great Gatsby"), explore the psychological facets of identity by presenting individuals who create new personas or practice self-deception to conceal their true selves.

Identity and Society: Writers like Ralph Ellison ("Invisible Man") examine how societal expectations and prejudices can cause someone to lose their identity or struggle to assert their identity in the face of systemic difficulties.

The identity crisis is a multifaceted and lasting issue in literature that enables authors to explore the complexity of the human experience. It provides readers with an opportunity to reflect on common concerns about identity, community, and the pursuit of meaning, making it an engaging topic for literary inquiry.

Objectives of the Study:

The research paper aims to evaluate the novel 'One Part Woman' under the scrutiny of identity-crisis of married couple. It also studies the social traditions so deeply entrenched in human psyche that spoil the happiness of marital life. Plus, The present research paper focuses that how the internal sufferings due to social pressure the leading characters in the novel suffer.

Research Methodology:

The present research paper applies a qualitative methodology under which different methods like content-analysis and interpretative have been adopted. Primary data have been collected through the text. Plus, secondary data is gathered from research papers and articles.

Identity-crisis in One Part Woman:

In "One Part Woman" (also known as "Madhorubhagan" in Tamil), written by Perumal Murugan, the main characters Kali and Ponna struggle with severe identity crises as they deal with the obnoxious social forces that dominate their life in a traditional rural Indian milieu. The story, which is set in early 20th-century Tamil Nadu, centers on a couple's fervent desire to become parents and the unrelenting social pressure that drives them to moral and emotional ruin. The idea of an identity crisis becomes particularly prominent in this setting as Kali and Ponna struggle with the tension between their individual ambitions and the overpowering impact of society conventions and traditions.

Traditional Gender Roles and Identity Crisis:

Traditional gender norms are ingrained in the conservative society that the book portrays. Men are expected to provide for and defend their families, while women are largely valued for their capacity to procreate. These tight roles mold Kali and Ponna's identities and cause them to experience an identity crisis.

Ponna struggles with the social ideal that her value is primarily based on her capacity to procreate. Her inability to fulfill her role as a future mother, which is inextricably related to her identity as a woman, causes severe self-doubt and an identity crisis. She is continuously unsure of her value and place in society because she does not fit the stereotypical image of a mother.

On the other side, Kali faces challenges in navigating his roles as a spouse and provider. He genuinely cares about Ponna and wants to shield her from the mental suffering and social embarrassment that come with

being childless. He experiences a crisis of manhood as a result of not being able to provide his family with a kid, which makes him feel inadequate and emasculated.

Community Pressure and Identity Crisis:

The novel's rural community exerts tremendous pressure on Kali and Ponna to conform to its traditional values and norms. The community views childlessness as a curse and a source of shame, which intensifies the couple's identity crisis. Kali and Ponna constantly feel the weight of the community's judgment and scorn. They are isolated and humiliated, and their identities within the community are defined by their childlessness. The fear of being ostracized and ridiculed forces them into a state of constant turmoil as they navigate their sense of self within the suffocating confines of community expectations. They are forced to navigate their sense of self within the constricted boundaries of communal expectations out of a perpetual state of upheaval by the fear of being shunned and mocked.

Ardhanareeswarar Festival and Identity Crisis:

The novel's distinctive and contentious Ardhanareeswarar festival plays a crucial role in Kali and Ponna's identity struggle. In accordance with the custom, childless couples are permitted to have consenting relationships with other partners during the festival in the hopes of becoming parents. While it might be a way to end their childlessness, it also calls into question their morals and sense of self.

Ponna faces a serious moral conundrum as a result of her decision to take part in the event. She struggles to reconcile her commitment to being a devoted wife with her overwhelming desire to play the mother she is expected to be by society. She experiences a crisis of conscience as a result of the festival's pressure to face her own ideals and convictions. Even Kali experiences emotional distress after witnessing his wife take part in the festival. His sense of self as a spouse is severely compromised as he deals with his feelings of resentment, betrayal, and impotence.

Identity-crisis Within Marriage:

The novel's main theme is the couple's identity problem in the context of their marriage. Although Kali and Ponna had a strong emotional bond and shared great love, the pressure to become parents fractures their union. They differ from other couples in their community because their shared anguish and longing define their marital identity. The transformational aspects of Kali and Ponna's married identities are explored throughout the book. Their deep bond of love keeps them together through their difficulties. Their identity as a pair is shaped by their mutual yearning for a child and their readiness to go to considerable measures to satiate that desire. The book emphasizes how strong their connection is despite external constraints and the ways in which One's concept of self can be redefined by love. The lack of infertility in Ponna, however, causes a problem in the marital identity. The strain from society is so great that marital bliss starts to fade and anxiety and concern take its place. The story examines how their marital identity changes as they deal with the outside factors that could split them apart. Their common desire for a child turns becomes a source of tension as well as a link, and their search for a resolution shapes who they are as a pair.

Emotional Turmoil and Self-Doubt:

Intense inner upheaval and self-doubt are hallmarks of the identity crisis that Kali and Ponna are going through. Due of her sorrow and belief that she is lacking something without a kid, Ponna begins to seriously doubt her status as a woman. As he watches his wife suffer, Kali struggles with thoughts of a lack of masculinity, inadequacy, and an identity crisis as a husband and guardian. The story examines how societal pressures may have an emotional and psychological toll on people, leading them to doubt their value and purpose in life.

The Power of Choice and Individual Autonomy:

In the end, "One Part Woman" presents issues regarding personal autonomy and the influence of free will on identity. The voyage of Kali and Ponna invites readers to consider the effects of following social norms vs making decisions in line with one's own values and goals. Even in the face of powerful social influences, the story emphasizes the significance of agency in determining one's identity.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, "One Part Woman" by Perumal Murugan is a richly nuanced examination of identity crises against the backdrop of compulsive social forces. It digs into the psychological, emotional, and ethical struggles that its protagonists experience as they attempt to balance societal expectations, accepted conventions, and the desire for personal fulfillment. A thought-provoking and emotionally engaging work of fiction, the novel asks readers to consider the tremendous influence of social and cultural factors on the construction and alteration of personal identities.

Acknowledgement:

I am highly thankful to my ... who has assisted me in this research paper. Moreover, I am thankful to Dr.... for proper guidance.

References

1. Raman, N. Kalyan (1 December 2013). "Boats Against The Current: The Kongunadu novels of Perumal Murugan". Caravan Magazine. Retrieved 18 October 2015.
2. "Perumal Murugan". Penguin Books of India.
3. Rajendran, S. P. (10 July 2016). "Tamilnadu: Writers Condemn Burning of Tamil Novel by Hindutva Outfits". Peoples Democracy. 40 (28).
4. "'Perumal Murugan was asked to exile himself by police'". The Hindu. Retrieved 23 May 2017.
5. "Tamil writer Perumal Murugan breaks his silence, will return with 200 poems". The Indian Express. 22 August 2016. Retrieved 23 May 2017.
6. Kolappan, B (19 April 2017). "One Part Woman bags Sahitya Akademi award". The Hindu. Retrieved 20 April 2017.

7. Naik, Purnachandra. (2019) "Love in the Times of 'Caste Killings'".
8. Murugan, P. (2020) "One Part Woman". Penguin India..
9. Murugan, P. (2018) "One Part Woman". Grove Atlantic.
10. Heath, Will. (2020) "Review: One Part Woman by Perumal Murugan". Books & Bao. Retrieved 3 January 2020.
11. Sehgal, Parul. "A Novel That Roiled India Is Now Translated Into English". The New York Times.
12. Ygnasri, S. (2020) Cultural Identity and Identity crisis in Perumal Murugan's novels one-part woman and Pyre, Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research, January 2020, Volume 7, Issue 1