

Ashes of Affection: Necropolitics and the Annihilation of Affection in Perumal Murugan's *Pyre*

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Abstract

Pyre by Perumal Murugan is a mean-eyed literary reflection on the atrocious intersections of caste, love, and violence in rural Tamil Nadu. Using Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, this paper, *Ashes of Affection: Necropolitics and the Annihilation of Affection in Perumal Murugan's Pyre*, analyzes how caste structures are the highest powers that control the legitimacy of lives and loves. The main focus of this study is to critically unravel the manner in which the novel presents the social destruction of inter-caste love through social rules in communities, entailing institutionalised practices of exclusion, punishment, and suppression of emotional experiences. This research is based on a qualitative approach to literature, which combines theoretical components of intersectional caste theory, trauma studies, necropolitics, and affect theory, and a detailed study of the text. It analytically examines the narrative, characterisation, and symbolic imagery used by Murugan to show how caste politics dictate desire and determine who can survive, who can fall in love, and who can die. The analysis outlines the politicisation of personal relationships in caste-based oppression and their transformation into regulated relationships. The main hypothesis is that *Pyre* by Murugan is a necropolitical narrative where caste systems subject physical threat as well as emotional and affective depletion, particularly on individuals who cross over caste lines through romantic affairs. This is a qualitative literary analysis that makes in-depth interpretations of the text based on trauma studies, affect theory, and intersectional caste theory. While the internalised conformity of Kumaresan and the caste otherness of Saroja depict the forces of social death, the village itself is a community necropolitical force of its own. The *Pyre*, as the title, is a place of burning, disagreement, affection, and control, literally and symbolically. Murugan's work dramatises caste as a disciplining and destroying power, where necropolitical control makes love impossible to live. This study shows how caste violence kills not just bodies but also emotions, attachments, and futures as it traces the psychological torture of Saroja and the ambivalent resignation of Kumaresan. This paper also contributes to the current debate on caste, emotion, and power in Indian literature because it deals directly with affect and annihilation. The findings presented in this study are moving in the right direction in terms of anti-caste literary criticism and socially minded humanities studies, since they emphasise the value of re-reading Indian fiction through critical approaches that put affect, annihilation, and caste sovereignty at the centre.

Keywords: Necropolitics, Caste Resistance, Inter-Caste Love, Social Death, Oppression Affective Annihilation

Introduction

Inter-caste love is not only discouraged in India but also faced aggressively, with consequences, and even questioned the existence of the victim since Indian society is highly hierarchical. *Pyre*, a novel by Perumal Murugan, explores an unusual affair in which the relationship between an immature couple, Kumaresan and Saroja, provokes an inhuman communal response from a caste-based rural community.

The story of the novel takes place in a South Indian village in Tamil Nadu, which is surrounded by intense prejudice and a strong social structure. Pyre presents the emotional and symbolic un-weaving of a marriage that tries to defy the rules and traditions of caste, and with an acute critique of the casteist society, the control of intimacy, and the power exercised by the casteist society over who may live and who must die (Mbembe 11). This study cracks Pyre as a necropolitical narrative in which not only is love opposed, but it is actually destroyed, and social death can be seen as the price of emotional rebellion.

This paper seeks to examine the ways in which caste violence has been portrayed by Pyre by clearing emotional legitimacy, in addition to physical threats. It explores the subversion of emotive agency through cultural norms and communal institutions in the caste society. The main hypothesis suggests that Pyre is a tale of necropolitics, where caste-approved approaches to exclusion, humiliation, and symbolic death are employed to systematically eradicate affection and criminalise the right to love.

Since Saroja arrives in the village of Kumaresan, her body and being are scrutinised. Her complexion and urban accent, combined with the unknown traditions of the city, make her a stranger (Murugan 23). The villagers do not explicitly question her caste, but their actions indicate that they have an informal understanding of her difference, which gradually hardens into group distrust. The threat is even more tangible because Murugan uses a prose style characterised by minimalism and understatement: the silence of air pressing them with the weight of a cloud was even more palpable (Murugan 37). The community's silence, the mother's silence, and later Kumaresan's silence become weapons of emotional violence.

This is where a person is made non-existent in the communal structure (without recognition, inclusion, and belonging), and this is what Saroja experiences in the village of Kumaresan (Patterson 38). Most of the novels do not comment on her physical state, but her alienation, isolation, and emotional starvation is a gradual erasure of any existence, and the collective negligence and unwillingness to involve her by the villagers are passive necropolitics. Necropower is not necessarily aimed at killing people; it is commonly

constructed by denying the social and emotional freedom of a person (Mbembe 27).

One counterargument that is beneficial to necropolitics is the idea of biopolitics, as defined by Michel Foucault, where life and populations are controlled by the state. Necropolitics has been associated with the strategic vulnerability of the population to death, and biopolitics with life promotion (Foucault 144). In Pyre, the village, not the state, possesses necropolitical power. The society claims its power over the moral and emotional existence of its members by making choices about who should and should not get married, who should fall in love, and who should be avoided. This confirms Gopal Guru's argument that caste is an already affective economy of humiliation and that hierarchy is imposed by playing with emotions, in addition to being a structural structure (Guru 45).

The topography of the Pyrenees is also significant. Small details, breaks, and glances are even more important than verbal oratory in the tone of restrained emotions in which the novel is created. However, it is hardly a disinterested silence. Emotions make people do things; they connect people with communities or bodily space with social norms (p. 119). The appearance of Saroja in the Pyre upsets this alignment. Her love, her need to be recognised, and her desire to become a part of the village destroy the social standards in the village. The community tries to recover homeostasis by not embracing her but instead rejecting her. Sharmila Rege argues that day-to-day experiences that establish bodies as being clean or polluted are the ones that experience caste (Rege, 23).

The presence of metropolitan movements and bizarre rhythms makes Saroja's body a pollutant. She did not receive physical contact, face-to-face communication, or inclusion in the emotional circle of the village. The symbolic nature of her love, which violates the logic of hereditary caste, makes her intolerable, not her real identity. Murugan suggests that the Pyre can be viewed as a counter-archive according to Anjali Arondekar, who believes that counter-archives are a source of voices and emotive realities which are erased through dominant narratives (Arondekar 16). The book unveils the devastating nature of caste in destroying the

emotional and physical worlds. It challenges the reader to notice the mundanity and mishapeness of human denial and not the acts of great violence.

Furthermore, the story of Murugan does not directly outline castes; the thing is calculated in itself. Murugan's unwillingness to refer to caste in *Pyre*, as A. Ramaswamy points out, indicates how caste violence operates on the unspoken and the assumed, creating an atmosphere where even language becomes a collaborator (Ramaswamy 88). Through this literary device, the pain and pervasiveness of caste discrimination are increased. By not confining the story to one caste group, Murugan opens his work to a broader criticism of the social order and convention.

The slow separation between Kumaresan and Saroja as a consequence of her blindness is one of the most tormenting plot points in the book. Although he is initially resistant, he eventually starts to share the village's views. This underlines what Yengde calls a graded caste complicity, where even those who apparently fight against caste end up endorsing its argumentation by being quiet or passive (Yengde 64). Kumaresan is not only a victim but also an advocate of caste supremacy, as he has not defended Saroja vocally, physically, or emotionally.

Love in Dalit literature and anti-caste culture is frequently represented as a subversive gesture, a rejection of the hierarchical restrict, and a utopian egalitarianism. However, this rebellion is not idealised by Pyre. Instead, it portrays love as a graceful, almost unattainable act within the restrictive reasoning of the caste system. This is explicated by Anupama Rao, who asserts that caste does not only control access to intimacy, trust, and affection, but also material inequalities (Rao 59). In *Pyre*, love is not unbearable, but it is uncontrollable.

Even the very name of the pyre soars not just as a funeral building, but as an incineration of feeling, emotion, and insurgency, as the narrative reaches its conclusion and the reality of actual death kicks in. The pyre is devoted to a love that crossed caste lines, not just the body. Along with maintaining the purity of caste, the society wishes to forget the memory of the transgression by burning Saroja to ashes.

Besides being a novel, *Pyre* is a necrological chronicle, a literary obituary to the numerous

unknown Saroja-Kumaresans on whose tales no epilogue is written other than a poor death. It challenges readers to accept that in a society governed by caste, love is not only sheltered; it is tortured. The remnants which remain are not the remnants of loss at an individual level but the remnants of a general moral failure.

Review of Literature

The thematic treatment that Pyre gives to caste, intercaste marriage, and rural orthodoxy has been the subject of most scholarly debate. The description of routine caste violence in rural Tamil Nadu in this novel has been criticised for often highlighting communal involvement and emotional suppression. A. Ramaswamy draws attention to the fact that through the employment of constraint in language "aesthetic minimalism" Perumal Murugan accentuates the horror of solitude and silence, which can be considered constant form of violence (Ramaswamy 88). This focus on silence can be aligned with another concept formulated by Orlando Patterson: the idea of a social death, where forgetting one emotional or social identity becomes as effective as physical annihilation (Patterson 38).

Literary critics such as Anupama Rao believe that caste violence is not just spectacular but also often ordinary and even embedded in traditions that govern speech, emotion, and physical appearance. Her masterpiece, *The Caste Question*, mentions that caste controls affect and intimacy, especially the use of Dalit or lower-caste individuals within the dominant social spheres (Rao 59). This mastery of affective life is manifested in the way Murugan portrays Saroja as a stranger whose emotions are not accepted by society.

The caste violence in *Pyre* can be theoretically explained by the critical interpretation of Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. According to Mbembe, necropolitics is the practice of social and political power to determine who should die and who should live (Mbembe 11). Scholars such as Jyoti Puri and Aniruddha Dutta have extrapolated this theory to the South Asian context to demonstrate that necropower is employed in the denial of emotional legitimacy and social inclusion, particularly regarding sexuality, caste, and gender. The village is

a necropolitical machine in *Pyre*, covertly asserting the authority to annihilate the affective agency of individuals who do not conform to the caste requirements.

Writing Caste/Writing Gender Sharmila Rege provides a caste critique with a gendered approach by arguing that the body and choices of women are controlled to feel caste (Rege 21). This is particularly evident in *Pyre*, in which Saroja is rebellious twice because she is a woman and a lower-caste alien. The absence of support and emotional isolation are indicative of the so-called graded inequality of shame (Guru 47), where gender and caste interact to form several aspects of marginalisation.

The emotional element of caste violence is further elucidated by Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies. According to Ahmed, in his book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, emotions do not exist in seclusion but flow throughout society because they either cement or push individuals out of the social sphere (Ahmed 119). Village hostility is not directed in general; it accumulates around Saroja as a sentimental threat to caste purity, a concept that is diagrammatically depicted in the *pyre*.

This discussion has been furthered in the recent scholarly literature. Chakravarti (2021) applies the necropolitical approach to contemporary caste-related atrocities in her book *Caste, Gender and the Politics of Death* and claims that love poses a danger because of its resistance to the socio-political governance of sexuality and kinship. Her arguments place *Pyre* in the modern context of caste violence, where it is significant to update past theoretical frameworks.

Another noteworthy contribution is Kandasamy and Nair's (2022) article titled *Affective Infrastructures: Love, Caste, and Surveillance in Rural Tamil Nadu*, which explores how emotional bonds, particularly inter-caste romance, are undermined in the system through surveillance, family honour preservation, and moral policing. This work has implications for the interpretation of current research on *Pyre* as a place in which the emotional is controlled by necropolitical practices.

A limited number of caste literary critiques have brought into focus the devastation of affection as the main instrument of control, most of which focus on

material deprivation. This study addresses this gap by placing Murugan's novel in a necropolitical and emotional context, which shows that *Pyre* is not so much about the death of love as it is about the politics of caste.

Methodology

The approach to literary analysis adopted in this study is qualitative and interpretive approach to literary analysis, grounded in the traditions of emotion studies, critical theory, and caste-based sociocultural criticism. Applying close reading as the main mode of textual engagement, this paper examines how the nexus of caste, affect, and necropolitical power is expressed by Perumal Murugan in his *Pyre*. This method examines some elements of narrative, such as setting, dialogue, characters, silence, and symbolism, to identify the sociopolitical systems behind the text.

To facilitate clarity in the process of analysis, the study will be carried out through the following steps: (1) Selection and preparation of the corpus: The analysis will be conducted using the authoritative version of the edition of *Pyre* by Murugan. All page/line references in the study reference the edition used. (2) Passage sampling: Passages that contain (a) direct contact between Saroja and Kumaresan, (b) responses of a community or interventions (e.g. village councils, moral policing), (c) description of the text describing the *pyre* or crematory, and (d) comments by the narrator (that described social norms) were selected with pre-determined inclusion criteria. (3) Line-by-line annotation and close reading: A close reading of each selected text was conducted in detail. The researcher developed detailed annotations with the help of vocabulary selection (affect words, metaphors, deictics), narrative voice, and grammatical patterns, which encode marginalisation (e.g. passive constructions, reported speech), and repeated imagery, which is linked to fire, purity/impurity, and control of the body. (4) Theme coding: The excerpts were then manually coded into theme groups (e.g. honour discourses, exclusion, social death, affective abandonment, and surveillance) after annotation. A codebook was developed iteratively during the analysis process. To ensure consistency, each code was described by inclusion/exclusion rules and sample textual examples. (6)

Secondary literature integration and triangulation: To contextualise the findings on greater debates and seek other interpretations, interpretive assertions were cross-referenced with secondary literature (such as Rege, Guru, Chakravarti, Kandasamy, and Nair). (7) Evidence presentation: Evidence is found based on close-quoted textual references.

The emphasis on the novel's symbolic, emotional, and political features makes the methodology largely theoretical and analytic, and does not include gathering empirical data. The main theoretical framework of this research is based on Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics. In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe expounds on the biopolitics proposed by Michel Foucault by noting that sovereign power is manifested not just in the power to regulate life but also in the power to make decisions regarding the manner of death (Mbembe 11). This hypothesis is particularly relevant in caste-based societies where emotional lives and love, in particular, inter-caste love, are regulated with the help of the threat or actual violence. The town of Pyre is considered a necropolitical power that systematically kills the rebellious couple on both symbolic and emotional levels. To explore the ways in which Saroja's character is deprived of social and emotional existence through the mechanisms of exclusion, non-recognition, and affective abandonment, the study also exploits the idea of social death proposed by Orlando Patterson (Patterson 38). Her marginalisation is understood as a necropolitical refusal of the subject, as well as casteist. This allows us to theorise caste as a regime of social and emotional destruction, instead of just a hierarchy of vocation or purity.

The concept of affective economy, as introduced by Sara Ahmed, is also embraced in this study. Ahmed claims that, emotions do not reside in individuals, but they pass between bodies, relating to specific persons and eliciting collective responses like disgust, fear or hatred (Ahmed 119). This paradigm reveals the association between Saroja's body and the collective emotions of the community, which inspire symbolic violence and label her as a threat to the stability of the caste. Her words, body language, and physical stature are construed with love towards Kumaresan and interpreted affectively as infractions by the community, thus making her

love towards Kumaresan not only undesirable but also punishable by law. Intersectional approaches of caste and gender are also adopted to infer the role of caste in intimate relationships, often seen as the bearer of dishonour, in which scholars like Sharmila Rege and Gopal Guru demonstrate the role of caste not only in the open, but also in intimate relationships (Rege 21; Guru 45).

This discussion is still being built upon in recent scholarly studies. Chakravarti (2021) extends the concepts of necropolitics to contemporary caste-related horrors in her book *Caste, Gender and the Politics of Death*, claiming that love is a danger that belongs to the socio-political regime of sexuality and kinship. Her arguments place Pyre in the present context of caste violence which is a significant addition to earlier theoretical accommodation.

The other notable one is the article by Kandasamy and Nair (2022), the title of which is *Affective Infrastructures: Love, Caste, and Surveillance in Rural Tamil Nadu*, which analyzes the systematic weakening of emotional connections, primarily the inter-caste romance, through surveillance, upholding family honor, and moral policing. This study can impact the interpretation of the necropolitical measures of emotion regulation in Pyre in the current research.

The quality control procedures that assure methodological rigor and transparency are also described in the following terms used in the study: maintaining an audit trail of analytical memos and coding decisions; conducting peer debriefing with two independent readers (who analysed argumentative inferences and coding decisions); and providing rich and contextualised quotations to enable readers to assess the interpretive moves of the study (thick description). There can be an instance of language nuances mediating in the case of using translations, and it is a single-text interpretive study; thus, arguments are confined by the text and situations. In cases where there were problems with translation, the analysis was made with a note, and the original Tamil text was provided. Finally, reflexivity was maintained by self-positioning remarks in the technique section that revealed the theoretical commitments and possible interpretive biases of the researcher.

The methodology used to investigate the necropolitical underpinnings of caste violence in Pyre is mainly interdisciplinary between literature and sociopolitical theory. This helps to gain a subtle understanding of how literary works like those by Murugan are counter-archives that maintain the political and affective expenses of the most insidious but dangerous activities of the caste society.

Results

1. Intercaste Love as a Threatened Existence

In the imaginary world of Perumal Murugan, caste is a sovereign necropolitical structure that rules life, love, and even affection. A closer reading of the text by Pyre proves this. The central hypothesis, which states that intercaste love in Pyre is intentionally destroyed by a community that has the exclusive right to build an emotional and biological destiny, is solidly supported. Murugan constructs a literary micro world in which caste operates through humiliation, surveillance, emotional detachment, and symbolic execution using simple but powerful words.

Kumaresan's entry of Saroja into the village is enough to arouse the villagers' suspicions. Although the audience is not explicitly challenged regarding her caste, her weird speech and body language immediately make her strange. According to Murugan:

It was not one or two people; it was the entire village that appeared to be staring at her. As she passed, the woman stopped talking. She approached the men, and they turned their heads away. As she walked, children were pulled out of the way. She had not wronged to deserve this kind of treatment. but she actually felt like she had entered a space and it had settled she was not welcome there (Pyre 28)

This affective exile, without any actual struggle, defends the theory of social death proposed by Orlando Patterson, which means the loss of all social membership. As explained by Patterson:

Slavery or any system that deprives the individual of any right, name, and community makes the individual a non-being in society (Slavery and Social Death 5).

Although not a slave, Saroja does not belong to the group of social humanity as she is a victim

of a symbolic type of caste captivity. She did not experience any physical harm, but her emotional reality was rejected.

2. Necropolitics Through Silence and Emotional Erasure

In the villagers' refusal to acknowledge Saroja as a woman and not a cow, the idea of necropolitics, as described by Achille Mbembe, can be used in passive-aggressive ways. According to Mbembe:

Necropolitics is the ability to establish what is important and what is not, and who can be disposed of and who cannot. The authority to expose some bodies to death and others to life, or just to allow them to die, is what it is all about (Necropolitics 27).

The members of the Pyre allowed Saroja to die not physically but emotionally. Her life is unbearable, with omissions of love, care, and home. Caste logic justifies the gradual eradication of her emotional existence.

3. Fire as a Metaphor of Caste Violence

In the course of the novel, the pyre, which is also called the main character, is used as a very strong metaphor to destroy the sins of the heart and the burning of bodies. The plot is bound to give the threat of literal burning; however, metaphorically, love, hope, and resistance are also burnt. Murugan's tension foreshadows the events that follow:

The hill in the twilight was asleep, but to Saroja, it seemed to have blazed. The sky was red, like ashes. And the stillness--as dense as smoke--had made her think the world was about to smoke over her head (Pyre 89).

This image converts the town into a scene of an upcoming fire and a community crucible of deviant emotions. The hill is transformed into a holy place where locals can socially cleanse themselves of the so-called contamination of caste sins, both literally and metaphorically.

4. The Collapse of Resistance: Kumaresan's Complicity

Although he is initially opposed to it, Kumaresan eventually concurs with the necropolitical order. His withdrawal of feelings is a caste fear and not an actual betrayal. Yengde opines that even the oppressed

are capable of replicating the oppressor logic in the presence of social alienation in caste society. Fear, honour, and duty tend to prevail over love and solidarity, and his silence, especially in crucial situations, is a sign of caste conditioning and not of weakness (Caste Matters 72). He transforms from a rebel into an enforcer when he stops protecting Saroja and allows the villagers' hatred to develop.

The community per se is presented as a necropolitical entity with sovereign power to establish the conditions of the expiry of emotions but not to kill directly. As the plot develops, it becomes evident that Saroja is being ritually erased and not just tolerated. At some point, the accumulated stress gradually increased to an enormous value. The constraints of the narrative are violated as the will of the villagers becomes apparent.

Somebody in the crowd said to me, There will be a fire that will mend you what your words could not. She lit something besides us that could never burn again. Then there was one more, who said: we will find out how far love can get ash (Pyre, 124).

In the community, love is perceived as an uncontrollable flame that must be extinguished, as opposed to a passion. Inter-caste love is a flammable affair that is prohibited, uncontrollable, and punishable by burning. This is not a social discipline but necropolitical sentencing.

5. Gender, Sexuality, and Double Marginalization

Saroja's gender also adds to her weakness. This factor can be further explained by the intersectional approach of gender and caste adopted by Sharmila Rege. She contends:

Caste is not a system of stratification. It is a regime of women's sexuality, mobility, and reproduction. Inter-caste marriage is not merely disobedience; it is also sedition (Writing Caste/Writing Gender 21).

Her gender makes Saroja vulnerable to the events in Pyre. She is also an intruder into the caste and a woman whose deeds compromise the moral base of the community. She was forced to be wiped out because the villagers saw her as being twice malevolent.

6. Minimalism as a Literary Strategy

Lastly, Murugan's personal style of writing, that is, emotional understatement and narrative

minimalism, is an effective way of bringing to light the everydayness of caste violence. As A. Ramaswamy notes:

It is not Murugan's silence on naming the caste but a strategy. This reflects the invisibility but efficacy of caste in Tamil society (Economic and Political Weekly 88).

The conclusions of the study therefore illustrate that Pyre is not only a story of two lovers but a strong commentary on a culture where caste strictness can control love to the detriment of the two lovers. By recording what is ignored by the existing archives, the psychological cost of caste obedience, the novel becomes a counter-archive.

Discussion

Based on the conclusions of the study, Pyre by Perumal Murugan is a necropolitical story that articulates caste violence in terms of emotional obliteration and social bias. This book is a literary expression of Mbembe's necropolitics, who believes that the power to decide who deserves emotional life and who does not, who deserves to be loved and who does not, who should be part of a community and who is not, is the sovereignty and not the mere acts of violence themselves. The detachment of emotions is a social death strategy employed by caregivers. Saroja's appearance in the community demonstrates that affective discipline is utilised to impose necropower instead of spectacle. Her social isolation sustains Judith Butler's theory, which considers insecure situations to be those that are often unimaginable within hegemonic frames. In *Precarious Life*, Butler states:

To mourn about life, an individual has to be aware that that is life in the first place, and that the unrecognised can be neither aired when gone nor hymned when alive (Butler 20).

Saroja's behaviour is inexcusable; she is not recalled, venerated, or saved. She is susceptible to sympathetic and iconic destruction since her identity, affection, and agony are invisible in a social sense. This is in line with her conceptualisation of the event in the study *Life and Words*, where Das conceptualises the event as daily. She explains:

Violence is not necessarily a dramatic breakage; rather, it becomes part of the everyday routine,

whispers, glares, absences, and the normality of exclusion (Das, 101).

Murugan describes this event impressively. Even though there is no open confrontation of the villagers, the active silence of people not speaking with Saroja, watching her without empathy becomes a form of passive violence, which is more vibrant than what Das calls the pattern of humiliation (Das 102).

The emotional distance portrayed by Kumaresan also reflects the caste which permeates love itself. At the beginning, he is a man in love who is ready to accept the ridicule of the Hamlet and the disappointment of his mother. However, the stronger the communal pressure of the village, the less he works towards Saroja. This is an example of a situation where love fails due to patriarchal fear, as described by Hooks in *All About Love*:

Love is not possible in a culture of domination. Fear, control, and conformity shatter the building blocks on which love is established (hooks 27).

Kumaresan fails to protect Saroja, but not only for personal reasons. His silence indicates how caste society kills moral agency and affection. This complicity is complementary to the argument of necropolitics, which simply needs passive observers and compliant lovers, but not active murderers.

The direction in which emotion flows in the hamlet is also something to consider when interpreting *Pyre* in terms of affect theory. Brian Massumi notes in his masterpiece article *The Autonomy of Affect*:

Affect is an unqualified intensity; it is experienced prior to the realisation and structures social interaction pre-consciously to interpretation (Massumi 88).

The overall distaste of Saroja by the peasants is based on what she represents rather than on the aspect of her actions: disruption, mobility, and impurity. Affective responses precede assessments. Therefore, caste is both visceral, that is, emotive, and incites fear and disgust both in the body and in society, and ideological. Dalit feminist philosophy resembles the writings of Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, who argue that experience is a matter of epistemology and that caste should be central to the lived experiences of anguish, shame, and exclusion. Sarukkai and Guru write:

Experience is not an embellishment of theory, but rather theory itself. Experience is routinely wiped out in the caste system. Its recovery is an act of intellectual defiance (*The Cracked Mirror* 10).

A pyre is an act of disobedience. Murugan restores the emotional experience of a woman belonging to a lower caste as one of the significant narrative elements. Saroja is not just a victim or a symbol but a warehouse of repressed emotions, a record of violence endured, and a love that has been rejected.

More importantly, there is no conclusion to the *Pyre* by Murugan. The novel does not offer reconciliation or redemption. The emotional and symbolic harm caused by caste cannot be undone, as confirmed in the conclusion. This literary device is related to the idea of bare life developed by Giorgio Agamben, according to which the subject is included in the political order only because of its exclusion. According to Agamben:

It is the camp which opens when the state of exception becomes the rule, where life is presented to power without protection (*Homo Sacer* 168).

Saroja is a symbolic refugee in the village; she is alive but cannot be loved, visible yet defenceless. Thus, the village is more of a necropolitical camp than a passive setting, where the affect is regulated, and the violators of its laws inevitably face death--the death of not being loved.

Pyre therefore shows that caste is an affective, not a social or religious, regime, which is at the intersection of necropolitics and affective theory. It disciplines both the body and heart. It decides with whom we may grieve, desire, or protect, as well as whom we may marry. Murugan's book is not just a lamentation on the devastation of caste; it forces us to view it.

Conclusion

In this contribution to the existing discourse on caste, the researchers focus more on affection, especially inter-caste romantic relationships, as a casualty of necropolitical violence, which is often neglected in the research on this topic, mostly revolving around physical assault or systemic oppression. Through a qualitative literary analysis that fuses necropolitics and affect theory, this paper

reformulates the existing knowledge about *Pyre* by placing love not only as the incidental victim but also at the centre of socio-political denial.

Based on this discussion, this study finds that *Pyre* is a highly necropolitical novel where caste dictates emotive life, intimacy, and emotional legitimacy, along with social discrimination. Based on Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics and Sara Ahmed's theory of affect, the analysis reveals that Murugan establishes a rural caste community, implying symbolic exclusion, surveillance, and silence to control others. The village maintains itself as the ultimate chamber(space) of social death, in which inter-caste love becomes a payable crime and emotional repression becomes more than a tradition.

The major findings are that caste destroys not only the bodies but also love, relationship,s and the future. The gradual emotional erasure of Saroja and Kumaresan's sentimental withdrawal reflect the influence of caste disciplines and their restructuring of love in places at risk. This takes *Pyre* all the way out of a love story into a literary vaulting-room of emotional turbulence and sociocultural necropower.

This research has repercussions in the general debates of affective humanities, trauma literature, and caste studies. It makes academics reread Indian literature through frameworks that emphasise the emotional consequences of social isolation. Future research can expand this study by applying similar methods to investigate comparative necropolitical dynamics based on gender, sexual orientation, or religion in other caste-based stories in regional literature. Moreover, the projections of lived caste experiences onto the literary form can be further elucidated through ethnographic studies or trauma-informed readings that will give a better idea of the dual role of literature as both a means of resistance and reminiscence.

However, this study has certain limitations. It is grounded in theoretical understanding, disregarding field-based or empirical perspectives, and is based on

one novel only, making it less applicable. Because of such shortcomings, despite these results being significant in establishing important links between caste, emotion, and necropolitics, they remain text-specific and open up the prospects of further, more comparative and multidisciplinary research.

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