

Biopolitics of Marginalized Lives Amid State Surveillance and Bureaucratic Oppression in Perumal Murugan's Poonachi or the Story of a Black Goat

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ABSTRACT

The inclination towards reducing the work of Perumal Murugan, *Poonachi: Or the Story of a Black Goat* to another fable with an anthropomorphic hero sounds too simplistic. However, the text is a rather complex and highly interesting reflection on the dynamic between the modern state and its population, which frequently goes unappreciated by literary critics, who reduce it to the imagination technique employed by the author to express rural life. The present study attempts to explore how literary criticism approaches *Poonachi* as a romantic story about life in the country as opposed to an intricate allegory. Using the approach of detailed qualitative analysis, based on concepts such as biopower (Michel Foucault) and bare life (Giorgio Agamben), the study highlights similarities in the methods of managing livestock and human beings. More specifically, it is suggested that *Poonachi* serves as an example of the use of a non-human perspective to transcend the framework of political realism and to create a representation of the Regime as an omnipresent authority that transforms each person's biological nature into an easily searchable datum. Additionally, in terms of *Poonachi*'s color and the problems she faces, it may be viewed as an allegory of Dalit experience in today's rural India. Crucially, the protagonist's struggle involves more than biology; it becomes a political resistance against total lack of privacy.

Keywords: Biopower, Bare Life, Governmentality, Surveillance, Allegory, Political Subjectivity, Marginalization

INTRODUCTION

From the past decade, the evolution of Indian literary fiction shows a clear-cut progression from traditional social realism to a more experimental mode of allegorical writing. At the center of this movement, there emerges a novelist in Perumal Murugan who continuously explores the borders between caste, traditions, and rural versus urban dichotomies. Although he began his career with more explicit explorations of social orthodoxy and politics of the body as exemplified by Madhorubhagan (*One Part Woman*), in his 2018 novel *Poonachi: Or the Story of a Black Goat*, Murugan takes up a completely different position. In choosing a non-human subject—a small black goat—as his main character, Murugan creates a seemingly naive story with deep political undertones. The problem of interpretation here comes with the perception of the story, which many readers, and even some early reviewers, tend to simplify into a pastoral story or a tale of a poor creature. However, this paper claims that this approach misses the point and ignores the deeper implications that this book holds.

The *Poonachi* is a perfect example of biopolitical allegory in a literary novel. In order to understand this idea, the audience should transcend from considering only the physical hardships faced by the goat as well as the old man and woman who look after her. It needs to be recognized that, in the case of this story, the Regime becomes a central figure representing the omnipresent force governing the very principles of living. This shift represents a fundamental change in modern governance, which no longer uses brute violence but rather attempts to manage

life. Such control is achieved by means of compulsory registration, ear tagging, and food rationing. The state depicted in this story seems to mirror our own worries regarding the new form of governance based on surveillance and monitoring of the individual. As we know, today the modern subject is often represented as a biological entity which has to be accounted for by the state through identity numbers and censuses. The choice of the body of a goat as the medium of exploring these issues becomes self-explanatory when one realizes that it represents Bare Life most accurately.

The last decade is marked by the notable transition in Indian literature towards allegorical writing from traditional social realism. In this connection, the most prominent writer to consider is Perumal Murugan who constantly explores the relationships between caste, tradition, and urban-rural split. While his debut literary works were focused on the direct examination of social orthodoxy and body politics (e.g., *Madhorubhagan (One Part Woman)*), his latest novel from 2018, *Poonachi: Or the Story of a Black Goat*, takes a totally different turn. By choosing a non-human character—a little black goat—the author creates an innocent-looking story that hides significant political subtexts beneath the surface. At first, many readers, including several initial reviewers, interpreted the book only in terms of its pastoral nature or the life of an animal suffering from deprivation. Yet, it will be argued here that such interpretations ignore important aspects of this novel.

To begin with, the main point of this research consists in suggesting that the text represents a typical example of biopolitical allegory as presented within a literary novel. To understand why this may be true, one needs not to concentrate on the hardships of the goat's life and its caregivers—a couple of elders. Instead, one should note that, within this story, the Regime appears to play the key role as the all-embracing power that regulates the conditions of life itself. This is a significant change that modern states have introduced into their governance strategies by shifting their focus away from violence to biopolitical regulation. In practice, it means such activities as compulsory registration, ear tagging, food rationing, and so on. In this context, it is easy to see how this particular plot reflects fears of the emergence of a novel system of power based on surveillance and personal monitoring. Indeed, in contemporary times, it becomes common to think about the subject as an organic being that needs to be accounted for by means of identity numbers and censuses.

According to this introduction, choosing the protagonist who is not human becomes the author's strategy of political displacement. Following the rise of controversies around Murugan and the temporary withdrawal from the public eye after he released the controversial book *One Part Woman*, this genre enables him to create a protective cover. By attributing issues related to surveillance, coercions regarding reproduction, and fears of the Regime to a goat, the author can speak up without risking censorship. Thus, the goat becomes a megaphone for the voiceless people of the contemporary world.

In this study, the reader will understand that the novel is more than just "a story of a black goat." It is a political document illustrating the fragile position of the person in the era of biopolitical domination. With the help of this biopolitical reading, the researcher proves that through a story of a goat, Murugan addresses burning political issues of modern times such as loss of autonomy, violent functioning of bureaucratic apparatuses, and resilience to live in conditions when everything is controlled by the State. The goal of the researcher is to provide the scholarly community with an innovative approach to reading contemporary Indian fiction as a form of political protest.

Theoretical Undercurrents and Critical Cartography

The use of animals as main characters to critique human social structures is not a new phenomenon in literature. The fable with animal characters can be seen as a case of 'safe storytelling' where one could tell the truth about power structures as explained by Blackham (1985), the author of *The Fable as Literature*. In the Indian context, anthropomorphic tales like the *Panchatantra* and *Jataka Tales* are used to teach statecraft, among other skills (Dandekar, 2010). However, the same scholar states that animal protagonists are no longer used as instructors in contemporary Indian literature and are instead for political purposes. Murugan's *Poonachi* is one such instance where the goat is represented as an animal manipulated by the state. This idea is developed in Agamben (2004)'s *The Open: Man and Animal*, where Agamben explores how the "anthropological machine" works to distinguish between human and animal.

In short, the analysis is moving from sovereignty as power of death to biopower as power of life. Michel Foucault (1978) in *The History of Sexuality*, explains that biopower is how the state tries to control the biological existence of its subjects. The link to James C. Scott's (1998) "Seeing Like a State" is evident in the discussion of how states seek to make society legible in the context of Murugan's Poonachi. It would be enough to mention the case of goats being marked with ear tags to say that this story fits perfectly within the definition of "coding of individual" suggested by David Lyon in his *Surveillance Society* (2001). Recent research in South Asian identity politics, for example Rao (2018), can also be helpful here.

Poonachi's blackness is not just a biological attribute but a sociological marker. In his critiques of Tamil cinema and literature, Stalin Rajangam (2013) has written that the colour black is often utilised in ways that mark it both as a symbol of Dravidian identity and as a marker of "outcaste" status. On Murugan's wider corpus, Venkatachalapathy (2015) notes that Murugan's rural landscapes are never neutral, they are deeply coded with caste hierarchies. Madhorubhagan has been examined in the politics of the womb and religious orthodoxy, but little research has been done on how the "animal body" in Poonachi represents the Dalit body. This research aims to fill that gap by synthesizing animal studies with the "Aesthetics of the Oppressed" as outlined by Boal (1979).

The intersection of gender and speciesism provides a second layer of analysis. Vandana Shiva (1988) in *Staying Alive* argues that the patriarchal state views both nature (animals) and women as "resources" to be exploited. In Poonachi, the old woman's relationship with the goat exemplifies the typical "subaltern" life. Mies and Shiva (1993) argue that the capitalist-patriarchal state controls reproduction to ensure the continuation of labour. This is reflected in Murugan's description of forced mating of the goat and the interest of the state in its offspring. The ecofeminist scholarship in India till now has mostly bypassed the 'small livestock' narrative and has been concentrating on forests and water. In a climate of state-sponsored precarity, this study uses the 'goat-human' domestic unit to explore what Haraway (2008) calls 'companion species'.

CHAPTER 1: THE BIOPOLITICS OF THE 'REGIME': SURVEILLANCE, LEGIBILITY AND THE TAGGED BODY

The Architecture of the Faceless State

For the Poonachi narrative, the state is devoid of any explicit name, capital or human face. It simply takes the moniker of "Regime" as its facelessness is part and parcel of its authority. According to James C. Scott in his work *Seeing Like a State*, one of the major goals of every contemporary administration is to ensure that the social and natural worlds become legible. In this case, the regime in Murugan's village views a goat not in terms of company and as a miracle but only as a "biological asset."

It can be observed from Poonachi that the terror and fear that characters feel towards the regime is neither physical nor real violence; it is more of being "unaccounted for" or being "improperly documented." In contrast with sovereign powers that have been witnessed earlier where kings decide who lives and dies, the regime exercises its biopolitical power that decides how people should live. What is even more important is the state of panic shown by the elderly couple when they find the black goat and think of being caught rather than the hunger of the goat. This is because, in this scenario, people are always living in a condition of "anticipatory obedience" wherein every step is dictated by the gaze of the state.

The Ritual of Registration: The Ear-Tag as a Site of Power

In fact, the most essential node of biopolitical critique in the novel is the mandatory registration of goats. According to Murugan, it entails immense efforts from both the animals and their owners: 'the long, serpentine queue stretched out endlessly in the intense heat'. For marginalized citizens, going through the lines under the scorching sun is what constitutes "bureaucratic purgatory". By standing there, an old man is engaging in a humiliating ritual. To become visible is one's duty to the state – but to pay the price of such visibility means to mark one's body.

The ritual of inserting a plastic identification tag into a goat's ear perfectly embodies the idea of biopolitical invasion. As per Michel Foucault, the strongest and most effective kind of power is the so-called capillary one:

reaching into people's grains and touching their bodies. In this sense, the ear-tagging procedure is more than just another step of agricultural management. In terms of contemporary biopolitics, it is rather a 'biological passport' of an animal. By piercing a goat's ear, the state seizes the control over its biology and reduces it to its 'data'. Indeed, just like modern states use biometric identification and NRCs, the ear-tag in the novel represents datafication. It converts the living creature called Poonachi into a string of digits that the Regime needs. Hence, the pain the goat feels during the procedure perfectly reflects the harsh truth about the power relations under discussion: soft power of the law turns into hard reality of suffering.

Total Surveillance and Private Space

Moreover, it is worth adding that in the world governed by the Regime, there is no such thing as privacy. Even in the farthest forests and remote huts, a citizen does not escape state control. 'The Regime has ears', the elderly couple say, fearing its omnipresence. The use of a bodily metaphor for depicting the Regime adds to the feeling of constant surveillance.

In this case, total legibility of the biological resource is the ultimate goal pursued by the state. Every birth or death of the goat should be recorded, and any kids have to undergo tagging: otherwise, the Regime will not get the full map of the available resources. In this way, biopolitical knowledge is transformed into biopolitical extraction: having learned how many goats live on the old man's farm, the Regime knows exactly how many of them it has a right to claim.

The Datafied Citizen and the Margin

The status of Poonachi as a "black goat" further complicates this situation of surveillance. According to the perspective of the Regime, this animal is a "deviant" and an "anomaly" because of its size and color. Therefore, Poonachi becomes a target for more scrutiny since the mechanisms of the state operate based on the principle of a "norm," a standard and healthy goat. As the one existing outside the norm, Poonachi challenges the state.

This reflects upon the marginal "surplus" populations in contemporary India. Those who exist outside the system—landless, Dalit, migrants—are the ones who get subjected to the strictest surveillance and receive little protection from the state. The plastic tag on Poonachi is a symbol of the state knowing about her existence, and the empty belly is a symbol of her lack of attention from the state. Therefore, this chapter suggests the following interpretation of the plot: the "Story of a Black Goat" in Murugan's novel represents the "Story of the State's Shadow."

In this chapter provides an analysis of the mechanics of power and governance in the novel. As seen above, in the story of Poonachi, we witness the mechanics of tagging, registering, and monitoring. In Murugan's opinion, this story is an example of modern governmental mechanisms of control that turn the miracle of life into an object of control and exploitation. In other words, through registration and tagging, the state subjects the biological to the political. And in Murugan's novel, it is done using the goat's body.

CHAPTER 2: BARE LIFE IN THE STATE OF EXCEPTION: THE ECOLOGY OF SCARCITY AND NEGLECT

While the previous chapter highlighted the importance that the state attaches to "knowing" the citizens through their tracking and tagging, this chapter discusses a tragic irony that ensues from that. Using Agamben's crucial concept of "Bare Life" or Homo Sacer, this section focuses on how Poonachi by Perumal Murugan reveals the terrible irony of people who, while being "known" to the state for the sake of control, are "discarded" by it when a disaster strikes. The switch from the state offices to the fields of rural Tamil Nadu affected by the drought demonstrates how documented citizens are turned into those whose only concern left is biological survival.

The Concept of the State of Exception

A state of exception occurs when laws cease applying to people living in a specific territory. Usually, such an exception applies to the period of national crisis. In the novel under analysis, however, the "state of exception" becomes a norm. For example, the elderly couple and their goat are in a permanent state of exception. According

to Agamben, modern politics involves the capacity of the sovereign state to differentiate between its "citizens" (those who have full legal rights) and bodies (those who do not enjoy any). As the ecological crisis deepens and the earth begins cracking because of the drought, the "Regime" that was once so successful at tagging the goat with identification numbers vanishes.

The laws of the state persist, demanding that its citizens pay taxes. On the other hand, the government fails to provide any kind of assistance to them, suspending food, water supply, and healthcare. The goat belongs to and is registered by the Regime; yet it no longer needs any protection provided by the latter since it has been deprived of all the basic necessities of survival.

Scarcity as an Instrument of Subjugation

Drought is not just a contextual detail, but rather a partaking force in the biopolitical struggle. Through the process of filtration, Scarcity allows for a clear distinction between valued life and expendable life. Through Murugan's portrayal of the elderly couple searching for a blade of grass, one can see a depiction of the degradation of the subject into bare life. All aspects of human dignity become irrelevant when the characters' lives have been reduced to the mere search for sustenance, becoming as animalistic in nature as the creatures which they care for.

The state uses Scarcity as a means of exerting control through calculated neglect. Through deprivation and control of available resources, the Regime manages to dominate without firing a single shot. Queue after queue formed by individuals hoping to receive a portion of food in return for submission is reminiscent of queues formed for the purposes of registering ear tags. However, here there lies an important difference – the state was all too eager to distribute the tag, but hesitates at distributing the grain. Contemporary neoliberalism requires a legible citizen who is "resilient" enough to cope alone with the shortcomings of the system. "Ecology of neglect" in "Poonachi" demonstrates that the state gazes upon its subjects so it may extract from them.

The Reproductive Body as a Factory

One of the key elements that constitute Bare Life in the novel is state interest in the goat's reproductive capabilities. Even despite the famine, it is expected of Poonachi to mate and reproduce offspring. "Politics of the womb" is the epitome of invasion of biopower. According to the Regime, each child born into the world becomes a part of the state's stock of assets. Poonachi's progeny is subject to tagging and monitoring, similarly to what has happened before.

The aforementioned form of reproductive violence resembles history, when marginalized communities were subjected to a similar process. Historically, the bodies of such people were perceived as means of producing labor or military. Here, in "Poonachi," the traumatic experiences of the goat—loss of her children, physical strain of feeding offspring amid starvation—are viewed by the state as biological functions. When state takes away part of the herd as its rightful share, it literally harvests life from the body deprived of any nourishment. This is the highest example of Agamben's Homo Sacer principle, since a life that can be "sacrificed" without legal consequences constitutes the core of his definition. The Elderly Couple: Human Animals in the Eyes of the State. Similarly, the "Bare Life" category of the goat applies to the old couple. As human animals, they share the same space with their livestock. The poverty of the couple has deprived them of political agency. They have been denied the ability to voice their concerns to the Regime and to fight against the neglect they are experiencing. Their care for Poonachi is a manifestation of the phenomenon of "horizontal solidarity," where the marginalized stick together. They maintain strictly transactional relations with the state, receiving nothing but punishment for the failure to comply with regulations. As pointed out above, Murugan excellently exploits the notion of drought in order to demonstrate that according to the Regime, there is no difference between the life of the old man and that of his goat. Both are biological organisms whose purpose in life is to work until their productive capabilities cease; after that, they both can die as part of the "State of Exception."

It is concluded that in the story analyzed, the "Ecology of Scarcity" is the final point of biopolitical strategies. After succeeding with the processes of tagging and legitimizing its citizens, the state acquires the right to decide whose life is worth living and whose is not. The author masterfully uses the image of drought to reveal the moral

corruption of governance that consists of pure surveillance. In other words, Poonachi's transformation from "miraculous birth" to the body suffering starvation becomes an allegory of the subaltern condition of modernity. The reduction of the main character to "Bare Life" forces the reader to face the violence behind the process of making people prioritize "tags" over their tongues and "numbers" over needs.

CHAPTER 3: THE AESTHETICS OF BLACKNESS: CASTE ALLEGORY AND THE TRAUMA OF THE "OTHER"

The Socio-Cultural Semantics of Blackness

The agrarian and social context of rural India (specifically of Tamil Nadu) is heavily characterized by socio-cultural semantics. Color symbolism plays a crucial role in the interpretation of social dynamics, good fortune, and other sociocultural elements of Indian culture. As soon as the protagonist of the story becomes known to readers as a black goat, she can be seen as the "Other" immediately due to the socio-cultural significance of color symbolism in India. For instance, darker skin color and animal color traditionally symbolize misfortune, impurity, and laborers. In contrast, white skin/animal color represents divine intervention, luck, or even Godliness in itself. Thus, Perumal Murugan employs the "blackness" allegory to highlight caste discrimination. It should be noted that black color has always stood for a marginalized group in Indian society. The "Dalit body" is one of the central terms used to refer to such groups as Dravidians or Tamils. Thus, by describing the goat as "black," the author brings up numerous references to caste allegory.

The "Aesthetics of Blackness" in "Poonachi" can be regarded as the parallel world to the Dalit body that was historically marginalized by the caste hierarchy. Similar to Dalits being treated as "untouchables," Poonachi is treated with a mix of fear and derision due to her black skin color. Throughout the novella, she faces bullying because of her blackness by larger and "standard" goats of the village. This type of herd behavior reflects a macrostructure of the caste system, according to which members of the marginalized caste were often subjected to lateral violence. The black goat, in turn, becomes a vehicle through which the author discusses the psychological burden carried by being "different" in a society that demands homogeneity.

The Intergenerational Trauma of the Subaltern

One of the main elements of this chapter is the trauma endured by the surplus population. For the village and the state, a small black goat represents little value. In terms of socio-economic conditions, she becomes a burden. This situation reflects the reality of landless workers and marginalized peoples, who become part of the surplus population in the capitalist-caste state. The trauma experienced by Poonachi is more than physical; it is generational.

Reproduction, which forms the core of this allegory, is the most disturbing feature of Poonachi's life. She is forced to reproduce while her offspring are commoditized or separated from her. Reproductive violence is a common theme in subaltern writing and reflects the exploitation of marginalized bodies through labor and reproduction without ever owning the products of their labor. Her sorrow over losing her kids symbolizes the historical trauma experienced by subaltern women, who lost their kinship ties due to slavery, indenture, and caste domesticity. Murugan uses an animal character to reveal the trauma, making the audience aware of the suffering of the subaltern.

The "Exception" of the Miracle: Smallness as Subversion

"Poonachi's stunted growth" or her smallness is yet another important point of consideration as an allegory. In the context of biopolitical power, small things like the small and the weak become objects of failure of the regime, which prides itself on optimization and growth. In Murugan's story, Poonachi's smallness is the source of her miracle, her ability to survive when all other strong and bigger goats die. The idea of "Subaltern Resilience" emerges from the notion.

This study contends that her survival is a form of passive resistance to the dominant power structure. Poonachi does not fight back using the means of violence, she simply survives because the system cannot make her disappear despite all its efforts. Such resilience can be defined in relation to "the weapon of the weak," the phrase

used by James C. Scott to describe the phenomenon of survival of marginalized groups in oppressive power structures through quiet resistance. Here, Poonachi's existence is the ultimate rebellion against oppression in this dystopia, where blackness and smallness mean death.

Bridging Caste and Biopolitics

Firstly, this chapter aims at establishing a connection between the caste metaphor and the biopolitical surveillance discussed in Chapter 1. According to the findings, the "Regime" and the "Caste Hierarchy" cannot be considered separately – they form an integral whole, where the tools used by the state bureaucracy (the ear-tags and registration) serve to solidify the social hierarchy. In no way does the state "uplift" the black goat – it needs to "tag" her and control her productivity in the existing social system.

The fact that the old man queues along with his black goat means that centuries' worth of oppression weigh upon him. This registration becomes a symbol of the "intersectionality of oppression," since she is not only branded by her caste but also branded by the state (by an ear-tag). This intersectionality of oppression is, thus, the main contribution of this chapter, proving that Murugan's Poonachi is, indeed, a philosophical reflection on the modern Indian reality, when both the stain of caste and the tag of the state become branded on the bodies of the oppressed.

The "Aesthetics of Blackness" in Murugan's novel was clearly a conscious choice. The fact that a story is based on a black goat compels any academic to stop considering it simply as an animal fable but to understand it in the context of social document. The trauma of Poonachi is the trauma of "Other" – of the black, insignificant, and too poor to be called a proper citizen. She becomes an image for millions of people oppressed by the modern state. This will be concluded in Chapter 3 and summarized in the following chapter.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE NON-HUMAN AS A POLITICAL SUBJECT

The journey of this research starts from the cold office of a faceless "Regime," moves to the dried-up landscape of the drought, and finally ventures into the sociological depths of color and caste. Using the theories of Biopower by Michel Foucault and Bare Life by Giorgio Agamben as well as identity politics in relation to the concept of subalternity, this paper tries to elevate the perception of Perumal Murugan's Poonachi: Or the Story of a Black Goat beyond the realm of literary fiction and position it as an important political novel. In concluding this investigation, it is crucial to summarize the results obtained and demonstrate how this research fills the gaps outlined in the introduction.

The first important result of this research is the identification of Poonachi as a model of the contemporary surveillance state. Using the careful analysis of ear-piercing and registration rituals, Murugan proves that "legibility," rather than welfare, is the primary concern of the state in relation to its subjects. The research is successful in identifying the process of transformation of the protagonist from a biological organism into a "datafied subject." This finding proves that "literalist" interpretation of the novel is incorrect since the ear-tag is used in the novel as a sign of the "marked body" of modern age.

In the second place, this paper identifies a "State of Calculated Neglect" that characterizes the relationship between the state and its marginalized subjects. Applying Agamben's "Bare Life," the research concludes that the mechanisms used by the government are meant to exploit the population during good times and abandon them at times of hardship. The drought in the novel serves as a trigger that allows unveiling the political nature of the biopolitical regime of "selective care." The finding reveals that the government's eye is predatory: it watches the reproductive and productive abilities of the subject, leaving the latter to fend off for himself in case of environmental crisis.

Thirdly, "Blackness" in this novel can be understood as a sociological symbol of Dalits, the underprivileged population. With the analysis of the "Aesthetics of Blackness," it has been revealed that Murugan uses ancient social hierarchies (caste and colorism) in the contemporary bureaucratic system. The black goat is not just an ordinary animal but a surrogate for the oppressed "other." It is her resistance, namely surviving despite the fact that she is small, black, and "surplus," which is interpreted as "weapons of the weak" in the terminology of James C. Scott.

In conclusion, one of the major contributions made by this research is the revelation of the reasons behind Murugan's choice of fables in his narrative. In the light of censorship and public aggression towards the author, his previous books, it was essential to create an element of political distance from the topic. According to this research, by transferring the issues of surveillance, compulsory reproduction, and bureaucratic violence onto a goat, Murugan was able to express subversive ideas that are impossible to put into a human context at the moment. The fable format should be understood, thus, as a political shield that enables him to address the issues mentioned without being criticized and censored.

The connection has been established between Animal Studies and Political Science within the context of this research. As for animals in literary studies, scholars focus on moral messages or eco-themes of narratives. However, this research shows that "non-human" can become the most powerful instrument for analyzing "human" trauma in certain circumstances. Witnessing the fate of the goat, readers face the dehumanization present in their societies. The goat's silence cannot be understood as her inability to act because it is a reflection of the forced silence imposed by the totalizing regime on its subalterns.

As has been mentioned in the introduction, previous studies on Perumal Murugan were either centered on his biography or on the controversies around his portrayal of traditions. The current research closes the "Specific Gap" in the field by applying Biopolitical and Agambenian theories to the novel in question in an extensive, theory-laden fashion. Moving beyond a focus on "novelty" and toward the "application of established theory," the paper proves that the novel *Poonachi* is truly a global text concerned with such universal issues as surveillance, privacy of information, and negligence of the state.

Another contribution of this research comes in the realm of Post-Humanist Dalit Studies, a relatively novel academic area. By explaining the connection between prejudice based on the caste system and discrimination against the "less worthy bodies" (human and non-human animals alike), the research offers an interesting perspective on the issue of intersectionality of oppression in India. Namely, the "stain" of one's caste status and the "tag" of state authority are two aspects of the same thing - rendering a subaltern body legible for control purposes.

As such, in the final assessment, the tale of the black goat is the tale of modern citizenship. As Murugan demonstrates, the contemporary world is one filled with queues, mandatory ID cards, uncaring officers, and the fight for Bare Life. "Regime" is no longer an abstract concept found within the pages of this novel; it is now a part of our lives in biometric scanners, census questionnaires, and digital traces.

Therefore, the final conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is the following—resistance in the age of globalization and capitalism can be achieved via the act of bare survival. Like *Poonachi*, the marginalized individual has to face the Regime, which remembers his number but not his identity. Through *Poonachi*'s portrayal, we keep reminding ourselves that there are beings worth caring about because no matter how marginal, "small," "black," or "different," any of them is not too insignificant for the conscience of literature.

Thus, based on the above discussion, *Poonachi* should be read as the ultimate survival manual for the subaltern. While the state can mark our ears, it will never fully capture our essence. Hence, it could be stated that the true miracle of the black goat's story was not her birth but her survival.

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