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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## OSCILLATION WITHIN THE MIND CONCERNING CONTEMPORARY CULTURE IN THE NOVEL OF PERUMAL MURUGAN'S ESTUARY

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### Abstract

Perumal Murugan, a regional writer (Tamil language) focuses on the pursuing life of human beings. His work *Estuary* fluctuates with village life and difficulty of coping up with the modernizing and developing digital technology. The mind of the person gets constructed based on the lifestyle living from their childhood. Traditional manner practiced in the countryside life crushes oneself when one came to know the drastic change in modernized life, refuse to unite with new culture and lifestyle. Cultural change developing in the village and growth of technology fears on peaceful government employee. The article focus mainly on the psychological conflict due to the cultural development in the working and living space attains in the rural area.

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### Introduction:-

In his work *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold defines Culture as "the best that has been thought and said" (*Malik 137*). The *Estuary* novel focuses on a father's possessiveness toward his only child. Murugan introduces Kumarasurar as an introvert with little knowledge about the modernised or digital world. His overthinking nature makes him feel uncertain about the computerised world. More than harming others, the gain of knowledge about the cruel reality leads to exaggerating his thinking quality with extreme imagination.

According to Daniel Bell, the symbol of modernism is "willfully opaque, works with unfamiliar forms, is self-consciously experimental, and seeks deliberately to disturb the audience- to shock it, to shake it up, even to transform it as if in a religious experimental" (*Saha, Nandini 05*). Information is acquired from newspapers, computers, colleagues, relatives, and friends, which disturbs Kumarasurar and his family's peace with fears and concerns. In an agrarian community, villagers help others during crisis or problems among community members. In contrast, modernised communities focus more on individual desires and self-interest. Gradually, modernisation influences villagers to pursue flexible, individual lifestyles, often at the expense of communal bonds. The growing cruelty and jealousy associated with modernisation lead to false accusations, such as blaming Kumarasurar's colleague for stamping a king's face on an old calendar. These unexplored actions are wrongly perceived as deliberate, leading to his transfer to the city. Such incidents in a modern society discourage one's generous social thinking and foster a tendency toward isolation. Kumarasurar, threatened by this harsh environment, begins to work late to avoid being entangled in conflicts. It reflects the lack of trust and strained relationships among the city dwellers.

In rural communities, people's survival depends on the agricultural land for their survival. But in the development of modernisation in the countryside, getting a government job is enough for a person to live a life in peace. But after

the generation, the development in the digital era changes the mind of the people completely and constructs the youngsters' minds with selfish thoughts. Craze over the materialistic world moulds one's mind to do anything to attain a higher position. Through the character of Meghasurar, Murugan reveals the hardships that clutch his life without restfulness for two years in the residential school. The drastic change in less humane behaviour among the people in the school institution (teachers) panics Meghasurar in the school, and his mind is filled with heaviness about loneliness and harsh words. The teacher never calls out the names of students; instead, they call out using the marks secured before entering the eleventh standard. Meghasurar silently shares his distress with his parents, highlighting the crushing pressure from teachers like the Physics instructor. Kumarasurar's calmness is shattered by these revelations, especially after hearing about his son's struggles over twenty-two months. The office man in canteen pacifies him thus: "Boys should be disciplined in their adolescence. Or they'll waste their lives away. Let them cry. If they cry through these two years, they can laugh their way to the bank for the rest of their lives. Cry today, laugh tomorrow," (E 45). It reflects the harsh attitudes of authorities and parents modulating their minds through modern influences. The parents' overprotectiveness, coupled with the school's cruel treatment of students, is manifested in panic and distress, especially when reports indicate children who succumbed to illness, highlighting the dehumanising effects of modernisation on young lives.

The basic opinion of Stephen Spender about modernism was the conflict or clash of the past and the present. Kumarasurar lives with his traditional lifestyle with slightly upgraded thoughts towards mythical thoughts. Thus, the discordance occurs towards social media and is considered it as a waste of expense. But Mangasuri and Megasurar have been adamant about buying a computer for their home. Meghasurar stays inside the room and engages with the computer. The engaging lifestyle of the wife and son with the computer disturbs his peace.

From the text *New Cultural Studies*, "Each element of a social formation is, to a greater or lesser extent, present in the other. The purpose of 'overdetermination' was to show that the elements of a social formation and their relations could only be established through the analysis of their concrete existence, rather than through reference to an ultimate cause such as a god or the economy" (Hall 58). Meghasurar, the son of Kumarasurar, insisted on buying a costlier mobile phone because of the criticism of his classmates for using a button mobile phone in college. Criticism of other words distracts one's stable mind when he tries to mingle with the modernised world. Meghasurar seeks the help of Mangasuri to buy a new smartphone with all the latest options available. Mangasuri conveys her favour to her child, Meghasurar. Pestering attitude of son and wife pushes his mind to loneliness, which leads to heaviness in his heart. The loneliness leads to muse over numerous irrelevant thoughts. Kumarasurar views buying a new mobile phone as a waste of money, but his wife's support for their son makes him feel lonely. He feels that no one understands his perspective. These in-depth thoughts change his attitude and lead him to behave more rudely.

The thought of a new mobile connects worldly happenings, the mind overimagines, and connects each incident with his son. Kumarasurar's engaging attitude towards his son irritates Meghasurar. The activities on the mobile make the person immobile, forgetting to consume their food and have conversations with the family. Kumarasurar remains stable even after the quarrel, which implies the unconscious state of love. Moreover, cultural friction is vivid; it shows the fear of a person who is unaware of their modern world.

In modernised reputed schools, students attain education while having bridles on their faces all the time in the time of learning on the campus. The bridles symbolise the promoting attitude of selfishness, cruelty and the jealous nature of a person. Being an observer and listener of the society, Kumaresan switches on to the side of a reputed college in the society. But the modernised school lifestyle forces Megasurar to accept these colleges with numerous restrictions. While travelling by bus for admission in a new college, Kumarasurar feels uncertain about highway travel. Because the knowledge he has acquired from the newspaper makes his mind think about all the possibilities. The excessive love towards the boy irritates him because Kumarasurar restricts the boy from sitting in the window seat to avoid serious injuries in the case of any accidents that may occur. Kumarasurar is affiliated with thoughts as: "Meghas was the only heir in the family. He would have to further their line...Meghas was a child, a boy who had never known a woman's touch" (E 130).

On seeing the togetherness of the girls and boys eating and chatting, some boys are wearing sleeveless T-shirts and shorts, others have tight-fitting clothes showing chests, armpits, and half thighs are shocking to Mangasuri. Most of the students in the college are foreigners. So, the culture and dressing style differ in the upcoming generation from the traditional world. All these dressing styles and the atmosphere prevailing inside the college surprise Mangasuri. In addition to Meghasurar's parents constantly worrying about their son's well-being and fear that he might stray from his academic studies. They are deeply concerned that he could be wasting time on leisure rather than focusing

on his future. Lacking trust in him, they suspect he might change due to the existing hostile college environment. This intense fear creates cultural conflict, which is clearly reflected in the actions of Mangasuri:

Every time she closed her eyes, she would imagine Meghas wandering about in shorts and laughing with all sorts of girls. Was her son not hers any longer? She ought to have ensured he went to an arts college in their own town, so that he could have been a day scholar. He was their only child. He was everything to her. If she were to lose him, what hold did she have on life? (E 136-137).

Eagerness to know about current news creates panic. The accidents reported in the mass media about the selfie-mania ruins his mental peace completely. Still, he gathers more news by browsing it on the computer after the loss of panic over the computer. Numerous articles are available in online about the accident cases due to people's craze over social. Thus, he is scared about the safety of his son, and he suspects that the mobile may lead him to destruction. His restless mind does not allow him to sleep Kumarasurar had nightmare that Meghasurar has lost his life by taking a selfie on the top of the train and is tossed over to further proceeding trains. In the same way, Kumarasurar fears that every news report occurs with a nightmare and ends up with extreme pain. These thoughts led him to quarrel and shout at Mangasuri and his son Meghasurar through a phone call.

In the text, *New Cultural Studies*, the concept of Althusser's work connects with the psychological impact of Kumarasurar "Freudian psychoanalysis, where it describes the non-literal nature of the content of dreams and its relations with both the unconscious and other processes encountered in ordinary life, such as traumatic events" (Hall 57). In the case of pornography news, Kumarasurar's views that everyone in the world is naked, including himself. So, he hides himself inside the bedsheet for three days and continuously washes his eyes on the third day with soap, and the dream at night about the view and share of pornography videos by Meghasurar made him boil the water and wash his eyes multiple times. Kumarasurar believes that his eyes are the problem, and he fails to realise that his problems are the outcome of his thoughts and not out of eyesight. Kumarasurar begins to seclude him from everyone by stating that, "He wouldn't listen to a thing anyone said. People weren't content with conspiring against him; they had now targeted Meghas. Kanakasurar was always regarding him with jealousy. Thenasurar had determined that he should prevent Meghas from studying further. Everyone on the street had an eye on the boy" (E 156).

According to Batra in *A New Approach to Literary Theory and Criticism*, "modernism is the repudiation of a continuity between worlds of subject and object, the self and the world. The human self is now regarded as fluid, flexible and fragmented. There is a perception of the complex roles of time, memory and history in the mutual construction of self and world" (02). Human invention has both positive and negative impacts. But, Megasurar remains practical and uses all the materials in the world in the right manner without deviation. However, the initial phase of using the product and learning about its drawbacks weakens Kumarasurar's stability due to the traditional customs and lifestyle he has followed.

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