

**ANIMAL ABUSE AND VIOLENCE IN PERUMAL MURUGAN'S
POONACHI**

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Abstract

Poonachi or the story of a black goat is the first work of fiction the author wrote after he declared in 2015 that Perumal Murugan the writer is dead and went into a self imposed literary exile. It is therefore a comeback novel for the author and presents before the reader a multilayered and complex tale featuring animals. "*Poonachi or the story of a black goat* features animals that think and feel" (Translator's note. Murugan171) . *Poonachi* represents all domesticated animals who suffer at the hands of their human masters in a world dominated by human beings. *Poonachi* is invested with the ability of metacognition as she possesses an ability to think, reflect on her own thoughts and feelings. She also ponders on the cruel treatment administered to other fellow goats at the hands of human beings. Her observations bring to focus the violence and abuse human beings unmindfully mete out to all the non human species of animals on earth in the name of human supremacy. In *Poonachi*, human interest and profit are the defining principles of all interactions between human beings and animals of other species. In this paper, I propose to study the various forms of violence and animal abuse in *Poonachi* in the light of various social, cultural and ecological theories and show how Speciesism is always wrong.

Key words: Animal Abuse, Violence, Speciesism, Painism

Poonachi is the story of a black goat who is gifted to an old couple by a giant like man they think to be Bakasuran. *Poonachi* is a tiny, all black doe kid who survives three fatal attacks on her life and comes out unscathed. She is raised by the old woman on rice water and coconut oilcake water as she does not have a mother and the other nanny goats do not want to suckle her. She is a miracle who gives birth to a litter of seven kids thrice in the novel. She goes through many painful incidents like being forcibly inseminated, not being able to live with the partner of her choice, suffering the loss of her kids and seeing other goats being mistreated by the humans. The omniscient narrator puts forth before the reader *Poonachi's* emotions, her thoughts and reactions to what happens to her and other animals in the course of their interactions with human beings. This serves as an inner critique of the insensitive way human beings treat animals on a daily basis within the text of the novel. The physical, mental and emotional harm or hurt to which the animals are subjected to as a result of the speciesist and anthropocentric violence is also put forth before the reader in no uncertain terms by the omniscient narrator. In the end, *Poonachi* turns into a stone idol at the time of her death. N.Kalyan Raman in the translator's note highlights "the hoary tradition in the folk culture of Tamil Nadu whereby the memory of an innocent girl destroyed by the random and ever present violence of the world is worshipped as a deity"(Murugan172). Needless to say, violence is one of the central themes of *Poonachi*.

The relationship between human beings and animals has been a subject of interest , analysis and observation since time immemorial. There are two basic viewpoints: the first regards animals other than human beings as beings without any consciousness and the second regards animals other than human beings as sentient beings .

The proponents of the first viewpoint like Immanuel Kant and Descartes hold that animals are not conscious . In "Duties to Animals and Spirits"(1930) Immanuel Kant writes, "[So] far as animals are concerned, we have no direct duties. Animals are not self-conscious and are there merely as the means to an end. That end is man." (2.) Many other philosophers and scientists like Descartes have similar views on animals. Descartes says that animals are automata who have no consciousness.

This raises the question of what is ethical and unethical in human encounters and relationships with animals and how human use of animals and animal products should be regulated or conversely should it be regulated at all? The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness was written by a group of neuroscientists; Philip Low and edited by Jaak Panksepp, Diana Reiss, David Edelman, Bruno Van Swinderen, Philip Low and Christof Koch. It declares that "non-human animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors. Consequently, the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Nonhuman animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates." (quoted in Kristen Andrews 51) Thus, we can not presume that animals have no consciousness and do not feel any pain .

Richard Ryder in *Painism-Historical and Ethical Aspects* takes the position that “all sentient individuals of whatever race or sex or species, have equal moral standing”(404). Further, he also states that “Speciesism is always wrong”(405). Tom Regan in “The Case for Animal Rights” (1983) has argued that non human animals are “subjects-of-a-life” (186) in the same manner as human beings. Further, he states that if one wishes to ascribe inherent value to all human beings, then we must similarly ascribe the same value to non humans regardless of their ability to be or not to be rational agents. “All who have inherent value have it equally, whether they be human animals or not”(187). Tom Regan also states that what is important for moral consideration are not the differences between humans and non humans but the similarities. Bentham in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780) gives a forceful defence of the sentient view of moral consideration. He holds pain and pleasure as two sovereign masters and says “It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do” (1). He questions “Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps, the faculty of discourse?...the question is not, can they reason? nor can they talk? but can they suffer?” (311).

The philosophers and thinkers who regard animals as sentient beings conclude that Speciesism is always wrong. This will be the basic premise on which this paper will attempt to study *Poonachi*.

It is pertinent here to first recognise what constitutes Animal abuse. According to Ascione, animal abuse is “socially unacceptable behavior that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or death of an animal” (228). *Poonachi* is replete with such instances of violent abuse which causes physical, sexual, mental and emotional harm to Poonachi and the other animals. All these actions are induced by human centeredness and anthropocentric approach of human beings. Elizabeth Stanko defines violence as “any form of behaviour by an individual that intentionally threatens to or causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves” (316). In *Poonachi* we see the animals suffering physical, sexual, emotional and mental harm as a result of human actions. In the light of the above discussion, we can safely presume that violence will be the norm, rather than the exception in an anthropocentric and Speciesist world. This same violent worldview pervades *Poonachi* which lends itself to speciesist and anthropocentric attitudes and behaviour.

Simon Hallsworth in his article “Imaginary Spaces and Real relations” avers that, “As we shall observe and as animal rights activists have argued (Regan 1982; Regan 1988), even the most seemingly benevolent of our relationships has sinister undercurrent that belies the benevolence that prevails at the level of the social imaginary” (76). *Poonachi*’s relationship with the old woman is a direct echo of the same. In the novel, seemingly nurturing relationships like that of old woman and Poonachi are also tainted with violence and denial of natural rights. In the beginning of the novel the old woman is determined to bring up the motherless kid Poonachi and feeds her rice water through a tube but later on the same old woman does not agree to her daughter’s proposal of leaving Poonachi with her and leaves another goat Porumi with her. Poonachi feels antagonism for the old woman as she wants to stay behind at her daughter’s house to be with Poovan. “She didn’t let that happen. Now, she won’t allow me to stay here with Poovan either. The old wretch. I have to keep falling in her arms, it seems. From now on, I shall avoid being trapped, Poonachi said to herself.” (Murugan 90) The old woman is not ready to part with Poonachi and she does not take into consideration the explicit liking Poonachi and Poovan show for each other. She does as she likes keeping her own interests in the forefront exhibiting typical anthropocentric/ speciesist behaviour toward Poonachi.

Richard Ryder coined the term “Speciesism” in a privately printed leaflet which he had circulated in Oxford as a protest against animal experimentation in 1970. “I use the word ‘Speciesism’ to describe the widespread discrimination that is practiced by man against the other species, and to draw a parallel with racism.” (Ryder 5). For Waldau “Speciesism is the inclusion of all human animals within, and the exclusion of all other animals from, the moral circle.” (38). Speciesism induced physical violence is the staple of almost all interactions human beings have with animals in *Poonachi*.

Ear piercing of all animals and children is mandated by the regime in *Poonachi*. When Poonachi is taken to the ear piercing office, she is subjected to physical violence by the official in charge of the process. The ear piercing is done so brutally by the officer that a nerve gets damaged, her ear starts to bleed and she comes down with a fever the same night. “Pus dripped continuously from the wound.” (Murugan 47) The wound festers and refuses to heal causing a lot of pain to Poonachi. The omniscient narrator tells us that “some kids even died from the brute force of the stab” (Murugan 46). Ear piercing is a branding mandated by the regime in *Poonachi* to ensure that all domesticated animals can be tracked at any time. It is also a safeguard against possible rebellion and a ploy to keep the subjects of the regime in check. “If we don’t keep a strict watch on them, they’ll become arrogant and do anything they want.”(Murugan 36)

Physical violence is meted out to the animals by humans, by the act of tying a rope around the animal's neck. "When the old man takes his herd for grazing he frees the goats from the tether and binds their neck to its forelegs with the rope in order to restrict their movement." (Murugan 55) The rope is tied tightly to the neck and forelegs of the goats, binding them together tightly in such a way so as to restrict free movement. A poignant instance of the rope being used as an assertion of human will and supremacy is seen when Poonachi and Poovan are torn apart from each other. The rope is a symbol of ownership and an agent of oppression at the same time. The old woman's daughter threatens Poovan when he breaks the tether and runs towards Poonachi as she is being led away from him. She says, ".....Snapping your tether and running off?....but tomorrow, I'll bind your neck and forelegs as close together as possible." (Murugan 91).

Poonachi does not have a rope around her neck initially but when she shows resentment and retaliates for being dragged away from Poovan against her will, a rope is tied around her neck by the old man. "And so, that day a rope was tied around Poonachi's neck for the first time; once tied, it was never undone." (Murugan 91) The humans assert their will and supremacy by way of the rope. Poonachi is a representative of all animals when she thinks that "all the love the couple showed her had shrunk to the length of the rope" (Murugan 143). Once the human supremacy and ownership is established by a rope tied to her neck she has no freedom "...but what could she do except walk in obedience to the pull of the rope?" (Murugan 143). When Poonachi is inseminated by a younger ram, she is tied to a brace made of logs with a rope apparently to hold her firmly in place. Thus, we see that the freedom of animals is restricted violently by humans and they are forced to submit to it.

Among non human species, sheep are privileged over goats in *Poonachi* as they do not have a rope tied around their necks. Sheep deliver only one kid at a time so their work is done quickly at the ear piercing office. Sheep owners also raise a voice against the goat owners as goats have big litters and their ear piercing consumes a lot of time. Poonachi encounters sheep when she goes out to the pasture to graze. She took a strong dislike to the lambs. Sheep are favoured because they exhibit subservience to the established norms by the regime. Poonachi reflects on why the lambs always had their heads down, even while walking. "Can you call it living when you live without looking at anything but the ground?" (Murugan 60). On the contrary, goats always walk with their heads held high and are potential rebels so they are always tied up with a rope. It is said about the goats that "When the goatherd called, they followed him with their heads held high." (Murugan 60). Further, "None of the sheep had their neck and forelegs bound together with a rope. That was done only to the proud goats, who were forced to look at the ground as they walked. This is necessary as goats always tried to break free of their shackles." (Murugan 61). When the drought strikes sheep are everywhere in the pasture because "Sheep could survive even by foraging in the dirt" (Murugan 157). Towards the end of the novel, when the drought strikes animals are the worst sufferers as they are abused and decimated by the twin forces of man's constant abuse and the drought. Human beings as well as nature seem to be antagonistic to animals. "There were no goats,cattle, poultry,cats or dogs in any house in the village." (Murugan165).

There is another form of covert violence seen in the novel where the byproducts of the natural processes of birth of animals like milk are commercialized and money is made out of them. The milk is denied to the kid of the goat and is instead used by the goatherd for his own use or is sold to make some money. "Every now and then, when his body became overheated, the old man would ask for goat's milk"(Murugan 15). As long as the goat's yield milk they are forced to suckle other goat's kids. When Poonachi delivers a litter of seven Semmi is made to suckle three of Poonachi's kids. "Semmi has once suckled Poonachi; now she had to suckle Poonachi's kids" (Murugan 127). Later in the novel, when the drought strikes and Poonachi is pregnant for the third time we see the old woman squirting the last drop of milk from Poonachi's udder. Then the old woman stopped milking her, saying that she was likely to yield only blood from now on. This is ample evidence of how animals are abused and exploited by humans till the very limit of the animals capacity to yield anything productive is breached and totally exhausted. Besides physical violence we see death of animals caused by human intervention and the human tendency to always keep their own interests and convenience as primary in their dealings with animals.

A total lack of respect for an animal's life is shown by the human agents in *Poonachi*. Tom Regan in *The Case of Human Rights*(1983) says that "The whole creation groans under the weight of evil we humans visit upon these mute, powerless creatures."(189). The male bucks suffer violence when they are slaughtered either to be offered up as sacrifice to Lord Mesagaran or to be eaten as meat. Poovan tells Poonachi "We die for meat. We die for sacrifice"(Murugan 147). Firstly, male bucks are pledged to be sacrificed to Lord Mesagaran and are offered up as sacrifice. Poovan and many other male bucks are sacrificed to Lord Mesagaran. In the *Lives of Animals* (1997) Elizabeth Costello cites the ancient Greek practice of ritualizing animal slaughter and justifying it to some extent by offering it to the gods first as a sacrifice. The same rationalization can be seen even today in ritual sacrifices to God in many cultures and religions all over the world. The same is reflected in *Poonachi* as

male bucks are sacrificed to Lord Mesagaran as appeasement. A critique of this killing of animals, highlighting the pain and brutality of the ritual sacrifice is clearly seen within the text. As Poovan is dragged away in the middle of the night suddenly, Poonachi questions, "Why did people who had nothing to do with them get to decide who should interact with whom and who should stay with whom?"(Murugan 149) By morning it becomes clear that Poovan has been sacrificed to Lord Mesagaran " Poovan came back in the morning as a lifeless carcass "(Murugan149). Poonachi's black buck is sacrificed and then eaten as junk by the old couple when the drought strikes.

In *Poonachi*, in a bid to compensate the old couple for the sudden death of Uzhumban, the villagers cut him up and offer the meat to the old couple. The old woman refuses to accept the meat saying that she does not have the devil's heart to eat her own child. She reasons that, "When we offer a sacrifice, God takes the life and gives us the refuse" (Murugan 99) which is clearly a bid and a defense intended to ethically justify the slaughtering of animals as a sacrifice and later to be eaten as meat. Later in the novel, due to the famine and drought, the old man and the old woman slaughter one of Poonachi's kids, offer it to Mesagaran as sacrifice to fulfill their vow and then cure it with salt and eat it as junk. "In the end, the kid lay on the palm frond as a heap of mutton"(Murugan162). In the course of the novel Poonachi gives birth to a litter of seven kids three times. Each time her kids are sold off, slaughtered for meat or sacrificed to Lord Mesagaran as the old man and the old woman deem fit exhibiting blatant Speciesism.

Sudden, violent and arbitrary death of animals is also seen, as in the death of Uzhumban who suffers a sudden, tragic death when a farmer throws a stone forcefully at him to stop him from feeding on the groundnut stalks in his field. The farmer's sole concern is his crop of groundnuts. He does not give even a fleeting thought to the life of the animal. Human intention to kill or harm the animal in order to protect human interests is starkly clear here. When the old man shouted at the farmer in anger, he does not display any regret for causing the death of Uzhumban. He calmly replied, "Only a farmer knows the value of a crop. What would a goatherd know?"(Murugan 96). Further, "There was a loud scream. Uzhumban body rose in the air, spun around and dropped inside the field" (Murugan 95). "Uzhumban life was gone in one stroke"(Murugan96) This instance shows how the life of an animal is regarded as utterly dispensable, once again displaying anthropocentric and speciesist disposition. Humans deem it fit to compensate for the life of an animal by offering either its meat or money to the goatherd for the loss he has incurred by the death of his goat. Further, whenever there is a crisis situation or money is needed, goat kids are sold by the old man and the old woman which is another instance of Speciesism and commercialisation of the natural process of birth. The nanny goat and the kids are separated forcibly. When Poonachi delivers a litter of seven kids there is a huge demand for the three does. "But there was a high demand for the does right now. They could sell all three"(Murugan131). Poonachi gives birth to a litter of seven kids thrice in the novel. Each time the kids are sold, killed, sacrificed as the old couple deem fit.

The pain and agony of Poonachi is highlighted and contrasted against the ecstasy the old couple are in after earning a lot of money by selling Poonachi's kids. "The old couple was so overwhelmed by their own good fortune that they were unable to sleep. Grief stricken at having lost all her kids at one stroke, Poonachi couldn't sleep either." (Murugan141). Pain is caused to Poonachi by humans for morally arbitrary reasons. When the drought strikes, Poonachi's kids are slaughtered one by one to serve various human needs: to serve as a sacrifice to Mesagaran, to be reduced to junk and eaten by the old couple in order to survive. It is regarded as fit and desirable in the scheme of things that animals are slaughtered and eaten so that the human may stave off hunger and starvation for one more day. Humans survive by eating the animals, but the animals don't get anything to eat. As a consequence, "Poonachi was emaciated and looked like a bag of bones"(Murugan 164).

In the novel apart from the severe pain being inflicted upon the animals by humans, they are denied their natural right to mate at will with the partner of their choice as we see in the case of Poonachi and Poovan. The male bucks Kaduvayan, Peethan and Poovan are castrated after their first sexual encounter. Richard Ryder in "Painism –Historical and Ethical Aspects" makes some very important observations about how pain should be considered the basis for ethics. "Pain is pain regardless of who/ what suffers it." (5). The violence with which young male kids are castrated and Poonachi is inseminated by the old ram are two glaring incidents highlighting the denial of basic rights to the animals and the forcible imposition of what humans deem fit on the animals. Ryder further elaborates that inflicting pain on any member of another race, sex, or species is wrong and all painient individuals have equal moral standing. (6). Human goatherds do not approve of the natural sexual behaviour of Kaduvayan and want him to be fixed. Once more we see how decisions are made keeping in mind only human concerns and interests. Not even a fleeting thought is given to the animal's needs and wants. The goatherds ask the old man to get Kaduvyan castrated and they would complain to the old man about Kaduvayan behaviour "Thata, we are fed up with your kid's mischief.....Just get him fixed"(Murugan 64). Susan Schoenian, sheep and goat specialist, Maryland Extension, states "all methods of castration cause

pain...”(1) The castration done by the boatman with a pair of scissors causes excruciating pain to the bucks. No anaesthesia is administered to the bucks. “With tears pouring from his eyes, Kaduvayan collapsed to the ground. Now there was no need for anyone to hold him down” (Murugan 72) After castrating the young bucks the boatman is beset with guilt and feels that he has committed a sin. ‘How will I ever be at peace after doing such terrible things?’ rued the boatman. (Murugan 72). He calls himself “Sinner ! I am a sinner and a wretch” (Murugan 73). Susan Schoenian further adds that “castration removes unwanted male behaviour...” (1) and they become easier to manage after castration. Castration is a means to kill the spirit of the buck and tame him forever by violently making him impotent. After the castration Poonachi observes that the testicles of the bucks have shriveled and withered away. “Nevertheless, Poonachi was happy that they were subdued and well behaved, and no longer writhing in pain”(Murugan76). The subdued and tame behaviour of the bucks is the desirable result sought by the human goatherd when he subjects the bucks to forcible castration.

On the same day Peethan and three other rams are also castrated. It can be presumed from the instance of five bucks being castrated on the same day that it is an accepted practice among all goatherds and secondly the boatman is called to do multiple castrations on one day so as to avoid paying the boatman again and again for individual castrations. The human motive behind the castrations is highly suspect. “Peethan couldn’t even cry. His body was still shaking. None of them was quite aware of what had happened to them”(Murugan73). Here we see how all the bucks are shaken to the core by this sudden violent castration and all of them are at a loss to understand what has happened to them and why. When the bucks go home they stand in the same position all night due to the pain. “Every now and then, they would whimper or cry out suddenly” (Murugan74). The injustice and brutality of the castration is evident when Poonachi lays in the shade, trying to figure out why it had come to this. ‘She couldn’t think of anything’ (Murugan 75). When Poonachi is paired with the old ram for mating, we see the mental and emotional agony she goes through when she turns her face away in disgust on seeing the old ram and when the ram inseminates her ‘Unable to bear the weight, she collapsed to the ground in less than a second’(Murugan 103). Poonachi’s insemination by the old ram further exemplifies the mindless violence with which the sexual needs of the animals are met. Poonachi is first mated with an old ram. Later, when she is again inseminated by a younger ram she is tied with a rope to a plank made of wood logs. Poonachi questions why she has been paired with the old ram ‘What was the connection between a faceless old ram and her body? It was beyond her understanding. Did the joy of mating amount to no more than this?’(Murugan 105) Poonachi is disgusted with the whole world. ‘It was enough to make her feel small and humiliated’(Murugan 104). This is an instance of uncalled for violence and extreme anthropocentrism by the goatherds.

This arbitrary uncalled for sexual violence is yet another instance of Human interests being given precedence over the needs of animals. As Hayward reflects: “it is not the concern with human welfare per se that is the problem here, but the arbitrary privileging of that welfare over the welfare of members of other species”(59)

It is evident from the above discussion that sexual violence is done to both male and female goats as it is presumed by the humans that they are not self conscious and can be rightfully used as a means to an end; ie to serve human needs. Tim Hayward in his article, “ Anthropocentrism : A misunderstood Problem”(1997) holds Speciesism to be truly objectionable “when humans give preference to interests of members of their own species over the interests of members of other species for morally arbitrary reasons”(52). For instance, Hayward reflects: “if it is wrong in the human case to inflict avoidable physical suffering because humans are sentient beings, then it would be morally arbitrary to allow the inflicting of suffering on other sentient beings. That is why cruel and degrading treatment of animals can be condemned as speciesist” (52–53).

When Poonachi gets lost in the forest on the way to the pilgrimage a very important question is raised by the narrator which calls into question the whole attitude of humans towards animals. Poonachi asks herself, ‘Had the old woman given up on her and gone away, leaving her behind...She might have been killed and eaten by some predator-or she might have roamed around happily for ever. The old woman had saved her.’ (Murugan84) When we see the terrible ordeals Poonachi faces in the novel after she is rescued from the forest by the old woman, we can conclude that this is a rhetorical question/ an ironic question/ critique of the callous human behaviour towards animals. Further, it is made clear in the text that the old woman had taken so much pain to find Poonachi because she had made a vow of supplication to Mesagaran which could not be fulfilled without Poonachi. The welfare of Poonachi per se is not the motivating factor behind her tireless efforts to find her. This is evidenced by ‘The old woman had the vow of supplication she had made to Mesagaran in her heart as she did endless rounds of the forest to find Poonachi’ (Murugan 86-87). Clearly, human interest outweighs the value of the life of the animal and the value the old woman attaches to it. In George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* as the novel draws to a close there is only one commandment written on the wall stating “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” (112).

In the same vein, the human beings in *Poonachi* are more equal than all the other animals combined together. The old man continues on his onward journey with the other goats and the old woman makes the effort to find Poonachi when she gets lost in the forest as she has made a vow of supplication to Mesagaran which can't be fulfilled unless Poonachi is found.

When Poonachi is touted as a miracle after she gives birth to a litter of seven kids, a hoard of people come to see her. The old man comes up with a very bright idea, 'no need for that. From tomorrow, we will charge a penny per person for seeing the miracle'(Murugan 125). It is thought to be a matter of right that humans use animals for money making and use them as potential, usable resources. As Hayward reflects "Interests of humans must always take precedence over the interests of nonhumans." (59). He further claims "Speciesism, I am claiming, is likewise, in principle, corrigible" (55).

Likewise, we can contend that the physical and sexual violence to which the animals are subjected in *Poonachi* is avoidable, atleast in principle. This can be substantiated by the subtle critique of Speciesism within the text which can be seen in the reactions of the animals to their violent abuse. Some remarks by the old woman and the boatman who performs the castrations in the text also raise questions about Speciesism. The old woman remarks 'People keep destroying everything and shoving every last bit into their mouths. How than can anything or anyone survive here apart from human beings? In the end, can even people survive for long? she remarked with a sigh.' (Murugan 85). The omniscient narrator's observations in *Poonachi* combined with Poonachi's reflections, thoughts on what she sees around her also show how the animals feel when violence is inflicted on them. The male bucks are surgically castrated by the boatman who says that he has committed a sin worse than homicide and bows before all the five bucks begging for forgiveness. 'My sin is bigger than homicide,' he said. (Murugan72).

Thus, we can conclude that we see ample evidence of speciesist behaviour in the way human beings treat other non human species of animals within the text. At the same time, the author Perumal Murugan has also weaved in a subtle yet powerful inner critique of the same attitudes by investing Poonachi with metacognition and through the observations made by the omniscient narrator on the way animals are treated by the human beings (which we can presume to be the author's own attitude towards animals.)

Although Kant in 'Duties to Animals'(1930) says that "our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties towards humanity." (1) yet Kant in "The Critique of Practical Reason" (1997) also states that "any action whereby we may torment animals, or let them suffer distress, or otherwise treat them without love, is demeaning to ourselves."(434). Thus, we can conclude that Speciesism is always wrong and is ethically and morally repugnant and not befitting for humans in any way.

In his anthology, *Songs of a coward, poems of exile* (2017) in a poem titled "A Strange Beast"(4) the poet laments that someone has painted a pair of horns over his head which everyone can see, thus reducing him to a strange animal.(4). In an interview in the Financial Express, the author states that "writing *Poonachi* was like rediscovering myself." When questioned about the motivation behind *Poonachi* Murugan in his interview to India Today asserted, "I have known not one but many Poonachi's." All these autobiographical leanings lead to the assumption that the author identifies his own persecuted and exiled self with Poonachi and through her travails and tribulations in the novel seeks to draw our attention towards far greater and deeply embedded violence and abuse in our society.

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