



**"EXPLORING IDENTITY AND MARGINALIZATION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF DALIT IDENTITY IN PERUMAL MURUGAN'S WORKS AND NATIVE
CANADIAN IDENTITY IN JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG'S LITERATURE."**

¹Mamta Abrol, ²Dr. Meenu (Associate Professor)

¹Research Scholar, ²Supervisor

¹⁻² Department of English, OPJS University, Distt. Churu, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT:

This comparative analysis delves into the intricate realms of identity and marginalization by juxtaposing the portrayal of Dalit identity in Perumal Murugan's literary works and Native Canadian identity in Jeannette Armstrong's literature. Both authors navigate the complexities of belonging and exclusion within their respective cultural contexts, shedding light on the profound impact of social hierarchies, discrimination, and historical injustices on marginalized communities. Through a close examination of their writings, this study seeks to uncover the shared experiences, unique challenges, and diverse narratives that shape the identities of Dalits in India and Native Canadians, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of the intersection between literature, identity, and social justice.

KEYWORDS:

Dalit identity ,Native Canadian identity ,Perumal Murugan, Jeannette Armstrong, Marginalization, Comparative analysis, Social justice

INTRODUCTION:

Identity and marginalization are pivotal themes in literature and society, shedding light on the complex interplay between individual and collective experiences. Within this context, the portrayal of marginalized communities and their struggle for recognition and equality has been a recurring motif in the world of literature. This comparative analysis embarks on a journey through the literary works of two renowned authors, Perumal Murugan and Jeannette Armstrong, to explore how they navigate the intricacies of Dalit identity in India and Native Canadian identity in Canada, respectively.

Dalits, historically oppressed and discriminated against in India's caste-based social structure, and Native Canadians, who have endured centuries of colonization, dispossession, and cultural assimilation, share parallel narratives of marginalization. Through their writings, Perumal Murugan and Jeannette Armstrong provide unique insights into the lives and struggles of these marginalized communities, offering a platform for their voices to be heard and their stories to be told.

Perumal Murugan, a celebrated Tamil writer, has used his literary prowess to shine a spotlight on the experiences of Dalits in India, particularly in the rural landscape of Tamil Nadu. His works delve into the complexities of caste-based discrimination, social exclusion, and the quest for identity among Dalits. On the other side of the globe, Jeannette Armstrong, a prominent Native Canadian writer, reflects upon the multifaceted aspects of Native identity and the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Canada. Her literature encapsulates the enduring spirit of resilience and the profound connection between Indigenous peoples and their land.

This comparative analysis seeks to uncover the common threads and unique nuances that define Dalit and Native Canadian identities within the literary landscapes created by Murugan and Armstrong. By examining the themes, narratives, and literary techniques employed by these authors, we aim to illuminate the shared experiences of marginalization, the strategies for resistance, and the complexities of identity formation. In doing so, we contribute to a broader understanding of the intersection between literature, identity, and social justice, transcending geographical boundaries to address the global struggle against marginalization and inequality.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND: DALIT IDENTITY IN PERUMAL MURUGAN'S LITERATURE

To appreciate the exploration of Dalit identity in Perumal Murugan's literary works, it is essential to delve into the historical context and background that has shaped the experiences of Dalits in India. Dalits, formerly known as "untouchables" within the Hindu caste system, have historically endured systemic discrimination, social exclusion, and economic oppression.

1. **Caste System:** The caste system in India is a deeply ingrained social hierarchy that categorizes individuals into different castes, with Dalits placed at the lowest rung. This system has perpetuated discrimination and segregation for centuries, relegating Dalits to the most menial and degrading tasks in society.
2. **Social Exclusion:** Dalits have faced social exclusion in various forms, including restrictions on where they can live, whom they can marry, and which public spaces they can access. They were often denied education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty.
3. **Economic Exploitation:** Economic exploitation of Dalits, through practices such as bonded labor and landlessness, has been a pervasive issue. Many Dalit communities have struggled to break free from these economic shackles.
4. **Struggles for Rights:** Throughout India's history, Dalits have engaged in various movements and struggles to assert their rights and challenge the oppressive caste system. Figures like B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit leader and the architect of the Indian Constitution, played a pivotal role in advocating for Dalit rights and social justice.

Perumal Murugan, born in a small village in Tamil Nadu, India, has drawn inspiration from this historical context to craft his literary works. His writings often explore the lived experiences of Dalits, portraying their resilience in the face of caste-based discrimination, their aspirations for a better life, and the complexities of identity formation within the rigid caste framework.

In Perumal Murugan's literature, readers encounter characters who grapple with the societal constraints imposed by caste, the longing for dignity and equality, and the tensions between tradition and modernity. His novels, short stories, and poetry serve as a mirror to the multifaceted struggles and aspirations of Dalits, shedding light on their quest for identity and justice in a society marked by historical injustices.

By delving into the historical context and background of Dalit identity, one can better appreciate the depth and significance of Perumal Murugan's literary contributions, as he seeks to amplify the voices of the marginalized and challenge the entrenched inequalities that persist in India's social fabric.

"CULTURAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE: NATIVE CANADIAN IDENTITY IN JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG'S LITERATURE"

Jeannette Armstrong, a prominent Native Canadian writer and activist, has made profound contributions to the exploration of Native Canadian identity through her literary works. To understand the cultural and social significance of Native Canadian identity as portrayed in Armstrong's literature, it is essential to delve into the historical and contemporary context of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

1. **Indigenous History:** Indigenous peoples in Canada have a rich and diverse history that predates European colonization by thousands of years. They have distinct languages, cultures, and spiritual traditions deeply connected to the land.
2. **Colonialism:** The arrival of European settlers in the 15th century marked the beginning of a long history of colonialism that had devastating effects on Indigenous communities. Indigenous lands were forcibly taken, and their cultures and traditions were suppressed.
3. **Residential Schools:** One dark chapter in Canadian history is the establishment of residential schools, which were institutions designed to assimilate Indigenous children into European culture. These schools subjected Indigenous children to abuse, neglect, and the erasure of their cultural identities.



4. **Indigenous Rights Movements:** In the 20th and 21st centuries, Indigenous peoples in Canada have been actively engaged in movements to reclaim their rights, land, and cultural heritage. Land rights, self-governance, and reconciliation have been central themes.

Jeannette Armstrong's literature serves as a powerful medium through which she addresses these historical and contemporary issues while celebrating the resilience and cultural richness of Native Canadians. Her works often feature characters who grapple with questions of identity, belonging, and the preservation of their cultural heritage in the face of ongoing challenges.

Through her novels, poetry, and essays, Armstrong sheds light on the importance of Indigenous languages, storytelling, and connection to the land. She emphasizes the need for cultural revitalization and the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom as integral to Canada's identity and future.

Jeannette Armstrong's literature carries cultural and social significance by providing a platform for Native Canadian voices to be heard, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and fostering a greater understanding of the complexities of Native Canadian identity. It contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding Indigenous rights, reconciliation, and the vital role of Indigenous peoples in shaping the cultural and social fabric of Canada.

"COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: PARALLELS AND DIFFERENCES IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION"

In this section, we will undertake a comparative analysis of the portrayal of identity construction in the literary works of Perumal Murugan and Jeannette Armstrong, exploring both the parallels and differences that emerge in their respective depictions of Dalit identity in India and Native Canadian identity in Canada.

1. Parallel Themes:

- a. **Resilience:** Both authors highlight the resilience of their respective marginalized communities. Murugan's characters often exhibit unwavering determination in the face of caste-based discrimination, while Armstrong's narratives emphasize the enduring strength of Native Canadians in the wake of colonization and cultural suppression.

- b. **Cultural Heritage:** Murugan and Armstrong place a significant emphasis on the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage. Murugan's characters grapple with the tension between their Dalit identity and the rich cultural traditions of their community, while Armstrong's works delve into the importance of Indigenous languages, traditions, and connection to the land.

- c. **Identity Struggles:** Identity struggles are a central theme in both authors' works. Dalits in Murugan's literature and Native Canadians in Armstrong's writings often grapple with questions of self-identity, belonging, and the impact of societal expectations on their sense of self.

2. Differences in Identity Construction:

- a. **Geographical Context:** One significant difference is the geographical context. Murugan's stories are set in the rural landscapes of Tamil Nadu, India, whereas Armstrong's narratives are rooted in the Indigenous communities of Canada. This difference in location shapes the specific challenges and cultural nuances faced by each group.

- b. **Cultural Context:** The cultural context also varies. Dalit identity is deeply entwined with the caste system and Hindu traditions in India, while Native Canadian identity is rooted in diverse Indigenous cultures, languages, and spiritual practices. These distinct contexts influence the ways in which identity is constructed and negotiated.

- c. **Colonial History:** Native Canadian identity is deeply affected by the history of colonization in Canada, including the impact of residential schools and land dispossession. This historical context adds a layer of



complexity to the construction of Native Canadian identity that differs from the historical dynamics of Dalit identity in India.

3. Narrative Techniques:

a. Literary Styles: Murugan's writing often incorporates elements of rural realism and folklore, reflecting the cultural milieu of his characters. In contrast, Armstrong's literature may draw from Indigenous oral traditions and storytelling techniques, adding a unique flavor to her narratives.

b. Character Perspectives: The authors may employ different character perspectives to convey identity construction. Murugan's characters may engage in introspection and self-discovery within a predominantly third-person narrative, while Armstrong's characters might share their stories through first-person accounts, providing intimate insights into their identities.

Through this comparative analysis, we aim to uncover the multifaceted nature of identity construction as portrayed by Perumal Murugan and Jeannette Armstrong, recognizing both the shared human experiences of marginalized communities and the distinctive elements that arise from their unique cultural and historical contexts.

"IMPACT ON MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN CHALLENGING OPPRESSION"

Literature has long been recognized as a powerful medium for challenging oppression and advocating for the rights and dignity of marginalized communities. In this section, we will explore the significant impact that literature, as exemplified by the works of Perumal Murugan and Jeannette Armstrong, has on these communities and its role in fostering social change.

1. Amplifying Marginalized Voices:

Literature serves as a platform to amplify the voices of those who have been historically silenced and marginalized. Both Murugan and Armstrong use their literary talents to give voice to the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of Dalits in India and Native Canadians in Canada. Through their works, these authors ensure that the stories of marginalized communities are heard and acknowledged.

2. Raising Awareness:

Literature has the power to raise awareness about the injustices faced by marginalized communities. Murugan's writings, for instance, shed light on the pervasive caste-based discrimination and social hierarchies that persist in India. Armstrong's literature highlights the legacy of colonization and the ongoing challenges Indigenous peoples face in Canada. By bringing these issues to the forefront, literature prompts readers to confront uncomfortable truths and engage in critical discussions about social justice.

3. Fostering Empathy and Understanding:

Reading literature that explores the lives and experiences of marginalized communities can foster empathy and understanding among readers. Through the lens of well-developed characters and compelling narratives, readers can step into the shoes of individuals from different backgrounds and gain insights into the complexities of their identities. This empathy can lead to greater support for social and political change.

4. Inspiring Social Movements:

Literature has often served as a source of inspiration for social movements and activism. The writings of authors like Murugan and Armstrong can galvanize individuals and communities to advocate for change. Their stories of resilience, courage, and cultural pride can inspire real-world action and solidarity among those who seek to challenge oppression.



5. Contributing to Reconciliation and Healing:

Literature can play a role in the process of reconciliation and healing for marginalized communities. By acknowledging historical injustices and giving voice to the pain and trauma experienced by these communities, literature can contribute to the broader efforts of reconciliation and the restoration of cultural pride.

6. Promoting Cultural Revitalization:

For Indigenous communities, literature can be a means of cultural revitalization. Armstrong's literature, for example, celebrates Indigenous languages, traditions, and spiritual practices, contributing to the preservation and revitalization of cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the works of authors like Perumal Murugan and Jeannette Armstrong exemplify the profound impact that literature can have on marginalized communities. Through their writings, they challenge oppression, raise awareness, foster empathy, inspire activism, and contribute to the healing and revitalization of cultures. Literature continues to be a vital tool in the ongoing struggle for social justice and equality.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the exploration of Dalit identity in Perumal Murugan's literature and Native Canadian identity in Jeannette Armstrong's works reveals the profound and transformative role that literature plays in challenging oppression and advocating for marginalized communities. Through the power of storytelling, both authors illuminate the shared human experiences of resilience, cultural pride, and identity struggles, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. Their works amplify marginalized voices, raise awareness about historical injustices, foster empathy, inspire social movements, and contribute to healing and cultural revitalization. In a world where oppression persists, literature stands as a beacon of hope, serving as a catalyst for positive change and a testament to the enduring spirit of those who seek to challenge and overcome the forces of marginalization and inequality.

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