

## GENDER FLUIDITY: A STUDY OF ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

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### Abstract

This work examined gender fluidity and sexuality in Roy's *The God of Small Things*. This study employed a qualitative research design. This work was anchored on the Queer Theory Perspective. Data for the study were extracted from the text as responses to the research objectives. The choice of this text (*The God of Small Things*) was informed by a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives of the text, exploring the intersections of identity, power dynamics, and cultural norms across various cultural contexts, making it ideal for the study on gender fluidity. This work was a library-based research that adopted a detailed analysis of the novel which served as the primary source. Through a deep dive into the text, the work uncovered the nuances of gender identity and fluidity particularly for non-binary individuals in the selected text. Also, the critical literary analysis conducted showed similarities and differences in how societal expectations, cultural influences, and personal experiences shape characters' perceptions of gender in the selected text which also confirmed the holistic understanding of the complex portrayal of gender fluidity in contemporary literature, while also acknowledging the subjective nature of interpretation and the importance of context in shaping meaning. From the analysis, the work concluded that gender fluidity is a complex and multifaceted constructs that shape the understanding of ourselves and our place in society as the rigid boundaries of traditional gender roles and expectations can be limiting and damaging, particularly for those who do not conform.

### Introduction

**Scholarship on Queer literature** encompasses a diverse range of narratives and representations within the Lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer (LGBTQ+ community). It goes beyond the traditional binary concepts of gender (male/female) to include non-binary identities, highlighting complex intersections of identity, culture, and society, and with a mandate to increase visibility and voice for LGBTQ+ experiences, challenging societal norms and stereotypes, and often embraces fluidity, rejecting rigid binaries, to explore both/and perspectives, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of queerness. It also **challenges conventions** through novels, poetry, or other forms and disrupts conventions, pushing boundaries in storytelling and form. But recent scholarship on contemporary queer literature have examined the issues of race, class, disability, history, experiences, struggles and other aspects of identity.

In recent years, societal understanding of gender and sexuality has undergone significant refinement and transformation. The traditional binary concepts of gender (male/female) have expanded to include non-binary identities. People now recognize that gender exists on a spectrum. Traditional binary concepts of gender and fixed notions of sexuality have been challenged by emerging perspectives that recognize the fluidity and complexity of human identity. According to Benjamin (2023), terms like "genderqueer," "genderfluid," and "agender" have gained prominence, reflecting diverse experiences beyond the binary. This evolving landscape has profound implications for individuals, communities, and society at large, influencing fields ranging from psychology and sociology to literature and popular culture.

Though, on the part of history, the word "transgender" had yet to exist, gender mutability was pervasive in the world of Greek mythology, too. Going by the Greek history, a person's sex was often changed at will by the gods: in one myth, Artemis changes a shepherd from a man to a woman after he glimpses the goddess bathing in the nude; in another, the prophet Tiresias was changed into a woman for seven years for displeasing Hera. That the gods behaved in this way – and that being changed from a man to a woman was seen as punishment – reflected Greek society's view of gender, which was patriarchal but fluid; indeed, Hermaphroditus, the child of Hermes and Aphrodite (and, you guessed it, the origin of the term "hermaphrodite"), was often depicted, and beautifully it must be said, with male genitalia but

female breasts and thighs. The Greek's acceptance and, indeed, celebration of male-male relationships continued into ancient Rome. Like "transgender", terms like "heterosexual" and "homosexual" did not yet exist; in Rome, sexual interactions between men were normal (Tella, 2017). Accordingly, Virgil's *Eclogues* (1st Century BC) includes a male shepherd who proclaims his love for a younger man, while *The Satyricon* (1st Century AD) features a similar relationship between its narrator Encolpius and his young companion Giton. Some of Catullus's poetry, meanwhile, contains specific references to anal and oral sex between men. There is mounting evidence of further LGBTQ+ stories from history; new books like *300,000 Kisses: Tales of Queer Love from the Ancient World*, in which authors Luke Edward Hall and Seán Hewitt unearth scads of evidence of queer love in antiquity, are being published with increasing regularity.

Since the emergence of this concept (gender fluidity) in literature, so many studies have emphasized the socially constructed dimension of the meanings of femininity and masculinity. As occurs in the anti-gender discourse, studies of gender and sexuality also present an ample terminological variation: gender ideology, sexual role ideology, gender role ideology. Attitudes about gender, attitudes relating to gender, gender equality, and beliefs about gender are expressions that have been used with a similar meaning in a series of studies in areas like sociology, anthropology, psychology, administration, literary studies and so on. The use of one term over another is generally due to conceptual distinctions within the field, but Amy Kroska in *Gender Ideology and Gender Role Ideology* (2018) summarizes the issue adroitly:

Contemporary literature offers a platform for diverse voices to examine the intersections of gender with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality, providing readers with perspectives that challenge dominant narratives and offer new insights into the human experience. Through characters, narratives, and themes, authors navigate themes of identity, agency, power dynamics, and the construction of gendered realities, prompting readers to critically engage with the complexities of gender ideology in the modern world (2018).

Amy Kroska emphasizes the importance of contemporary literature as a platform for exploring the extensive variation in terminology within studies of gender ideology. Despite the diverse terminologies, these expressions generally refer to similar concepts, such as attitudes about gender, gender equality, and beliefs regarding gender. The choice of terminology often depends on specific conceptual nuances within different academic fields. Through diverse voices and perspectives, literature challenges dominant narratives and offers fresh insights into the human experience. Author use characters, narratives, and themes to navigate complex issues such as identity, gender, sexuality, and the construction of gendered realities. Ultimately, this prompts readers to critically engage with the intricate complexities of gender fluidity and sexuality in today's contemporary world.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study explores the representation of gender fluidity in this novel: Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things". Despite growing recognition of diverse representation, literature often perpetuates traditional gender binaries and erases non-normative sexualities, contributing to marginalization and invisibility. By analyzing this novel, this research aims to address this gap, examining how the authors use character development, plot, language, and cultural context to construct and challenge gender and sexuality norms. The study will investigate intersections with other identity markers, contributing to a deeper understanding of human identity and sexuality, and shedding light on the complexities of gender.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Arising from the above, this research aims at studying the ways the texts present the gender fluidity, and how traditional binary concept of gender has been challenged by emerging perspectives that recognize the fluidity and complexity of human identity.

This study has the following purposes:

- To examine the cultural and social contexts that influence the characters' experiences of gender fluidity.
- To explore how the selected novel represents and challenges traditional gender roles.

## Methodology

The research used Queer Theory Perspective to do a critical analysis of the selected text with emphasis on the concept of gender fluidity. Through a deep dive into the texts, this study aims to uncover the nuances of gender identity and fluidity as depicted by the author. The methodology involves close reading and thematic analysis of key passages, dialogues, and character interactions related to gender within the novel. The choice of this text (*The God of Small Things*) was informed by a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives of the texts, exploring the intersections of identity, power dynamics, and cultural norms across various cultural contexts, making it ideal for the study on gender fluidity. This work is a library-based research that adopts a detailed qualitative analysis of the novels which serve as the primary text. By employing qualitative content analysis, common themes, patterns, and representations of gender fluidity was identified and interpreted. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of the complex portrayal of gender ideology in contemporary literature, while also acknowledging the subjective nature of interpretation and the importance of context in shaping meaning.

## Gender Fluidity in Literature: An Overview

The term "Gender" has been introduced by society to describe the biological differences between men and women. According to Rima and Tatan, (2022: 165), gender is the relationship between biological sex and behavior. From the definition above, we can say that gender refers to men and women's social and cultural roles. As adults, women and men usually take on gender roles as husbands, fathers, wives, and mothers. In our culture, the man and woman are connected as family starts with marriage, which both have related to social roles. The man will be the husband, and the woman will be the wife. In this relationship, they will affect each other. Gender concepts that are socially different have revealed the differences in roles between men and women in their society. The term Gender actually refers to a cultural concept that serves to differentiate the roles, mentalities, and emotions that women and men develop in society. Gender, according to Rokhmansyah (2016), is a trait that is used to identify differences between men and women, which are assessed in terms of culture, social conditions, mentality, emotional, and other non-biological factors.

Gender plays an important role in a person's life because it influences the life experiences that person has. In genders, Men and women have their own places and one of the genders is usually treated unfairly. Men are typically more active than women. As a result, most people believe that women are weak. However, in this relationship, sometimes one of them has much power, which will cause an imbalance. In social construction, men have more power than women, even in the relation between husband and wife or father to daughter. This power usually leads to unfair things but nowadays in a relationship ideally equal. The inequality between man and woman is called gender inequality.

Gender is the social, psychological, cultural and behavioral aspect of being a Man or a Woman. It refers to being a male sex or a female sex. It is role define and it varies from society to societies. According to the World Health Organization (2007); Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys who are socially constructed. Gender Identity refers to how a person feels internally. Tella (2017), the Gay, Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), describes gender Identity as "Ones internal, personal sense" of belongings at some point on or off of the gender spectrum. Sexuality on the other hand, refers to the sexual feeling and attractions towards other people. The three novel to be analyze here contains that information.

The social construction created men with much power and being dominated in the relationship with the women. According to Tyson (2006), traditional gender roles depicted men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive and women as emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive. What is stated above shows that women are placed in a powerless position. The differences make the inequality in gender, especially for women. Tyson (2006) quoted in Fakhri defines gender inequality as a system and structure in which either male or female becomes a victim of the system. Inequality against women persists throughout the world. This is because of the patriarchal system, in which the male is the dominant person and the female is the dominated person. The culture based on patriarchy defines this biological-based difference, which is the benchmark in limiting rights, control, participation, and

limited information. Along with the many gender inequalities and patriarchy in society, the feminist movement has appeared. Feminism is the idea that recognizes equality. Fiss (1994) states that feminism is the idea of social and political movements to reach women's equality. According to Sutanto (2017) which quoted in Subhan Women faced negative stereotypes in society. Women are viewed as weak, emotional, and housewives, and they are even viewed as sexuality tools in a relationship. This is why women are regarded as second-class to men, and women are denied the right to control their own lives. Feminism is a movement that seeks equality for men and women.

In recent years, societal understanding of gender and sexuality has undergone significant transformation. Traditional binary concepts of gender and fixed notions of sexuality have been challenged by emerging perspectives that recognize the fluidity and complexity of human identity. This evolving landscape has profound implications for individuals, communities, and society at large, influencing fields ranging from psychology and sociology to literature and popular culture.

Contemporary gender beliefs in literature represent an evolving landscape that challenges traditional binary understandings of gender. One prominent thread within contemporary literature is the exploration of feminist perspectives. Authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Bell Hooks, and Margaret Atwood slice up societal structures, questioning the power dynamics inherent in gender roles and advocating for equality. Their works explore themes such as the objectification of women, patriarchal systems, and the intersectionality of gender and sexuality. Through their characters and intricate narratives, feminist literature now serves as a catalyst for critical discourse on gender dynamics and social justice (Adichie, 2007, 23; Hooks, 1984, 45; Atwood, 1985, 76).

Simultaneously, sexual orientations such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual chronicles offer a rich tapestry of experiences that defy heteronormative conventions. Writers like Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, and Alison Bechdel craft stories that center on the complexities of identity, desire, and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. These narratives celebrate the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities while challenging societal norms and prejudices. By amplifying marginalized voices and experiences, queer literature fosters empathy and understanding, paving the way for greater acceptance and inclusion (Lorde, 1982, 34; Baldwin, 1956, 89; Bechdel, 2006, 112). Transgender and non-binary perspectives represent another vital aspect of contemporary gender ideologies in literature. Authors such as Janet Mock, Akwaeke Emezi, and Casey Plett brighten the journey of gender exploration, identity affirmation, and resilience. Their works shed light on the challenges and triumphs of transgender and non-binary individuals, highlighting the importance of self-expression and authenticity. Through effective characterizations and poignant storytelling, these authors contribute to broader conversations about gender diversity and the need for societal acceptance and affirmation (Mock, 2014, 56; Emezi, 2018, 78; Plett, 2018, 91). Gender fluidity generally refers to a concept where an individual's gender identity may fluctuate or exist outside traditional binary categories of male and female. It also refers to the idea that gender is not a fixed or binary concept, but rather a spectrum or a fluid experience. It encourages that individuals may experiences and express their gender in different ways, which may change over time or in different context.

The term 'gender fluidity' has come to best describe the way some people feel they fit outside the gender binary. The term acknowledges that gender doesn't have to be fixed, and de-emphasizes the need to align oneself with a specific gender – a concept more and more people are moving away from, as conversations about alternate ways to express and experience gender proliferate. Gender fluidity has grown even more visible as celebrities such as [Miley Cyrus](#), [Ruby Rose](#) and [Cara Delevingne](#) embrace it in the public eye. The term according to them is hard to pin down precisely, since it describes such a vast array of people and experiences, say experts. "There are as many ways to navigate gender fluidity as there are gender-fluid people," says Philadelphia-based Liz Powell, a gender-fluid psychologist, who works with many gender-fluid clients.

Moreover, intersectionality emerges as a central theme in contemporary literature, emphasizing the interconnected nature of gender with other dimensions of identity, including race, ethnicity, class, and

disability. Scholars like Kimberlé and Crenshaw have pioneered intersectional frameworks that recognize the unique experiences of individuals at the crossroads of multiple marginalized identities. Literature from postcolonial and global contexts further expands this discourse, offering diverse perspectives on gender and sexuality informed by cultural traditions, colonial legacies, and globalization (Crenshaw, 1989, 124). Speculative and science fiction provide yet another lens through which contemporary gender ideologies are explored. Authors like Ursula K. Le Guin, N.K. Jemisin, and Samuel R. Delany imagine worlds where gender is fluid, non-binary, or transcended altogether, challenging readers to reconsider their preconceptions about identity and society. These works invite speculation about alternative gender realities and provoke reflection on the possibilities of liberation from restrictive gender norms (Le Guin, 1969, 45; Jemisin, 2015, 67; Delany, 1966, 89). Memoirs and autobiographies by gender diverse individuals offer intimate glimpses into personal journeys of self-discovery, affirmation, and resilience. Writers like Janet Mock, Roxane Gay, and Juliet Jacques share candid accounts of their experiences navigating gender identity, challenging societal expectations, and finding empowerment in their authenticity. These narratives serve as powerful testimonials to the complexity and diversity of gender experiences, inspiring empathy, solidarity, and social change (Mock, 2014, 123; Gay, 2014, 56; Jacques, 2015, 78).

Gender ideology operates at both the individual and institutional levels, influencing behaviors, attitudes, and policies related to gender. It shapes the expectations placed on individuals based on their gender identity, as well as the opportunities and constraints they encounter in various domains of life, including education, employment, healthcare, and politics. Furthermore, gender ideology intersects with other axes of identity, such as race, class, sexuality, and ability, producing complex and intersecting forms of privilege and oppression. This intersectionality underscores the importance of analyzing gender ideology within broader systems of power and inequality, recognizing the ways in which it interacts with and reinforces other forms of social hierarchy. In contemporary society, gender ideology is increasingly subject to critique and contestation as individuals and social movements challenge traditional norms and advocate for greater gender equality and inclusivity. Scholars, activists, and policymakers continue to interrogate the underlying assumptions and implications of gender ideology, seeking to create more equitable and just societies for people of all genders.

### **Queer Theory**

This work is anchored on Queer Theory. Queer Theory according to Piantato (2016), once the word 'queer' used to be a colloquial term for homosexual. It was embedded by a strong homophobic significance and often used as an insult. Recently, the meaning of queer started changing by losing its negative connotation and it began to refer both to individuals that were attracted to others of the same sex, but also to individuals' sexuality and bodies that did not conform to the societal dominant norms. Hence, queer explores the discrepancy between gender identity, anatomical sex and sexual desire, resisting hegemonic heterosexuality. It turned into a symbol of struggle against heterosexual culture, becoming a term of reference for those marginal sexualities that could not fit into the traditional discourse about gender and sexuality. If we consider the genealogy of queer theory, this is the result of a continuous process that begins with the gay liberation movement of the 1970s, that passes through the lesbian and gay movements that developed between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, then the gay, lesbian and bisexual organizations of the mid 1980s and early 1990s, to end with the development of the contemporary queer—lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender—activism (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996). Thus, it is clear that this constant transformation and expansion of the approaches to gender and sexuality show the increasing attention that had been given with regard to both these issues in the last five decades, but also 'the dynamic nature of both sexuality and the political organizing that has developed around it' (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996, p. 5). The expression 'queer theory' was coined in the early 1990s and it is not accurate to associate this approach with lesbian and gay studies, since it also comprehends new and different topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery (Jagose, 1996) that were not taken into account into gay and lesbian studies. Moreover, at the basis of queer theory there is a new understanding of sex, gender and sexual identities as sites in becoming that do not match with the normative discourses of the previous gender studies, but that actually 'problematizes the idea of fixed gender and sexual identities and challenges the basis for a unitary identity politics' (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996, p. 5). Through its emphasis on this interpretation

of the notion of identity as fluid and in constant formation, this approach insists on the fact that individuals are constantly questioning the idea of fixed and stable identity in multiple ways.

Relatively, Piantato (2016), asserts that Queer theory is also based on the belief that it is pointless to make any reference to specific groups -such as gays, lesbians, women and so on- since identities comprehend such a wide range of elements that it is impossible to catalogue individuals altogether in a category, on the basis of a single shared characteristic—being a woman, for example. Hence, queer does not concern any particular identity category but it is an umbrella term that, refusing labels and rejecting stereotypes, encompasses all those subjectivities that, crossing the boundaries established by the dominant norms, do not fit into the traditional defined concepts of gender and sexuality.

### **Gender fluidity and Social Injustice in Roy's *The God of Small Things***

In this novel, Roy presents the tragic tale of Ammu who is the female protagonist and strongly points out that since childhood, she has to face discrimination of being a female and is often considered as a worthless member of the family when education is denied to her on the basis of her gender. It is important to mention that education is the fundamental right of every human being living in India and it must be given to both men and women without any gender discrimination because in this modern age, only education enlightens the outlook of a person.

Thus women who are equally a worthy member of the society should not be deprived of this privilege but in this novel, the situation is entirely different as the parents of Ammu think that higher education corrupts a lady. As a result of this orthodoxy, Ammu, the only daughter of Pappachi and Mammachi is unfairly debarred from continuing higher studies by her parents on the belief that higher education degrades a woman. This traditional misconception governed the mind of Ammu's parents who intentionally deprived her of college education. But they on the contrary facilitated their son Chacko to continue his further studies at Oxford, although his academic performances were disappointingly poor and unsatisfactory. But Chacko avails himself of the scope for higher education because of his being a male but his sister is not allowed the same platform being a woman. Arundhati Roy castigates this kind of gender fluidity as gross injustice and tyranny. She condemns this shameful tendency of parents who sustain the conventional outlook of debarring their daughters from having higher education and shockingly, this narrow and orthodox tendency still persists even in the twenty first century.

Arundhati Roy gives exposure to the caste difference, gender fluidity, colour and racial distinctions through social institutions and she strongly professes how they influence human relations and individual behaviour of people. The old traditions gave rise to rebellious thoughts and Roy has raised a voice of protest through her characters and the way injustice is done to these socially downtrodden people because of their gender is emphatically portrayed. The treatment given to women for their basic necessities and passions through the character of Ammu is condemnable as the new waves of change, with the independence of India and equal rights to women in the constitution, are gaining strength.

As a result of this unbearable torture, Ammu returned to her parents' home along with her children but to her misfortune, she is tortured physically and emotionally by her parents and brother Chacko without remorse. Thus Ammu suffers like Shakespeare's Cordelia in King Lear. She is punished for being a divorced woman separated from her husband. It is an irony that a divorced daughter is oppressed upon by her own parents, who welcome and bestow their love and affection on their estranged son. It is a matter of social injustice and discrimination that the estranged son Chacko is kindly treated by his parents but on the other hand the same parents turn biased against their daughter on account of her helplessness and homelessness. In this context baby Kochamma's jealous comment directed towards Ammu:

A married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter... she had no position anywhere at all. As for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage (1997:45).

Also, in "*The God of Small Things*", there is another notable example of gender discrimination and social injustice depicted in the novel is women's deprivation of parental property. Chacko, the brother

of Ammu proudly exercises and asserts his full right as the inheritor of the property of his parents, but his sister Ammu cannot claim any property of her parents, as a woman as a daughter has no claims to her father's property. Chacko arrogantly asserts his power before his sister every now and thereby saying:

What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (1997: 57).

This haughty claim of his property hurts the sentiment of his sister but Chacko does not mind hurting her emotionally. Connectedly, Chacko's claim of property is cited by his partnership with Ammu in his running the pickle factory named Paradise Pickle. Although Ammu work in the factory as much as Chacko did, the latter always claims the factory as his own. His frequent assertion of his claim of property is suggestive of social injustice meted out to Ammu. Arundhati Roy condemns this kind of gender discrimination not only as an act of injustice but also a kind of social oppression to which she gives vent. Thus gender bias and patriarchy are the major discursive practices which form the backdrop of the tragic drama unfolded in *The God of Small Things*. Ammu was such a character that she was deprived of any sympathy and compassion in her days of adversity and misfortune, her kith and kin who came to see her on the pretext of showing sympathy, shed crocodile tears on her miseries and she gradually learnt to study their hypocrisy and hate them. But the real tragedy of Ammu begins when she comes in contact with Velutha. Though there was huge caste difference between Ammu and Velutha yet they indulged in sex act because of their passion and they did not pay any heed towards the code of conduct of their respective castes. Such illicit affair was not permitted and was considered a societal crime to be punished severely. Even Mammachi thought,

Ammu had defiled the generations of breeding and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, forever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptism and birthday parties" (1997: 258).

So this is the irony of this novel that on one hand there is gender discrimination at all levels but simultaneously it is quite stunning that even women are against the women. Ultimately, both of them are physically separated as Ammu is locked in her room and Velutha is forced to leave the town. Brinda Bose comments, “

The Ammu-Velutha relationship must end in death because while the affair is conducted secretly, it is also done so in full visibility (1997: 67).

Ammu is compelled to live in loneliness because she has transgressed the boundaries of her high caste and as a result, she is unable to bear this agony and separation and ultimately dies in isolation.

The prevailing social structure does not ensure justice as we see that Ammu and Chacko both are guilty of breaking the love laws of the society but severe punishment is given only to Ammu and Chacko remains unpunished. The clear double standard is emphasized by Susan Stanford Friedman in the following words, “how Chacko receives no punishment for his transgressions, whereas Ammu and Velutha do, proves why panoptic operations are resisted” (Friedman 255).

Thus Arundhati Roy has graphically and realistically portrayed this evil of gender fluidity in her novel *The God of Small Things*. The next hapless target of gender fluidity is Ammu's daughter Rahel who like her mother also develops a sense of isolation and aloofness in a male centred social set-up and she is always treated by her own family members as an outsider. She is devoid of any love, affection and care of the Ayemenem House and for this very reason Rahel feels like a fish out of water. After the death of Ammu, she faces the most troublesome period of life whether she is in school or at home. The treatment of the family made her sadistic and even abnormal in her attitude. She is even blacklisted in her convent school and expelled on the basis of repeated complaints from the senior girl students. Rahel went to study in a school of architecture in Delhi, even got married to a research scholar Larry Mc Caslin but her married life is totally eclipsed by her divorce. Mammachi is another sufferer of gender fluidity whose married life is also not very peaceful and happy as she is always a puppet in the hands of her husband, Pappachi. He often beats his wife with a flower vase and from the first date of her marriage, she is a silent sufferer to the atrocities of her husband. Though he is a well-educated man yet he is a very jealous husband who wants to abuse and insult her wife without any sufficient cause. Margaret Kochamma is another character of the novel who is the wife of Chacko and the mother of

Sophie Mol. Like the other gender victims of the novel, she also suffers much at the hands of her husband Chacko and her life becomes horrible and scary. Like Hardy's Tess, she is also a poor victim in the hands of fate as she faces a series of misfortunes i.e. she gets the divorce, her daughter Sophie Mol dies and thus becomes a pathetic character who earns our sympathy.

Arundhati Roy illustrates the gender fluidity in a very striking and comprehensible manner in the novel *The God of Small Things*. The work presents the undesired sufferings of women who have to face the endless torture silently and meekly. It is the valiant attempt of the novelist to evoke social consciousness among the females and the subalterns and through the struggle between the powerful and the powerless, Roy has delineated the miserable plight of women in a male-dominated social set-up and strongly supports the female cause in the novel.

Estha's decision to take on traditionally feminine roles, such as housework, cooking, and shopping, challenges traditional gender norms and expectations. This blurring of gender roles and stereotypes is a theme that Roy explores throughout the novel, and Estha's character, in particular, embodies this fluidity. Example: "Estha finished school with mediocre results, but refused to go to college. Instead, much to the initial embarrassment of his father and stepmother, he began to do the housework. As though in his own way he was trying to earn his keep. He did the sweeping, swabbing and all the laundry. He learned to cook and shop for vegetables. Vendors in the bazaar, sitting behind pyramids of oiled, shining vegetables, grew to recognize him and would attend to him amidst the clamoring of their other customers. They gave him rusted film cans in which to put the vegetables he picked. He never bargained. They never cheated him. When the vegetables had been weighed and paid for, they would transfer them to his red plastic shopping basket (onions at the bottom, brinjal and tomatoes on the top) and always a sprig of coriander and a pstful of green chilies for free" (page 19).

By portraying Estha's domestic work as a way of "earning his keep" and finding purpose, Roy subverts traditional masculine roles and highlights the flexibility of gender expressions. This subtle yet significant detail adds depth to Estha's character and contributes to the novel's exploration of gender, identity, and social norms. In the context of the novel, Estha's sexual fluidity is also tied to his emotional sensitivity, his close bond with Rahel, and his struggles with the societal expectations imposed upon him. Roy's portrayal of Estha's character challenges readers to rethink their assumptions about gender, sexuality, and identity, making the novel a landmark work in contemporary literature. Another instance of "gender fluidity" in the *God of Small things* is Rahel's behavior and actions challenge traditional gender norms and expectations, which is a key aspect of gender fluidity. This can be deduced in the paragraph below:

By portraying Rahel's gender nonconformity and fluidity, Roy highlights the restrictive nature of gender norms and expectations, and challenges readers to rethink their assumptions about gender and sexuality.

## Conclusion

This study is anchored on gender fluidity in the novel using queer theory to explicate issues such as gender, fluidity, fluid, identity, gender role, sexual violence, subversion, societal norms and third gender. The text selected for this study is a representative of the various issues that boarder on gender fluidity and sexuality to give a detailed depiction of how real the societal and conventional gender role is challenged. This work does not only engage in an organizational clarification of the concept of fluidity literature, but it also presents and proposes new trajectories of reading contemporary literature from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives.

## Recommendations

From the reading and critical analysis of the texts, the following recommendations are made:

- ✓ The generation of today should embrace her true authenticity. In "*The God of Small Things*", Estha's struggle to conform to societal expectations of masculinity is a powerful reminder of the importance of embracing one's true self. Estha's forced separation from his twin sister Rahel and his subsequent struggle to cope with the loss
- ✓ People should speak out against discrimination and marginalization: In "*The God of Small Things*", the character of Velutha, a Dalit man, faces discrimination and marginalization,



highlighting the importance of speaking out against injustice. Velutha's tragic fate, which serves as a powerful commentary on the destructive nature of societal expectations and discrimination.

- ✓ People should seek support and resources: In "*The God of Small Things*", the character of Rahel's struggles to cope with the loss of her brother Estha serve as a reminder of the importance of seeking support and resources. Rahel's reunion with Estha, which highlights the importance of seeking support and resources in times of need.

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