

Redrawing Gender Boundaries in Selina Hossain's *River of My Blood*

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine and reinterpret gender roles shown in the book *River of My Blood* (Hangor Nodi Grenade, titled in Bangla) by Selina Hossain. Hossain's (2016) work is a compelling story that questions conventional standards by emphasizing the changing experiences of its three central female characters, Boori, Nita, and Ramija. These people live in a society allegedly to be puritanical and misogynistic, in which women have little independence. They are faced with thoughtful questions on the political and sexual persecution of women as well as the differences in political processes. The book, set against the backdrop of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, offers an authentic and detailed account of a significant historical event. Through the characters in this book, the author, Selina Hossain, demonstrates her skill in examining the issue of identity while questioning stereotypical gender norms. This study examines the book's potential to inspire readers by challenging gender stereotypes and presenting perspectives on identity and social roles. This study employed a qualitative research approach, with thematic analysis being the primary method used for data collection. The study showed how the book challenges gender stereotypes and presents perspectives on identity and social roles.

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Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the redrawing of gender boundaries in Hossain's (2016) *River of My Blood*, highlighting the subtle portrayal of female empowerment and resistance against patriarchal norms, thus offering fresh insights into feminist literary criticism within South Asian contexts.

1. Introduction

Gender roles are defined as a set of diverse structures that represent the relations between men and women. These could be ideological barriers based on physical, psychological, or social. The concept of boundaries is, therefore, the cultural creation

that defines the differences and, simultaneously, the similarities between men and women. Changing such boundaries can result in fewer preconceptions about gender and an increase in concern for achieving equality between males and females. The attributes of a person and what they do are unique to male and female people, and these are referred to as gender. As Ban Ki-Moon said, "*Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone's responsibility*" (Ban Ki-Moon, 2014). However, gender is not determined by personal desires and inclinations but rather by what culture expects from a man or a woman in society. Sex is a gift that is bestowed upon human beings at birth. Society does not make the decision, although it does establish specific norms for the two genders, usually only in fragments. Woolf (1929) realizes, "*Anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation*" (Woolf, 1929, p. 35). When diverse gender experiences are acknowledged and validated, society will become more accustomed to them and foster tolerance. Gender conventions in literature must be questioned and criticized on an ongoing basis. As seen from the literature, it is often possible to see the reflection of culture, including aspects such as gender roles. As much as this analysis is vital in understanding the constitution and sustenance of gender roles across recorded history, it is also an essential tool in deconstructing these roles with the primary goal of achieving equality in society. It is essential and valuable in a literate society to read and scrutinize the gender roles in literature and challenge conventions. It contributes to human knowledge, benefits an improved society, and provokes the readers to consider their environment critically and contemplatively. Literary works like *River of My Blood* highlight and reinterpret unconventional perspectives within established cultural standards and practices. They promote inclusivity, enhance comprehension, and question and modify deeply rooted gender norms. The protagonist of this narrative is called Boori, and this work provides an opportunity to witness the transformation of this naive woman from an urban background into a mature woman who has experienced all stages of life. Rabbani and Chaudhury (2018) stated that Bangladeshi women played a pivotal role in creating a Bangladeshi identity. Hossain's (2016) *River of My Blood* is an exposition of Boori, her rural female psyche, and her intricate role in the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971, along with her friend Nita and step-daughter-in-law Ramija.

River of My Blood is rooted in the backdrop of the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Bangladesh was set free twice. The first time was in 1947, when it was freed from British rule, and the second was in 1971 from West Pakistan. Bangladesh was created when the "Muktijuddho," or liberation war of Bangladesh, was dissolved by Bengali nationalism and self-assertion with East Pakistan. One individual who experienced the brunt of this war was Boori. Haldi Gaon was among the peripheral communities that endured significant hardships throughout the conflict. Boori witnessed this struggle, which significantly transformed the circumstances for the entire nation while also participating in it distinctly. For Boori and others, this was perhaps the most significant shift in the nation, yet the subject saw the impending collapse differently. Boori showed great courage during Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War. Due to her formidable strength, she commanded respect within both the village and the wider population. "*She missed her youth, a youth that could snatch away all her life's attachments*" (Hossain, 2016, p. 168). The role of women in the novel is well illustrated through the protagonists' lives, Boori, Nita, and Ramija. The story is mainly about their experiencing of hardships, suffering, loss, and challenges.

1.1. Research Objective

The analysis of gender stereotyping, gender roles, and gender biases in literature is vital to overcome the realization of the myths and work towards changing the status quo for minorities and women to be given equal opportunity and proper representation in literature, thereby promoting an equal society. This study considers gender fluidity and the evolving gender representations in this work. This essay aimed to showcase Bengali literature that represented this kind of shift—where the traditional male hero was replaced with a woman—through analysis and representation.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Renowned American Philosopher [Butler \(1988\)](#) says “*gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time-*” ([Butler, 1988, p.1](#)). [de Beauvoir \(2011\)](#) previously stated that a woman is not born but becomes a woman. This can be said before this quotation. Another kind of theory that falls under gender is called gender theory. Thus, Gender relations refer to how two or more people with different gender roles in a specific culture or society relate or interact. It establishes tasks such as specific roles that refer to the distribution of work, tasks that involve the bargaining of positions and power relations, the roles of power, and recommended behavior for the male and female.

Regarding the enumeration continuing from the previous classes, we can see that men's and women's roles gradually changed after World War II. Women were forced to search for work in previously prohibited regions and enter the physical market. As a result, women have driven employment opportunities like engineering and medicine, among several other sectors, to the extreme. These responsibilities, formerly defined and given exclusively to males, are being reinterpreted and broadened throughout this phase of evolution.

The mentioned relationships in *River of My Blood* are the relationship of transition to capture all that through Boori and all aspects of her struggles. Even the nature and themes of the novel are illustrated clearly to envision the conservative social background of the villages. They endeavor to set barriers to what society approves and condemns, such as female behaviors, roles, and restrictions. Concerning the analysis of the chronological sequence of the presented narrative, readers signal the stereotypically oppressive factors that befall Boori in these encounters. Still being an active member of this society, Boori remains unaware of the ignorance of these hegemonic patriarchal values in her behavior and actions. Boori consistently rejects these patriarchal norms through her decisions and behaviors. She was different from other girls of Haldi Gaon. “*She knew enough to read books write letters. What else did she need?*” ([Hossain, 2016, p. 10](#)). There are many themes intertwined in this novel, but the most crucial is the overwhelming feeling of loneliness and despair that almost overwhelms the characters. From this standpoint, her character can be analyzed by examining the subtle indications of the performers' gender conventions that are being erased and the deliberate distinctions that are being highlighted. This notion suggests that irrespective of gender, cultural norms influence women to fulfill societal expectations by serving as cultural resources, doing domestic tasks, and behaving submissively. Thus, implementing all the social roles and the state of the boundaries that Boori dares to cross, the movie shows how many hardships she has had, allowing the spectator to feel empathy for her. It is also, however, recognizable that the performers reverse the stereotyped male/female

roles in society since both Boori and other female characters challenge traditional societal roles.

3. Gender Roles in River of My Blood

The protagonist of *River of My Blood* is Boori. This Boori seemed as airy as a bird; other young ladies from village families stayed indoors to be trained to be good wives. She has earned the reputation of being one remarkable, strong lady due to her attachment to nature and dedication to work, especially during the war. She is well-liked by the locals and the community due to her rebellious ability. She has standard measurements to evaluate the war and independence, and the novel centers on this woman's life story—her struggles, hardships, and contributions.

One of the most elaborate works in the context of the contemporary literary trend focusing on patriarchy, women's rights, and conflicts is *River of My Blood* by [Hossain \(2016\)](#). Defying conventional society, she inspires a revolution against political oppression. She symbolizes the challenges of women of the earlier eras who did not bow to male chauvinism but remained assertive in the unfair situation they were subjected to. Another valuable person is Nita, who is a friend of Boori's. She is a Bairagi (Nomad), a freely moving person who comes in and out of the external world and brings Boori into it. This could barely be considered when one sees her experience as an apparent representation of the limitation placed on the path of women, especially when the woman in question desires to be independent in the way men associated with the institution of marriage are independent. Thus, the freedom Nita seeks to attain remains solely an illusion, entirely overshadowed by society's prejudices that do not acknowledge women unless they are associated with men. The female characters in this text include Ramija, who is depicted as strong within her despite her frail appearance. Salim, the elder stepson of Boori, is married to Ramija. Her persona demonstrates the virtue of hard work, and she is highly determined as she goes through the nature of life's give and take. However, war dashed off everywhere, and she had to look after her mother-in-law even with the chaos of war. [Hossain \(2016\)](#) has not only attempted to depict concerns in Bangladesh but also other matters such as poverty, gender violence, and political instability. Some examples are depicted in the book, including how Ramija always cares for other people's feelings and her ability to understand them. To her acquaintances, she assumes the image of a woman who, unknowingly to most, evaluates their needs and tries to prioritize them to the extent of irritating concern. As far as the gender and power question is concerned, [Hossain \(2016\)](#) chants about women's rights and the importance of women's voices in Ramija.

In addition to these female characters, the male characters play a significant role in advancing the plot of this work. Talking about Gafoor is essential because he is a significant character in [Hossain's \(2016\) *River of My Blood*](#). The age difference between the protagonist and Gafoor is quite significant, which gives him importance in the protagonist's life. Gafoor married Boori after the death of her father. They live together; he protects her and looks after her needs even though he is twice the age of Boori. In doing this, Gafoor helps to protect Boori from the worst that life has to offer, and this, in turn, provides a measure of security. Gafoor is a multifaceted character. In all of his actions and decisions, he blends tact and practicality. Boori felt lucky that her husband, Gafoor, had this opinion of her. Unlike the average villager who would try to control his wife, he took a different approach to getting to know her. He was willing to initiate a process of learning about his wife that was different from the typical villagers who

would attempt to dominate her. Knowing that his young wife was experiencing revelations of the unhappy feeling inherent to her nature, he acted differently toward her. “*Gafoor sensed her pulse and liked her disposition in the open air*” (Hossain, 2016, p.24). However, Gafoor's contribution provides a nuanced and complicated element to the story. Even though he is traditional to Boori's journey, he has something more to offer as an essential figure. Jalil is a childhood friend to Boori and is very calm and composed in contrast to Boori's hyperactive nature. To some extent, Boori also uses gender comparison with Jalil and herself many times. She understands how effectively Jalil can work as a man rather than in her capacity as a woman. Also, Jalil seems entertaining, and people get hooked to listen to him. Boori agrees to marry Gafoor, an older but good-natured man, but she refuses Jalil. The book thoroughly portrays the relationship between Jalil and Boori. Jalil is introduced because his presence shows the complexity of people's relations and enriches the story with profound information. From Jalil's actions and choices, we must look beyond the person to realize that he is also a part of society. His persona represents the clash between progressive change and preserving the old. Jalil put together predestination, free will, and yearning as significant themes throughout his poetry. The reader is affected because he has influenced those around him to be part of the change. One of the sons of Gafoor, named Salim, becomes the son of Boori. In her relationship with him, elements of family ties become more complicated or confusing, especially when Boori attempts to take care of Salim and his brother Kalim. Salim took over the role of family carer upon his father's passing. As Salim takes sides to fight a war called Muktijuddho, the liberation campaign is ongoing around them. While the former highlights the societal concern regarding disgruntled individuals simply asking for equality, the latter captures the more serious social unrest in his willingness to fight for freedom. The same goes for Boori, who is not the biological mother and still has maternal feelings towards Salim. Instead, the experienced, the embodied social history, the want-to-have, and the imaginable social history step forward alongside Salim's identity as a transitional figure in this rather touching narrative. Many readers can be genuinely impressed by his determination and beliefs while exerting a lasting impact. In *River of My Blood*, Rais is one of the complicated and sensitive characters. Most importantly, always being with impaired hearing and speaking ability, Rais is in a class of his own. His ability to communicate is limited, shaping his commitment to the environment. Rais has an unfulfilled relationship with Boori, his mother. They both have a solid and inexplicable family bond, with love and sacrifice as the crossover steel coupling and the ability to overcome similar adversities. By presenting Boori's martinet and submissive figure in relationship to Rais, it is apparent that the novel deals mainly with the issues of mother power. Rais describes violence, sorrow, and turmoil as people continue facing the uncertainties of war. Therefore, the main idea of an oppressed person can be seen through Rais despite his limitations. Rais is an opportunity to appreciate the subjects of sacrifice, love, loss, and the tenacity of the human spirit.

4. Methodology

The primary idea for developing this qualitative study came from analyzing Hossain's (2016) riveting story, *River of My Blood*, and critics' critiques of it that have been published in literary journals and other works. The researchers utilized thematic analysis to explore the theme of gender boundaries in Hossain's (2016) novel, pursuing various scholarly and critical books and websites to locate pertinent study materials. To construct this paper more acceptably, the principal researcher (first author) also visited several libraries to gather information from various periodicals and critical assessments

of *River of My Blood*. The researchers also utilized textual analysis of the novel, the primary source for this study. However, information was gathered from primary and secondary sources.

5. Findings

5.1. Social Consequences of Challenging Gender Norms

Some precautions have to be taken when uttering the words 'gender limitations'; special attention must be paid to the social implications of the concept since even those who hold political power must always speak for minorities and can never stand for them. Still further, even if they get a chance to speak, they are unheard of (Riach, 2017). It can and should be discussed what behaviors are realistic and how characters that challenge the gender norms of a given society can manage to cope with specific challenges and pressures. The social fears that are inherent in gender norm-breaking characters are that of rejection as well as exclusion from mainstream society. Their actions offend society's standards, and people hate or avoid them. The aspects of self-uncertainty, fear, and psychological struggles are experienced by characters struggling to embrace their status as outcasts.

5.2. Personal and Legal Concerns of Confronting Gender Stereotypes

Rakhshit and Gaur (2022) introduced the 'economic impoverishment' concept. They said that "*women are directly or indirectly bearing the brunt of a fast-emerging religious and cultural nationalism, nascent patriarchy, illiteracy and joblessness, unpreparedness for natural disasters and calamities, class divides, exploitation of ecology, and economic downturns and backwardness*" (Rakhshit & Gaur, 2022, p. 3). Gender stereotypes often emerge when individuals decide to sacrifice some of the privileges that are offered to them in exchange for non-conformity to gender roles. It is always essential to adhere to gender-related norms, but sometimes, someone might find oneself on the wrong side of the law. As such, characters may experience unfair treatment in access to housing, employment, or other needs and opportunities due to gender nonconformity. Characters can face such thematic concerns as identity questions. They can find it as complex and enriching that they sever their connection with traditions to embrace truth. If one thing can be said about characters experimenting with their gender, they are surprisingly composed when experiencing hardship. Through their experiences, they can defend change and fully accept their identity. Presently, women are progressively taking on the position of agents that stimulate and accelerate social transformation. However, this event is rare in Bangladesh. The observation of women's empowerment is infrequent in this society, mainly because it is classified as a developing country (Nitu & Ali, 2024). This quotation is pertinent to our research because the literary characters function as mirrors of readers, instigating conversations on gender equality and compelling readers to ponder conventional social standards. Their narratives exemplify the courage required to challenge societal norms and facilitate the establishment of a more inclusive and tolerant community.

5.3. Gender Norms in Historical and Cultural Settings

Analyzing gender norms in the context of Hossain's (2016) *River of My Blood*, one must consider that the book was written during Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War. The state of Bangladeshi women can be imagined at that time. However, as the story advances, Boori- the protagonist, emerges from that stereotype as a powerful woman and keeps

the audience enchanted by her drastic behavior. Boori's Journey can be seen as centered upon cultural dimension and personal development, based on the main character's change from an independent girl to a mature woman, transformed by cultural determinism and her surroundings. While no novel with this title focuses on Bangladeshi identity, the issues highlighted in this text can be seen as the topics explored in any given literary work that addresses gender roles, identity, and war. From this procedure, it would be possible to advance a speculative explanation to demonstrate that Boori, as a young and attractive woman, personifies the wild and the untamed wilderness, symbolically represented by the character's adventurous ability. Boori realizes that as she grows up, societal norms and the culture of her society put a cease to women's dreams and careers. She has to fight these social conventions, and she does this especially as far as her experiences with it are concerned during a war when she rethinks the social role of women. She teaches herself how to survive and gain strength given the circumstances, and at the same time, she teaches herself about her nation. The sufferings depicted in *River of My Blood* and the protagonist's troubles, which are enmeshed with the more significant battles and the endeavor for emancipation, may have been similar to what Boori went through during the Liberation War. This yarn might explore the role that women play and how they hold up in perilous moments to influence the creation of a nation's identity and, therefore, address the critical roles women play in the world that are often ignored. In this article, Boori's story, along with the themes and issues in this novel, depicts women's role in Bangladeshi society, at least in politics, and a narrative of personal development. From being an emancipated young girl to being a responsible and respected woman and a proud citizen of her country, she enthusiastically makes her mark in her country's history. She is a living testament to the spirit and valor of Bangladeshi women.

6. Discussion

6.1. Motherhood, Identity, and Social Expectations

In *River of My Blood*, Boori's mothering experiences are an exciting aspect of women. It was thought that she was barren and then childless, which raises the question of how much more complex women are. As Rich (1976) says, motherhood is the ultimate in female service, an experience rife with contradictions: it is both isolating and empowering, a source of profound joy and tremendous frustration. The book shows that women endure emotional as well as physical struggles in their lives concerning their gender roles or maybe as parents. Because she struggles with infertility, Boori challenges the stereotypes of women, which usually equate a woman's value to her ability to bear children. Although her life did not go as smoothly as she had hoped, she had to learn to live with it; as she put it, "*you have to take the rough with the smooth*" (Hossain, 2016, p. 65). Such social pressure can be a significant burden and cause much pain for infertile people to feel as "less than" or "unfulfilled." While portraying Boori, the novelist effectively communicates the idea that womanhood encompasses more than only childbirth but also embodies strength. Motherhood may be empowering and confining or anything in between, depending on the kind of motherhood one attains. It seems that Boori views infertility as a strength and an identity while experiencing the burden that is associated with it. She shows the broader perspective of what it means to be a woman when one is not only a mother but also a creator of children and responsible for many other relationships she has outside the marriage. According to Huq (2016), Boori is an example of an everyday woman who transcends to a higher being by her act of supreme sacrifice. It is perhaps a braver thing to do when you sacrifice your child's

life rather than your own. Hossain's (2016) strategy of portraying motherhood as a possibility for her character beyond her biological status, therefore, makes readers reflect on how it could be a significant role that a woman might fulfill regardless of social constraints.

6.2. Impact on Society and Identity

River of My Blood can be regarded as a manifestation of feminist culture, as the protagonist's challenge and subvert traditional gender roles, expectations, and standards. For women, whether as literal protagonists like Boori who fight sexual and social oppression in their suppressive male-dominated society, the book depicts them with brilliant historical realism. Because Boori's role is still confined to the home sphere despite the moments depicted and the sexually explicit moments that are critical of conventionally feminine women, they did not feel that Boori objectified her character or possessed little power over their own lives or situations. As she ages and enters marriage, she tries to accept this. However, she also struggles with infertility and later with a deaf child. She challenges conventional notions of women's duties by contrasting her simple, peasant, raw sexuality and strong femininity with her experiences as a target and a warrior in the Liberation War.

Last, but not least, it has been concluded that the behavior that is usually deemed to be different from the acceptable norms and ethics of standards of society has a significant impact. This is why one has to understand that the degradation of expectations placed on social roles makes the present state obscene, which is well exemplified by characters such as Boori, who deeply emasculates the discursive formations of gendered power and labor. To coincide with the fate of so many women, there should be a new culture of embracing women for who they are – as influential, stemmed beings. In addition to the rise of a new life for the protagonists, the novel raises the iconic sense-saving rebellions that redesign the existing frameworks of the community and provide the next generations with reflections on the roles and opportunities of both sexes.

6.3. Male Perceptions on Gender Roles and the Influence of Literature

The male characters in *River of My Blood* do not hesitate to express their opinions on topics against the grain. However, ironically, such opinions support the stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a man. The male characters in the book are shown as embodying the conventional socio-cultural structures of the patriarchal masculine paradigm since they are products of history and culture. However, the target audience expects, and even though the characters depicted are very much chauvinistic in their approach, there are moments in the novel that show just how considerate and supportive these characters are, especially towards Boori, the novel's protagonist. As for the criticism of the events that may occur, it can be credited for proposing a healthier attitude toward such events that are more focused on the modern idea of emotions and friendship rather than the act of copulation. Paradoxically, the very proposition of such unhealthy behavior for males as refusing to conform to the traditional male stereotype can be seen in his work. It was possible to challenge the roles of men and women and free the men from the oppressive roles of always being strong and dominating rather than being gentle and tender instead. Likewise, the political and social roles of the book's male and female characters are similar because actual change happened during the Bangladesh Liberation War. So even if women protest or work secretly or dare to stand for the sexually and socially subjugated, it underpins and disrupts the ideologies

and practices that males cherish in those women's lives. Men and women striving to transform societal gender roles stigmatically – the more of these, the better an equal society can be attained. When it comes to women fighting against sexist oppression, the author [Hooks \(2000\)](#) will go further to state that women are not only busy trying to modify what the male perspective is and how it can change to pull for an alteration of man's participation in patriarchy but also helping to transform man's relationship with women on the subject matter of gender equality ([Hooks, 2000](#)). Finally, in discussing *River of My Blood*, [Hossain \(2016\)](#) discusses the male characters pluralistically regarding their ability and willingness to interrogate and maintain such gender assignments. The reconciliation of the social setting as depicted in the story is worthy, especially in portraying a woman like Boori and how, as an individual, women have to handle issues of womanhood within the backdrop of social issues such as social uprising and even climate change. Thus, people depicted by [Hossain \(2016\)](#) do contemplate and question their identity, insisting on the status change of role expected from them as housewives and wives; that is why it does stand against patriarchy. Therefore, one can affirm that the work in the given perspective reflects and impacts more global discourses regarding gender and emancipation to a greater extent. It has contributed towards setting the emancipation process gender discourses and even extended the horizons towards people. Apart from the portrayal of new identities, the Bangladeshi women's strength, capacity, and ability to choose their future during the vulnerable political time in the history of Bangladesh is an appeal towards globalization to stop the torture of women and nature. In *River of My Blood*, there is a representation of the ability and role of women in constructing themselves and the self as socially constructed. It should also be noted that literature is also a source of power and transformation since it is a resource that can be employed towards cultural organization, and gender equity is a realizable goal for achieving gender emancipation and equity. As Atwood noted, a word after a word is power ([Atwood, 2002](#)). Concerning the above quotation, there is work that much more is yet to be done for emancipation and gender equality, not to mention literature as an instrument of cognition about and transformation.

6.4. Challenging Gender Norms and Intersectionality

This integrity of gender makes the readers rethink what they previously thought of gender norms as depicted in [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) *River of My Blood*. Thus, by using characters like Boori, Nita, and Ramija, a spectator can come closer to understanding all the manifold aspects of Bangladeshi individuality beyond simplified dualistic division. Hence, empathy and identification of the characters' fight against social norms are developed in the audience to a greater extent. One is a specific impact from the topic or aspect of gender disputes; it is connected to more general topics such as nationalism, war, and cultural identity. It also assists its readers in understanding that gender concerns are not a stand-alone concept but rather entwined with multiple aspects of life, providing a richer approach to understanding personal and collective experiences. As stated by [Adichie \(2009\)](#) and ascertained by this study, stories can emancipate, ascribe humanity, strip, and vituperate; they can demean and reinstate individuals. Written works in those particular contexts must include representations of gender in a diverse way. Besides proving the existence of non-binary individualized, it extends people's knowledge and acceptance of Gender Minorities. Still, in a way of overstating the role of a man and [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) work of subverting the role of a woman, *River of My Blood* alters the audience's perception of what it means to be a male or female. The shift in motivation can be noted in the characters' autonomy and the tenacity they demonstrate. One can learn from one's audacity to escape conventional roles and create all their roads

moving forward, trying to answer how gender can be performed. Therefore, [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) work enriches better discussions on gender and freedom by shedding ample light on the function of literature in experiencing and informing change. *River of My Blood* is a helpful instrument for doing the work of unlearning. It offers valuable lessons for teaching about the fluidity of gender while honoring the worth of personal experiences and the way representation affects readers.

6.5. Gender Boundaries in *River of My Blood*

The story of *River of My Blood* breaks the cultural stereotype associated with the roles often assigned to women and has social implications. These aspects of the story teach the audience or erase the boundaries that force the characters to stay within their designated positions and promote the concept of gender equality and reforms in society. Perhaps one can achieve this by analyzing how Boori changes as a character, which speaks to optimizing the portrayal of gender relations. They have interacted with much power and authority but are now involved in conflict and fights with the male characters. Or Nita, who talks about women's freedom by executing it through her nomad life. To understand how they fit the process of changing women's gender limits, such themes as resistance, empowerment, and perseverance are helpful and essential for the story. The addition of gender dynamics in this novel analysis can enhance the understanding of how gender roles and power relations are constructed, negotiated, and transformed in the story.

Boori is singled out, her difficulties and abilities highlighted in a manner that immediately localizes her experience to the rural Bangladesh socio-cultural landscape through this creative strategy. Readers can comprehend these dynamics by learning how the work generated by [Hossain \(2016\)](#) contributes to the discourse on gender and change in society. The female characters pose a threat to the stereotypical concept of womanhood by denying to be what society expects of them: mothers, especially given Boori's temporary childlessness issues. Gafoor's curious protectiveness confronts the stereotyped masculinity whenever there is combat and seems to offer the notion of masculinity beyond war. Main themes established and exemplified in the novel include the Bangladeshi women during the Liberation War. The various transmissions of Boori during this period of political strife and transition underscore the contribution of women in a national historical narrative analysis of political struggle and nation-building and a national copy of gender norms of the society. Drawing gender roles and originality, the author urges readers to question prejudice by considering themselves from another perspective. It increases awareness about the need to modify culture to attain positive incremental change for women. *River of My Blood* challenges the readers' minds and questions the current conventional ways of identifying self-identity by redefining one's identity in a non-binary manner. It also empowers the reader to think about the opinions imbibed in society, being healthy or not healthy for a person, his relationships, his health, and everything else. It promotes social justice by raising awareness of the challenges of struggling and marginalized persons. [Ruether \(1995\)](#) wondered if women must comprehend a society whose critical model of relationships cannot liberate them or resolve the ecological catastrophe. As with [Ruether's \(1995\)](#) book, [Hossain \(2016\)](#) also offered her input into the focus on gender and liberty. In *River of My Blood*, the audience can observe the characters as they embody vital elements of those breaking the mold of the conventional gender role; therefore, readers are forced to look at society's standards judiciously. [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) characters embody strength and resistance, thus representing [Ruether's \(1995\)](#) motifs and transferring the discussion

into South Asia's cultural and social context. The central theme of [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) work is the significance of this transitional stage on the verge of gender differences breaking down, and readers are prompted to consider the ramifications of this definitional shift in gender roles within society. Thus, her characters, like the ecological aspects of [Ruether's \(1995\)](#) reasoning, illustrate that liberation cannot be achieved as a solitary effort and is intimately linked to other vital forms of justice.

7. Conclusion

The avant-garde novel *River of My Blood* subverts the assumptions about gender and gender roles typical in Bangladeshi culture. Thus, the book goes against stereotypical roles in some ways. This book disrupts stereotypical thinking regarding gender and raises awareness about people who can and do more than expected. [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) conceptualization of gender as a complex concept is highlighted in the book. Many themes are present in this novel, including elements of identity that work along with focusing on gender identity development, including the fact that all human beings are on a spectrum rather than belonging strictly to males or females. Still, by giving more attention to minority gender identities, the book speaks louder for the often unheard individuals and their stories, and it helps readers accept the variety of existent experiences and learn to understand one another. *River of My Blood* calls for embracing oneself, valuing one's uniqueness, and treating oneself kindly, sparing oneself from becoming an expectation. It also overpowers conventional guidelines in how and what and teaches readers who they are. Discrimination and prejudice relating to gender, equality, acceptance, and human rights are potential themes the reader would be provoked to discuss to improve society. The most profound revelation necessary to embrace is that this novel by [Hossain \(2016\)](#) is precious as it defies and calls the methods of perceiving gender differently. It remains an essential function of reminding us how literature can alter one's identity and works as a tool for transforming tolerance within society. This research has the potential to expand the current studies on class, ethnicity, postcolonialism, and identity while also examining the portrayal of gender in [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) writings. Examining the many challenges faced by female writers in Bangladesh, such as [Hossain \(2016\)](#), and contrasting them with the issues explored by other female writers in South Asia can facilitate an exploration of the differences and convergences across different regions of South Asia. This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the redrawing of gender boundaries in [Hossain's \(2016\)](#) *River of My Blood*, highlighting the subtle portrayal of female empowerment and resistance against patriarchal norms, thus offering fresh insights into feminist literary criticism within South Asian contexts. Additionally, this approach can make a substantial contribution to the field of literature by providing a direction for further in-depth research on gender roles.

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