

# Gender Performativity in Perumal Murugan's *Estuary*

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## Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** The study aims to trace how the author has portrayed the characters in ways that they perform in specific ways to generate various effects that determine their gender roles. It aims to map gender performativity in the novel *Estuary* by close reading and analysing the acts and dialogues of the characters from a cultural context.

**Methodology:** Qualitative analysis of the text was done to derive the findings. The text was subjected to close reading. The points relevant to the concept of gender performativity were highlighted using a pencil. The points were neatly organized and classified using a notebook. The points were developed into an essay by using critical thinking. Views from other disciplines such as psychology are incorporated making the study an interdisciplinary one.

**Main Findings:** Though Perumal Murugan alters the stereotypical gender roles of Meghas' parents at specific points in the novel, he reinforces them a more significant number of times than when he changes them. With his sarcasm as a tool, he supports Kumarasurar and Mangasuri as typical Indian parents of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thereby stereotyping them in the novel.

**Applications of the study:** This study will be useful in the fields of gender studies, cultural studies, domestic studies, the study of 21<sup>st</sup> century Tamil culture, South Asian studies, South Indian culture, etc.

**Novelty/Originality of the study:** The study jots down the various ways in which gender is performed by a typical Tamil couple. Translated Tamil novels are rarely studied using the emerging literary theories including gender performativity. As the present analysis of the novel breaks down how gender is performed by the characters, it contributes to the field of gender studies as well as research on Tamil novels translated to English.

## INTRODUCTION

Judith [Butler \(1988\)](#) in her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" makes the following statement which would have a deep impact on gender studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

When Simone de Beauvoir claims, "one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman," she is appropriating and reinterpreting this doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition. In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceeded; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time -an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*.

Perumal Murugan is a leading Tamil author of the contemporary era. Many of his novels are translated into English. One of which is his recent novel *Estuary*, a sarcastic rendering of the parent-child conflict of a modern Indian family. The parents' attempts to make their child into a doctor or an engineer is depicted with light-hearted humour, wherein the parents strive to live up to society's expectations. Therein they perform specific gender roles. This paper examines how the main characters in the novel "perform" the societally accepted gender patterns.

Gender becomes naturalized, woven so tightly into the social fabric that it seems like a necessary part of reality rather than a contingent production of history. Just how this happens is complicated—we don't invent these roles, they are invented for us, as Judith Butler argues in her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution."

Gender identity "is a performative accomplishment," she writes, "compelled by social sanction and taboo... Gender is... an identity instituted through repetition of acts." Butler describes gender as a "phenomenon that's being produced all the time and reproduced all the time."

The technical term "performative" means for Butler an act that not only communicates but also creates an identity. Performative acts of gender do a similar kind of work, not only communicating to others some aspect of identity, but constructing that very identity, only they do that work through repetition. As de Beauvoir argued, we are not born a self, we become, or create, a self, through social pressure to conform and through "reiterating and repeating the norms through which one is constituted," Butler writes.

As we might expect of any cultural construct, gender norms vary widely both inter-and intra-culturally and throughout historical periods. And given their constructed nature, they can change in any number of ways.

Therefore, according to Butler, “there’s not any grounds,” as our philosophy explainer puts it, “for saying that somebody’s ‘doing their gender wrong’” (Jones, 2018).

This paper aims at analysing the novel *Estuary* as to how the gender roles are performed by the characters in it.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In research from [Wikipedia contributors \(2021\)](#):

Gender performativity is a term first used by the feminist philosopher Judith Butler in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*. She argues that being born male or female does not determine behaviour. Instead, people learn to behave in particular ways to fit into society. The idea of gender is an act, or performance. This act is the way a person walks, talks, dresses, and behaves. She calls this acting “gender performativity.” What society regards as a person’s gender is just a performance made to please social expectations and not a true expression of the person’s ‘gender identity’.

The novel *Estuary* is about a father and mother who dream of making a doctor or an engineer out of their son Meghas so that they could gain some social status. The novel captures funnily, all the actions done by the parents to somehow get their son a good profession. The parents try to live up to the social expectation, that makes them perform certain deeds that make their lives gendered. The way they perform the gender roles is sarcastically made fun of by the author. The proposition is that the two parents are stereotypically a male father and a female mother, but at various points, the mother shows masculinity whereas the father shows femininity. This paper highlights the times and events when the gender roles were altered and performed by Meghas’ parents.

In research from [Meyerhoff \(2015\)](#), gender performativity is explicated as follows:

The notion of performativity in gender studies was introduced primarily through the work of philosopher Judith Butler (1956–), but the underlying presuppositions performativity makes about the nature of gender as a social category has been very influential in language and gender research as well as in philosophy. The publication of Butler’s book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) came at a critical period in the history of sociolinguistics. It coincided with a burgeoning of the creative connections between sociolinguistics and anthropology; this fostered a climate in which researchers and theorists were engaged in exploring social categories as emergent and multifaceted—identities were analyzed as being socially and historically contingent. As we will see, Butler’s arguments from feminist philosophy that gender is performative meshed well with this ongoing shift in how linguists had begun to examine the relationship between language and social categories such as gender...

The performative quality of gender and sexuality is distinct from gendered and sexualized performance. If performance is something controlled and possibly characterized by a degree of artifice, performativity is talking about something completely different. To say that gender is performative is simply to say that how we understand gender, and how we position ourselves as gendered or sexual beings concerning others is achieved through the repetition and enactment of these activities. The fact that our community sees these acts as gendered is what makes them so, not the fact that lesbian women or heterosexual men (as some given) enact them. However, the distinction between performance and performative is often blurred in analyses of language and gender, and language and sexuality. Some analysts will move freely between the two epistemologically and discursively. Butler herself sometimes uses “perform” in a way that suggests a mannered and controlled performance, not just a performative act; this reflects the complexity of performativity. She argues that when normative performances conform to our expectations they are likely to obscure the performed nature of identity.

In research by [Morgenroth and Ryan \(2018\)](#):

In her book, *Gender Trouble* Butler (1990) argues that within Western culture, sex, gender, and sexual orientation are viewed as closely linked, essential qualities. The prevalent view is that biological sex is binary (male vs. female), essential, and natural, and that it forms the basis for binary gender, which is viewed as the cultural interpretation of sex, and sexual desire. In other words, there is a belief that a baby born with a penis will grow up to identify and act like a man – whatever that means in a specific culture – and, as part of this gender role, be sexually attracted to women. Similarly, there is a belief that a baby born with a vagina will grow up to identify and act as a woman and, as part of this gender role, be sexually attracted to men. Butler argues that these configurations of sex, gender, and sexual desire are the only “intelligible” genders in our culture.

In research by [de Souza \(2020\)](#):

The Butlerian notion of gender performativity has, over the years, been an important lens through which discourses on sexuality and gender are interrogated. Butler’s work, especially *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), is often referenced in scholarship on the notion of gender performativity. The theory of gender performativity claims that dominant cultures blindfold people to think of heterosexuality as the only ‘normative sexuality. Butler (1990) argues that heteronormativity facilitates “the compulsory order of sex, gender or desire” (p.5). She further contends that “assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of ‘men’ will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that ‘women’ will interpret only female bodies” (p.9). These remarks indicate that a neat matching of gender with sex is

problematic. Butler rejects the belief that sex or gender is stable. She regards “gender as multiple interpretations of sex” (1990, p.8). It is a result of gender being ‘a multiple interpretations of sex’ that has led to the denigration of queers in socio-cultural contexts universally (Butler 1990).

In the article “Gender Performativity Seen Through the Eyes of Children: a drag queen mediates literary encounters”, the authors examine the notion of gender performativity with reference to children and “have approached gender performativity as a concept that interpellates us from early childhood. Furthermore, children themselves recognize and are capable of analysing it. The human challenge of being protagonists of our own life narratives is with us from our early years, alongside other voices that reverberate throughout society and situate us in main or supporting roles within the stories we become a part of” (Rosa & Felipe, 2021). These studies point out that individual characteristics are results of the surroundings they belong to which prompts them to perform specified gender roles.

J. T. Ton, in their report *Judith Butler’s Notion of Gender Performativity: To What Extent Does Gender Performativity Exclude a Stable Gender Identity?* observes: “The distinction between gender and sex is used to make a separation between the sexed body on one hand and the gendered behaviour of people on the other hand. Butler says that the distinction between sex and gender is intended to show that biological sex does not determine gender” (Ton, 2018).

Li He, in their research, notes the following:

Judith Butler gets much from the famous theorist Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir’s theory differentiates “sex” from “gender” and she clarifies gender is an aspect that the identity acquires step by step. Just as she mentioned in her book “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.”

In her other book, *The Second Sex*, she reemphasizes that gender is constructed, but gender is changeable, meanwhile is controlled by our minds. We have to pay attention to the keyword “become”. It means everyone is under a cultural compulsion to become one. Of course here the compulsion is not from “sex”, but from the circumstances. She mentions that “body is a situation”, and “one” becomes a woman who is not needed, female. Then the “gender” is constructed (He, 2017).

In research from van den Broek (2019):

Some theorists consider the relation between sex and gender to be an essentialist one. These essentialists argue that a person born as biologically female has something inherently ‘female’ or ‘feminine’ and someone born as biologically male has something inherently ‘male’ or ‘masculine’. This also means that all people born as female share some universal ‘female’ or ‘feminine’ essence and all people born as male share something universally ‘male’ or ‘masculine’. Other theorists do not consider the relation between sex and gender to be an essentialist one. They argue that there is no such thing as a ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ essence that all people of the same sex share. People are born with a certain biological sex, but their gender is constructed by their environment and throughout someone’s life (Stone 142). Judith Butler is also a non-essentialist; but, her philosophy is a radical form of gender non-essentialism. She goes beyond the sex versus gender distinction as many other non-essentialist theorists have conceptualised it before.

Thus, the distinction between sex and gender has been discussed widely by scholars and is an important concern with regard to Butler’s theory of gender performativity.

In research from All Answers Ltd (2021):

Although there is an emphasis in Butler’s work on the manner in which discourses affect our behaviour: rather than gender performance being a role-play and created by the individual creatively, gender performance is habitually continually acted and performed on a daily basis in everyday life. Although as she suggests in her examination of drag performance creativity can serve to subvert the performativity of the roles we are assigned to perform. Butler’s key ideas are therefore based on the notion that gender is not a simplified ‘role’ but a deep-seated psyche playing out of identity and behaviour, there is also no causal link between sex, gender and sexuality. The performative gender roles are dependent upon repetition and re-iteration in creating identity, which in turn result in instability of the ‘gendered roles’ we are assigned.

Jillian Slezek (2018) notes that “gestures, mannerisms and actions create an illusion of a cohesive gender and sex, that is, of continuity between the exterior and interior.”

Karen Barad (2003) observes that “performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve.”

Guanio-Uluru (2015) has observed: “Judith Butler (1993) has influentially argued that gender has a performative aspect—in the sense that it both compels us to act a part and in the sense that through such “performative acts” we assimilate and so eventually “become”, in our sense of self, the gender we perform.”

Nasrullah Mambrol (2016) points out the basic tenets of gender performativity in seven points which are:

1. A central concept of the theory is that your gender is constructed through your own repetitive performance of gender.
2. There is no self preceding or outside a gendered self.

3. Performativity of gender is a stylized repetition of acts, an imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of gender.
4. Biological sex is also a social construction—gender subsumes sex.
5. What is at stake in gender roles is the ideology of heterosexuality.
6. Performativity of Gender (drag) can be subversive.
7. But subversion through performance isn't automatic or easy.

The above points summarize the concept of gender performativity crisply.

## METHODOLOGY

The research method used is qualitative analysis. The study is a review study that analyses the text *Estuary* by applying the concept of gender performativity to the novel. The activities and the speech of the characters were analysed to find out how they perform specific gender roles.

The study is interdisciplinary in nature as ideas and findings from other disciplines such as psychology are incorporated for the purpose of literary criticism.

Also, the study goes in accordance with the research from [Priya and Panniko \(2018\)](#) that “research studies in the literature are conducted applying many innovative methods. The methods employed for this study are literary analysis, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis.”

In research from [Wight \(2011\)](#), “there is a particular need to take a critical look at existing research regarding face and facework in terms of non-normative gender performativity or “anti-normative” performativity. . . Performativity involves more than just a performance of gender and instead encompasses cultural, historical, linguistic, and relational factors that are tied to a moment of performance. Such research involves looking at facework and gender performativity from multiple cultural perspectives as well as in terms of face conflict.” The present study aims at employing this method in the analysis of Perumal Murugan’s *Estuary*.

[Sadjadi & Hojabri \(2019\)](#), in their research, point out their technique of literary analysis as: “The current survey is further concerned with the angles through which the novel reflects gender troubles and identity crisis of the women, conventionally defined as a minor category, according to Judith Butler’s post-structuralist approach to the analysis of identity. Consequently, there is a confluence between the development of Woolf’s female characters in the novel and Butler’s critical notion concerning the subject’s attempts to present performativity in the form of an active agent.” The current study employs a similar method to analyse *Estuary*.

[Detter \(2019\)](#) writes: “Literary criticism focuses on the ‘study, discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literary texts’ (Thaler 37). It is a practical application of theory as it directly examines specific literary texts, mostly from cultural and social perspectives. Judith Butler’s theory is classified within feminism and discusses the role of gender identity and relations in literature (40). The following chapter hence introduces traditional gender roles and Butler’s theory of performative gender.” This type of literary criticism has been done in this study.

In accord with [Cook and Hasmath \(2014\)](#), the methodology of the paper can be presented as follows: “Judith Butler’s conceptualization of gender as performatively constructed is used as an operating lens in our investigation of identity construction and resistance.”

All the above techniques are utilized to analyse Perumal Murugan’s *Estuary*.

## FINDINGS / RESULTS

The character Kumarasurar and Mangasuri perform the typical qualities of a male and female, respectively. Occasionally the stereotyped gender roles are toppled over by the author wherein the male father is found with feminine characteristics, and the female mother is found with masculine qualities.

## DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Kumarasurar’s family is a middle-class one. His son is sent to study in an engineering college. He wants a mobile phone that costs ₹74,999. The main concern of the novel is Kumarasurar’s thoughts, confusion, and objections to consenting to buy the phone for his son. Throughout the story, Kumarasurar’s actions make him a typical South Indian father with masculine characteristics, but at times, he loses his guard and the feminine features of his character rise to the forefront.

Kumarasurar goes for the morning walk just like all men of his age and social status. The morning walk can be associated with gender performance, especially masculinity. It is an act that men of a specific social class perform. In the case of the novel, it is the middle-class father. ([Murugan, 2020](#))

Kumarasurar can’t talk much with his son on the phone while at the college hostel. This is contrary to his wife who can speak for hours with the son. He used to ask seven questions to Meghas each day, to all of which his reply would be an “mm”. This makes him feminine as he is unable to talk for long. On the other hand, Meghas’ mother can talk for long hours with her son making her masculine.



But Mangasuri was different. She could talk to their son for hours. The moment Meghas called, she would take her phone into the kitchen. Kumarasurar would hear the sound of laughter, punctuated by disjointed phrases. He had tried eavesdropping, but he could barely follow the trajectory of the conversation. He didn't dare press his ear against the door – if Mangasuri happened to catch him red-handed, he wouldn't have an excuse. But until she hung up, he wouldn't be able to turn his mind to anything else. She spoke to Meghas for at least a quarter of an hour every day. Sometimes, she went on for half an hour.

Mangasuri rarely left the house. What could she be talking to their son about? If he asked her, she would demur.

'Could I possibly run out of conversation with my own son?' she would say, without letting him in on what they spoke about. Kumarasurar had driven himself crazy trying to figure out how she kept Meghas on the phone for so long.

'If you show him some affection, he will talk to you,' she said at times. 'All you have for him are instruction and interdiction. What can he say to those? You snap at him all the time.'

Did any of his seven questions sound snappy? On the nights when sleep played coy – which was most nights for Kumarasurar – he would analyse each of these seven questions.

'Are you well, aiyya?' was certainly not snappy. He did not even use 'da' with his son. He said 'aiyya'. One had to begin a conversation by asking if one's interlocutor was well. So, the first question could not be faulted.

'Did you go to class, aiyya?' was the next question. He only meant to ask whether Meghas had finished his work for the day. Perhaps Meghas thought this was a veiled suggestion that he was likely to play truant. . .

Kumarasurar had always been firm that Meghas should stay in the college hostel, which had regulations and curfews. If he stayed in private accommodation, no one would be able to keep tabs on what he did, where he went or how long he stayed out. He was at an impressionable age. If he chanced upon intoxications, he would get addicted at once. As his parents, Kumarasurar and Mangasuri had to be careful. And Kumarasurar would have to be careful with his questions too. A qualitative question could have unforeseen ramifications. He decided to avoid these.

'Do you have enough money, aiyya?' was a question he asked because he worried for his son. A father could only prove his solicitude by offering money. He was the breadwinner and had to provide for his son. So this question could not be avoided. . .

Sometimes, Kumarasurar was tempted to add questions like, 'Have you bathed, aiyya?' 'Do you scrub your clothes while washing, aiyya?' 'Were your stools normal today, aiyya?' He had acted on this impulse a couple of times, only for Meghas to hang up on him. Since Kumarasurar was determined not to provoke Meghas, he had already decided to do away with follow-up questions to the fifth query. But even the main question suggested Kumarasurar did not place much faith in his son's sense of cleanliness. What could he do about this?

'Are you studying, aiyya?' could not be avoided. This wasn't a question which sought an elaborate reply. It was important to remind Meghas of his duties as a student of engineering. It was a father's responsibility to ensure that his son was constantly reminded of his duties. He would not shrink his parental obligations, and those necessitated the sixth question.

The last question, 'Shall I hang up, aiyya?' could not be replaced with anything else. He did have to seek his son's permission to hang up. If he simply signed off with, 'I'll talk to you later,' he would worry that Meghas might have had something to say and that he had cut him off prematurely. He had to retain this one too.

So, his seven questions were unavoidable. He would have to ask them irrespective of whether Meghas chose to respond. His son was conditioned to expect these questions by now. Even if he resented them, these questions were designed to direct him towards a healthy, happy life. Kumarasurar had never shied away from his parental duties; he never would. ([Murugan, 2020, p. 16–19](#))

The above passages bring out the psychological stress in the mind of Meghas' father Kumarasurar.

At times he feels like hitting his wife, which can be associated with masculinity. But his life in his office is entirely different.

At the office, Kumarasurar is portrayed to be less intelligible as there is a new recruit named Kumbhas, who is well versed in modern technology like computers. On the other hand, Kumarasurar disapproves of computers and fears getting anywhere near a computer. He has carefully packed the computer sent to the regional office where he works, which is set up for use only after Kumbhas joins work. Here, the usage of electronic products is associated with masculinity, but Kumarasurar is devoid of it.

Moreover, a similar incident happens while Kumarasurar travels with his son on a bus to drop him at his college hostel. During the journey, Meghas shows his ease in using the smartphone by listening to songs with his earphones on and watching movies. Meghas even tried to put one part of the earphone into his father's ear, but it doesn't work out as Kumarasurar couldn't bring up his mind to work with electronic gadgets. Here, again Kumarasurar's masculinity is put into question.



Kumarasurar's friend Thenasurar runs a profitable business with his son, who has had education only up to the school level. In contrast, Kumarasurar's son is not job-secured even after a collegiate education. When Thenasurar points out this fact, Kumarasurar is humiliated and thus emasculated. Kumarasurar's lack of knowledge in choosing the right course for his son to quickly get a job, shows him to be less knowledgeable, thus portraying Thenasurar to be more masculine.

There is a yearning for pride and social status in Kumarasurar. His attending yoga classes is due to this fact. Yoga classes, again, can be associated with masculinity.

At certain times, he is suppressed by his wife's scoldings and questions. This brings his feminine quality rise to the forefront.

At one point in the novel, he feels like slapping his son. This can be equated with the physical strength that is associated with masculinity.

Meghas' college selection was done with Meghas' wish and also with Mangasuri, his mother's approval, while Kumarasurar objected to it after getting a sense of the campus culture. The campus culture included revealing clothes worn by girls and boys, casual touching between the two sexes, loud chatting, etc. Once Mangasuri came to experience what Kumarasurar alone had experienced while visiting the college for the first time, she could not make up her mind into allowing her son to study there. Kumarasurar starts a "harsh and aggressive" verbal fight with her which highlights his masculine nature.

Whenever the couple is tangled up in some decision-making, they have a "conference at the terrace". In chapter 20, the conference is on whether to buy a new phone or not for Meghas. The narrator says, "His wife's pleasure at his son's demand had broken Kumarasurar. He felt all alone". Kumarasurar's loneliness portrays him as insecure, which is a feminine quality. He is not relaxed and calm, but he is tense. The narrator also says that before the death of Kumarasurar's parents, his words commanded respect, but now the case is the opposite, where Mangasuri does not mind showing him some respect at all.

Kumarasurar makes a show by sitting in a comfortable chair and reading the newspaper in front of his house. He reads an English newspaper too. All this he does to showcase his status to the passers-by. This act is considered an act of gender performance by a man. Masculinity is associated with showing off one's strength to others. Thus, the masculine effect is generated.

After Kumbhas has introduced Kumarasurar to the dangerous world of selfie-taking by youngsters like Meghas, online chats and other things, including pornography, Kumarasurar feels dirty with all sorts of ugly dirt. So, he washes his eyes over and over again. He even puts soap into his eyes. The reader feels pathetic for this act of his, but this also can be associated with masculine strength.

Towards the end of the novel, Kumarasurar tries cooking at his friend Athigasurar's house. Here he is revealed to be not knowledgeable in cooking, so he calls his wife by phone for instructions. Here, he is represented to be less masculine.

Finally, his drinking toddy with Adhigasurar near the estuary is also a masculine feature.

Thus, Kumarasurar proves himself to be a socially accepted masculine person in the novel *Estuary* by Perumal Murugan.

Contrastingly Meghas' mother can talk with him for hours. Usually, it is the mother with whom their sons are attached and this family fit well into that notion.

Mangasuri can also cook well, which, when culturally considered, is a feminine feature in India as women are expected to be good cooks. She is a homemaker, so she does not go to any job like Kumarasurar. Page 16 of the novel says she "rarely left the house". All these are feminine qualities that are stereotyped in Indian women.

When Meghas requires something from his father, for example, the smartphone that he is referring to now, Mangasuri becomes his "deputy", who takes the matter from the son to the father.

When we consider if there are any masculine qualities in Mangasuri, we may view her as more knowledgeable than Kumarasurar in technology. ([Murugan, 2020](#))

Mangasuri is a religious woman. She is enthusiastic about sacred rites. This quality is associated with femininity in Indian culture, as most men are portrayed as reasonable. Another example to support this argument is the rational father of Nissim Ezekiel, as mentioned in the poem "Night of the Scorpion", where his mother is in line with the religious beliefs of the village. Like Kumarasurar, Mangasuri also lives for social expectations. This also, in a way, stereotypes her.

Mangasuri monitors Kumarasurar's "smallest movements", too. This shows how keen she is to preserve and protect her (their) social status by watching her husband and son so that she can see to it if they are on the right track towards pride in front of others.

Mangasuri also has a lot of verbal fights with her husband ([Murugan, 2020](#)). This attribute of her can be considered a masculine feature. This quality of her makes her dominant over her husband. Thus, in this aspect, the gender stereotype of the woman is toppled over by Murugan.

When Kumarasurar is sick, Mangasuri makes all sorts of natural medicine using herbs. This shows her concern for her husband. This quality is again attributed to the stereotyped female in the Indian society where anything related to the kitchen and cooking and even medicine making is associated with the female.

During her visit to Meghas' college to drop him in the hostel for the first time, she is embarrassed by the clothes worn by the young girls. The girls were wearing sleeveless, revealing clothes, which is a western culture that is not digestible to many Indian women of Mangasuri's age (Mothers who were born before the 1980s). Again, this highlights her feminineness.

Mangasuri is unable to sleep when Kumarasurar is restless. Such is the effect of his life on hers. As Meghas has asked for a new mobile phone, Kumarasurar is restless, and Mangasuri also keeps herself awake to care for her husband. This again highlights her feminine feature.

## CONCLUSION

Though Perumal Murugan alters the stereotypical gender roles of Meghas' parents at specific points in the novel, he reinforces them a more significant number of times than when he changes them. With his sarcasm as a tool, he supports Kumarasurar and Mangasuri as typical Indian parents of the 21st century, thereby stereotyping them in the novel. The various elements of the father and mother's lifestyle that are discussed above help them to produce the effect of the stereotyped masculine father and feminine mother, which is the expectation of society as well in the Indian cultural context.

## LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

The study applies a concept from the 1990s to a contemporary novel of 2020. Thus, there may be a few discrepancies.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

There exists no conflict of interest with the current organisation, and no unethical practices were followed during the study.

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