

# Silent Witness and Suffering Waters: Environmental and Cultural Transformations along the Meenachal River in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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## Abstract

This paper delves into the profound relationship between the human and non-human in post-colonial contexts like India, where this connection historically held immense significance. In pre-colonial India, a strong link between the human and non-human existed, exemplified by the intertwined concepts of the divine and the terrestrial, where everything on Earth symbolised the divine. However, the arrival of colonisers brought a paradigm shift, leading to the exploitation of non-human entities.

The study investigates this dynamic within Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*. It begins by addressing epistemological challenges arising from the contrast between indigenous and Western rational knowledge. Material ecocriticism, as articulated by Serenella and Oppermann (2014), emphasising the inherent agency within non-human entities, is employed to bridge this gap. The Meenachal River, depicted as a silent witness to two tragic events—Sophie Mol's untimely death and the unlawful love affair between Ammu and Velutha—takes centre stage.

The subsequent segment underscores how the departures of 'indigenous' characters lead to a harrowing fate for the Meenachal River, once a nurturing cradle and garden-river for Estha and Rahel, the twins, and their mother, Ammu. As these characters exit the landscape, the river gradually declines, paralleling their destinies and symbolising a slow, inexorable death.

This exploration highlights the intricate interplay between human actions, relationships, and the non-human environment. It emphasises the critical importance of recognizing the agency of non-human entities and the repercussions of human choices on the natural world, encapsulated in the poignant fate of the Meenachal River.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial, Ecocriticism, Meenachal River, Arundhati Roy, Material agency