

Body, Gender and Belonging in Contemporary Indian Children's Literature: A Critical Reading of *Big Hero Size Zero*

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Abstract

This paper examines *Big Hero Size Zero* by Anusha Hariharan and Sowmya Rajendran as a landmark intervention in Indian children's literature, one that reframes adolescence as a site of gendered negotiation rather than a naturalised stage of growth. Through close reading, the study argues that the text translates complex feminist and intersectional theories into accessible narratives that encourage adolescents to question, resist, and reimagine dominant social scripts. Anchored primarily in the insights of Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Raewyn Connell, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, the analysis highlights how the book interrogates femininity, masculinity, identity, and violence while foregrounding the possibility of agency and transformation. By blending critique with hope, *Big Hero Size Zero* demonstrates that children's literature can operate not merely as moral instruction or entertainment, but as critical pedagogy—equipping young readers with the intellectual and ethical tools to challenge patriarchal structures. In doing so, the text situates itself as both culturally specific and globally resonant, marking adolescence as a crucial moment for cultivating feminist consciousness.

Keywords

Adolescence, Gender, Performativity, Intersectionality, Children's Literature.

