

The portrayal of Women in Anita Nair's Novels.

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Abstract

Anita Nair's fiction explores the quest for identity of the woman to fulfill herself essentially as a human being, self-governing of her various traditional roles as daughter, wife, mother and so on. The self considering, suffering and unselfish woman, with her gender characteristic qualities has begun to aggravate the compulsions of supporting patriarchal gender philosophy. The woman who has moved to the center and become an important individual in the social setup is intense to discover new path for improvement and logical satisfaction and establish her independence in marriage. The creative women writers re-define the husband-wife relationship in their novels. Anita Nair in most of her novels reveals woman's capacity to assert her own rights and eccentricity in marriage and develop into a fully fledged woman of potential as a human being. Writers such as Anita Desai, Nayantara Shagal, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Shobha De show how the modern Indian women attempt to free themselves sexually, economically and domestically from the male dominated society. Male and female characters in their novels fight against their interpersonal problems without caring for any success; often they end up having some kind of peace.

Quest for identity is the leading theme with many writers especially in the postmodern writings. Anita Nair, a living post modern Indian woman writer in English, has earned much critical attention and has been celebrated both in India and abroad as significant novelist. Her ventures have produced some good works and in a little span of her career she has gained an international reputation. Anita Nair, like the expert Anita Desai started writing at the age of seven or eight and both of them began doing so in their moments of emotional outbursts. Middle class family stories being their forte, both of them are not primarily distracted with women's woes. Desai's novels depict the mental conflicts coiling their heroines whereas Anita Nair makes her characters suffer but she enables them to come out of it. Desai's heroines sulk, sob and submerge themselves in their calamity but for Anita Nair's characters, their sufferings become their strength and weapon to fight out their predicaments.

In this paper we discuss about the women characters in the novels like **The Better Man**, **The Ladies Coupe** and **Mistress**. The women presented here is quite different from the others. Anjana, in the novel *The Better Man* was brought up in a liberal atmosphere by her parents. She is happy in her world of independence which gives her a profound sense of self fulfillment. When her age turned twenty seven her independence is lost in the name of marriage. In her married life she endures several injustices perpetrated by her husband. Anjana consciously or unintentionally imitates the perfect woman because of her conventional upbringing. From her

early childhood, girls are trained to stay pleased in their married lives under any circumstances, and thus fit in these ethics in her psyche. In her married life she endures several injustices perpetrated by her husband. In the days of her earlier married days she tries a lot to impress her husband, Ravindran but she couldn't. She wants to give the best to him but he was interested in her. She is eager to lead a healthy life with him but it is mere a dream for her to achieve. She longs for freedom and love in marriage.

Finally, Anjana breaks the traditional Indian consciousness and creates the world of her own. Anjana's emergence from her unsuccessful marriage, with the determination to live as a free individual, is an assertion of her personal freedom. She meets Mukundan and falls in love with him. She finds in Mukundan everything which she had been searching for in Ravindran. Mukundan does not ignore her presence or over ride her thoughts, but instead helps her to regain her freedom of herself as an individual, a human being with her own identity. Anjana is a blend of both traditional and modern elements and she wants uniqueness and autonomy. Unable to get recognition of her identity from Ravindran, she shapes out a new lane for herself.

The **Ladies coupe** that these six women whom Nair welds together, start unveiling the secrets of their lives. Akhila, the protagonist, experienced the other six women's predicament and their quest for identity. The 'journey', Nair presents is an exploitation of the Picaresque Tale. Akhila decides to go on this journey because she realizes that she has reached her saturation point where her life has been taken out of her control. She wants to run away from her family and responsibilities therefore, she plans to go on a journey that ultimately makes her a different woman. Akhila gives away her youth to provide total support to her family after the death of her father and never receives any appreciation and acknowledgement. Ultimately, these multiple factors encourage her to take drastic measures against the social and the religious norms.

Being a modern woman Akhila feels sickened with her mother's conventional preaching. Even then she supports her family and sacrifices all her happiness and her own personal life, right from educating her brothers and marrying off her sisters. They all get settled in their lives, but turn a blind eye towards her desires. Not even her mother thinks about the welfare of her daughter and remain so unconscious to the fact that she has made sacrifices so that her family prospers. The noble deed of prosperity done by her for her family adds to misfortune in her life. Her mother never bothers for her to get married and have family. She feels caged and rapt because of their indifferent attitude and disdain for her. This makes her a rebellion. She likes everything which is against narrow-minded Brahmin culture. Akhila's rebellion against the forced customs on her. She tries to revive the pleasure of being a woman with him. Akhila's calling Hari connects her to missed emotional part of life after arriving to the final decision that after all she can live alone and manage well independently, respectively.

Radha's Quest For Love in **Mistress**. Here quest for love, besides identity can show. The main heroine Radha married with Shyam, lived happy with each other. But Radha is not contented with the life. Shyam loved her too much, that bother her. The fellow traveller Chris

arrived and Radha finds pleasure with his company. She loved Chris, she liked him and wants the relation with him. As she is unsatisfied wife of Shyam she gets pleasure in the hands of Chris. As Chris love with her they enjoyed the relationship. Radha thinks that for Shyam she is only her mistress not a wife. Shyam knows the closeness of both of them ,he knew that Radha come back with him. The novel make the reader to find the conclusion .Here Nair's bold novel present the picture of different woman who longs for love. **Mistress is a story about Radha, for it is Radha who consciously decides to fill the void in her life created by one man through indulging her desire for another.**

As the affair progresses, the reader is likely to assume that Radha will be hurt when Chris leaves. The narrative disjuncture comes when Radha begins to worry that no matter what *she* decides—and so she clearly sees the decision as being hers rather than Chris'—'Someone will be hurt. Shyam or Chris. Interestingly, **Mistress** does not reveal what Radha's next step will be. **Will she continue to live with Shyam and rework the rules of their marriage?** Will she eventually go to Chris while holding on to her own cultural identity? Will she strike out alone, with or without another man? While an accurate (re)presentation of the complexities of Radha's desire rules out any easy solution—and for this reason, **Mistress**, as an exercise in postcolonial feminism, rightly ends on an inconclusive note.

Woman finds life less promised and confusing due to her social and cultural insecurities. Whenever women step out of their confinements, they have to fight to wipe out the negative image of women already dwelling in the minds of men and women. In certain aspects women are treated as angels and goddesses. In some other aspects women are expected to be slaves, who are ready to work for a man and his benefits and comfort. Anita Nair, with a deep, psychological insight, skillfully utilizes the story of all three novels. Anita Nair presents the existential struggle of woman who denies to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. The woman emerging out of such situations is a defeated individual who undergoes much pain and suffering. Anita Nair traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to selfrealization, self-denial to self-assertion and self-negation to self-affirmation.

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