



### ANITA NAIR'S WOMEN - A STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*Anita Nair provides perfect examples of victimized women in a patriarchal system. Marriage is still a social necessary, where women seek security and men respectability. Domination is the significant in an analysis of the man- woman relationship where the male characteristics are ones coupled with mental thought and positive activity, at the same time as a woman is regarded as basically submissive; her role to be fulfil male sexual drive for the subsequent reproduction of the species. The woman in the past was completely traditional, uneducated, superstitious and confined. Being lived in such atmosphere women had become narrow and controlled. They could never think that there can be a different world outside the four walls of their house. She was completely cut off from such dynamic world. It was so because the men of the traditional society wanted them to be so. They too were ruled by the old age philosophy which was anti-woman and which taught that woman's place is within the house.*

**Key words :**Traditional, Uneducated, Superstitious, Confined.

### INTRODUCTION

Anita Nair is one of the well known writers in Indian Writing in English with an international reputation. Anita Nair was born in Mundakottakurthu near Shornur in Kerala. She was brought up in a suburb in Madras. Her father worked in factories. Her grandparents who lived in Kerala were the reason for Anita Nair to make frequent visits to Kerala and such visits made her to know the heart of rural Kerala. She did her B.A in English literature and language in a small town Othapalam in Kerala. At the age of twenty four, she went to the United States to study journalism. She was working as an innovative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories. She said good-bye to her advertising career and she opted to concentrate her "addiction" writing. As she remarks herself that, "being writer is a necessity for me, an addiction.

*'The best thing being a writer is to be anonymous in one's writing, being genderless, ageless, classless, writing about people completely different from myself.'* (Sinha,P. 147).

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1P a g e

Anita Nair in her debut novel reveals woman's capacity to assert her own rights and individuality in marriage and develop into fully fledged women of prospective as a human being. Anita Nair has presented in her novels, modern Indian women's search for revival of relationships that are central to women. Her own struggle as a writer is equally symptomatic of the resistance to feminist expression that prevails in India in the middle of the twentieth century. As a woman writer her dilemma was either to give voice to women's concern and be branded as a women writer: removed from the mainstream of literary scene; or to deny her feminist and write like a man either with male name or male narrative voice. Anita Nair reveals that her concern is with the exploration of human psyche. She explores the emotional ecology of her protagonists. Anita Nair has portrayed some of her protagonist as economically independent women but still they don't have control over their own life even major decisions of their life have been taken by others, she has very clearly brought this concept in light that women in modern Indian may be educated and financially independent but still the rope of their life is in the hands of others. Anita Nair depicts carefully the diversity within each woman, as she did not want to put the lives of women to one ideal. The women living in such an orthodox society became so habitual to their surrounding and age old philosophy that they too were thinking that the marriage is their destiny and their husbands are their masters. Their duty is to obey him and serve him and his family. The writer focuses primarily on the psychological exploration of inner mind of Indian women in Indian novels in English. Anita Nair being woman penetrates deep into the inner mind of the depressed women by virtue of her feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues which are the outcome of Indian women's psychological and emotional imbalances in a male dominated society. Therefore, Male dominated society and its anti-woman ideology is the root cause of women's backwardness and their suffering and victimization.

## CONTRADICTIONS AND AMBITIONS OF ANITA NAIR'S WOMEN'S CHARACTER

Anita Nair is a bold and straightforward writer. Anita Nair refuses to be labelled as a feminist writer. She makes an attempt to show the quality of strength in a woman. Anita Nair also adds that strength is not usually considered a woman as thing. Her styles ultimately differ from other feminist writers. In other words, she is a feminist with difference. She traces the real position of women in the families as well as in the society. She has created ripples in the society of male domination by taking women as women in a serious manner. Her attempt to exhibit the plight, fears, dilemmas, contradictions and ambitions of her women's character is remarkable. Her primary focus of attention is the world of women, the struggle of women in the context of modern Indian society. Her novels depict the real life of her characters. Her novels reveal the effect of social conditioning on women. Society uses many different means to propagate belief we have literature as one of the means to carry these ideas further,

surrounded by such messages. They break the chains of social norms and do not confine themselves to the boundaries which limit women. So we can say that Anita Nair breaks the chains of society in portraying her women characters, which usually leads to its fragmentation. She forces us to think of the importance of curbing adultery to save family life. The female characters in Anita Nair's novels come from different religions, reflecting thus the diversity of Indian culture, which would be difficult or- impossible to generalize. Anita Nair is a contemporary Indo-English novelist who has presented the plight of Indian woman. This novel deals with tradition and modernity in the contemporary India. Anita Nair has demonstrated the subordinate position of woman in the orthodox tradition –bound Indian society. She has taken up issues of gender discrimination and social conditioning of women, husband-wife relationship and the suppression of women and sexual exploitation of women within and outside the marital frame. Marriage is set as an ultimate goal for girls, women have to mould and transform themselves to suit the interest of the male counter parts and suppress their self- identity.

Anita Nair's novel expresses the need of emancipation and education of Indian women and hence its reformist objective is fore-grounded in her novels. Anita Nair's women characters in her novels rebel against patriarchal community in order to explore their own terms, regardless of the consequences that such a rebellion may have on their lives they take the position of "outsiders" to fight and also projected her Indian sensibility and attitude through her women characters in her novels. Most of the Indian women living in an orthodox and conservative family feel inhibited to raise their voice against aggressive dominance of the male person of the society owing to their inferiority complex and rigid code of conduct imposed on their ambitions, desires, sense and sensibilities are faithfully expressed in Nair's Novels. In fact, in Nair's writing, the restructuring of male-female relationship that can bring changes in social and interpersonal attitudes becomes the most important basis of female emancipation. In this context, Anita Nair's novels make an interesting reading because of their contemporaries. Nair's novels are grounded in South Indian reality its inherent complexities and value systems.

## THE TREATMENT OF FEMINISTIC ISSUES IN ANITA NAIR'S NOVELS

Anita Nair's fourth novel Lessons in Forgetting (2010) is discussed to redefine the role and the quest of women to move on life. Her writing reveals a story about real people, about second chances and fresh beginning. It deals with love, dependency and betrayal. Anita Nair in her fiction talks about how woman suffers from patriarchal system which has tried in many ways to repress, humiliate and abuse women. The question she raises in the novel makes us to rethink about the ideological ground of man's patriarchal role in the traditional society and to think about the existence of alternative reality. It presents an opposition between ideological appearance represented in mythic and metaphysical understanding of the material world and reality represented in the material oppression of women.

Usually Anita Nair's novels are portrayed the status of woman in South Indian context in which how they are oppressed in the male dominated society and their women's desire are totally repressed in patriarchal society. Most of her novels depict the lower class but also upper class women. It can be proved that in Anita Nair's novels are spoke about the issues of women who fight against patriarchy and women desire. Basically in all Indian writer's novel patriarchy is used common concept in all every women's life in which they constrained by tradition and customs.

Anita Nair has presented her women are struggling side by side because of patriarchy but at the end of the novel she provided them a gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Usually her women's characters are portrayed as intelligent, courageous women who had not satisfied with the injustice and rebellion against men. So Anita Nair's women raise the question of their way of life due to patriarchy and see it not only as the site of their oppression at home but in society also. It makes a field of battle to vanquish their oppressors. Anita Nair has chosen self- discovery as the central theme in both the novels *Ladies Coupe and Mistress*. However it is different from the religious of self- realization. Self- discovery here is more a guidance for assertion and realization of one's own interests, certainly not selfish in the narrow sense. The main theme of these two novels *Ladies Coupe and Mistress* is subjugation, caste discrimination, individuality, freedom, gender identities, emotional insecurity, alienation, sexuality, women's suffering, oppression, identity crises etc. her women's characters are come from all parts of the world with the social, religious and cultural preoccupation. In many of her novels, she has depicted about the husband-wife relationship. She admits that in spite of being married, they do not lead a pleasurable life in their marital life and so for that they are ready to indulge in extra marital affairs. The faithfulness in husband-wife relationship is completely lost. This end has been making a big issue in such relationship. The misunderstanding and unhappy marriage in every Indian women's life leads to the main cause for female to oppose their relationship and that seek to an individual.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*, deals with the stories of six women who travelled together in Ladies compartment. This was narrated by Anita Nair. This novel depicted the concept of female defiance against patriarchy. Mainly it explores the women's search for self-discovery and women's desire. The main custodian of this novels are Akhila, Janaki, Sheela, Margaret Shanthi, Prabha Devi and Marikolandhu who was affected by patriarchy in different ways the first and foremost character of patriarchy are used here is Akhilandeshwari as Akhila. She was a main protagonist in the novel. She was absolutely dominated by her whole family that is her mother Chandra her two brothers ( Narashiman and Narayanan) and her sister Padma. Though she was a provider and man of the family, she was repressed by them because she was a single, unmarried women .Her mother continuously insist her that,

*"There is no such things as equal marriage. It is best to accept that*

*wife is inferior to the husband. That way there can be disharmony. It is when one wants to prove one's equality that there is warring and sparring all the time. It is so much easier to accept one's station in life and live accordingly. A woman is not meant to take on the male's role or the Gods would have made her so, so what is all this about two equals in a marriage."* (LadiesCoupe,p.14).

After her father's death she took all her family duties and responsibilities as soon as her brother's grown up they got married as their wishes without getting anybody's permission in the family and they hardly think about Akhila's desire, needs and demand. Akhila's dream has been destroyed completely by her entire family. She has never lived with her own identity at any cost.

*"She was always an extension someone's identity. Chandra's daughter, Narayana's Akka, Priya's aunt, Murthy's sister-in-law [.....] Akila wished for once someone would see her as a whole being" .* ( LadiesCoupe,p.200-201).

She loses her complete self identity, freedom for the sake of her family. Therefore in this novel was being educated and income tax officer she has been put in a patriarchal circle. Here we understood that in patriarchal society Indian woman should not be treated as equal as men they are not compliment with each other. They are highly inferior towards the male dominant society.

The fifth passenger is Prabha Devi. She was affected by Gender Discrimination in a family. This role has been described by her father. She was denounced by her father in following words,

*"Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans, addled your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance."*  
(Ladies Coupe,p.169).

In this novel Anita Nair had selected the character of Prabha Devi to strengthen this issue. In those days this discrimination of gender has take place a major role among all Indian parents. Because of this issue Prabha Devi suffered lot at her early age. Due to these gender identities Prabha Devi was faced lot of difficulties and worries in her character. The last passenger of Ladies Coupe is Marikolanthu. She was belonged to low-caste women. She was ill treated and exploited by the family members of the chettiyar's house where she works in. here Anita Nair highlighted the suffering of the woman predominantly. They suffered due to the physical abuse especially the sexual exploitation. Sex is used as a tool to control the woman's legitimates aspiration. The physical abuse of women by the man folk which makes them suffer a lot mentally and further leads to various complications such as social economical and

cultural ones. In Ladies Coupe, Marikolanthu is a better example for the sexual exploitation, subjugation and male hegemony. Anita Nair has shown that women are suffering in the world irrespective of their religion, language and culture.

In Anita Nair's *Mistress* (2005), she portrays the husband and wife relationship in the patriarchal society. So in those days marriage is an ultimate goal for all Indian women. With this assumption, Radha in *Mistress* who suffers in her traditional marriage life. She was forcefully married Shyam by her father's compulsion. Before she got married with Shyam she had a pre-marital affair. She was not happy with traditional life. She was completely dominated by her husband and his elder sister Rani Oppol. At the beginning of her marriage, the patriarchy exists in different ways such as she was not able to conceive even after eight years of her marriage. So she was called "Barren" by the society. By calling her name barren she was affected in the patriarchal society. Radha was obviously blamed though Shyam was impotent. The entire society is ready to blame Indian women. On the other case of Shyam's dominant nature is to put her end to all her plans. So Radha retaliates with:

*"I hope that is not going to undermine your standing in society. Is there anything I can do that won't? I wanted to teach in one of the primary schools and you said it was too much work for too little money. When I wanted to start a tuition class, you said the same. Then I wanted to start a crèche and you said you didn't want the house filled with bawling babies. So I thought I would find something else to do which didn't involve making money, but even that isn't right. Don't I have to an opinion? I am your wife. Your wife, do you hear me? But you treat me as if I am a kept woman. A bloody mistress to fulfil your sexual needs and with no rights". (Mistress, p.73)*

On certain extent she never tolerate Shyam's dominate character because he even protest against her involvement with his business. Consequently she was in dilemma to stay with him. Meantime the travel writer Christopher comes to India to write about the story of her uncle Koman, a kathakali dancer. After seeing him, Radha was attracted towards him. But Radha was not quite happy with her husband, Shyam. So she drew her attention over Christopher. After some days passed, the misunderstanding between Christopher and Radha started. For instance, When Christopher talk of Saddam Hussain as "evil", Radha retorts by comparing Hussain to Bush and printing out the latter dubious political motives behind invading Iraq. Christopher is angry and rebukes Radha by saying that he finds her attitude of tolerance unacceptable. By this way of argument of Christopher; she comes to know that he was also dominant in nature as like her husband Shyam. So she neglects both Indian and western culture. Therefore she decided to lead her life as her own wish. She seeks her own individuality. On the whole incident which happened in Radha's life affected by the patriarchal culture. Hence she never wants to live in tradition and society so breaks the limitation and family customs of tradition.

## CONCLUSION

This study is primarily undertaken the position in contemporary Indian society and how they are suppressed in the male-dominated society and eventually how they fight patriarchy and women's desire are portrayed through the novels of *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* by Anita Nair. Patriarchy literally means "the rule of the father" and comes from the Greek (Patriarkhes). Historically, the term patriarchy was used to refer to autocratic rule by the male head of the family. However, in modern times, it more generally refers to social system in which power is primarily held by adult men. It is a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is the head of the family in which men held the power and women are largely excluded from it. Patriarchy is a social system in males is primary authority figures central to social organization and they occupy the roles of political leadership, moral authority and entails female subordination. Patriarchy is the term used to describe the society in which we live today, characterized by current and historic unequal power relation between women and men. This take place across in every sphere of life but is particularly noticeable in women's under representation in key state institution, in decision making position and in employment and industry. Male violence against women is also a key feature of patriarchy. Women in minority group face multiple oppression in this society in race, class, sexuality. Feminism defines patriarchy as an unjust social system that is necessarily more oppressive to women. In male dominated society is supposed to be an ideal wife, a mother and an excellent home-maker with multifarious roles to play in the family. Her required attributes are to sacrifice, submissiveness and tolerance. She makes in her life faithfully and obediently through her excessive endurance service of adjustments are main admired qualities of women. Her individual self has very little recognition in the patriarchal society and so self-effacement becomes her normal way of life.

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