

Unveiling of Women Characters in Anita Nair's Select Novels

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Abstract

Indian women novelist in English has emerged as important writers in the recent times. They have presented different themes like the fight between tradition and modernity, women's fight for liberation, psychological issues and identity crisis in the patriarchal society. The women are suppressed by male dominated society based on traditions. As a woman, the writers can understand the inner thought of the inconsiderate women with their protagonist as clearly portrays their feelings, knowledge and emotion with feministic approach. Feminism in India though it has many languages yet could not show its potential. After that it will be changed. The women writers got opportunity to express themselves effectively. Before 1980's the women writers had a dilemma of women and backward classes in conventional societies which regarded them as inferior in the pyramid. After the eighties, Indian women got recognition, showing their feminine prudence. Many well known writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nyanthara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Kiran Desai and Anita Nair etc. They show the new period of liberation for the women with the social and intellectual life.

The women writers have presented the 'New women', how she is in her family and society. The protagonist individually faces the society for her survival. They disclose utilization of women and their struggle for a new life which provides enough space for their own feelings and emotions have raised as work and it paid immediate attention. They establish different world of women's feelings and achievements. The contemporary novelists have made the action of social change meaningful with their point. Among these novelists, Anita Nair represents the new women in the society. Anita Nair's novel surveys the search for identity of the woman to

satisfy herself essentially as a being, individually plays many roles as daughter, wife, mother and so on. Woman has suffered a worst kind of oppression in the culturally determined Indian society. In the institution of marriage, woman has not enjoyed the equality of status. Our culture is so programmed that it grants all powers to its men and prohibits a woman even to exist. There comes many phases in the life of a woman which undermine her sense of identity. The violence against a woman starts when her sex is determined in the very womb. With the swing from medieval man centric society to business vision of middle class male-controlled society, the life of societal relations has corrupted, and vivacious distinction, egotism and self-governed have advanced as the urgent individual factors in the social relation. When all is said in done, female characters quited not with standing their persecution under a man centric framework. Women have not seen denied presence as total individuals, physically and rationally. Act to perform on a libertarianism with men, yet in addition penniless of the chance to offer articulation to their emotions, their feelings of trepidation and their misery.

Key Words: Women Subjugation, Mythology, Feminism, Identity, Betrayal.

The living writer Anita Nair is leading fiction writer of Indian English literature. Her fiction is predominantly Indian both in setting and characterization. Anita Nair in her novels talks about woman and her experiences into their day to lives. Nair in her creative writing argues that woman all over India face the same problems. She mainly focuses on the sentiments and emotions of the woman whose intentions are not accepted by the society they live in. They impose a number of questions to the conservative society about the pains and sufferings, she comes across, but her questions go hardly answered. The woman of Indian traditional society is so conditioned that they face a lot of difficulties. Her life becomes miserable she tries to come out from these strict social norms and customs. Rape, female abortion, female subjugation, marriage endowment, marital rape, dissatisfaction, suppression, identity, self-discovery, individuality and social issues are the repeated themes of Nair's narrative fictions. Nair gives a main role to her socially conscious female characters. Her female characters are demanding equality from their male counterparts. Such characters help Nair to unveil the conservative outlook of the Indian society and the evil practices.

This paper deals with the women characters in the novels like *The Better Man*, *The Ladies Coupe* and *Lessons in Forgetting*, unveiling them from suppression, Patriarchy. The women portrayed here is completely different from the others. Anjana, in the novel *The Better Man* was brought up by her parents in the liberal way. She leads her life with her parents, feels free and fulfills her desires. When her age turned twenty seven, her independence is lost in the name of marriage. In her married life she suffers several injustices executed by her husband. Anjana unconsciously imitates the perfect woman because of her traditional behaviour. From her early childhood, girls are instructed to stay pleased in their married lives under any situations, and thus suitable in these ethics in her psyche. In her married life, she tolerates several injustices executed by her husband. Early days of her marriage life, she tries a lot to make an impression on her husband, Ravindran but she couldn't. She has to oblige her husband but it becomes fail. She is eager to lead a good life with him but it is mere a dream for her to achieve. She expects freedom and love in marriage.

Finally, Anjana breaks the usual practices, Indian consciousness and creates the world of her own. Anjana's turns up from her unsuccessful marriage, with the persistence to live as a free individual, is an assertion of her individual freedom. She meets Mukundan and adore with him. He is a good man, tells her: "Anjana....I know you think I am a good man. A gentle man someone you can depend on completely. I don't know if I am that man you make me out to be. My mother begged me to rescue her away. But I didn't. I was afraid of my father and so I made excuses....That is the kind of man I am. A weak and undependable creature. Do you want to be a part of such a man's life" (244-45). She finds in Mukundan everything which she had been looking for in Ravindran. Mukundan does not ignore her presence and her thoughts, but instead helps her to regain her freedom of herself as an individual, a human being with her own recognition. Anjana is an amalgam of both traditional and modern elements and she wants uniqueness and frees herself. She couldn't get recognition of her identity from Ravindran, she chooses a new path for her own.

The Ladies coupe women characters whom Nair held together start unveiling the secrets of their lives. Akhila, the protagonist, experienced the other six women's unpleasant circumstances and their quest for identity. She 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 members and responsibilities therefore, she plans to go on a journey that ultimately makes her a different woman. Akhila spends her young part of life for her family, but her family after the death of her father, never gives any appreciation and acknowledgement. Eventually, these multiple factors encourage her to take extreme measures against the social and the religious norms.

As a modern woman Akhila feels troubled with her mother's conventional preaching. She sacrifices all her happiness and her personal life because of her brother's education and sister's marriage. 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 remains 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 thinks for her to get married and have family. She is expected to play, "Young as she is, she hopes that one day she will have a home and family of her own" (85). She feels caged because of their indifferent attitude. She likes everything which is against narrow-minded Brahmin culture. Akhila's revolt against the forced customs on her.

The protagonist Akhila and other characters unconsciously are subjugated by the masculine figures straightly and accidentally. Every character emphasizes the stories of victimization physically and psychologically. A female is always looked down upon by the society. It is generally believed that, a female is incapable of handling life without the help of men in family as well as the society. This traditional ideology had been spread in the mind which has made life of women turn on their companions reluctance. This novel pictured the modern technology and socially developed society which fails to acknowledge and recognize the role of female. Through the protagonist, it tries to show the possible independence and freedom to women. By this novel Anita Nair has tried to reflect the suffragist women and their want of self – discovery. They must have independence and their own existence.

Lessons in Forgetting, Meera belong to an upper middle class family, feels like a queen in her domestic world. She leads a beautiful life in the Lilac's House till a major change came in

her life. This house makes major changes in Meera's life. She gets married to Giri who came as a model, co-coordinator to assist shooting for a film and falls for Meera seeing her beauty. He gets greedy for the Lilac's House thinking that to be owned by Meera and decides to marry her. Giri's wrong assumption as Meera to be the owner but in reality that house is on lease to them. Giri thinks that if he marries Meera he can live and lead a lavish life and also thinks to sale the Lilac's House. Meera is very loyal; she submits her whole life to her husband. After marriage she has disclosed all her dreams, and then she takes care of her husband. She forgets herself and her identity while taking care of her husband. Giri, her husband does not respect his wife. He leads his materialistic life with his wife. He does not love her and has no attachments towards her. Though Meera neither raise her voice nor words complete solace within him. She listens to his every word like a typical woman. This women character shows the genuine life of women in this society. She was entirely dependent on Giri . She could not perceive herself. She could not able to face the rasping actuality of being discarded by her husband from his life and his disloyalty after she rejected to sale the Lilac House.

Meera started to realize her change after being she was left alone by her husband to take care of the family and take the household duties upon her. She realizes very late that her perception was wrong towards her husband. She learnt how to live the life without depending on her husband. 'Being a Postgraduate in English she could easily get job. She becomes a changed woman. Her mother and grandmother notice this and a measuring spoon that didn't brim anymore. But they said nothing. The stern cast of her face alarmed them more than Meera realized' (84). Meera transforms herself from being this infirm woman and becomes an edified self. She finds a job for herself as a research assistant and becomes economically independent. She realizes her identity which was lost after her marriage.

In the Patriarchal set up, whatever happened in the man-woman relationship, it is the woman who is universally blamed. A woman suffers because of terms and social norms. Anita Nair in her novel *Lesson in forgetting* highlights the sufferings of women characters. They never think about themselves and much committed to family. After knowing the reality, they turn their life individually and lead an independent life. Nair shows the dark reality of the society, where many women can make themselves independent but fails to make it as they remain dependent.

So she raised her voice for these women in all her novels and asks women to be strong and realize themselves. The author wants to express how these women try to change the atmosphere of their life and keep their dignity and their independence in real life. The major theme on Anita Nair's works is 'Women's liberation' and her 'Dignity'.

Woman finds life less promised and confusing due to her social and cultural insecurities. At any moment Women come out of their confinements, they have to fight to wipe out the negative image of women already keeps in the minds of men and women. In that aspect 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 experimental fight of woman who refuses to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. The woman rising out of such situations is a defeated individual who undergoes much pain and suffering. Anita Nair indicates a woman's life start from self-sacrifice to self-realization and self-negation to self-affirmation.

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