



ANALYZING ANITA NAIR'S NOVELS FOR THEMES AND ATTITUDE ABOUT WOMEN

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Abstract:

Literature has developed in response to a variety of social issues, including caste, poverty, the oppression of the poor, equal opportunity for everyone, the awakening of women, religious reform movements, the awakening of the underclasses, etc. The current study tries to investigate Anita Nair's hidden or "untouched" issues on many social, religious, political, economical and cultural aspects of Indian society. She speaks out on a variety of social, marital, and psychological viewpoints affecting people in society.

Key Words: Marital Attitude, Cultural Realities, Awakening

Introduction:

Indian literature in English has served as a focal point for a variety of societal issues that have had an impact on Indian society either directly or indirectly. Mulk Raj Anand's works are most notable for the way the philosophy operates in the background. His books *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *Untouchables*, and *Across the Black Waters* are accurate accounts of the lives of the oppressed. With caste, class, and religious distinctions, he has offered work that is tougher and sometimes more ruthlessly involved. R. K. Narayan explores his deep philosophical leanings toward societal concerns that have an impact on Indians' lives in a variety of social contexts in his books *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Dark Room*. Written by Khushwant Singh, a train to Pakistan His subsequent book, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, paints a satirical portrait of a blended Sikh family that reflects many Indian responses to the liberation struggle of the 1940s. The Indian English novel was significantly impacted by the epochal political, social, and intellectual ferments in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Along with Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, other writers who significantly enriched Indian literature with their iconoclastic and critical perspectives on social issues in Indian society include K. Nagrajan, Bhabhani, Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Shashi Deshpande, Kamla Markandya, Anita Desai, and Amitav Ghose. These authors' first books do a good job of exposing the genuine status of Indian culture in terms of how women are treated. Since all of these authors were born after India attained independence, English has no colonial connotations for them. Their writing is distinguished by an excellent command of the language and a wholly accurate portrayal of modern India, with all its regional differences. They often wrote about the urban middle class since it is the social class they are most familiar with. Due to patriarchal presumptions about the higher value of male experience, Indian women's authors' work has historically been underestimated. The majority of these female authors wrote about the enclosed home area and how women saw their experiences there, which is one aspect that contributes to this bias. As a result, it is expected that their writing will always be seen as being of lower quality than that of male authors who write on "heavier" subjects. In comparison to their regional counterparts, Indian women authors of English-language books also suffer from a second form of discrimination. In terms of Elaine Showalter's three phases, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, and Shobha De stand out as examples of consistent advancement. Their female protagonists show a psychological transformation that moves through the various stages of following tradition, protesting and advocating for rights, and ultimately introspection leading to self-discovery that transforms them into strong, independent, and quick-witted women willing to face the challenges of life not just as a minority group but with the awareness of being a powerful sustaining force for society as a whole.

Feminine Explosion:

Dr. Nirmal Sharma's paper, "Anita Nair's Women in Ladies' Coupé As Victims Under Patriarchy," focuses on the many stages of pain that women go through in society. The work is an attempt to show how, in real life, repression and subordination often go unnoticed and instead pass for affection, safety, and security. There are many stories in the book *Ladies' Coupé*. It focuses on the lives and experiences of six women, whose stories the author skilfully weaves together, with Akhila or Akhilendeswari acting as a magnet in the middle. The Akhila narrative serves as a reminder to readers of the position faced by Indian women, who are expected to spend their time fulfilling the roles of daughter, sister, and family earner in order to meet their needs. In this book, Anita Nair not only addresses the issues facing women but also aims to offer them a way forward. Whether it is the situation of a girl kid, physical humiliation, rape, or the domineering position of men in a

woman's life, the research has touched on all the important features of the female world in this book. The researcher has covered all the issues in all parts of female existence and depicts realistically how their rights, desires, and happiness are suppressed under the pretence of responsibility. The author of the book does not support maintaining women's status as property or as victims of the patriarchal system, nor does she argue against the presence of men's roles in women's lives. However, they should respond in their own manner to the inappropriate behaviour on the male side. In the work, Anita Nair not only paints a realistic portrait of the state of women, but she also conveys a message via a variety of characters, including karpagam.

The quest for self-discovery and understanding one's value as an individual comprises the experiences of six women who meet in a ladies' coupe, as Ms. Poornima Gaur demonstrates in her research, "A World of Their Own: Women at Crossroads in Anita Nair's Ladies' Coupe." The phrase "Ladies' Coupe" itself is a metaphor for women's lives from conception to death. It is a compartment reserved only for women, comparable to their small world, where they can share their smiles, their tears, their marriages, their lovers, and their children—the most private and special moments of their lives—without worrying about being seen by others because they are all strangers and are probably never going to cross paths again. However, they all have the same attitude in that they are all extremely powerful and looking for the true purpose of life. The study's lively description and the passion it arouses are what give it its attractiveness.

An increasingly popular patriarchal idea is presented by D. Silvia Flavia in her work, "The Concept of Patriarchy and Female Defiance in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe," in which a woman is bound by tradition to be reliant on men and thus unable to recognise her own power. She depicted her ladies as they battled patriarchy side by side, but at the very end, she gave them a defiant gesture. Her female characters have been presented as clever, inquisitive individuals who are dissatisfied with the injustice done to them and revolt against it. As feminism highlights a connection between inequality and injustice, colonialism and the idea of patriarchy go hand in hand. Although it seems that the colonial master has disappeared from the conquered nations, patriarchy is still a result of colonialism. It is clear that only males enjoy the benefits of freedom, while women continue to experience male tyranny similar to that experienced by the colonial rulers and the colonised. It is apparent that the decolonized guy used his unfair treatment of women to declare his dominance. Therefore, Anita Nair's female characters highlight the issue of how patriarchy has shaped their way of life and perceive it as both the source of their oppression at home and in society as well as a place where they may wage war to defeat their oppressors.

In her research, "Rupturing the Wedding Bond in Anita Nair's The Better Man," S. Suganya attempts to examine how rape, male dominance, and betrayal in marriage are dealt with in Anita Nair's books. The struggle for a woman to fully realise herself as a human being, independent of her numerous conventional duties as a daughter, wife, mother, etc., is explored in Anita Nair's literature. Female authors of the twentieth century see marriage as the most effective tool for subjugating women and a covert manifestation of patriarchal dominance. The transition from feudal patriarchy to entrepreneurial bourgeois patriarchy has polluted the life of societal interactions, and strong individualism, self-centeredness, and self-government have advanced as the main individual components in social connections. Even if in a pretty confined fashion, women have started to grow more independent, and the custom of marriage—which up until this point has defined the boundaries of her space—becomes their primary source of influence. With her gender-specific traits, the self-considering, suffering, and generous woman has started to thwart the pressures to uphold patriarchal gender theory.

The woman who has risen to the centre and taken on a significant role in the social structure is eager to explore new avenues for growth and intellectual fulfilment and to establish her independence in marriage. This research examines marriage-related topics as they appear in the writings of female authors. In their stories, the talented female authors redefine the husband-wife relationship. In her first book, Anita Nair explores how women may establish their uniqueness and rights in marriage and grow into full-fledged women with potential as people. "The fact that we are human is far more important than our being and woman," Simone de Beauvoir said, and Anita Nair wholeheartedly agrees. Women have long been severely repressed and oppressed. The primary subject for many authors, particularly in postmodern texts, is the search for oneself.

The interesting story of a woman's desire is told in the essay "Radha's Revenge: Feminist Agency, Post coloniality, and the Politics of Desire in Anita Nair's Mistress" by Debotri Dhar. Radha's lack of desire for her businessman husband Shyam and her growing desire for Chris, an American travel writer and cellist on the hunt for his own stories, weave a triangle of desire for us. The story unfolds along the fault lines of tradition and modernity in contemporary India. The research demonstrates how Nair's use of the Radha-Krishna narrative from Hindu mythology enables Mistress to address important issues surrounding female agency and desire in feminist and postcolonial theory when read as a feminist reworking of myth. To this purpose, the first section of the thesis reads Mistress as a feminist reclamation of the legendary Radha's agency via a subtle reworking of desire by drawing on a variety of classical and modern literature on the lore of Krishna. The second part of the thesis then goes on to suggest that the notion of desire used in "Mistress" can usefully engage postcolonial feminist concerns. The study contends that Mistress envisions a potent postcolonial feminist politics of an alternative, open future by dislocating centre-periphery and global-local binaries and by locating female

desire within a hybrid "third space" of agency. The research focuses on sexual desire but avoids physiologically simplistic explanations of want in favour of considering a variety of elements, such as respect, compassion, mutuality, and pleasure. The study situates female desire more holistically within women's emotional world; this view of want has both the potential for critical-feminist resistance and patriarchal cooperation since it is affected by dominant cultural discourses and daily gender politics.

Society and Women:

Only female concerns have been examined in Anita Nair's works in prior studies, it has been noted. But she also advocates for a better way of life for women through her characters. Indians serve as the main protagonists in her works. She switches between stories that are male and female centered. Women and men complement one another. Even women are no longer seen as equal to males in this day and age; rather, they are seen as the weaker class. They experience repression-ruled society in a man. These women are social beings without voices.

Since no writer can completely escape from society, the brutality of the system, and the injustice surrounding them, Anita Nair takes on the role of a social critic. The books written by these women authors cannot overthrow oppressive societal systems, but by posing issues, encouraging reflection, and encouraging rethinking, they may aid in the formation of a consciousness that will finally result in a positive and beneficial shift in society. Anita Nair covers a sizable portion of society from all socioeconomic levels and age groups in her book *Ladies Coupé* through the close conversations amongst the members of the *Ladies Coupé*. *Cut Like Wound* introduces the reader to a cast of memorable characters and their social and psychological states, all while being deeply rooted in Bangalore's alleys and atmosphere. *Lessons in Forgetting* is a touching narrative of forgiveness, redemption, and second chances. She discusses writing in urban India as well as the book's exploration of the position of the corporate wife. She concentrates on the outcasts of society. Her characters rebel against society's hierarchical structure. She bargains and manipulates to spread middle-class ideals. A modest cultural change that has occurred throughout this voyage has been documented. The main character in Anita Nair's second book, *Ladies Coupe* (2001), is Akhilandeshwari, aka Akhila. She is a 45-year-old single woman. After her father passes away, she gets hired as an income tax clerk. She is from a traditional Tamil Brahmin family. She now fills the responsibilities of daughter, sister, aunt, and breadwinner while carrying the weight of the whole family on her young shoulders. She finally chooses to purchase a one-way train ticket to the coastal city of Kanyakumari after considerable consideration. She meets five other ladies on her route to Kanyakumari, hears their experiences while riding in the compartment, and shares her own. The author of the book illustrates how patriarchy impacts the lives of women by providing detailed descriptions of six different women. They are kept within the confines of the established social structures by our social and cultural ideals. In many facets of life, they encounter injustice and inequity. Women's empowerment is discussed on the one hand, but the book also casts doubt on the social structure and educational system that now exist in modern India.

Anita Nair begins her quest for social change with her own home. She demonstrates how family is bound by its own members' social development, which is affected by many societal consequences. In reality, she did a good job of capturing the traditional behaviour of the Tamil Brahmin family. In her book *Ladies' Coupe*, which challenges the position of women in a society that places them only in the roles of submissive wife, obedient daughter, and childbearing, she disobeys a number of socio-moral rules. She immerses the reader in the daily struggles that women in modern India deal with in their interactions with their spouses, mothers, friends, co-workers, and kids. She illustrates the awful situation faced by Indian women in a patriarchal society where female foeticide has become rampant. She travels a difficult path in life. She is expected to belong to her father when she is born, to her husband after marriage, and to the adult male child when she is elderly. She is constantly reliant on others. Indian women's identities, according to Robert Fraser, "are often linked to and determined by the social and cultural norms of a societal framework" (44). She has been constrained mentally and physically by cultural norms and restrictions that are ingrained in people's minds and in the collective memory of society, and she has been shocked by the patriarchal attitude.

The characters in Anita Nair's books undergo evident reflection as a result of marital conflict or disillusionment. Her characters do not undervalue marriage as a social institution and turn to marriage to resolve their marital issues. They are looking for a fair and sensible solution to their issues. They possess the bravery that comes from being truthful with themselves after a fair assessment of their circumstances. They assign responsibility for their problems to themselves in addition to others and their spouses. Their eagerness to find answers to their issues causes them to temporarily separate from their families, which is followed by an unbiased assessment of the whole issue. They sometimes take a conventional approach in their quest for identification and self-realization, preserving societal norms and institutions while doing so. They are independent, autonomous women who are conscious of their rights and responsibilities as people. They have valid passions. Due to their circumstances, individuals eventually reach a point of mental maturity and believe that maintaining a marriage is worthwhile. They fight against the repressive and unfair character of the societal

standards and regulations that restrict their capacity and existence as a wife because they are aware of the tremendous social inequity and injustice done to them.

Anita Nair progresses from the position of social theorist to social reformer. She brings to light a variety of social crimes, including female foeticide, gang rape, honour killing, stalking, and flinging acid. She draws attention to the culture of male supremacy and societal norms. According to her, when impoverished and oppressed women give birth, they are unwelcome; when they must get married, they become a financial burden; when they have daughters, they do the family wrong; when they leave the house, they are provocateurs; and so on. Women are still seen as a man's property that has to be managed. Men worry that they could renounce such power. In her book *Idris*, Nair further demonstrates the ancient caste-based social structure. The strict caste restrictions of the culture have a negative impact on her highly categorised characteristics. In reality, she seeks to escape the limitations of the conventional social order based on caste through her works. The works of Anita Nair capture a universal cry that indubitably springs from her roots in commonplace India. Her primary interest comes from her close surroundings, which serve as a mirror to the lives lived in India. She critically investigates a variety of societal taboos, including those around marriage, education, rites and rituals, and class and caste. She expresses the sentiments, anxieties, and emotions that people have. One might see her books as humanistic and social texts because of her concern for the issues faced by the downtrodden and their search for identity. Her work is renowned for its brave and compassionate treatment of weighty and unresolvable subjects impacting the lives of the underprivileged in a class-ridden society.

The Major Themes in her Novels are Blend of Traditions and Modernity:

The literature author Anita Nair is a postcolonial feminist. She has discussed the predicament faced by Indian women as they vacillate between traditional and contemporary duties. Her writings are exclusively inspired by Indian culture. She has shown how women are treated less favourably in traditional Indian culture. The social standards that now exist in our culture undermine women's human rights and marginalise their presence. Her primary concerns in her works are "gender discrimination and societal conditioning of women," "husband-wife relationships: the assailant and the repressed," and "sexual exploitation of women," both within and outside the context of marriage.

The female characters challenge the long-standing customs and expectations of the society in which they live in an effort to find their own uniqueness and identity. They have the confidence and strength to make unconventional decisions that society often does not approve of. However, the reality is that these interactions do exist, but they are hidden from view. The writers deserve praise for accurately depicting society as it is and demonstrating that literature in general reflects societal conditions. Nearly every protagonist looks into unconventional options in order to pursue emotional independence, personal freedom, and a life according to their own preferences.

Women's Liberation by Preserving Their Value and Dignity:

Women's Liberation by Preserving Their Value and Dignity in Modern Society of India is the theme of Anita Nair's writings. These tales' prognostications painted issues like women's weaknesses throughout their lives and misery inside their community. The researcher's goal is to demonstrate that these women managed to find their path, make an effort to get their independence, and maintain their dignity in their families and communities.

Even though the researcher wishes to show that Indian women experience discrimination, loss of rights, and other challenges in both public and private life, these women nevertheless make a significant effort to maintain their independence and quality of life in their community. The main focus of this study is Anita Nair's emphasis on women's liberation through the preservation of their worth and dignity in contemporary India. The prognostications in these stories portrayed issues as women's weaknesses throughout their lives and suffering within their society. The researcher's goal is to demonstrate that these women managed to find their way, make an effort to obtain their freedom, and maintain their dignity in their families and communities.

Women's experiences demonstrate that they are not helpless animals or pitiful victims; rather, they are capable of completing any task on their own, even without a man's assistance. This essay portrays the aggressive mentality of women who gain social status by social, family, and financial means. Women in these works eventually overcame challenges, adjusted to their situations, and maintained their dignity in both their personal and societal lives.

Gender Inequality:

The structural discrepancy between men and women that causes women to experience sympathetic social injustice is based on gender discrimination rather than biological necessity. Gender inequalities are constructed culturally, not biologically. Traditional gender roles depict women as emotional, weak, caring, and subservient, while males are logical, powerful, protective, and determined. Inequities like denying women equal access to leadership and decision-making positions in the family and society, paying men more for doing the same job than women, and persuading women that they are unsuited for careers in fields like math and engineering have all been made acceptable through the use of these gender roles. This kind of gender categorisation encourages the idea that women are fundamentally beneath males. Because it is based on

biological distinctions between the sexes that are seen as being part of our unchanging identity as men and women, this belief in the inherent inferiority of women is a kind of what is known as "biological essentialism." Therefore, feminism makes a distinction between the terms "gender" and "sex," which relate to our cultural programming as either feminine or masculine, and "sex," which refers to our biological structure as either female or male. In other words, neither men nor women are born with a feminine or masculine nature. Instead, these gender categories are socially produced; this is referred to as "social constructionism." Therefore, feminism's ultimate goal is to advance gender equality.

Family Relationship:

In her book, Anita Nair intriguingly weaves the concept of relational anarchy throughout. In the majority of her novels, she uses this phrase. Women are always seen as sensitive, empathetic, and caring, whereas males are always seen as logical. They never share the same interest or perspective. The manner in which they approach problems differently and attempt to find solutions. Anita Nair portrays the evolution of the couples' connection in the family in her film *Mistress*. It is vital to note that the lack of communication between the husband and wife is what causes this gap in the couple's relationship. Anita Nair has meticulously depicted every little detail to give the impression that this is how ordinary people really live their daily lives. She is successful in highlighting the precarious situation of women in patriarchal India. Readers will like the challenging circumstances that various individuals face since she has a window into the human mind. She elaborates on the social consciousness of the time in which two souls are in fierce competition with one another and are working very hard to create their identities in society in her idea. A man-woman partnership must take into account both of their financial freedoms. Anita Nair, however, has placed emphasis on the emotional connection between a husband and wife to strengthen their relationship. *Mistress* serves as the ideal instance of how husband and wife roles have changed in modern culture. This book explores a variety of subjects, including art and adultery, the thrill of new born love, relationship monotony, the ugliness and dirtiness of love and tenderness, abuse, finite expectations, and regression. Additionally, it emphasises tradition, marriage, religion, and betrayal.

In contrast, the failing relationships are contrasted with the Nila River, which has less water and symbolises the desolation of the characters' sad lives in *Mistress*. Through *navarasa*-the nine stages of human emotion-Anita Nair strives to incorporate this with *Kathakali*, the ancient dance of Kerala. All of the characters are going through these emotional stages that characterise the human condition.

Social Position:

Everyone in a society has a shared emotion known as social awareness. It simply means to be aware of the laws or values that govern a society or group, fostering a sense of equality and protecting individual rights. It also has to do with how a person and society are interdependent on one another. The prevalent culture, ideas, customs, and conventions in society have an impact on every single person. However, the conditions and quantity of exposure determine how much a person is impacted by society. Anita Nair is one such committed Indian writer of the current day. An artist has a perceptive comprehension of reality, and therefore, with the aid of perceptual philosophical understanding, he attempts his own manner to disseminate social consciousness and awareness among the people. She bravely speaks her opinions on the plight of women in modern Indian culture. This essay shows how Nair uses her book *Ladies Coupe* to encourage social awareness among readers.

One of the leading female authors in modern India, Anita Nair has received recognition for her creativity, inclination, and commitment to the community. She displays courageously strong female characters in her writings. Being an Indian woman, along with the experiences of other women, she had a very clear understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural issues that women face. Both Anita Nair and the seasoned Anita Desai began writing when they were seven or eight years old, sometimes in the midst of emotional outbursts (Mishra 100). *Ladies' coupe* is a moving and genuine account of women's ongoing struggles to create their identities in society. According to Nubile, "*Ladies Coupe* is a fantastic illustration of modern women's identities and their conflictual connection with tradition, a male-dominated society, gender discrimination, and restrictions due to class and caste. It's a book where fiction and reality converge, and the voices of the women are genuine" (Nubile74). Anita Nair attempts to illustrate via the examples of six female characters what women can do for their emancipation and how our society might become aware of them.

In conclusion, Anita Nair is one of those Indian English authors who, via her excellent novel-writing style, provides a realistic account of women's miserable conditions in Indian culture. Nair analyses the suffering of women on the one hand while offering several solutions on the other to help them live productive and tranquil lives. Her female characters are strong and bold, with an astonishing amount of daring and willpower to battle against societal injustices. The books written by Anita Nair might be seen as a microcosm of the world of women.

Conclusion:

The works of Anita Nair capture a universal cry that indubitably springs from her roots in commonplace India. Her primary interest comes from her close surroundings, which serve as a mirror to the lives lived in India. She critically investigates a variety of societal taboos, including those around marriage,

education, rites and rituals, and class and caste. She expresses the sentiments, anxieties, and emotions that people have. One might see her books as humanistic and social texts because of her concern for the issues faced by the downtrodden and their search for identity. Her work is renowned for its brave and compassionate treatment of weighty and unresolvable subjects impacting the lives of the underprivileged in a class-ridden society.

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