

REPRESENTING DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS WITH RESPECT TO CASTER AND GENDER IN THE WORK OF ANITA NAIR

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Introduction:

Anita Nair is one of the notable writers in India. She always focuses on the problems of a woman in Indian society. Though Anita Nair has refused to be labeled as a feminist writer her stories portray the sensibilities of a woman, how a woman looks at herself and her problems. Actually, the intention of writing this article paper is to portray the major theme of the social consciousness of women to find their dignity, independence, and roleplaying in modern society of India. Anita Nair's novels display an amazing depth in her narration, and the main thrust of her novels is the encounter between the self-actualization and family responsibilities of the individuals. Almost all her novels are placed in Indian culture and the characters and settings are original Indian. There are multiple themes in Anita Nair's works, like family, relationship, social position, gender inequality, and etc. One of the main themes which researcher consider in this thesis is women's liberation by preserving their value and dignity. The following is the present research of the thought of women's liberation. The emancipation of women, their liberation in society, legal, economic, and family relationship, and their escape from narrow gender roles are not easily achieved. But the women's characters in Anita Nair's novels try to change the atmosphere of their life and keep their dignity and their liberation in real life.

Anita Nair is a popular Indian writer and contemporary Indian novelist and poetry who famous with her novels as „The Better Man” and „Ladies coupe” which have been translated into 21 languages. She was born on 26 January 1966 at Shornur of Palakkad in the state of Kerala and also she brought up in Chennai, India. Anita graduated BA in English Literature in Chennai, India and worked as an innovative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore while she was writing her first book which is a collection of short stories with titled „Satyr of the Subways”. When she was twenty-four years old, she went to the united states to study journalism. Anita Nair lives in Bangalore with her husband and her son, but her parents are still living in Kerala at present.

Usually, Anita Nair's novels have portrayed the situation of woman in South Indian base in which how they are oppressed in the male dominated society and their women's desire is totally repressed in a patriarchal society. It can be proved that Anita Nair's effort to portray the social consciousness of women to find their dignity, independence, and roleplaying in modern society of India. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn told that literature isn't the breath of contemporary society but Anita Nair believed that society is the environment in which literature breath. In fact, she intends to depict both the good and bad sides of society in literature. So, her novels have drawn a pattern of problem society among people life.

In these novels, Anita Nair had selected the characters with full of great courage. In fact, she wants to display Indian woman who can independence in society and they can continue to their life in

every situation. The purpose of Anita Nair of writing these novels is to sketch how female oppressed in during of their life while they can gain their dignity and their independence in the modern community.

The author of this paper was interested in writing about the theme the Women's Liberation by Preserving Their Value and Dignity in Modern Society of India. The theme is the result of reading a story to looking for the author's most important comments from their writings. In this study to consider major themes and minor themes on Anita Nair's novels and short stories. Major themes are the most significant themes of the story, and often they are a part of the entire story while minor themes are less important. They refer to an idea that appears in a work briefly and gives way to other minor themes.

Objectives:

- 1) To explore the various psychological aspects of the women characters in both the Novels.
- 2) To understand the gender discrimination prevailing in the society.
- 3) To study cultural, social and emotional backgrounds of affected women in the novels of both the writers.
- 4) To study the scenario of the society related to equality of man and woman relationship in marriage.
- 5) To have deeper understanding of both writer's work.

Review of Literature:

Margret Shanthi portrayed as a well educated is a gold medalist in Chemistry. She is still dominated by her husband. Ebenezer Paulraj who is a school principal, gives first importance to her career rather than her desires. He never tries to respond to her feelings. Anita Nair through the example of Margret's character reflects that not even an illiterate woman but also a well educated woman feels herself trapped in such a society.

The other Lady passenger in the coupe Prabha Devi is one who is very pretty and beauty conscious. When Prabha Devi was born her father was not happy as he wanted a male child. "Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans, addled your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance" (LC169). Here Anita Nair presents gender bigotry in Indian society where a girl is still considered inferior to a boy.

Marikolanthu is a poor woman. When Marikolanthu is exploited, instead of showing sympathy, everyone blames her. Here Anita Nair delineates the psychology of all the members in the society both male and female. They find fault with the woman who has been exploited. They regard that woman herself is responsible for her tragedy. After that disastrous incident, Marikolanthu spends her days in a phase of complete loss of identity. After some time she gives birth to a male child, Muthu. She is unable to love her baby Muthu, an outcome of that hateful incident and of her helplessness and nothingness. When Murugesan died, his body was not fully burnt so Muthu has been given the task to take care of his father's dead body. In these circumstances she accepts her son and starts enjoying the most important part of her life 'The Motherhood'.

Janaki is the eldest lady in all of six ladies in Coupe. She was married at the age of eighteen and her husband was twenty seven. It was an arranged marriage. From her childhood she had been taught that a husband is an equal to God and it is her duty to serve him "He is your husband and you must accept whatever he does" (LC25). She realizes that her life is not hers as it is wholly dedicated to her husband and to her son.

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. In the days of her earlier married days she tries a lot to impress her husband, Ravindran but she could not. She wants to give the best to him but he was not interested in her. Whenever Anjana is ready for a casual conversation Ravindran feels irritated and leaves the place at once. In spite of his actions she is ready to perform her duty and all that she wants to know about the likes and dislikes of her husband. 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, but it breeds pain, misery and fury. She develops hatred to all the things around her, even to herself. She has lived for others sacrificing much to be called altruistic. Then she is egocentric to be called aggressive. Women are tending to be more aggressive than usual as they began to give importance to their own self.

Education provided them the privilege to be aware of themselves, especially of their rights. The women of the oriental countries remained confined to the four walls of the houses. With the spread of knowledge and greater independence, women have started raising the voices of the protest against oppression of any kind. Educated women demand equality, freedom and justice to bring about a radical change in their lives. Anjana breaks the traditional Indian consciousness and creates the world of her own. Anjana emerges from her unsuccessful marriage, with the determination to live as a free individual. Thus she asserts her personal freedom. Anjana is a blend of both traditional and modern elements and she wants uniqueness and autonomy.

Meenakshi is one of the characters of Anita Nair. Meenakshi falls in love with Balan the Kathakali dancer. When she is deserted by her husband, she does not want to depend on others. She finds herself a job and become financially independent. She is projected as the woman of the twenty first century. Modern women are aware of their potentiality.

In Anita Nair's *Mistress*, she portrays the husband and wife relationship in the patriarchal society. In those days marriage is an ultimate goal for all Indian women. With this assumption, Radha in *Mistress* suffers in her traditional marriage life. She is forcefully married to Shyam by her father's compulsion. She is not happy with traditional life. Therefore she decides to lead her life as her own wish. She seeks her own individuality. She never wants to live in tradition and society so breaks the limitation and family customs of tradition.

In all the works of Anita Nair, each aspect of womanhood is depicted with graciousness and sensitivity generating the message of womanhood. Anita Nair's marvellous understanding of the minds of women is depicted beautifully in her novel *Ladies Coupe*. Women continue to be victims of circumstances though they live up to the varied roles they are expected to uphold. Patriarchy, in various forms tries to repress, and humiliate women. Women should not be ashamed of their status in life for e.g. widowhood, divorcee status, spinster status etc. Instead they should realize their true potential and strength. They should have the willingness to face new challenges and come up with

innovative ideas to tackle issues around them. Though Patriarchy is a common concept, Anita Nair deals it with variety of women in different situations. She has portrayed her women characters who rise against patriarchy to find their identity.

Methodology:

This research works aims to reveal the various aspects of feminine sensibility in the novels of Anita Nair. So the method of research would be critical, analytical and qualitative research. As it require more library works.

Chapterization:

Anita Nair's treatment of gender has been the main concern of several studies, but the dynamics of caste-gender relations in the Kerala society, the author's home-state, has not received the attention it deserves. This study seeks to examine the way Nair's fiction throws light on the ideological constructs, created in the interest of sustaining existing power relations, to induce certain patterns of social and personal behaviour. It approaches the task on hand with the assumptions that, Anita Nair's fiction, being the work of a Malayali woman writer whose within/without position with respect to the Kerala society, offers her a unique perspective on that society, can help provide a comprehensive understanding of the caste-gender relations in what is considered one of the more progressive societies of contemporary India.

Chapter One, *Introduction*, acts as a prelude to the thesis by providing a social and historical 'background' of the Kerala society. A brief account of the various theories of caste circulating in the academic circles is juxtaposed with the genealogy of caste and gender conflicts in Kerala to initiate the reader for an active engagement with Nair's fictional representations of these issues. The highlight of this chapter is the attempt it makes to offer a corrective view of the impact of the social reforms, and the communist ideology on the traditional division of society on the lines of caste and gender. The treatment of their women by the upper caste Nair community has been dealt with in some detail to help the reader appreciate Nair's comprehensive treatment of the caste and gender issues.

Chapter Two, *Diasporic Consciousness in the works of Anita Nair* anticipates the question regarding the authenticity of a narrative that is characterized by the writer's ambivalence towards the culture she deals with. This chapter presents literary debates raging among the various sects of writers regarding authenticity and the concept of home. I have explored Anita Nair's problematic concept of home and the quintessential dilemma of double-identity faced by most migrants. While acknowledging the fact that a writer's socio-economic and political background colours his/her writings, I have tried to present the case that Nair's ambivalence is a productive ambivalence that has enabled the writer to represent the dynamics of a society driven by caste and gender, by avoiding certain facile generalizations.

Chapter Three, *Caste in the works of Anita Nair* deals with Nair's treatment of the dilemmas that the upper-caste individual, whose liberal education, and experience in city often force him/her to challenge his/her deeply-ingrained notions about caste-relations. This Chapter also highlights the

fascinating phenomenon of the reverse flow of power in caste-relations that Nair brings to light in some of her novels. One of her novels examined in this chapter, deals with the way the untouchable is seen both as someone who gives the upper caste individual a sense of power and control, and someone who, in precisely being the 'other', evokes fear by occupying a space that is beyond the horizon of the upper caste individual's experience. The occult practices and the *theyyattam*, the dance performed in village shrines, suggest the existence of the reverse flow of power within a caste society. Nair's unique contribution to the caste debate is the way she portrays the radical instability of the caste society, and the suggestion that external constraints/deterrents alone are insufficient to bring down the caste barriers in human relations.

In Chapter Four, *Matriliney and Gender in the works of Anita Nair* I have tried to establish the fact that matriliney, which is believed to give agency and voice to woman is actually a myth. I have further looked at the way this apparent granting of agency to woman is a patriarchal strategy to exclude women from the public sphere, which is not very different from limiting women's access to certain domains in the name of culture and tradition. I also analyze the way Anita Nair problematizes the upper caste Nair woman's identity in their battle against the existing oppressive social structures, which attempt to stifle their identity. Nair's fiction exposes the romanticization of matriliney by focusing on the life of the Nair women after marriage. This portrayal clears the conceptual confusion between matriliney and matriarchy, proving that though the inheritance and lineage were the prerogative of the women, authority always rested with the men folk of the community.

Chapter Five, *The Intersection of Caste and Gender: Dynamics of Oppression of Women outside Kerala*, I deal with Anita Nair's treatment of the complex working of gender in the Brahmin society. This Chapter deals with the way insidious notions like the *stree-dharma* or the *pati-vrata* get internalized by the upper-caste women and make them agents of their own subordination. Anita Nair's vision of the ideal woman, is influenced, among other things by her exposure to other writers who have chronicled the life of the new woman and the forces that have shaped her identity, which stands in sharp relief against the false notions of freedom that contemporary upper caste woman nourish.

Chapter Six helps the reader appreciate the way a creative writer like Anita Nair, through her poignant portrayal of the condition of women, helps the reader visualize a society that allows its members to grow in ways that they themselves choose to. Chapter Six is the Conclusion which sums up the arguments in the previous chapters and reflects on the findings of the research work. I also acknowledge the challenges and limitations of the thesis. I have also suggested some of the areas where research gap exists, which can be profitably explored.

Caste and gender, at bottom, are categories that demonstrate the inequality inherent in society. The experience of an oppressed individual in society is so complex that these categories often overlap in the description of this experience. This study is a modest attempt to understand the complex phenomena, using a creative writer's depiction of it as the proverbial Ariadne's thread to traverse through the maze.

Significance of the Study

Anita Nair is the most significant of the contemporary Indian novelists in English literature, whose works explore different categories. She tries to present the differing perspectives of the East and the West in her novels. Researcher attempts to assert that author's life faced too many social problems in India for this reason she portrays the social problems of characters in her novels. In this paper, researcher purpose to analyses the character's identity to find out the major theme of value and dignity women in their social life.

The emphasis of this paper is to seek and evaluate the social problem of women characters in selected novels of Anita Nair. Although, the author focuses on the feeling of the female characters without the value of being seen in the community. Anita Nair insitences to represent how they faced too many social problems as lack of liberation and right in their society and individual life. Hence The most significant of this study is to display the women's life and portrait the quality of women's courage in Indian society.

Anita Nair highlights the women's lives in the past whom were traditional and their life was narrow and controlled by men in their life and also they were oppressed in personal and social life. 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.

Hypothesis

Up to now very rare attempts had been made to analyze the novels of Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande. But nobody has attempted to analyze their novels comparatively to bring out feminine psyche, the changing faces of women and changing relationship between man and woman. It is believed that the novels of Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande deal with the feminine sensibility and changing roles of the women in the Indian society. So it is proposed to study these novels to bring about the changing roles of women in Indian Society.

Conclusion:

This study is founded on the assumption that the productive ambivalence of a creative writer like Anita Nair, who adores her native land even as she is unsparing in her criticism of a seemingly modern, yet deeply conservative society, will facilitate an understanding of the way a caste society constructs identities and shapes people's behaviour. The self-contradiction of the male-dominated community that boasts of its strong matrilineal tradition forms the substance of Anita Nair's major works, and this study is an attempt to tease out the implications of Nair's views on the subject. Nair's fiction succeeds in providing a glimpse of the rich and varied layers of experience that the Kerala society offers. Nair owes her comprehensive treatment of this complex sociocultural phenomenon partly to her location. Nair's identity is partially responsible for the manner in which representations are mediated within the narrative spaces. Fiction, the medium she has chosen to articulate her views on the issue, has facilitated a nuanced treatment of the problem plaguing most societies in contemporary India. Nair's grim portrayal of contemporary social relations is tinged with the vision of a better society, which makes her fiction a unique contribution to the caste and gender discourses.

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