



## Humanitarian Perspectives in Indian English Novels Anita Nair's Characters - A Role Model of Humanity

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Humanism is an attitude of mind. It is a system of thought which concentrates especially upon the activities of man rather than of the supernatural powers or upon religious ideas. Humanitarian philosophy in Indian English novels stresses the importance of human love, compassion and sympathy. It involves the study of human culture. It originated in English literature during the time of Renaissance, when the humanist writers asserted the dignity of man and the importance of worldly life. This gave vent to sociological novel writing. It is the prose fiction which derives its major interest in the background and theme from the conditions of the society in which the characters exist.

The above mentioned definitions have a strong bearing upon Indian English novelists too. The researcher here wishes to unfold the subtle layers of humanitarian perspectives found in Anita Nair. The novelist emphasizes on the feminist views having majority of her protagonists as women and paints middle and lower middle class human beings.

Nair is popularly known for her novels Ladies Coupe, Mistress, Lessons in Forgetting, The Better Man and Cut Like Wound. Her outlook for life and relationship is affirmative and her novels are full of humanistic value. Through her novels she unfolds many demerits or contradictory ideologies which entered into man-woman relationship. The social and religious

codes are slowly loosened by the individual. As a result the harmonious marital relationships are upturned. Still the humanistic value are strongly preserved by the characters. Character in Ladies Coupe, Prabhakar gets married to Janki. The initial days of this marriage display bride's stiffening within, which is sympathetically understood by her husband. The otherwise difficult situation is handled skillfully by the humanistic husband and slowly she conquers the penetration phobia which leads to a happy married life. Margaret Shanthi and her dictator husband Ebenezer Paulraj tells a story of discordant marriage. The dominating husband is avenged by the wife as she makes him fat by overfeeding him. She does this only to make him an agreeable person, fit to live with. Later the couple had a baby daughter. But now she ponders if he loses his life, she will lose her husband and the daughter, her father. Thus, every year she takes him to a clinic to control his obesity and saves her husband's life as well as married life. Margaret concludes:

"Ebe slowly become fat man ... He needed me like he had never before. And Ebe became a man I could live with once again (Ladies Coupe 134)

Here, we notice the humanitarian perspective in an insulted wife, Margaret. She is a working woman who is insulted every now and then by her husband. He even forces her to abort the first child under a false claim of settling in a career; as opposed to his real treacherous designs to have her body unstained for sex only.

Jagdish and Prabha Devi is another couple who shows humanitarian perspective towards each other. The otherwise docile bride turns fashionable after her return from New York. Still she is accepted by Jagdish sensitively. He even uses condoms to agree to her wish of not having kids so early. The same Prabha Devi also tries to tempt Pramod by her sexual wiles, but immediately returns to her shell as soon as the latter makes physical advances. Her initial

confidence melts away with the arrival of mid-forties and she learns swimming secretly to create plethora of sensations in her married life. She makes her husband feel like a boy of twenty one. In this couple we observe humanity shifting from husband to wife and vice-versa which continues till the end of their conjugal life.

The protagonist Akhila's devotion for her family is the most important document of humanitarian attitude. She remains a spinster only because she is the only breadwinner of the family. She even allows her sister Padma and her family to stay in her quarter. Akhila is even compassionate towards the family of Sabramaniyer, though his elder daughter turns a whore after his death. Akhila leaves her first lover Hari only because she cares for what humiliation he might have to feel, if they get married. Here, it is noteworthy that though her marriageable age has passed, Hari is ready to marry her for he loves her truly. But Akhila's humanitarian attitude wants to save this youth much younger than her.

A poor lady, Marikolanthu is one more spinster who turns a nurse of a mad woman in Chettiar Kottai. She even turns a concubine of Shridhar Anna at night and a lesbian partner of his wife Sujata Akka during day time. A reader is shocked to see that she has not only delivered a child born of rape, but also reared him like her own son in latter phase of her life.

Sujata allows Marikolanthu to be a proxy in Chettiar household as the former feels a strange revulsion for her husband's touch. But, suitable to her humanitarian attitude, Marikolanthu neither exploits the couple financially nor emotionally. In literary history of Indian English novels, she becomes a role model of humanity, when she did not collect her wages nor does she ask for money for her operation. It is a strange act on the part of Sujata, who once was cautioned by Morikolanthu's youth and beauty, and thus, promptly sends her away; now, allows her to stay in her own house. Crafty Sujata at her own critical age uses Marikolanthu

not only as her proxy, but also makes her Shridhar's mistress, because, she has an absolute confidence in Marikalanthu, who demands none and gives all.

Anita Nair projects such human characters in *Mistress* too. Sethu, Koman's father is first such character who flourishes in his life and career only because of Dr. Samuel and later due to James Raj, a smuggler. Though he cheats the doctor, he is pardoned. His motherless child Koman is nurtured by the two sisters. Later, as Sethu marries Devayani, she also accepts Koman as an elder son. Such a love and compassion is unparalleled in human society. Koman's two brothers Babu and Mani also accept him as a real brother and respectfully treat him. Thus, the couple Sethu and Devyani leads a happy and calm life. In Sethu's life, full of straggles she plays a key role. She is the contentment incarnated in Sethu's life. The couple displays a fine example of traditional Indian marriage system where the wife's surrender value is a boon to a polity in general and husband in particular.

Novels by Anita Nair differ slightly from the problem novels. The problem novels concern and try to work out the central problem through characters and incidents. Problem such as patriarchal domination, sociological problem, poverty are discussed and a noble way out is suggested by the sacrificing characters. The novelist under study scarcely discuss such type of propaganda. She does not write on some specific purpose, neither does she criticize the effects of certain social or economic condition. The two Christian sisters Mari Patti and Jada Kondai takes a loving care of Koman- the motherless child. During his illness Mari Patti in her true motherly and Christian spirit makes an offering at the Church on the Chiffs to have his hair cut. Sister Faith i.e. Jada Kondai even risks her reputation as Sethu often visits her home during the first year of boy's stay at her home and the public rumours rise about Sethu and Jada Kondai's growing relationship. As such

there is none, but for a woman in Indian society, it is such a risk that she could suffer social banishment. But her humanitarian attitude overpowers it.

Koman's half-brother Babu is another example having humanitarian perspective, who marries Gowri though he knows all about her love affairs with his brother, Mani and her resultant pregnancy. Though he accepts her on familial obligation, his act is less than sold in Indian male dominated society, where a women's virginity is the first criterion for marriage. All through his life Babu is never seen to be blaming or beating Gowri.

Radha's boss, an elderly man is a habitual lady killer. He exploits Radha physically and she carries his baby. But all this is casually taken by his wife. She convinces Radha to leave him. Her dialogue reveals not only her helplessness but also a humanitarian perspective. She speaks;

"He is not a bad man, only weak, and he will never leave me" (Mistress 113)

The central character, Koman is a gentleman, though he has many love and sex relationship. He is honest with all of them. His decision to take Angela back to London as she is homesick, his quiet return from London as he senses the burden on Angela, shows his humanitarian perspective. All through his life he is a clam observer of his relatives and friends. Though he could not act at many incidents, his compassion and love for them is highly humanistic in tone. His love for Lalitha, the prostitute is noteworthy incident. He even offers to marry her. But quite strangely she rejects it on the grounds that Koman loves his solitude more than anything else. For years together she becomes Koman's companion and mistress. But seldom accepts money from him except in the last few years of her life. She showers her love on this lonely creature not for money.

The another major character, Radha flaunts all the social norms and has illicit, extramarital affair with Chris. She even gets

pregnant and all her guilt are pardoned by her loving husband Shyam. Radha exploits his tender feelings and his sense of loss for her. She maintains her sexual relationship with Chris, in Shyam's resort, even conceives and ultimately returns back to Shyam's life. Shyam too accepts her happily, which shows his humanity.

These characters from Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe and Mistress feel the urgency and need to forget the self at the cost of humanity. They undergo the stages of introspection and reflection.

#### Conclusion :

The research paper attempts to study and analyses the humanitarian perspective in Nair's two novels. Many inward and outward factors determine the human behaviour. It ranges from fate to finance and from basic instincts to Socio-anthropological causes. Though a little warmth and a little ice is left in human relationship, we observe true humanistic attitude in her characters -men and women, the poor and the rich alike. Media and modernity have added to the people's knowledge and sensitivity towards social experiences. People in the diversity of their socio-cultural, linguistic, ethnic and geographical backgrounds try to express there-humanity towards fellow human beings.

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