

10. Anita Nair's Social Vision through Female Protagonists

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Introduction

Anita Nair discusses and interrogates the androcentricism and patriarchy embedded in our culture. The female consciousness in the literary scenario also acquaints us with the variety of ways in which women respond to their inner urges and the environment. This new consciousness extended by women has been raised strongly in Indian English fiction and Anita Nair authoritatively advocates the feminine concerns through her realistic characters.

The author aims to study the identity crisis of female protagonists, to project the present social status of Indian middle class women, to suggest remedies for the emancipation and development of new woman, to survey the cause and effect of the struggling women on society in general and family in particular, to generate the confidence amongst womenfolk in the scenario of globalization.

Feminism- An Approach to Literature

Feminist campaigns are generally considered to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near-universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender neutrality in English, reproductive rights for women (including access to contraceptives and abortion), and the right to enter into contracts and own property. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights, some feminists, including bell hooks, argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims because they believe that men are also harmed by traditional gender roles. Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience; it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender.

Numerous feminist movements and ideologies have developed over the years and represent different viewpoints and aims. Some forms of feminism have been criticized for taking account only white, middle class, and college-educated perspectives. This criticism led to

...na Devi, Akhila, Radha, Meera rebel against patriarchal injustice and attain their freedom. Similarly, the female protagonists in her short stories, as mentioned above try to assert themselves in their life. They are modern women, who are aware of their selfhood and achieve their emancipation. Anita Nair, through her novels and stories, shows new possibilities and social adjustment in relationships in the marital life. She shows how women have to be aware of their self-hood.

Conclusion

In an urban middle class life, women find themselves entrapped in a male dominated world. They are assigned a secondary position in the family as a result of the social customs, and traditional values assigned to an ideal womanhood. In a family life, essentially in India, a woman is forced to occupy a secondary status even if she is an earning member of the family. It is not her femininity, but the age-old social tradition and the control of education by men which are the factors contributing to the subjugation of women in their family life and the society in general.

Anita Nair does not claim to be a feminist, but all her novels are predominantly concerned with feminist perspective in delineating the life and struggle of the female protagonists in her fiction. In her *The Better Man*, though apparently the central character is Makundan, the man, there are episodes on female characters like Parru-Kutti, Meenakshi and Arjuna, who are the protagonists of their own stories, and who struggle for their self-hood. Anita Nair's feminist preoccupations are seen in the presentation of her female characters. They are not only aware of their individuality, but they also effectively express it in their life presented by the writer in her fiction. In *Ladies Coupe*, for instance, Margaret Shanti, a chemistry teacher, asserts her individuality by taming her husband, who tries to thwart her and emotionally dominates her. Similarly, Marikolanthu in this novel faces injustice even at the hands of her parents, who would depend on her education because boys of the family must be given priority for education. And here, she is victimized by the landlord, and sexually exploited as she belongs to the lower strata of the society.

Similarly, in *Mistress* the female protagonist Radha, is not allowed by her husband, Ram, to visit his farm and the factory where she tries to educate the women workers. She is a woman, and therefore, she should not participate in his business affairs. Anita Nair shows how patriarchal domination affects freedom of women in family life as well as in the public sphere. In every novel presents the female protagonists undergoing patriarchal oppression, and the way

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