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Exploration Of Psychological Themes In Anita Nair's Works

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Abstract: The struggles of individuals within society have long been a central theme in literature. As civilization has evolved, this theme has taken on new dimensions, especially with women around the world advocating for equal rights and opportunities alongside men. In India, women are often shaped by tradition and societal expectations, embracing their roles as the guardians of family honor. The family context plays a crucial role in defining women's identities and their social roles, such as daughter, wife, and mother. Anita Nair, a prominent Indian woman writer, focuses on the modern Indian woman's quest to redefine relationships. She delves into the complexities of the female psyche, particularly the experiences of depressed women, revealing the psychological, emotional, and social inequalities they face in a male-dominated society. In this context, Anita Nair's novel literature explores women's struggles within a patriarchal society. The narrative addresses issues such as gender discrimination, exploitation, oppression, and the abuse of women's bodies. This paper seeks to examine how socio-economic conditions influence individual psychology, particularly for women in a rigidly patriarchal society.

Key words: Human psyche, Psychological insights, Equal rights, Tradition

Literature serves as a powerful tool for transforming human thoughts and emotions, acting as a guiding force for progressive movements throughout history. It inspires a spirit of freedom and provides a new means of expression for the masses, promoting the principle of equality and advocating for the rights of the downtrodden. In times when women were denied their natural rights and subjected to oppression, various movements emerged globally to fight for gender equality. The novel's rise in eighteenth-century England coincided with the emergence of individualism, influencing Indian English fiction in the 1960s and 1970s. Indian English novelists offer a broader and more nuanced perspective compared to their Western counterparts, developing unique narratives that reflect the diverse experiences of women in India. The struggles of Indian women for recognition and their realities are vividly depicted in the works of writers like Ram Mehta, Gita Mehta, Shama Futehally, Nayantara Sehgal, Ruth Pravar Jabvala, Santha Ram Rau, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, and Anita Nair. This paper aims to illustrate how Anita Nair comprehensively portrays the social and psychological dimensions of her female characters across her novels.

Anita Nair (born 26 January 1966) is an Indian novelist who writes her works in English. She has also written various poetry, essays, short stories, crime fiction, historical fiction, romance, and children's literature, including Muezza and Baby Jaan: Stories from the Quran. Nair was working as the creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories called Satyr of the Subway, which she sold to Har-Anand Press. The book won her a good fellowship from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Also Nair's second book was published by Penguin India, and was the first book by an Indian author to be published by Picador. Her best novels were The better man (2000) and Ladies Coupe'(2001) and both the novels have been translated into more than 21 languages around the world. In 2002, her novel Ladies Coupe was selected as one of the best five novels in India. Other famous works are The Puffin Book of Myths and Legends (2004), Where the Rain is Born (2003),

Mistress (2003), Adventures of Nonu, The Skating Squirrel (2006), Living Next Door to Alice (2007), Cut Like Wound (2012), Magical Indian Myths (2008), The Lilac House (2012) and Alphabet Soup for Lovers (2016). Her various poems appeared in many prestigious anthologies like The Dance of the Peacock, a 2013 anthology of English poetry from India.

Nair highlights the struggles of women against patriarchal oppression, illustrating how societal norms suppress and demean half of the population. Her intention is to expose the ideological foundations of male dominance while also revealing alternative realities. The plot oscillates between past and present, showing the humiliation and oppression faced by women. Margaret Shanti's character exemplifies the victimization of women in a patriarchal society and their resistance to such challenges. Her husband, Ebenezer, embodies male chauvinism, failing to recognize her worth.

While believing that women are suppressed by inequality of gender, the author also believes there is salvation not only through economic independence but more through the courage to make and execute the right choice in a demanding situation. In a way, a prostitute is regarded as a weak and oppressed slave, and on the other, a liberated one by the way of a successful economic strategy to lead her life.. It is understood and known that there are few biological differences between men and women, the greater truth of that there is no male or female natural difference in the psyche. As Beauvoir says, "marriage and motherhood are constituted in a patriarchal society to entrap women in embodied immanence" (Tidd, 2004, page 115). Everything is instilled within the mind and it is being organized in the mind for ages which have resulted in whatever women are today. Ladies Coupe is one of her captivating work which was translated into more than twenty five languages around the world. Here Nair raises very deep questions, which often remain in the reader's mind, about the role of women in contemporary India. Here novelist presents India as a state which suffers from a system of sex role stereotyping oppression of women under patriarchal society. Every person in this novel confronts painful experiences of domestic violence in Male dominated household and also they attained relentless elasticity not only to keep themselves alive, but also to ascertain their inner source of vitality and artistic wellspring. This novel presents a woman's quest for inner freedom and individuality. It comprises six women who accidentally met in a train journey and their life experiences narrated by each woman during the journey in the novel. Akhila is a protagonist who tells and also listens the story of these five women in the compartment and tries to come to a solution of their questions which bothered her in her life. In this novel, we observe that Anita Nair presents country into a suffering situation by patriarchal dogmas that is used in many ways to suppress and degrade the half of the population of the country i.e. women. Nair intention to poses such questions in the novel not only exposes ideological ground of man's patriarchal role in traditional society but also shows the existence of an alternative reality. The plot shifts from past to present and present to past and henceforth we are shown of certain women who are humiliated and oppressed. The persona of Margaret Shanti in the novel strongly reflects the victimization of women in Male dominated society and how some of them show resistance towards these harsh challenges. Margaret's husband Ebenezer is symbolizes male chauvinism and doesn't realize the importance of her wife as a woman in the novel.

One of the critic comments on Margaret's shattered dreams and her problems: Her dreams broken, she comes crashing down to reality when she is forced to abort her first pregnancy. Gnawed by indecision and pain, she allows herself to be coerced into it. She sees another side of her husband when after her apportion, a week later, he says: "I love it when you call me Ebe... I like you this... untainted and clean... I never want you to change I want you to remain like this all your life (Rachel, 111). There are rules suited to patriarchal society and have a deep impact on women's psychology. In Indian society women are seen as caretakers and play a pivotal role in the sustainable development of the life of a family. By analyzing the psychology of women, several edges open up for discussion related to the women's abilities to emerge victorious after shattering these societal decrees. Psychoanalysis theory is founded by the 19th century psychologist Sigmund Freud. It means that people can experience catharsis and gain insight into their state of mind by bringing the content of the unconscious into conscious awareness. Through this process, a person can find relief from psychological distress. Also, the psychology of the author has a deep impact on the characters of the novel.

In her novel, *The Better Man*, Anita Nair has explicated a quest for identity and self realization and portrays women's aspiration for liberty in marital life, liberty in establishing healthy husband- wife relationship. Anjana, in *The Better Man* enjoys freedom and self satisfaction till she gets married to Ravindran. She wants to be loved and give the best to her husband but, he avoids her. She wishes for freedom in married life. When she doesn't get the same she hates everyone including herself. She endures pain, loneliness and misery. She suffers the devoidness of healthy sexual life and conjugal bliss. She had to return to her parental home only to ignore her husband's attitude. Lack of understanding, between husband and wife and their egoist attitude towards each other and incompatibility between them, have made their life super complex. She wants silence and gives up everything as

"She gave away her colourful saris and took to wearing starched.

Cottons in shade as inspid, dull as her life. She locked up all her.

Jewellery in a safe deposit box at the bank and swept all her.

Flipperies away into the waste basket." (P. 234)

Another novel, *Mistress* also revolves around the subject of social and psychological spheres a woman goes through. This novel discovers the deepness of relationship between a couple, Shayam and Radha. In this failed relationship, Radha find herself as a caged creature by the owner who confined her the liberty of life. During her own self-realization process, she transformed herself into new direction and provides her strength to bring back Shayam to her house. Moreover this classical masterpiece of Nair unfolds the interesting plot of a woman craving for love and independency. The novel around the captivity of the tradition and modern contemporary India intertwines a triangle of desire that represented by the character of Radha and her lack of desire for the husband Shayam and Chris and for a travel writer from America.

In summary, social and psychological challenges hinder positive changes in women's circumstances. A psycho-social analysis highlights the significance of social constructs and their impact on individuals, particularly women. Gender discrimination has existed since ancient times and poses a serious threat to societal balance. Women face this discrimination universally, regardless of their region, ethnicity, or religion. Although various laws have been enacted to combat this issue, it remains pervasive, affecting women across social, psychological, and other aspects of life.

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