



The Portrayal Of Women In Anita Nair's Mistress

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Abstract:

Human life reflects in Literature. It is one of the tools or medium to express the life of human beings especially their happiness and sorrows as well as it reflects Psychological aspects of human lives. Anita Nair is one of the leading writers in Indian writing in English. Through this paper we can know how the women are leading their life and how they overcome their struggles and sufferings etc.

Anita Nair novels depict especially how the women characters and how their life becomes delight from despair. She has the perception and analytical mind of a sociologist who gives a record of human life, society and social systems prevailing at that point of time. Despair to Delight seems to be of Particular theme in Anita Nair's Novel Mistress. She depicts this theme in her third novel Mistress. She concentrates and gives clear picture on modern woman in a male dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage and how they overcome their sufferings and lead a happy life. Generally men are strong and Women are weak mentally because women feel emotionally. As a woman she needs to tolerate many things especially in marriage life. She likes or not but she needs to get marriage with man. She needs to adjust herself in many ways. In Mistress Anita Nair depicts "From Despair to Delight" through her three female protagonists in this story.

About the Author:

She is the author of novels "The Better Man" and "Ladies coupe", poetry collection of "Malabar Mind", a collection of short stories "Satyr of Subway" and Eleven other stories and has written two children's books - "The Puffin Book of world Myths" and "Legends". She has also edited an anthology of writings about Kerala titled "Where the Rain is Born."

Anita Nair is a novelist, poet, travel writer, essayist, short story writer and writer of stories for children. She is working as a creative director in an advertising agency in Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore).

Introduction:

Anita Nair is one of India's popular female writers in Indian Writing in English. She portrays through her expression, the present condition of women in society, using many female characters. She examines deep into human psyche and makes the reader to realize and enjoy a perfect journey by giving interesting stories that have colourful and apt characters. She explores many women's experiences that are drawn from day-to-day life and her approach often enables the readers to think more and more about her own like that.

In this story "Mistress", she explains human relationship and Men women relationship and their marital life and their disaffection between husband and wife mainly how the women characters become delight from their Despair.

Anita Nair is one of the eminent Indian writer, grips many ideas about marriage and women's life in our society. Now-a-days many families and many husband and wives separate each other for misunderstanding. Some body is leading their life as parent's wish. Some body they lead their life for society and their children. Mainly today many husband and wives they are standing in front of register office to get divorce. The reason is lack of communication and misunderstanding.

Anita Nair has projected a new ideas regarding how the women are suffering in the society especially in the modern days in the name of religion and by the male chauvinism.

The Novel is a magnificent narrative of relationships. The novel agreements with several themes like art and adultery delight of new found love, dissatisfaction in conventional relationships, dirtiness and ugliness of love, abuse, hurried hopes and dark family secrets. It is a book which deals with infatuation and obsession across the gulfs of religion, marriage, validity and conventions.

Sethu and Saadiya,

In general women are not allowed to go outside. They cannot take any decisions of their own. Always they should dependent on others because of this male dominated society. Mainly they should be dependent on male like father, brother, uncle, husband etc., whatever they think women should obey them. Even women are doing many works in the home. But many people are telling they are simple sitting in the home and they are not doing any works. If the women are doing works in the office, they accept they are working. Even though are working they don't allow to take any decisions of their own.

Saadiya is one of the main protagonist in the novel "Mistress". Saadiya, daughter of Hajib Msdoof lives in Arabipatnam. He is one of the important person the village as well as one of the chief of the Mulism town and the most respected man, impressed on the mind of his daughter that the Arabs of the town, were of the pure Arab stock. And he had firm belief that he and the other Arabs must safeguard the bloodline, the pure Arabic blood.

In Muslim, women are not allowed to come out from their homes but she wants to come outside and she likes to enjoy the outer world. And the questions arises in her mind why men are allowed to go outside but women are not allowed to go outside. She wanted to know more and more. And her philosophy was based on the concept 'the Plank of Avidity'.

Life demands of us that we have a Plank of avidity. How can we have more if we don't raise our expectations? How can we be content with just what we have and know? Even Vaapa, who was a teller of stories, was content with sailing the seas of imagination. But that wasn't real. Reality was to be able to see, to touch, to hear, to feel, to sense, to know, to experience". (100)

Saadiya's family is very orthodox and traditionalist. Sethu is a Hindu orphan who is trained as a health inspector who works under Dr. Samuel. The doctor takes him wherever he goes for medical rounds for others treatment. Sethu sees Saadiya in Arabipatnam and fell in love with each other. Women and girls are not allowed to see any strangers except their parents, brothers and husbands.

What have you done, Saadiya? When I tell your father, he will be furious. She turned to zuleika and pinched her forearm. And you? Who else saw her there? Tell me the truth, you lazy cow.

Where were you when she decided to put the honour of the family in jeopardy (129).

When Saadiya's parents come to know about her love for Sethu, a Hindu boy, they don't accept their marriage. Her father gave punishment to her and burnt her flesh using hot rod. And he uttered his coldest voice. But she neglects her parents words and joins with Sethu. He is confident that Dr. Samuel would help him and protect them. But Dr. Samuel asks him to leave immediately. He doesn't give any support to them. Saadiya gives birth to a male child. Sethu and Saadiya argue about "Khitan" to be performed on the newly born child. He tries to convince her not to convert him into her religion. But Saadiya's upbringing through indoctrination about religion is strong and common sense is not allowed to work. She has full faith in her religion. Daily quarrels between Sethu and Saadiya lead to dejection and force Saadiya to commit suicide.

When Sethu returns home and see only their child is there but she is not there. Even though they loved each other, they don't ready to give up their religion.

Koman:

He is one of the protagonists in this novel “Mistress”. Being Kathakali Artist, he misbehaves with many women. Issues of identity and self-definition is the upper most theme in the character of Koman in this novel. Before learning about Koman, it is necessary to know about his parental background. Sethu, father of Koman, is a Hindu orphan, trained as a Health Inspector before he moves to Nazareth, a small town. He starts work under Dr.Samuel. There is an epidemic in the village and its neighbourhood. They provide necessary help and service to the affected population. The doctor has tremendous confidence and faith in Sethu. The doctor takes him wherever he goes on medical rounds. In a village by name Arabipatnam, Sethu sees Saadiya, daughter of Haji Najib Msdoof. Her family is very orthodox and conservative. Women and girls are not allowed to see any strangers except their parents, brothers and husbands:

“What have you done, Saadiya? When I tell your father, he will be furious. She turned to zuleika and pinched her forearm. And you? Who else saw her there? Tell me the truth, you lazy cow. Where were you when she decided to put the honour of the family in jeopardy” (Mistress P-129)

When Saadiya’s parents come to know about her love for Sethu, a Hindu boy, she is expelled from the house. She joins Sethu. He is confident that Dr Samuel would help him. Dr Samuel asks him to leave immediately.

Sethu is very fortunate. Whenever he is in trouble, providence comes to his rescue. He is offered a job by James Raj, the richest man in Nazareth. After sometime, saadiya gives birth to a male child. Sethu and Saadiya argue about “Khitan” to be performed on the newly born child. He tries to convince her not to perform such things on the new born baby. She is stubborn and wants to follow every instruction that is said in the Koran.

Saadiya’s upbringing through indoctrination about religion is strong and common sense is not allowed to work. Sethu does not allow such things to be performed on his son and asks her to leave his son and go to her parents. When he comes home, only the child is there. She commits suicide.

Daily disagreements with Sethu lead to dejection and force Saadiya to commit suicide. Though Saadiya leaves her parents house because of her love for Sethu, she cannot leave her religion. This categorically tells us that Mind and Body are different. Body is willing but the mind unwilling.

Sister Faith, a nurse, is free and accepts to look after the child so that Sethu can get along with his life. He makes arrangements for delivery of money every month for maintenance of the child. He migrates to Shoranur and buys properties. He marries Devayani and has children through her. Sister Faith marries; there is none to look after the boy, Koman. Sethu has not informed about his previous marriage or about the child with his wife Devayani. She is disturbed by the arrival of Koman. Sethu feels that time will tackle all the problems. Like every father, he wants to give his son a good education. Koman is an average student. Koman has lot of interest in Kathakali. Sethu encourages him to learn the art of Kathakali. His

teacher, Aashan, trains him for many years to make him a good Kathakali dancer. He receives an invitation to play Keechakan in Keechaka Vadham. People praise his performance.

Sethu wants to see that Koman has a house of his own, purchases one for him near the river Nila. Angela is a student learning Kathakali under Aashan. She has been learning Kathakali for two years. She is here to do her dissertation work. Her parentage is both German and Spanish. She now joins Koman's class as a student. She finds him attractive. He is playful, mischievous and an affectionate teacher. He is generous and romantic by nature. She starts desiring him. She never misses to witness any performance given by him as it helps her research of recording as many veshams as possible. She feels that she is not just a student of his but she is something more than that.

Koman starts to have an affair with Anjela. It is very difficult to confine oneself from the amorous advances of a determined woman. They start living together. Sethu is worried that this would be a replay of his own life. Because he also starts his life like this and he fails in his life.

“You are old enough to know what you are doing”, he said. ‘Why don't you marry her? All your life has been wasted on Kathakali. Will your art fetch you a glass of water when you are thirsty? Will it lay a wet cloth on your brow when you are burning with fever? Will it hold you up when your legs tremble? That is why you are lonely? That is why you need a family and home’. (P-371)

Sometimes relationships don't need rituals to dedicate them. Koman and Anjela start living as husband and wife, without being married. Slowly, perception of Anjela changes and wants him to move to the west to get international recognition, fame and fortune. Koman's ego gets a boost. Planning for the future reduces fear and uncertainty. He is going to land in an uncertain future as the future events reveal.

With the current generation of Indian writers in English, depiction of Man – woman relationship is not as advanced as in western culture, dealing with Infatuation. Women in India are very sentimental and emotional and denied many civil rights. But now a days women know everything, what they will do in case of problems in life. They can decide of their own. Job is the main reason to stand in their own leg in the male dominated society.

Anjela and Koman move to London. They are very happy for some time and then problems arise one after another. Koman is totally dependent on Anjela both financially and emotionally. This causes friction between them. Money can make the best of friends into enemies. Naturally male ego is hurt and Koman decides to move out of Angela's house. He does not find any progress in the art world. For survival he starts working in a hotel. He feels lonely as long as he is in London.

Finally he leaves for India. Lack of planning at work and in their lives, people fall short of their dreams and goals. Here Koman having no goal to achieve feels frustrated and dejected thereby becomes estranged.

Koman on his return, rejoins his dance school as Ashan. Two years later the institute troupe is invited to Europe. They perform at various places. Koman is offered a teaching fellowship by a German University. He neglects the offer as he is aware of the insignificance of perception of the people in the western world. Because he knows what will happen in the Western country.

If it is the sense of purpose that ties the past, present and the future together. One must live with a purpose. How one responds on purpose. One has to respond to what is important now. It is important to him to teach this art to new students who are coming to join the dance school.

Success is becoming what one is capable of becoming. Progressing or moving towards worth-while goals are very important. Koman by nature is a good human being. He recommends Sundaran's name for the teaching assignment and scholarship, abroad. Thus Sundaran gets a chance to go to a foreign country. He never returns to India. Here Koman is very happy with his dancing school.

One has to adapt to the changing needs of society. One should not be afraid of change. The performance of Kathakali characters comes through life and death of Aashan, the art teacher who developed Koman into a man who is there to perform, art for art's sake, whereas Sundaran reaps spectacular commercial benefits from the art.

Koman proposes to Lalitha his long time mistress. She refuses to marry him because of her fear of people in society. She knows that Koman's family would never accept her as his wife. She would always be treated as his mistress.

He has strange knack of inviting and building sexual relationships with women. During his stay in Delhi, he meets Maya. She is lonely. A month later Koman goes to Madras where she lives. He is comfortable, has peace of mind as long as he is with her.

Koman is acclaimed as a successful dancer and praised by the audience wherever he has given performances. A well-known filmmaker makes a short film on him. A journalist attempted what he called a fly-on-the wall biography. He is invited to perform at prestigious venues and participate in workshops and seminars.

There have been many interpretations of his technique and style. He is detached from all. It is of no consequence to him how he is perceived by others or what the world thinks of him, as a man or as a dancer.

Men reach a stage where they generally become witnesses. Koman has reached a stage of detachment, where he can view things with the help of a detached mind.

Radha

There is an interesting aspect in Anita Nair's novel *Mistress* that its treatment of man-woman relationship is based on her own wish. She treats as sex object not as a wife. Before marriage she has sexual relationship. But her father arranges marriage to her. This novel on one level looks at the turbulence of large families where dependency breeds strong emotions. Shyam, a self made entrepreneur has been humiliated by his uncle, Radha's father. His uncle comes with a proposal of marriage with his daughter:

"What is wrong? Shyam asked as gently as he could"? She has been involved with a man,'

So why don't you get them married"? (*Mistress* p-121)

Shyam is in love with Radha. He had foolish dreams since his childhood wanting to possess her at any cost. Even though he knows that she had pre-marital relationship with a married man, he thinks that it is an innocent relationship. It does not matter and he will be happy to marry her. He asks his uncle if she is agreeing. His mother approves their marriage. His sister, Rani Oppol is suspicious that Shyam has been forced to agree.

"You can get any girl you want. You don't have to be saddled with her just because we owe her father a debt of gratitude,' (*Mistress* P-122)

Despite his sister's protest, marries Radha and on their marriage night, she waits for him in their wedding chamber with a face that seems cut out of stone. She looks at him, when he tries to crack a joke to make her laugh, she remains stoic.

"I am not a virgin,' she said,' I want you to know that I have had sex,' it does not matter. I have had sex, too. I have slept with other women, too. 'Did my father offer you money to marry me?' I looked at her carefully. You are insulting me,' He said quietly. I don't need to be paid to marry you. Do not you know how beautiful you are'? (*Mistress* P-123)

Shyam is a businessman. He wants to become rich. His uncle gives him money and property. He is a growing business man and he plays a main role in Kerala. He has a resort near Nila where tourists and foreigners visit and stay. They do not have child even though they get marriage for eight years. Radha is unhappy about the marriage because of the behaviors of Shyam.

Men and women are complementary to each other. Neither of them can claim any superiority over the other. In human civilization, women are often gifted with foresight, which contributes to the happiness of others.

In earlier days, women were merely portrayed as dependent souls. They prefer happiness of others. Women's identity is hidden behind the mask of sacrifice and dependency.

Nowadays, women have enough courage to exhibit their individuality at various levels. They are ready to undertake challenging journey of self-discovery to make the whole world recognize them. A certain percentage of women have successfully reached their destination and remaining are on their way to the destination of 'Self-discovery'.

Radha knows that it is a sin to see another man, a foreigner, Chris. Her husband loves her despite

her guile nature. He suspects that she is attracted towards Chris. Her frequent visits to Chris make Shyam worried and put him in a vulnerable situation.

Chris is a writer, a journalist. He is interested in music. He has come to probe and find out if Koman was his father. Koman has had many affairs. Radha, herself has to grapple with the question whether her uncle, who had an affair with her mother, was her father.

Radha meets Chris secretly. Koman made many mistakes of romancing with Radha's mother who was his own brother's wife. As a wife, she is a symbol of the glory and prestige of her family and transmitter of tradition from one generation to another. Radha fails to restore her life even after her marriage to Shyam. As a wife, she must protect her husband's reputation. The prohibited relationship gives a chance to others to comment about her husband. She never bothers about her husband's reputation and she tries to quench her thirst for sex, by romancing with Chris. She has forgotten that Shyam had given her a new life by marrying her when her life was in ruins and her family at crossroads. Unfortunately she forgets Shyam's help. He feels deceived, but he loves her very much. This shows his good nature and his true love for Radha.

CONCLUSION:

Anita Nair throws light on different aspects of human relationships and how the women characters are behaving in this male dominated society. In the beginning they suffer a lot, but at last they decide their life of their own. After many rejections they take care their life as their wish. "Man and wife do not, as a rule, live together, they only have breakfast together, dine together, and sleep in the same room. In most cases the woman knows nothing of man's working life.

Therefore, relationships we find in the characters of *Mistress*, between Sethu and Saadya, Sethu and Devayani, Koman and Anjela, Koman and Maya, Radha and Shyam, Radha and Chris, are not very happy affairs, but very much compromised upon after initial excitement. And later they analyzed their life in various way and decide their life in their own way. Even though they suffer a lot in the beginning they start to lead life as happy at the ending.

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