



Voices of Marginalized Women in Anita Nair's Novels

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Abstract

*Anita Nair is a renowned novelist and has become known as a writer possessing deep insight into the female consciousness. Her novels are all about various women's issues in contemporary Indian society. Her novels also highlight subjugation, discrimination, silence domestic violence, familial tensions, patriarchy, loneliness, and rejection of women by her husband. Feminism stands for equality and equal standards of living for every gender. Feminism as a movement stands against patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social system, whereby the male member of the family takes precedence and is considered to be the head. This paper reviews the theme of feminism in the novels of Anita Nair. Women are viewed as inferior in our society and are declared unsuitable for independent living. Many educated women nowadays are attempting to alter the traditional images that are still prevalent in our culture. Akila and Meera, the characters of Anita Nair's books *Ladies Coupe* and *Lessons in Forgetting*, have never been able to live on their own. These characters are desperate to reject their traditional identities. The protagonists in Nair's films amply demonstrated the power of education in transforming the stereotypical image of women.*

Keywords: orthodox, patriarchy, toleration, and self-reliance.

Anita Nair depicts women suffering and how men and patriarchal society are responsible for women's predicament and existence. As far as women's place in Indian society is concerned they always remain secondary in every walk of life. They have a very limited place in public life. At home, they always have to perform various roles. They have to take care of the entire family. Even in matters of decision making they have very limited space. Women are viewed as second-class members of the family by men. Nair spoke out against patriarchy, and she frequently depicted women changing for the better in her works. The female characters all struggled with self-identity and fought to break free from long-held

customs. Her novels, like *Ladies Coupe*, *Lessons in Forgetting*, *Better Man*, *Mistress*, *Cut Like Wound*, etc., heavily emphasised the importance of women. Her books mostly addressed issues related to marriage, women's empowerment, self-identity, child abuse, physical harassment, patriarchy, female foeticide, the dowry system, and widowhood.

The main characters Akhila and Meera both gave their lives for the family in the books *Ladies Coupe* and *Lessons in Forgetting*. Akhila was a 45-year-old Tamil Nadu native who was born into a traditional Hindu family. She began to live her life for her brothers and sisters after her father passed away. Despite working, she was reliant on her family.



She was 45 years old and attempting to shed her previous persona while pursuing personal freedom. According to Anita Nair's portrayal, the majority of working women in India do not live freely like Akila. Just the family is their priority in life.

Akhila and Katherine shared the same office. Akhila noticed Katherine eating an egg. Despite coming from a Brahmin family, she wants to taste the egg. Yet she took her time eating the egg. She purchased an egg from the store and properly fried it. Her mother gave her permission to fry egg but instructed her to keep it a secret from neighbours. By consuming eggs, she disobeyed Brahmin society's rules and regulations. Her courage in making the initial move towards her identification was evident. She used to live for the people.

Meera portrayed the selfless wife, much like the main character Akhila in the book *Lessons in Forgetting*. In the beginning she prioritised her husband and kids over anything else. Giri, her husband, left her in favour of the property. She broke out of a traditional image and began living alone after divorcing her husband. J.K. Krishnamoorthi's helper was Meera. In the meantime, Giri demanded a divorce because he wanted to wed someone else, setting a bad example. Meera also decides to advance in life.

Lilly is the best example of women's empowerment. Meera's grandmother named Lilly was an old actress. After the death of her daughter, she felt alone. During old age, Most people took rest but she wished to act in the cinema so she waited for a serial chance for earning money and supported Meera. She advised Meera: "I don't want to talk about the wind of trees. If they bother you so much, chop them down!" (269). Meera thought that granny said the truth about tress as same as men. No longer she beseeched the Giri. Lilly suggested to Meera that stayed away from Giri and started a new life. Saradha was an Indian typical woman. She was, initially bearing the total family her shoulder but her husband dominated her. One day her husband left her alone with their son named JAK. After that started to study and worked as a teacher in school. She tried to uplift the life of a son named J. A. Krishnamurthy.

The characters Karpagam, Meera, and Saradha were the best example of women's empowerment. Anita Nair depicted the Characters Saradha and Meera almost the same.

Nair used her works to portray authentic Indian society. Women were compelled to adhere to our traditions and conventions. Men did not have this disorder. Now, women have overcome this and begun to live lives on par with men. Women and children were abused by men in our Indian society, but they overcame it. Using the characters Marikolunthu, Sheela, and Smirithi, Anita Nair illustrated this reality. Smiriti was raised in the US while Marikolunthu was born and raised in a small hamlet in India. Marikolunthu and Smirithi both experienced physical abuse as a problem.

Among the six people in the coupe, Marikolunthu was one of the pitiable personalities. At the age of 19, Murugesan physically abused her. She worried that no one would marry her daughter as a result of her molestation. But, she didn't enjoy sharing her life with Murugesan, and until the age of 31, she lived alone. She struggled with life as a free woman. In the persona of Marikolunthu, Nair demonstrated how much women had changed in contemporary society and also showed how resilient their minds were. The best traits of wives like Meera were present in Kala Chithi. She later developed strength as a result of making all of her own decisions. Kala was popular for her long hair, which she hated the most. Kala's father felt proud to see her daughter's hair. She tried to get permission from her father to cut the hair because she couldn't sustain the hair. Kala's father almost swooned hearing that... Anita Nair writes, "Are you mad?" he demanded. Look at your hair. Do you know what an asset it is? Not everyone has hair like yours" (217). He told her that her long lock was her strength and she had a determination that she must not cut it down until she was married. Her mother also trusted it and strongly refused the very thought of cutting her hair down. Kala got into a matrimonial relationship with Ambi because his family was simply impressed by her long hair. They took a lot of attention to caring for her long hair, when kitcha (jak) met her, they traveled to



Minjikapuram seashore to play in the water. While playing, her hair got heavy and so she cut her hair off a few inches thinking that it would be left unnoticed. Ambi, her husband who belonged to urban and found out that her hair was short by a few inches. His rage knew no bounds. He didn't speak to her until the hair grew back, which took at least six months.

Kala saw that her family and other people only liked and admired her for having a long hairstyle, which was something to be "proud of. As her husband intended to wed another lady because Kala was sterile, she made up her mind to leave her marriage. Regardless of Kala's emotions, Ambi's family urged her to accept their decision to get into a second marriage and raise his child so that she would continue to be their daughter-in-law and take pride in her long hair. He was told to follow their decision without showing any consideration for her sentiments and was informed that she may take on the role of another mother for Ambi's son. She was embarrassed and degraded. There, she makes the most empowered decision to end that life. JAK's aunt is Kala Chithi, another strong female character in the book. Her story also exemplifies male dominance, betrayal, and the girls of a patriarchal society. But, her husband Ambi never complimented her. Like Giri, he left his home one day and wed a different woman after concluding that Kala Chithi was incapable of having children. Kala chithi makes the unusual decision to begin a new life with Saradha, unlike any other Indian woman.

The character Janaki was portrayed by Nair as an example of a typical Indian housewife. The protagonist of *Ladies' Coupe*, Janaki, married Prabhakar. Janaki wished to be superior in her role. She married a man who helped her career. She enjoyed her married life till forty years. As days pass on, she came to know the real color of her husband controlling the whole family. She felt like "that's not helping. you just wanted to control him. you want To control everybody, you want everyone to do your bidding. She said, not caring who overheard." (30)

Janaki married when she was 18 years old. Prabhakar caused her a lot of suffering. She

sacrificed her life for that of her husband and son Siddharth. Thereafter, she detested herself because her son had reprimanded her for ruining his life, but he had misinterpreted her. He didn't comprehend the cost to herself and her family. Janaki won the battle with her spouse. He says that "You are spoilt, everyone you know has spoilt you. Your family and then dad. Page" (36). In her life, she got irritated and frustrated with her son and husband's behavior. She confronted a lot of ups and down in her peaceful life. She found her happiness and discovered here of new for the first time.

Margaret Shanthi struggled with numerous emotional, psychological, and spiritual issues. She kept trying to change until she arrived at her happy place. Her union with Paul Raj was like a movie. She first complied with her husband's requests, which led to him taking entire control of her. She was first compelled to do a B.Ed., but later on, she wanted to complete a Ph.D. The local school's principal was Paul Raj. Shanthi had a job teaching chemistry. He tortured her a great deal because they both worked at the same school. She worked there, and he didn't like her, he wasn't willing to grant her equal privileges. For his happiness, he had his child aborted. She managed to get away from her husband Paulraj's authoritarianism. She stated feeding him hygienic food decreases his activity turning him into a sloth man.

The father's face was unimpressive when a girl kid was born in a society where men predominated. In *Ladies coupe*, Prabha Devi's father expressed his intense opposition to the news that there would be a girl child and claimed that having a daughter would be the worst thing that could happen to the family, even though he already had four sons. Her mother trained Prabha Devi to an expert level in both cooking and embroidery. By using a face pack, she also showed her how to take care of her skin. She was the perfect bride-ready girl, similar to how Sheel's grandmother raised her. In Indian society, girls are raised to maintain their feminine qualities. They only taught how to cook, maintain a home, sew, draw kolam, and decorate one's face. In the book



Nair depicted challenges faced by women in various socioeconomic contexts and marital positions. Her married women experience male or patriarchal oppression, and some of them tried to overcome it to achieve some freedom or happiness. Anita Nair was given the example of Prabha Devi, Janaki, Margeret, Meera, Kala Chithi, and Saradha as educated women who overcome oppressed and achieved happiness. On any momentous event at the house, a widow was not welcome to approach the concierge. She had to abide by numerous guideline regarding how she should behave, eat, and dress. She was unable to accessorise with a kumkum tilak and bright outfits. Widowed educated women also had their income in contemporary India. Societal limitations permeated widows' daily lives. The Hindu community received a hostile attitude.

Anita Nair illustrated a range of issues that women face in conventional Indian society with its venerable orthodox customs. The narrative of Sarsa Mami blatantly illustrates the miserable fate of widows in a patriarchal society where moral standards were pushed only on women while men were free to reject them. The best illustrations of patriarchy may be seen in the lives of Sarsa Mami, Sheela, Saradha, Smrithi, Kala Chithi, and Marikolunthu. Through her works *Lessons in Forgetting* and *Ladies Coupe*, Nair demonstrated realism; many of her female protagonists battled male chauvinism. Nonetheless, they began to live and rebelled against customs. They went on to the next stage of their lives and never looked back.

Anita Nair, a female author, made every effort to depict the challenges facing women in Indian society

realistically. Although women have long been oppressed in Indian society, the way she presents it is quite different. Women are still oppressed over the world today, even in modern civilization. Yet, it is a fairly peculiar behaviour that is present across Indian civilization. The situation as it stands does not fully alter the equation. In Nair's book, every single one of the female characters was a genuine fighter for liberty; while they were able to meet their demands as moms, wives, sisters, and grandparents, they never compromised their dignity for the sake of others. Feminism is non-existent in a patriarchal culture, but Anita Nair's writing keeps it alive. Women who want to fly come out of the cage and spread their wings. In contrast to earlier times, most women now never accept their lives as they may have been. They were attempting to alter the conventional perception of women. They desired to lead a responsible and respectful life.

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