

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ANITA NAIR'S FICTIONAL CHARACTERS AS AUTONOMOUS

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ABSTRACT

Anita Nair is a bestselling author of Indian English writing in fiction and poetry. She was born in Shorannur in Kerala state. She was working as creative director for an advertising agency in Bangalore. Her works are translated into many languages.

This paper aims to study of changing roles of women in Indian society by taking into consideration Anita Nair's fiction, the novelist of the Post-independent era who has very skillfully and effectively presented the predicaments which are imposed upon them and while fighting against these predicaments, how they come out of their traditional roles as a mother, daughter, sister and above all as a wife or a homemaker and acquire many unimagined and novel roles like teacher, social worker, social activist, businesswoman or corporate personality and many more. This paper presents how contemporary women identify their inner desires and how they could make realize those with strong determination and perseverance.

While struggling against the traditional roles imposed by the social and domestic sphere these characters search for self-identity and could place themselves in moderate positions rather than a rebellion. This paper tries to attempt to study postcolonial feminism concerning Anita Nair's fiction 'Ladies Coupe', 'The Better Man'. It presents the observations, comparisons, and contrasts made among the different characters and how it could inspire contemporary women's society to conquer their willpower.

INTRODUCTION

Nair's second novel, *Ladies Coupé* presents six passengers in a train compartment who all meet by chance, and exchange of communication throws light on the title reflected in this paper. They are Akhilandeswari (Akhila) Sheela Vasudevan, Prabha Devi, Janaki Prabhakar, Margaret Paulraj, Marikolanthu (Mari)

Akhila is 45 years old. "Sans rose-colored spectacles. Sans husband, children, home and family. Dreaming to escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching connect. (p 8) Akhila was an organized person and took time for every decision. Akhila's mother married her uncle when she was 15 and he was 24 years old. She feels that her Amma might have been brought up and conditioned to accept the authority of men without questioning. So whatever her Appa did was right even when there occurred a loss and selling the land in the village, Amma said "mind you, I'm not saying that your father made a hasty decision. Who would have known that the land prices would soar to high and that too in a place like Metropolitan?" (p14)

When Akhila's father died, Akhila was 19 and she got a job on compassionate grounds as she passed pre-university examinations. Akhila became the head of the household. According to the Hindu Brahmin rituals when the husband dies the wife has to shave her head and wear a saffron/white sari but Akhila didn't want her mother to do so. 'I don't care what anyone says' Akhila told her mother. 'But I won't let you shave your head or exchange your pretty madisars for a saffron sari. Just because Appa is no more, you don't have to turn into a hideous monster.' The next few years Akhila led her family with military precision. As that was the only way she knew to preserve order and keep her family from floating away from its moorings. Anita Nair has intricately brought about the similarities between Akhila's external appearance of starched cotton stiff saris and her internal character of being authoritative or stiff in her behavior.

Her siblings Narayanan was 14, Narsi 11 and Padma much younger when Appa passed away. Narsi wanted to marry the college principal's daughter and a Brahmin, but Akhila wanted Amma to ask 'don't you think you should wait for your elder sister to get married before you think of a wife and family? She insisted that both Narayana and Narsi's marriage take place together. Even then Akhila waited for Amma and her brothers to broach over her marriage and ask 'what about you? You have been the head of this family ever since Appa died. Don't you want a husband, children, a home of your own?' Akhila feels that to her family members she had ceased to be a woman, and already metamorphosed into a spinster. Yet Akhila continued to take responsibility

for Padma who had entered into adolescence and accumulated dowry till Padma was 22 and married her off. Akhila was 34 and living a quiet starched and ironed life with 'no room for chiffon-like flourishes of feeling or heavy zari-lined silken excesses'.

Akhila's situation-she compared herself with a Nandi in a Shiva temple which was unlike all other Nandi's rested with its back to the sanctum Santorum. It turned its back on its lord and its master to protect a devotee from being killed by his enemies. Nandi chose duty over devotion to the lord and Akhila chose duty towards her family over herself and her life.

Sarasamami coped with Subramani Iyer's death by selling all the little pieces of jewelers she owned and when nothing was left to sell, she 'shook the respectability out of their bones' and sold her eldest daughter Jaya. Amma would say 'if I was in her place I would have fed my children poison and killed myself. Anything is better than selling once honor.' It was easier for Amma to forgive a Brahmin no matter how serious the crime was or may because it could have happened to her.

At the end of the novel when Akhila comes back to her home and enquires about Sarasamami she finds that they have been driven away by the neighborhood and they left their home to the forbidden area. Akhila feels that had the neighbor would show concern or helped the family when Sarasamami pleaded for work, Jaya would have led a respectable life but it was circumstances that drove Sarasamami to sell Jaya.

Hari is 28 years old when they met first. He was a draftsman in the railway engineering department. He was a co-passenger on the train when she used to go to the office. They had courtship for about a year. When Akhila and Hari want to have privacy and plan to a resort Akhila lied to Amma that she was going for the weekend to Mysore for an office trip. 'I don't know why you want to go with all those strangers,' Amma said 'perhaps you should ask your brothers for permission first. ' Amma, I am their elder sister. Why should I ask them for permission? To go on an office tour?' 'You might be older but you are a woman and they are the men of the family,' Amma said making no effort to mask her disapproval. Akhila found it ridiculous to ask her younger brothers' permission on a trip. Amma says '... But do be careful. You are a single woman, you know people need very little reason to put two and two together and come up with five.' Though Akhila was the breadwinner of the family and the decision-maker too, yet when it comes to her own decision, she was asked to seek permission from her younger brothers. Not only Amma least bothers the future of Akhila but also imposes limitations on going out at the weekend. As she reminds Akhila of her single status but doesn't utter a word when it comes to Akhila's marriage, maybe she is worried that she will be left alone uncared.

Akhila and Amma watch a movie in which the protagonist is a woman who shoulders the responsibility after her father abandoned the family. She even sacrifices her lover to her sister.

Akhila feels that she wouldn't do this had she been in the protagonist's place. After watching the movie her mother doesn't look into the eyes of Akhila. It seems Anita Nair tried to draw the parallel between the Akhila character and protagonist in the movie in the Telugu version of 'Anthuleni katha'.

Akhila very much wanted to tell Amma that she is in love with Hari who must be the age of Narsi and the love between Akhila and Hari is similar to the love between Amma and Appa. But she knew that Amma would never understand. In Amma's world, even in the contemporary world, mostly men married women younger than themselves. Women never went away with men who were not their husbands. Women never knew that what it was to desire.

During her stay with Hari at Mahabalipuram resort, she was hurt by the people's talk and the dirty looks at which they glanced them. She was afraid that she would age before Hari and he might someday regret the relationship, regret being bound to her when he could have chosen someone younger and more suitable and finally turns away from her, then she would be left with nothing. Not even self-respect. So she breaks up with Hari.

Fed up with family responsibilities and stereotyped life, to escape or get a short relief out of all these she planned to visit Kanyakumari and boards in to train into ladies *coupé*. She happened to meet more other five characters and after listening to the unique stories of those women she feels contented to make a self-identity. To depict the lost identity of Akhila Anita Nair had subtly written the character of Akhila, Akhila was no longer called by her name instead she was called Akka-elder sister by siblings, ammadi by Amma, the madam at the office. Akhila was so engrossed with her duties towards her family that she didn't exist for herself. Akhila found that her co-passengers Janaki and Sheela confronted life and fixed to make some sense of its uncertain lives. She thought when they could do what they thought was best, she too could do what they thought was best, she too could do it. Yearned for the life she dreamt of the life she wanted as a child and as a woman.

Before leaving Margaret said 'Akhila, if there is one virtue I have, it is immunity to what people think of me. Naturally, this makes them dislike me even more. People don't like to think their opinion of someone means nothing to that person. And when it is a woman.... The thought is intolerable. But like I said, I don't care.' Margaret doesn't advise Akhila to think like her but she gives her piece of wisdom.

'You'll discover that once you stop worrying what the world will think of you, your life will become that much easier to live.' As a woman I too feel that since childhood a girl is conditioned by the family and societal norms, she is accepted and expected to abide by them at the cost of her self-esteem and self-identity. She gets so much entangled in her duties and responsibilities that she yearns to set herself free breathe and live her life.' Akhila is trying to define the reality of

her life, justify her failures and compare the hopelessness in the co-passengers life with that of hers.

Now on her trip to Kanyakumari, she is clear with what she wants from life. She spends time with a stranger Vinod, invites him to her hotel without hesitation throwing off people talk around her. After the trip, she calls Hari as she thinks all her thoughts are preoccupied with Hari. The novel ends with a note where Hari calls back, his voice is low and cautious and Akhila reintroduced herself as Akhila and Akhilandeshwari.

MARICOLANTHU

Maricolanthu is 31 years old and works as a helper in a mission hospital. After her father's (Shanmugam) death her mother Kanakambaram worked as a cook at the Chettiyr's Kottai from 7 in the morning till late in the evening. Mari as a child did almost all the household chores without complaining as if she is playing house."Amma sometimes held me to her bosom and wept, 'what have I reduced my child to? I have stolen her childhood from her' but I didn't understand what she was fussing about. Why did she grieve for what I delighted in?"

Mari took the reins of their house as a housewife long before she became an adult. She believed that she was just into being so. The village school had classes only till the fifth standard. Mari was conditioned by her mother "will send your brothers to the school when the time comes, but we can't afford it on my salary alone, Amma said. You do understand, don't you? that it would be impossible for me to send you to the school by bus every day. It's not just the money, but how can I send a young by her..... There is too much risk"

Mari took to babysitting Prabhu papa son of Sujatakka and Sridharanna and the grandson of Chettiyr's. Mari was happy with her job and couldn't stop talking about them always. Amma knew the realities of life and snapped. "You give your heart too easily child, they'll break it into a thousand pieces and leave it on the ground for others to trample into the dust." Mari tries to question herself "is the heart a glass bangle?" Now Mari feels that women's heart is fragile. A glass bangle is a metaphor for heart and has to be handled with care, one careless moment it shattered, yet women were glass bangles. New bangles were bought hoping that they will last longer than the broken ones. I think Anita was trying to portray the fragility of women.

Women give their hearts to others who have no regard for that and break it, yet women continue to give themselves hoping that they won't be taken for granted each time. So she suggests that women should wear bangles made up of granite, which means that women should be strong-minded. Mari was loyal, truthful and sincere towards any work, she took up in her life but as life unfolded, she was always at the receiving end.

The eldest Chettiyr Rajenderanna's wife was Raniakka was a timid woman made even timider by the fact that she had failed to bear a son. So in the elite house of Chettiyrs usually the eldest son and daughter-in-law should take on the reins of Chettiyrs. But Raniakka though a niece of

Chettiyar and from an impoverished family could be the daughter-in-law of the Chettiars since she couldn't give a legal heir to the Chettiars, had no say in the affairs of Chettiars. Since Sujathakka was educated, beautiful, and brought a fat dowry along with her and most importantly she gave an heir to the Chettiars. So the Chettiyar wanted every whim and desire of Sujatakka should be fulfilled.

Mari loved Sujatakka, Prabhu papa and everyone in the Chettiars house, but when her son was born she felt revulsion for the child. The very sight of her child brought disgust and hate to the fore. But now Mari recalls that she had been a bad mother and spent all her maternal love on Sujathakka's baby and nothing was left for her child. 'Perhaps that too was Brahma was doing' she thinks.

After Mari attained puberty she was expected to follow the societal norms. Sujathakka made Mari her slave with her cast-off glass bangles and leftovers. Sujathakka observed her younger brother-in-law and her husband watch Mari with lusty eyes. So she sent Mari to her aunt in Vellore as a housemaid for her tenants. The tenants were two lady doctors from across the seas.

At Vellore, she enjoyed her work for three years with MissyV and MissyK to have a relationship which she understood when she returned to Vellore after giving birth to her son. She befriended Periyar swami the old gardener who was cranky too, though they had nothing in common, yet they were equals in each other's eyes. The missies taught her the English alphabet and bought English and Tamil books to read. They even guided her to pass SSLC privately and sponsor the nursing assistant course for Mari and later help her find a job as a helper in the hospital. They felt Mari had the aptitude and most importantly the makings of a good nurse.

Mary's mother fell and cracked her bone, so she was advised to rest for a few weeks. Amma didn't want to lose her hold on her job at the Chettiars, so she called for Mari to take a place. Mari obliged but she didn't enjoy cooking and longed to go back to Vellore after six weeks where missies would shape her future. So she dreamt of independence and dignity and confided in Amma. But Amma wanted to get Mari married off. In Vellore, Mari was expected and liked to be plain and bare. But Amma wanted her to be dressed up like 18 years old, seeking the world's admiration and Mary reflects feeling this was the blunder she had committed. When Amma recovered and returned from Chettiyar kitchen went on to be a handmaiden for Sujatakka.

Raniakka's Chettiyar daughter-in-law brother Murugesan secretly started eying her. On the fateful night when the whole world was celebrating Bogy at the Chettiyar Kottai, Mari was stolen off her modesty by Murugesan who trapped Mari with nonsense, illogical statements and emotionally blackmailed her of the consequences if she resisted him and giving no time for her to think. Mari bore the brunt of the lusty man and didn't dare to tell Amma, rather she dismissed it as if nothing has happened. Mari couldn't escape the truth, though she asserted herself by saying nothing has changed, nothing has changed and forget the deadly episode as a nightmare and just return to Vellore. But fate decided otherwise and Mari had to stay on to attend Sujatkka

as she was suffering from jaundice. She wasn't aware of the consequences of the episode until her mother noticed pregnancy. At first, amma chided Mari severely but sought the help of Sujatakka. Sujatakka hypothetically thought that Mari's pregnancy should be aborted and she should go back to Vellore nurse training, get married and if Mari's husband found it then Mari would have a job and it would replace a husband's protection. It was absurd for Mari to think about husband protection as the Chettiyar took care of Sujathakka's needs and Amma had to fend for herself. "The men in their lives had done nothing and yet to them fulfilled women were one who was married, everything else was secondary" Mari wanted the pregnancy to be aborted but Periyamma blew life into it in the guise of giving medicine for a healthy child instead of abortion. Mari just could not stand on her son. So Periyamma handed over the child to Amma and foretold that when Amma is gone this child would be there for Mari.

Mari left for Missies after this episode and was there for some time. After Chettiyar's and Chettiar Amma's death, Sujathakka and Sridharanna took over the Kottai. So Sujathakka calls back Mari to accompany her or care for her emotionally. Mari has felt that she has to oblige the feelings of Sujathakka and she became a lesbian to Sujathakka daytime and became a mistress to Sridharanna during nights.

Sujathakka said 'you will be my assistant-my eyes and ears. Your hands will reach where mine doesn't. Your feet will tread where mine can't. Do you understand?' Sujathakka wanted Mari to take her place, to be her proxy to which Amma strongly opposed and warned that all of it would end in grief. Mari never thought of what she is doing. She led like a mechanical life. But Mari knew that neither of them loved her but they needed her. Mari thinks 'those who can't have loved have to settle for need. What is love if not a need disguised?'

After Mari's mother's death, several issues take place and again she is thrown by her brothers and Chettiyar's family. But she did not lose herself. Mari went back home and found that she was pregnant again, now she didn't have the money for the operation. She could have asked Sridharanna for money but it would make her a whore and though she didn't collect the money she owed as salary, she just didn't want anything belongs to Sujathakka neither her husband nor her money. Murugesan became a rich man, to take an act of revenge on Murugesan she made up her mind to mortgage the boy to Murugesan looms and in return, she got 5000 rupees and which she wanted to use for her operation. 'A perverse satisfaction flared within me. Murugesan might not know it. But I had sold him his son; I had finally collected the rent for nine months of housing the boy. With the rent money raised from the boys' sweat and blood, I would destroy the house and bond that wove our lives together.

When Murugesan died, as the funeral procession is going by flowers rained on the body of Murugesan but Mari was glad that green sprigs of Marikolanthu never graced that creature's body. Along with the urchins who were dancing at the funeral she spotted the boy and told the boy 'dance at your father's funeral and let his spirit watch you with sorrow. That you celebrate his passing with such glorious abandon. Mari strongly believed in destiny. In January only

Murugesan had destroyed her life and now in January, only his life has come to an end. The body wasn't burning and maybe it was inauspicious for his sons to see it, so they were asked to leave and the boy-Muthu who was from Murugesan looms asked to stay there and to keep an eye on the men while they tried to burn the body again. According to the Hindu ritual son is set to assist his father's passage to the other world and the boy did it. When Mari saw the boy lit the second heap of logs, collect twigs, branches, dried grass for the body to burn a great sadness took over and she thought what she had reduced the boy to, 'a chandala, a keeper of graves, the overseer of the dead, and thought' and thought he didn't deserve any of this what happened to him. As the flames left Murugesan's body Mari's hate also burnt with them. Now that Murugesan had died. Her bitterness was gone and she had no reason to hate Muthu. She felt ashamed 'no remorse for having rejected him as anybody, you must understand. That was destined to be. But I felt shamed for having used him. How was I any different from that long line of people who had used me and then discarded me when their need was over? I knew that I would have to make up to him for that.'

Through Akhila, Jaya and Mari Anita had raised an important question of the death of the head of the family-father in all the cases and the consequences which have directly impacted the daughters. Rather ruined their liveliness and life. Akhila talks to herself 'what do the dead think of the havoc wrought by their absence? Subramani Iyer? Appa? In some bubbled realm of no return, do they twist and writhe in pain? Or is that what death all about? To be able to live. to cease to care, to be free.' Akhila remarked that she and Amma could be in place of Sarasamami and Jaya for which Amma said 'but I had you'. Amma had Akhila who had replaced her husband as the head of the family. 'Amma had her-Akhila. Akhilandeswari. Mistress of all worlds. Master of none.'

MARGARET SHANTI

As we read the story of Margaret Shanthi, it is obvious how women are dominated by man-power. Men like Ebenezer Paulraj are like the colonizers who are unable to see and praise the worth of the women, who are like the colonized. She married Ebenezer Paulraj at her own choice and the immediate willingness of her family. She was a Chemistry teacher, not an ordinary teacher but the one who had been a gold medalist. Initially, Margaret did not understand the deep-rooted male egoism in Ebenezer Paulraj, as her extreme love for him had made her blind. Though at times she felt the pain of it she convinced herself saying, "He was Ebe. My Ebe. He was right. He was always right". "She silences her aspirations to what Ebenezer wants her to be". Ebe is simply a male chauvinist when he takes the power to ask Margaret to abort the baby off, the first baby off, when she conveyed him the good news with all happiness. Not only in that, but he continued to thrust upon his supremacy over her in deciding her higher studies, career and even simple things like choice of food and her hairdressing for he says, "What's the point of working for a doctorate? Do your B.Ed. so you can become a teacher and then we will always be together. Long hair doesn't suit you. Cut it off. You'll look nicer with your hair in a blunt bob".

She was so patient and gulped in all insults thrown by him on her but later woke up to the fact and planned her strategy to prove her strength. As Ebe was becoming more and more egoistic, domineering, and hypocritical, Margaret was unconsciously compelled to teach him a lesson. She was taken to the height of anger as Ebe started throwing insults at her in front of his favorite Coterie. When he said to the Coterie "When I think of Chemistry, what comes to mind is the odor of rotten eggs", the anger in her bubbled for she thought how he had turned the evening into another moment of triumph for himself. She thought, "all that was good and noble about my life that he had destroyed, the baby that died even before it had a soul...there was nothing left for me to dream of and the words rose to the surface again: I HATE HIM. I HATE HIM. What am I going to do?"

She chose flattery as the weapon to bring down Ebe's self-esteem. She flattered and flattered and fed him with fatty food since dawn till night, till fat found its home on him, and turned him into a fat man, a quiet man and an easy man who sought her for food and sex and every way she knew. By making him fat she erodes his self-esteem and feels he is an easy man to live with now, in and out of health institute. Margaret gains self-esteem by eroding Ebe's self-esteem. She succeeds in achieving her emotional fulfillment keeping the family ties intact, though some justifications contain a modicum of sense". The character of Margaret shows that the woman could vanquish the domineering man.

PRABHADEVI

"Patriarchy shows its ugly face from cradle to grave." Even parents are more concerned about the boys than the girls. And Anita Nair has chosen the character of Prabha Devi to emphasize this issue. When Prabha Devi is born his father sighs, as it would be a hindrance for his business progress as he says, "Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans, addled your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance". Even Prabha Devi's mother is pleased when a daughter is born as her thoughts are confined that a daughter is someone who will take her recipes to the other house and treasure her jewelers and someone who will say that she did this and that in her mother's house. Even while playing games as a child, a girl is destined to choose to play cooking or baby-sitting games as it is said, "A kitchen was set up for her to play house and mother games. Sometimes Prabha Devi's mother joined in her daughter's games, pretending to be an adult – child while her daughter tried hard to be a child-adult". A woman is never liked to come out with opinions. Prabha Devi's mother finds great pleasure in the company of her daughter than in her four sons put together. But she conceals it within her for "she had discovered that a woman with an opinion was treated like a bad smell, to be shunned," She swallows this thought as she has done all her life. Though Prabha Devi's childhood had been this way, in the future she grooms herself as a woman who can measure up her life with a difference. She doesn't want to define herself within a more mechanical and monotonous life of a homely wife and a mother. She is not satisfied with this life and craves something more. Moreover, she

feels guilty for her vile upon her husband's friend Pramod and tries to come out of it. Prabha Devi's weakness does not escape Anita Nair, yet she displays very real respect for her as she has done with every other woman. And Prabha Devi achieves the self - actualization by learning to swim on her own out of great desire. "She triumphs over her innate timidity and gains peak experience" of supreme content bringing tremendous happiness to her husband as well".

BETTER MAN

The novel *The Better Man* describes every individual's attempt to find a degree of inner peace and manner. Throughout the story, there is an underlying message about how to have assurance on one's dreams and strive hard to fulfill the same. Anjana, in the novel *The Better Man*, was brought up in a liberal atmosphere by her parents. She is happy in her world of independence which gives her a profound sense of self-fulfillment. When her age turned twenty-seven her independence is lost in the name of marriage. In her married life, she endures several injustice perpetrated by her husband. In the days of her earlier married days, she tries a lot to impress her husband, Ravindran but she couldn't. She wants to give the best to him but he was not interested in her. Anjana consciously or unintentionally imitates the perfect woman because of her conventional upbringing. From her early childhood, girls are trained to stay pleased in their married lives under any circumstances, and thus fit in these ethics in her psyche. Whenever Anjana is ready for a casual conversation Ravindran feels irritated and leaves the place at once. Despite his actions, she is ready to perform her duty and all that she wants to know about the likes and dislikes of her husband. Her husband's home signifies a place of meaningless where she feels a stranger in the bed beside her. She is eager to lead a healthy life with him but it is merely a dream for her to achieve. She longs for freedom and love in marriage, but it breeds pain, misery, and fury. She develops a hatred for all the things around her, even for herself. She feels that she has been victimized in the name of customs and practices. In the world of Anjana, marriage is used traditionally. Communication in the Indian society marriage brings together man and woman under one roof, but she skins over the sexual relationship. She conveniently gives up the fact that every relationship, of course, the sexual relationship also incomplete without the involvement of an emotional relationship. There was no fine exchange between them. Her marital relation with her husband is marked by loneliness and improper communication. Anjana moved to her parent's home to look after her mother. Her entrance to her mother's house is a kind of escape from her loveless conjugal life. In course of her married life, she feels happy for the first time after four months her husband spoke an extended discussion about his plans to give up the house and start a new factory on his own and she flavors the conjugal bond with him.

Anjana tries to understand him because all her thoughts stand for the Indian wife who is compelled to carry her tradition and culture. Ravindran's business failed and decided to start a new one. He being a selfish man wants to achieve his goals and ambitions in life. He becomes a

self-obsessed man. He concerns about himself and rarely does he think about her. His frequent visits were reduced. Their relationship is affected adversely by their incapability to understand each other. Due to lack of communication the growing 'silence' between them, their marital life grows unsteady and dismal. For his lack of confidence, he violently attacked Anjana. On watching the terrifying behavior her father raised a voice against him.

'When I gave you my daughter's hand in marriage, it was with the hope that you would love her. Cherish and protect her for the rest of her life. If all you intend to do is hurt her and made her unhappy, then there is no need for such a relationship. My daughter can manage very well without a husband like you. If you ever hurt my daughter again, I'll throw you out of this house. Do you understand?' her father told Ravindran.

Again the worries begin to start in the life of her parents. Ravindran began to assault her in another way. To save their daughter from the brutality of her husband, her father finds a suitable teacher job. She enjoyed her job and made many friends. She prefers to read magazines, books and carried the transistor radio along with her like a baby. She tries to come out from the married life which she considers a disaster. The reader is given adequate hint that she is going to break her passivity. Having realized her position, Anjana would not accept the earlier image of a pair of bullocks yoked together, signaling a loveless couple. She comes to realize that life can always be made possible. The earlier impulsive Anjana becomes a mature woman, and with her realization, the shadow that befalls between wife and husband tends to disappear.

Anjana like all women is a victim and subjugated woman but not a passive silent sufferer all restricted women. Yet she does not question the man; her oppressor because she is more concerned about getting on her life and finding her meaningful existence. She was not unaware of the thoughts of her husband. The novelist tries to establish that it is not only the patriarchal setup that is responsible for the woman's condition in Indian society. The responsibility also lies within the victim to refuse, to raise a voice, and to achieve the goal. The novel also traces the growth of the character from a state of weakness, a feeling of failure to that of relaxation. She accomplishes this through self-assessment and self-criticism. The older generation is silent to the colonial power of patriarchy and becomes colonized whereas the younger generation is drastic and revolutionary.

Anjana seeks healthy relationships that will allow her to be herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she knows and she deserves. Years went by and one morning she realizes that she has lived her life with no symbols of marriage and decided to live as a spinster. She holds strong opinions about patriarchy and decides to become a teacher and discards the perception of wifhood, maternity and marriage as the final goal of a woman's survival. The novel travels from total silence to strong enunciation at the end. She gave away her colorful saris and took to wearing starched cotton in shades as insipid and dull as her life. She

locked up all her jewelry in a safe deposit box at the bank and swept all her fripperies away into the wastebasket.

Finally, Anjana breaks the traditional Indian consciousness and creates a world of her own. Anjana's emergence from her unsuccessful marriage, with the determination to live as a free individual, is an assertion of her freedom. She meets Mukundan and falls in love with him. She finds in Mukundan everything which she had been searching for in Ravindran. Mukundan does not ignore her presence or override her thoughts but instead helps her to regain her freedom of herself as an individual, a human being with her own identity. In Mukundan's company, she realizes that she has to free herself from her unhappy married life.

When Anjana, proposed her wish to Mukundan, he said, 'Anjana, You must listen to me. I know you think I am a good man, a gentleman. Someone you can depend on completely. I don't know if I am that man you make me out to be. My mother begged me to rescue her and take her away. But I didn't. I was afraid of my father, and so I made excuses. If I had done as she asked me, perhaps she might be still alive. That is the kind of man I am. A weak and undependable creature. Do you want to be part of such a man's life?'

'All of us have our weaknesses, but we seldom dare to accept them. Or even declare it as you have done now. To me, that makes you braver than anyone else. I Love You. My love tells me that this is right; you are right for me.'

Anjana is a blend of both traditional and modern elements and she wants uniqueness and autonomy. Unable to get recognition of her identity from Ravindran, she shapes out a new lane for herself. Anita Nair seems to be deeply concerned with women's freedom as Anjana wants to stand on her wishes and liberty. It is Anjana's longing for gratification and stillness that urges her to take divorce from her husband. Only after a long struggle, Anjana turns out to be a woman who can make choices, take decisions and makes up her mind to start life anew with Mukundan from whom she can get what she longs for love, care, affection and understanding. Finally, Anjana's positive attitude towards life, work, financial independence, and self-identity helps her to go ahead in her life with hope and optimism and she proves that women can achieve autonomy. Anjana finds her voice and establishes her identity. She has also created her gender identity and found a significant way of life with Mukundan. It shows that the novel does not end in depression but ends on a note of hope.

Thus Anita Nair in her novels has given the external and the internal identity of her all-female characters in a psychological way. Her fictional specialty occurs to be the exploration of the psyche of her women characters of all age groups. She not only voices of emancipation (though still surrounded by the construction of marriage), but also attempts to map out the real processes by which women are womanized. She does so by establishing and landing the evident and hidden

means of women's bondage and enrollment by principles, stereotypes and limited choices. She also focuses on the tactics of re-adjustments her female protagonists commence to create an identity of their own. Her women characters struggle to learn to become "one's place of safety".

Anita Nair, like many other writers of novels of typical literature, has chosen breaking the patriarchy and establishing self-identity as the central theme for her novel *The Better Man* and other subsequent novels 'Ladies *Coupé*' etc. The stimulation of self-understanding is an essential part of Indian philosophical and theological systems. Self-esteem, as presented in Anita Nair's novels, however, is different from religious self-realization. Self-discovery here is more guidance for assertion and realization of one's interests, certainly not egocentric in the narrow sense. The language, theme, characterization, narration and story reveal Anita Nair to be an exceptional novelist.

It is intended to show in this research that the traditional view of women is not anymore valid. The traditional picture may not have been valid even for the olden days. With self-discovery of their roles as individuals, women are steadily taking up new roles to play both as individuals and members of families and societies. It is wrong to assume now that women know only their homes. It is wrong to portray that being ignorant of the ways of the world, women experience untold and intolerable hardships if they come out of their homes. However, the vast majority of women, even now, continue to lose their identity, independence and self-respect. They are pawns in the hands of their husbands and laws. They should realize how important they are, not only at home but also in the society in which they live. They should assert their independence and know themselves. This is achieved through the process of self-discovery.

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