

## AN ANALYSIS OF ANITA NAIR'S NOVEL FROM A FEMINIST POINT OF VIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Many of the feminist women who have made lasting contributions to literature have also authored works that explore the concept of chivalry. Their works typically feature empowered female protagonists and highlight the many accomplishments of women across the world. Poets and writers who espouse a feminist viewpoint have not given up the struggle for gender parity in literature. The Indian-born poet and writer Anita Nair has become a worldwide phenomenon. She has always had a passion for writing and the will to pursue it no matter what stands in her way. The many roles that women are expected to play inform Nair's artistic practice. As a writer, she has amazing vigor and writes outstanding articles with ease. Post-colonial feminist literature has long carried the weight of rectifying many erroneous readings of traditions and beliefs. The basic problem here is that society and the economy rely so heavily on women. More conservative postcolonial cultures face more challenges in addressing the topic of women's freedom. Thus, the more strongly authors like Anita Nair question women's roles in postcolonial India, the more uneasy certain readers may feel about the subject matter. I've decided to focus my critical attention on the works of Anita Nair, specifically her novels *Ladies coupe* and *Mistress*. Anita Nair's novels signal the arrival of a gifted storyteller who can go past the obvious in her characters and take readers on an engaging quest for meaning. Books like this are great for delving into secret societies. In these words, I hope to acknowledge the skills of personality sketch artist Anita Nair.

**Keywords:** Feminist women, Novel, ANITA NAIR'S.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Large numbers of students enrolling in English literature programs at universities around the country attest to the popularity of the field. English literature encompasses a wide range of topics, and this has led to some confusion. This article delves into the various applications of English language in the academic and professional spheres. To answer the second part of your question: yes, it does include literature written in English, but not necessarily British literature. However, it becomes increasingly difficult to pin down exactly what literature is. The definition of literature is open to debate, although it is generally accepted that novels, poetry, and occasionally play are all forms of literature. International students who are willing to broaden their definition of literature to include other forms of writing, such as scripts, nonfiction, and even song lyrics, might benefit from studying abroad. While many institutions offer courses in English literature, their focus is typically narrowed to more conventional forms of literature study. A typical English literature major will include readings from both poetry and prose fiction, with some drama and other, more debatable "literature" thrown in for good measure. A good English literature degree program will introduce you to novel critical concepts and provide a deeper level of analysis than you could achieve on your own, while covering all significant time periods and literary movements in English literature. A typical English department's course catalog will have sections for "British literature," "American literature," and "world literature," as well as "pre-1800" and "post-2000" sections.

### 2. ABOUT NOVEL

We've all seen shelves full of them. We've all read at least one in our lifetimes. But could you give a definition of 'novel'? Keep reading to find out more about the novel's characteristics and encounter some examples of this literary form!

#### The Old and New: Defining 'Novel'

Getting to the root of what makes a 'novel' a book is like reuniting with an old friend. A novel, in its most basic definition, is a very long piece of fictitious literature. Novels are more complex than that, though.

Novels, in this sense, might be said to have originated in Egypt about 1200 BCE. Authors like Heliodoros (Ethiopian Romance) and Apuleius (The Golden Ass) found an audience in ancient Greece and Rome for their lengthy works of prose fiction, which are still read and enjoyed today. But literary styles change over time as people's preferences shift.

And throughout the centuries since its creation, the book has evolved its own distinctive traits that set it apart from other literary genres.

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF A NOVEL

What defines a novel, like many other themes in literature, is sometimes the subject of fierce controversy. Fortunately, though, books share a few universally acknowledged strengths.

#### • Innovation

Novels as a whole illustrate literary change, which is not always a rule for each individual specimen or even addressed by many writers. They were revolutionary for the ancient Greeks and Romans, who had hitherto relied on verse epics and lyrical poetry, and their significance has evolved with each succeeding age. The very name of the literary genre, "novel," comes from the Latin for "young" and "new," suggesting that the works it contains should be innovative. Unlike other literary styles (like haikus or Shakespearean sonnets), the book has witnessed many changes throughout the years and continues to evolve regularly.

#### • Length

When defining a "work of considerable length," how long is too long? The length of a book is a topic of ongoing debate among literary critics, as it is with the novel's close relative, the short story. But luckily, they tend to fall within a very consistent range, with the lowest being around 60–70,000 words and the largest being around 200,000 words.

#### • Content

Of all, it wouldn't do to simply refer to a novel as "a long book." Novels are works of fiction because they tell tales. However, the realistic depictions they offer are a key characteristic of the genre. Here, realism is communicated via the actions and reactions of the novel's characters to one another, to their environments, and to themselves. There is always some sort of coherence to what happens and how people respond, no matter how illogical it may seem at first.

Fortunately, books may still draw inspiration from more fantastical genres like fantasy and science fiction while adhering to this level of realism. A novel's content is also distinguished by its use of prose rather than poetry, though it may contain occasional lines of verse for emphasis. However, even in these cases, the poetry section stands out as separate from the remainder of the story.

#### • Character and Plot Development

The length of the story and the incorporation of realistic aspects allow for extensive exploration of the people and their situations. Novels are longer than short stories, therefore they can include more than one protagonist and often have many groups of characters. Novelists have a lot more leeway to develop their characters fully, which allows them to incorporate countless new angles of thought and analysis. These folks also tend to be thrust into more intricate and difficult circumstances. Both the outward situation and the interior circumstances that coincide with, originate from, or produce this sequence of events are typically shown in such narratives from two contrasting points of view.

#### • Publication Practices

One of the most common methods of publication is to have one's work published in anthologies with other works of a similar kind, or to have one's work published in a magazine, newspaper, or other periodical as a serial, or segmented piece disseminated over time.

### 4. THE IMPORTANCE OF NOVEL BEGINNINGS

It's crucial that you spend some time every day learning more about the craft of writing as you work on your novel. A writer's reference library is essential, and in a previous post I recommended four works that every author should have on their shelf: Plot & Structure by James Scott Bell, Stein on Writing by Sol Stein, On Writing by Stephen King, and The Elements of Style by Strunk & White.

You will find several allusions to "Beginnings, Middles, and Endings" as you read these books, add more to your collection, and conduct Internet research. There are three acts in a novel, just as there are in a play. Even while each "Act" will have its unique requirements, Act One (the beginning) will undoubtedly be the most difficult.

The narrative you wish to tell may be completely familiar to you, or you may simply have a vague sense of it. You have selected either the first or third person for your essay. You've already decided if your novel will be funny, wacky, serious, fast-paced, or slower, nerve-wracking tension, and whether the genre is science fiction, romance, thriller, epic, or something else entirely. This is what you need to have accomplished before starting, middle, and ending can be discussed.

#### Beginning your novel

In the beginning your goal is to:

1. Hook the Reader
2. Establish, or hint at, a dramatic situation
3. Tell us the setting and time
4. Introduce at least one character
5. Introduce the opposition

You will hear the phrase "hook the reader" quite a bit. The significance of this cannot be overstated. You have very little time to capture the reader's attention and make them want to keep reading. Similarities exist between a reader and a potential literary agency. It doesn't matter how well-written the remainder of the book is if no one is interested enough in it within the opening paragraphs to keep reading (for some readers and agents, this may be as little as the first phrase).

#### **Not sure how to hook? Do a little research at the library**

Get yourself to a library and spend some time there reading the first few pages of random books. Flip through both the bestsellers and the books you've never heard of. Why are you drawn to read on beyond the first few sentences? In every book that succeeds, the reader will encounter some sort of mystery or suspense that compels them to keep turning the pages. You're immersed further in the narrative. You just caught yourself a hook.

A long time ago, perhaps by Raymond Chandler, I read a mystery novel whose author I have since forgotten. I won't be able to give you a direct quotation, but it went something like this: "My partner and I were just finishing our shift and getting ready to head back to the precinct when someone threw the girl off the bridge".

Holy buckets! Is this a book you'd put back on the shelf? I don't think so.

Or how about this one: "Hapscomb's Texaco was on Number 93 just north of Arnette, a piss-ant four street berg about 110 miles from Houston." All the regulars were there tonight, chatting and sipping beer at the cash register while they watched insects flutter into the neon sign. Bill Hapscomb was in charge, therefore everyone else listened to him even if he was an idiot. More, please! Yes, you do, and so do the ten million other people who have read *The Stand* by Stephen King.

#### **The best way to learn? Practice.**

All good first scenes have this effect on readers, even though not all starts are as dramatic as these. To refuse is futile. More information is needed. Until you're sure that your opening lines will grab readers like a clinched fist, keep working on them.

Quickly introduce a likeable figure, who need not be the protagonist. A novel's momentum is quickly delayed if the author begins by providing background material she believes readers need to know before getting on with the plot. Too much exposition makes a tale drag and is never interesting. It's a certain way to stop a novel in its tracks before it ever starts going. Unless you happen to be James Michener, that is. When writing those first lines, keep "action" in mind. The explanation can wait. Naturally, you want to include this information into the narrative rather than spoon-feeding it to the reader.

Opening with a dream is another bad idea. It's not well received by readers or literary agents. Don't be enticed; it's just another road to nowhere for your story.

Throughout the 20th century, several Indian authors gained recognition for their work in English in addition to their native tongues. Indian English is a kind of English spoken in India that emerged as a result of the country's colonization by the British. Books produced in India exhibit the widespread trend of using British spelling and accent for written Indian English. Comparatively to American English literature, Indian English literature tends to use more internationally recognizable terminology than does vernacular Indian English.

## **5. BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SELECTED AUTHORS**

All four authors have some connection to feminism, although Charlotte Bront, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, and Jeanette Winterson all take significantly different approaches. However, their biographies and canonical works are highlighted in this section. British author and poet Charlotte Bront (1816-1855) was the eldest of the three Bront sisters. Her mother passed away from cancer when she was five years old, and her aunt took care of her and her siblings. After their parents transferred them and their sisters to a Clergy Daughter's School in the hopes that they may all get an education, Charlotte's physical and mental development were severely stunted, as recounted in her novel *Jane Eyre*. When Charlotte got home from school, she took up the role of a parent to her younger siblings. The Haworth Parsonage was the home of the Bronts, the site where the children first began writing stories together. The two started making up stories about their characters and the worlds they lived in.

Emily and Anne penned poetry about the nation of Gondal, and Charlotte and her brother Branwell wrote about the country of Angria. Despite this, Charlotte finished her schooling and worked as a teacher from 1835 until 1838, and then as a governess after that. Under the pen names Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne produced a book of poetry in 1846. And the following year, in 1848, she released her masterpiece, the autobiographical *Jane Eyre* (1847), which was an instant hit. Her other works include the feminist classic *Shirley* (1848) and the social critique *Villette* (1853), both of which explore the effects of social seclusion and the suppression of personal desire. Despite her father's objections, Charlotte went ahead and was married after the deaths of Branwell, Emily, and Anne.

Sadly, in 1854, she had pneumonia while she was nine months pregnant, and she died the next year. One of the most celebrated writers in British literature is Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). Dorchester, a little town in rural Wessex, is where he was born. He went on to study and practice architecture, but after moving to London in 1891, he realized that poetry and fiction were more to his liking.

### **Six Women in a Box**

The private thoughts and emotions of Indian middle-class ladies are reflected in Nair's *Ladies Coupe*. Women's roles in Indian society are reflected in the characters. Nair's descriptions of the genuine middle-class home and the humour of the trivial issues of daily existence are affecting. *Ladies Coupe*'s protagonist is representative of the many women who have suffered at the hands of males in our exploitative society. *Ladies Coupe* follows the lives of six women who meet for the first time and share their stories, all of which have in common the fact that they are Indian women whose lives have been dominated by a man or a woman in some way, just as the title of the novel suggests they will be.

*Ladies Coupe* features an all-female ensemble and is about a woman's determination to choose her own path in life rather than conform to the expectations placed on her by her roles as daughter, sister, aunt, and breadwinner. In an interview, Nair explains that she writes fiction "whenever things perplex me." According to her, "Equality of Strength in Women" is a prominent theme in this book. Because we Indian women don't value ourselves highly, we often neglect our own wants and needs.

### **Simone de Beauvoir in The second sex remarks**

Like he wishes her to be both hot and cold while he's in bed with her, he wants her to be completely his without being a burden. He wants her to root him firmly in one spot while yet allowing him to roam, to bore him with the same routine every day while being close at hand. He doesn't want her to belong to anybody except himself;

to live as one of a couple and to remain alone. Thus she is betrayed from the day he marries her. (465)

Marriage, in this culture, is seen as a woman's ultimate goal. Arranged marriages are common in India, and as a result, the wife is subject to her husband's whims and desires her whole life.

## **6. OBJECTIVE**

Anita Nair is the author of six books. The titles include "The Better Man," "Ladies Coupe," "Mistress," "Lessons in Forgetting," "Cut Like Wound," and "Idris: Keeper of the Light." Among these books, "Ladies Coupe" stands out for its widespread acclaim and numerous translations (21 so far).

The primary goal of the present paper is to examine Anita Nair's feminism. Anita Nair is one of the best female Indian writers to write in English because of the strong female protagonists she creates and the empowering message she conveys.

### **ABOUT THE TITLE**

*Ladies Coupe*, directed by Anita Nair in 2001, is about a woman's fight for autonomy. A non-feminist, Nair declares, "I am not. Being at home is where my heart is. I appreciated it when people took good care of me. It's not a book on feminism, in my opinion. "I'm blown away by the inner strength I see in so many women." In a *Ladies Coupe* fifteen years ago, the women surrounding me started talking...people are more comfortable speaking candidly with complete strangers. The "Ladies Coupe" moniker is intentional, says Anita Nair. Interview with Suchitra Behal. (The Hindu)

Like Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Anita Nair's story follows a group of pilgrims as they make their journey to the shrine of St. Thomas in Canterbury. They are a compilation of framed narratives. Anita Nair's "Ladies Coupe" is similar in that it has six ladies who share a train car and each has a tale to tell. Nair's narrative shifts from one of lethargy and absence to one of active presence as she follows the lives of six different women from the domestic sphere (kitchen and bedroom) to the public sphere (street and world at large). These are the anecdotes that come together to tell the larger tale of women reacquainting themselves with their bodies. Some narratives serve as symbols of an ideal society freed from patriarchy and characterized by a lack of false dichotomies.



## SIX WOMEN CHARACTERS

Six ladies share their experiences while riding in the train's Ladies Coupe, as narrated by Anita Nair. It primarily illustrates a crisis in societal conventions and a yearning for personal independence. Akhilandeswari alias Akhila, 45, was raised in a traditionalist household of Tamil Brahmins. She is now unmarried and works as a clerk. After her father passed away, Akhila has had to become the breadwinner for her family. Her siblings become adults and settle down with spouses, leaving Akhila to fend for herself. She has never had the chance to establish her own identity or lead an independent life.

"She was always an extension of someone's identity; daughter, sister, aunt.... Akhila wished for once someone should see her as a whole being" (P.201-202).

Five ladies, JanakiPrabhakar, Prabha Devi, Margaret Paulraj, SheelaVasudevan, and Marikolunthu, cross Akhila's path en route to Kanyakumari. Even though this is their first meeting, they are already exchanging life stories. The terrible position of Indian women under a patriarchal social structure is a common thread running through the experiences of these women, despite the differences in their ages, levels of education, and cultural upbringing.

## NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND THEMES

Anita Nair has established herself as a leading writer in India's literary canon, despite the fact that other women authors are more known for the way they write or approach to fiction. When compared to other filmmakers, Anita Nair stands out for her distinctive approach, character portrayals, and promotion of women's rights and responsibilities. She paints a clear picture of their plight in the world. Anita Nair excels in depicting the everyday activities—from a leisurely Sunday brunch to a heated family argument to the sights, sounds, and scents of a crowded train station—that comprise her characters' lives. She's made it clear that each of her books is really a novella, and it's true that she appears more suited to writing short stories than novels.

There is no single definition of feminism. If you want to find a thread that runs through a lot of its variants, go no further than the critique of patriarchal ways of thought that strive to dominate men and subjugate women. During their indoctrination, women are taught to internalize this patriarchal mentality. It highlights the artificiality of gender roles. After reading Simone de Beauvoir, I realized that women are not born to be leaders; they must earn that position through hard work and perseverance. This entire culture is responsible for the existence of a being that fits the feminine stereotype. Novelists' use of various narrative techniques is becoming increasingly significant as the variety of storytelling options grows. The author has the benefit of hindsight, thus he or she typically uses a straightforward narrative or story-telling approach. The author will often use the first-person point of view to increase the story's realism and credibility.

Authenticity is preserved in novels written this way, although the author is limited in exploring the motivations and thoughts of the other characters. After laying forth an extensive list of the books' and its weaknesses, including its overarching bitterness, its limited location and characters, and its failure to maintain itself past the first reading, all of which are debatable, the novel is deemed to have failed. Anita Nair's talent as the chronicler of Indian middle class life is well acknowledged.

It's possible to disagree with her view that the characters in the story are nothing other than their roles. After finishing her book, the reader is likely to reflect on the works of other renowned writers and come to the conclusion that the vast majority of books follow a similar pattern of place and lifestyle. By making her characters a byproduct of their surroundings and upbringing, Anita Nair is not making them two-dimensional; rather, she is reflecting the realities that exist and human nature as well. Anita Nair mentioned that she plans certain scenarios and the narration occurs as she writes (in long hand) in one of her radio talks. Then, once she types it in, she'll add a few more details. She found inspiration for her characters in literature, movies, and real life, often at the train station. For a split second, she'd met someone with Akila's sorrowful eyes and demeanor not too long ago. The author has written because they were curious about their life.

## CONTRADICTIONS AND AMBITIONS OF ANITA NAIR'S WOMEN'S CHARACTER

Anita Nair is a writer who is not afraid to say what she thinks. Anita Nair rejects the term "feminist writer" to describe herself. She tries to demonstrate that women can be powerful too. Anita Nair chimes in as well, noting that strength is not stereotypically associated with women. In the end, her writing is distinct from that of other feminist authors. Therefore, she is a feminist who also values diversity. She tracks the true standing of women inside households and communities. By treating women as equals, she has set off a chain reaction in our male-dominated culture. It's impressive how she tries to show the struggles, anxieties, conflicts, inconsistencies, and aspirations of her female characters. Her main concern is with women's issues and their place in contemporary Indian culture. The characters in her books are based on actual people. The novels explore how women are shaped by society. Literature is one of many

tools used by society to spread ideas and beliefs; we are always surrounded by literature that does just that. They defy convention and push the envelope of what it means to be a woman in today's society. As a result, we might argue that Anita Nair's portrayal of women leads to the customary splintering of society. To preserve the institution of the family, she compels us to consider the relevance of reducing infidelity. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to generalize about Indian culture without taking into account the religious variety reflected in Anita Nair's female protagonists. Modern Indo-English author Anita Nair has written on the struggles of Indian women. The tension between modernity and tradition in present-day India is explored in this novel. Anita Nair has shown how women are treated as second class citizens in traditionalist, conservative Indian society. She has spoken out against oppression of women in the home and in the workplace, as well as sexual abuse of women both inside and outside of marriage.

### THE TREATMENT OF FEMINISTIC ISSUES IN ANITA NAIR'S NOVELS

Lessons in Forgetting, Anita Nair's fourth novel, published in 2010, is addressed in an effort to reimagine the place of women in society and their search for fulfillment. In her writing, she presents a world where ordinary people are given extraordinary opportunities. Love, dependence, and betrayal are all themes explored. Anita Nair's literature addresses the oppression, demeaning, and abusive practices of the patriarchal society. Her novel's central topic prompts us to reconsider the reality of other worlds and the conceptual foundations of man's patriarchal role in conventional society. It contrasts the mythological and metaphysical perspective on the material world with the reality of the oppression of women in the actual world.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Ladies Coupé and Mistress, two books by Anita Nair, center on the process of coming into one's own. In addition, the theme of sexual assault in the home is central to Mistress. Even though Anita Nair isn't a feminist, the choices and constraints that married Indian women face are explored at length in her works. They're caught up in the anguish they've endured and the rebellion that's grown out of it, but they're also trying to spread a message of optimism about the positive change that's achievable with enough bravery and initiative. Anita Nair has been called a feminist ever since Ladies Coupe, a label she has fiercely rejected. She stated her distaste for the label "feminist" in an interview with Sreeni K. R. She discusses the societal shifts that she believes are necessary for the advancement of women. Nair explains, "The creative process begins for me when certain aspects of life trouble me," in another interview with Sneha. Then, I do my best to figure out why things are that way. But all I'm doing is reflecting the world as we see it. I have no delusions that I can spark a societal uprising by doing this. Not that I ever intended to, mind you. She makes it clear in an identical interview that she does not consider herself a feminist since she does not share all of the beliefs of the feminist movement. She dislikes having her freedom constrained in any way. Feminism has a significant role in how readers and reviewers evaluate the works of women authors across the world. Clearly, Ladies Coupe is a book on womanist ideas and perspectives. Again, the above method is a cautious attempt to probe feminism; maybe, it will inspire future Indian authors and readers to give female characters nuance and agency.

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