

How to Cite:

Aruna, V., & Ratnaker, P. S. (2022). Woman perceptions while Re-reading Anita Nair's Mistress. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S3), 12099–12105.

<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS3.9120>

Woman perceptions while Re-reading Anita Nair's Mistress

Vasantha Aruna

Research Scholar, English Division, Dept. of S&H, VFSTR Deemed to be University, Vadlamudi AP & Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, Narsaraopeta Engineering College, Narasaraopet, AP.

*Corresponding author email: arunasamineni123@gmail.com

Dr. P. Sasi Ratnaker

Associate Professor, English Division, Dept of S&H, VFSTR Deemed to be University, Vadlamudi AP

Abstract---Challenges of woman faced during her life is the major issues in feminism. According to Oxford Dictionary Feminism is a kind of feeling born out of the champion of right, power and also the equal chances with men by woman. This idea is as old as the English Language. Anita Nair is one of the successful writers in writing Feminism. "Mistress" is a tale of struggled woman in finding her own identity and respect and also the fight against the suppression of the patriarchal society. The novel gives the importance of the role of Indian women under the men dominated society. Woman in Indian history stands for protecting herself from all kinds of exploitation and suppression under male dominated society. Representing the other woman, she respects herself while respecting others under different kinds of cultural and societal issues and atmosphere. Naturally, it is said that the centuries together, woman is limited herself to the four walls of kitchen and never step out of the house for any other reason. She is said to be most obedient, faithful and loyal to male dominated one. But under the changing circumstances, it is inevitable to any woman to protect herself from all kinds of hurdles faced in her life. Resistance and protest has become a part of her life right from the beginning. As a mother, daughter and also as wife she plays various roles where woman exhibits herself her capacity, strength and also the power. In spite of many challenges, woman still restricted to the roles of wives and mothers. Hence, this paper focus on how Anita Nair projects Feminism and the attitude of the society towards the women through her women characters in her novels. Anita Nair has signalled the arrival of a sensitive writer she could perceive deep mysteries in people's personalities and take the reader on a delightful journey of discovery. These novels show her talent for in delineating the women

characters who come out from the inquisitive the narrow world. This paper is an attempt of appreciating the powers of Anita Nair and the delineation of the deeper layers of the woman's personality.

Keywords---eco-feminism, equal rights, feminism, power, mistress, sensitive, personality.

Introduction

Anita Nair is successful writer of the novels "The Better Man" and "Ladies coupe" "Lessons in Forgetting", "Mistress", "Collection of Malabar Mind" a collection of poems, "Satyr of Subway" a collection of short stories and Eleven other stories and she has also written two children's books -"The Puffin Book of world Myths" and "Legends". She has edited an anthology of writings about Kerala titled "Where the Rain is Born". Portraying strong woman expressions and the feelings, Nair stands alone on the top of all contemporary writers. She presents woman in society with all facts and outstanding emotions in her domestic life. She also explains a few anecdotes on woman who exhibits their strength under different circumstances. She penetrates into the deepest layers of the human psychology and exposes the readers to find their ways and means to think about themselves. She exhorts her experiences that strike in her deepest layers of heart which pinched her life at different corners. So her approach towards all her feelings are very clear in demanding the self identity and struggle. Her novel "Mistress" is a kind of embodiment of her experiences entwined with human relationships and their roots with the neighbours in the society. She is also very clear in men and woman relationship. Her proposition on the pre-marital and also marital and extramarital relationship has created a kind of havoc among the society during the period. She expresses that all these are purely woman personal emotions and no one should question them including her life partner.

All her ideas are very radical and different to the existing systems of thought process. Her views about marriage, relations and societal behaviour are completely new and nobody easily approve them. So she faces many challenges in her life and faced them boldly. She says there is a dire need of consciousness on the pattern of life. It must be useful to the growth of the society as well as the individual development with the better understanding between man and woman. Her main focus is on development of personality and genius, which is quite difficult to achieve in the modern society. Atmosphere in the life is the key role in everyone's life. It is mentioned many times in Nair novels through many characters and incidents. The economic independence to a woman makes has life very smooth and easy. At the same time, such an economic independence should not be an accidental but it should have top priority. However, human relations are most depends on the circumstances they are living and also the society they are undergone. But for centuries together, there are many incidents where woman is treated as the secondary one in spite all her strengths and also key role in the society. She has been described in the fiction and narratives as the weaker in her mind and also in her body. She always depends on men to serve even her own needs. Such characters can be traced in the novels of Nair like Radha and others.

In ancient times, it was Manu who described the role of woman in the society with certain limitations and objections.

“Duteous girl obeys her father,
Husband sways the duteous wife,
Son controls the widowed mother,
Never free is a women’s life” (23)

Men and women are correlative to one another. Neither of them can guarantee any prevalence over the other. In any case, in human development, women are frequently assigned an optional job. Notwithstanding, they have the force of perseverance, proclivity, love and prescience which add to the bliss of others.

Woman Liberation in our Society

Woman's rights can likewise be characterized as a worldwide marvel which delivers different issues identified with women across the world in a particular way as relevant to a specific culture or society. In spite of the fact that the issues identified with women's liberation may vary for various social orders and culture, they are comprehensively integrated with the hidden way of thinking of accomplishing equality of sexes in each circle of life. So woman's rights can't be attached to any restricted definition dependent on specific class or race of religion. This can be noticed obviously by Ernestine's words in his History of women`s suffrage. Humankind perceives no sex, mind perceives no sex, life and demise, joy and agony, bliss and wretchedness perceive no sex, similar to a man lady comes automatically into reality. Like him she has physical and mental and also moral forces. Like him she was to take care of the punishment for disobeying nature's laws, and for more noteworthy punishments she needs to experience the ill effects of obliviousness. Like men she additionally appreciates or endures with her country. However she isn't perceived as his equivalent.

It is believed through holy scriptures that the ultimate God, Brahma created woman with all her weaknesses and also associated with men. Indian literature from times immemorial practiced orally that the God himself created woman with feministic approach. He then, shaped woman with the material and physical beauty to attract men and to live under the shade of men. "She will serve you lifelong and if you cannot live with her, neither can you live without her. The primitive myth carries an unambiguous implication of woman`s image in life and literature for centuries” (Genres in Indian Literature, 2012). Literature is a kind of thought process where all feelings, emotions and utterances are taken into a shape with characters and situations. The genre, novel, plays a dominant role in such modes of expression where Nair has used it very strongly. Her novel, Mistress, focuses on different corners of woman life in the modern age in the male dominated society. She has to bow her head during the marriage and also after life. Now a days, marriage system in the society emerged as to exhibit the richness of their family instead of their strong bond which they are going to develop.

Generally, woman are quite sentimental and expressive in their mood. Whereas men are quite silent and coherent. Both their attitude is different. The situation demands them to move in various directions. Nair created such incidents in her novel Mistress, Radha and shyam characters stand for the argument made so far.

Radha is bold, energetic and also radical in her thoughts whereas shyam is purely traditional and also conventional in his way of life. Many times he tries to control Radha over her emotions but she escapes and could not stop her thoughts giving towards Chris. The entire course of action takes place in the form of play within the play. The entire novel moves around these three characters and also develop all independent and revolutionary thoughts of Radha. Thus the attitude of men and woman are quite different. The novel, Mistress moves around such situations with characters like Sethu, Sadhya and Koman. In spite of their religious differences, they could not compromise with the cultural and traditional barriers. Such barriers lead to the abrupt ending of the Saadiya. These religious and cultural differences among the people are discussed on large scale in the novel. So Mistress shows the effect of changing relationships between the wife and the husband also with the society. In most of the cases, wife and husband relations are broken because of their disbelief and faith on each other. Society also plays a dominant role in these circumstances.

Women`s Identity and Self Discovery

Woman is treated as inferior to men in all respects. Her identity, strength and her observations are never taken care by the society. They always strive for their own happiness. Men always pretend to be the sacrifice and also savour of the family. But actually, in many incidents it may not take place. The voices of woman are not given scope and they are very bitter.

The relation of Radha in the novel

In the novel, Radha stands for purity and fairness as she feels nothing wrong in maintaining relations with people like Chris. Her husband also loves her she never feels guilty. She frequently requests him to visit her make her to be happy. "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. Primarily, issues of identity and self -definition remain uppermost in the novel. Koman is the protagonist character in the novel Mistress. 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. Unfortunately, they have gone to a camp in Arabipatnam, there 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 fore arm. 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)

Saadiya is sent out of the house as she maintains a relationship with a Hindu boy, Sethu. Her parents noticed it and warns her not to resort for such actions.

But she could not stop her love towards Sethu and lastly she ends her life meaninglessly. They have one child, later Sadiya commits suicide of extreme distress and tension.

“Radha, herself has to grapple with the question whether her uncle, who has 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 illegitimate 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 has 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” Shyam opines that he was decided, but his defeat would be nothing before his love for Radha. It exposes the true nature of Shyam.

“Anita Nair throws light on different aspects of human relationships and brings out the factors, which are responsible for change in behaviour of man towards man. She feels that men have been successful in suppressing woman for centuries. She does not waver in her version of better world where men and women can live and work together harmoniously, developing a higher level of consciousness by means of a closer sharing of meaningful concepts, meaningful to the conditions that are present and prevailing” Feminists have advanced the issue of empowerment of women through education as a means of challenging patriarchal ideology of male domination and women subordination. *Mistress* revolves around the life of Radha, Shyam and their morbid marriage against the back drop of the narratives of Radha’s uncle Koman. Remarkably, in Eco feminist terms, Shyam sees nature or woman as a resource for the benefit of man. Both nature and women represent the generative powers of fertility and birth. But it exists as a reflection of nature through the reproductive and productive work of giving birth to children, feeding them and ensuring them their healthy growth. Eco Feminism argues that Western Colonialism and science have damaged this relationship of nature and natural resources.

Radha’s resistance is not without tension or fear. She ‘masquerades’ for a while as the dutiful in order to give herself time for hard decisions: “Fear makes one do things one would never do otherwise. Fear lets you compromise. Fear will even let you seduce your husband so that he thinks he imagined your transgressions, your betrayal, and that you still are his.” (P-No 253). Finally, Radha rejects both Shyam and Chris and in doing so, releases herself from the roles of wife and mistress. In her decision to break away from both men in her life, but keep her urban baby, she gives her baby a maternal identity through the maternal care only, by rendering it “fatherless”. Radha, who had been mistress to two men (Chris and Shyam) and wife to one, moves towards becoming “mistress” of her own self.

Mistress is an intensive novel full of deep, mysterious, complex emotions that are very true to life. The story of each character unravels slowly and in the end

culminates in a passionate story of life. All the characters in the novel have a passion in life and in some way or the other it decides the course of their lives and it becomes a demanding mistress. Empowerment entails life-long struggle for survival and transforming the structures and institutions (e.g. laws, social practice, political process, religious matters) that seem to perpetuate or reinforce gender and social discrimination. International Journal of Academic Research and Development 1285 inequality. According to Graham-Brown (1991), for the individual, empowerment through education promises an escape from poverty, oppression. It also promises greater social prestige, job mobility and better future prospect. Education empowers through language. A three way relationship among languages, literature and culture has been well established and documented (Olaoye, 2002, Isyaku, 2004). According to them, there is no literature without language. Culture and language are inseparable and the trios are intricately interwoven. They play vital role in man's education and national development.

Conclusion

The argument comes to conclude that the novelist has projected a kind of new ideology among the relationships between men and woman. These relationships are born out of modern age and its influence. The development of technology and speedy life in the society has brought many changes in the lives of individual. Nair strongly believes that the social and traditional pattern of life in various stages of woman life marriage is being rediscovered and its ultimate goal is to lead a calm and peaceful life with mutual understanding and cooperation. In some issues it will be possible but in the issues like Radha in the novel it may not be possible. However, in the recent times, the honourable supreme court of India has identified the rights of individuals and they can stay together without marriage. It is also revealed that staying together without marriage is also not wrong and nothing harm to the society. Such live in relationships are highly exposed through various characters discussed in the novel *Mistress*. Thus Nair's *Mistress* focus on the issues of self-realization and understanding of men and woman.

References

1. Nair, Anita. *Mistress*, New Delhi: Penuin Books India, 2007.
2. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English*. (Sterling Publishers) Private Limited, 2000, 317.
3. Srinivasa Iyengar. *Indian Writing in English*. (Sterling Publishers) Private Limited, 2000, 165.
4. Meenakshi Mukherjee. *The Twice Born Fiction*, (pen craft International, 2010, 28.
5. William Walsh. *Sweet mangoes and malt Vinegar*, 124.
6. Barnard Shaw. *The complete prefaces of Berenard Shaw*, (London: paul Hamlyn, 1965, 11)
7. Quoted by S. Krishnawamy in *Kamala Markandaya: Autonomy, Nurturnace and Sisterhood of Man*. "The women in Indian Fiction in English", 167-168.
8. Olaoye AA, *Modern approach to classroom learning*:
9. Anandragogical exploration. An unpublished Education Tax Fund workshop paper, July. Argungu, Kebbi State: College of Education, 2004.

10. Olaoye AA. Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Text in applied linguistics. Abuja: Israel Ogunieye Publisher, 2007.
11. Olalekan GBA. Yoruba translation, metalanguage and lexicography. In Oyewole, A. (ed.), Nigerian language, the past, the present and the future. 2001, 57-79.
12. Opega ROY. The teaching of language and literature: Relevance to and reactions of a younger Nigerian generation. Language and literature in education for a better Society, 2004.
13. Solanke J. What has folklore got to do with it? Endangered languages and the electronic age. Proceedings of the national workshop on best practices to safeguard Nigerian languages. Abuja: UNESCO publication, 2006.
14. 13.Manohar, D. Murali, Indian Fiction women'sFiction : A Study of Marriage, Career and Divorce, Atlantic Publishers and Distributers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi – 1994.
15. Mukherjee, Meenakshi, "Women creative writers in Indian English Literature between spaces of silence : Women creative writers", New Delhi – 1994.
16. Suryasa, W. (2019). Historical Religion Dynamics: Phenomenon in Bali Island. Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems, 11(6), 1679-1685.
17. Suryasa, W., Sudipa, I. N., Puspani, I. A. M., & Netra, I. (2019). Towards a Change of Emotion in Translation of Kṛṣṇa Text. Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems, 11(2), 1221-1231.
18. Aryani, L. N. A., & Lesmana, C. B. J. (2019). Neuropsychiatric factor and polymorphism gene in internet addiction. International Journal of Health & Medical Sciences, 2(1), 39-44. <https://doi.org/10.31295/ijhms.v2n1.90>