

“The Pain Of Protagonists” Inselected Novels Of Anita Nair

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“A woman is like a tea bag – you never know how strong she is until she gets in hot water.” –
Eleanor
Roosevelt.

Abstract:

A female is God's lovable creature to balance man. She is mentally and physically weak through creation itself, but she express her feelings unexpectedly in the battle against her. She is even spoiled for that. A women's picture is a central theme to literature writings around the globe. The writings of Anita Nair is concerned with man, females, nature, true life, and social convention. She explores the existential struggle of her protagonists in most of her novels. Nair describes particularly, how Indian women are exploited, abused, marginalized even in the modern times both by individuals and by the society. Apart from the society women are tossed even by her family members. Anita Nair emphasizes the need for creating awareness in women. Her female protagonists are conscious of the injustice in marriage brought to them. Probably, the protagonists of Nair's novels denies to flow along the current. They seem to be adamant or aggressive, but the fact is that they underwent much pain and suffering. Apart from the pain the protagonists are the losers of life, respect, family, dignity and everything. This paper is an effort to bring to light the pathetic conditions of the protagonists, and to study the social, family and economic picture of women's suffering in life. Though the protagonist characters are brave, they seem pathetic and losers of a common simple life, they dream to live. Anita Nair defines circumstances or occurrences that harm or kill characters due to the aggressive nature of characters in her novels.

Keywords: Literature, Women characters, Protagonists, Sufferers.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is usually described as artistically valued writing. Literature relates, among Other forms, to distinct kinds of text, including novels, non-fiction, poetry, and plays. Literature in English was seeded in India during the British rule. The seed has now flourished into an evergreen tree, fragrant flowers and mature fruits. Women and literature are strongly linked to each other because literature needs a lot of artistic creativity, and females are too great in it. The position of Indian English Literature (IEL) is obviously high, in spite of many prolific writers especially women.

Though there are numerous women writers in India from the independence of the nation, the present women surviving authors pulls the position of the country in literary field to a great extent. For instance surviving women authors like, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Sudha Murthy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and especially feminist writers like Anita Nair, Urvashi Butalia, Gayathri ChakravathySpivak, Ritu Menon, Ruth Vanitha and many more are successful surviving

women writers of our nation. Among the listed authors Anita Nair is the one, whose novels are passionately woven on the thread in a female oriented component. Nair's characters are mostly drawn from small-town or rural India. Patriarchy, Misogyny, Marginalization, the Male gaze or even technology, are some threats women face in daily life.

The Indian Constitution denotes that women too have equal rights as men. While the constitution guarantees women equality, legal protection has a restricted impact where patriarchal traditions prevail. Though awareness is created in various aspects, day to day the status of female abuse increases. Even if a female victim fights for justice, she is condemned, threatened and eradicated from the society. Nair, one of the prolific writers of today, in most of her novels through the protagonist brings to light the dark side of the Indian society. A protagonist is a story's principal character. She is the main agent who propels the narrative forward and is often the person who faces the greatest barriers. As Steven James narrates:

Think of a caterpillar entering a cocoon. Once he does so, one of two things will happen: He will either transform into a butterfly, or he will die. But no matter what else happens, he will never climb out of the cocoon as a caterpillar. So it is with your protagonist. (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/protagonist>)

Probably, protagonists are central characters of a literary piece. Obstacles are always between every protagonist and their goals. They are even remarked as heroine of a story, as they are brave, intelligent, courageous, and superior to men at times. On the other part the most pathetic matter of the protagonist is they are crushed by family allies, sentiments, threats, obligation and longing for true love.

Anita Nair in most of her novel has proved herself successful through her protagonist characters. In Nair's *The Better Man* (2000) Anjana, a victim of marriage comforts herself in the company of Mukundan. She decides to banish her husband from her life forever and starts to do the divorce proceedings. She dreams of a new beginning in her life. Very soon it was shattered by the crooked Mukundan, who abandons her in order to be a better man than his father in his home town.

"Like Mukundan, for instance. Can anyone in this village point an accusatory finger at him for any reason? Mukundan felt his heart still. What would they say if they knew about Anjana? This was what he had longed for all his life and he didn't want to jeopardize it in any way." (310) only for these words of the villagers, for name and fame the coward Mukundan abandons a marriage victim, who once thinks of a restart in her life. Anita Nair's such writings are a clear cut view of the Indian society, which never bothers about a female's heart.

In her *Ladies Coupe* (2001) her protagonist spinster, Akhilandeswari, carries the yoke of the entire family from her twenties. Neither her mother nor his brothers care for her. Yet the protagonist Akhila bares the pain she is not in a state to reveal it. Akhila, thinks, like this when marriage proposal is made for her two brothers younger to her. "What about you? You've been the head of the family ever since Appa died. Don't you want a husband, children, a home of your own?" (77) None, even her mother cared for her future. After her mother's demise, Akhila was left alone, and has no right to judge her life. It was decided by

her brothers either to move with one of them or with their sister. Poor woman Akhila plays the role of a man, and earns for the family, but her life is being tossed by her siblings. Through the narration of the character, Anita Nair highlights the evil of the male dominated Indian society.

One more rebel protagonist in *Ladies Coupe*, Margaret Shanti is experiencing several life-long physical, mental and spiritual crises. Her marriage is like a fairy tale wedding to Ebenezer Paul raj. Ebenezer enjoys food and sex, and Margaret begins to have sex with him. She is compelled to do anything that her husband asks her to do. She's been forced into an abortion she doesn't like. "My little darling. My lovely girl. With no big bouncy breasts and horrible woman's bush. I never want you to change. I want you to remain like this all your life. (111) In a hostile manner, Margaret Shanti transforms her life. Margaret starts her revenge upon Ebe through food.

"Puris fried in ghee and a potato, peas and cauliflower korma. Two fried eggs sunny side up and a tall glass of cold creamy milk into which I stirred two big spoons of sugar....Ebe ate. Breakfasts. Lunches. Dinners. An evening snack as soon as he came home from school. A late night snack as he worked on his files. Almost a year later, fat found its home.... Ebe slowly became a fat man. A quiet man. An easy man. He needed me like he had never before. And Ebe became a man I could live with once again." (133,134)

Margaret Shanti, a well learnt silent protagonist, quietly uses her knowledge to subdue her tyrant husband. She overcomes the ill behaviour of her husband through a sweet silent weapon named tasty food.

Marikolunthu, 31 years old and an unwed mother who was a victim of a man's lust, was the most heart-rending protagonist character of Nair. The turning point in her life, was on the day of Bogi before Pongal while Marikolunthu was returning from the Chettiar Kottai, this ghostly face Murugesn grabbed Marikolunthu and seduced her. "A hand clamped around my mouth and another hand gathered me into a clinch. Fleshy meaty hands robbed me of my voice and tore at my body." (239) her poverty forces her to do everything that violates traditional social, moral injunctions. Soon Marikolunthu is pregnant. With the assistance of her mother and her periamma, she consumed enough herbals and waited for the cramps to begin, but she was still pregnant. Periamma stated that the fetus will be born dead, as nothing can survive all these kinds of plants. But the growth of the child is quite normal in her womb. "I pressed my palm on my belly. Go away. Leave me. I don't want you, I told this child of mine. The creature kicked. My belly rippled gently. Die, die, I prayed." (249) Marikolunthu gives birth to a boy baby. She is now a mother to an unlawful kid. She treated the baby in a cruel manner. In full of bitterness over the child, Marikolunthu abandons the infant and moves to Vellore to work for the missies.

After the death of her mother, once again Marikolunthu was forced to look at the baby. Meanwhile, Marikolunthu has been through poverty, rape, lesbianism, and physical torture. When the corpse of the destroyer of her life Murugesn comes to India from Singapore, she was excited. The below lines of Anita Nair pictures the pain and agony of a woman. "It was in January that he had destroyed my life and now in another January, his life had come to an

end.” (267) Marikolunthu felt sorry for the first time in her life for the boy Muthu, whom she begot of the rape. As she viewed the tiny boy dropping the twigs to the flame, of his father, she felt utterly shame for her deeds to him. She decides to live the rest of her life for her son, whom she had abandoned for some long years. For the first time Marikolunthu was stable in her decision that, “All I wanted to be was Muthu’s mother.” (268) among all the protagonist characters of Nair, Marikolunthu, seems so pathetic.

In *Mistress* (2005) Radha, the protagonist, of Anita Nair is a bit different from the rest. The other heroines long for real love, affection, protection, and a secure feeling. Radha is quite different from the other protagonists, who treat badly and cheats her husband. She never feels guilt for it. Her husband as well as cousin, Shyam loves her more than anything. He even considers his beauty of his wife Radha, as a pride. Radha whole heartedly, hates him from the depth of her heart. She even punishes him by committing adultery with Christopher Stewart, a travel writer and their guest. Nair has created the character of Radha as an aggressive woman. She was pregnant before her marriage. Though knowing the truth, Shyam accepts her, but she thinks low of him when she comes to know that Shyam knows about her pre-marital affair and marries her. On the wedding night itself, she breaks his mind and heart by confessing and raising rude questions. ‘I am not a virgin,’ she said. ‘I want you to know that I have had sex.’... ‘Do you think this is a joke?’... ‘did my father offer you money to marry me?’.... ‘But why did you marry me? (122, 123)

While, the other protagonists longs to have a happy and peaceful married life, Radha is quite different as she does everything to be away from a husband who loves her wholeheartedly. Though Shyam, knows all her misbehavior he is never angry towards her. Radha is too rebel and angry towards her husband and treats him in the worst manner. She too gets pregnant by Christopher Stewart. Coming to know about her pregnancy, Shyam is ready to be the father of Chris’ child. This behavior, of Shyam made Radha to feel shame, and by the end of the novel, she regrets for her deeds towards him and repents to begin a new life. “I have played wife all this while, despising him. For this I know remorse... The hurt she has caused him eats into her. And she wonders, does God punish us for our sins or does he leave it to us to punish ourselves? (426)

In *Lessons in Forgetting* (2010) Smriti a NRI, visits her father’s home town Minjikapuram and met many pregnant women, and collects needed data she requires. She traces that the pregnant women from various districts come there to identify the sex of the feticide. Also abortion is also undergone for the women who requires. Smriti is angry and upset with the society that illtreats women and the injustice they do to the female children. Soon the girl turns a gang rape victim in a cruel manner by the brutal men who carry over all sorts of illegal works. “...Your slut, she was at the nursing home this evening. Poking her nose into things that don’t concern her. Go home. Go wherever you want. But get out of here.”(294)

Nair’s these lines visualizes the society and its rude behaviour. Even if a person commits a wrong, none should raise a question to him, or try to bring the disaster to light. If

they do so, they will be tormented and torn to pieces. This is what happens to Smriti the protagonist, who tried to bring to light the cruelty done to fetus. Smriti was brutally gang raped and thrown as a rubbish of the bin. “The three brawny men....They were animals, these men. They tore at the girl and it seemed the more she screamed, the more excited they became.” (316,317) the victim of Anita Nair is a protagonist who wishes to bring a good life to female fetus. The chapter of the novel portrays the drawback of the Indian society, in which we are not supposed to raise a question to evil. Modern woman is, thus, ready to fight the evils of the society.

Nair's tales depict a woman's sensitivities, how a woman looks at herself and her issues. After having been disturbed and seduced by males in their aggressive life, all these protagonists claim their individuality. They all are probably powerful and confident to decide their lives favorably or negatively as they have gone through the vile manner of life. The lives of Nair's protagonists demonstrate that females are not fragile animals or pitiable victims, but they can do everything they need, on their own. The women protagonists in Anita Nair's novels appear to struggle for establishing their identity.

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