

## Feminist Introspection and Self-Discovery in the Novels of Anita Nair

M. Preetha, M.A., M.Phil. Research Scholar and Dr. Jayaseela  
Tiruppur Kumaran College for Women  
Tiruppur 641687, Tamilnadu  
[preethachandru40@gmail.com](mailto:preethachandru40@gmail.com)

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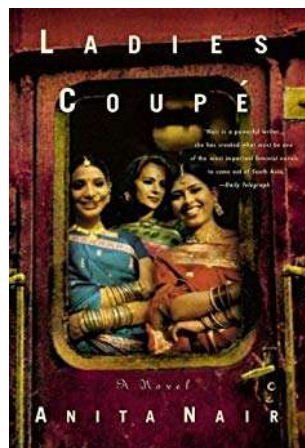
### Abstract

Feminism represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. Feminism challenges the male-oriented nature of society and the long-accepted stereotypes and gender roles thrust upon women. It is concerned with marginalization of women – women being reduced to a secondary position. Masculine culture has come to be identified as active, overpowering, audacious, rational and the feminine by systematic opposition and the feminine by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conservative.

Anita Nair is a contemporary Indo-English novelist who has presented the plight of Indian Woman. For her feminism is the recognizing the importance of the female self. She is of the view that a woman's emancipation is tied to the roles she has to play in life.

Anita Nair being a woman penetrates deep into the inner mind of the depressed women by virtue of her feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues which are the outcome of Indian women's psychological and emotional imbalances in a male dominated society.

**Keywords:** Anita Nair, feminism, emancipation, suppression, freedom, self-discovery



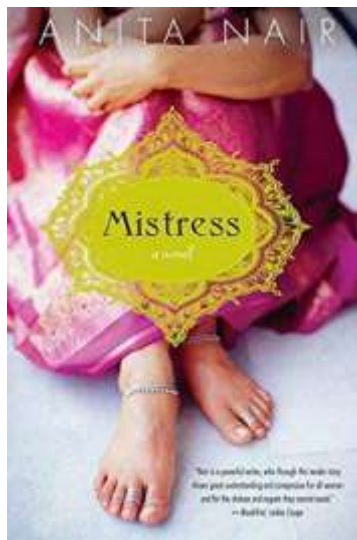
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## Introduction

Anita Nair is a preeminent writer in Indian writing in English with an international prominence. She is blazing a new trail of emancipation for Indian women. Anita Nair's birthplace is Mudakottakurthu near Shoranur in Kerala. She was brought up in a suburb in Chennai. Her grandparents lived in Kerala and that enabled her to know the heart of rural Kerala. She was working as an innovative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories called *Satyr of the subway*. *The Better Man* (2000) is her second work. Her third work *Ladies Coupé* was rated as one of 2002's top five books of the year. Her works have been widely published in twenty-seven countries.

Nair's language is simple, crisp and possessive. The thrust area of this paper will be on the novels *Ladies' coupé* and *Mistress*. It will explore the journey of female exponent from subordination to freedom, identity and deputation. Anita makes her character acquire a sense of maturity and conviction which rightly makes them the woman of substance. Anita Nair has been able to create an image of such women who have left behind a trail of identity and a self-definition of life, growth and experience.

## Feminist Issues in Anita Nair's Novels



Courtesy: [https://www.amazon.com/Mistress-Novel-Anita-Nair-ebook/dp/B004VMWBA0/ref=sr\\_1\\_7?crid=LVFS97KD4HTB&keywords=ladies+coupe&qid=1565658033&s=digital-text&sprefix=Ladies+coupe%2Caps%2C174&sr=1-7](https://www.amazon.com/Mistress-Novel-Anita-Nair-ebook/dp/B004VMWBA0/ref=sr_1_7?crid=LVFS97KD4HTB&keywords=ladies+coupe&qid=1565658033&s=digital-text&sprefix=Ladies+coupe%2Caps%2C174&sr=1-7)

Anita Nair has presented her women struggling because of patriarchy but at the end of the novel she provided theme gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Usually her

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women characters are portrayed as intelligent, courageous and had not satisfied with the injustice and rebellion against men. Anita Nair has chosen self – discovery as the central theme in both the ladies coupe and mistress. It is different from self – realization. The main theme of these two novels *Ladies coupé* and *Mistress* include caste discrimination, individuality, independence, gender identities, emotional insecurity, sexuality, alienation, oppression, and identity crisis. Her women characters emerge as “New women”. They break the traditions of Indian Society. When women resolve their inner conflicts, they are able to conquer self-identity.

Anita Nair’s *Ladies coupé* is the story of a woman’s search for strength, sovereignty, self-discovery and desire. It is the story of six women named Akhila, Janaki, Sheela, Margaret Shanthi, Prabha Devi and Marikolandhu who were affected by autarchy in different ways. The first and foremost character Akhilandeshvari as Akhila is the main protagonist in the novel. She is entirely dominated by her whole family. Though she was a provider and the man of the family, she was repressed by them because she was a forty – five year old spinster. After her father’s death she took all her family duties and responsibilities. Her family hardly thinks about Akhila’s desire, needs and demand Akhila’s dream has been shattered absolutely by her entire family. She has never lived with her own identity at any cost.

*“She was always an extension of someone’s identity” P9L.C 200)*

She forgets her womanhood and she is drawn into a coil of duties. She forfeits everything for the sake of the family, but inside she rebels. She wants to run away from her family responsibilities. Therefore, she plans to go on a journey that finally makes her a different woman. She buys a one-way ticket to Kanyakumari and in the compartment silently listens to the stories of different women in the coupé which finally makes Akhila to take the ultimate decision of her life, something only for herself. She finds herself more determinant, and stronger. She also realizes that there is not one perfect solution to her dilemma. She became a transformed and intermediary being. In Kanyakumari, Akhila tests her new-found confidence by taking a lover. She is able to manage the little encounter entirely on her own terms.

Akhila has no more fears. There is no need to walk with a downcast head. She books a call to Hari. He might be married; he might have moved on. Still, it is worth to make an effort. If he is available and interested life could take a turn for the better. If not well . . . the narrative is open-ended. Hari does answer the call, but Nair does not choose to tell us what he says. Whatever it is, a new Akhila has been born – one determined to be heard and noticed, capable of building a good life for herself.

In *Mistress* (2005), Anita portrays the husband and wife relationship in the patriarchal society. She concentrates on the predicament of modern woman in male-dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage. These days, there are more

marriages which appear to be union of incompatibility than compatibility. Men are apt to be logical and women emotional. Their attribute and interests are different. Basically, they look at things in different ways and react to situations differently. Not only is the man himself different, but also, in a society of changing values, woman is expected to adjust herself.

Husband-wife alienation resulting from lack of communication and temperamental consistency forms the theme of *Mistress*. Through an array of complex narrative techniques, in a brilliant language sparkling with extraordinary intelligence, Nair unfolds a strong mistress, using Kathakali, the classical art of Kerala, as a mega metaphor. The narrative follows a unique pattern. Opening with a prologue and wrapped up with an epilogue, and in between the main body broken up into three sections in each, making up nine as found in Bharata's *Natyashastra* it has each character speaking in the first person long soliloquies or dramatic monologues, reminiscent of long narrative sequences from a kathakali performance. The entire story has been structured around the nine predominant emotions or expressions. The story develops through the perception of the main characters as they live, as they feel, as they experience their lives and the lives of those around them.

The movement and shift of perspective gave pace as the story progresses and reaches a crescendo before settling down at the final chapter titled Peace. Anita Nair throws light on different angles of human relationships and brings out the factors, which are responsible for the change in behaviour of man towards woman.

### Conclusion

This study is primarily undertaken to describe how women are suppressed in the male dominated society, how they fight patriarchy, and how women's desire are portrayed through the novels of *Ladies coupé* and *Mistress* by Anita Nair.

In earlier days, women lived as dependent souls. They preferred happiness of others. Women's identity was hidden behind the mark of sacrifice and dependency. Nowadays, women have enough courage to exhibit their individuality. They are ready to undertake the challenging journey of self-discovery to make the whole world recognize them. Thus, self-understanding and discovery here include more realization of one's own interests in the narrow sense.

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### Works Cited

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