



Marginalization of women in the Selected Novels of Manjukapur And Anita Nair: A Study

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Received 28 June , 2017; Accepted 30 June, 2017 © The author(s) 2017. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

ABSTRACT: Marginalization is the powerlessness and exclusion experienced by a group, resulting from an inequality of control of 'resources and power structures' within society. Feminism argues that woman is marginalized due to the patriarchal structure of society. Marginalisation happens when a person is cornered, alienated and driven to the wall in the society. It is a systematic process, so to say, a type of conspiracy woven like a web with the underlying characteristic features of domination and subordination forcing the woman into submission always. But the feminist theory advocates equality - politically, economically and socially. Even after harping on these equal rights alone, many feminists of late, have come to realise that these cannot free women from sexual and social subordination. So, it is in the fitness of things that marginalisation of women, their predicament, and their struggle for identity in finding their own space are taken up and adequately exposed which are the core elements of this trend.

Keywords: - Identity, Imagination, Marginaliation, Oppression, Reality.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a research on the selected writings of ManjuKapur and Anita Nair. In their writings, they explore the lives women live and struggle under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society. The protagonists in their writings long for the desire of being independent and for leading lives of their own. ManjuKapur has depicted in "Difficult Daughters" and "A Married Women", the intellectual starvation, economic expression, domestic domination, physical abuse, sexual harassment and lack of personal freedom of the women. Through her fiction, she has also successfully and skilfully brought to the surface, new issues like dilution in relationships, pre-marital and extra-marital affairs, man-woman relationship, fears, oppression and suppression faced in and outside their home. Anita Nair depicts in "Mistress" and "Ladies Coupe", the real life of her characters without hiding anything from her readers. The conflict between the roots of imagination and sensibility is brought out well in these novels. Both the writers amply demonstrate and reflect on the sufferings of women at a deeper level in their novels.

Strictly speaking, the marginalization has many connotations. These are people deprived of socio – economic opportunities for their sustenance in the process falling prey to male chauvinistic web and becoming victims of social, cultural, and political exclusion. Being marginalized refers to being separated from the rest of the society, being forced to occupy the fringes and edges and to not occupy the centre stage in any sphere of normal human life. They want to be recognized as separate but equal human beings. People who are marginalized do not have complete control over their lives and do not have access to all the facilities of the society. Therefore, the concept of marginalization is very novel in the contemporary literary practice. It is an approach to study the literature, lending identity and giving emphasis to the voice of marginal people in the society. Today marginal people are socially, politically, economically and legally deprived of their rights as a human being in every society.

Delving deep into history, women are considered more marginal of the lot in a male dominated society. And to add insult to injury, in the patriarchal society of India, women's marginalization continues shamefully unabated even today. All these writings are painful narratives of resistance of the marginalized women, who wage a relentless struggle against alienation and subordination if not outright oppression and to seek their identity and their rightful place in a hostile society. Needless to say, the age old prevalence of oppression, despair, and suffering is common in the lives of marginalized women.

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Taking this idea, the present research paper tries to explore the marginalization of women in the selected writings of ManjuKapur and Anita Nair. In fact, their writings beautifully and thoughtfully delineated the concept and the insights of marginalised women with remarkable aplomb and unswerving authority. They have used marginalization as a literary device to explore the, hitherto, untold sufferings of peripheral sections of society notably and especially women.

The lives women live and struggle under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society are reflected in the writings of ManjuKapur. Protagonists nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. They are not silent rebels but are bold, outspoken, determined and action-oriented. Though they dare cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is adjust, compromise and adapt. Women were not supposed to raise voices for their rights, protest against injustice or question the already existing beliefs, customs, rituals and superstitions. They have to merely exist submitting and subordinating to the patriarchal system. Women have to be obedient, quiet, submissive, and passive not claiming any of their rights neither as women nor as human beings. ManjuKapur's female protagonists are mostly educated, aspiring or hopeful characters caged within the margins of a conventional society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society became prejudiced and intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity.

The novels of ManjuKapur voice well the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. Virmati in "Difficult Daughters" and Astha in "A Married Women" both of them have been exploited, victimized and marginalized by the society. Difficult Daughters is the story of a freedom struggle. While India fights for freedom from the British Raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her terms. Like so many other Indian girls, she wants to decide what to study and where, whom to marry and when. In the end it appears that she might have achieved all that but it ceases to be important. For in the throes of the struggle, she loses a part of herself. She is torn in two halves, one of which is on the side she is fighting against. In her quest of identify, Virmati the central character of the novel Difficult Daughters, rebels against tradition. She is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter. She ends up being marginalized by her own family and despised by her husband. Even, whenever she visits her first home to see her family, she is beaten by her mother. The step-wife does not allow her into the kitchen or talk to the family members. Virmati does realize the hopelessness of her illicit love when she learns about the pregnancy of the Professor's wife.

Virmati's married life with the Professor in Amritsar turns out to be a disaster. Virmati is being used by the Professor. He enjoys the better of the two worlds and is not there even at the most crucial time when she undergoes the termination of the pregnancy. Her mother's marginalised existence and miserable plight make her protest against the system that does not allow women to think of the possibilities of being something else than a wife only. The ultimate fate of a woman that Virmati has been taught and made to believe is marriage. The awareness of the other avenues comes to Virmati when, she watched "Shakuntala ride horses, smoke, play cards and badminton, act without her mother's advice, buy anything she wanted above all, she never seemed to question or doubt herself in anything" (DD.15). But Virmati does not accept this behaviour as a way of life. It simply provides the much needed impetus for Virmati to make efforts to seek new possibilities of her existence. Here these ideas inspire Virmati to refuse to accept, if not reject completely, the traditional Indian way of women's life exemplified in her mother who is reduced to the level of a child-producing machine, "For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly. Morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly" (DD.7). Instead of thinking about some alternatives and the means to get rid of her present miserable existence Kasturi, Virmati's mother, seeks solace in prayer only, "She turned to God, so beautiful with his gifts, and prayed ferociously for the miracle of a miscarriage" (DD.7).

In the beginning of the novel the narrator presents Kasturi's miserable and pitiable plight. She seems to be quite helpless before the social conditions. The accepted purpose of her existence and of all the women at this stage of social development in India is to be a female only. Her function is to produce children and look after the family. The only space available to her is inside the threshold. Due to the persistence of certain ideas constantly forced on women she believes, "what is the need to do a job? A woman's shaan is in her home," (DD.13.). And 'shaadi' she considers to be the ultimate goal of a woman's life. Shakuntala's living a life of singlehood is something unnatural and abnormal for Kasturi. Her attending the conference and working in the laboratory makes Kasturi comment, "I tell her she should have been a man" (DD.14).

However seeds of aspiration are planted in Virmati when she sees Shakuntala, her cousin tasting "wine of freedom." She secretly nurtures the desire of being independent and leading a life of her own. She wanted her life to go beyond mundane business of looking after husband and procreating. She knew if wanted to be free she needs to look outside the family as her mother was epitome of traditional women in patriarchal construct. Who looked at education as evil force? When Virmati showed her desire to study Kasturi retaliated and said 'Leave

your studies if it is going to make you bad tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first.'(DD. 21). She had to fight with her to assert herself and it was education at first she used as tool to achieve her identity. It is education that enables women to realize the nature of their subjugation, marginalization and suppression and helps find effective ways to check it and acquire a self-dependent, autonomous self.

In her novel, *A Married Woman* 'ManjuKapur has taken writing as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a woman's experience. The novel is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. In a realistic way, she has described the Indian male perception of woman as a holy cow. As a married woman Astha, the protagonist, becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother. Her husband compels her to play the role of "mother and father" for her children. This denies her self-fulfillment and leads to the collapse of the institution of marriage. Discontentment leads her to defiance and restlessness. Her anxiety, discomfort, loneliness and isolation do not encourage her to give voice to her unhappiness over her troubled relationship, rather it prompts her to develop the feelings of guilt, negativity and lack of self-esteem in facing the challenges of her life. Restlessness drives her to enjoy absolute loneliness, a sort of entrapment by the family, its commitments, its subtle oppression and she yearns for freedom.

She is suffocated with the growing needs of her family and "always adjusting to everybody's needs". (MW 227) Astha understands a married woman's place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status. She feels for herself that "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth", (MW 231) are the necessary prerequisites of a married woman. She contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to enjoy bouts of rage, pain and indecision. Being torn between her duty and responsibility, faith and fact, public ethos and personal ethics she thinks "a tired woman cannot make good wives", (MW 154) and struggles for an emotional freedom from the scourge of the nation.

As she entered prime of her youth in her college days she got emotionally and physically engaged to Rohan. For her, he was the physical realization of her dreams. But for Rohan, Astha was just a pleasure seeking commodity and this relationship ended soon as Rohan moved to Oxford for further studies. On other hand her mother is primarily focused on pivotal parental obligation of getting her married. In her search for groom Astha's family zeroes on Hemant, belonging to a well to do bureaucrat family. The marital bliss for Astha ends soon and she starts feeling entrapped and bored.

The married woman Astha questions the established norms to search her identity. Astha who has been brought up in all conservative and a protective environment ends up in the most turbulent times in search of herself. Astha's assertion of identity was mostly depicted through choice of her partners. In adolescence itself she has tasted the sense of freedom by being with Rohan. Being in a relationship that too physically intimate in nature, is an outward act of disregard of social conventions. She tries to find her expression self through poems, but that were also subjected Hemant's scrutiny. Astha poured her feelings out in her poetry to which Hemant coldly disregarded. Her poetry reflected the conflict in her mind which Hemant refused to acknowledge. Her paintings gave her the vent to be herself and form separate identity from her husband and family.

Hemant detested Astha's involvement with man and tried to emotionally maneuver her in the name children and familial duties. Even her mother-in-law looked at this disapprovingly and told her woman's place is within the confines of house not on the roads and politics in not a field where woman should participate. "Her mother-in-law looked at her. 'It is not a woman's place to think of these things', she said firmly." (MW186). It was their abomination, which made Astha more determined. Astha asserts herself by not succumbing to her husband's demands and even through economic independence. This is the reality of most Indian women they have to live and bear the atrocities caused by their husbands they don't have any other means of survival. Even Astha's mother didn't give money to her, rather trusted Hemant with it; this attitude reverberates the age old notion that women are not to be involved in money matters. "Your mother gave me money to manage, I didn't ask for it", said Hemant coldly. "she trusts me even if you don't"- making a sarcastic remark on Astha.

In spite being economically independent Astha is not able to do things for herself. The trip to Goa that family takes was sponsored by Astha's money and it Hemant's decision to squander that money on air tickets. But on the same trip when Astha asks for a certain box she is denied and when Astha retaliates by saying, that, "I also earn; Can't I buy a box if I want, even if it is a little overpriced?" You earn', Hemant snorted.' What you earn that is really something, yes, that will pay for this holiday' (MW 165). This satirical tone of Hemant reflects his outlook toward Astha's economic independence he sees it in a derogatory manner and this view of Hemant changes drastically when Astha's paintings are sold for lakhs. This shows how money changes the perspective of people around you. The amount of money you earn decides your position in the family and becomes your social case marker. Astha asserts herself by asking for a separate space to paint this very act of hers defines her identity. This demand of hers is seen as opulence and not a requirement. Having space of one's own is definitely the biggest assertion in the spatial sense. Hemant even comments the space that she possesses would be the source of envy for many women.

Astha's slow discovery of her differences with her husband, her change from tender and hopeful bride to battered wife and her meeting with Peeplika makes her realize the other state of woman in their 'familiar distress' (MW 188). Astha questions the established norms to search for her identity she had led a life of sacrifice and adjustments but it failed. She had longed to have her husband who would appreciate her, but now as a matured woman she had other expectation from herself and not others. As she continues to paint, she feels more confident. Astha's conflict between oppressive patriarchal culture and her imagination and sensibility is sorted out through the independence she gains by taking decisions for herself. She protests against male dominance, subjugation, control over and marginalization. Both the novels had women who were identity achievers and had set an example for the protagonists who were in state of identity diffusion. In case of *Virmati*, it was Swarnlata and Shakuntla who showed her path of independent identity. In a similar manner Astha, looked upto Peeplika a woman who was liberated and had carved a place for herself well within the patriarchal construct of the society. A woman who lived alone, asserted her choice by marrying Muslim against choice of her family and society. Even after her husband's death she carried on with her mission without any apprehensions. She was a woman who never needed a man to tell her what she wants she was to do or support her. This was Peeplika's assertion of Independence which attracted Astha towards her Identity at a glance.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé* is a novel about female identity and female space. In *Ladies Coupé*, Anita Nair focuses on men and women relationship, marriage and divorce, social and cultural, and psychological issues. Anita Nair's characters *Ladies Coupé* have their own pain and sorrow but they overcome their entire struggle and have their own life in their society. The novel narrates the life stories of six women travelling in a Ladies coupe, each of them describing their life to Akhila, the protagonist, who is travelling to find out what she really wants in life. Akhila is a scapegoat for her family, as she has taken all the responsibility of her mother and siblings when her father died. Even though she is an income generating source, most of the time she is not receiving social independence. Aged forty-five and the background demanding her to be a spinster, she feels lost without having a companion and getting exploited by her sister. The novel roams through the memories of Akhila, interconnected by the story telling of fellow passengers and their empathy towards each other. The Coupe becomes a platform for them to express themselves and support each other. A bond of sisterhood is suddenly created among the women from different caste, class and age. The story of Marikolanthu, a Dalit woman, remains unique and reveals the multiple layers of exploitation she has faced in her life by being a woman, minor, Dalit, and poor. Though the novel is a sort of collection of several narratives of women, there is a single thread of their suffering in the world of men. Here we meet women who have been in a way imprisoned in their life by the expectations of the male world. Margaret Shanti, a well-educated chemistry teacher is oppressed by her tyrannical husband finds a place in the Ladies Coupé. She was like frozen water in her married life. He was tyrant at home and also at school punishing late-comers harshly. He did not allow her long hair. It must be cutoff. He did not allow her to work for her doctorate. He asked her to abort her first child. But, she finds a strategy to school this tyrant husband turning him into a fat man. He would not come in the way of her having a child then. The stories in this book reveal the most private moments of their life. The women narrators in this novel discover themselves as they tell their stories. Anita Nair shows through these narrations how women are marginalized in the male-dominated world. Her novels show the impact of patriarchy on the lives of women. She reveals how women are exploited and maltreated in the name of religion and social customs.

In most families, the man is the boss of the house; wife a counselor or a minister who assists or helps; but not the dictator. Beyond the threshold of her house, woman finds life less promised and confusing due to her social and cultural insecurities. Whenever women step out of their confinements, they have to fight to wipe out the negative image of women already dwelling in the minds of men and women. In certain aspects women are treated as angels and goddesses. In some other aspects women are expected to be slaves, who are ready to work for a man and his benefits and comfort.

Margaret Shanti is one of the fellow travelers in the ladies coupe. Margaret's story is a story of a woman who learns her own strategies to get her dreams true. Margaret's husband, Ebenezer Paulraj, is an example for male dominance. He maneuvers Margaret into a position of submissive silence, making her out to be an unnoticed and unremarkable girl. A girl, with a brilliant academic career and a warm and vibrant personality, is reduced to an average girl. His subtle cruelty to the children in his school gets repeated with his wife too. Once he was obsessed with the girlish characteristics of Margaret. It was visible even at their first meet. To retain the girlish charm in her, when she happily announced her pregnancy, he insisted on to aborting the baby. Margaret's felt confusion, anger, sorrow, pain and self-pity. Tired of her submissiveness at her home, she finally takes her life into her own hands. With supreme will power she collects her hidden strength and sends the ball to his court. Having learnt the tactics from his constant playing of games to get his things done, she takes her revenge by following the same tactics which are her husband's tools to rule her. Margaret has gone through physical, mental and spiritual crisis throughout her life. She keeps on growing till she finds a state where she is happy and peaceful. Margaret's marriage to Ebenezer Paulraj is like a fairy tale for her. Ebenezer Paulraj loves Margaret Shanti from the bottom of his heart but not ready to accept her individual likes and

dislikes, whims and fancies and dreams and aims. Margaret's state, hands tied freedom, is excellently portrayed by Anita Nair. He loves her but he did not allow her individuality.

Janaki, another fellow passenger of Ladies Coupe is an example of age-old belief of Indian society that a woman should always depend on some man in her life. According to Indian tradition, a woman is always synonymous with good wife. A good wife should be faithful, obedient and virtuous. Janaki is expected to take up this traditional role of women. She plays various roles such as a daughter, a wife and a mother but not an individual who claims her life to be her own. The secondary position becomes permanent for her. This is mainly due to the patriarchal pattern of her society, which is accepted as a natural phenomenon.

Janaki gets married to Prabhakar, when she is eighteen year old and leads a happy, comfortable, long married life for forty years. Janaki's husband is a caring partner and she has a son and daughter-in-law. Janaki leads a happy life until she realizes her submissiveness. She feels some string of revolt when she finds her husband controlling everybody even their grown up son. She says to her husband, "You just want to control him. You want to control everybody. You want everyone to do your bidding." (Ladies Coupe 30). Prabhakar's overbearing dominance, exactness, and precision irritates Janaki. The life which has gone smoothly starts to find its ups and downs. She discovers herself and her true happiness that lies in her, but she is not able to take off the web under which she is covered for a long period. Her initial response to Akhila's query "Why should a woman live by herself? There is always man willing to be with her" (Ladies Coupe 21), explains it.

"I am a woman who has always been looked after. First there was my father and brothers; then my husband. When my husband is gone there will be my son, waiting to take off from where his father left off. Woman like me end up being fragile" (Ladies Coupe 22). Anita Nair, with a deep, psychological insight, skillfully utilizes the story of Marikolanthu to comment upon the sexual exploitation of Indian women from rural background. Marikolanthu's story recalls her encounter with men and concludes that most men take advantage of women's loneliness, illiteracy, dependence, ignorance and frustration. They never hesitate to blame the woman at the end. The society dominated by patriarchal culture tends to lay down the rule that a woman's responsibility towards the family is total whereas any sort of other authority is conveniently denied to her. This society shuns to think that the woman is strong willed to create disastrous consequences if she is completely ignored.

Marikolanthu undergoes humiliation and debasement, which result in negating her son Muthu. Marikolanthu's character reveals the physical as well as mental suffering due to ignorance. Marikolanthu comes from a poor background. Her mother works as a cook at Chettiar's house, which is one of the richest families in their village. Even while she was a child she is the victim of social and economic repression. She loses her education by this. She looks after her house when her mother goes for work; later when her mother is seriously ill, she is employed at the Chettiar's house. There, she is assigned with the work of taking care of a child of Sujata Akka, the daughter-in-law of Chettiar. She showers love and affection upon the child. She takes care of him well, but hates her son Muthu, the one who escaped many attempts of abortion. He is the result of her seduction by Murugesan. She does not want the child which is the result of seduction but the circumstances do not help her. So she leaves her son at her mother's care and takes care of the household of Chettiar family.

Marikolanthu, deprived from the society, and Sujata Akka, deprived from her husband, finds mutual happiness in their nearness. Later Sujata's husband also uses Marikolanthu to fulfill his sexual desires. When Sujata Akka comes to know this, instead of punishing her husband, she pushes Marikolanthu out of her household. She gets the responsibility of her own child after her mother's death. Mercilessly she mortgages him at one of Murugesan's looms for Rs.5000/-. The anger she has on Murugesan, the society which saves him from punishment, her inability and the hatred of her son, everything comes to an end only at the death of Murugesan. The turning point in her life comes when she sees the dead body of Murugesan burning at the pyre and she sees Muthu tends to the pyre. She is shocked at the realization that she has reduced her son to a very lower state for no fault of his. All the hatred she has on him goes with the flames. She feels love for her child. She decides to look after him and makes up her mind to call him back to her.

Marikolanthu is surrounded by social, familial and financial problems. Her resolve to bring up her child enables her to begin a new chapter. Finally Marikolanthu, a voiceless victim, forced motherhood and lesbianism, finds peace only after accepting her responsibility of the child, whom she has negated and neglected. Marikolanthu's constant search for meanings and values of life ends here. Anita Nair presents the existential struggle of woman who denies to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. The woman emerging out of such situations is a defeated individual who undergoes much pain and suffering. Such characters exhibit a sense of insecurity due to their traumatic psychic experiences and also due to the collapse of one value system and the absence of enduring values. Thus, in Ladies Coupe, Anita Nair traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to self-realization, self-denial to self-assertion and self-negation to self-affirmation. The feminist voice is heard throughout the novel.

While Nair's Ladies Coupé is set in an Indian railway compartment reserved exclusively for women, it is not a story of female containment or, conversely, of feminist separatism. Though the women may be kept

separate from the public sphere, and segregated from the imagined utopic equality of the train-car proper, the coupé itself is neither fully public nor private. As a liminal space, the coupé engenders negotiations of a woman's place in society, and, as cultural scripts are both revised and upheld, the women in the coupé move beyond circumscribed roles associated with female domesticity by making a narrative space for themselves that enables them to reclaim the process of identity construction. Considering what the space of the coupé allows its female passengers as well as attending to the symbol of the railway and the language of train travel which dominate this text, is central to an understanding of this novel, as the transitional space of the coupé, contained within the transient space of the train, is central to its protagonist's figurative journey into selfhood.

From a point of potential exclusion and an indication of the second-class existence that an Indian woman is by birth condemned to assume in her life's journey. The woman's compartment—the so called ladies coupé—is a clear example of a gendered spatiality, where women are sheltered from the outer male world. Anita Nair's works are based on purely Indian background. She has demonstrated the subordinate position of women in the orthodox tradition-bound Indian society. These existing norms axe the rights of women and sideline their existence as human beings. She has taken up the issues of gender discrimination and social conditioning of women, husband– wife relationship: the assailant and the suppressed, and the sexual exploitation of women within and outside the marital frame. Marriage is set as an ultimate goal for girls. Women have to mould and transform themselves to suit the interests of their male counterparts and in this process suppress their self-identity. Radha in 'Mistress' is a character whose status made her marry below her standards, thus ruining her father's expectations for her to make a brilliant marriage into a family that will match them in status and wealth (Nair, *Mistress*: 119).

Finding out about her affair, her father finds her immediately a husband, so that she is not able to make further damage to his social status. When the question of marriage arises, Radha plays a passive role in the match making. Her father finds a suitable husband and arranges the marriage. This is the traditional marriage procedure that is described in most cases in the novel. While the bridegroom to be is usually asked his opinion on the chosen bride, as is the case of the Radha who raised no objections to sharing her life with a total stranger and also there is no such possibility applies to her. Like all intelligent and independent women, Radha too was not satisfied with her married life and her hopelessness is worsened by the actions of an anxious, over protective husband. There is no difference in this aspect in the novels when it comes to the family's status. The same future of being married to a stranger without their consent would apply also for all religion. Here again the notion of woman as an object who has no say in the decision about her future emerges and is confirmed by the tradition of arranging marriages. On the other hand, Radha's affair with a married man, even though putting her father's good name in trouble, is not punished as severely. She is forced to marry Shyam after her father has heard moderately disconcerting things as not to cause any more damage.

The depiction of their wedding night reveals another important, even though not at all surprising, finding, which is that there are binary standards when it comes to what is expected from men and women. When Radha tells her bridegroom that she is not a virgin, he realises the consequence of her affirmation. When he admits to having slept with other women, none of them finds it a serious confession. While a male is never judged by his affairs to women, a woman's bad reputation is considered a hassle for the whole family. Having a child is such a mechanical premise that anybody, it seems, is entitled to inquire about it. "Isn't it time you had a child?" demands Rani Oppol when Radha and Shyam are still childless in their second year of marriage (Nair, *Mistress*: 114). It is never considered to be the couple's choice whether or not they want to have children. Just like a marriage is the only credible option for a respectable single girl, having a child is the only possible future for a married wife, unless she is barren. Yet still, being barren is considered ill luck and often the wife's critical defect. There are many prejudices for women without a child must face. Radha is dejected to visit a social event on the grounds of being childless in spite of her being married as long as two years: You know how people are; they think a married woman who hasn't had children for so long is a macchi. They wouldn't like it. It is inauspicious to have a barren woman at such functions... the evil eye, etc. (Nair, *Mistress*: 114). In the wife-husband relationship, a child is also a proof of the wife's devotion. A child is it may seem the husband's legal assert. By giving a child to the man, the wife proves her loyalty to the husband, or even her affection to him. This holds true not only in arranged marriages, but also in love marriages. There are however, a number of other necessities besides giving the husband a baby that a woman has to meet in order to be considered a good wife. Most of them similar to those she had to meet as a daughter. A good wife should in addition cultivate her good qualities, while disposing of her vices. As for her appearance, she is expected to keep her good looks for her husband, possibly also to impress his friends.

Radha is emotionally detached and fairly disdainful of her husband, Shyam. Their matrimony existed only in name, without any effort on the part of Radha to keep it lively. She was unable to create a bond with him and considered that her marriage was already "fractured" as she mentioned to Chris. It is the beginning to enjoy her life and first step indirectly to voice out her travail. An affair can add excitement and a sense of purpose to life, and often this activity helps to taste up the state of achieving autonomy, from the hands of the dominating

partner. Boredom and anger are the common reasons why Radha had an affair with Chris. Sometimes anger at a husband may cause an affair to start, especially when the spouse is being difficult and someone else is being nice and pleasant. Due to this various assaults she hated her husband and starts to seek pleasure from Chris. Radha's attitude towards Chris builds a new moral code of extramarital relationship. Like all the ordinary husbands, Shyam monitors her behaviour through his staff and even at times tried to control her but he was not successful in those attempts. Finally, Shyam knows that he cannot reign over Radha's mind and hence decides to reign over her body. When a woman is indifferent to his husband and turns to another man for love or sex, it directly questions the virility of the husband. In this case, Shyam needed to reassert his ownership of Radha and 'mark his territory'. He wanted to prove that he is the husband and he has complete rights to his wife's body whether she welcomed the intrusion or not. The very description of the act in the novel shows Shyam with an almost animal like drive to his virility and asserts his position as the husband. His one act of rape leaves a deep scar on Radha whereas, he is quite satisfied with what he has done without a scrap of guilt. Radha, on her way to home, she went to meet Chris at the cottage and there Radha took up the place of cello in Chris. Many times, when these women are left alone by husbands under precarious predicaments, these women do not hesitate in developing extramarital relationship with persons who show sincere affection they thrive for or sometimes for their personal achievements. Here Nair's woman, Radha appears as a split subject who watch her being watched by men but generate the strength to attain freedom from the patriarchal society by living a life of their own choice through revolt. The woman's quest for recognition is satiated when she takes a lover and rejects her husband.

In *Mistress*, Nair has brought to the fore the issue of marital rape, which is often not discussed in public and which does not necessarily amount to violence under the law, because it is the husband who is the perpetrator. Women have been living in pain and silence for ages as victims of male dominance and sexual violence. Anita Nair portrays how women are oppressed and dominated by men through the novel *Mistress*. Finally she 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.

In *Mistress*, Anita Nair focuses on the issue of domestic sexual violence. Anita Nair's works reflect a wide range of interests making her a multifaceted writer of the present generation. *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 of the characters in the novel have a passion in life and in some way or other it decides the course of their lives, and it becomes a demanding mistress. In *Mistress*, she makes the closed realms of Kathakali performers come alive; she paints a poignant picture of the segregated, cloistered Muslim village. These two novels, Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé* and *Mistress* bring into focus the issue of self-realization. In addition, *Mistress* focuses on domestic sexual violence. Though Anita Nair is not a feminist, her stories delve deep into the expectations of married Indian women and the choices they make within the relationships. They are entangled in their suffering and rebellion born of that pain, and convey a message of hope, through the change that is out there and can become possible through one's courage and initiative.

ManjuKapur and Anita Nair present in their novel the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women towards self-assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self-expression. All the novels explore the difficulties of reconciling the devotion to family expected of middle class Indian women with their aspirations and desire for a life outside.

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