CHAPTER II

RESUSCITATION OF SELF

Indo – Anglican fiction has received severe criticism and some critics have charged it as ‘mimicry of the West’. After reading the novels by genuine Indian novelists, one comes to understand that the charges are baseless. C.D. Narasimaiah has rightly pointed out that the Indian’s gift of storytelling goes back to the period of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Indo- Anglican novelists have by their wide range of interest proved the capacity of Indo-Anglican fiction to accommodate variety of concerns. There are novels presenting purely ‘Indian’ problems like the disintegration of the old hierarchical and agrarian society and the splitting up of the joint family, which would be familiar to the heterogeneous Indian population with its enormous regional and cultural difference. Anita Nair’s novels offer us a rewarding study of socio-psychological activities. Her novels offer a view of the long smothered wail of lacerated psyche of a female. They, of course, tell the readers, the harrowing tale of valuable human relationships.

Art is the mirror of life. Literature is the greatest form of art, which reflects life. The power of literature is to both entertain and educate. It provides a vision on human mental attitude and attribute. As Literature is a product of social consciousness, it evaluates a society’s moral concern and projects its moral consciousness. It provides a laboratory in which the ethical and moral dimensions of human actions can be readily perceived and thought about. Unlike other areas of study, which claim to be ‘values- neutral’, literary study has its values at its very heart. Yet the potential of literature is to develop moral character which is often unrealized. This could be because the correlation is over simplified.
Possibly no subject offers greater opportunity for moral ideas than English literature. Ideals and principles may be found in experiences that allow one to formulate one’s own moral code and to see the working – out of ideals and attitudes in life like situation. A literature text provides great amount of material that stresses on values of society.

Indian English literature abounds with tradition and values, which are vital in man’s life. Indian English Literature is an endeavor of showcasing the rare gems of Indian writing in English. From being a curious native explosion, Indian English has become a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India speaks. The beginnings of Indian English literature in the first few decades of the preceding century might have been as a hot house plant as its critics rather cheerfully allege.

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature. Women have entered various walks of life; they are not segregated at least in the cities. It is manifestly easier for them now to portray men and women involved in various spheres of activity in India. Women no longer remain confined to the four walls and domestic duties do not constitute the bear and end all of their existence. They no longer belong the old generation.

Various spheres of their interest and activity have to be observed and created in fiction. The despair of the innocents, the corruption of the power – wielding classes, the sheer animal behaviour which a valueless society encourages, the decadence of certain segments of life and the erosion of moral values—all these constitute significant elements in the Indian scene today. The world of women in India also has its own diverse problems and difficulties its ecstasies and agonies, joys and frustrations.
The urge of social reform was, of course, a significant aspect of the Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century; it therefore naturally became an important theme in some early Indian English fiction. The questions that engaged the minds of some of the novelists were the position of women, east - west encounter, the plight of peasants and the decay of the old aristocracy.

As India is still governed by traditional values, the women of today find it difficult to escape from their gendered roles as mother, daughter and wife. Women have been subjected and imprisoned intellectually, financially, physically, emotionally and socially for generations. In the face of stern hardship, the women promote herself to stand up like a rock, though; she is seen on innumerable occasions, reduced to a puddle of tears, at the slightest frustration. Women are like twig that sways with the smallest breeze but never breaks, even in the most violent of storms. If any attempts are made by women to seek equal status with men, they have to face isolation or self-destruction. It is a high crime on the part of women to do so. Though attempts have been made by women to escape from patriarchal society, they cannot achieve total independence and liberation. Personal adjustments have to be made by women to connect themselves to community so as to avoid being isolated and estranged from the society.

“One is not born, but rather becomes woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the female presents in the society, it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature… which is described as feminine” (Beauvoir,16). More than half of the population of the world is made of woman but she is not treated on par with man regardless of incalculable progress and revolutions. She has the identical mental and moral influence, yet she is not accepted as his equal. Actually in the male dominated society, she is wife, mother, sister and homemaker. She is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and
tolerate each evil against her peacefully. Her individual self has very little recognition in the patriarchal society and so self-effacement is her normal way of life. The illustration of Sita, Savitri and Gandhari are always expected to be followed by her. But these ideal women existed only in epics, they were princesses and queens and much far from the pains and sufferings of the modern world in which modern woman has no identity of their own.

Women are an integral part of human civilization. No society or country can ever progress without an active participation of women in its overall development. Unfortunately, men have always looked down upon women as the weaker sex, as their property and object of pleasure. Down the ages women have been denied existence as a complete and independent human being; they have been given secondary place both in society and family. A large number of women are reconciled to a life of humiliation in the form of gender while performing the roles of daughters, wives and mothers in a rigidly custom-bound environment they live in. The quandary of women is that they have to endure from birth to death. In the male-dominated structure they have to face prejudice, oppression, slur and abuse, regardless of their physical and mental capability to perform at par with men.

Modern men with all latest technology live in higher strata. He wants to live his life separating from the rest of the world. Neither he needs dependency nor does he take it. With such self, he starts developing ego. Anita Nair in her works exposed the subtle processes of oppression and gender differentiation operative within the institution of the family and the male-centered Indian society at large. According to them feminism does not uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These include social and psychological factors such as, woman’s subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality. The author seeks to expose the ideology by which a woman is trained to play her docile role in society. The stress for the need of women to break
free from the shackles of their traditional position and see their own need for self-fulfillment
is more important than the duty of sacrificing themselves for their husbands and children.

The male domination in woman’s life is a natural phenomenon in a patriarchal society
and the consequent relegation of woman to a secondary position seemed to have prompted
Indian women writers to take up the cause of women. Identity synonym is characterization.
Human beings wish to possess an individuality to match the life-style. The word is often
misunderstood. It engraves to be silent, sticks to stigma, strains within self. It is like knowing
its place and possession but not showing to anybody. It is a mirror of one self. This one
characterization is the best on psychological approach. Coming to talk on identity, nobody
dare to say or speak about it. In India, the population is huge and the mankind finds no time
to share and care. They are almost aware of self-identity. When they lose it they call it in the
name of insult, ignore, etc. The women novelists almost all of them have brought out the
phenomena and substantiate valid ideas to make the readers aware of it.

In almost every novel, Anita Nair is preoccupied with the woman’s search for
freedom and Self-realization. She believes in freedom at all levels and the doctrine of
peaceful existence. The women characters of Anita Nair’s fictional world have come out of
the shackles of bondage in their struggle to regain self-identity. In these women characters,
there is a deep longing for self-fulfillment through self-expression.

Her second novel, Ladies Coupe is the same as that of Chaucer’s “Prologue to
Canterbury Tales” where everyone starts narrating a story for the comfort of the journey.
This same encounter is also found in Boccaccio’s Decameron. For Anita Nair, it gives her an
opportunity to bring together women of different ages, experience and social strata. The
novel comprises their narratives and an account of Akila’s life until she embarks upon that
journey, and afterwards. The reality of the social situation and that of a woman’s existence in
India is a plural one and the business of the novel is to give the readers a taste of that plurality. Still, despite the variety of experiences related by the characters, the essence of the overall statement implied by each seems to be a singular one. Women are secondary (to men) in their importance and have been rendered silent and absent as far as the reckoning goes.

The strained family relationships at various levels hamper the normal growth of the children. They lose their self as they grow into adults. This realization of the loss of identity, of recognition, quest for meaning in life has been very artistically woven in the texture of Anita Nair’s fiction. They seem positive in their attitude and refuse to be cowed down and defeated. They rebel against sexist discrimination, question the double standards and refuse dual morality. They are the women who respect themselves and protest all sort of humiliation meted out to them. It is the study of the struggle that accompanies the attempt of an Indian woman to liberate her from the moral and social pressures that combine with economic dependence to exercise a crippling power over middle class women.

Identity is a state of mind that is granted by the interaction with the fellow beings in the society and also by the acceptance in the society. Accepting but not accepted is the crisis of identity in one's life, the one thread that runs through it all. A woman’s identity crisis is that where she struggles to achieve as a human being in its full sense against those forces of society who bind her in chains and reject her as a being in comparison to man. Earlier, woman sought her identity in the relationship as a wife, mother and daughter. She accepted this identity willingly. But now, time has changed and a woman rejects this relational identity. Now she is able to understand the duplicity of this identity that is imposed on her by society so that she may restrain herself as a being. But now, woman wants to stand on her feet as a full human being, equal to man in society. She doesn't like to know herself as someone's daughter, wife or mother, rather than she seeks separation from these relations and wants to
make her own identity that shows her individuality. She also does not like the support of man in making her own identity. And it is a quest for identity in a woman that she revolts against the traditional image of Indian woman in words and deeds. She is conscious of herself as a being, not as an object. She realizes that she is not an appendage of man. A woman is not the ‘other’. She is not an addition to man. She is an autonomous being, capable of through trial and error; finding her own way to salvation. Therefore, a new modern girl is reluctant to play the conventional role of a sex object and a yoked wife. In a sense, she is the symbol of the emancipated woman, the forerunner of the emerging Indian woman with her liberated womanhood.

To show the self and resuscitating nature, Anita Nair’s protagonists seemed to be aware of their role both in the family and society. In *Ladies Coupe*, of all ladies, Margaret stands first and foremost in sustaining herself without damage. She being a chemistry teacher believes very much in H₂O. Her husband Ebe (Ebenezer) is a strong wrong-headed man loved Maggie (Margaret) and entwined into marriage. From the beginning of the story, he dominates and at times insults her among the colleagues. This makes H₂O (Maggie) to rise more and more violently. She confesses that she hates him. The resuscitation takes place as she feeds her husband with mouth-watering dishes, fried items, to make him a very fat man. This made Ebe to stop conducting parties at home, dancing and scolding Maggie. The self of Maggie once again regained or revived from the regular norms of the society. Next to Maggie is Sheela, the young girl. As she likes her Ammumma, she cannot restrain her idea of sending the body of Ammumma to the fire without any jewels. Ammumma during the whole of her life, stayed with Sheela, has confined in her about maintaining individuality in spite of others view. Her everyday makeup at the time of her sleep makes her more energetic and erotic. As they started leaving for the graveyard, Sheela hurried the make-up and wearing of jewels to
Ammumma for she felt that the identity or the self not to be damaged at the time of her travel to other world.

Thus, through self-identity they are independent like man. They have established themselves as autonomous beings, free from the restrictions imposed by society, culture, nature and also free from their own fear and guilt; thus women have reached a stage of understanding the fundamental truth; you have to find it for yourself. Therefore, for gaining her identity, her independence, new women reject the help of men by rejecting them as: "Are you the Lord God that you should rule every widow and every woman? Hands off, they will solve their own problems" (My Indian the India Eternal Kolkata 76).

Anita Nair has presented in her novels modern Indian women's search for definitions about the self and society, and the relationships that are central to women. She portrays in her novels that her new woman is trying to search for her identity and create for herself a new place in the society. She is conscious of her existence as an individual who has her own rights and wishes. She firmly asserts that these women are the ones who have the guts to raise their voice against it, hence creating awareness for the rest. In fact, these characters are a reflection of their own emotional perplexities and disturbances which they want to come out of and find new horizons of self-esteem and liberation.

The novels by Anita Nair, basically express the frustration and disappointments of women who experience in the social and cultural oppression in the male-dominated society. It highlights the agony and trauma experienced by women in male-dominated and tradition bound society. They bring out the absurdity of rituals and customs, which, help to perpetuate the myth of male superiority. This clearly points out, how a woman grows from self-surrender to assert her individuality with newly emerged identity.
In Indian context, circumambulating the tulsi plant by a woman is meant to increase the life span of their husbands. Here, Anita Nair’s protagonists reject these rituals. This rejection indicates their freedom or individuality and her capability to see their life independent of their past.

The portrayal of women in Indian English fiction as the silent sufferer and upholder of tradition undergoes a tremendous change in the novels of Anita Nair. In the recent past, one sees how ‘feminine consciousness’ has brought about a social change resulting in self-assertiveness and quest for identity. This quest for a self-preservation and self-identity has been rightly termed as “lust for life” (535) in Contemporary Theories and Systems in Psychology by Benjamin B. Wolman. These characters try to free themselves and yet do not wish to break up the family traditions. They fall as victims of choice between two sets of values, one inculcated by an alien culture and another, handed to them by their own culture and tradition. Thus, they encounter problems of identity crisis, marginalization, east-west encounter, and search for meaning in life.

“Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered by society” (445) says the feminist Simone de Beauvior in her book The Second Sex. The characters in Lessons in Forgetting are ordinary people who lead mediocre life. Though they look somewhat happy with their lives, but beneath the surface, they have lots of desires, fears and want which are unexpressed. These hidden needs manifest in different ways in their day-to-day lives and everyone continues to exist mundanely, ignoring what they really want from life. Identity is the hallmark of human beings. It plays a crucial role in the part of human life. So, all human beings in the world have the desire to identify themselves in a unique way.
The women characters of Anita Nair do not merely confirm to male expectations or conflict with male world. Anita Nair’s heroines negotiate for their independence and a respectable place in society. Anita Nair’s heroine is mentally advanced in the real sense of the world, whether she is Sheela, Janaki, Margaret, Prabha, Marikolanthu or Akila. Anita Nair understands the importance of adjustments and compromises in a family. Almost all her female characters: Prabha, Margaret and Janaki, after their marriages are negotiating here and there in life to make their own and their family members’ life happy. The harmony in family relationships and their stability also depend on the behaviour and pent-agonic attitude of a woman as a wife, a mother, a sister, and a daughter. Society, morality, values are like bondage to them, so all of them are leading forward in an ambiguous manner in the midst of relentless urbanization and the far reaching western influences. Dr. Ashok Kumar says aright:

A major preoccupation in recent Indian women’s writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the women’s role at home is a central focus, it is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Anita Nair has joined the growing number of women writers from India on whom the image of the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact (Kumar, 160)

Although, the quest for self, especially in the life of woman has become a much debatable phenomena, as long as this term is growing old, it is losing its authenticity. It is occasionally misinterpreted by literati of the world. No one can deny the fact that women are treated as no entity several times in their life, their sentiments and emotions are mostly ignored but as far as their honesty to themselves is concerned, they must be vigilant for their
chastity and responsibilities. Poojatolani says: Even today, thousands of girls sit within the four walls of their houses and wonder why they do not have the right to chose their own lives, decide for themselves whether they want to be homemakers or move. Marriage is still the reason for their birth. Freedom is more than just being aloud out for a pizza with friends. (Poojatolani)

Both intellectuals and sociologists regard Indian society as a traditionally male-dominated one where individual rights are subordinated to group or social role expectations. Woman has often been a victim of male oppression and treated like a beast of burden. As a result, woman’s individual self has very little recognition and self-effacement is the only course left to her. Indian woman has traditionally succumbed to this hierarchy, accepted her position and lived with it for ages.

Anita Nair attempts to explore, the psyche of her characters in the endless pages of her novels, with women as her principal focus. With the western impact on India, the position of woman started undergoing a change. India acquired an identity of her own in 1947, and there dawned awareness in all walks of life and woman too made efforts to acquire her own identity.

Women’s understanding became questionable as the old patterns of behaviour no longer seem to be acceptable. These struggles become intense quests for self-definition, because it would not be possible to relate to others with any degree of conviction unless one is guided by clarity about one’s own image and role.
Anita Nair has presented in her novels modern Indian women’s search for these definitions about the self and society, and the relationships that are central to women.

Whenever Akila wanted to do something out of her own interest, she hesitates because the family comes first and then the society. Eating egg as a Brahmin was sin. As the taste tinted in her tongue, she gained her confidence to make spicy egg at home, advised by her friend Kalpana. She again gets a moral boosting from this very same friend, when she undergoes narrow chaotic ideas on how to lead her life after her father’s death. When Akila believes that her family is everything for her, her family thinks otherwise. They all drown her away from her marital bliss. Under the family system there was a right age for marriage but today the educated and employed women are delaying their marriage for the sake of the family. Here Akila stands as head of the family for namesake. She is aware of a fact that if a woman stays single, she would never witness the all-round development of her personality. She is helpless in showing and proving her individuality.

During her travel the five smart characters illustrate their identity along with their experience. As a child, Akila has watched her father lionized by her mother while she and the other children were marginalized. His favourite foods were made and offered first to him. It was only after he had eaten that the children were allowed to taste them. At the least annoying happening, he promptly tended to announce a headache and had to be pampered and ministered to-and was. After his death, when she, as the eldest child, takes her father’s place as the breadwinner of the family, she does not get the same sort of importance. She might have got equal pay for equal work but she certainly does not receive equal respect even though the family survives only because Akila brings home a decent pay packet. In comparison, Nair shows us a parallel situation in a neighbour’s family. When the man of the house dies, the widow is forced to put her eldest daughter on the street as a prostitute. The detail that both families are Brahmin seems deliberately to have been included to underline
the similarity of their situations. As such, Akila’s great contribution to the dignified survival of her family is certainly not appreciated by its members and they never repay’ her in any way.

Akila is their saviour but the act of their rescue implies a sacrifice on her part. She is a silent worker, entirely behind the scenes, while all the younger children get their moments centre stage. Her brothers ask for and they get what they want-education, marriage and a life of their own. Akila is left behind, silently hoping they would consider her aspirations and desires too, at least once they have been satisfied. But they don’t. She has become a useful instrument, a faceless provider. Even her own mother fails to gauge, or rather, carefully avoids wondering about her longings. “When the other widows gathered around her and stripped (her mother) of her marks of marriage, Akila cried because she knew that this was what it meant to be a woman.” Akila understands and feels for her mother but her mother, having internalized male ideological systems for years, finds it convenient to ignore Akila’s “womanhood”. Akila lives not by her own desires but according to the expectations she senses. As Anais Nin has said, “Everywhere I look I am living in a world made by man as he wants it, and I am being what man wants.”(LC 13) A complete product of the society shaped by “the male gaze”, she behaves in a self-effacing, unassuming manner that is geared to attract the least attention, ensure a near-absence. As Jasbir Jain has said, in modification of Lacan, “Women have not learned to see themselves, for the mirrors they look into do not reflect them. They reflect the male idea of a woman…” They reflect “women confined in long skirts or long sleeves or purdah…”( LC 33)
Akila’s life is indeed restricted. It consists of the office and home, nothing more. She becomes a creature of routine, catching the same train every day, wearing a starched cotton sari each day, minding her own business – until the starch enters her personality and her soul (LC 76) and she acquires a “spinster mouth” (LC 4). There was no place for chiffon and frills in her life, the readers are denoted. Though she is the eldest in the family, she is still expected to ask her brothers’ permission if she so much as wants to join an office outing. Obedience, it seems, is a major attribute of the ideal woman. And, indeed, Manu, that patriarch of Hindu family law, has decreed as much- “In childhood a woman should be under her father’s control, in youth under her husband’s, and when her husband is dead, under her sons’. She should not have independence.”( LC 12) so says Manu. One is told that what Akila’s mother had ever wanted was to be a good wife and in the very same breath one is told that a good wife “listened” LC (14), implying her silence and obedience.

When co-passenger Prabha Devi asks if she is happy (LC 21), Akila has no answer. Like the 14 year old Sheela who does not yet know what she wants, Akila at 45 still cannot say what she wants out of life and, therefore, whether she is happy or not. When Janaki says she likes the smell of food wrapped in banana leaves, Akila discovers that she does too. Janaki is not surprised that Akila has never thought in terms of what she likes or does not. That is how women are, she has realized.

Akila wonders whether a woman can manage without a man indefinitely or whether she is missing out on something that is vital to a woman’s satisfaction. “Can a woman cope alone?” (LC 22) Akila asks. Uncertain and strangely innocent at 45, Akila is frozen in the same situation as the child, Sheela. Sheela is bewildered by her father’s disapproval of the cheeky with and ‘pertness’ he so used to enjoy and encouraged in her till she ‘grew up’. Now, suddenly, everything she says seems to be wrong. In confusion she retreats into a shell of
quietness. Her father approves of this silent Sheela just as Akila’s family is content while she stays in the wings, making no demands, issuing no orders, inarticulate in spite of her breadwinner status. Akila is as confused as Sheela is but, with help from her childhood friend Karpagam and, later, the co-passengers in the coupe, she realizes she must live for herself. Through the narrative fragments concerned with Akila one sees her gradual growth and her discovery of a voice and a will.

Her yearnings for tenderness, touch and erotic fulfillment are never verbalized. They exist only in her dreams and her unexpressed sub-consciousness. In her dream (LC 92) she has the guts to defy her parents and continue an entirely physically passionate love affair while they watch with horror and disgust but, needless to say, in reality she has no such courage. It is amusing to see that, in her dream, Akila wears not starched cotton but a flimsy chiffon sari that the mystery lover removes with a flick of his finger. The bus conductor who notices Akila allowing an unknown passenger to covertly touch and stroke her back might be disapproving but the sensual deprivation her complicity reveals can only be called pitiable, “Akila had never felt anything like this before. An unfurling… A quiet flowering…” She “let the hand send 1000 messages to her almost dead nerve ends” (LC 139). The faceless passenger has been welcome because he notices her and approaches her as a woman. No one else has done that. Once found out, however, she is forced to acknowledge and evaluate her participation in the act. Needless to say, Akila accepts the judgment of patriarchal society and, terribly ashamed, she punishes herself by never taking that bus ever again.

Though she is financially independent, she continues to live and govern her actions and decisions in the all-encompassing “male gaze” that Roland Barthes has described so well. Her behaviour is, at all times, decorous in the way the men of her family and of her society would except it to be, she fulfils the social expectations that Kamala Das clearly resents so
much when she imitates the commanding tone of patriarchal elders as they dictate to women, saying: “Dress in sarees, be girl / Be wife” (The Old Play House and other Poems 27). It is important to ‘fit in’.

Akila does finally draw the courage to stand out, to be a typical, to appropriate the voice and will to action that would normally belong to a man in her position of financial independence. Rejecting the man-decreed ineffectuality and the voicelessness reserved for women, she forges ahead. Just as she found the courage to break through the barriers of her Brahminism by eating eggs, she also finds she can live on her own, defy her brothers’ authority (which they possess merely by virtue of being male) and discover her own relationship.

Akila, far from contented with her life, might have found the courage to defy her family and stay with her lover in her dream but in reality she abandons her real-life lover because she is so afraid of what society might say about their marriage. Her meeting with Hari can only be called fortuitous. Considering that she does absolutely nothing to ever attempt to meet men, this chance encounter – once again, in a train – is incredibly lucky for her. That a presentable and younger man should find her attractive enough to pursue is itself a compliment to this not-so-young-any more woman (she is 34 years old). In spite of finding mutuality and happiness in this love, Akila decides to give it all up. So, she has thoroughly internalized patriarchal notions that the fact that she is older than him is (to her) such a dreadful transgression of the conventional social norms that she would rather give up on happiness there and then have to answer questions and deflect taunts when they come later on. People will wonder, she is sure, people will point fingers, and people will ultimately make Hari unhappy with his choice. Utterly lacking all confidence in her, Akila leaves Hari rather than face him, confront and answer the predictable verdict of the male gaze.
She returns to her uneventful life. While Prabha Devi and Sujata Akka have husbands to wait for, however unexciting they might be, she had no one and nothing to look forward to. Her life is governed by her brothers, and her parasitic sister’s family sponges off her. In the words of Anita Desai – lives are spent in “waiting for nothing, waiting on men self-centered and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death, dying misunderstood, always behind bars…” It is her interaction with Karpagam that first helps Akila to find a voice and a will. Karpagam is a widow but continues to wear the signs of marriage and live a fulfilling life. Her defiant stance inspires Akila to decide to live on her own. “We are strong, Akhi. We are, if we want to be,” Karpagam tells Akila. Again, she declares: “I don’t care what my family or anyone thinks. I am who I am.” (LC 202). Inspired by her, Akila finally manages to cast off the influence of patriarchal society, find her voice, speak out, assert herself and win her right to live independently.

The good work Karpagam begins is continued with the sympathetic intervention of the passengers in the coupe. The decision to go on a journey is Akila’s celebration of her newly achieved freedom when she moves into her own flat. Kanyakumari is the farthest destination she can think of and therefore the chosen one. Young Sheela has understood what Akila at 45 has barely begun to think about. Sheela’s Ammumma used to say that women should groom themselves for themselves, not for others (LC 67-68). With help from her co-passengers and Karpagam, Akila comes to realize that she must take the reins in her own hands, take her own decisions and live life for herself. The ‘other’ has enjoyed far too much importance in her life; it is time to relegate it to the wings and assume the stellar role in her own life. Too long has Akila seen herself as ‘object’? The journey implies both a physical escape from the patriarchal world she has inhabited (and this has involved the use of her individual will) and also the stereotypical metaphoric value invariably attached to the concept of the journey—that of experiential growth and an expansion of horizons. The combined
experiences of her co-passengers help Akila to develop the new confidence that marks her behaviour after she disembarks. The metaphor of the journey is further developed into the metaphor of the destination—Kanyakumari is a seaside town with the grand vista of the meeting of three seas. The openness of the scene symbolizes the range of possibilities open to Akila. Akila who was trapped in her family situation in a small land-locked town in Tamilnadu now sits gazing at an azure sky and playing with the sand. Three oceans meet and mingle at her feet, she realizes with exhilaration. Her realization of her own independence is epiphanic.

In Kanyakumari, Akila tests her new found confidence by taking a lover. The capability to manage the little encounter entirely on her own terms amuses her. She smiles “because she discovers it is so easy to smile now that she has her life where she wants it to be” (LC 275). “Akila has no more fears. Why then should she walk with a downcast head?” She books a call to Hari. He might be married, he might have moved on. Still, it is worth the effort - if he is available and interested. She loves Hari “but she desires life more”. Hari does answer the call but the author Anita Nair does not choose to tell us what he says. Whatever it is, a new Akila has been born—one determined to be heard and noticed, capable of building a good life for her, expecting nobody to stand and support. It is purely her will of the soul that ‘why not’ Hari again?

Karpagam shows Akila the possibility of living a full life without a man. Prabha Devi’s swimming adventure underlines the realization that it is never too late to embark upon a new experience. It also shows that something that gives you simple, undiluted pleasure is more precious than all the riches in the world, or the riches that your husband can give you, as indeed Prabha Devi’s husband does give her. Prabha Devi is able to create a life of her
own after years of a vacuous life spent in merely waiting for her husband. Nair’s version of the old nursery rhyme must touch a raw nerve in every subaltern woman-

“Prabha Devi, Prabha Devi, where have you been?”

“I became a woman, neither heard nor seen.”

“Prabha Devi, Prabha Devi, what did you do there?”

“I waited and waited till ash speckled my hair.” (LC 184)

Margaret’s story demonstrates how a woman can strategize to get her own way. Margaret’s husband Ebenezer Paulraj is the most awful example of male chauvinism in the novel. A vain and arrogant poseur (‘a male peacock’ as his wife call him), he maneuvers Margaret into a position of submissive silence, making her out to be an unremarkable, average kind of woman. A girl with a brilliant academic career and a warm and vibrant personality, she is reduced to a silent extra. He hogs the limelight in their marriage, keeping her firmly in the wings, hardly allowing her even ‘supporting’ status. His subtle cruelty to children in his school (he is headmaster of a school) is repeated in his treatment of his wife. He is obsessed with the girlish; pre-woman that Margaret is when he first meets her. When she happily announces her pregnancy, he insists on an abortion in order to keep her ‘girlish’ in his eyes. Margaret is confused and then angry. Tired of her subaltern position in his house, she finally takes her life into her own hands, gathers her forces with supreme will power and turns the tables on him. Having learned from his constant playing of games to get his way, she takes her revenge by inventing the game that will render him harmless to her, an ineffectual gourmand.
To talk about men in the novel, Paulraj is dominating, mean and almost perverse. For Marikolanthu, life has thrown up, by way of the men in her life, only a rapist and an adulterer. Prabha Devi’s husband is a typical conservative male who neglects her in what he considers the standard way to treat a wife. Janaki’s husband has got her into a routine that makes her completely dependent on him. Now that Sheela’s father has successfully silenced her, one wonders what kind of man she will be made, quietly, to marry.

The narratives of Akila’s co-passengers in the coupe fairly tumble out of them, revealing the need of each woman to speak to a sympathetic listener. Each woman has been cocooned in her own silence and longs to be heard. The achievements of Prabha Devi, Margaret, Marikolanthu and Karpagam strengthen Akila’s resolve, so that, when she gets off the train at Kanyakumari, she is a new Akila. Perhaps it is the aura of her new found confidence, her newly discovered selfhood that attracts the young man at the beach. The fact that Akila is able to meet and hold his gaze seems to be almost a literalization of her new position as the “self” and others as “object”. She has grown into her selfhood.

The novel ends by identifying Akila with Durga, as Shakti, indicating the potential of womankind. From an image of absence and silence to one of confrontation and assertion, Akila has come a long way. Shedding the patriarchal image of woman as a silence and an absence, as imperfection and incompleteness, Akila appropriates the voice and the will that has been the province of men and takes an active part in life. Nair has made a gesture for the advancement of women, that class which, along with untouchables and forest folk, according to Mulk Raj Anand, constitute the rejected people of our country.
Akila is fed up when she hears the gossiping of her sister about her. Akila's demand for an independent life is discarded by her siblings. It really bored her of playing various roles like daughter, sister, and aunt. What Akila missed the most was that no one called her by her name. Her brothers and sisters had called her as akka. At work, her colleagues called her as madam. All women were madam, and all men were sir. And amma always addressed her as Ammadi.

After all the names, Akila herself wondered who was Akilandeswari? Did she exist at all? If she did, what was her identity? (LC 84) getting fed up with those multiple roles, she decided to freeze herself on a train journey that would make her a different women. Akila begins her symbolic journey to Kanyakumari where the Goddess of it, like Akila is unmarried and eternally waiting for her groom to arrive is to be remembered. During the journey she met five other women, her fellow passengers their being together in one compartment provides the frame work and hold the story together like a ribbon holding a banquet of different kinds of flowers of different shapes, colours and fragrances. The self in Akila has been resuscitated by the story of five women and amused her to take dare decision as she has no more fear for the society nor for her family. Taking a new lover can bring forth critical evaluation but the society cannot question her. When she needs to have, it was not provided. So she didn’t ask why but why not I do? For it’s her life and then atleast she need space for herself to live a life of legacy, a free will to take upon.

After hearing out these women stories of living in cocoon sheltered by men or rampant exploitation again by men, Akila breathes out happily that her self atleast has not suffered in the hands of men. Thus, the protagonist journey for search and independence, no doubt her indomitable will and undefeatable spirit compels her to carry on her life in a revived manner. The novelist carefully portrays the shades of pain, love, anger and frustration
in the novel. It is a novel about contemporary Indian society, about the awareness of the
conflicts between one’s aspirations, visions in life, the threads of intolerance, anger, violence
and the survival of one’s traditional values and ideas still in the present circumstances. Anita
Nair is perhaps the only Indian woman novelist who has made a bold attempt to give voice to
the frustration and development of women in a patriarchal world. It is a novel which
provokes the readers thought and moves them deeply and quietly.

In the novel Mistress self is the suffering process of all characters. The unwritten code
of conduct and culture that prevails in south-India, is that, Men want his woman to be perfect
and they are bound to obey the culture he was supposed to have seen in his family. If that
notion went wrong then arises the misunderstanding and the breakage. Indian woman in
particular are anemic in front of their man. Radha, the protagonist lives the life of hatred. A
man older than her age had seduced Radha. At that point of time, Shyam rendered his co-
operation to marry Radha. There seemed a mere tolerance within them as a pair. They
showed off as a best couple to the society. But truly they have self-satisfaction. She has lot of
money that could not help her. She never loved Shyam. She lives a life as the society expects,
a traditional wife, an authentic woman. Shyam, the ‘to be’ hero of the novel lost his self on
surrendering his life to marry Radha. His tolerance level was overthrown by the arrival of
Chris. Leaving the rest of the world Radha and Chris entered a new life, which loved, by both
and in silence blessed by Koman who lingered in his own treasured pleasure.

And the character Nair loved the most was Shyam (the cuckolded spouse) is my
favourite character and perhaps the one she had most love for. At the end of the book, one
may not like Shyam but one will certainly respect him. What’s more, he is the only one in that
cast who does not wear a mask. He was what he was. He is like Pandava prince Bheema -
bumbling and super-efficient - and loved Draupadi more than she loved him. To Nair, he was
the hero of the book, even if an unlikely one.

“One live life on their terms and practice art on their terms. You compromise on nothing. You try to raise yourself to better your best,” she said. And in the end, what counts is if your life or art is signified by your own satisfaction with it. And, most importantly, you don't lose a shred of humanity no matter what art or life demands of you.” (MS 95)

One of the primal and seminal concerns of feminism is, to declare that a woman is a being. She is not an appendage of man. A woman is not the ‘other’; She is not an addition to man. It is true that feminism in its early stages thought of Amazon-Utopias, an all-female world where man has peripheral functions.

The woman in order to achieve her freedom seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. She resents the role of a daughter and looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that her new role will help her in winning their freedom.

What is significant about such relationships is that they suffer no guilt and they begin to evolve a new code of sexual ethics. Their path to individualization is marked by contacts with diverse experience such as extramarital affairs. They experience a sense of sexual autonomy freeing themselves from sexual politics. Further, these heroines arrive at a realistic perception of love as physical instinct. Radha reveals: Love… there was no such thing between man and woman … only a need which both fought against futilely, the very futility turning into the thing called love. (MS 65)

In the Indian context, once a girl gets married to a man, the husband completely dominates over her. If the wife does not conform to the norms and ideals set by the husband, there is disharmony and tension. The difference between their outlooks is so marked that they fail, it takes time again, to understand each other. This greatly affects their marital life. It
becomes more of a compromise than a relationship based on love or mutual understanding. There grows a silence between the husband and the wife. It creates a tension between them.

Men were consistently described as being more aggressive, independent, dominant, active, competitive and self confident than women. Women were concisely described as being more tactful, gentle, sensitive, emotional, expressive, neat and quiet than men. Such stereotypes can be dangerous. The stereotypes are misleading because they encourage us to over generalize, to assume that the stereotype accurately describes all members of the group. In reality, stereotypes are never accurate in this blanket sense, as evidenced by the existence of large numbers of submissive men and insensitive women.

Radha has in her character what makes a fictional figure universal. Whatever her faults, whatever her life but she does reaches depths of self-actualization. At last, she reaches a stage when she is not beaten down by other people’s rejection, by low self-regard, by anxiety, or by conflict. The theory goes that if the self develops in an open, flexible, expansive manner, the individual will continue on the road to self actualization. She introspects philosophically and reaches to the conclusion that escape is a ridiculous idea. There is no refuge, other than one’s own self. She realizes that she cannot attain happiness through anyone else be it a husband, a father or a child. She can attain peace of mind by her own efforts. No one gives peace. It has to be created within. Thus, free from fears and pain, the final picture of Radha is appealing indeed, when she confidently waits for what used to be the greatest terror of her life, her husband. She is ready to face him. She is ready to face life.

Mostly they return to their husbands with the realization that self-assertion and conformity to one’s given role are not necessarily contradictory, but can even be complementary. Thus, the end shows them as women aware of the importance of family and marriage, at the same time, accepting their need to discover their ‘self’. Her belief was that
caste based arranged marriage is not always the key to happiness which is highlighted in most of her novels.

Indian fiction in English has sometimes treated the theme of Negation in its various attributes-resignation denial, acceptance, fatalism, withdrawal, passivity, fantasy world-weariness, moral turpitude, rejection of concern, submission to the past, a preference for symbolic or mythic rather than pragmatic action, a rigid compartmentalization of moves alongside an unwillingness to make definitions concerning life.

Apart from the obvious and central theme of Radha’s relentless probing to discover herself, there is the theme of alienation, compassion, aggression and much more. There is the theme of woman’s fate in general which is brought to the reader’s notice, unobtrusively, in the form of Radha’s observations. There is also the theme of the old order giving way to the new.

Self is nothing but safeguarding individuals mind in a independent way. Self always expects respect and esteem. Anita Nair’s Mistress deals with individual’s self respect from the characters point of view. Radha after knowing about her mother’s life and her own birth feels reluctant and afraid about maintaining the individuality. Radha throughout her life dwelled with fear in making decisions but somehow worn a mask for hiding Kathakali is all about dance with many vesham and she coming from such family made it very easy to be a whenever situation arises.

The story starts from shantham to abautam explicating navarasa. The author, particularly in this novel clearly show that every individual speak about their own character and self starting from Radha, Shyam, Uncle Koman, and his secluded memories of the past.
Shyam is a secondary character who never says what he feels. That at times kindles his self into and acts of arrogance which gives Radha a heavy blow – devastating the self.

Eventhough Anita Nair does not like to be called as ‘feminist’, the yearning of self by her female characters very quickly reveals that she stands for feminity she never opposes men’s ideas but in her full sense supports women. In a family, culture tours around in a way anything and everything what men’s says. This is kept up to the mark till 1980’s all around the world and in south India, it prevailed till the beginning of the 21st century. Scenario started towards Renaissance and Reformation from 2000.

Considering south Indian mentality, the girls has to be married within the age of 25. If not, she would be called as a spinster and marriage becomes long term goal. Radha’s father coming from such culture made a quick marriage with Shyam due to the fear of earning a bad name in his town. At the outset, marriage with Shyam was a punishment like to Radha. Losing her virginity to an elderly man during her college days forced her father into that commitment. No way that, she could sustain neither her ego nor herself on it.

Freud framed the opinion that the dream fundamentally acts as the guardian of sleep. When one goes to bed, the curtains are drawn, the lights are turned off and in effect one is attempting to disconnect from the reality by extinguishing all external stimuli. During the night, the mind protects the sleeper from being disturbed by reacting to further external stimuli (noise, temperature, light, the need to urinate, numb arm/leg, pain, etc) as well as all internal stimuli (emotions, fears, dissatisfaction, desires, previous day’s activity) by manufacturing dreams.
Freud’s concentrates more on internal stimuli. It is essential for a person to continue
to sleep undisturbed strong negative emotions, forbidden thoughts and unconscious desires
have to be disguised or censored in some form or another. Otherwise, confronted by these,
the dreamer would become distressed and they would eventually wake up. The main material
of dream according to Freud are unconscious wishes, bodily stimuli while sleeping, images
out of previous occurrences and an intensive transformation of all these happenings in the
name of ‘dream work’. Therefore the dream, if understood correctly, could lead to a greater
understanding of the dreamer’s subconscious.

At the arrival of Chris in her life Radha feels that she started accessing her
individuality. Radha – Chris enjoyed a pure love and ecstasy all over the Nila Resort. The
love life of Radha gets fulfilled as denoted in Freudian theory that delivers about the dream
analysis. Radha gets more mental energy out of her love. She never felt odd in loving Chris
when Shyam is very much alive and more than that watching their love as a silent spectator.
Eventhough Radha’s action is against the culture, it can be retaliated with Freud’s master
piece The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), on the nature of dreaming. Dreams do not gather
conscious work.

Radha’s dream along with Shyam’s transformed into nothingness and so it loses the
essence of the dream. Uncle Koman has surrendered himself to the art of Kathakali and has
rendered his self on it. Being the senior of the family, he knows very well about the marriage
life between Radha and Shyam. Later, when he comes to know about the relationship
between Chris – Radha, his subconscious mind brings out his past and about his Mistresses.
In his youth, Koman worked with passion for his Aasaan (the head of the arts school). As
Koman cannot realize what he wants, he left the choice with Aasaan. One such occasion is
leaving to Chennai for a year to teach the dance. He was not able to give his full commitment to Kathakali dance in Chennai because Bharathanatiyam is preferred than Kathakali.

When Chris came to Uncle Koman he learnt about the art he had a doubt in his mind which later gave a meaning for his meaningless life. The life of Uncle Koman is put under pressure after the arrival of Chris. In the course of Radha and Chris relation, Uncle Koman was shocked to realize that Chris might be his son.

The sole purpose of Chris to visit India was in search of his father. Staying with Uncle Koman provided him memorable experience; loving Radha showed him the other world of eternal peace. It was on search of his identity that he visited Nila Resort and the self-identity brought him lot of inconvenience, misfortune, hatred and at the end losing the relationship with Radha. The love which brought the closeness with Radha expected more understanding and could not withstand any disgrace. Here again in researching about self, men like Chris expects every material and abstract ideas from women but not self of a women.

It is a curse on the women particularly in India to refrain and restrain every single move in front of women. In such a situation Anita Nair has tried to prove resuscitation of self of Radha by taking a decision to leave Chris, Shyam resuscitates his self by brutally involving himself into a rape – violent sex with his own wife Radha. Shyam’s self in this novel Mistress is highly damaged than Radha as Shyam is a man and his brutality is justified.

Thus, Anita Nair supports the evidence found in the society through her novel Mistress. Nair also confirms through this novel that self is not a matter to be last it has to be preserved like one’s virginity. But the irony is that ‘searching after losing’ is the mentality of a human being; rising with a revival brings a solace for every individual. The novel Mistress
with all cultural deviations brings out human’s sought after individuality through nine rasas which makes this novel a best artistic one.

As Shama Futehally observes: “this slender novel attempts, in a way, to encompass too many themes, and is unable to develop them beyond making reflections on each which are almost in the nature of asides”(Futehally)

In novel after novel, Anita Nair explores the impact of change in terms of human psychology; for her, culture means essentially an idea which unites a million individuals and confers on each of them what Lionel Trilling calls, ‘an integral selfhood’. It thus represents the ideal of “a unitary complex of interacting assumptions, modes of thought, habits and styles, which are connected in secret as well as overt ways with the practical arrangements of a society and which, because they are not brought to consciousness, are unopposed in their influence over men’s mind. (Trilling, p.125.)

Anita Nair’s characters, in return to society, can progress to awareness, at least partially, of the positive freedom as the ideal state of consciousness within the circle of tradition and duty. In the affirmation of this ideal, Anita Nair reflects in her work the concept of true freedom as enunciated in the Indian philosophy - in the Gita and its teachings. Freedom, according to the Gita, is ripeness and awareness through a total realization of the self.

In Lessons in Forgetting, Meera and JAK are the two major characters who seemed to lose their individuality for the sake of their family. Both these are educated and they have a corporate status in the society. On taking Meera’s life, right from her marriage she is unaware of her individuality. Giri from the beginning dominated Meera in the name of love. The actual essence of getting into marriage is money than love. This act was never taken seriously
by Meera as she always considered her to be Greek god Hera. The Lilac House played vital role in misleading Giri. The first time he entered the house along with Meera was ever remembered by Meera again and again after losing Giri. When Giri ran away from Meera’s life she had sixteen year old girl, nine year old boy, her mother and her grandmother to look after. This disappearance shattered her for a day or two it was her son Nikhil who supported her in that shock.

Life became a question for Meera as no corners gave any clue. Meera who was once a cuckoo girl for Giri became no man of any art. Chaotic condition prevailed until she came across an email sent by Giri from his mail account. The self got a heavy damage to analyze who she had been in the life of Giri. The mail revealed Giri’s mentality yet another shock was that Giri never loved Meera when preferred to Lilac House. She could easily recollect the damages she often faced in the hands of Giri with the nick name cuckoo girl. Meera loved Giri unconditionally. She wanted to be a dedicated wife as Hera. She gave her heart and soul in serving Giri with love. She was a squirrel to Giri. In running a family, every move was his choice including sex. She adored Giri in such a way that never it occurred to her that he might think wrong.

In the life of JAK, it is a mere fate that makes things move around. His early days had been hard as his father left his mother to move as a sanyasi. He is voiceless all the time. Even his Kala Chithi’s life also had a great damage. When he thought of living with his mother and Chithi in a comfortable way, his mother chose another life and went away. Jak left out of country to pursue his life as well as his research. When his daughter Smriti wanted to do her graduation at Madurai, he felt good and sent her. After coming to India for the tragedy of Smriti, he could realize that his individuality is tormented from his childhood. As a father Jak couldn’t cope up with the reality and the redemption to be made.
The novel, “Lessons in Forgetting” is an odyssey of redemption and renewal. The story puts forth a strong statement that the act of recovering and recreation is not an act of betrayal. In fact, Nair crafts life not as a cage of inevitable burden but as an act of resurrection and metamorphosis. One has to sever the ties of the past and acquire a new sensitivity towards life. Life, like cyclone, triggers despair and uncertainty and all human beings have one thing in common, nothing but troubled souls. The bulwark strength of human beings lies not in accepting the devastation of life but in renewing themselves from the shackles of burden and bars. The novelist teaches a lesson to expect joy as the birthright and a power of denial towards despair. The murky canopy of life may gift dismay and demolish, all of a sudden, the hopes which are carried. Again the same life teaches to refashion the decree of redemption and renewal with forgiveness. Life is not an encumbrance of affliction and anxiety but it educates to look at the twists and turns of life with courage and strength.

Nair’s “Lessons in Forgetting” offers an intimate perspective into the lives of two individuals, who are trapped in sullen situations. Both the characters are captured in familial ties, cultural expectations, marital betrayals and sexual discovery. The plot moves on with men and women abandoning their marital relationships. Narrated in the backdrop of the Greek mythology of Hera and Zeus adds colour to the novel.

The main aim of the novel is the delineation of individual’s quest in all its varied and complex forms. A sense of identity is a constant sustaining creative force in a writer. For the modern man, the search for identity has been one of his chief preoccupations. Identity and its quest refer to the spiritual odyssey of the modern man. When an individual finds himself in the fullness of his capacities, he is satisfied with himself. All his needs, roles in the society, his sublimations, and his personal and cultural achievements – together can give the
impression of an individual with established identity. If all the above factors are negated, identity crisis will result.

It is her quest working in two directions simultaneously. In one direction, she tries to assert herself as an individual and in other her female identity. In the course of the novel they are to meet later. For Meera, her quest for self is very important. The novelist has presented the existential dilemma of the self of Meera in society and in her mind. They are alienation, fragmentation & meaninglessness of life. It leads to perpetual quest for identity. Owing to an unbridgeable gulf between herself and Giri after eighteen years of their long married life, Meera remains clouded with terrors sparked off by various reasons. As a wife, her body has become more precious than her own being. The knowledge that Giri has not married her for her own sake but for her money, the woman in her breaks down completely. She has been needed by Giri only for her status & money.

When Meera puts the proposal of not giving up the house for sale because she is tired, Giri flatly rejects her. He tries to prove her the necessity of her work. The basic ground for her to be a woman with status in society is denied to her. Her dream to find happiness through a man has become shattered. She wants to be a woman attracting her male partner for all the time. Her dream to find happiness through a man has become shattered.. She wants to overcome this sense. She is unable to accept everything calling it ‘Fate’ like a traditional woman. She becomes confused. She gets nervous. There is no answer and no solution to her question. She is caught in a dichotomy and has become tired of taking the burden of this dual experience. When the realization comes to her of the things happening in a logical manner, she has become strong enough; she has understood that she carries her own hell within her she has to come out for the sake of her children.
Thus, Anita Nair is a writer par excellence when she deals with ‘human issues which are of interest to all humanity’. She effectively portrays the lot of Indian women and the convoluted state of things resulting in their self-abnegation in her writing known for courageous and sensitive handling of significant and intractable themes affecting the lives of women. Her works, therefore, constitute an outstanding contribution to Indian literature in English.

Despite their disillusionment with marriage and all that it entails, they are able to preserve their identity, realizing their own personal and private limitations. Within the binding relationship they are able to, at last, affirm their own individuality. It could be said that “they are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their own individual capabilities are realized in their own lives.”

Therefore, Anita Nair repeatedly calls for understanding and balance in matrimony, however not at the cost of one’s self-respect and individuality. Her novels based on submission and suffering of women does not necessarily end with their rejection of family values and marriage. Her bold and balanced heroes often face the challenges of life confidently. Mostly they return to their husbands with the realization that self-assertion and conformity to one’s given role are not necessarily contradictory, but can even be complementary.

Thus, the end shows them as women aware of the importance of family and marriage, at the same time, accepting their need to discover their ‘self’. Her belief that caste based arranged marriage is not always the key to happiness is highlighted in most of her novels. Repeatedly calls for understanding and balance in matrimony, however not at the cost of one’s self-respect and individuality. Her novels based on submission and suffering of women,
do not necessarily end with their rejection of family values and marriage. Her bold and balanced heroines often face the challenges of life confidently.

Though to present only a realistic picture of society is not the real business of art and literature, however rich and profound author’s knowledge about society may be, it has no permanent significance in the realm of literature unless it is woven into the fabric of art. Anita Nair has showed the naked truth of society, no doubt, but she has never forgotten the rules of art, e.g., images and symbols, overtones and ironies and other associated aspects of the great art.

Anita Nair’s novels represent the new Indian woman’s voice. A new woman is in search of self-identity, seeking liberation in all walks of life, replacing the traditional image of Indian woman. The need for women to seek their identity is the message in her novels. However, Anita Nair also exposes the women’s misunderstanding regarding their freedom and mocks at their way of asserting their individuality by posing to be men without concentrating on female empowerment as a whole.

Above all, her protagonists are more intelligent and capable women than men, who desire to have their own individuality. Anita Nair is fascinated towards the complexities of human relationships. She has confessed in an interview with the researcher, “We know a lot about the physical and the organic world and the universe in general, but we still know very little about human relationships. It is the most mystifying thing as I am concerned. I will continue to wonder about it, puzzle over it and write about it. And still it is tremendously intriguing, fascinating.”
As the years have given the clear vision that a woman cannot exist outside the boundaries of married life and motherhood. Otherwise she is perceived as useless and unworthy, according to traditional Indian views Indian woman do not appear to have their independent role in society. Moreover, they must become a male appendix in order to have a role. Indian women are thus linked by male definition sex-segregation patterns only of a woman is a wife and a mother both example of male appendix difference she gains a status in the outer world although a very subordinate one the main difference between Indian and western societies is that in India women live as a part of a community, a group, a family, first the father’s family then the husband’s one and finally the joint family, Individualism is considered a western perversion and female individual space in unacceptable and inconceivable.

The novelist gives a true-to-life saga of the trauma faced by Meera. Unlike the general idea of a deserted wife, Meera does not crumble to pieces at the pain and humiliation inflicted on her. As soon as he recovers from the shock, she picks up the threads of her life and tries to readjust her life style to suit the situation. She moves with her children, into her parents’ house and helps her children to get on with their lives as before. This monstrous tragedy, so undeserving as we are made to understand, leaves Meera seemingly unperturbed.

Even today, strict emphasis is given on arranged marriages. In case a woman flaunts the rules and regulations of her family, she is blamed to ruin the honour of the family. Female sexuality is, seen, not as personal private matter, but a family concern, sexual constraints on unmarried girls, control on their sexuality and the obsession with virginity, are still very common in Indian. Even today, when it comes to woman, the law of control is applied. The woman in India is confined to ‘the triple role’ of daughter-in-law, wife and mother, yet another form of gender discrimination in the eating co customs of Indian families. Even now
a day, in the traditional Hindu families, women are supposed to take their meals after their husbands, elders and children have finished eating. Such a habit and spirit of sacrifice is inculcated in women since childhood as a part of Stridharma (Duties of women). A time, a woman is required to eat her husband’s left over, which is deemed a great prasad.

There is no resistance but an immersion in and embracing of the world of experience in her novels, she uses her art, to express the subterranean life of silence lying under the skin, a life that is no less, if not more eloquent and vibrant than the life lived in the outside world. Her novels reveal the rise of a new consciousness which fuses the aspirations of an independent and free entity with the pleasure of an aesthetically vibrant and radiant self. The isolation and insecurity that her characters suffer is human, and the growth of women is from self-alienation to self-identification.

The characters become strong and take over the story, bringing in complexities, human truths emerge and artificial buildings fall away. The truth is that, personal reasons trigger off the writing most of the time; reasons come out of the writer’s own life. A writer writes not only out of herself, but also out of the society, its tradition, its life, and she is living in it. Her basic focus in writing is always the human being. Society is the background; it is what the society does to the individual, that, the writer is really concerned.

The writer, through her writing may give expression to a very personal emotion, but when this personal becomes public, it becomes universal, and symbolizes human emotion itself. It is through giving expression to human feelings that the writer becomes a pact of a movement for a wanted and needed social change. It is very essential that the woman of today need to clarify what the self expects. They had to struggle a lot to establish one’s identity and to assert one’s individuality; it has led the women to wage a desperate fight.
against the existing social order of the day. Hence it becomes essential for women to assert
their role models and redefine its parameters.

Their concerns and preoccupations paved way to establish the relational development
and continuity in the construction of the subjectivity of women. Anita Nair portrays modern,
educated and career-oriented middle class women, who are quite sensitive to the eternal
changing time and situations. Her women are aware of the cultural and social shortcomings to
which they are subjected in this male-dominated society. They rebel against their men in
search for freedom and identity, but ultimately find themselves up against well-entrenched
social inertia.

Quiet aware of the predicament of a woman in this male-chauvinist society, especially
when she is not economically independent, the author presents her women as longing to
become economically and ideologically independent. Her women stand at the cross roads of
traditions. They seek change but within the cultural norms, seek not to reinterpret them, but
merely make them alive with dignity and self-respect. Her women seek anchorage in
marriage. They looked at it as an alternative to the bondage imposed by the parental family
and opt for it. They do not accept to be considered as the objects of gratification.

They challenge their victimization and find a new balance of power between the
sexes. But their idea of freedom is not purchased from the west they strongly believe in
conformity and compromise for the sake of the retention of domestic harmony rather than
revolt, which might result in the disruption of family relationships. Nair’s women protagonist
generally seeks to come out. “…from inherited patterns of thought and action in favor of new
modes, arrived at independently after much consideration of the various aspects of the
problem, keeping also in view the kind of society she lives in” (Vinay Kirpal: 148).
A woman in our society is a non-person, an appendage, a slave to the master-man. Women in our culture are not individuals in their own right but objects through whom man aspires for self-affirmation and self-relationship. The culture that created a Sita and a Savitri has denied the rights of existence to woman save as daughter, sister, wife, mother etc. she is yet to achieve individuation and an authentic self-identity. Vern Bullough observes: “The very word woman … emphasized [a] passive anonymous position. It derives from the Anglo-Saxon wifeman literally ‘wife-man,’ and the implication seems to be that there is no such thing as woman separate from wifehood. As individuals, with few exceptions, women did not count. They were mothers, wives, daughters, sisters.”

Women rarely lead an independent life. They exist in a bipolar world: on the one hand they are subordinated to the masculine world of their husbands and on the other hand committed to the assertion of their womanhood, their female ego. A woman is seen in terms of the male-oriented world. Her identity or self is seen in terms of the identity of her male counterpart and as such the female world is not one with the male world but is adjunct to it. They run parallel. Women are generally gentle, dependent, submissive and passive. Within the family, she is usually her husband’s yes-person. In the society, she is subordinate to man.

Through all these characters of Anita Nair, it is very clear that women are subjected to undergo pressure in the hands of male-dominated society and also these women strive to get their self a better position simply by shifting their thought from why to why not. In this society, resuscitation can happen only when such longing ideas come into existence.