Chapter Two

Anita Nair: A Review of Her Life and Aspirations

I have no qualms about admitting that I am curious. I like to know about other people – what they wear, what they eat, whom they love, whom they hate, what they read, who their friends are, whether they floss, what secret quirks they have. It helps flesh a shadowy shape I have in my mind about a person.

Anita Nair

Anita Nair (1966- ), the living writer of this century, is an Indian English writer. She is a creative artist bestowed with immense proficiency and scholarly panorama. She is regarded as one of the leading novelists in Indian English Literature. In her works, Anita Nair mainly focuses on the real human condition on the earth. At the same time, she is artful in interweaving her stories in the Indian scenario, unique in presenting her conceptions and innovative in sharing the experiences of language. Exhibiting an individualistic flair in her writing style, Anita Nair’s novels display an awe-inspiring depth in her narration, and the main thrust of her novels is the confrontation between the self-actualization and family responsibilities of the individuals. Almost all her novels are embedded in Indian culture and the characters and settings are inherently Indian. Her stories may be said to be ideological as well as practical, based on the structure of Indian middle class families. In this context, she displays a sharp mind and observation
skill with which she details stories depicting the enigma of Indian women, in an
easy manner.

Anita Nair mirrors the society in her literary endeavours. Her writings
delve deep into the contemporary obnoxious condition of human beings. She
explores the colossal proviso of human experiences and expresses them with full
flow of her emotions. In addition, her works are a mixture of realism as found in
Indian culture with universal appeal. As a novelist, her spirit lies in ushering the
everyday reality in her writings.

Anita Nair was born at Mundakottakurissi near Shoranur in Kerala on
January 26, 1966. The researcher feels that the writer’s birth date coincides with
Indian Republic Day may be for the reason that she voices forth the psychic
trauma of Indian men and women. This pleasant finding motivates the researcher
to delve into the author’s views further with a positive angle. She studied B.A in
English Literature at NSS College, Ottappalam. Due to her father’s work in the
Ordinance Factory at Chennai, she spent her childhood days in a suburb called
Avadi near Chennai. Her fellowship from the Virginia Center for her first book,
a collection of short stories called *Satyr of the Subway* (1997) enabled her to
move to Virgina Center to pursue her education in Creative Arts in 1998. Her
visit to her grandparents’ house urged her to know the warmth of Kerala.
Presently Anita Nair lives in Bangalore with her husband and son but her parents
are still living in Kerala. Besides being “a doting mother, wife, and homemaker
too” (Chandaraju Para 4), she is successful in her career because of the support
being offered by the members of her family.
While analysing the aesthetic excellence of Anita Nair, one finds that her family and village moulded her writings. The river Bharatapuzha or the Nila exhilarated Anita Nair’s childhood thoughts and childhood experiences at her grandparents’ house. She pronounces that she imbibed her “literary realm” (Nair, “Malabar Mind” 36) only from her village Mundakkottakurissi. Anita Nair’s parents stood as bridge to connect her with the literary world. Undoubtedly Blake Morrison’s memoir And, When Did You Last See Your Father? (1993) made Anita Nair understand her father in a better manner. Her relationship with her father is a mixture of love and admiration. The bond between Anita Nair and her mother gave her the freedom to make her “own discoveries” (Goodnight 235). In her own words, “A daughter’s struggle with her mother is what shapes her journey through childhood and makes her a woman” (Goodnight 237). On her mother’s side her uncle who is interested in arts guided Anita Nair to concentrate in literature. Anita Nair’s husband Suresh Parambath, a Malayalee, is in the field of advertising and her son is Maitreya. These two stand as pillars in her literary world. Often Anita Nair would discuss the stories with the members of her family. Now she is living in Bangalore.

Anita Nair’s name has been recommended for the Booker Prize thrice. Her name has been selected for the awards such as Pen/Beyond Margins Award in the U.S.A., LiBeraturpreis 2007 in Germany and Orange Prize long list in the UK. And also her name has appeared in the Picador USA list. For her contribution to literature, Anita Nair was awarded FLO FICCI Women Achievers Award in 2008, Montblanc Award in 2009, Women of Substance Award by the Times Group in 2010 and the JFW Women Achievers’ Award 2011 conferred by

Anita Nair’s first novel *The Better Man* focuses on Mukundan’s emergence from his dismays and humiliations. It fictionalises the patriarchal structure of Indian families. The novel is a profound exploration of the psychological problems of Mukundan. It is based in Anita Nair’s imaginary
village Kaikurussi supposed to be in the northern part of Kerala. Her second novel *Ladies Coupe* is a story of six women who are in search of autonomy and perseverance. As a woman novelist, Anita Nair depicts the problems of Indian women and probes into their psyche. The novel also deals with the transformation of the six women in the patriarchal society. The protagonist of the novel Akhila breaks out of the traditions of Indian society which chain her. Not only Akhila but also Prabha Devi, Janaki, Sheela, Margaret and Marikolanthu emerge as independent personalities.

Her next novel *Mistress* is the “tutelage of art” (*Goodnight* 256). Having Kathakali as its backdrop, the novel examines the lives of the characters. The novel is divided into nine navarasas in Kathakali like love, joy, disgust, anger, heroism, grief, fear, serenity and curiosity. As a skilful story teller, Anita Nair intertwines the love of Christopher Stewart, Shyam and Radha. *Lessons in Forgetting* is a story of compassion and recovery from the snags of marital life and family commitments. The typical problems of Indian society such as female infanticide, the abandonment of women and the brutal behaviour of men in society structure the novel. Anita Nair delineates the problem of the abandoned middle class woman Meera and her attempt to assert her identity in the society. The characters of the novel Prof. J.A. Krishnamurthy and Meera find their lives intermingle and then begin a new life. The novel has been filmed and directed by Unni Vijayan.

*Cut Like Wound* is a crime novel. The hero of the novel Gowda, a policeman investigates the mystery behind the death of male prostitute Bhuvana. This novel explores the psyche of the murderer Ravikumar who, by his cruel
attack thwarts the lives of the innocent. *Idris: Keeper of the Light* is a story of Idris, a Somali trader and his nine-year-old son Kandavar. It records the adventurous twists in the lives of Idris and Kandavar. In an interview with Supriya Sharma, Anita Nair herself says, “I haven’t invested as much time in any book as I have with *Idris*. Because of the extensive research I put into it, it took me six years to write it” (qtd. in “Talent” 3).

Anita Nair’s *Malabar Mind* exhibits the eccentricities of everyday life. As a poet, Anita Nair is “a voice of warmth, of energy -- a voice that engages” (Subramaniam 173). *Malabar Mind*, which consists of forty one poems, primarily focuses on the political history and the environment of Malabar. Anita Nair employs the mixture of love, passion, philosophy and psychological reflections in her poems. Explicitly the “tonal, thematic, stylistic” (Subramaniam 173) aspects create an emotive impact in the readers. Her poems are saturated with astonishing perceptions of Malabar. *Where the Rain is Born* (2003) is an anthology of a leading writer’s views on society, politics and culture. Anita Nair has also edited a collection written by the famous writers Arundhati Roy, Ramachandra Guha, O.V. Vijayan, Vaikom Muhammad Basher, Kamala Das, Shashi Tharoor, etc.

In English Literature, the space for children’s fiction is limited. As a writer of children’s fiction, Anita Nair has written *Adventures of Nonu, the Skating Squirrel* and *Living Next Door to Alise* and these impress the children of all ages. Importantly, these stories deal with the psychological feelings of children. Moreover, it is highly commendable that Anita Nair is a writer of myths. *Magical Indian Myths* is a collection of fifty myths of Indian culture.
With simple language and clear style, Anita Nair fascinates the children. Another collection *The Puffin Book of World Myths and Legends* is invigorating and effusively delightful to the readers. These myths include the world of myths from Africa to Japan and Thailand to Alaska.

A short story collection *Satyr of the Subway* consists of fifteen heterogeneous stories of human relationships. These stories encompass a wide range of themes such as the condition of Indians in the alien lands, loneliness, frustration and male and female relationships. Varied experiences, thought-provoking expressions and cultural observations prove that Anita Nair is masterful in her story telling. *Goodnight and God Bless* comprises of forty two essays and they project the author as a sincere writer. The essays entwine with the personal experiences of Anita Nair and the members of her family. In these essays, the “cross wires with domesticity and familial demands show the author in a more humane light” (Kapur 31). It is a sparkling collection of literary essays with interesting dimensions of life.

English is the language that stirs the imagination of Anita Nair. As a postcolonial novelist, Anita Nair has chosen English as a medium to communicate her ideas to the readers. Her mastery over English language reverberates in her usage of words in her works. In her writings she expresses her concern for Indian English literature. She highlights the fact that Indian English writers are accepted in other countries but in India the position is pathetic. In an interview Anita Nair acknowledges the fact that Indian English writers are the “orphaned children of nowhere” (qtd. in “Maintain Status Quo” Para 6).
Anita Nair is a voracious reader and a lover of books. In *Goodnight and God Bless*, Anita Nair articulates her interest in books as follows:

As if time can be captured in my palm by the very act of holding a book whose pages emit the sweet and cloying fragrance of age. As if by inhaling this intoxicating fragrance, part memory, part organic, I can feel a tie bonding me to that book. And so for the moment I cease to be author. Teller of stories. Peddler of imagination. I am the supreme creation of the God of books. A reader and a book lover. (16)

She is quite interested in reading old books, as evident in one of her interviews where she says, “old books seek me out, they talk to me . . .” (Swapan Banerjee 41). Moreover Anita Nair is a regular visitor of book shops such as Blossoms in Bangalore and Moore Market in Chennai. Out of her fascination for books she says, “Neither fame nor money, awards or movie rights. All I wanted was a shelf full of books in a bookshop . . .” (Swapan Banerjee 41). Indeed her friend’s father Mr. Oza created an impact in Anita Nair in reading and to visit libraries. Similarly her close friend Tanya often made discussions with Anita Nair about books, art, music, recipes, pets, gossips and travels. Intimacy with Tanya opened a new horizon in Anita Nair to, “...share the joy of discovering a new writer . . .” (*Goodnight* 37).

Though Anita Nair is fond of reading books, yet she never reads the prize winner books. She has her own system in selecting the books. She says, “I avoid all well-known names and shun them almost totally if they have won a big literary prize” (*Goodnight* 86). She had read Tibor Fischer, Alan Holinghurst,
Rose Tremain and Victoria Glendinning before they became famous. During her childhood days, she read Enid Blyton, Noddy, St.Clare Series, Richmal Compton’s William, Katty books by Susan Coolidge, the Anne of Green Gables books by L.M. Montgomery, Louisa May Alcott, Katty, Anne and Jo. After reading R.K. Narayan’s *Swami and Friends*, Anita Nair says, “... I experienced a work that is purely Indian in context, milieu and sensibilities’ (“Maintain Status Quo” Para 4). Significantly Allan Sealy’s *The Everest Hotel* inspired Anita Nair and she considered it worthy enough to give as birthday gift to her friends. Her favourite authors are Jorge Amado, Barbara Kingsolver, Peter Ackroyd, Alan Holinghurst, Sue Townsend, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, M. Mukundan and Amitav Ghosh. Her favourite authors and the novels shaped Anita Nair as a novelist.

Anita Nair’s love for Kerala is echoed in her writings. While narrating the geographical condition of Kerala, Anita Nair calls Kerala as “God’s own city”. She points out that the principle “make do” (“Introduction” vii) is adhered by the Keralites in shaping their lives. The principle “make do” (Nair, “Introduction” vii) turns the trodden path of Kerala into a well-trodden path with centum level. Ayurveda and the flora and fauna make Kerala meaningful. Traditionally Kerala includes drums and Kathakali along with religious rituals and the overall secularism. Kerala shapes Anita Nair’s identity and paves way to create a new alternative world.

Anita Nair’s way of describing nature in her novels reveals the truth about her rootedness in Kerala. It is a place that stands with a stupendous mixture of people with different cultures. In her writings Anita Nair highlights the environment, the people and the life of Kerala. Even though she was born in
Shoranur, her closeness to the ancestral village Mundakottakurissi is found in her writings. Further Anita Nair describes the green of Kerala thus: “Nowhere else in the world have I seen so many hues of green. The velvety green of the moss on the wall. The deep green of the hibiscus bush. The dappled green of the jackfruit. The jade green of the paddy . . . Leaves. Parakeet’s wings . . .” (Nair, “Introduction” vii). These conceptions are revealed in her writings.

Being a lover of nature, there is a space allotted in her works to describe nature. Anita Nair’s artistic description of the dawn in The Better Man goes thus:

From behind the Pulmooth mountain, the sun peeped out surreptitiously. The trees were wreathed in cobwebs of gossamer mist; the paddy fields shivered in the chill of the dawn breeze and the cocks waited anxiously in their coops. One by one the cocks raised their heads and searched the air for the warmth of the sun’s lips. Unable to contain their impatience any longer, they puffed their chests, stretched their throats, and crowed lustily, beckoning the sun to make intimate contact with their proud red combs.

The sun took a deep breath and began its morning chores. With a long-handled sunbeam, it dusted the veils of mist off the trees. Then it set about warming the paddy tops before knocking on the doors of the various coops. (47)

In the short story “Consider the Tree” Anita Nair delineates the intimacy of nature with the character Amma. Inherently Amma says, “. . . The tree was my friend, my companion, my provider” (Satyr 89). These depictions reveal the closeness of Anita Nair with nature.
It is significant to note that Anita Nair is an admirer of art and music. Mostly she loves to hear instrumental and western classical music, jazzy and soft music. It is also evident that in *Mistress*, Anita Nair picturizes the condition of Kathakali artists in the modern world. Such an esteemed art Kathakali is challenging in its learning process. Anita Nair feels that Kathakali dancers are being treated like a performing animal by the advertising agencies. In *Mistress*, Anita Nair brings to limelight the humiliation of Kathakali artist Koman. The mixture of Kathakali with other art forms evokes anger in Koman and he says as follows: “I couldn’t comprehend the performance. It was pretentious and false. It made a mockery of what we had given most of our lives to. It trivialized it and I felt shame and anger...” (*Mistress* 416). The humiliations and anger of Koman echo the voices of other artists in the society. In the present scenario artists are used as commercial products. In the short story “The Hippoman”, Lewis, a musician is made to stand at the entrance of the shopping mall in order to entertain the consumers. Like Koman, Lewis feels ashamed in his work yet in order to earn a livelihood he continues his work.

Indeed Anita Nair is known for her intellectual dynamism in the literary field. Besides her astuteness, she is honest in bringing out the realities of the society in her writings. In *Goodnight and God Bless*, Anita Nair says that a writer has to be able to “transmigrate into the lives of the characters so that their joys, their anguish, their dreams and damnation become the writer’s. That requires an imagination as well as an understanding of the warp and weft of the character’s life and setting...” (82). Using the tools of language and
imagination, Anita Nair vividly portrays the mental sufferings of her characters. She has confessed that what she has read and seen inspires her writings:

I also get the ideas from newspaper articles. When I see sadness in somebody else’s life, it bothers me a great deal. The only way I can come to terms with this kind of sadness is by writing about it. So without being from the scope of my own experience, it could be the story of someone else which I can translate into part of my plot . . . . (Swapan Banerjee 44)

Perhaps the stories which appealed to her senses turned into her writings. Writing gives much satisfaction and pleasure to Anita Nair, and she says, “When I write fiction, it’s really something that I feel beyond my control . . . .” (Swapan Banerjee 45). In terms of spirituality, she says writing, “. . . it is like an inner calling” (qtd. in George Para 2).

In the novels of Anita Nair the characters are crafted with uniqueness and identified with the real characters. Not only the characters but also the incidents of the novel are based on real life experiences. The story of Saadiya and her community in *Mistress* mirrors the story of a small town in Tamil Nadu. To understand their way of life Anita Nair visited a Muslim community in southern Tamil Nadu and got a firsthand experience of their ways of life. During her stay at the village, she observed the practices of the community thus:

Using the woman’s alley to go from one house to the other. Swaddling myself in a dupatta in the heat and even drawing it over my head. Letting the women use me as an excuse to fulfil their desire to go to the beach and then riding in the back seat of an
auto-rickshaw which was partitioned off from the driver’s seat with thick black curtains that ran along the sides as well. With peepholes in the curtains so that we may know where we were going, we rode the hundred metres to the beach. I went wearing the night as a veil and escorted by a gaggle of women in their burkhas, young children and two burly men, . . . drawn our fill of the sea breeze, I allowed them to shut and barricade the door of the room. . . . (Goodnight 250)

In this context her writings are preoccupied with intense experiences of the society. In her concern of being a successful novelist, Anita Nair faces challenges to write about the people entirely different from her life.

Anita Nair is a “mistress of minutiae” (De Para 5). In The Better Man, she details the routines of a village in Kerala. Aditi De in Hindustan Times comments that Anita Nair in The Better Man “. . . details every plant and pedestrian footprint, every clay urn and uruli in Kaikurussi, all the banter at the village tea shop . . .” (Para 5). She sees the mountains, hills, fields, and wells of the imaginary village Kaikurussi as the pulse of Kerala. Ladies Coupe delineates the Indian middle class families, the domestic details such as Sunday lunches and vadakams in the month of summer, the death of the chief minister M.G. Ramachandran and the smell and sounds of Chennai railway station. The description of Kathakali and its facial gestures in Mistress gives a clear picture of the soil of Kerala. And also the description of the life style of the Muslim community and their practices and the life of artists depicts the authenticity of Anita Nair. Insights into the experiences of women in Lessons in Forgetting give
a clear outlook of Indian women. The female infanticide and the roles of a doctor in the novel depict the real picture of Indian society. As a responsible novelist, Anita Nair examines, enquires and sometimes learns new concepts to present to her readers.

Being a creative and dynamic researcher, she is unique in presenting the facts and discoveries in her novels. Before writing *The Better Man*, Anita Nair read a lot about herbs. Significantly, in the novel she highlights the medicinal values of the asoka tree. Anita Nair read B.Sc. Chemistry text books to build the character of Margaret Shanthi. The author’s intellect lies in her analysis of the characters with chemical names such as bromine, lithium, cobalt, nitrous oxide, arsenic and tetrasulphur tetramide.

The plot of the novel *Mistress* is the realistic portrayal of the Kathakali world. To write the novel Anita Nair underwent a short term course at Kerala Kalamandalam. In one of her interviews Anita Nair said, “. . . It was quite a challenge to structure my novel in a similar way. It takes a lot of craft and it’s very satisfying to be able to fulfil this challenge” (Bagchi Para 5). Anita Nair is extraordinary in interweaving the navarasas within the plot of the novel. *Lessons in Forgetting* is about cyclones and catastrophes. To explore the character Prof. J.A. Krishnamurthy, Anita Nair pursued studies in cyclone.

Anita Nair’s writings triumph over the faith related conceptions. Moreover the ideas of different religions pervade the novels of Anita Nair. Ideologically Anita Nair says, “. . . Human fragility is easier to endure than human priggishness” (Nair, “Malabar Mind” 39). Being secular in her ideas, Anita Nair quotes the characters and phrases from the *Bible*, the *Koran* and the
In her writings. As a matter of fact, she is well versed in various religious concepts and themes. Especially *Mistress* is a hybrid of three religions.

Writing about food in her works gives Anita Nair the greatest enjoyment. In fact Anita Nair feels that food writing gives her the “greatest enjoyment is fiction that without any effort and quite seamlessly introduces food into the narrative” (*Goodnight* 149). The mention of traditional food items like steamed pudding made of rice flour, jaggery and coconut milk, the kinnath appam, egg curry and the flavours of fish, chicken and mutton curry, fluffy iddlies, kara bath and kesari bath, the vegetable pulao and chapatti-kurma adds zest to the readers in hearing the traditional food names in the midst of junk foods. Food has been used as a metaphor in describing the characters’ state of mind. Anita Nair says, “Writings from across the world show this propensity for braiding in food as a literary device” (*Goodnight* 151). Descriptions of food items occupy the pages of many of her novels. In *The Better Man*, she describes clearly about the preparation of chicken curry which was taught to her by her old family retainer Krishnan Nair. The demonstration of different dishes of egg in *Ladies Coupe* proves the author’s interest in her culinary skill. Regarding her introduction of food items in her novels, she writes, “Food when written skilfully can add zest and flavour to even a dull book” (*Goodnight* 148)

Being a novelist, Anita Nair is also interested in writing poems. In 1992 she wrote a poem “Happenings in the London Underground” which was included in the Poetry Society of India Anthology. The contemporary Indian poets Kalidasa, Kabir, Tulsidas, Tiruvalluvar and Subramaniya Bharathiyan influenced Anita Nair through their writings. After reading Sarojini Naidu’s poems, Anita
Nair started writing poems even at the age of eight. In writing poetry Anita Nair is extempore, as she feels that poetry is an expression of the inner consciousness of the individuals. Her favourite poets are Kamala Das, Jeet Thayil, Vijay Nambisan, Rajeevan Thachampoyil, Langston Hughes Robert Creeley, Pablo Neruda and Stevie Smith. Arundhati Subramaniam appreciates the poetic of Anita Nair thus: “It is a voice that seethes, that crackles, that would like to speak many things, serially and simultaneously, that would like to speak in different registers and voices” (173). In order to arouse the emotion of the readers, Anita Nair uses a series of nouns in her poems. For example in “A Baga Imprint”, “No memories./ No dreams./ No fears./ No desires./ No pain.” (qtd. in Subramaniam 174) which is not necessary. She also profoundly details about the philosophies in her poems.

Anita Nair is a disciplined writer and multitasker. She has translated Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai’s Chemmeen from Malayalam to English. She found the translating work rather difficult, and she was able to translate only three pages a day. In an interview Anita Nair said, “Thakazhi’s novel uses a dialect that is unique to the coastal region. One has to understand the soul of a writer for a good translation and get a feel of the warp and weft of emotions that Thakazhi weaves in the novel” (qtd. in Nagarajan Para 11).

Anita Nair has turned into a scriptwriter by writing the screenplay and dialogues for Lessons in Forgetting based on her own novel with the same title. Being a novelist and screenplay writer for movies, Anita Nair points out the differences:
Each has its own language, just as literature and cinema. Both require a lot of thinking, research and creativity. For a novel, there is no time-bound period. Creativity flows. Whilst writing a script, there is some amount of binding by meter and chord as it is confined within the limitations of a full-length feature film and its duration period. Each is challenging in its own way. (qtd. in Gupta Para 6)

The play *A Twist of Lime* is an adaptation of three short stories “Sushil and the Maybe Virgin”, “Half a Sin” and “Tresspass” and the play was directed by Vivek Madan. The short story “Mercury Woman” was adapted as “Sushil and the Maybe Virgin”. The *Nine Faces of Being*, a play is an adaptation of the novel *Mistress*. Arundhati Raja directed the play.

As one of India’s remarkable female writers, Anita Nair mainly focuses on the problems of women in her novels. Mainly her novels speak of the pains and struggles of women in Indian society. Of course when the novel *Ladies Coupe* was published, every one asked her the question “Are you a feminist author?”, She replied “It is a book of stories about women and how a woman makes her own place in the society. It is a book about the human condition” (Nair, “Malabar Mind” 45). Until 1998 there was a special counter for ladies, senior citizens and handicapped persons in the Bangalore Cantonment railway station. Being a woman, Anita Nair felt disturbed and wrote to the authorities concerned and later the separate ladies queue was abolished in all the railway stations. On the day, when Womens Reservation Bill was passed, ensuring 33 percent on March 9, 2010, Anita Nair felt jubilant and said, “. . . the voice of
women acquired a whole new stridency. By the women. For the women. Of the women” (Nair, “The She Factor” Para 5).

In one of her interviews, Anita Nair says, “To me, feminism in the Indian context is about recognizing the importance of the female self and to be able to nurture it” (qtd. in Kanta Para 6). Mainly Anita Nair feels women of all ages have “to battle for identity” (Nair, “Malabar Mind” 40). Perhaps there is always a conflict between her self-actualization and family responsibilities:

... it isn’t easy to be a contemporary Indian woman. On the one hand she is aware of her rights and the need for an identity. On the other hand tradition dictates that she submerges in it in her role as mother and wife. How does she cope? What does she do? Like she had always been taught, a good Indian woman could resort at the scriptures for help. But what does she find there? Is she to be Sita, modest and chaste for the world to see, or a Radha, willing to please her lover Krishna in bed, or be like Kunti, a diplomat when it comes to handling difficult relatives, or show Draupadi’s flair for managing, not even in the scriptures can you find a parallel for the superwoman the contemporary Indian woman is expected to be... (Nair, “Malabar Mind” 40)

However Indian women are super women in managing their routines. Anita Nair as a woman writer displays an interest and commitment to balance a literary life with family life.

As a writer of travelogues, Anita Nair takes her readers into the remote locales and forgotten villages. In her travelogues, Anita Nair shares her heart
thumping adventures and discovery of new things at various places. Her travelogues may be said to be records of her experiences in touring places. She expresses her desire to follow the footsteps of a Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta in travelling to various places. In *Goodnight and God Bless*, Anita Nair depicts her excitements of travel thus:

In my twenties, travel acquired a whole new dimension. In those days, I didn’t see myself as a writer gathering experiences; every little episode to be marked and filed as grist to the mill for some future day. Instead travel became a way to still the restlessness that is part of my mental make-up. I ceased to be daughter, sister, and wife . . . I became this anonymous person soaking in every new sensation, thought and word. I felt my senses bloom and my mind open . . . . (200)

With charming enthralment of words and the description of the places, Anita Nair gives a detailed outlook of places to her readers. “The Elephants Are Coming” depicts a complete scenario of Wayanad. There Anita Nair exhibits the life style of Wayanad, the heroic deeds of forest security Ravunni Chetty and the escape of Anita Nair’s friend Dr. J. from elephants. The nostalgic remembrance of Anita Nair of an eco friendly place gives an aesthetic touch to her readers. “There and Not There” is a guide book to travellers who intend to visit Maldives. It presents a description of the environment of Maldives, its history, famous landmarks, the islanders, their economic condition, their occupation, variety of fishes and the travellers who visit the island. “The Last of the Boatyards” takes the reader through a range of areas of Beypore, eight kilometres from Calicut.
The place is famous for halwa, sardines, plump dates and the famous dish Moplah Biriyani. An interesting fact is that Beypore had direct connection with Mesopotamia and there is a huge ship building yard where boats are built out of wood.

In “Nothing Irregular”, Anita Nair is unique in presenting her impressions of her visit to Taiwan. Her visit to the tea house Ing Che Shi is an unforgettable moment. And also the important milestones of Taiwan are Sun Moon Lake, Taipei shopping mall, Western Gate area, the restaurant Iyachu, Wulai hot springs and the Wulai scenic area at Taipei. Significantly in Taiwan tea is used in different preparations. For instance, tea twigs are used for roasting chicken, and making tea cakes. Shrimps are deep fried using tea infusion, and soups are made out of tea.

“Tasting the Boot” takes the readers to Italy for feasting. Anita Nair’s description of her trip to Italy during Easter time is filled with glorious memories. She quotes the words of P.B. Shelley that Rome “is yet the capital of the world. It is a city of palaces and temples, more glorious . . . than they . . .” (qtd. in Nair, “Tasting the Boot” Para 1). The history behind the food items is really captivating for Anita Nair. Rome is also known for its religious aspects, and Anita Nair has presented different dimensions of Rome.

Another travelogue “Where Nothing is Everything” delineates Anita Nair’s family trip to Assisi. Indeed the story of Saint Francesco is quite interesting to read in the travelogue. Perhaps Saint Francesco’s Companion Brother Leo inspired Anita Nair through his deeds. Another interesting fact Anita Nair shares with her readers is olive oil which is grown in Assisi with its
“fruity taste, and an aromatic scent” (Nair, “Where Nothing is Everything” Para 16). The scenes that inspired her much in Assisi are, “. . . sheep that dotted the
mountains or at a curl of smoke that spewed from the chimney of a well worn
stone farm house . . . .” (Nair, “Where Nothing is Everything” Para 20). In
“Pausing for Cartagena”, Anita Nair presents an account of her experiences at
Cartagena. Significantly, she finds her stay at Cartagena mysterious. The
multifaceted history, the sea and mountains provide a pleasurable experience to
tourists in Cartagena.

“How Now” is a trip to the World Heritage Site and Tourist attraction,
Kumbh Khajuraho. The place is known for temples with fine architecture and
carvings which were built during Chandela dynasty in Khajuraho. In “A Village
Pooram” Anita Nair speaks of the pooram festival which is celebrated in Kerala.
Of course the pooram festival is a celebration with harvested paddy offerings
made to God. Anita Nair says this festival speaks of fraternity in Kerala.
However the participation in pooram festival speaks of an individual’s affinity
with his/her birth place.

In “How Don Quixote Rescued the Miserable Damsel By the Pillar” is
about Anita Nair’s business trip to Madrid. “Near-the-Nila” gives an account of
her hometown Shoranur on the banks of river Nila. Anita Nair feels happy to be
at her hometown because it fills her with reminiscences of her childhood days.
The fine description of Kalari gives a true picture of Kerala. In all her
travelogues, Anita Nair presents the facts of the place and her own experiences.

Notably Anita Nair as a writer of book reviews explores the salient
features of the book and the author. She lists out not only the merits of the book
but also its demerits. As an intense investigator, she delves deep into the pages of the book and critically examines the plot, characters, settings and style of the book. In her reviews she scrutinizes varied issues like those concerning the psychology of women, everyday life of Sri Lanka, about extraordinary minor characters, trespassers, Indian history, lunch at Indian restaurants, married women, western reader’s imagination, the anthropological study of customs and manners, social commentaries, the author’s aversion to proper nouns, wearing sarees, and about the book’s dust jacket.

Moreover, her book reviews are descriptions of the author’s mind, critical survey of the plot, evaluation of the quality of novel, and meaning and significance of a book. They present unfathomable critical reviews of the books published in India as well as abroad on different subjects. Similarly she bridges the gap between the incorporeal and corporeal apprehensions of book reviews. Perhaps Anita Nair covers the life and times of human beings in her reviews. She focuses her attention on the book’s purpose, parts and supremacy in order to be a responsible reviewer of books.

As a writer of different genres, Anita Nair has written non-fiction, where the stories give minute details about man and woman relationship, the serious issues, habits of people and the problems of women with comic tone in her descriptions. The non-fictional piece “Sex and the Art of Second Hand Car Buying” provides an insight into the behaviours of men and a humorous note on the second hand car buying. “The Thin Woman Will Inherit the Earth but She Won’t Get the Man” highlights the merits of being a fat woman and demerits of being a thin woman. With satiric tone, Anita Nair argues that men prefer fat
women for family life. In “The Story of Oh, Not Tonight Darling I’m Much too Full . . .” Anita Nair depicts how men deceive women for sex by ordering the exotic dishes. Ironically women fall fast asleep after taking heavy lunch. Perhaps Anita Nair depicts the funny note on taking heavy food. “By Great Grandma’s Four Poster Bed, I Sat Down and Wept” is the story of the bed which is inherited by her mother from her great grandmother and also the sex relationship of men and women.

In “Alphabet Soup for the Libido” Anita Nair explains the expansion of the alphabets ACDEGPTY. Here Anita Nair details a variety of food items. Fruit ahuacati, champagne, dill, egg, garlic, peppers, tomato and yarrow are the food items which stimulate the love and sex in the human beings. The normal food items are presented in different perception, yet these food stuffs intensify the strength in the individuals. “Foot in the Mouth” is advice given to men to massage the foot of women in order to make her feel as a human being. The underlying message is to respect women. “On Making Some Music” depicts the women’s passion for hearing music. She feels that music transforms and stimulates love in women. Similarly Indians are patriotic in respecting and saluting the leaders of their nation. “We Are Like That Only” evokes the feeling of patriotism in Indians. The humours of Anita Nair may appear humorous in tone, but they bring out the facts of the society. Anita Nair is good in scrutinizing the facts and cross checking the facts again and again to present to the readers. Significantly she records the behaviours of men and women in different circumstances of life. Her non-fictional writings are hilarious in tone in making the readers turn jubilant.
Anita Nair, out of her own interest, interviewed famous personalities like the South Asian director Mani Ratnam, a historian, Ramachandra Guha, a dramatist, Mahesh Dattani, and a flutist, Murali Nagapuzha. After interviewing eminent personalities, Anita Nair wrote profiles on them. In “A Man in Full”, Anita Nair depicts the director Mani Ratnam. In it she discusses the director’s milestones like the films *Nayakan, Dhalapathi, Roja, Bombay* and *Iruvar*. Particularly Anita Nair points out the fact in her profile that the Hindu mythologies are restructured in Mani Ratnam’s movies. As a writer of the profile of Mani Ratnam, Anita Nair highlights the point that terrorism and romance are intertwined in Mani Ratnam’s movies. “History’s Footman” highlights the salient features of Ramachandra Guha with his different facets as biographer, cricket-writer, essayist, historian, activist and an environmentalist. Of course Nair admits certainty in the profile that Ramachandra Guha is an intellectual academician and a lover of Marxist principles. It is clearly pointed out that Ramachandra Guha’s essays are written against the backdrop of ideology while carrying reality in the descriptions.

“The Invisible Observer” gives a complete picture of Mahesh Dattani, a disciplined and hard working dramatist. Anita Nair places Mahesh Dattani in the literary world, as an observer of the society. The most interesting feature of Mahesh Dattani’s plays is that they have no pat endings. Much of Mahesh Dattani’s plays reflect the conceptions of the society. The artistic legendary T.R. Mahalingam, a flutist, is magnanimous in returning his Padma Bhushan award because he dislikes awards and fame. Anita Nair’s “God at One’s Fingertips” brings to light the forgotten legendary T.R. Mahalingam in the profile. Such an
eminent personality feels that in the present scenario the lack of creativity and the rigid rules of concert affect the popularity of music. The profile “Life on the Corner” vividly portrays the aesthetic idea of Murali Nagapuzha. Without understanding Kerala, it is difficult to understand the paintings of Murali Nagapuzha. Anita Nair is astonishing in her presentation of the profiles on various talented personalities. Her attempt to bring the colourful memories of erudite personalities with comprehensive analysis and insightful comments are remarkable.

Anita Nair is a reporter of ordinary events in her writings. She writes articles on various topics for the newspaper DNA in the English language. Her writings add zest by the power of evoking memories like, the oath taken on New Year’s Day, the happiness of hearing the sound of music from a record player, mysteries happening during travels such as a business transaction, confession or even a proposal of marriage. Anita Nair also writes on Ayodhya’s verdict, her beginning of learning on the auspicious Vijayadashmi day, the skilful planning of vacations, the happiness of enjoying little things of life, the books which mesmerise the readers, the practices found in Kerala in 1950s, etc. The most interesting facts about Anita Nair which are revealed in her articles are keeping the letters as bookmarks, her interest in preparing various dishes, her passion for books, about her favourite bird chemboth, her respect for an eminent personality M.T. Vasudevan Nair, her ideas on death and her interest in literature and writings. However her writings are on different nuances and expressions and hues and differences of life.
The writings of Anita Nair in different genres imitate the realities and incidents of the daily happenings of the society. Her books are famous across the world. With wide and awesome ideas in her works, Anita Nair presents a thematic innovation and experimentation in her novels. Being one of the leading writers, Anita Nair is proactive and creative in progressing and developing the ideas in her writings.

As a master of multi-tasking, Anita Nair manipulates her working style through compartmentalism. She says,

\[ \ldots \] I am referring largely to the mechanics of everyday life. On the one hand there is the business of familial ties and on the other that of a writer \ldots the only way I can cope is by segregating; I need to eke out time and mark space in clearly defined categories for me to fulfil my various duties and chores. But the creative process, even if I were to want it to be so, is a factor I have no real control over. It intrudes into my thoughts whether I am watching a film, reading a book or cooking or even helping my son with a school project. In that sense it is like the Betaal in Vikramaditya’s story. A fixture that refuses to let go. \ldots I relish this secret life I lead in my head. I think it enriches my life in ways that I cannot explain but know it for certain. (qtd. in Chandaraju Para 4)

The researcher has understood that the writer Anita Nair has always becoming busy in attending literary meetings and publishing newer contributions to English Literature. Quite recently she has inaugurated The Indian Ruminations Literary festival in Kerala. Her name has been shortlisted by The Hindu for the
Literary Award. In view of these vibrant literary activities of the writer, the researcher decides immediately to convey to the author about this dissertation. Despite several attempts to contact the writer either through phone or any other media, the researcher has not received any replies. The research supervisor has been selected to undergo a training workshop through www.anitasattic.com. The researcher is hopeful of getting a chance for a personal chat with the writer in the near future.

In short, this living writer is a multi faceted one whose personal interests and experiences add spice to her writings. She is primarily a postcolonial writer, and hence it is pertinent to highlight certain features of postcolonialism found in her works with special reference to self-actualization. Anita Nair is significant in the Indian literary scenario with a universal appeal.