



## Research article

# Portrayal of Patriarchal Subjugation of Women in the Selected Works of Anita Nair

Divyani Sharma<sup>1\*</sup> & Swati Chauhan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of English, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India

## Abstract

This study will investigate how patriarchy works as a vehicle for women's subjugation. Many female authors were born within a predominately patriarchal environment, where women have historically been subservient to socially imposed norms. Anita Nair has emerged as one of India's most committed modern authors. She freely expresses her views about women in autocratic Indian culture. She also offers insight into how society views women and what it expects of them. The paper will portray women's sufferings and the status of women in society. It will also shed light on the importance of education. The idea of 'half' by Simone De Beauvoir in her work *The Second Sex* will illuminate the concept of self. The paper will highlight the shifting scenarios of women and how new women transcend the confines of patriarchal setup and create new identities through Anita Nair's novels- *Ladies Coupe*, *Mistress*, and *The Better Man*.

**Keywords:** Freedom, Individualism, Modernism, Patriarchy, Tradition, Womanhood.

**GOALS** [Gender Equality](#)

## 1. Introduction

The study will illustrate the plight of women and their role in society. Through the works of Anita Nair, we can see the issue from a new lens - one that is both introspective and thought-provoking. Her unique perspective allows us to delve deep into the heart of this issue and consider its impact on women and society as a whole. It will look at the experiences of women who struggled in a culture that restricted their freedom of movement. The female protagonists of the narratives shatter patriarchal norms and forge unique identities. They yearn to be self-sufficient and to live their own lives. Nair criticizes traditional schooling for promoting patriarchal ideas in both genders in *Ladies Coupe*. Anita Nair imparts life lessons and portrays household lifestyles while analyzing the many stages of women's existence. *Mistress* by Anita Nair portrays the evolving social relationships between husband and wife. She exposes the impacts of oppression on women and

**Article History:** Received: 12 November 2023. Revised: 26 December 2023. Accepted: 27 December 2023. Published: 29 December 2023

**Copyright:** © 2023 by the author/s. License Aesthetix Media Services, India. Distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Citation:** Sharma, D. & Chauhan, S. (2023). Portrayal of Patriarchal Subjugation of Women in the Selected Works of Anita Nair. *Rupkatha Journal* 15:5. <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v15n5.08>

emphasizes individuality as the fundamental concern of *The Better Man*. Anita Nair also states that education is only beneficial if it focuses on altering people's ideas, empowering them, and working on the emancipation of women. She understands how society has to work on restoring the male-female relationship and providing equitable treatment to both genders.

Society influences the way we exist, perform, and play, as well as how we see ourselves and other individuals. As a part of society, it is highly wrong to differentiate people based on their sex. In a male-dominated household, patriarchy refers to the father's authority over the members. Sylvia Walby describes it as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (Walby, 1990). We have witnessed circumstances in which women are not just viewed as submissive to men but also face racial prejudice, shame, abuse, sexism, surveillance, and assault. A woman's quest for identity has made her oppose society's typical system. Women did not have ideas or opinions of their own since they were reliant on men, the system encourages and feeds the fundamental human values of dominance and control in nearly every aspect of life. Those who grow up in a repressive society tend to endorse, associate with, and engage with it as a typical and ordinary life. The methods used to control and subjugate women varied from one civilization to the next, owing to variances in sociocultural practices, class, caste, religion, area, and ethnicity. The culture of male dominance emphasizes the idea of mothering, which limits women's independence and lays the responsibility of parenting children on them.

Aristocratic ideologies distort the boundaries of gender and sex and think that all monetary and juridical distinctions involving men and women have a genetic basis. Like socioeconomic strata, ethnicity, caste, or religion, gender must be analysed as a fundamental social difference to understand societal disparities, discrimination, and asymmetrical relationships between men and women. Feminist scholars, philosophers, and novelists have examined women's oppression, arguing that sexual politics and sexism notions have intended similarities with class politics and racist beliefs. Male domination, female subjugation, and male-centeredness are all aspects of discrimination towards women.

**Male Domination:** Men make all the decisions in patriarchy. Women are not permitted to make private choices that affect their families or personal lives. Men are seen as superior because they have authority, whereas women are inferior. In the patriarchal system, men and women are treated differently. Women are perceived as weak, while men are perceived as powerful and logical. Men have a traditional and biased attitude towards women due to these preconceptions.

**Female subjugation:** Women are oppressed and discriminated against in society as a result of male supremacy and their obsession with control. Lack of education, independence, career possibilities, forced marriages, and bearing male offspring are all evidence of prejudice against women. Even if they do acquire jobs, they are inferior to men and are frequently exploited at work. They are not treated with the same dignity as a male in their position.

**Male-centeredness:** The focus of activity and progress in a patriarchal culture is on men and their value to societal advancement. In every patriarchal society, men remain the focus of interest, the inventors of all advances, and the ones who shine.

**Limited roles:** Females and males have different social roles in society. Because a woman's major purpose is to be an excellent mother and wife and to undertake chores at home, she frequently

drops out of school following her basic studies. As a result, the autocratic society persuades women that education is pointless. After marriage, many women adopt their husbands' surnames, and half of them quit their employment since they are no longer allowed to work and must care for their new family. Their sad reality is that after marriage, even the parents do not bother to support their side or encourage them to continue their profession because she is married and no longer lives under their roof, a sentence that depicts a classic patriarchal culture. Likewise, many females receive a good education to obtain a respectable spouse rather than a good job.

Due to these stereotypes, men have a conventional and biased attitude toward women which startlingly reflects the realities of society. Earlier, women were treated with the same respect as men. The roles of men and women were equal in matriarchal societies. In the fields of martial arts, ayurveda, and statistical philosophy, women were pioneers. Women had a high role in a matriarchal society, and in agricultural science, conventional farming methods were replaced by the use of ploughs and animals. Unfortunately, after this period, the role of man in birthing also became apparent. This led to the abandonment of the idea of the feminine mahatma and the replacement of motherhood with a hierarchical culture. The matriarchal non-Aryan civilization that predominated Indian society was vanquished by the Aryans. It gave rise to caste, which paved the way for the Indian system's introduction of discrimination. There are two different schools of thinking on women in India. One stream advocate for gender equality, while the other merely regards women as subordinate.

Based on scripture, Indian life was governed by discrimination, inequality, and a lack of knowledge. Epics founded on scripture served as the foundation of civilization. Women were the most vulnerable to this caste system. Epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata were indications of how the position of women underwent a shift at that time. The position of women started to deteriorate in the post-Vedic era. In "*Manuvachan*," it is made clear that women do not belong in countries where they are in leadership positions due to their social standing. (Patil, 2021) Women's financial and political engagement in such a secure existence started to decrease. Scriptures were written at this time to add religion to women's subordinate and secondary status. Women were subject to a lot of limitations during this time to maintain the subjugation of women. With the aid of several terrible customs, including early marriage, the inhumane treatment of widows, and polygamy, the Arya Samaj attempted to overthrow the matriarchal order. Men and women were subject to a different set of norms about conduct. For her, marriage became necessary. In the Brahmin social structure, the rigour of the hierarchy of castes, the absence of females, education, and shared families contributed to the dismal situation of women. This era of women's lives is believed to be a bleak period because of the transition of the system of castes into an economic hierarchy in the medieval period. To prevent girls from getting married outside of their caste, child marriage was created. Women were subjected to intellectual servitude and denied the right to an education. Widow remarriage was prohibited to prevent interracial marriages among widows. Hindu women were forced to remain within four walls, while Muslim women faced a similar fate. They were denied any rights and were forced to spend their life behind a burka. They had a very low quality of life as a result.

Mr. Bhide Patil claims that the missionaries' activity in Maharashtra and India contributed to the development of a new generation of social reformers. (Patil, 2021) In the nineteenth century, both Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Phule contributed significantly to the discussion of women.

Despite minimal attempts, it seems like change has begun. Pre-independence and post-independence are the two distinct eras of women's growth in the modern era. The British introduced a new concept of capitalism and colonialism to the Indians at the start of the nineteenth century. The British attempted to demonstrate their moral superiority at this time by supposing that a group of Indian women was under oppression. Women were adored as mothers and goddesses in Indian civilisation but considered second-class citizens. Women had a secondary role within society and at home throughout the nineteenth century. Later, the activism was given little scope recognizing that the seclusion of women was the primary cause of Indian backwardness, the first school for girls was established in Pune in 1848. It aided in the transformation of women's lives. Women took part in the liberation movement. In addition, women's engagement in the economic, political, social, and educational spheres began to rise. However, in a male-dominated system, the position of women remained unchanged.

The Indian government established equal rights for women and men in society after the country attained independence. The Hindu Code Bill was submitted to Parliament to establish gender equality, but it was rejected by the male-dominated politicians of the period. Later, a large number of organizations advocating women's emancipation were created. These organizations work to develop women holistically by raising awareness and a sense of self-worth. In the domains of sociology, politics, literature, and education, women have successfully demonstrated their abilities.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries were crucial for Indian society. This period has seen several drastic developments in the daily lives of Indian women. Women's attitudes in society are evolving. Women's social and cultural environments are evolving. Women have demonstrated their existence in every situation that has arisen. The position of Indian women began to improve throughout the British era. Women tried to advance their position by improving their skills. However, a patriarchal culture often fails to recognize the talent and contributions of women on the same level as men.

Education facilitated the removal of patriarchy from society. It helped in raising public awareness. Women underwent personal change and development via education, becoming more conscious of their rights. It assisted women in empowering themselves and overcoming the obstacles the institutions had placed before them. The socioeconomic circumstances of women were changed with the aid of education as well. Women's participation in the market has two positive effects. One of the reasons they engaged more and were less reliant on men for their own needs was that they were talented. Second, women with greater levels of education received preferential treatment and better salaries. Women needed to be liberated from the orthodox culture, and education provided them with the chance to succeed. Education not only aids an individual's involvement and decision-making in life, but it also helps in the growth of the nation and around the world. We witnessed many educated women in the past who contributed to India's and the world's liberation movements. For instance, Sarojini Naidu paved the way for women's involvement in the Indian movement. She rekindled the villagers' sense of freedom via her poems. Yet another woman with a gift for words was Madam Bikaji Cama. She travelled to Europe to advocate for India's independence.

India has seen the emergence of the "New Woman." The Victorian era marked the start of everything. The Victorian era brought about several improvements that benefited women. The

Irish author Sarah Grand (1854–1942) used the term "New Woman" in 1894 to refer to the independent women seeking radical change. After the 20th century, conditions changed as there were more female writers, a few of whom even gained respect and acclaim for their contributions globally. The shift from a conventional self-effacing lady to an educated woman emerged in Indian English literature of the 1960s following the arrival of a new generation of authors. Several female writers are addressing the humiliating state of women in contemporary society to combat gender injustice. Writers who are concerned about the current state of women's affairs utilize their literary platform to awaken people's consciences and break the taboo of their deplorable treatment of women. These female authors rebelled against the idealized portrayal of women. Writers such as Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, and Namrata Verghese not only rebelled against literary conventions but also challenged the accepted view of the Indian woman. They revealed who contemporary, educated middle-class women were and what they envisioned themselves to be.

## **2. Subjugation of women in the works of Anita Nair**

Literature has always served as a reflection of society, reflecting its people's culture, traditions, and lifestyles. Many works of literature illustrate the paradox of an Indian woman's existence. Indian women's authors' early works portray women in a conventional light. The portrayal, however, got more authentic as time went on, emphasizing her sense of despair and estrangement. They portrayed characters caught between the two worlds.

Anita Nair is a modern Indian writer of the twenty-first century. Her writings mostly depict the pitiful fate of women who writhe in the hands of patriarchy. Our culture's dominant values limit women's rights and marginalize their existence as human beings. Anita Nair, in her interview with *Indian Express*, states patriarchy works in equally visible and deceptive ways, Nair goes on to say it is what she had wanted to concentrate on in each of her literary novels. (Pepper, 2013)

Anita Nair's primary concerns consist of gender inequality and women's cultural upbringing, as well as the abuse of women, both within and outside of the marital framework. She exemplifies women's servitude within conventional Indian culture. She insists on equal opportunities for both men and women. She believes that it is only right that women in India be given the same opportunities as men. Education, financial independence, and employment opportunities, among others, have enhanced the condition of Indian women.

The process of self-discovery is portrayed in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*. This work serves as an identity for women in modern India. The book's characters talk about how women were taken advantage of in a society that was ruled by men. *Ladies Coupe* features the narrative of six distinct ladies, highlighting various stages in the life of a woman. The protagonist of the novel is *Akhila*, also known as *Akhilendeswari*. Nair uses the persona of Akhila to illustrate the predicament of Indian women, who are typically expected to devote their time to performing the roles of daughter, mother, sister, and family earner to meet their needs. Akhila in her journey, met five women: *Janaki*, *Margaret Shanti*, *Prabha Devi*, *Sheela*, and *Marikolanthu*. Through their personal stories, they all depicted various stages of life.

The French word "coupe" indicates a confined region. It is ideal for Akhila, who is likewise bound to her family, hampering her independence in every way possible. The majority of Anita Nair's books explore the lives of women who endure trauma and oppression in their families. The other five ladies are constrained by their social and familial bonds. The coupe's restricted environment represents an Indian woman's life. The Ladies *Coupe* depicts how society expects and values conventional and pious ladies. As a result of needing a spouse to provide for the family, Akhila's somewhat avaricious family forbade her from getting married. Her mother anticipated that she would be a subservient daughter. She was a girl who paid attention to everything around her. Akhila, like every other girl her age, had ambitions. But whenever there was disagreement in the house, she would be the one to make sacrifices. Because of her traditional family, she was expected to have a member of her family with her anytime she went out. The irony here is that even when Akhila was the family earner, she had to seek approval from the rest of her family. Akhila chooses to embark on this journey as she reaches her limit and believes she hardly has control over her life. She is about to embark on an experience that will turn her into a new woman to evade her family's obligations and commitments. Ultimately, she was a resolute lady who, by the evening, resolved to get on the train and flee: "She felt her lips stretching into a smile.... will board a train and allow it to lead me into a horizon I will not recognize" (Nair, 2005)

The work explores awakenings, traversing the liminal zones of self-discovery, and transformational change. It also discusses restrictions. This train was more than just a mode of transportation for her; it was a new universe where she would be liberated to conceive fresh opportunities in her future. Akhila, who had always done "what is expected of her," fantasized "about the rest" and collected "epithets of hope like children collect ticket stubs" (2) before her important excursion.

The mother of Akhila is a devoted, traditional woman who believes a wife is never truly equal to her husband. She is the kind of woman who is convinced that "he knows best." She never makes decisions for herself and instead always defers decision-making to her partner. The mother of Akhila desires that her daughter adopt her perspective and values. She said that a good woman knew how to prioritize the requirements of her husband before her own. A good woman did what she was told and paid attention to her husband. According to her, there is nothing like equal marriage. Thus, for a considerable amount of time, despite all the advancements, the patriarchal family unit maintained typical norms. The idea of the perfect "housewife" evolved into the dominant paradigm.

Before embarking on the journey of self-discovery in *Kanyakumari*, Akhila began to question whether a woman needs a man to complete herself and be an acceptable citizen in this society. The personal experiences shared by the five women on her train provided answers to all of these concerns. For example, *Janaki* was the coupe's eldest member. She was barely aware of her obligations as a woman when she entered into an arranged marriage at the age of eighteen. She did precisely what she saw around her; she was the epitome of a typical woman. In society, she was submissive to men. She adds how her father and brothers came first, subsequently by her husband, and later by her son. She automatically moved in the same cycle that started with her father. Her husband was equivalent to God, according to the ideals she followed, and she was entirely committed to him. She quickly learns that she never lived her life solely for herself.

Another example is *Margaret Shanti*, who entered a love marriage with *Ebenezer Paulraj*, the man she adored. Margaret works at the same school where Paulraj is the principal. She has also won a gold medal. She intends to undertake a PhD after finishing her M.Sc.; however, her husband, Ebenezer Paulraj, advised her to first earn a B.Ed. It is challenging to live in a conventional culture when everything, even career choices, is determined by the men in your life. There is no sense of individuality. "How a good wife never says 'No,' even when she is not in the mood," her mother said a day before her marriage. (102) Margaret, a successful chemistry teacher, is the prisoner of an unpleasant marriage with an insensitive autocrat and a selfish husband who neglects her. "What else could I do?" she asks. Hadn't I done everything he asked? She was clueless about his expectations of her. "And suddenly, I felt much too weary to care." (LC 109) This depiction personifies the effects of patriarchy. (Nair, 2005)

She tries everything to woo him, but nothing works. She is mentally and emotionally drained. Simone de Beauvoir was a French essayist and philosopher who lived from 1908 to 1986. *The Second Sex* (1949) is a well-known analysis of women's situations. She discovered that men saw themselves as subjects and women as objects. Simone de Beauvoir answers through *The Second Sex* that he wants her 'all' to himself and does not want to live as one of the two and become alone. Therefore, she is betrayed from the day he marries her. (LC 465) (Nair, 2005) The most common fate provided to women by society is marriage. In India, in marriages that are arranged, the wife is obliged to serve the desires of the man her whole life. Later on, he compelled Margaret to have her first child aborted when she became pregnant. She finally gives up after several arguments, but she remains solitary. She had no regard or adoration for her partner, and it all evolved into hatred. She felt comfortable hurting her ex-husband's pride in his athletic appearance because he was essentially obsessive and unaware of her needs. She wanted revenge for the discomfort she felt in life because of her husband. In exchange for making him appear overweight, she prepared oily food for him. She commented while mocking society: "You'll discover that once you stop worrying about what the world thinks of you, your life will become that much more" (136).

Anita Nair portrays gender discrimination in Indian culture in *Ladies Coupe* via the portrayal of Prabha Devi, where a girl child is still regarded as inferior to a boy child. Prabha Devi is a beautiful young lady who was neglected by her biological father shortly after she was born. When her mother informed her father that she had given birth to a girl, he said, "A daughter is a bloody nuisance." He could not accept the fact that he had a girl because he had always desired a son. It is heartbreaking to witness how patriarchy operates throughout generations. The irony is that she is both the goddess one worships and the gender one despises when she is born into the household. In due course, she married Jagdeesh, a diamond merchant's son. As part of his business travel, they both relocated to New York. Prabha Devi has transformed into an entirely different lady. She walked confidently in high heels. She did not want to be her former self, who was never good enough. Prabha Devi was not planning to have children soon after her marriage. She informed Jagdeesh of the same thing, expecting him to agree with her decision. But after learning of the decision, he became ashamed and began to talk about how his parents planned to have their first grandchild. She understood it was not something she wanted. She abandoned her husband. Learning to swim is one of Prabha Devi's post-marriage accomplishments since it gives her a sense of empowerment. Nair depicts Indian husbands' obstinate conduct towards their

wives, as well as how everyone tells them their biological clock is ticking and they should conceive sooner. Anita also demonstrates how families compel women to carry children even when they are unwilling to do so. To sacrifice oneself for the benefit of one's family and husband is precisely the lesson that women raised in patriarchal societies are taught.

Out of the six women, *Marikolanthu* is particularly miserable; she is an unmarried mother who falls prey to a man's desire. She belongs to a lower-caste community. She serves as an accurate representation of impoverished and hungry rural women subjected to male dominance. Marikolanthu, like *Akhila*, was never treated well at her residence. While growing up, she suffered from gender prejudice. She never attended the same school as the other children in town. Her mother never let her go to school and instead assigned her to care for Akka's child. Since *Sujatha Akka* was the only person who treated her like a human, she felt a strong bond with her. When Marikolanthu grows into an adult woman, Akka gets her a job and transfers her to Vellore to keep her safe from the unwanted attention of her family's males. She works as a maid for two foreigners, *Miss K*, and *Miss V*. They were doctors at the same hospital.

Her early innocence was shattered into pieces when *Murugesan*, an upper-class guy and a relative of her employer, raped her. Murugesan is a family member in the home. He is the brother of the family's eldest daughter-in-law and despises Marikolanthu, as she appears to be more prominent in the house than his sister. He rapes Marikolanthu, reminding her that slaves must know their proper place. When a girl gets raped, she is embarrassed and constantly reminded by society. Upon Marikolanthu's rape, rather than evoking compassion, everyone places the blame on her. Nair attempts to characterize the psyche of all members of society, male and female, who find fault with the woman who has been unfairly abused because she is held accountable for her misfortune.

In her work, D. Silvia Flavia (Langyan, 2021) outlines a prevalent patriarchal notion in the novel *Ladies Coupe*. It portrays how a woman is limited by conventions to be reliant on men and handicapped to see her abilities. She has shown her ladies being oppressed by patriarchy and fighting side by side. Her female characters have been presented as clever, inquisitive, and rebellious against the injustice done to them. As they emphasize a connection between inequality and injustice, colonialism and the idea of patriarchy are inextricably linked. Although the colonial master is no longer present in the conquered nations, the legacy of colonialism lives on in the form of patriarchy. Men alone can be seen enjoying the blessings of freedom, while women continue to be oppressed by men. The decolonized male demonstrated his dominance by treating women unfairly. Therefore, Anita Nair's female characters highlight the issue of their lives, which has been reinforced by patriarchy, and perceive it as both the source of their subjugation at residence and within the community and a place where they may fight to defeat those who oppress them.

Akhila decided to see her younger boyfriend, *Hari*, after getting to know the five female characters onboard and learning about their experiences. Previously, she was concerned about how her connection with Hari would be seen by society. These stories, however, encouraged her, and she quickly saw that a woman needed a partner with whom she could express her thoughts and feelings. Following the life lessons of the ladies in the coupe, Akhila rediscovers herself.



In the novel "Mistress" by Anita Nair, the book explores complex relationships between married and unmarried people and the challenges women face in society. Additionally, it delves into the beautiful and intricate art of Kathakali. The work goes thoroughly into the social standards of married Indian women and the decisions they make in their marriages. The novel's main character is Radha, who represents a modern Indian woman. Her husband, Shyam, failed to provide her with a sense of security or independence, leaving her feeling unfulfilled. As a result, she becomes involved with Chris, a travel journalist who recently arrived in India. Radha feels a strong connection and affection towards Chris, whereas she feels suffocated and enslaved in her relationship with Shyam. Anita Nair's writing showcases the struggles of women who attempt to be submissive wives but ultimately fail to maintain their happiness. The male-dominated culture's pride hurts the sentiments and desires of these women, leading to unhappiness in their married lives. For instance, Radha expresses how she feels like a possession to her husband, Shyam, despite her efforts to love him. She says he thinks she is "a possession for Shyam," and she adds "a much-cherished possession." Radha claims that it is her only role in his life as he does not want an equal; all he wants is a mistress. (Nair, 2005) This section emphasizes Radha's need for love and company. Radha decides what to do and accepts the circumstances. This also highlights the need to challenge traditional gender roles and the importance of equal partnerships in marriage. Nair portrays the need to understand the challenges faced by women in male-dominated cultures. By using the character Radha, the author challenges gender inequality and attempts to go beyond prevailing stereotypes by illustrating Simone de Beauvoir's theory that men consider women like objects. Shyam alleges he treats his wife like a sexual commodity. Shyam may have thought he owned Radha, but he did not. She declares she was "never truly his", and she continues to say, "And I'll never be." (Nair, 2005) Chris and Shyam are ultimately rejected by Radha. She is free of the burdens of being a wife and mistress. By separating from both men in her life, she gives her child a motherly identity only via maternal custody, leaving him "fatherless." Radha, who has been Chris' mistress and Shyam's wife, is now on her way to becoming the "mistress" of herself.

In her novel "The Better Man," Anita Nair portrays the struggles of women pursuing independence in marriage and facing gender inequality, ultimately leading to self-realization. *Anjana* and *Valsala* are the female leads of the narrative. *Anjana*, the spouse of *Ravindran*, was a self-reliant young woman before her marriage, and her parents gave her the chance to reach her full potential. Everything changed after her marriage. She craved her individuality. She yearns for love and independence. Anjana and Ravindran were growing apart. His business was always shifting, and he lacked stability in his finances. His inability to communicate effectively was the main problem in his business. When he would get home from work, he would beat Anjana. Her father warned him about the domestic abuse as well as his not being at home saying, when he gave her daughter's hand marriage, it was with the "hope" that you would "love her." But all he did was hurt her. He insists on saying his daughter can "manage very well without a husband" like him. (Nair, BM: 232) Her father helped her in getting a suitable teaching position to spare her husband's violence. She enjoyed her work. She is now free from her marriage. She realizes her value in life. Anjana is now a mature lady. The author investigates the patriarchal structure that is to blame for women's plight in Indian culture. The narrative also follows the character's development from vulnerabilities to wisdom.

*Valsala*, who married *Prabhakaran*, a schoolteacher, was dissatisfied with her marriage and eventually developed feelings for her neighbour, *Sridharan*. She could not care less about becoming a part of traditional society. Valsala finds her true self and accepts his proposal to be her mistress. This episode, via morality, exemplifies Valsala's feminism. She acknowledges that sex, freedom, love, and gender equality are fundamental revitalizing energies for all women. She validates it by saying she is "just forty years old." She believes she does not want to be "pushed into old age before it is time." She was a newly free woman, fiery, and wanted to love with full passion. She states "I want to know ecstasy." She continues to repeat the same "night after night" (Nair BM: 130). Valsala inquires and asks questions about established conventions in Indian society. She raises new questions regarding women's sexuality and gender identity.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Women in literature have long been portrayed as paragons of passive sufferers globally. The subjugation of women is common in patriarchal cultures. They must serve their husbands, as marriage is their only fate. Women were expected to keep their thoughts to themselves and were not allowed to express their ideas. According to Gayathri Chakraborty Spivak, the marginalized were silenced not only by imperialism but also by those of us who look on while injustice occurs all around the world but do nothing against it. According to her, "the figure of the woman moving as a daughter, sister, wife, mother, and clan member to clan and family member structures patriarchal continuity even as she is herself drained of proper identity." ( In Other Worlds) (Spivak,220) Social suppression of women has a long, dynamic history, and sadly, it still exists today. Anita Nair's selected writings illustrate the hardships of women who battled in an environment that limited their rights to freedom. Nair's female characters desire to find the truth and be free from oppression; therefore, they battle it in their own way. Anjana and Radha, for example, both abandoned the men in their lives and began to value themselves. Valsala finds her inner consciousness, and Akhila realizes she is no longer a prisoner to her own family. Anita Nair's writings depict women and their challenges in a conventional society, with women finding solutions to them. She portrays both the rebellious and resilient nature of women and also highlights how education is critical to empowering women. Anita Nair portrays how today women are free from patriarchal constraints and forging new identities. Women have changed over time, and today they exhibit an exquisite combination of past and modern aspects. When a woman is pushed to the limit, separated from society, and trapped, she becomes subjugated. It is a rigorous procedure. It is only by acknowledging and understanding this issue we can begin to work towards creating a better, more equal world for all.

### Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

### Funding Disclosure/Acknowledgement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency.

## References

- Beauvoir, S. de. (2015). *The Second sex*. Vintage Classics.
- Chakrabarti, P. (2018, October 14). *Female desire takes the power equation out of patriarchy's*
- Chakrabarti, P. (2018, October 14). *Female desire takes the power equation out of patriarchy's hands: Anita Nair*. The Indian Express.
- Dhivya, K. S. (2020). *Dynamics of Indian diasporic women writers*. Evincepub Publishing.
- Gupta, A. (2018). *Novels of Anita Nair (a critical perspective)*. Dattsons.
- Langyan, R. (2021, May 5). *Women and society: A study of themes and attitudes in the ... - IJCRT*. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT).
- Nair, A. (2005, April 7). *Ladies Coupe*. Penguin UK.
- Nair, A. (2005, January 1). *Mistress*. Penguin Books India.
- Nair, A. (2015, April 7). *The Better Man*. Picador.
- Patil, R. H. (2021). *The Social Status of Indian Women of Different Periods in the Patriarchal Society*.
- Pepper, H. (n.d.). *An Interview with Anita Nair*.
- R., S. I. K., & Nandakumar, P. (2020). *Indian writing in English*. Sterling Publishers.
- Research Center for English Language and Literature Rector's Quarter. (n.d.). *Women and marriage in Anita Nair's - The Criterion*.
- Walby, S. (1989). *THEORISING PATRIARCHY*. Sociology, 23(2), 213–234.

---

Divyani Sharma is a research scholar from Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India.

Dr. Swati Chauhan is an Associate Professor at the Department of English, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India

---