



## Self-Actualization in Anita Nair's *Mistress*

Kavita Rani

NET, M.Phil in English, University in Kurukshetra, Haryana, India

### Abstract

The search for identity is a quest that has social, psychological and metaphysical connotations. In the transitional Indian society affected by western ideas of individual autonomy, each individual dreams of personal achievements to enhance one's own identity. The myriad pressures operating on human beings have resulted in psychic traumas and fragmentations. The individual needs mental strength to assert personal autonomy in the facts of social pressures and regulatory forces, my emphasis lies on revealing that Anita Nair accepts the validity of the individual needs for rebellion and rejection of stereotypical roles. Her novel *Ladies Coupe* has also been explored as a journey of self-discovery of patriarchal and feminist text. The empowerment of women points to the concept and position of womanhood in the modern context.

**Keywords:** Quest, stereotype, Patriarchal, Feminist, Empowerment.

### Introduction

Indian English literature originated due to the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In the recent years, it has attracted wide spread interest both in India and abroad. Today a number of Indian writers in English have contributed substantially to modern English literature. Fiction, being the most powerful form of expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in indo-English literature among the novelists experimenting with Indian writing in English, Anita Nair has a unique position in the literary world she is uniquely Indian who is writing particularly about Kerala. She is writing with new visions, new themes, new technical and linguistic devices, new ease and a new confidence, making experiments in her works and winning international recognition and acclaim, which ensure a bright future for the Indian fiction in English in general and for her in particular. The novelist minutely analyses the significant and far-reaching changes in individual passing through period of overall transition. She attempts to reconstruct Indian women-hood in a new western ideology, though the content is replete with Indian rather regional sensibilities and regional social situations.

Only a few feminist writers made their contribution to women's movement against oppression. Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Irish Murdoch, Margaret Atwood in west and Nayantra Sehgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Despande, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, R.P. Jhabwala, Kamala Markandya and Arundhati Roy in India have contributed to raise a new wave of feminism across the world. But Anita Nair as she herself says, is not a feminist, her writings reflect a variety of shades, colors and visions. Anita Nair was born at MundakottaKurrissi near Shornur in Kerala state but she was brought up in a suburb at Channai, Tamil Naidu. Her grandparents lived in Kerala so she paid frequent visits to Kerala which made her

perceive the rural Kerala so minutely. Her novel *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe* have been translated into 21 languages.

Anita Nair post-colonial novel *Mistress* (2005) is a wonderful narration of women desire. The novel lays bare the married life of Radha getting entangled in a love triangle. The novel narrates the story of the Kathakali dancer Koman, his niece Radha whose desires for her businessman husband Shyam are dead but gets ignited for Christopher Stewart, who comes to India to write about Koman. Radha is a true embodiment of a modern Indian woman. She feels suffocated in playing the role of a traditional woman but remaining in the company of Chris, Radha feels life has yet a lot to explore.

"I look at him. With every moment the thought hinges itself deeper into my mind; what an attractive man" (8)

But when she is in the company of her husband, she thinks, "Don't I have a right to an opinion? I am your wife. Your wife, do you hear me? But you treat me as if I am a kept woman. A bloody mistress to fulfill your sexual needs and with no right" (Nair, 72)

Radha enjoys physical and emotional intimacy with Chris but not without a sense of guilt, "I lie here in my bed in my husband's arms and I think of another man. What kind of woman am I?"(59).

But she runs after the colorful rainbow of desires. In the deep recesses of her mind, she knows that there is no justification for adultery. She does not hesitate to breach the rules of society to realize her true self. She neglects society for the sake of self-fulfillment and hence Radha can be termed as self-actualising Radha. Self-actualization implies self-fulfillment, self-expression, self-development, personal achievement and full realization of potentialities. Radha defies all the conventional ideologies of patriarchal society and enjoys fulfillment in the realization of her true self.

**References**

1. Nair, Anita. *Mistress*. New Delhi: Penguin booksPrint, 2001.
2. Maslow, Abraham H. *Toward a psychology of Being*, New York: D.Van Nostrand Company Print, 1968.