

**Experiences Of Modern Indian Women Through The Lens Of Feminism :
A Critical Study Of Anita Nair's '*Mistress*' And '*Eating Wasps*'**

A Dissertation for

Course code and Code Title : ENG – 651 Dissertation

Credits : 16

Submitted in partial fulfilment of Master's Degree

Master of Arts Degree

(M.A in English)

by

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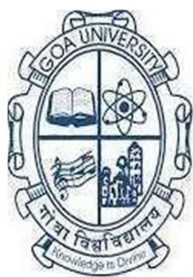
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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, "Experiences of modern Indian women through the lens of feminism : A critical study of Anita Nair's 'Mistress' and 'Eating wasps' " is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the Supervision of Ms. Poorwa Naik and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities / College will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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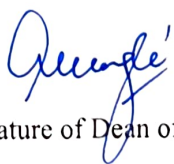
COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation report “**Experiences of modern Indian women through the lens of feminism : A critical study of Anita Nair's 'Mistress' and 'Eating wasps'**” is a bonafide work carried out by **Ms.Aditi Damodar Fadte** under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts** in the Discipline English at the Shenoj Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Beginning with the prayer of thanks, I extend my deepest gratitude to the almighty for his constant guidance and blessings throughout this journey of completing my dissertation. His presence has been my source of strength and inspiration

I am immensely thankful to my supervisor, Ms Poorwa Naik, for her invaluable guidance and mentorship through the research process. Her expertise, patience and unwavering support has been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this research.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to my family and friends for their encouragement and motivation during this research journey. Their belief in my abilities has been a driving force behind my accomplishments.

Lastly, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has played a role in the completion of this research paper. I am truly grateful for everyone's assistance.

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Abstract

The dissertation titled "Experiences of modern Indian women through the lens of feminism: A critical study of Anita Nair's '*Mistress*' and '*Eating Wasps*'" talks about how women suffer even after gaining independence. It's vital to understand that women play a variety of significant roles in our society, from birth until the end of life. Even after playing all their roles in an efficient manner in modern society, women still face oppression. In the last few decades, gender equality and women's empowerment have picked up momentum in India. There has been a significant transformation, not only in the policy approaches but also in the ideology of women themselves. Modern women attempt questioning and reasoning; they project their urges, desires, and dreams. Anita Nair, through her fiction, depicted the inner fear, oppression, and suppression faced by Indian women in their daily life. This study aims to understand the inner selves of women and their urge to have freedom in a patriarchal society.

Keywords : Gender inequality, women empowerment, oppression, modern women , freedom

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: OPENING DOORS FROM SHADOWS TO LIGHTS

1.1 Introduction

Even in the 21st century, it is a matter of great regret that women still do not have the same freedom that men do in a society that is controlled by men. In many aspects, women were not given the same respect as males. Voting, property ownership, and employment in numerous professions were all off limits to women. Whether it's from their father, spouse, or son, women are still viewed as the "weaker sex" and need to be safeguarded throughout their lives. It is evident that men continue to mistreat women in the modern world. The most prevalent and long-lasting type of inequality is discrimination against women and girls, which includes gender-based violence, economic discrimination, and damaging traditional behaviors. It is an indisputable fact that women have not only been denied the right to exist as whole human beings, psychologically and physically prepared to function on an equal basis with men, but they have also been deprived of the ability to express their emotions, anxieties, and distress. From the time of their birth until the end of their lives, women play a range of important functions in our society. She is weak as men continue to remain the dominant gender in society, even after carrying out all of her roles in the modern world effectively. Women have a significant impact on the advancement and modernization of society, contributing to its growth and development.

Women have a crucial role in the advancement of civilization. It actually determines whether or not a community is robust and harmonious. The foundation

of society is the female gender. Women should be empowered in order to end discrimination against them in all its manifestations. Moreover, organising women worldwide is the quickest method to transform society. "A more compassionate, tolerant, just, and peaceful life for everyone is inevitable as a result of women's education and empowerment worldwide." Globally, women's empowerment is a significant topic. Empowerment and equality between men and women are universal issues. The previous three decades have seen a rise in the concerns of "gender equality" and women's empowerment, even in India.

This research paper shows the essence of feminism and how women are still searching for freedom. It also focuses on the women characters that want to be liberated from the shackles of patriarchal society. This study including two novels of Anita Nair '*Mistress*' and '*Eating Wasps*' gives experiences of modern Indian women and depicts how modern advancement can hinder one's life.

1.1.1 Importance and Reasons of the Research

The socio and political movement which stood for supporting women for their welfare bonding in the society was feminism. A movement focused on setting, defining and upholding equal socio-political, economic rights, opportunities for women in India. Women challenged inequalities. Hence, they were allowed to get involved in the workforce for equal wages, right to education and equal access to health facilities. Women also fought for inheritance laws. Feminist worked effectively to protect the rights of women from sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence and discrimination within society.

The reader will be able to understand modern Indian women's thoughts and experiences in the selected works of Anita Nair. It will explore the inner self of women beyond the materialistic world.

1.1.2 Scope and Limitations of the research

The study will put forth the question of women's ranking in the world. In the 21st century, it's important to understand how women's perspectives have evolved. The limitation of the research would be a limited study of the author's literary work. Although the feminist issue is universal, this study will only focus on the Indian aspect.

1.2. Research Problem / Question

- How does Anita Nair portray life opinions of modern Indian women in her novels ‘ *Mistress*’ and ‘*Eating Wasps*’?
- How patriarchy is challenged in Anita Nair’s novels ?
- In what ways societal expectations are viewed by Anita Nair’s Female characters?
- How does Anita Nair represents authenticity in the novels
- How does the Author view self acceptance in the contemporary world ?

1.3. Relevance and Necessity of the proposed Research

1.3.1 Necessity in the field of Languages and Literature

This research paper will play an important role in socio-cultural aspects. It will deal with the ideologies of both men and women. It will also create a medium for readers to feel and understand internal conflict.

1.3.2 Relevance to the Society

The society would relate their situations ,which will be mentioned in the research. It might also help society to realize the need for equal empowerment, self-love and the ability to express their desires.

1.4. Objectives of research proposed

- To Explore abuses of female body and mind by patriarchal society in select texts
- To Explore how concept of marriage and family is seen as an institution of suppression and oppression
- To understand Stereotypes of female psychology portrayed in the novels.
- To understand social and cultural norms / impact on modern Indian women.
- To define roles and position of modern Indian women in India
- To explore women's struggle for Survival in selected texts.

1.5. Literature Review

1.5.1 Researchers and Research in the selected field.

A book 'Feminism in Contemporary British and Indian English Fiction' by Miti Pandey has given an insight into British and Indian women's studies. Writers like Dorris Lessing and Iris Murdoch have depicted women raising issues such as love, sexuality. They also included their empowerment and self assertion. Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya and Nayantara Sahgal portrayed women in the same way, but with an Indian scenario and their thirst for action against men and the environment.

Highlighting female depiction in Anita Nair's work, by Dr. Usha Bhatt - the research has uplifted women's ideologies. She has shown readers that even after living in a modernized and civilized society, women are still facing oppression. With a literal concern for the predicament of women in the 21st c. writers like Anita Nair have focused on current women's conditions. This paper proved that Anita Nair is a hope for oppressed women. With self realization, confidence, and potential one can lift themselves out of the worst situations.

The actual sense of the word 'Feminism' in literature will differ from our personal experiences. Anita Nair's novel '*Mistress*' shows us the woman's situation under the control of men and her wish to achieve freedom. Under the patriarchal norms the question arises in the novel whether women should only play the role of mothers and wives. A Paper titled "Feminism and Literature: A Study of Anita Nair's '*Mistress*' by Dr. Madhu Jindal, points out women's attitudes and Indian Feminism through her novel. The paper also revealed the power to show the reality of society and women's psyche.

The following research papers :

'Feminist Perspective in the Selected Novels of Anita Nair: *Ladies Coupé* and *Mistress*' by PMB marieswari, P Bala Muthu.

'Indian Feminism In Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* And *Mistress*' by Alice Cherian
An International Refereed e Journal of Literary Exploration (2013).< [http://: Indian Feminism in Anita Nair Ladies Coupe and *Mistress*./](http://IndianFeminism.in)> 20 Dec 2015.

Reveals the burden of dealing with the misconceptions of tradition and religion has been shown by postcolonial feminist Literature. Once a reader gets engaged in the depths of post colonial society and its traditions, one may question problematic women's roles. Anita Nair tried to question the taboo and the role of women. She questioned patriarchal ideologies and their oppressive tendencies towards the growth of feminist and their reactions to it. Contemporary writing in Indian English has attained independent status in literature. It provides a view of the themes of Indian culture and tradition and a basis for discussion. Through the lens of women writers, one can see a different world and with their help one can realise the potential of human goals and achievements. Every appraisal of Indian English literature will certainly result in an appreciation of the writing of women.

The researcher tries to explain how Anita Nair projects Indian feminism and attitude through women characters in the selected novel, “*Ladies coupe*”. Akhila is a Brahmin heroine who is left to play roles such as daughter, aunt, etc after her father's death. So she decides to travel by train to take a step towards her goals, but she realizes that due to certain norms set by society, she is left with no option to pursue her dreams or even experience her own life. Train compartment is the setting

of the novel and she meets 5 ladies, all trying to understand and answer the question- whether staying single and happy can be done at a time?

The novel “*Mistress*” resulted in the cause of equality for women. According to the writer, rules must be applied to both men and women. In “*Ladies Coupe*” she has taken up the notion of alienation in marriages, issues of premarital and extramarital affairs. On the Other hand, “*Mistress*” is a literary journey starting from man-woman relationships to complex kathakali aesthetics. Cultural norms and society are connecting and explaining the identity of Indian women .The research paper titled 'Quest for Female Space in Anita Nair’s *Ladies Coupé*' by T. Vasanthakumari, Studies the novel *Ladies Coupe* , Akhilandeshwari's (Akhila) space and identity which is defined within the parameters of her social relationship to men .

A Research paper titled 'Women's agony in Anita Nair's *eating wasps*' by k kalyani, A subashini - talks about different women's circumstances and their understanding of the word 'life'. The novel's protagonist is the writer of her own life, trying to show readers what women actually need. *Eating wasps* connects with the life of Sreelakshmi, her problems and pain in her life. This research paper highlights contemporary issues of women.

Following a thorough examination and careful reading of the aforementioned research articles on the subject, the study concentrated on women’s psyche and their condition. The research gap is that there are still some nuances to discover. Although the researcher has previously examined women’s psychological behaviour, the planned study will use the chosen texts to examine women’s oppression and their evolution from pre-independence to the present. Instead of

instructing readers of the present generation, the critical feminism study of *Eating Wasps* and *Mistress* would directly link to social norms, how women have played their role in society and how they appreciated modernity.

1.6. Formulation of hypothesis

- In the novel “*Mistress*” and “*Eating wasps*” Anita Nair exposes harsh experiences of modern Indian women and spots concealed emotions of the female characters. The author also challenges societal pressure

1.7. Research Methodology for proposed research.

Primary sources: ‘*Mistress*’ and ‘*Eating wasps*’ by Anita Nair

Secondary sources: Online websites, secondary texts, research articles, scholarly papers, TED talks and YouTube videos.

1.8. Research design

1.8.1 Chapterization

Chapter 1: Introduction: Opening doors from shadows to lights

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Research Methodology

1.3 Research Objectives

1.4 Chapter Scheme

1.5 limitations of the study

1.6 literature review

Chapter 2: Tracing the journey of Indian women in Ancient and modern era

- 2.1 Silence voices of women: Ancient period
- 2.2 The status of women: British Rule
- 2.3 Social evils encountered by Indian women
- 2.4 Reformers in the process of making women 'modern'
- 2.5 Representation of women in Indian Literature
- 2.6 Participation of women in social life

Chapter 3: Feminist reflection in Anita Nair's selected texts

- 3.1. Introduction to the writer
- 3.2. Introduction to her works
- 3.3. feminism evolution
- 3.4 Themes in the select texts.

Chapter 4 : Intersecting identities and Violence in '*Mistress*' and '*Eating Wasps*'

- 4.1 feminist analysis in '*Mistress*'
- 4.2 Feminist analysis in '*Eating wasps*'
- 4.3 Exposing Violence

Chapter 5

- 5.1. Conclusion
- 5.2. Bibliography

CHAPTER 2

TRACING THE JOURNEY OF INDIAN WOMEN IN ANCIENT AND MODERN ERA

When it comes to women's empowerment, Indian culture has seen many ups and downs over the years. Therefore, it's critical to focus more on how women's empowerment in India gained traction from the ancient to the modern era.

2.1 SILENCE VOICES OF WOMEN DURING ANCIENT PERIOD

During ancient times, women were equally treated and equally respected by society. Women were also known as Janani, or mothers, and are even called Devi in Hindu scripts. These views predated gender inequality. The wives of rishis were known as the Ardhangini (better half) because they were eager to engage in spiritual pursuits along with their husbands and had access to all of their fundamental rights, including the freedom to pursue an education. Women were allowed to live equal lives during that time, just as men did. During the Vedic period, they served as a comprehensive representation of guardianship and caretaker of mortality and ideals. In addition to receiving and enjoying their rights and equality, these women were competitive with males in numerous fields, had no limitations placed on them, and held substantial income and property. The idea of humanity is fundamental to Vedic civilization; in the Taittiriya Samhita, women and men were viewed as a cart's two wheels. These ideas on gender equality that the Vedas imparted to humanity were examples. (Roy)

The position of women started to deteriorate in the post-Vedic era. Women's involvement in public life shrank to an extreme. The impact of "Manusmriti" and

other like scriptures led to the degradation of the women's position. Women were marrying at a younger age. The institution of child marriage was established. It was expected of women to bear male children. And the child's field of work was decided. The women were only used as a vehicle for sexual fulfillment and procreation as a result of her child marriage, which made her inexperienced, immature, and ignorant of religious customs. Distinct regulations regarding their portrayals of men and women were established. It became essential that she get married. A few women who belonged to monarchs and palaces had extraordinary liberty. Women's situation was terrible throughout the Puranic era because of Brahmin culture, the rigidity of the caste system, mixed families, a lack of female education

Women's position during the medieval period

In the post-Vedic era, women's status, which had been equal throughout the early Vedic period, began to decline. The basic idea explaining the decrease of women's position throughout that era is foreign conquest. Women lost their right to study the Vedas, read Vedic mantras, and perform Vedic rituals as a result of the Rig-Vedic principles of justice and harmony fading.

India was first ruled by Islam in the Middle Ages. Thus, the custom was shaped by the interactions between Muslims and Hindus. Owing to the cultural differences between Islam and Hinduism, attempts were undertaken to safeguard women and Hinduism from Islam. As a result, the position of women was further degraded. Hindu women were hence imprisoned inside four walls. The status of Muslim women was likewise terrible. Women were once forced to wear the "pardah," a body-covering veil that restricted their independence. Because of this,

a lot of other problems in society were born, making women's lives even more unpleasant.. Women were required to live their lives under a burkha or purdah and were not granted any rights. Their quality of life was extremely low as a result. Many prohibitions existed, including those on the issue of child marriage, widow remarriage, the practice of Sati Jauhar, and the lack of education for girls, among many more.

2.2 THE STATUS OF WOMEN : BRITISH RULE.

After the Mughal Empire's collapse in the crucial Battle of Plassey (1775 A.D.), the British people asserted their absolute rule of government over the Indian population(1858). Several changes were made to our society's social and economic systems when under British administration.

The status of women, at the dawn of the British rule in India, reached the lowest level in the society. The wife's position in the household was in a sorry state. Indian women and India went through cruel acts under British Christian rule. The efforts to whitewash this cruelty have been going on since independence. 100 million Indians, especially women, have been through atrocities during 200 years of British rule. Farmers had to pay 90% of their earnings to British officers, and if they failed to do so, they were beaten up to death. Very few used to survive. It was not an end for them, but they also forced farmer's daughters, mothers, sisters, and wives to march naked around the village. After this, the barbaric Britishers pressed their breasts with iron tongs until their nipples bled. Women used to struggle and scream with unbearable pain, but the British officers used to laugh aloud about their

situations. The officers used to gang rape them in a very brutal and inhuman way when women fell unconscious out of pain. This was the fate of Indian women.

It was difficult for an Indian woman or girl to escape from Britishers without being the victim of rape. The greatest historian of modern India, Shri Rajiv Dixit ji, witnessed and found photocopies of a British officer's personal diary. In the diary, it was written that there was not a single day when he did not pressurise an Indian girl to have sex. No British officer got punishment for their offense as per their rape laws. The raped women were forcibly made prostitutes by the British officers. Prostitution houses were established, and British soldiers and officials often visited these houses to satisfy their desires and lust. Britishers brought slave girls from other countries, but eventually the prostitution houses in India were filled with Indian women who were raped by barbaric officers. Those innocent and helpless women were compelled to become sex slaves.

This could indicate that the British Raj did not contribute anything positive, yet that is not completely true. During this time, women's quality of life remained mostly unchanged, although significant progress was made in eradicating gender gaps in social rights, work, education, and other areas. However, social reformers made a passionate effort to overcome social evil and alert people against the injustices done to Indian women in the nineteenth century, following decades of social degradation, endless depression, horrible pain, and social loss.

2. 3 SOCIAL EVILS ENCOUNTERED BY INDIAN WOMEN

After the Vedic era, women in India experienced more societal injustices and were seen as less valuable than men. Social evil focused against women was more common. The British and social reformers were interested in a number of

social issues, like sati, child murder, slavery, child marriage, the ban on widow remarriage, and the absence of women's rights.

There was roughly one woman among the one hundred who could read or write due to the severely low literacy rate. The worst social norms, brutal superstitions, strict religious doctrine, and dangerous practices were the main causes of the degradation. Indian culture was static due to child marriage, compelled widowhood, sati, purdah, a dowry female infanticide, and polygamous relationships.

Sati pratha :

The practice of sati had limitations to the areas of Hooghly, Nadia, and Burdwan in Bengal, Ghazipur in the state of Uttar Pradesh, and Shahabad of Bihar at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was discovered in other regions of India as well, although it was a rare phenomenon. According to the notion of sati, a woman must sit on a blazing fire with her husband and burn herself to death when her husband passes away. It is said that it's a solemn responsibility which can be committed for a partner. It was written in ancient Hindu scriptures that a woman's doors to heaven open for her when she passes away as a sati.

It was carried out in the districts of Ganjam, Masulipatnam, and Tanjore in southern India. In Punjab, Kashmir, and Rajasthan, the custom was mostly restricted to upper caste ladies. Charles Metcalfe put an end to the practice in Delhi. There were hardly any instances of sati in Aligarh or Agra. (Singh)

Three-fourths among all sati cases in British India happened in Bengal alone. All castes were affected, however Brahmanas and Rajputs were more affected than the others. The pride and bravery of the princely family turned the sati

into a noble deed. However, women whose spouses were from the middle and lower middle classes generally performed the rite.

Sati cases are still being reported from all around the nation. Furthermore, the police have either arrived too late or have not been very successful in most of the cases. A magnificent sati temple called Rani Sati Mandir is a spot of worship for people of all castes and communities in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.

A young Rajput woman committed self-emolation in the Sikar region of Rajasthan about twenty years ago. Protests from across the state as well as into different regions of India were prompted by this specific incident of sati.

Jauhar :

Indian practice of women, small children, and other dependents collectively self-immolating themselves in front of an enemy when they believe that there is no longer an opportunity to hold out against them and that death is the only acceptable way to escape the situation. It was a Rajput tradition. A mass suicide occurred. The women of Chitor (later Chittaurgarh), headed the Rajput Queen Rani Padmini, performed the most renowned act of jauhar in Indian history at the beginning of the 14th century when they threw themselves into a fire.

Child marriage :

In ancient times, the most popular type of marriage was the tradition of marrying a young girl to a Brahmana priest. Throughout the invasion by other rulers, the Delhi Sultanate's rulers adopted this method to safeguard their women from rape and kidnapping.

In 1846, girls had to be 10 years old to be eligible for marriage. However, the Native Marriage Act of 1872 lifted the age limit to 14 years old for girls and 18 years old for boys.

The Sarada Act, generally referred to as the "Child Marriage Restraint Act," was passed in 1930. For both boys and girls, the age was set at 18 and 14. This act's sponsor, "Haribilas Sarda," is the reason for its title.

Women were compelled to get into marriage, take on household responsibilities, and show their husbands unconditional support. Parents were embarrassed to have a girl child during that period. A boy proved for carrying on the tradition, and a girl kid was viewed as a burden. therefore in the past, parents would marry them off as soon as convenient. Another explanation for child marriage is the perception that older girls are more likely to cause scandals. For this reason, parents marry their daughters when they were very young, and the girls remain at home until they reach puberty.

Men used to believe that women were only suitable for marriage at that time, and they were treated as such. This is the reason for the rising birth rate; women's health was extremely bad, which also contributed to the rise in the high death rate among women and infants.

Even now, child marriage is common among the impoverished and ignorant in cities, as well as among those living in rural areas. The issues like virginity and purity, dowries, and hypergamy all contribute to the legal system of child marriage. Population growth, joblessness, poverty, poor health, reliance on parents, and other issues are the outcomes of it. The first piece of legislation, which lifted the legal age of marriage completion for girls to 10, was passed in 1860.

Compelled widowhood :

Throughout the Middle Ages, it was common to treat women like objects. Widows were viewed as cursed during the Middle Ages; it was thought that becoming a widowed brought misfortune and destruction. Someone who was widowed had to renounce all of the comforts promised by her husband during their marriage, and they were not allowed to participate in any holy or sacred rituals or points of interest. Their right to remarry was prohibited. The woman was forced to eat a certain type of food that can only be eaten by widows, and she was never allowed the option to live an ordinary existence. Also, she always dressed in faded white clothes.

Female Infanticide :

The Northern Plains and Rajput-dominated communities were the epicentres of this horrible tradition of killing a girl child. It is present in South India as well. The main practice of the misguided practice was adhering to the strict cultural norms established by the patriarchal society. The inhabitants in rural areas were sure that spending money on a girl child wouldn't be beneficial to the family because she would marry into another family. Another significant worry for the girl child's parents was the dowry, which raised the possibility of killing a female kid. Other regions of India adopted this approach. To stop evil practice, the British East India Company created numerous laws and implemented a number of other measures. Below is a list of some of their laws.

The 1795 Bengal Regulation Act (XXI).

Act Regulating - 1802.

Yet, the practice existed in secret, especially among Rajasthan's Rajput population. The main cause of it is dowry. (Singh)

No education for women :

There is proof that women had access to education in the past, but in the following Vedic time, everything changed. Women were taught every aspect of housework and received instruction in beautiful art whereas in the Muslim faith, their situation completely changed. However, during medieval times, women's suffering never became any easier.

Polygamy :

In the past, polygamy—primarily, the state in which a man has multiple wives. It was extensively prevalent in India. The 1860 Indian Penal Code forbids polygamy for Christians in sections 494 and 495. The Hindu Marriage Act, drafted in 1955, forbade a Hindu from marrying someone whose spouse was still alive. Thus, in 1956, polygamy was outlawed in India for all nationals with the exception of Muslims, who are allowed to take four wives, and Goan Hindus.

2.4 REFORMERS IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING WOMEN "MODERN"

Among the most notable social reformers of the 1800s was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar .His primary contribution was to improve women's standing; he was a strong advocate for widow remarriages. He convinced the British Government to enact the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, which allowed widows to remarry and

recognized the legality of the children born in these unions, in an effort to provide justice to women.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first to identify and take action against inhumane customs such as the caste system, religious superstition, and sati pratha. He is regarded as the founder of modern India and the mastermind behind the Indian Renaissance. He declared that the rite of sati was not contained in the Shastras in order to start an effort to end this barbaric tradition. It wasn't a necessary component of Hinduism. Several religious authorities disagreed with Ram Mohan Roy's anti-sati campaign. In the princely states, it had been practically eliminated due to the princes' support. However, it wasn't made illegal for quite some time. He was successful in having the Bengal Sati Regulation Act, 1829, which did away with Sati Pratha, passed by the British Government. It was Lord William Bentinck who performed this act.

Swami Vivekananda , always argued against the existing societal problems in his meetings and lectures. With the help of fifty women, he stated that he might transform India into a modern, progressive nation, demonstrating his reborn faith in the ability of women to shape the development of history.

In addition to men, women like Savitribai Phule were significant in advancing women's equality in the realm of education. In the male-dominated field of gender reforms, Pandita Ramabai was the sole female advocate for women's rights and a social reformer. In 1883, she established Sharda Sadan, a home for widows and single females.

Sister Nivedita was the first woman to educate women in India. She opened a school for women's empowerment in North Calcutta. And a host of other well-known individuals who supported progress, reason, and social fairness. They

fiercely opposed ancient traditions and customs like child marriage, sati, and discrimination against women.

These reformers supported women's education, widow remarriage, and the encouragement of critical thought. With these notable reformers many and other reformers including people's coordination, helped to build a better place for women. Though it's taking a while for women to gain freedom, the major achievement is to know that there are rights which are reserved especially for women and any woman can fight for it.

Even in the 19th century women were in the male-dominated system, the status of women had not changed much. The National Movement (1930) emerged in the early twentieth century, led by Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated for the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women. Gandhiji issued a strong call for women, who made up almost half of India's population, to join forces in favour of the country's independence. Women accepted the call, and their widespread involvement under Gandhiji's direction gave them a feeling of equal opportunities with men. Women began to speak out against the decades of injustice that the traditional society was causing them. Democracy adopted changes shortly after independence. In an attempt to advance gender equality, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was chosen as the Indian Legislative Council's Law Minister. He then submitted the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament, but the male-dominated politicians of the day rejected it. Subsequently, other organisations dedicated to the empowerment of women emerged, showcasing women's intelligence, actions, and labour force. Their goal was to promote women's advancement by fostering self-esteem, awareness, and other qualities.

The status of women in contemporary society and their issues are current topics of discussion everywhere. The subject of women is also one that frequently receives attention in India. In order to investigate women's roles in society and their concerns, women's study centres have been established in numerous colleges, universities, non-governmental organisations, etc. Women's issues are currently being researched. The issue of women is becoming more and more prominent in society because of feminist philosophers. Following independence, women have been given access to business possibilities, employment, and training with the belief that achieving financial and educational independence will improve their social standing. Women are employed alongside men in the workforce; this is evidence of their existence. Women have 30% of the seats reserved in democratic politics, giving them the opportunity to engage in political matters. Women aren't yet at that level. It is clear that there are issues with a fair wage, physical and psychological abuse, and discriminatory attitudes. Men and women face discrimination in the workplace in a variety of contexts, including property rights, the division of labour, and workplace harassment. Indian civilization is very old. The patriarchal structure in India has an impact on every community.

The Modern woman may participate in significant decision-making within her community, has a voice, and is aware of the concerns of other women. A modern woman is one who aspires to both intellectual and physical fulfilment. In order to gain independence a woman questions societal norms , she fights against her atrocities. Two words that immediately come to mind are empowerment and equality. For a contemporary woman, both are essential. Modern women take knowledge, equality, liberty, and fraternity equally into consideration. In the twenty-first century, men who consider themselves contemporary have an

especially modern attitude toward women. Most males have a stereotypical perspective on women. Many of the issues facing males have their roots in the way society views women. Additionally, we feel that males are the foundation of our lives because, in the man dominated society, they are genuinely better than us and women are inferior. Thus, women's lives are being negatively impacted by the attitudes of society. Men and women make up around half of the population in any civilization. Since women are just as much a part of society as men are, any kind of society can only be assessed in light of women's roles and position in society. Throughout human civilization, women have always been viewed as inferior to men. The state of affairs now is no different. Women have historically been viewed as secondary in society on all fronts—religious, social, cultural, and economic.

2.5 REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN LITERATURE

Women also played an important role in literature. It was not only reformers but even through writers and their writing we can know a lot about women's position

Literacy is the ability to communicate through written, printed, or electronic signs or symbols that represent language. Orality (oral tradition), which includes a wide range of techniques for communicating through oral and auditory media, is typically contrasted with literacy. Social reality is expressed in writing when someone is literate. It depicts how members of a culture consider and understand the objects they come into contact with on a regular basis. Literature has the power to change people's ideas and perspectives, which makes them an important impact in forming cultural norms and values. Once a reader gets engaged in reading he/she understands a character's perspective who may even have passed away. Literature has been discussing and explaining global contexts and circumstances since the

beginning of time. Because of the fact that it connects people who otherwise could not have met, it is the greatest innovation ever made by humans. Novels and poetry do not only depict reality; they enhance it.

Portrayal of women in literature: Ancient

In the past, when more women began publishing their own works, literature mostly presented an uneven image of women. Women contributed significantly to the formation of oral culture through folk music, storytelling, and nursery rhymes, which in turn impacted written culture. Literature has portrayed women in a variety of ways, with writers frequently relying on cultural stereotypes or personal experiences. Various perspectives on how society regards women are frequently presented by male as well as female writers.

The portrayal of feminism in Indian literature goes back to ancient Indian history. 'Ramayana' is considered to be one of the greatest epics of Indian literature written by Valmiki in the 5th century BCE. In this epic, the women characters have depicted the real condition of Indian women in the ancient period. As stated by the author Valentina Gamberi, the character of Sita who is the wife of the protagonist has justified the power and strength of her husband Rama. She has also been portrayed as vulnerable without her husband. Furthermore, Gamberi argued that the epic made Rama a model protagonist at the expense of abandoning his wife. According to Dwivedi, the 19th century Indian poet Toru Dutta expressed his pain and sorrow in his poem '*Sita*' and questioned the dominance of patriarchal Indian society. (Das and Chetty)

In the book "*The High-Caste Hindu Women*" (Bhog and Bharadwaj), by the 19th-century Indian writer Pandita Ramabai described the helpless situation of high-caste Hindu women in India during colonial rule.

Portrayal of women in literature: Post Independence

The women portrayed in India's post-independence era are autonomous and modern. In these new works, the female characters struggle mightily to break away from oppressive, traditional limits. Many Indian English writers have taken a special interest in the feminine search for identity. The main themes in these writings are the quest, search, uprootedness, rootlessness, struggle for "I," and struggle for existence. They signify that a "new Indian woman" has arrived.

Indian women's situation has been shown in a new light in post-independence literature.

According to Sharnappa, Kamala Markandaya's novel "*Nectar in a Sieve*" depicts the true agony of a peasant lady in rural India. In this book, moneylenders take advantage of a woman and her husband in an Indian village. Rukmani, the female protagonist in "*Nectar in a Sieve*," is a peasant woman who assists her husband in farming in addition to helping out around the house. Yet, the couple had to bear financial hardship after the land was sold. The villagers' merchants began turning down Rukmani's requests to purchase rations on credit because of her lack of funds. The rural Indian women portrayed in the text lacked access to education, stable work, and social support.

However, Anita Desai's book "*Voices in the City*" places a particular focus on women's freedom and accepting their reality as Indian women (Khan). Two main female characters in "*Voices in the City*" are depicted in two distinct universes. An

important female character in the book named Monisha kills herself because she is dissatisfied in her marriage. Monisha found out that her husband and his family didn't value her along with the fact they wanted a kid from her. Monisha was trapped like a bird in a cage by old-fashioned, traditional customs.

On the contrary, Amla, Monisha's younger sister, moved to Kolkata from Mumbai in order to start again. But her excitement vanished when she learned the shocking reality about Dharma, one of her acquaintances. He showed no care for his daughter, who was the same age as hers

Portrayal of women in literature: Modern

Today's Indian feminism is more advanced than that of the West. Prominent authors such as Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Nair, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai have reshaped the notion of feminism in Indian English literature.

The themes/ issues like homosexuality, abortion, and failed personal relationships are being boldly and fearlessly tackled by modern writers. Regarding women's issues and the feminine mind, there are several important issues. The current wave of Indian women writers writing in English is eager to tackle subjects and themes. These topics were regarded as taboo and were not allowed to be spoken in public. Postmodernism has a profound and broad impact on English-language Indian writings. The literary works of today exhibit this effect. These ideas are reflected in the best Indian literature, including Booker Prize winners like Arundhati

Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

The way that women are portrayed in Indian society in the twenty-first century has undergone numerous modifications as women's identities have been established. According to Sharma, Shashi Deshpande's book *The Binding Vine* (1992) has made marital rape a prominent topic. The protagonist of this book is Urmi, a female character. She was aware of and experienced her mother-in-law Mira's suffering. After finding Mira's diary, Urmi learns that Mira was raped in her marriage but chose not to speak out about it. In addition, Urmi was coping with the anguish and sadness of losing her kid to disease. *The Binding Vine* has depicted the modern problem of marital rape, which is forbidden in many conversations among families.

Through her story "*Second Thoughts* (1996)," Shobha De, another contemporary author, sheds light on the emotional and sexual requirements of an Indian middle-class woman. The protagonist of the tale is a married young woman from the middle class who develops feelings for a man other than her spouse. Maya, on the other hand, is unable to maintain the extramarital connection for too long since she values traditional customs. The author has demonstrated the significance of both emotion and sexuality, as well as how they are interdependent, in preserving wholesome relationships in this story. Hence it is vital to look at women's participation in social life.

2.6 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL LIFE

Women were viewed as less valuable individuals at the start of our second chapter. Women have been marginalized, discriminated against, and kept in the background for generations. It was her responsibility to take care of the babies, stay at home, and handle household tasks. However, there is a rising understanding of the value of women in today's environment. Women contribute to the household income by working and combining their earnings with their husband's to support the family.

Women have a vital part in society. They serve as the foundation of families and are essential for the progress and advancement of communities. Society, the world, and even existence itself would be lacking without women. Women have a unique talent for creating and possess the inclusiveness that our world greatly needs. They have the power to positively impact society through both rationality and imagination.

Women are the foundation of families and communities. They provide care, support, and nurturing to their loved ones and play a vital role in children's development. Women also contribute greatly to community building and often take on leadership positions in community organizations. So, empowering women is crucial for creating a fair and equal society. When women are empowered, they are more likely to take on leadership roles and have a say in decisions that affect their lives and those around them. Women's empowerment also leads to better health, economic growth, and poverty reduction.

It's no longer surprising to witness women driving luxurious cars, constructing modern homes, and excelling in their talents because they have acquired the skills and capabilities to do so. Moreover, their contributions greatly

benefit the economy of a country. In fact, they become taxpayers, which adds a significant percentage of revenue to the nation.

Education plays a pivotal role in the progress of societies. The education of women, in particular, holds great significance as it is associated with better health outcomes, enhanced economic growth, and the alleviation of poverty. Additionally, educated women are more inclined to invest in their families and communities, creating a positive impact that extends to everyone. Women with higher levels of education are less likely to marry young, which helps to avoid child marriages.

With a little knowledge and awareness, women can make small but effective changes in their child's health through food, exercise, and proper hygiene. Many young children, particularly girls living on the streets, are easily targeted by illegal prostitution rings, drug trafficking, the effects of HIV infection, and serious emotional and mental disorders due to their poverty. In India, 70–80% of all healthcare services are performed by women. In order to help society understand the importance of proper nutrition and health, female healthcare professionals may make a significant contribution. The improvement of India's health and nutritional system depends on the employment of women professionals and the empowerment of women at all levels. (Buckshee) Well-educated women possess a deep understanding of various social issues and serve as inspiring role models for younger generations. (Women Education in India - GeeksforGeeks)

Women play a vital role in the economy by actively addressing the issue of unemployment. Their increasing innovation and establishment of new businesses and companies create job opportunities, benefiting both the state and the government's commitment to protecting women's rights. In addition, women have

proven themselves to be successful entrepreneurs, outpacing men in the number of new businesses they launch. (Fawad)

Today we see, how women have the freedom to express their views and opinions on political matters. Their active participation in politics is crucial for the growth and progress of democratic societies. It's empowering to know that women can even run for parliamentary seats, as long as they meet the legal requirements outlined in their country's constitution. This inclusivity allows for a more diverse and representative political landscape. When women hold positions of political leadership, they contribute a wide range of viewpoints and experiences, leading to decision-making that is better informed. Additionally, their involvement in politics results in policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the entire population.

Women are making significant contributions to technological progress globally. They have creative minds and are inventing machines and gadgets to minimize manual labor and promote the use of automation. This not only boosts efficiency but also generates job opportunities for those operating these machines. Indian women athletes have experienced a remarkable surge in their achievements on the global stage since the beginning of the 21st century.

CHAPTER 3

FEMINIST REFLECTION IN ANITA NAIR'S SELECTED NOVELS

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITER :

On January 26, 1966, Anita Nair was born in Mundakottakurissi, a village in Kerala near Shormur. She completed her early schooling in Chennai and earned a graduate degree in English before coming back to Kerala to pursue her passion of writing in the English language. (Wikipedia)

Anita Nair is a well-known writer throughout the world. She is a prize-winning dramatist, essayist, lecturer, and literary celebrity. Nair is an Indian novelist who writes in English in her literary works. By adopting her distinct writing style in Indian English literature, she established herself on a global scale. Instead of focusing on fictional world she has focused on portraying ground realities in a very unique way through her works. For a writer, writing a book and spreading ideas to a large number of readers plays a vital role. But for a writer like Anita Nair, As a best-selling author, she was highly successful not just in terms of book sales but also in getting recognition and appreciation from Indian literary critics. She is now a well-known advocate for feminism in contemporary Indian English literature. Anita Nair has concentrated on the actual conditions that women face. (Mishra)

Her method of writing does not involve waiting for her thoughts to come to her. Rather, she likes to respond out the story in her head, which helps her to clearly see what she wants to write. This facilitates the word flow in her writing. She

acknowledges that she always travels with a notepad in hand so that she can record any idea or observation as soon as it occurs to her. This facilitates her work.

Nair writes highly contemporary novels in a modern language. The seriousness of her topics, however, sets her apart from the typical young readership, who are unable to absorb the complexity of the novels written by growing authors for their naïve reading lists. Before entering the fictitious world created by Anita Nair, one must acquire the maturity that her novels require for her readers. Her books are a reflection of the struggle and conflict they face in trying to be themselves.

She says that everything around her, no matter how small, inspires her—a simple idea, an incident, a word, or an image. As Anita Nair writes, her ideas develop into thoughts, which are then turned into the work that we read in her critically acclaimed novels. Anita Nair's art captures the variety of roles that women have played throughout their life. (Medley and Medley)

3.2 ANITA NAIR'S WORKS :

To delve into the literary journey of Anita Nair we must dive into the captivating world of Anita Nair's works.

Anita Nair, a novelist, spent twelve years producing advertising copy before she could dedicate herself fully to her self-described writing addiction. (Nair, Anita | Encyclopedia. Com) She began her career as the creative director of an advertising company. Her debut book, *The Satyar of the Subway*, is a compilation of short stories. The book has been sold by her to Har-Anand Press. She became well-known

because of this collection of short stories, which also aided in her application for a Virginia Center for Creative Arts fellowship. Her life was altered by this experience, and she began writing novels full-time. *Better Man*, her second book, was the first by an Indian author to be published by Picador USA. It was released by Penguin India. Numerous languages have seen the publication of Anita Nair's novels. And thus, as everyone knows, Anita Nair rose to fame in India and abroad as a novelist.

Early commercial works by Anita Nair were written in the late 1990s for "The Bangalore Monthly," a magazine that is now known as Explocity Bangalore. The articles were published in a column named "*The Economical Epicurean*" by Explocity. (Sharma "Anita Nair" The CEO Magazine India)

Anita's story differs slightly from other modern fiction writers in terms of concept, themes, and plot. She tries to go into great detail about everything. She has changed the image to one of the dawning villages rather than the city lights.

The Better Man (2000), one of Nair's well-known books, was released in both the US and Europe. It was also appreciated in India. The protagonist of *The Better Man* is Mukundan Nair, a bachelor who retires to the isolated Keralan village where he was born. He fled at first to get away from his violent father, but later he wanted to establish his value to the town leaders. His mother's ghost, who laments that he did not save her mother from dying from a fall down the stairs or from being attacked by her father, now resides in the house he inherited from her. Mukundan makes friends with One-Screw-Loose Bhasi, a house painter and healer, who subtly assists him in overcoming the emotional wounds from his upbringing. Consequently, Mukundan initiates a secret connection with Anjana, a teacher who is going through a divorce from her deserting spouse. However, the friendship is

scrutinized by the local authorities, who also want Mukundan to assist them in seizing Bhasi's land. (Nair, Anita | Encyclopedia. Com)

In her second book, *Ladies Coupé*, Nair transports the reader to the now-extinct ladies' compartment, or coupé, aboard Indian trains—a location reserved for women. With a great deal of knowledge, solidarity, and humor, the story explores the situations that women face in a society that is ruled by men. After her father passed away at a young age, protagonist Akhila, a 45-year-old employee of the tax department, took care of her family. She gave up her own goals and interests to raise her siblings because she was the firstborn and had obligations to them. They now disregard her as a useless spinster, unappreciative. Feeling stuck in her life, she rashly books a trip to a resort at the furthest northern tip of India. She ends herself spending the night in a ladies coupé with five other female passengers. It turns out that each has a very varied life story, with various family, social, and economic influences. (Nair, Anita | Encyclopedia. Com)

Ladies Coupé was chosen as one of India's top five in 2002. *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupé* by Nair have been translated into twenty-one languages. An update to *Ladies Coupé* is her 2018 novel *Eating Wasps*. According to The Telegraph it is “one of the most important feminist novels to come out of South India” (Anita Nair | Marsh agency)

Nair has experimented with a variety of writing styles and is not restricted to any one genre. “*Malabar Mind*,” her debut collection of poems, was released in 2002. “*Where the Rain is Born – Writings about Kerala* which she has edited” was edited by her in 2003. “*The Puffin Book of Myths and Legends*” (2004), a fascinating voyage into the realm of myths and legends, is another work of children's literature that she contributed to.

Writings by Nair about Kerala and her poem “*Happenings in the London Underground*” have been included in an anthology of the British Council Poetry Workshop as well as *The Poetry India Collection* (1992). Her poems were included in *The Dancing of the Peacock: An Anthology of English Poetry from India*, edited by Vivekanand Jha and released by Hidden Brook Press in Canada. The anthology featured 151 Indian English poets. Contributor for *Man’s World*, *India Today*, and the *Times of India*. Columnist for the *New Indian Express*. Translations of Nair’s writings are available in Dutch, French, German, Italian, and Lithuanian.

(Nair, Anita | encyclopedia.com)

Among the other publications Nair has authored is *Mistress* (2003), which attempts to examine and possibly synthesize different viewpoints on the connection between a man and a woman. The world of writing was about to change, and with it the slang words that writers had appropriated to portray Indianness in Indian English novels and poetry. This would elevate the problem to a new level and require fresh approaches to the medium of communication. (<https://theindianauthors.in/novelists/anita-nair/>)

A few additional novels she authored are *Adventures of Nonu*, *the Skating Squirrel* (2006), *Living Next Door to Alise* (2007), and *Magical Indian Myths* (2011).

Her essays, titled *Goodnight and God Bless* (2008), are published as a collection (Anita Nair, writer Anita Nair, Poet Anita Nair) Nair is a skilled writer who can transport readers to other worlds because of her travelogue writing. She developed her love of reading even further by training as a writer and turning the book

“*Mistress*” into the drama “Nine Faces of Being.” (Sharma “ Anita Nair” The CEO Magazine India)

The 2012 publication of "*Cut Like Wound*" by Harper Collins India, Bitter Lemon in the UK, Guanda in Italy, Albin Michel in France, Signatuur in Holland, and Duomo in Spain (Anita Nair | Marsh Agency) Anita Nair made her debut in the crime fiction genre with the creation of the fictional Inspector Gowda. The 2015 book "*Chain of Custody*" came out after this one. "*The Lilac House*" (2012) and "*Alphabet Soup for Lovers*" (2016) are two of her other works.

The script for Anita Nair's novel "*Lessons in Forgetting*" was also written; the film won the National Film Award in 2013 and was included in the Indian Panorama at IFFI 2012. ("Anita Nair – Words Are Bridges")

"*Idris: Keeper of the Light*" (2014) is a historical and geographical novel that is among her most amazing works. It takes readers on a voyage with a Somalian trader who visited Malabar in 1659 AD.

With audiobook titles like "A Field of Flowers" (2021) and "Little Duck Girl," narrated by Prakash Raj, Anita Nair's influence on literature is evident in audiobooks as well. Konkona Sen Sharma and Satyadeep Mishra provided the voices for *Twin Beds*. Konkona Sen Sharma has previously provided the voices for audiobooks including "*Why I Killed My Husband*" and "*Satyr of the Subway*." (<https://www.theceo.in/women/anita-nair>) Her most recent book, *Eating Wasps*, is about a writer with conflicting goals and desires. Anita Nair's story is incisive and carefully focused on message delivery and emotion communicating to readers. She writes with a delicate yet powerful style. Anita Nair was interviewed in January

2022 by Ramjee Chandran for the podcast The Literary City. (Anita Nair Facts For Kids)

The author of books such as *Satyr of the Subway: And Eleven Other Stories*, *The Better Man*, and *Ladies Coupé: A Novel in Parts*, Anita Nair was reared in Madras (now Chennai) after being born in a remote area of Kerala, India. Then, at the age of seventeen, she went back to Kerala. Even though she currently makes a living based in Bangalore, Kerala is where she does most of her work. The retired businessman in *The Better Man* and the spinster in *Ladies Coupé* are two examples of characters that Nair has stated she enjoys losing herself in their stories. (Nair Anita | Encyclopedia.com) Published in the United States, the earlier work was the first novel written by an Indian author. To adapt *Ladies Coupé* for American readers, Nair declined to make any changes.

The work was praised by several reviewers for its skillful depiction of everyday lives. “Nair’s low-key, sometimes funny and sometimes hard-hitting book, is not earthshaking but is definitely worth a read,” Urvashi Butalia wrote in a review for the Hindustan Times website. A. Nayak commented on the variety of personal experiences presented in the coupé in a piece for Masala.com, drawing the conclusion that “all are poignant and indelible.” The book might “easily become a treatise on the social status of women, but Nair’s story-telling style saves it from becoming a commentary on women’s lib,” Nayak noted, given its premise. (Nair Anita | Encyclopedia.com)

The Better Man, a well-received and critically acclaimed novel in India, received favourable reviews in the US, despite certain criticisms. For example, Kit Reed critiqued the book in a New York Times review, stating that its meandering style and disconnected elements work against it. He referred to it as “a genial,

meandering tale filled with false alarms and diversions” and went on to say “Charming as it is, the novel gathers momentum only at the end, when Bhasi and Mukundan find themselves at odds just in time for the drama of conflict and resolution.” A Publishers Weekly reviewer praised the “charming” book, saying, “In this hilarious, inventive, and heartwarming book, Nair has the magical capacity to make all of her readers feel, for a small while, like Kaikurussi villagers.(Nair Anita | Encyclopedia.com)

Awards and recognition:

Since her very first piece of writing, Anita Nair has consistently produced excellent work, for which she has won numerous important awards. Her renowned novel “*mistress*’ made her a nominee for the 2007 PEN / beyond Margins award in the United States, one of her numerous accomplishments. Additionally, she is a finalist for the German Literaturpreis 2007 nomination.

The novel was also included in the UK’s Orange Prize long list. In 2008, she was granted the FLO FICCI Women Achievers Award in recognition of her efforts and her literary achievements. (Medley And Medley) For her significant literary contribution, encouraging cross-cultural endeavours, and illuminating experiences that have gone beyond an endless variety of forms – barriers of language, cultures, and identities – Montblanc honoured her in 2009 by launching the Special Edition writing instrument in India.

In 2012, the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award recognized her significant impact on literature and culture. Nair’s writings have been well-received by critics; one of her novels, “*Idris Keeper of the Light*,” was included on the 2014 Hindu Literary Prize shortlist.

Among her other accomplishments are the 2015 Expo May Global Ambassador for Women, the Crossword Book Award, the Jury Award, the Children's category, Muezza, and Baby Jaan in 2017. (Anita Nair, Writer Anita Nair, Poet Anita Nair)

Anita Nair's impact continues beyond her writing accomplishments; in 2020, she was named a prominent advocate for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

She was also honoured with the Arch of Excellence Award for Literature at the All India Achievers' Conference in New Delhi.

3.3 THE EVOLUTION OF FEMINISM:

The Feminist movement has its roots right in the earliest eras of human civilization, working to prioritize the political, economic, and cultural equality of women across every society for thousands of years. It also means challenging and dismantling the existing systems of inequality and discrimination based on gender, and acknowledges that women have been historically marginalized and denied opportunities simply because of being women. Feminism affects all of us, but most of all it impacts the rights of women and girls. At its core, feminism is about all genders having equal rights, opportunities, and treatment(Varrial)

Feminism acknowledges that every person deserves to be treated with the same level of humanity and respect. With a wide range of viewpoints, philosophies, and methods, the movement is dynamic and complex. Feminism as we currently know it now is a product of the global collaboration of scholars, activists, and thinkers. The feminist movement does not support the idea that women are superior to males or that the efforts and experiences of other oppressed groups should be

disregarded. Regardless of gender identification, the goal is to create a society that is more just and equal for everyone. However, within the movement, various people may interpret the word “feminism” in quite diverse ways.(Varrial)

‘Feminism’ In The Dictionary

Feminism is defined as “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes; or organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests” by reliable Merriam-Webster, which also declared it the Word of the Year for 2017. It also mentions that in English, the word “feminism” was first used in 1841. According to Dictionary.com, a definition of feminism is “the doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men,” according to Dictionary.com. We must examine the word’s etymology in order to comprehend the concept of feminism’s deeper significance.

Origin Of The Word ‘Feminism’

Originally linked to women’s rights, the term “feminism” was coined in 1837 by radical social utopian and French philosopher Charles Fourier. He discussed women’s empowerment via the French feminist movement. Feminisme is directly translated into English as “feminism,” yet there is an etymological breakdown of the original French word. The Latin term femina, which means “woman,” is the source of the Old French feminine, and the suffix -isme, which transforms a noun into a system, practice, or philosophy, is derived from the same word.

As we’ve already mentioned, the word “feminism” didn’t initially have a political meaning when it first appeared in English in 1841; rather, it only indicated

that something had to do with women. It began to refer to the progressive politics of women during the 1890s women's suffrage movement, which is today known as the "First Wave" of feminism. Instead of recognizing the phrase as their own, the movement adapted it to fit their purposes. And that is the reason behind how we use the word 'wave' in feminism. ("What's the meaning of feminism")

History

The notion that women should have human rights served as the foundation for feminism. Several philosophers from the 18th and 19th centuries, including Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill, advanced this theory. Early 20th-century feminists who came after said that women ought to have the right to vote in a democracy. There were numerous protests because a large number of women firmly believed that they should be able to vote. They were referred to as suffragettes. This is a result of their battle for universal suffrage, which grants us the right to vote. The Suffragettes protested for their rights on many different levels. Some women even took their own lives to demonstrate how unfair it was that they were excluded from political life. Following women's suffrage, feminism gained traction..

Nothing comes easily. We have to face consequences to climb the ladder of success. So even during the feminists waves some Feminists have not always been supportive of female politicians; Margaret Thatcher, Sarah Palin, and Michele Bachmann are a few prominent examples. ("Feminism")

Feminism's waves basically aim to analyze the history of modern feminism by breaking it down into multiple historical periods, from the late 19th-century battle for women's suffrage to the many movements that coexist in the present moment. Popularizing the idea was a 1968 piece by Martha Lear in the New York

Times, wherein she made a distinction between the activists of previous generations and the feminist movement of her day, known as the second wave. (“A Brief History Of Feminist Waves”)

The "wave" idea had critics who claim that by implying that there is only one unique form of feminism present at any one point in time, it oversimplifies a more complicated history. In the real world, every movement consists of smaller, overlapping sections that frequently disagree with one another. Even while the wave concept is undoubtedly imperfect, it is nevertheless a useful tool for summarizing and comprehending the controversial past of feminism in the US, from its roots at Seneca Falls to the activity propelled by social media during the #MeToo period.(Pruitt And Pruitt)

Gender equality has been significantly addressed due to generations of dedicated workers, who have improved women’s human rights in a variety of areas, including political decision-making, healthcare, work prospects, and education. Waves characterize feminism and its achievements in history. (Varrial)

1st wave

Emerging in the middle of the 19th century, feminism’s first wave spread throughout the US and the UK. For women at this period, obtaining legal rights was the primary goal. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Lucretia Mott group of women, which included Stanton, gave rise to the American first wave of the Seneca Falls conference in 1848. Numerous abolitionists were among the attendees of this first-ever woman’s rights convention in the United States.

Equal property rights and the omission of a husband’s ownership of his wife were at the forefront initially. Alcohol use increased throughout this wave, which led to

an increase in domestic abuse and made things worse for women and children. (“Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges”) As the 19th century came to an end, the emphasis switched to calling for women to have the right to vote in the hopes that this would lead to the attainment of other rights.

Numerous activists in the United States, particularly women of color like Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth, pushed for this to be paired with universal suffrage. In 1893, New Zealand became the pioneer nation to formalize universal suffrage for women. The United States granted women the right to vote in 1920 when the 19th Amendment was approved. (Varrial) The right to vote was ensured for white women by this amendment. Truth Sojourner questioned the “cult of domesticity.” Women started to create their own identities and rebelled against the gender norms that society had placed on them.(“Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges”) But the mainstream feminist movement, which includes Susan B. Anthony, disregarded these opinions and used racist arguments to promote its own goals. This was the case, for one example, following the passage of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1870, which gave African American men the right to vote (theoretically), shocking many white suffragettes.(“A Brief History of Feminist Waves ”)

Abolitionists were also some white feminists. However, many White advocates for women’s voting rights neglected to include Black and other women of color in their campaign.(including specific age and socioeconomic status) Due to this distinction, the first wave of feminism ended about 1920.(“Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges”)

2nd wave

According to some accounts, the second wave started in 1963 when Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique," which attracted a lot of attention in the US, was published. With three million copies sold in just three years, the book was an enormous success and sparked the second wave of feminism. (Pruitt And Pruitt)

Contrary to the stereotype of women from the 1950s, it argues that women are not fulfilled by marriage, childcare, or housekeeping. It also links into the idea that "the personal is political," which has come to symbolize the second wave of feminist movements.

Western feminist movements succeeded in passing landmark laws pertaining to equal pay, equal education, and reproductive rights during the course of the following 20 years. It condemned sexual harassment and domestic abuse and campaigned for women to have their own bank accounts without their husbands' permission. When this wave of activism first started, sexual violence was a major theme that dealt with civil rights issues. Black women were particularly impacted by the structural prejudice that Black people in the United States continued to face. The Montgomery Bus Boycott ultimately became a pivotal milestone in the civil rights and feminist movements because they were targets of sexual assault on public bus routes. Campaigns were also launched to stop forcing people of color and some people with disabilities to get sterilised. ("Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges")

The second wave succeeded in organizing huge crowds for demonstrations and activity, which gave rise to the myth of the "angry feminist," the stereotype of the "angry feminist," and the image of feminists as deranged, hysterical people.

Additionally, feminists started to investigate cultural icons such as the Miss America contest. They opposed the ideas and actions that made women into objects

of desire and imposed unattainable beauty standards on them. Protests against the pageant were organized by activists in 1968 and 1969, who claimed that the patriarchy kept women home, controlled their identities, and devalued them. (“Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges”)

Second-wave feminism, like the suffrage movement, was criticized for emphasizing affluent white women. As a result, some Black women founded their own feminist groups, such as the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). Even with its successes, the women’s liberation movement had started to wane by 1980, the year Ronald Reagan was elected president by conservative forces. (Pruitt And Pruitt)

3rd wave

The Anita Hill case of 1991 is a defining feature of the third wave, which starts in the 1990s. One of the first public discussions on workplace harassment occurred when African-American law professor Anita Hill testified about being sexually harassed by Clarence Thomas, the nominee for the Supreme Court. (“A Brief History of Feminist Waves”)

The third wave, which rejected all expectations of what women should be, gave women more rights and influence. Women had more opportunities to embrace every aspect of their personalities, with greater autonomy and freedom, even if many disparities persisted in all spheres of society. Women were encouraged to exhibit their sexual desires and individualism by the wave. (Varrial). Kimberlé Crenshaw invented the term “intersectionality” in the 1980s, and it was because of this growing understanding of it that the phenomenon occurred. The term “intersectionality” describes the ways in which many forms of oppression, such as

racism and sexism, interact with one another. It also attacked the second wave for largely speaking for middle-class, white, heterosexual, cis women's desires.

Since then, feminists have come to value intersectionality more and more. Although this was undoubtedly one of the more significant accomplishments of the time, many detractors said the cry of "Girl Power" was a hollow promise because there was no cohesive political goal or philosophy..("A Kinda Brief History of Feminism")

The philosopher Judith Butler, who strengthens the case for trans rights by defending the distinction between sex and gender, is also seen as a key contributor in the third wave. ("A Brief History of Feminist Waves")

Finally, the wave also questioned the idea of "universal womanhood" with the aid of the punk feminist movement and "Riot grrrl" music groups that arose. It was the fusion of politics, activism, and artistic expression. Oftentimes, the "grrrls" of this era embraced femininity, dressing in lipstick, stilettos, and braziers that their moms had discarded. These campaigners changed people's perspectives by establishing the possibility for women to embrace feminine clothing, which was previously seen as a sign of male oppression, and to show that they were intelligent. ("Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges")

4th wave

While many maintain that there are only these three waves of feminism and that the third wave is still running strong, some contend that in the 2010s, the third wave gave way to a fourth.

The fourth wave's link to the media and its online campaigning for social change are its defining characteristics. This indicates that it supports feminist causes

online, particularly on social media, where it runs campaigns against body shaming and rape culture and utilizes hashtags like #MeToo and #YesAllWomen. After Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein was found to have sexually harassed and assaulted women, the #MeToo movement gathered momentum in 2017. An analogous movement was really initiated more than ten years earlier by activist and survivor Tarana Burke. Her NGO, me too, works to support activists in ending sexual assault and to give survivors services. (“Learning the History of the Feminist Movement | Bestcolleges”)

Pop culture has changed as a result, striking a connection with young women, girls, and people of color everywhere, resulting in the emergence of youthful activist online communities. The fourth wave is said to go beyond the third In terms of sex- and body-positivity and to further strengthen women’s empowerment, even if it retains the elements of the third wave. Additionally, they are still struggling with the idea of intersectionality.

Indian Feminism:

As we begin to embark on exploration of Indian feminism, we will be glad to be empowered by the incredible stories, struggles, and triumphs of Indian women and others. Indian feminism is an adventure that will make you see how coming together and working as a team can create a world where everyone is included and treated equally. It's about realizing the endless potential we have for change and progress.

In India, feminism involves balancing global, national, and local concerns; these include complex cultural norms and socioeconomic inequalities (History of Feminism in India • Bebadass.in)

India's feminist movement is vital to tackling the nation's enduring social injustices and ingrained gender inequality. It is crucial because it aims to alter established rules, empower women, and advance gender equality in a variety of contexts, such as politics, the workplace, social interactions, and education. India's feminism has a special character due to its unique environment. In addition to addressing global feminist themes, it also tackles complex cultural norms, caste systems, and socioeconomic inequality. In India, the fight for women's rights is connected with the fight against female infanticide, violence related to dowries, and unequal access to resources. The fundamentals of feminism are still relevant today, but India's movement is dynamic and multidimensional because it is deeply interconnected with its rich cultural heritage. It is also deeply rooted in the nation's social fabric.

The history of feminist writing has also had a big impact on the women's movement overall. Women's advocacy and literary history are connected and mutually supportive. The Women's Organization bases its understanding of the patriarchy on the historical analysis of gender. The development of approaches and viewpoints about the historical progression of women into their current roles is a noteworthy advantage. (Singh)

History of feminism In India

The history of feminism in India is vital as any other histories in the world. Women were not aware about the rights during the 1st phase of feminism but today women are fighting for their own rights just because, in the 1st phase and back then we encountered 'Nari shakti'. Before delving into the phases of feminism in India. We will take a look at the history of feminism in India.

The first stage started in the middle of the 1800s when reformers began to challenge societal mores and educational practices in order to advance women's rights. The second phase, which started in 1915 and ended with Indian independence, saw the emergence of independent women's organizations and Gandhi's inclusion of women's activities into the Quit India movement. The third phase, which started after independence, has concentrated on women's rights to political equality and equitable treatment after marriage, both at home and at the workplace.. (" Feminism in India")

Maharashtra was the birthplace of the feminist movement in India thanks to the pioneering work of women's rights and education activists such as Savitribai Phule (1848), Tarabai Shinde (1882), and Pandita Ramabai (1880s), who criticized the caste system and patriarchy in Hinduism and married outside of it. Bengali reformers worked to end practices such as sati, which involved a widow being burned to death on her husband's funeral pyre, child marriage, the practice of harming widows, the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows, women's education, securing the right for women to own property, and the requirement that the law recognize women's status by granting them basic rights such as adoption.

Most women's difficulties were brought to light, and changes started to be implemented. Men carried out a large portion of the initial changes for Indian women. But by the late 19th century, their spouses, sisters, daughters, students, and

other people who were directly impacted by campaigns like those for women's education had joined them in their missions. As independent women's organizations were formed by the late 20th century, women had more autonomy. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, a new story about "women's activism" was emerging. In order to establish "logical" and organic connections between feminism and Marxism, as well as with anti-communalism and anti-casteism, etc., this was recently investigated and broadened. Although "equality between the sexes" was guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, women's movements saw a relative pause until the 1970s.

The distinction between the sexes in terms of duties, functions, goals, and aspirations was largely taken for granted throughout the early stages of women's rights movements. They were therefore to be treated differently in addition to being raised differently. This distinction as a result of itself eventually emerged as a key catalyst for the start of women's movements.

Reformers of the early 19th century contended that women's subjugation in society had nothing to do with the differences between men and women. Subsequent reformers, however, believed that this specific distinction was what really linked women to their social roles—such as mothers. Women's rights therefore needed to be properly taken care of. Their roles as mothers were emphasized once more, but in a different way, with the establishment of women's organizations and their own involvement in campaigns. This time, the case was for women's rights towards independence, education, and expression. But as time went on, the perception of women as symbols changed, moving from a focus on family to the development of the classic mother figure. ("Feminism in India")

The three phases of Indian feminism:

Three major eras of the complicated path that Indian feminism has taken has been characterised by changing beliefs, difficulties, and the unwavering efforts of feminist pioneers.

1st phase

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries—a time marked by British colonial control and socio-cultural conservatism—the first wave of Indian feminism arose.

The principles of democracy, equality, and individual rights were introduced during the colonial march toward modernity. The emergence of nationalism and an examination of discriminatory practices led to caste and gender-based social reform initiatives. Men in India started the first wave of feminism with the goals of eliminating societal problems, permitting widows to remarry, outlawing child marriage, and lowering the rate of illiteracy. It also sought to protect property rights by means of judicial action and to control the age of consent. However, as nationalist movements arose in India in the late nineteenth century, efforts to improve the position of women in that country were considerably hindered. Particularly in the domain of family relations, these movements opposed "colonial interventions in gender relations." A nationwide movement emerged in the middle to late 1800s to oppose colonial attempts to "modernize" Hindu families. Among these was the Age of Consent dispute, which started when the government attempted to raise the legal age of marriage for females. ("Feminism in India")

Pioneers like Pandita Ramabai and Savitribai Phule were crucial in opposing established patriarchy and promoting women's education. Known as the "mother of

Indian feminism," Savitribai Phule tirelessly advocated for women's education and agency, founding girls' schools against opposition from society. (History of Feminism in India • Bebadass.in)

During the British colonial march, women reigned over several Indian states, notably Jind Kaur in Punjab, Quidisa Begum in Bhopal, Kittur in Jhansi, and Rani Laxmibai in Jhansi.

2nd phase (1915-1947)

A wider feminist awakening with a focus on social awareness and legislative changes was observed during the second phase. (History of Feminism in India • Bebadass.in)

Intense resistance to colonial rule emerged during this time. Nationalism emerged as the main factor. The assertion of Indian supremacy was used as a vehicle for cultural revivalism, which led to the creation of an essential Victorian-style model of Indian womanhood—one that was unique but kept private from the public sphere. Gandhi's introduction of Indian women into the nonviolent civil disobedience movement against the British Raj justified and extended their public activities. He elevated their feminine roles of selflessness, sacrifice, empathy, and care while creating a space in the public sphere for them. Peasant women were crucial to the rural satyagrahas in Bardoli and Borsad. There was an emergence of women-only organizations such as the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). Women were battling problems with communal awards, women's suffrage, the extent of women's political engagement, and leadership positions in political parties.

For Indian women, the 1920s marked a turning point in history, when 'feminism' gave rise to regional women's organizations. These groups created livelihood plans for working-class women, focused on issues related to women's education, and coordinated national-level women's organizations like the All India Women's Conference. AIWC had a close relationship with the Congress of Indian Nation. It operated within the nationalist and anti-colonialist independence movements, led by Mahatma Gandhi. As a result, the widespread mobilization of women became a crucial component of Indian nationalism. Women were heavily involved in a number of nationalist and anti-colonial initiatives, including as the 1930s civil disobedience campaigns.

Following independence, the All India Women's Conference persisted, and the Indian Communist Party established the National Federation of Indian Women as its own women's wing in 1954. Yet, as patriotic agendas on nation-building took priority over feminist issues following India's 1947 independence, feminist goals and movements became less vocal.

Women's critical awareness of their rights and place in an independent India had been encouraged by their involvement in the liberation movement. As a result, the Indian constitution now includes women's civic rights and the franchise. ("Feminism in India") Renowned individuals such as Kamla Bhasin and Sharmila Rege vigorously defended the rights of women, taking on problems like dowries, domestic abuse, and discrimination based on gender. Kamla Bhasin worked to empower women via education and economic independence as well as to raise awareness of gender-based violence.(History of Feminism in India • Bebadass.in) Women's empowerment was supported by equal pay for equal work, maternity health and child care services (including preschools), affirmative action, and other

measures. The government started acting ignorantly toward women. The Indian constitution, for instance, asserts that women constitute a "weaker section" of society and as such require support in order to exercise their equal rights. (In particular, women from indigenous and Dalit communities.) Therefore, unlike women in the West, women in India did not had to fight for their fundamental rights. The paradise came to an abrupt end when the newly gained ideals of democracy and fundamental rights were not upheld by social and cultural beliefs and structures.

3rd phase - post

Feminists started redefining the parameters of women's employment rights after independence. The majority of feminists acknowledged the gender gap in the workforce before independence. On the other hand, feminists contested and worked to undo the rooted disparities during the 1970s. These disparities included keeping women in "unskilled" occupations, paying them less than males, and using them as a labour reserve. declared in various ways, the goal of the feminist movement was to end the free labour of women, who were essentially being utilized as cheap labour. In the 1970s, feminist class consciousness also gained popularity as they acknowledged the disparities not only between genders but also within various power structures, including caste, class, tribe, language, region and religion. This presented a problem for feminists as well because it required them to concentrate their efforts in order to guarantee that granting the demands of one group would not result in additional inequality for another. In the early twenty-first century, the Indian feminist movement has shifted its focus to include women's autonomy over their personal lives and the right to self-determination, in addition to seeing them

as valuable contributors to society and granting them the right to equality. (Thakur)

Indira Gandhi took office as India's first female prime minister in 1966. She was India's prime minister from 1966 to 1977 for three terms in a row, and from 1980 until her assassination in 1984, she held the position for a fourth term. The third phase, which lasted from the 1990s to the present, saw a major turn in the direction of intersectional feminism, which recognized the interconnectedness of sexuality, gender, caste, and class. Prominent voices emerged from activists like Kavita Krishnan and V. Geetha, who addressed challenges unique to their respective social situations. Kavita Krishnan's advocacy covered a broad spectrum of issues, from campaigns against sexual harassment to supporting the rights of underprivileged women in conflict-ridden regions like Kashmir. (History of Feminism in India • Bebadass.in)

Because they were menstruating, the Kerala High Court banned women over the age of ten and under the age of fifty from entering Sabarimala Shrine in 1991. However, the Indian Supreme Court removed the prohibition on women entering on September 28, 2018. It declared that discrimination against women is unconstitutional on any grounds, including religious ones. Kerala is frequently seen as the model progressive state in India for leading the state-level women's rights movement. Kerala continues to have relatively high rates of female health and literacy, as well as higher rates of female inheritance and property rights. For instance, a 1998 study by Bina Agarwal discovered that although just 13% of Indian women whose parents owned land were able to inherit it as daughters, 24% of these women were able to do so in the state of Kerala. This is significant since research has demonstrated that initiatives to increase women's access to property and

economic independence through avenues like education not only enhance their well-being and capacities but also lower their chance of encountering any kind of marital or other domestic violence.

One law passed by the Indian Parliament to safeguard women against "domestic violence" is the Protection of Women from Domestic abuse Act of 2005. The Indian government implemented the concept on October 26, 2006, and it encompasses not just physical violence but also non-physical kinds of violence like emotional and verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and economic abuse. This is a civil law, not a criminal law, with the primary purpose being protection orders. But a recent survey found that 51.5% of men had been the victim of abuse from their spouses or wives.

In order to shield women from sexual harassment at work, India passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Act became operative on December 9, 2013. Sexual harassment is now an express offense under the Indian Penal Code thanks to the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013. The Amendment also added additional parts that made it illegal for someone in a position of authority to engage in sexual actions, stalk someone, or strip a lady naked without her consent. Additionally, it designated acid attacks as a distinct offence, punishable by a minimum of ten years in prison, a maximum of life in prison, and a fine. The legal definition of rape was broadened to include acts such as forcing a woman to have her vagina, mouth, urethra, or anus penetrated by the penis, or by any object or part of her body to any extent, or applying one's mouth to one's sexual organs against the willing consent of the victim. The new rule mandates that all Indian hospitals, whether government and private, provide free medical care and first aid to victims of rape.

Additionally, the 2013 law raised the age of consent from 16 to 18 years old. As a result, any sexual interaction with a person under the age of 18—regardless of consent—now qualifies as rape under the law.. ("Feminism in India")

Today's ideology of feminism in India.

After reading about feminism and its history, it is important to note the current status of how feminism has attracted the minds of people in India.

So today's feminist movement in India is broad and multidimensional, aiming to combat social conventions that support discrimination and destroy long-standing gender inequities. It acknowledges the relationship between gender and other facets of identity, including sexual orientation, class, caste, and ethnicity. Many topics are addressed by modern Indian feminism, including as sexual harassment, reproductive rights, employment equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and violence against women. For example, the "Me Too" movement gained traction in India as courageous survivors of sexual assault and harassment shared their stories and demanded justice. In addition, programs like the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" campaign work to promote girls' education and empowerment while addressing the unbalanced sex ratio. Online and off, contemporary Indian feminists are still fighting against stereotypes and promoting an inclusive and equitable society. They stress the significance of intersectionality in comprehending and resolving issues related to gender. (History of Feminism in India • Bebadass.in)

Feminism in Indian context.

The way women functioned in pre-colonial societies shows how feminism was defined differently in India than it was in the West. When the state hired a group of feminist researchers and activists to write a report on women's condition, women's issues in India were first given attention. The report acknowledged that India's system of structural hierarchies and inequalities harmed women. Indian feminists of this era drew inspiration from Western discussions about violence against women. However, the discussion in support of Indian women had to be carried out creatively and some Western concepts had to be rejected because of the differences in India's historical and social cultures. After the United Nations designated the years 1975–1985 as the Decade for Women, women's issues began receiving attention on a global scale.

In Indian society, Indian feminists encounter various challenges that are absent or less common in Western society. Indian feminists share the same end aim as their colleagues in the West, but their approach to feminism might vary greatly to address the kinds of problems and situations they encounter in India's contemporary patriarchal society. Indian feminists employ diverse strategies to contest the patriarchal framework of their community.

The mother of five, Sampat Pal Devi, was raised in her Indian village and witnessed marital abuse and violence firsthand. She was formerly employed by the government. Following this, she made the decision to form the "Gulabi Gang," an insurgent squad that tracks down abusers and beats them with bamboo sticks until the victims are thought to have received enough justice and the abusers have regret. In terms of religion, Indian feminists highlight the significant symbolism of Hinduism's female goddesses. As per our reading in Chapter 2, feminists draw attention to the female-dominated background of Indian culture and highlight the

existence of non-patriarchal periods in Indian history, during which communities were present. Indian women must navigate a variety of restrictive patriarchal family systems in order to survive, including those based on age, ordinal status, relationship to men within the family of origin, marriage and procreation, and patriarchal traits. Dowries, having sons, etc., family ties, caste, community, village, market, and the state are a few examples of patriarchal characteristics. However, it should be mentioned that a number of Indian communities display matriarchal inclinations, including the Nairs of Kerala, the Shettys of Mangalore, several Marathi clans, and Bengali households. Rather than the eldest man, the oldest lady leads the family in some communities. It's also believed that Sikh culture is largely gender-neutral.

In India, "some... are matriarchal and matrilineal" of the groups designated as Scheduled Tribes under the country's Constitution "and thus have been known to be more egalitarian." Manipur "has a matriarchal society," according to interviewer Anuj Kumar, although this claim may not be supported by academic research. Robust dynasties controlled Manipur, and the males were involved in the limit expansion, crushing of foreign challenges, etc. Hence, women had to assume responsibility for the home. The diversity of Indian experience indicates the presence of multiple patriarchies, which in turn contributes to the complexity of feminism. Because of this, feminism in India is not a single theoretical perspective; rather, it has evolved over time in response to historical and cultural circumstances, consciousness levels, and the views and behaviours of both individual and collective women. The most common meaning is "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation." [12] The path to a just society

for men and women involves acknowledging the existence of sexism in everyday life and working to combat and eradicate it by dismantling mutually incompatible ideas of femininity and masculinity as biologically fixed categories.

Men were the ones who started social reform campaigns against various societal problems, which challenges the idea that men and women are polar opposites who oppress the other constantly. This is especially true in the Indian setting. Of the hierarchy, patriarchy is only one. Women in the same family have more negative relationship structures. It is women versus women in this situation. Women do not always hold back power. ("Feminism in India")

The link between Indian and Western feminism has been the subject of heated discussions within Indian women's movements. Even with the advancements made by Indian feminist groups, discrimination against women continues in contemporary India. Many Indian feminists simultaneously assert both an international feminist solidarity with organisations and individuals around the globe, as well as a particular "Indian" sensitivity. The 1970s saw the emergence of liberal feminism in the West, which placed a strong emphasis on calling for women to have equal access to jobs and education and to stop violence against them. The early feminist movement in India was heavily impacted by Western principles. These demanded equal rights and education, but they also tailored their arguments to address regional problems and anxieties, like rape in custody, Sati, sex-selective abortion, and violence against women brought on by dowries. These injustices are viewed by Indian feminists as ones that are worth fighting for, and Indians frequently confuse feminism with female dominance rather than equality. Some Indian feminists have argued that these problems are a reflection of a broader

tendency of patriarchal oppression of women rather than being specifically "Indian" in origin.

Feminist movements in India have faced some criticism, just like in the West. They have drawn particular criticism for giving undue attention to affluent women while ignoring the concerns and representation of lower caste or impoverished women. ("Feminism in India") Feminist movements and organisations that are caste-specific have resulted from this.

As our study goes through the lens of feminism. It's vital to understand - Feminist theory : The expansion of feminism into theoretical or philosophical domains is known as feminist theory. It includes research in a wide range of fields, such as women's studies, anthropology, sociology, economics, literary criticism, art history, communication, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. Feminist theory frequently examines gender politics, sexuality, gender inequity, and power dynamics. Discrimination, objectification (particularly sexual objectification), oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, art history and current art, and aesthetics are among the themes frequently examined in feminist theory. A large portion of feminist theory concentrates on advancing the rights and interests of women while simultaneously offering a critique of these social and political relationships.

Parallel to this, French feminists created the idea of *écriture féminine* (literally, "female or feminine writing") in the 1970s. Along with other French feminists like Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous contends that writing and philosophy are phallogentric and emphasizes "writing from the body" as a subversive practice. Feminist philosopher and psychologist Julia Kristeva and artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger have impacted feminist theory in general and feminist literary

criticism in particular. Still, "none of these French feminists align themselves with the feminist movement as it appeared in the Anglophone world," as academic Elizabeth Wright notes. More modern feminist theory has focused on defining feminism as a global emancipatory movement, such as Lisa Lucile Owens' idea.

Intersectionality is the concept which we find when we read about feminist theory. To begin with the Definition of Intersectionality : It is a sociological framework that helps us understand how various social and political identities can result in different forms of discrimination and privilege. It considers factors like gender, caste, race, class, and age, height weight, physical appearance etc and how they intersect and overlap. These intersecting identities can have both empowering and oppressive effects. However, there is a lack of comprehensive quantitative research to fully validate or question the practical applications of intersectionality.

When it comes to the experiences of women of color, the impoverished, immigrant women, and other groups, intersectionality expands the focus of the first and second waves of feminism, which were primarily concentrated on the experiences of white, middle-class, cisgender women. By recognizing women's many identities and experiences, intersectional feminism seeks to set itself apart from white feminism.

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw first used the word "intersectionality." She explains how people who are most marginalized in society are impacted by interlocking systems of power. Scholars and activists utilize the framework to advance political and social equality. The concept of intersectionality challenges analytical frameworks that address each axis of oppression separately. According to this theory, racism and sexism alone are insufficient to adequately explain discrimination against black women; rather, a more nuanced explanation is

required. The oppression that comes with being a poor or immigrant woman of color is known as triple oppression, and intersectionality addresses issues that are related to it.

The framework has been criticized for its ability to reduce people to particular demographic characteristics and for being used as an ideological weapon against other feminist theories. The framework has drawn criticism for being unclear and having no clear objectives. Critics claim that because it is grounded in viewpoint theory, its emphasis on subjective experiences can result in paradoxes and make it difficult to pinpoint shared sources of oppression. A review of scholarly works published up until December 2019 revealed that there aren't many commonly used quantitative techniques to look into intersectionality-informed research issues. It also offered suggestions for best practices in analysis for next studies. Intersectionality is commonly misinterpreted when integrating theory into analytical techniques, according to a review of scholarly publications released through May 2020. A quantitative approach to intersectionality was proposed in 2022, and it was based on information theory—specifically, beneficial information. In this framing, intersectionality is associated with knowledge about some outcome (e.g., income) that can only be learned when multiple identities—e.g., race and sex—are known together and cannot be extracted from analysis of the individual identities taken into consideration separately. (“Intersectionality “)

3.4 THEMES IN *MISTRESS* AND '*EATING WASPS*'

Anita Nair themes in the novels guide us to think how she explores relationships and search for identity. To delve into the complexities of these themes fundamental aspects of our lives.

In Anita Nair's novel *Mistress*, one interesting aspect is how it explores the relationship between men and women. Nair's belief in "new humanism" emphasises that women should not be seen as mere objects of desire, but as equal partners to men. She portrays the idea of a liberated woman who has surpassed societal and economic constraints, developing a mindset and emotional independence. The novel also delves into the complexities of large families, where dependency can lead to intense emotions. So, it's a thought-provoking story that explores these themes.

Shyam loved Radha since his childhood. Although he knew about her pre marital affair he didn't bother about marrying her. In return Shyam had received property shares from Radha's father because he knew that only Shyam would agree to marry Radha. Shyam's family agreed but Shyam's sister, Rani Oppol was suspicious that Shyam had been forced to agree. She said "You can get any girl you want. You don't have to be saddled with her just because we owe her father a debt of gratitude," (Nair 122)

Even though Shyam's sister objected, he went ahead and married Radha. On their wedding night, Radha awaited Shyam in their bridal room, her expression appearing as if it were carved from stone. Despite Shyam's attempts to lighten the mood with a joke, Radha remained impassive and didn't crack a smile..

Shyam wanted to excel in his career. Shyam owned a resort near river Nila where tourists and foreigners visit and stay. Shyam and Radha had no child for the last eight years. Radha felt trapped in her marriage because of playing the housewife role. Shyam treated her like a sex object. She said " I can't say that I am unhappy with Shyam. If there are no heights, there are no lows; either...I think that for

Shyam, I am a Possession. A much cherished Possession. That is my role in his life. He doesn't want an equal; what he wants is a *Mistress* (Nair 53)

Chris had come to meet Koman (Radha's uncle). And Eventually Radha and Chris started their secret relationship. Radha herself wanted to find out whether her uncle, who had an affair with her mother, was her father.

Koman made a lot of mistakes by getting involved with Radha's mother, who was his own brother's wife. As a wife, Gawri represents the honour and reputation of her family and carries on traditions from one generation to the next. Even after marrying Shyam, Radha couldn't find fulfilment in her life. The illicit relationship opened the door for other people to criticise. . Radha faced societal judgement for not having a child. But in the end, she discovers that she was actually pregnant with Chris' child.

When Saadiya's parents find out about her love for Sethu, a Hindu boy, they kick her out of the house. She decides to be with Sethu, who believes that Dr. Samuel will assist them. However, Dr. Samuel advises Sethu to leave immediately. Sethu and Saadiya have a disagreement about performing "Khitan" on their newborn child. Sethu is upset because he believes it will cause pain to the baby's penis and testicles. He tries to persuade Saadiya not to go through with such a procedure. Rationality was not allowed to function in Saadiya's upbringing, which is heavily indoctrinated in religion. She is asked to leave his son and go to her parents by Sethu, who will not permit such acts to be perpetrated on his child. It is just the child who was at home when he returned. Because of their constant arguments, Saadiya becomes hopeless and ends up killing herself.

Koman and Anjela start getting involved romantically, and it's really hard for Koman to resist Anjela's strong attraction. They decide to move in together.

Sethu, who has had similar experiences in the past, tries to talk to Koman about the idea of marrying Anjela. Gradually, Koman's perception of Anjela changes, and she convinces him to go to the West for international recognition, fame, and fortune. This boosts Koman's ego and makes him more inclined to pursue that path.

Even in the novel *'Eating Wasps'* Urvashi's relationship with Mahesh wasn't a bad marriage. Mahesh had always done what a husband was meant to and he had done it well. We see that she receives kisses when he leaves for work or whenever she leaves earlier. She received occasional surprise gifts and the big tickets for birthdays and anniversaries. But their marriage was a contractual obligation determined by their mutual usefulness. Although she had not given birth to children. She had been chosen to be his wife eighteen years ago.

An affair with a married man could go two ways: he either left his wife or left a lady to go back to his wife. Asha would stop talking about Raghu. She had to live with the phantom of the other woman in her life. She always thought of the woman she had turned into. All that she had was intimacy and a whispered memorandum of understanding that would have no validity in the court.

On the other hand, Urvashi's relationship with Raghu was a deal. Raghu had accepted all her flaws. He made her feel it was right to be who she was. But eventually Urvashi felt that their relationship was hard work; she had to be everything his wife was not. She had to fulfil his sexual desires and at times she felt like "sex kitten and seductress" (Nair 109)

The theme of man and woman relationship also torched Sreelakshmi and Markose's relationship. Sreelakshmi was a writer. She considered herself as Kerala's Virginia Woolf. She was in love with a married man Markose and he was

the one who dumped her. The reason was never about her career but it was about having an affair with a married man.

Issues of Identity and self-definition remain uppermost in the novel. The novel delves into the complexities of suppressed identity and also the novel revolves around the female character who fought for their identity.

These days, women are showing their true selves with confidence. Even though they were once silenced, they have found their voices and are challenging traditional notions of dependence. They are bravely embarking on a journey of self-discovery, determined to make their mark on the world. Some women have already achieved their goals, while others are still on the path to self-discovery.

Shyam always refers to his wife as "My Radha" when he speaks or thinks about her in the book "*Mistress*." For Shyam, it feels completely natural to exert control over Radha in various aspects of her life, including her appearance, behavior in society, and even her most intimate moments. His meticulous records of Radha's activities symbolise his attempts to maintain control over her. Shyam believes it is his right to dictate how Radha spends her free time, how she styles her hair, and even what colour sari she should wear. Even in the case of marriage, Radha's father decides her husband, leaving her in a passive role where she is married to someone below her own standards, which disappoints her father's expectations for her "to make a brilliant marriage into a family that will match them in a status and Wealth"(Nair 119)

Rani Oppol's life is mostly revealed through her conversations with Radha and Shyam. We learn that her marriage was arranged according to tradition and it had a significant impact on her family's wealth.

Radha's behaviour is seen as inappropriate for various reasons. People criticised her for not having a job and staying at home. They use this as a reason to judge everything about her, from her clothes to her cooking. Rani Oppol, who herself follows traditional gender roles, expects everyone else to do the same. We don't really know why Rani is so committed to conforming to these rules. She values the traditional way of life above all else. Even though she suggests that Radha should have a job like a modern woman, Rani still expects her to dress modestly in a sari and have children. If Radha doesn't meet these expectations, Rani doesn't consider her as an equal. To Rani, Radha's reluctance to fulfil the traditional role is more important than her higher social status, at least until she has a child.

Radha isn't the first person to have an affair. It was actually her mother who planted this idea in her mind when she was young. Radha initially believed her mother shouldn't have done that, but then she ends up making the same mistake herself. What's interesting is that she didn't share this secret with her husband Shyam, but instead confided in Chris, whom she trusted. This shows the level of intimacy between Radha and Chris. Radha tries to justify her actions by comparing them to her mother's experience, which helps her convince herself that it's alright. In her marriage of convenience, Radha feels trapped and longs for artistic freedom and self-expression. She finds it hard to tolerate Shyam, whom she sees as materialistic and lacking in refined tastes. When Chris suddenly enters their lives, Radha's suppressed emotions explode, leading to significant changes in her relationships with all three men.

In the novel *'Eating Wasps'* Urvashi thought about her identity and said " I wish I could define who I am. I wish I could say that what I do makes a difference in the world, in some way" (Nair 44) As a journalist she met different people. Her

identity was nothing but she believed that she believed that her identity was entangled in several affairs with man.

Sreelakshmi craved for identity which her sisters were failed at. She decided to stay single and away from the pressure cooker. She discovered that writing helped her to forget everything. She wrote about possibilities and chances of encounters. She insisted her mother leave Karakkad. She wanted to gain recognition in writing.

Another female character - Najma. Her Ammi helped her to build the foundation she needed in her life. Ammi had borrowed money from her friend to buy a new dress for Najma's Interview. Even though Najma was educated enough her identity was influenced by Religion. At her work ladies were asked to wear churidar kurtas having little prints in pastel shades. And ofcourse, dupatta to cover their heads.

Even Ammi's life was not easy. She had to regain identity to live her life freely and away from hassels. At the age of twelve years Ammi's drunken father had married her off to twenty-three years man older than her. Ammi was sold for five hundred rupees. She had understood that her dreams were scattered. Although she faced difficulties in her past, she wanted Najma to live her life with freedom. She was progressive than others and she was talking about empowering Najma.

After Imtiyaz flung acid on Najma. Her identity was destroyed. Everyone used to see Najma with shock and horror in their eyes. Everyone in the train denied having seen anything. Najma's life was destroyed yet Imtiyaz was walking freely. When Ammi knew about this incident , she supported Najma and she wanted him to see in jail. Najma'ammi never wanted her to hide her identity or hide under Burkha. But after this incident she started wearing Burka. Soon after the death of

Ammi , Najma decided that she could face the world and never hide behind burkha.

In this world it's important to recognise that we as a human have a right to make choices. In this way Najma renamed her identity.

CHAPTER 4

INTERSECTING IDENTITIES AND VIOLENCE IN '*MISTRESS*' AND '*EATING WASPS*'

In the third chapter we saw how intersecting identities can affect one's life. It can be empowering as well as oppressing. To know how female characters in the novel '*Mistress*' and '*Eating Wasps*' take these identities, we have to analyse text through the lens of Intersectionality.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF '*MISTRESS*'

Class: The class discrimination began with the social hierarchy, wherein the wealthier people were at the top and common people and others were at the bottom.

According to Shyam's mother, he was the main provider and bread winner of the family. As he was climbing the ladder of success his mother thought about his marriage. Shyam immediately had a thought about Radha. But his mother reacted harshly saying not to be foolish. She thought that Gowri Amma (Radha's mother) would have agreed but not Mani (Radha's father). Shyam's mother said that "he expects his daughter to make a brilliant marriage into a family that will match them in status and wealth. We are nobodies" (Nair 119) . Shyam believed that his love for Radha would be enough. But it was necessary for Radha's family to consider Status and wealth of Radha's life partner. This analysis shows us that the intersectionality of class was the main reason for Shyam's mother to keep away the thought of marrying Radha. We see how the aspect of class portrayed the female

character in the novel *Mistress*. Shyam's mother considered that they were not in Radha's league.

When Mani came to know about Radha's affair, he was shattered. And in order to save his own reputation and standing in society he pleaded with Shyam to marry Radha as he was his lone hope. Due to this bonding later on Mani had gifted money and shares of his properties to Shyam just to save his and Radha's goodwill. But actually it was a bribe for marrying Radha. Even today in Indian society the concept of dowry is seen frequently.

Another insight into the intersectionality of class and gender is when Radha was putting forth her opinions of working out, Shyam wasn't supporting her ambition. He started giving excuses to her as he doesn't want her to work. The main reason behind this was the question of "what will my friends and their wives say if they find out? We have a place in society." (Nair 71) This shows us the influence of social class on Radha's ambition. It also suggested that societal expectations and judgement based on gender was the main issue behind deciding Radha's ambition.

In another insight Angela's introduction of Koman as an artist instead of acknowledging his actual position working under a chef suggests a potential desire to elevate his social status. By presenting Koman as an artist, Angela may be attempting to align him with a higher social class associated with artistic pursuits, which could potentially enhance his perceived status and reputation. This situation highlights the intersection between social class and the perception or presentation of one's occupation or profession. The intersectionality of class in this scenario sheds light on the ways in which social class can influence how individuals are perceived and how they present themselves to others. It underscores the significance

of social class in shaping people's identities, opportunities, and the way they are perceived by others.

This situation also raises questions about the impact of social class on access to certain professions and the opportunities for upward mobility. It highlights the complexities and potential disparities that can arise when individuals navigate different social classes and the ways in which they may strategically present themselves to fit within certain social expectations.

Marital status: are the distinct options that describe a person's relationship with a significant other. Married, single, divorced, and widowed are examples of civil status.

Today, we are required to fill the marital status in forms, vital records, and other documents to indicate whether a person is married or single. Traditional values and cultural norms emphasise the importance of fidelity and commitment within the institution of marriage. Engaging in a premarital and extramarital affair can be seen as a breach of trust and a violation of societal expectations. In the case of Radha, she was not happy in her married life with Shyam so she decided to draw her attention to Chris. This shows us that the intersectionality of Marital status can affect the overall experience of life. She felt as a chance of happiness with Chris . This portrays that her decision of extra marital affair was the voice for her own happiness.

The female character Maya, was happily married and had 2 children. Her decision of having an extra marital affair with Koman intersected with her individual desire for the sense of comfort. Maya and Koman secretly got married in the temple without civil documents. But when Koman asked her to stay with him forever, she denied as she didn't want an extra marital tag. She thought that she was

content with her current situation. This shows us that due to societal expectations about marital status caused Maya to stay away from the decision of continuing her affair. We apprehend that the patriarchy looks at women as inferior in addition they question such marital situations and treat women as exploited.

Even in the situation of pre-marital affairs, women are ill-treated by society. The question of reputation began to be established. In the case of Gawri ,(Radha's mother) her marriage was fixed with Mani. But 3 days before marriage he ran away thinking that he would be trapped in this marriage and won't be able to live freely like he used to. Radha came to know about her mother's pre-marital affair from her uncle that her Family honour and her mother's future were at stake. "The pregnancy was a secret, but if the marriage was called off, her life would be ruined" (Nair 344) Before the whole town could find out the actual situation , Babu got convinced to marry Gawri. In this way we see that the intersectionality of Marital affairs can also affect our identity.

However, it's important to remember that Indian society is diverse, and perspectives on premarital affairs can vary. Younger generations, especially in urban areas, may have more liberal views and be more accepting of personal choices and relationships outside of traditional norms.

Religion: Religion is a set of organized beliefs, practices, and systems that most often relate to the belief and worship of a controlling force, such as a personal god or another supernatural being. Religion often involves cultural beliefs, worldviews, texts, prophecies, revelations, and morals that have spiritual meaning to members of the particular faith, and it can encompass a range of practices, including sermons, rituals, prayer, meditation, holy places, symbols, trances, and feasts.

India is a secular nation where we respect every religion but due to numerous practices and perspectives within religion, there is an increase in one-sidedness and discrimination. Religion can influence societal norms, cultural practices, moral values and even political dynamics. Religion shapes the way people live and interact. Throughout our lives, we have all experienced the traditional aspects and customs that are derived from our religions. Minority religions may be subject to stigma or discrimination. People who belong to a minority religion may be subject to discrimination and prejudice, especially when the religious differences correlate with ethnic differences. One of the such groups which we can discuss from the "*Mistress*" novel is community of Muslim (under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992)

Religion is an aspect which we encounter when we look at feminism intersectionality. In the novel, Sethu fell in love with Saadiya at the first sight. Saadiya was a descendant of the original Kahirs, purest of Arab blood. On the other side Sethu belonged to Hindu religion. Saadiya used to meet Sethu up on the terrace at Nazarath where a hospital was located in which Razia (Saadiya's sister) was hospitalised. Even before marriage Sethu had informed Saadiya that he was a Hindu and said that their "love will never be accepted" (Nair 143). Sethu was waiting for her reply and in which she said that they must find a place where their love would be allowed to live. When she refused to marry a person which was chosen by her family, Saadiya's Vappa disowned her. This shows us that a girl like Saadiya can set an example for others to choose their own life partner instead of keeping that option available for family or any other person. Every woman must have a right to voice and take serious decisions in life.

Saadiya chose to live with Sethu, the love of life. When Dr. Samuel came to know about their situation, he tried convincing Sethu to leave Saadiya. He said "Every day you will discover differences" (Nair 183) Indian patriarchy sees Interreligious marriage as problematic for couples who belong to different faiths. It is assumed that in the eyes of God, Inter-Religious marriage will never consider it as a marriage. The question of choosing one religion or which faith one's children will follow and so on revolves around. Throughout our lives, we have all experienced the traditional aspects and customs that are derived from our religions. The way of living life and interacting with others is shaped by religion.

Sethu stood firm to his decision of marrying her. Sethu and Saadiya settled at Manappad. When Sethu went to work , Saadiya started developing the fear of loneliness. She remembered her mother telling about Holy Koran. Saadiya chose a religious path. She convinced Sethu to get her Religious books - Koran, Holy Bible, The Thirukural and the ramayana. The intersectionality of religion is seen at the time of her delivery; she speaks about dying with the baby. She puts forth a condition that "If this baby is born, it has to be brought up as true Muslim" (Nair 197) In India, people get influenced by Religion ,caste and other factors to name their child. In the case of Saadiya, she chose to name her son 'Omar Masood'. She follows her path of religion. Instead of welcoming children into the world, sometimes we are more bound to religious thoughts. The child of Saadiya had to balance the two god's. On the birth of the child Saadiya asked Sethu to whisper her religious prayer. At the same time Sethu wanted to establish equality between religions. So even he decided to recite his prayers. This shows that Sethu respected other religions. Saadiya performed 'Aqiqah' which is an important ritual in her religion, Where in they weigh a child's hair and give the same amount as alms. But

when she suggested the ritual of 'Khitan' in which the child's inner thigh skin has to be removed. Sethu got intolerable after hearing this.(Nair 226) They both had an argument which led Saadiya to leave the house. This shows that intersectionality of religion can impact our life. Even after getting immense support from her husband, she chose to delve into religious practices more often which led to arguments and at the end she was left with nothing. Because of Sethu's love she was also disowned by her family but when it came to religion, and her beliefs she was hopeless.

Sexuality: It is a term which describes one's sexual behaviour, likes, preference.

Intersectionality of sexuality is explored through the different characters in the novel '*mistress*'. In the first case, Radha and Shyam had been married for eight years. Shyam showed unconditional love towards Radha. But on the other side, Radha neither felt pity nor even affection. She was only engaged in the responsibility of marriage. Radha felt that there was no escape from the ritual of marriage. As Radha was just a cherished possession for Shyam. And sleeping was the only ritual in which she indulged with Shyam in their marriage. This shows that she was treated as an 'object'. According to society, a woman must be a housewife, she must obey her husband and fulfil his desires. But it's necessary to see women not as machines but as human beings. A woman seeks for individual freedom, self-love and has her own decisions. Radha was trapped in a marriage because of societal norms. Shyam as a husband started dominating Radha. He used to treat her only as a partner in bed. When she refused to accept his sexual demand, she said " I am not a bloody object" (Nair 162) and she even questioned him " Don't I have a right to say no?" (Nair 163) yet he forced her to have a physical relationship. Even today women are considered as a sex object. A rapist doesn't have to be a stranger , he

could be one's husband. A rape is considered as rape even if it is sanctified by marriage. The most intimate relations of women with men are held to be governed by consent.

The intersectionality of sexuality can explore one's personal desires and emotional fulfilment. Radha's decision to choose Chris for her sexual needs shows us that her personal desire and emotional need was satisfied within this bonding with Chris. But at the end she got to know that she was pregnant, she realised that it was not a love but lust. She felt disgusted with herself for Cheating Shyam and having sexual connection with Chris. This shows that the intersectionality of sexuality, although she got an opportunity to look beyond her marriage for sexual desires (her romance) yet , we see at the end she was faced marital rape.

Culture: The ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or social norms: are the unwritten rules and expectations that guide our behaviour and interaction within a community or culture.

Even after many years of marriage Radha faced difficulties to conceive. Hence there was family and societal pressure which she faced. She was considered as infertile and she was not welcome in one of the festivals. They considered such women to be evil. Even before celebrating any occasion we usually think about society, what people will think or whether our decision can be accepted by society or not. All these thoughts usually revolve in our minds. Intersectionality of societal norms is seen in the case of Radha. A woman from her society said "I don't think you should come with us. You know how people are ; they think a married woman who hasn't had children for so long is a Macchi. They won't like it " (Nair 114) The idea that a married woman without children is seen as a "Macchi" reflects the cultural belief that a woman's primary role is to be a mother. These expectations

can be influenced by societal norms, cultural beliefs, and gender roles. It highlights how gender intersects with marital status and the perception of motherhood.

As Dr. Samuel and Sethu were travelling to a different region in order to help people to cure from the Drought and Cholera, there was a need for a helping hand of females. But Dr Samuel did not ask his nurses to travel with him. To clarify Sethu's doubt about keeping sisters behind in the hospital even after knowing that they were needed, Dr. Samuel said " It would harm their reputation if they spent the nights with us in the wilderness. " (Nair 48) This shows that Dr Samuel took care of his actions which might be perceived by the society and potential harm it could cause to the nurses.

Another insight where we discover intersectionality of culture is in the story of Chris and Radha. When they began their physical relationship, Radha spoke about precautions. She didn't use the word "Condom" as she was too embarrassed. Chris reacted carelessly to this and asked her to buy a few. Then she realised that in India a woman gets a strange look when they go to a chemist and ask for condoms. But in other countries women don't feel insecure to openly speak about sex. She feels that in India, due to societal expectations women are judged by people . In the novel there is also a mention of the installation of Vending machine.

Today we know about a law called 'live in relationship' where adults can stay together without marrying each other. Live in a relationship has no legal implications. There is no registration required and even no divorce is required to end the relationship. This western culture was not very well accepted in society.

To provide a brief summary about an incident of Intersectionality of culture we have to delve into the case where Angela and Koman had their meetings in Kerala. Angela had come to Kerala in order to pursue her studies in the art of

'Kathakali'. Eventually Angela and Koman started living together in the same house. Soon people started gossiping about their live in relationship. One fine day, Babu visited koman's place and informed him that even at the marketplace people used to talk about them. This incident developed the fear that his family's name would be disgraced. And this was the reason Babu said " This is a small town, like I said. I don't want any slander spoiling my child's prospects." (Nair 374) In order to preserve their social standing, he also suggested that he marry Angela. But Koman's and Angela's thoughts were different from other people yet they were trapped in the cultural norms where a man and woman staying together before marriage was not appreciated. Angela realised that she was in the small town with people who had "smaller minds" (Nair 374) intersectionality of culture and societal norms

Gender : It refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviour and expectations associated with being male and females. Gender is Determined by biological sex. In the novel '*mistress*' the intersectionality of gender highlights oppression against women. The nurses who were asked to help in the situation of drought, Dr Samuel didn't take them with him because they would have been targeted because of their gender. In this case, the intersectionality of gender demonstrates how societal attitudes can affect access to opportunity and safety for individuals based on their gender identity. It also suggests that there was gender based discrimination which could put them in risk.

A mother is a one who thinks once for herself and twice for her child. When it comes to a gender, females are targeted by the society during birth of the child. After Saadiya's death there was a need for a woman to take care of her newborn. So the only option which came into Sethu's mind was that the Sister Faith and Mary Patti would take care of his child. So he handed his child over thinking that they

would take care of the child's needs. He used to visit Faith's house very often to see his child. But one day Dr told him not to visit their place. He said "All this coming and going makes the world talk" (Nair 231) he said this because he didn't want Hope and Charity's name slandered as it will automatically affect his hospital's reputation. His visits would ruin their chances of marriage.

In the novel, women's story was narrated. Women were not allowed to step out of their house on their own. . They were found to satiate male needs. The ship had anchored in kafirs kingdom and the ship was full of women. The leader summoned Brides for those who had no wives, and second wives for married men whose wives showed no inclination to share their husband's lust for adventure. There were some rules which were laid down only for the women like none of them should go out on their own. Secondly, "No man may look at a woman unless she is his wife, sister, mother or daughter. If a woman comes In his path, he must turn his back on her and let her pass." (Nair 97)

For women there were alley ways which were built for their use. In the story it was revealed that there wasn't a single female insight- child, girl or woman.

Another insight where we see, intersectionality of Gender is where Koman's bird named Malini sees a stranger outside or near the gate she used to make noise. So one day a stranger was passing by and he said to Koman that birds are meant to be free. This reveals that freedom for birds is as important as humans' urge to be free. On this comment , the koman asked him "How different is it from keeping your wife and daughters at home? Isn't that a cage, too ?" (Nair 74)

Although Keeping wives and daughters at home can be seen as a reflection of patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles that assign women the primary responsibility of caregiving and domestic duties. It doesn't only steal one's freedom

but it also targets one's mental health. However, it's important to recognize that this practice can vary across different cultures, communities, and individuals.

Stranger replied to him that he can't compare the bird and woman. He supported his statement saying " Women need to be looked after" (Nair 75) . This statement clearly expresses that just because she's a woman one must take care of her. Women were termed as inferior and even today are treated in the same way. Even though they have claimed the staircase of success , for women it gets difficult to compete in society.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF '*EATING WASPS*'

Marital Status : Intersectionality of marital status is highlighted through many female characters of *Eating Wasps* by Anita Nair. Marital status has been the most important aspect in society. Sreelakshmi's both older sisters were married at the age of sixteen. They wanted to be married. Sreelakshmi had never been a domestic sort of person who loves to have a husband like a pressure cooker and two children. She dont want marriage or children or a pressure cooker. Even though she had scoffed at the marriage proposal bought by her relatives. To this extent, she asserted her agency and independence. She wanted to stay single. She used the excuse of her master's degree. She said that her father doesn't want her to wash dirty dishes. Another excuse which she came up with was about a tutors position. She said that relatives must wait until her position was confirmed at a college in Pandalam. In this way she clearly expressed her desire to stay single and not conform to societal expectations of marriage and motherhood. She challenged the traditional notion of a domestic life where a woman is expected to have a husband

and children and take on domestic responsibilities. Sreelakshmi's desire to stay single and focus on her education and career demonstrate the complexity of navigating societal norms and personal choices within the context of marital status.

When Theresa was narrating her sister Molly's story to Father George Koshy, she portrayed her sister as a widow. A widow is seen with no shelter above her head and society keeps on passing judgement on her. When Molly's husband Mathew drove his Jeep into a bulldozer and flung it on the ground, he was soon declared as dead. Usually society treats a widow as harmless and demands to have some pity on her just because she's a widow. But on the other hand her own sister, Theresa becomes a suspicious woman and accuses her sister for having an affair with Anthony. She called her "Bitch. Whore. Devil's spawn" (Nair 95). According to her, Molly tried to grab Anthony's attention, and she exchanged a secret smile with him. Society thinks that a widow who can think of a relationship can be an adulteress, a shameless, brazen hussy who has no qualms about having an eye on another man. But when Molly started confessing to George Koshy she said that her own sister spewed venom all day. Any woman like Molly would be devastated to be a widow a mere six years after her marriage. She often thought "which other man would endure his wife's widowed sister, as he did?" (Nair 100). In a society where women were revered as deities, widowed women's hair was chopped off. The woman who had been shorn and shaved appeared to be colourless and lifeless. This was the condition of the widow. Although the physical torture might have come to an end in certain parts yet in the case of Molly, we still see societal judgement and her suffering as a widow.

Intersectionality of marital status resulted in privilege for Urvashi as well as she faced difficulties and challenges . Even after marrying, Urvashi decided to have an affair outside her marriage. Anita Nair describes extra marital affairs as a 'hard work' in the context of Urvashi, Urvashi says " I have to be everything his wife is not" (Nair 109). Once again a woman was treated as an 'object'. When it comes to the choice of man, a woman has to be sexy, interesting, reckless, wanton and tender. Urvashi had to work on what she wore , what she said and what she ate. A relationship with Raghu began because she had never met anyone before who got her the way he did. For Urvashi it was a victory because he made her feel right in her own self and with all her flaws. He seemed to consider what made her tick. Her marital status influenced the pressure she faced to confront certain stereotypes and roles with relationships. Although it was Urvashi's choice to be in a relationship, she also faced difficulties. The presence of Raghu's wife created a barrier for Urvashi to openly communicate and seek support from him. Urvashi had to transform herself into "sex kitten and seductress" for Raghu (Nair 109). This shows that Urvashi's marital status with societal expectations and gender role as a woman who is considered as inferior is seen in the case of Urvashi even after picking her own choice had to obey Raghu's demands. .Her marital status influenced the pressure she faced to confront certain stereotypes and role with relationships. A widow or a woman who looks outside her marriage is always judged by people. When Urvashi joined a dating app, a man was stalking her profile wondering how lonely a woman must be to look outside her marriage. With these incidents we see Urvashi's experiences are shaped by gender , societal expectations , power dynamic and marital status.

Intersectionality of marital status played a significant role in shaping Asha's experience and challenges she faced. Even Asha was suffering due to Raghu. Asha had to live with the phantom of the other women in her life. This created a sense of loss and longing for Asha. Due to Raghu's act she used to weep. She had put her life on hold, waiting for him to call or come over to her flat. For Asha " what every couple took for granted would never be hers"(Nair 111) like a walk down the road, meal at favourite restaurant , a tub of popcorn shared at a movie, buying groceries, and shopping together. All these desires were unfulfilled. This shows that the intersectionality of Marital status intersects with Asha's emotional well-being and fulfilment of desires within the relationship.

Religion: In Najma's context we encounter the demonstration of Intersectionality with reference to religion and gender. We see Najma was selected as a school teacher in Bangaroet. It was a school which was run by a Muslim charity and they were glad to hire Najma. Ammi had sought help from the owner of a company where she used to work in order to employ her daughter in the school; the owner had strong links with the school. This shows us how the intersection of religion and power can create specific barriers for other women. It shows us that there was a distinct perspective which contributed positively to the school environment

For Muslim women, the hijab serves as an identity that reflects their modesty and strong beliefs or what is called the 'Imaan' also serves as protection for women from the male gaze, especially from those unrelated men. In the novel '*eating wasps*' Najma's mother - Ammi had faced many difficulties in her past. Her husband accused her of having affairs with the fruit vendor and the postman. She was married off at the age of twelve. Due to Ammi's intersecting identities like

socio economic background, age and gender, her experience was influenced. And that is the reason Ammi had given Najma's the freedom to choose. When Najma was travelling in the train, an old man muttered " what kind of Muslim woman steps out without a Hijab?" (Nair 62) Najma never used to wear Hijab. This case reflects an old man's belief about muslim women and their adherence to religious practices. On the same day, acid was flung on her face. And from that day onwards Najma pulled on Burkha. The truth was that no one wanted a girl with a wrecked face. On a school board someone had said to her half heartedly that she would wear a burkha. "Though Burkha is for business too. You know how touchy parents are about religion these days"(Nair 70). This highlights the fact that religious beliefs are given more importance than anyone's comfort. But at the end Najma decided that she could face the world and never hide behind burkha. She said "I don't mind if it isn't a teaching job. I'm not going to wear a burkha. I will not hide my face" (Nair 70) In this world it's important to recognise that we as humans have a right to make choices about religious practices, our appearance and how we navigate societal expectations. The intersectionality of Najma's experience as a Muslim girl, the societal expectations which she faced and Ammi's impact on her resulted in shaping her choices. For us it is necessary to understand that people have different interpretations and expressions of their faith and it is not fair to make judgement or assumptions based on someone's appearance and choice. Everyone should be free to reveal their identity according to their comfort.

Gender: Intersectionality of Gender is highlighted through Najma's character. Just because she was a woman she was asked to wear churidar kurtas having little prints in pastel shades. And ofcourse dupatta to cover heads. These were the rules and regulations laid for lady teachers. This dress code was

specifically targeted towards women and this indicates that gender plays a significant role in how they are supposed to present themselves. This case of intersectionality of gender shows us how societal norms and expectations can intersect with identity.

In Megha's context , her class teacher also spoke about curbing her imagination in order to make her topper. Although she was good at academics, her teacher felt that she should behave in a certain manner. Her class teacher showed the first page of Megha's diary to Chaya (Megha's mother) . Megha had written all the compliments which she had received from Prem uncle "You are a Princess. Princess Megha" (Nair 27) . This reveals that the Indian patriarchy treats women differently. In a society, a girl should sit, eat, talk/ behave properly. A girl shouldn't talk to strangers. If Suraj(her brother) or any other boy had written such compliments in a book , his teacher would have not asked him to curb his own imagination. The intersectionality of Megha's age and gender forced her to experience unusual circumstances in life. She had not yet seen the ground reality of the world ; about people's different intentions. When gender intersected with Megha's age she was even more oppressed.

Brinda Patil was a national badminton champion who had won several international titles. During the Diwali party at the club house she had worn a lehenga choli for the first time. , there is the intersection of gender and clothing norms. Usually she was seen in sports attire. But this time everyone gave her a weird look. Her society members commented " She's like a boy dressed up. All angles and no curves. Girls need curves" (Nair 128) This shows us that it was the girl's decision to wear a lehenga choli, which is traditionally seen as more feminine attire, and

challenges societal expectations and norms regarding how girls should dress. The comments from her society reflect the intersection of gender and body image, as they focus on her body shape and the perception of lacking curves, implying that femininity is associated with specific physical attributes.

Also, there is an intersection of gender and societal expectations. The comments suggest that there is a narrow definition of femininity that dictates how girls should look and behave. This places pressure on individuals to conform to these expectations, reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting the expression of gender identity.

4.3 EXPOSING VIOLENCE

Many forms of violence against women and children have come to light over the ages, including honor killing, femicide, feticide, domestic abuse, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and cyberbullying. However, women have to constantly battle a variety of issues.

Feticide and cyberbullying are not new forms of violence against women. It is still there and is felt by women of all ages who are victims of those who uphold patriarchal hegemony. Millions of women worldwide are impacted by violence against them, regardless of their age, class, culture, language, religion, or level of education. Due to gender stereotypes, men are mostly responsible for the violence against women, making women the weaker sex and hence the most vulnerable victims.(Victim-Perpetrator.)

Victimisation affects victims for the rest of their life in both a physical and psychological way. Literary works depict human feelings and situations in a

picturesque manner, which reflects society. undoubtedly, Anita Nair has made a significant contribution to women's writing with her realistic depictions of female characters in *The following Doors*. Her passion for writing delves into the secrets of women's life and their struggles inside patriarchal societies, with the goal of emancipating them from the many misinterpreted customs and religious beliefs. Her works feature characters that are regular women who represent the gender disparities they experience in their daily lives. Indian author Anita Nair addresses the various types of victimisation that occur in the present day in her novels *'Mistress'* and *'Eating Wasps'*

Before investigating violence and abuses in the novels. We will delve into the concept of victimisation. The act of physically or psychologically abusing someone is known as victimisation. The person who committed the crime is the perpetrator, and the others who have suffered or been victimised—either alone or collectively—physically and psychologically are the victims. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, a victim is someone or something that has been harmed, destroyed, killed, or endured suffering, either as a result of another person or thing's acts, an illness, or coincidence.

In the novel *'Mistress'*, Violence is seen in many cases. The female character Saadiya, was bound to stay at home and never beyond the common alley. She never liked the idea of herself, her sisters and every other woman born there, as they were living and dying hidden by those walls. She had a desire to go outside and live her life. One fine day, Saadiyaa decided to follow her desire to just go to the common alley all by herself but she knew her Vaapa would get furious if he got to know about it. Yet she goes out and eventually her family comes to know about her step. When Zuleika told the whole story to Ummama she got very angry and Vappa did

what was expected of him. He made Zuleika heat an iron rod till it blazed a fiery orange and with that rod he burned Saadiya's calf. In his act of cruelty he said “ But I can't let you go unpunished for risking the honour of my family.” (Nair 130) This injury led to infection. And she had to suffer. Vappa's cruelty took away the freedom of Saadiya. Not only in the case of Saadiya but in India and other parts of the nation women are not allowed to educate themselves and move outside. In India women are entitled to the right to life and dignity. Even The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is one of the important acts and laws for Indian women. It is meant for women's protection against oppression by domestic violence.

Another case where Saadiya rejected the marriage proposal, Vaapa started boiling with anger. Vaapa and his family did everything they could to convince Saadiya for marriage. Vaapa administered beating her, threatened her and even gave orders to starve Saadiya but Saadiya was determined by her thoughts and refused to change her mind. At the end her Vaapa disowned her from the family.

In the start everything was going well in Sethu's and Saadiya's married life. But when Saadiya got determined by her religion, Sethu couldn't understand her anymore. On the birth of their child Saadiya started demanding to perform Muslim's rituals, they both had an argument in which Saadiya claimed she did a mistake leaving her family. Sethu couldn't believe her words and asked her to leave the house. She was shattered, there was no one she could go to and she ended up giving her life by committing suicide.

In Anita Nair's novel *Eating Wasps*, six-year-old Megha Naidu is portrayed as an entirely innocent victim. Her school bus's conductor, Prem Uncle, was the one who attacked her. She does not add anything to the victimization, but the offender

takes advantage of her innocence to further their own agenda. Prem Uncle carefully and attentively tucks Megha's hair behind her ear while sitting her on his lap in the truck each day and gives her a handful of jamuns. "Chubby, chubby cheeks, curly curly hair: what a pretty girl! She is such a Bommakutty," he murmured, pulling at the flesh on her cheeks. (Nair 26)

Children receive affection and love from everyone without passing judgement on them, and they are unaware of the intentions of those who harm them. When love comes from other people, children who don't receive enough of it from their parents or other family members begin to crave and enjoy it. Megha truly loves Prem when he refers to her as a doll. Because, up until now, nobody had called Megha a doll. Additionally, her mother changed her feelings for her first child, Manoj, which makes Megha feel very touched. She writes her name as "princess" in the school diary and sings, "Megha is a bommakutty, la la la," (Nair 27) when she receives extra attention from Prem. Today's parents want their children to be exposed to a variety of locations and situations so that they will be self-sufficient in the future, rather than growing up in a four-wall setting. Consequently, kids will be equipped to deal independently with challenging circumstances and harmful intentions in the future. Unfortunately, the abuser's good intentions allow them to take advantage of helpless children who don't know the difference between right and wrong. Even parents can be blind to bad intentions sometimes. Megha's mother chose not to send her in the truck anymore after learning that Megha was sitting on his lap and writing her name in the book "princess.". Megha was disappointed with her mother's choice and prayed hard for it to be overturned the entire night. At first, Megha's father was ignorant to the truck driver's obscenity. He reasoned that sending her by truck would give her an opportunity to see the outside world, which

is different from the lovely setting they have provided for her. Parents place certain limitations on their (female) children in order to prevent criminality, even if they permit their kids to engage with a variety of individuals and situations. Megha was cautioned by Mummy not to sit on Prem Uncle's lap or the edge of the bench.

The following day, Megha planned to sit on the bench rather than on his lap or the edge of the bench. Prem Uncle found Megha's actions annoying, so he smiled and looked away from her. Since he was the one who referred to her as a princess, she found it impossible to comprehend and accept his ignorance. She was deeply impacted by Prem's avoidance, so on the drive home in the evening, she apologises in a quiet voice. She was unsure about her offence and the reason for her apology.

However, she was aware that apologizing usually works. Prem uncle took advantage of Megha's sense of ignorance and worthlessness to physically abuse her.

Prem uncle took advantage of his authority and asked her to kiss him instead of saying sorry. For a six years old girl like Megha, pressing her lips against someone else's lips seems nothing less than pushing off a swing on its way down. She sensed his tongue in her mouth just like a snake. Prem uncle smiled at her, she was yearning for his smile. We usually try to make a child happy by giving what they ask or what they like the most. A child's happiness directs us to recall our childhood memories. But Prem uncle said that he "will show you a few other ways in which you can make me happy" (Nair 32)

Megha's childhood was different. Prem uncle started assaulting her. Megha told him that her father had told her not to sit by the edge and her mummy had said that she mustn't sit on any stranger's lap. Megha tried to escape but she figured out that the more she moved, Prem uncle first nudged her more. She felt as if she was a dog. With the help of instinct, intellectual and logical behaviour humans can think

but animals are usually motivated by instinct and they lack the quality of reason. Megha finally sank her teeth into his hand just like a dog mac. Megha managed to flee. She felt as if she tasted blood in her mouth . She rinsed her mouth with water yet her mouth was tasting like blood. For Megha the taste of vomit was better than the taste of blood. She used to throw a stone on Mac but now she realised that it was wrong, she said sorry to Mac. Although it was Megha who suffered the most , yet she started thinking about what her mummy and papa would say once they got to know about it . She thought there would be scolding and punishment.

He removes Megha off his lap and gives her a sunshine smile, which makes her crave. And said, “princess... understand, this is our secret... No one must know. Just you and I, promise?” (Nair 32). Megha silently nodded after giving him a hopeless glance. He assured her that he will show her some more ways to make him happy tomorrow. Even though she was a little child and couldn't comprehend what was happening to her, she sensed something wasn't right. She felt helpless and filled with hatred the next morning, on top of the same sour-tasting wrath. Megha spent her entire school day thinking about large tongue and she felt like she had a hole in her tummy.

On the way back home in the army truck, Suddenly an arm grabs her waist. “Where are you running off to, princess? Why is my princess not meeting my eye? With his rainbow smile” (Nair 33). She wriggled to get off but his grip tightened her. Megha said, “mummy said I must not sit on a stranger’s lap” (Nair 34) She recoiled, but her waist pulled her back to his plump belly, and his fist pressed into her buttocks. She was enraged and felt stupid. When the truck eventually stopped, she realised that the fist would nudge her more the more she moved. Megha gives him a horrified look as she bites into his hand. He screams and attempts to remove

his hand from her lips. Megha runs away, tasting the blood on her lips. She keeps wiping her lips with her water bottle as she gets to the end of her street. The taste of blood was better than the taste of vomit, but it still lingered.

She was terrified to explain what had happened in the truck to her parents. Rather than telling the truth, Prem had made it seem as though Megha was fighting with a girl in the truck, and that when he tried to break them up, she bit his hand. His advice was taken seriously and her parents chose to stop sending her truck in order to prevent any additional inconvenience. However, they insisted that Megha take the truck the following day in order to apologise to the girl she had argued with. She was also ordered to apologise to Prem uncle by her parents.

Megha was not in the mood to ride in the army truck like she had been the previous time. But her parents wanted her to seek apologies with Prem uncle and take the army truck one final time in order to put an end to the argument. Megha's parents were unable to comprehend her refusal to ride in the army truck, even though she had rejected using the vehicle. Rather than monitoring Megha's behavioral changes and understanding the reason behind her choice to not take the bus, they chose to believe Prem uncle's hoax and remained uncompromising with Megha.

Prem uncle gained more bravery as a result of this experience, and he begged Megha to apologise to him once more. Nevertheless this time Megha stood still realising that there was no escape as she waited in the truck to say sorry to him. Prem uncle asked her “are you really sorry? ... then show me you are sorry” (Nair 38) by pulling her to the back of the truck and the tarpaulin . Megha heard the flapping wings of hundreds of crows around her. She stood there without any escape. The psychological trauma left its impact on her life. Children occasionally

have the ability to detect adults' animosity, but they are harmed because they are unable to figure out the true intentions. It is the responsibility of parents or guardians to shield their charges from wrongdoers, but rarely they turn into the victims of other people's wrongdoing.

In Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps*, Najma was a survivor of an acid attack. She was a 24-year-old Muslim who resided with her mother, Ammi. She had no idea that in five or six minutes, a man she had never met before would change her entire existence like it's in a horror movie. He was Imtiaz, a man who worked with Ammi in a catering business.. Everything was fine until she noticed a young man who used to wait outside the school gate and followed her to the station. One day that man came and sat across from her once the train left Devagonthi station. She sensed a familiar odour that she knew from Ammi. Najma thought the man was the employee of biryani caterer. The man told one of the passengers that he is Najma's fiance. Najma was shocked to hear and she wondered if she should pull the emergency chain or shout for help. When Najma questioned him. He told Najma that he had fallen in love with her. He was working in the same company where her Ammi worked. When he convinced Ammi about his love Ammi had laughed in his face. And Ammi told him " my daughter deserves better. She is a teacher. Why would she marry a lowly kitchen help like you?" (Nair 61)

Imtiaz feels insulted by his manliness and is unable to accept being rejected. That's why he chose to leave her with an everlasting scar that would cause her to endure physical and mental pain for the rest of her life. He decided to use acid as his weapon to kill her as it was readily available and inexpensive.. . He said to Najma "Your Ammi is an arrogant bitch. Like you are. The two of you think you are above all of us" (Nair 62). He criticised her as a whore and the one who flaunts

her beauty to have men in her way. “She thinks you are too good for me. Does she know that you are no better than a two-bit whore? Do you think I haven’t seen you? Flaunting your face for the world to see. Using your beauty to have your way with men. From the tea-stall boy to everyone in this train... How many men do you want, you whore?” (Nair 62).

In our society, everyone expresses their thoughts, but no one is prepared to stop victimisation. In the train nobody wanted to get involved in the matter. But an old man muttered " Education doesn't mean you disdain the Koran. What kind of Muslim woman steps out without a hijab? " (Nair, 62)Despite their innocence, women are more easily victimised since they are perceived as the weaker sex. The elderly man stands up and walks over to the door. Leaning forward, Imtiyaz gazed at her. She begged him to stop bothering her. He flung acid on her face by telling her “I won’t let you become anyone else’s wife” (Nair 63). Her flesh was melting and she was screaming for her life. The police investigation came up with no results, and she felt rejected by society and limited to her home. Helpless Ammi said “Time will heal everything. It’s like watching grass grow... you think you can’t see any difference, but one day you will see that the grass has indeed grown” (Nair 63). She was unable to leave the house because of the trauma. The laws and society had failed to protect her from the physical and psychological anguish, even after she had learned everything about the culprit. With a little voice, she withdrew her burkha after Ammi died, revealing her melted face and the stretched-out flesh of her neck. Her larynx had also been harmed by the acid.

Acid attacks leave their victims devastated and prevent them from participating in public life. However, some victims overcome their circumstances and recover fully. Najma did not want to hide her identity and face behind four

walls and become a victim. She made the decision to take up the world's difficulties.. “Ammi I did it. I did what you asked of me. I faced the world. I will never hide behind a burkha” (Nair 67).Despite having teaching training, she struggled to obtain employment in any field. Because the burkha was bad for business and nobody wanted to see someone's face destroyed. However, she was determined not to cover her face with a burkha. At the end, she was shown as a housekeeper in a resort on the Nila River.

Women who have experienced victimisation often feel silenced by the societal and patriarchal restrictions imposed upon them, which can be incredibly daunting. Sadly, we frequently come across distressing news about girls and women being subjected to abuse in educational institutions and workplaces, leading some to tragically take their own lives. However, Anita Nair takes a different approach with her female characters. Instead of portraying them as objects of pity, she empowers them to reclaim their agency and become survivors after enduring victimisation. Nair's storytelling strives to uplift and inspire, highlighting the resilience and strength of women in the face of adversity. Making mistakes is a part of being human, and unfortunately, it often leads to women finding themselves in helpless situations where they become victims. It's inspiring to see how these women fight against the various forms of restrictions imposed on them and strive to recreate their identities. However, preventing these long-standing crimes is not an easy task. It requires a continuous effort to address the deep-rooted inequalities in our socio-economic systems and culture. We need to keep raising our voices and advocating for change if we want to work towards a world free from such crimes. Anita Nair's aim in her writing is to shed light on the victimization of women in the

21st century through her strong female characters. It's a message for us to bring attention to these issues and inspire others to take action.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 CONCLUSION

From the shadows to lights women's journey is nothing but a lesson to learn in life. Women were revered and viewed as equal to men in the past, much like a cart's two wheels. But as time went on, they became less involved in social activities. Men utilized women as sexual objects to satiate their lusts. Yet women had to respect their families and the society at large and remain within the four walls. India has to undergo transformations as a result of conquest, Innocent and helpless women were compelled to become slaves. Women had to adapt to the political and economic changes in their own lives. Not only was this a compromise, but they also had to be detained behind four walls. Social reformers made a passionate effort to overcome social evils like sati pratha, child marriage widowhood etc. Even today we appreciate Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Savitribai Phule, Sister Nivedita and many more.

It's also vital to remember the efforts of writers whose voices reached thousands of women encouraging them to break barriers. With the help of writers, literature has been discussing and explaining global contexts and circumstances since the beginning of time. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Shubha De, Nayantara Sahgal, and even Anita Nair reshaped the notion of feminism in Indian English Literature. Modern writers write about issues like homosexuality, abortion, and personal relationships.

One of the Indian writers who adopted a distinct writing style in Indian English literature is Anita Nair. She established herself on a global scale. She has concentrated on the actual condition that women face. Through her writings we understand that there is a rising understanding of the value of women in today's environment. Women are the foundation of families and communities. Today, women have the freedom families and communities. Today, women have the freedom to express their views and opinions on even on the political front.

The only reason behind voicing against patriarchy and fighting for women's rights is nothing but the feminist movement. Feminism is about all genders having equal rights, opportunities and treatment. Just because women have been historically marginalised and denied opportunities doesn't mean that they should gain the right to dominate. Feminism acknowledges that every person deserves to be treated with the same level of humanity and respect. The feminist movement does not support the idea that women are superior to males or that the efforts and experiences of other oppressed groups should be disregarded. The only goal is to create a society that is more just and equal for everyone.

The link between Indian and western Feminism has been the subject of heated discussion in the Indian women's movement. The intersectionality concepts help us to understand how various social and political identities can result in different forms of discrimination and privileges. With the help of themes in Anita Nair's novel we understand that identity plays an important role in moulding our life. At this time, We need to question ourselves, why are women considered the weaker section ? Just because they give birth or just because they want to achieve something in life ?

In '*Mistress*' and '*Eating Wasps*' Anita Nair, each aspect of womanhood is depicted. The constant struggle for self assertion and identity gave results with the discovery of inner strength and the courage to evolve and construct a new perspective. Although it was impossible for some female characters to move out of traumatic experience, their sufferings and bravery gives us a lesson for life. It's necessary for every person to respect themselves and appreciate their own hardships. In our day today life , Most of the time we have seen women covering their face with 'Ghunghat'. for them it's a sign of respecting their family and tradition but when the same woman comes to other parts of the world, we are less likely to see them in their traditional attire. India has a vast culture and different ideologies. Women have the right to wear whatever they like but sometimes due to societal restrictions women tend to restrain their wants. Even after getting recognition women tend to face societal pressure.

Sometimes society questions a woman's decision to stay independently with her husband. This kind of judgment often stems from traditional expectations and beliefs about marriage and gender roles. It's unfortunate that some men may feel threatened or uncomfortable when women excel and take on roles traditionally associated with men. This could be due to societal expectations, ingrained gender norms, or a fear of losing power or control. However, it's important to note that everyone has the right to make choices and recognize that these attitudes are not universal and that many men support and champion gender equality. There is often a double standard when it comes to judgments on women involved in sex work compared to men who seek their services. Society tends to stigmatize and question

women in these situations, while men often escape scrutiny. It's important to challenge these unfair judgments and recognize that everyone deserves respect and understanding, regardless of their choices or profession.

It's unfair that a highly educated woman is expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over her own aspirations and independence. On the other hand, men are not typically questioned or expected to take on these roles, especially if they are educated. This double standard is a result of long-standing gender norms and stereotypes that have been ingrained in society.. Everyone should have the freedom to pursue their passions and contribute to their families and communities in ways that align with their skills and interests, regardless of gender. . It takes time for attitudes to change, but progress is being made. It's crucial for women to stand up for their rights and make choices that align with their own values and aspirations. Its a time for women to not allow to societal judgments define her worth. Everyone should have the freedom to pursue their passions and contribute to their families and communities in ways that align with their skills and interests, regardless of gender.

Lastly, Feminism is about respecting and treating every gender equally. It's not about one gender dominating or mistreating another. If women achieve equality, the goal is not to treat men the same way they were treated in the past. The goal is to create a society where all genders are treated with respect, fairness, and equality. It's about breaking free from the cycle of discrimination and creating harmonious world for everyone. It is crucial for both men and women to work together to uplift and empower each other, rather than competing. By giving women the recognition and support they deserve one can make a fair world and also by Embracing the

spirit of equality and respecting women as Janani, we can strive towards a more inclusive and empowered society for all.

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