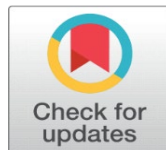
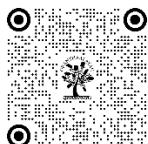


PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS AND STRUGGLE IN ANITA NAIR'S LESSONS IN FORGETTING

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ABSTRACT

Literature is one of the most accessible sources of information about the cultural, social and socio-political history of the society. This paper focuses on the aspirations and struggle of women portrayed in the novel 'Lessons in Forgetting' by Anita Nair. This novel deals with the suppression, subordination, Betrayal in relationship, aspirations, struggle and seeking individuality of women in contemporary society. This article attempts to explore how aspirations and struggle help people to overcome from the predicament and to establish one's identity. Anita Nair is a popular Indian postmodern English writer. She is considered to be bold and straight forward writer; Anita Nair exhibits confidence in tackling new themes and experiments with new techniques. Her novels depict the real life of her characters without hiding anything from the readers and she reveals the effect of social conditioning on women and how they survive in the patriarchal society and find solution to come out from their suffering especially, This novel has a strong feminine flavor where the author portrays her female protagonist as strong, determined in the same hand. She has stressed about marriage being an integral part of a woman's life or no one cares about it. She is concerned with the studies, family, love and striving for fame and fortunes. She has portrayed such a life in this novel.

Keywords: Betrayal, Suppression, Aspirations, Subordination



Lessons in Forgetting; Anita Nair talks about how women suffer in sociological system which has forced in a many ways to repress, humiliate and abuse. She raises some questions in her novel, makes the readers to think about the ideological ground of sociological role in the traditional society. The novel describes how a woman struggles for attaining success in her life. Two main characters of the novel Meera and J.A.K undergo many hurdles in their lives separately. When they meet each other, they try to find solutions to their problems and find solace in one another's arms by forgiving the people who have made their lives miserable.

The Lilac house plays a vital role in the life of Meera. Mr. Raghavan Menon, a native of Calicut, working in Calcutta and falls in love with Charu. She is a Bengali woman and he married her. Some years later, Charu died and Raghavan Menon sent his daughter Leela to Santiniketan for her studies. The brothers of Raghavan Menon did not like Raghavan Menon coming back to Calicut, and so sent him a cheque of his share in his family estate. At that time, a Bengali director spotted Leela and motivated her to work in Hindi cinema by changing her name as Lily. Lily married Sandor, a Hungarian painter and came to live in the Lilac house which Raghavan took for ninety nine years lease. Saro was born to Lily. Saro fell in

love with her best friend's brother and married him. Saro's husband died in an accident. Meera did her post graduation in English.

Meera never dreamt big dreams. She had no desire for designer clothes, diamonds, or expensive holidays. In those hard years after her father's death, she learnt to worship at the altar of enough. That was all she ever hoped for. Enough to keep the roof over their heads and food in their bellies. Enough to retain dignity and not have to ask reluctant removed relatives for a temporary hand out. Enough to live as they did. (*Lessons in Forgetting* 46) Giri, the son of a poor man in Palakad, was good at studies. His maths teacher SivaramanIyer shepherded him away from home, first, to the Regional Engineering College, where his eyes widened at a world he never existed. He joined in IIM in Ahmedabad. He got placed in the campus recruitment and found a job in the corporate world. He was a good planner. He made plans about where he would be by the time he was thirty, forty, forty five...thereafter would be the playing fields of his life. As a business affair, Giri enters the house Lilac with other members for a photo shoot. He is more attracted towards the house and plans to marry Meera and wishes to settle there. Meera easily falls in the trap which is laid by Giri in the name of love. She starts analyzing Giri's attachment towards her.

"She thought of the young women who were part of his professional world. Tall young women who wore their suitability like their hair. Shining, groomed and never out of place. Why does he prefer me to them? She asked herself. They are smart, competent and have careers. Whereas all I have is a postgraduate degree in English and stewardship of this house." (*Lessons in Forgetting* 41-42).

After marriage, Meera changes herself as a corporate wife of Giri and also becomes a cook book writer. They have two children. Nayantara, the 19 years old daughter who studies in The Indian Institute of Technology (Madras) and Nikhil, who is thirteen years old. Meera becomes a socialite. Giri plans to start a new business. For that, he needs money. He wishes to sell the Lilac house but Meera not agree with his plan, moreover she cannot sell the house, because the house will revert back to the original owner after forty five years. Giri does not know about contract scheme of the house. Meera tries to convince him but he refuses to listen her words. She is unaware of his intention. When the babies are laid in her arms, the fulfillment she knows that drowns her in its completeness. But Giri is not like that. If he cannot have the benefit of this house, he does not want her anymore. One fine day in a party, he leaves Meera with their two children, her mother and grandmother. From his unfinished mail only Meera comes to understand that "she has been so blind. Giri had wanted more than enough." (*Lessons in Forgetting* 47) JAK has married to Nina. She belongs to Madras. They have two daughters, Smriti and Shruti. He is known for the reader of omens, the collector of warnings and the storm warning man. He is a very accurate in his predictions. He spends more time in studying cyclone. Most of the time, he stays out of his house. Like Meera, he fails to sense the change. His absence at home has created a distance among between them. As Nina is a short temper, their marriage comes to an end. Both get divorced and Smriti lives with J.A.K and Shruti lives with Nina. Smriti, much interested in listening the tales of India. She comes to India for her Undergraduate studies. She meets one of her friends Shivu in the Shakti Forum. Rupa, She becomes the coordinator of the Forum, plans to conduct a play on the theme of female foeticide. Smriti actively participated in the play. With her friend Rishi Menon she goes to Minjikapuram. While she is walking near a sea beach, she gets injured by a bit of broken glass. She goes to the nearby hospital for treatment. There, she noticed many pregnant women and comes to know that every women came for scanning in order to find the sex of the fetus. If the report of fetus is girl child, they should do abortion either willingly or forcibly. Smriti felt that it is an illegal and wishes to stop it. She tries to collect the proof against that for making a report. She meets Chinnathayi, whose daughter dies at the nursing home in abortion. Smriti was in need of some proof regarding the female infanticide problem from Chinnathayi. She also promises to help Smriti. But, the people who supporting the scanning method, they warn her friend to leave the village and also they threatened Chinnathayi. They send a message in the name of Chinnathayi and ask her to come to the sea beach. When Smriti comes there, those people destroy her and she becomes a motionless, pathetic frozen figure. J.A.K receives the news about the fatal accident of his daughter. He comes to India for the investigation of her daughter's accident. His education taught him to ask questions, to go beyond the limit. J.A.K, being a father of Smriti, he tries to discover the matter of accident. When the investigation starts; he meets the different people who were friend of Smriti. Those people gave their different opinion about her accident. J.A.K feels that he is about to know the truth, unfortunately it happens all in vain. As Meera, he also comes to a situation to think about his future life. The shocking experienced of Meera over Giri's sudden disappearance from her life is nothing when compared to the blow that J.A.K receives over the tragedy of his daughter.

J.A.K takes Meera to his house at Bangalore. Both of them share their thoughts about their families. Meera talks about her daughter Nayantara who is at IIT, Chennai. J.A.K talks about his daughter Smriti who is also nineteen years old. The description of Smriti's room and Smriti is a very touching one. The novelist's artistic hand creates sympathy not only in

the mind of Meera but also in the minds of the readers. When Meera is stunned by the creature's appearance, J.A.K comes forward and tells her that creature is his daughter Smriti. Meera starts showing a motherly attitude towards Smriti. At home her grandmother Lily encourages her to make a new life.

"If there is a chance for you to make a new life, you must

...When your father died I should have told Saro this. But I didn't. I was selfish in my fear that I would be alone. So I clung to your mother and let her use me as a crutch". (Lessons in Forgetting 308) Meera gives a reply I don't know what you are thinking but there is nothing between the professor and me." Lily leans back. 'Not yet. But I can see he likes you and you him. It isn't about cutting your hair or acquiring a new wardrobe. That's good in the movies. A new look that turns you into a new woman. Get real, Meera. Get real before your life slips away from you. (Lessons in Forgetting 309) J.A.K suffered so much when he listened to Chinnathayi's report about the fatal accident of his daughter. Meera on her part thinks: "This could have been my Nayantara, she thinks. If it had been my child, how would I have endured it?" (Lessons in Forgetting 358) Meera subsides into silence and she sees J.A.K's shoulders heave. Meera starts consoling him and at the same time shrugs away the sadness that threatens to swamp her.

Through the narration of the lives of the two characters, namely Meera and J.A.K, the novelist brings out the theme of forgiveness by describing various events that happened in their lives. Meera faces an embarrassing situation when her husband Giri leaves her with their two children, mother and grandmother in the middle of the party and also disappears from her life. But Meera forgives him and takes the steps on her own to lead a respectable life. She is steady and careful in her new life. "She will be there with him, Meera decides. But to keep herself alive, she will need to drudge all the selfishness that lies deep within her. That alone will ensure that J.A.K does not swallow her up, as once Giri did." (Lessons in Forgetting 365)

She cannot give him the reassurance as he wants from her. Then she thinks how she savours the pomegranate fruit best when she eats it seed by seed rather than as a handful thrown into her mouth. J.A.K is of the view that whatever happens in one's life, it is inevitable. It has been all decided by someone in his surroundings. But, he never takes revenge upon them; instead he learned how to forgive. He starts to forgive his father, his mother Sarada who marries another man, his wife Nina who has divorced him and the persons who are responsible for his daughter's fatal accident and makes up his mind to accept Meera's entry into his life as a promising one

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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None

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