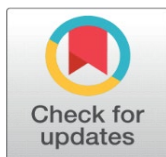
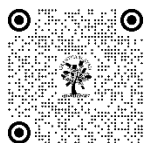


# CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN ANITA NAIR'S WORKS

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## ABSTRACT

Indian English Literature is well-known for Indian Writers' cultural thought, mythology, cultural hybridity and provoking ideas. Anita Nair is one of the prominent writers in India for expressing the social norms and value in her writings. She involves the characters in various transformations of gender, cultural hegemony and insight of human feelings. In her writings, she portrayed the South Indian social norms with livelihood characters and sensitive themes like culture, struggles of women and social norms. She has challenged the restricted social norms and complex identity prescribed by the forefathers. Her writings prioritized the complexities of cultural hybridity, human identity in social expectation. She created the characters that showed tensions, conflicts and harmony in the diverse cultural influence. Overall, Anita Nair's works provide the chance to the readers of contemporary Indian society to know the multifaceted nature of identity and cultural norms.

Overall, Anita Nair's novels offer insightful explorations of cultural hybridity, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of identity and the ever-evolving dynamics of contemporary Indian society. She has earned a global readership for her works.

**Keywords:** Cultural Hybridity, Identity Formation, Gender Issues, Characters' Resilience, Multiculturalism and Cultural Dynamics



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. LIFE AND WORKS OF ANITA NAIRE

Anita Nair was born on January 26, 1966 in Shornur, Kerala, India. Her literary journey started with the novel *The Better Man* in 1999. Her insightful thoughts and feelings were described in the work, so many of them criticized and popularized her work. She developed a significant role in world literature and her works were published in many languages.

The novel *Ladies Coupe* (2001) is one of her renowned works and included the theme of feminism, women identity and social norms imposed on women. She explained the reality of life of women in a biased society, women confronted struggles in and out of the family, women fighting for self-dignity in male priority society. She used six women characters from different backgrounds who travel in a train journey and share their bitter experience and at the end find out the way to escape from the particular circled life. Next her work is *Mistress* also discussed the ill treatment of society on women. The writer exposed the complexities of love, sex and will-power of the main character Radha.

Nair works included short stories, children's books, poetry, and essays. Her multiple ideas and writing style is reasoned to earn many awards. For her novel *Lessons in Forgetting*, she won India's prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013. Beyond her works, Nair contributed to various anthologies, children's books, and is a columnist and essayist. She was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel "Lessons in Forgetting" in 2013. Her voice is mostly

considered in contemporary Indian Literature and also focused readers' mind-thought easily by her writing themes and realistic characters' role.

## 2. CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

Cultural hybridity is used to denote the blending or merging of different cultural influences. Its result is people who follow and exchange the different cultures and identities. Anita Nair used cultural hybridity very well in her works. Her works covered Indian social concepts and the context of Indian society.

Anita Nair created many characters who followed different cultures and complexities in diverse society. They performed in multicultural roles, identity, traditional clash and social terms. Nair's themes are often based on the intersections of caste, language, religion and identity. In some places, the characters negotiate to follow multicultural influences, highlighting the ways in which individuals negotiate multiple cultural influences in their lives. In *Ladies Coupe*, Anita Nair exposes the different women's individual experiences and perspectives in their hardest life, also mentioning their background culture and their religious identities. Akila, the protagonist

who makes a journey of self-discovery and freedom from family struggle. After completing the journey, she has experienced how other women survived in the critical situation and after they married women followed different traditions and culture in husband's house. She stands many times to fulfill societal expectations which are not her aspirations.

## 3. IDENTITY FORMATION

Anita Nair handled Identity formation as a recurring theme. The factors of culture, society, gender, and personal experiences used by her on individuals to shape their identities. In most of the works, she handled the concept of self-discovery and introspection, the characters search out the world around to fit for their life. By these impacts, the characters' struggle to search their identity formation also confront the male prior society and traditional norms. The characters constructed their role by Nair into cultural constructs and social existence for staying away from predefined roles and expectations. They showed characterization in them self-desirable things, passions and individuality through their life and taught them many experiences. They want to live freely without societal domination and tradition but pushing them to confront the same.

As per the concern of Nair, who depicts the personal histories and cultural backgrounds on identity formation. She involved multiculturalism simultaneously and the cultural hybridity shapes characters' sense of self. From the perspective of Nair, she is discussing the present generation's life-style and their different cultures. At present, the people's mind delves into

complexities of multiculturalism and different social norms. The writer highlights the intricate interplay between individual experiences and the broader societal context. By the continuous

creation of Anita Nair in characters with identity formation, resilience and emphasizing the need of cultural transformations, these help the audience know more about culture and societal needs. These help to change the world from the individual thought and narrow view.

Anita Nair presents the struggles through characters' sensitivity and depth and away from the societal norms and expectations. Many characters are frustrated and rejected by the highly followed social norms also they raise defy and questions established against social construction. In *Ladies Coupe*, the writer introduced the protagonist Akhila denies to follow the male dominated society and make a solo journey to search her identity beyond the circle of traditional role and marriage. Even in her family, she was expected to obey her elder brother and her mother instructed her to do that. In the name of love, she was affected by a male who is younger than her. She took care of her family from her childhood as a father role, but she wasn't allowed to do something for her own desire, love and suggest her brother's marriage. Her freedom life journey started away from her family after suffered a lot from societal norms and male preference

society. While on the train journey, she learned that not only her life, mostly the women from around her also subjugated and suppressed in the role of mother, wife and sister. In the end of the novel, she understands the life cycle of women everywhere and returns with clear thought about her identity by the sharing of co-passengers.

Anita Nair introduced the character Rani in *Mistress* who performed her role as bowing down her head and wishing for the expectations of a traditional marriage. The writer created her role as distressed woman and wants to become a non-conventional relationship challenge. The social expectations are usually around women's fidelity and marriage.

In *Cut Like Wound*, Anita Nair narrated many crime scenes around the marginalized communities. The main concept of this novel is the social prejudice based on caste. The main role character Gowda, who is Inspector and confronts his own biases while investigating a murder case. After studying the case, he understands the domination based on caste and suppressed a particular society. Through this work, Anita Nair tried to express that people still hold their caste-based prejudices and highlight the injustices.

Anita Nair introduced the protagonist Meera in *Lessons in Forgetting* who stands in her own point of view and stays away from societal norms by divorcing her husband. She has

embarked on a journey of self-discovery like the character Akhila in *Ladies Coupe*. She wants to show her identity without based on social expectation and challenges the decision taken in the divorce. She proved herself as an independent woman even though Indian society expects women should be placed upon in marital relationships. Nair created many women roles to show different kinds of cultural identity, visualized the social issues, women confrontation in social norms and gender differentiation.

Anita Nair's works are a testament to the complexities of cultural hybridity and identity formation in contemporary India. Her in-depth analysis on Cultural Hybridity which defines the blending of different cultural traditions, and the new forms of expressions and identity created through using the characters in her writings. She used the blend of traditional Indian values with modern, Western influences in her novels *The Better Man* and *Lessons in Forgetting*. The other important aspect of her style is using language as a best example of cultural hybridization. She

created the unique narrative voice through using Malayalam, English and other Indian languages. The diverse cultural background seems through the features of characters in her works and highlighting the exchange and fusion of cultural practices.

Anita Nair's works are notable by the readers in order to consider the identity formation and complexities of self-discovery in a rapidly changing world. In *Cutting Edge*, the characters struggled to find themselves in different worlds, and also find a sense of belonging. In *Ladies Coupe*, Nair used female characters to find out their self-discovery through journey while

navigating the complexities of their own identities. The Self-discovery concept also Nair applied in the works *Lessons in Forgetting* and *Alphabet of Lust*.

Anita Nair's works and her characters witness the exploration of cultural hybridity and identity formation. Her novels included the complexities of cultural exchange, self-discovery, and belonging to Indian experiences. The characters showed their role in Anita Nair's works, constrained by rigid societal structures and in gender roles, caste systems or cultural traditions.

Their constraint roles include finding individual identity, restricting opportunities and fighting for their freedom in life from husband family and society. She finds her wishes in different paths through her character's role with emotional and psychological toll. The Characters struggled to find their internal originality between social expectations and pursuing their own aspirations.

Anita Nair's works depict the exploration of cultural hybridity and social expectations to understand the complexities of multiple cultural identities. Her works celebrate adversity and diversity; these inspired and encouraged readers to reflect on their own identities and the influence of culture on their lives.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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