



## EMERGING WOMANHOOD IN ANITA NAIR'S "LESSONS IN FORGETTING"

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### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on "Emerging Womanhood" In Anita Nairs *Lessons in Forgetting*. In fact the works by women writers constitute a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English Today women are seen establishing their identity in almost all walks of life and they have heralded a new consciousness in the realm of literature too. Like other women writers, Anita Nair's writing reveals a story about real people second chances and fresh beginning, "Lessons in Forgetting" narrates a tale of two individuals who manage to work through all the odds. Nair writes about how women wants to be free. They fight against the burden on them In short, in her works Nair writes about the challenging attitude and rebelliousness against the traditional role of women.

Key words: Rebel; Challenge; tradition; culture.

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'The emerging woman will be  
strong – minded, strong – hearted,  
strong – souled, strong – bodied  
strong strength, and beauty  
must go together (Louisa May Alcott said)

Though women with their attitude of modernity and advancements, they struggle to rebel against the repressive forces of patriarchy, most of the time their efforts and anger and up in vain. They finally end up in the clutches of patriarchy & console themselves by compromising on their rebel & stay suppressed in the hands of men. Anita Nair is a well known and renowned Indian English writer. Her novel mainly concentrates on feminism and exposes

the condition of women especially in Indian society with wit and humour. Her novel portrays the facets of the lives of women. One of the main concerns of Anita Nair on modern woman is man-woman relationship. Sexual relationship is prominent among them and here the novels of Nair spell a break from the mythological image of Indian women in the earlier fiction. For instance, the major characters in Nair novels have affairs outside their marital relationship both before and after marriage.

But still the old world of taboos and superstitions where women are marginalized has not died yet. Modern Indian woman is generally liberated from the traditional restrictions and some

of the family constraints still she has to play certain roles in the frame of the family and society. The characters of Anita Nair find that marriage itself is a form of repression. Meera in "Lessons in Forgetting," is one of the most burdened characters of Nair when she was deserted by her husband at a very young age of her marital life, she was pushed, forcefully in a situation of shouldering the entire responsibilities of her family which she could not bear. At a certain stage in her life, she thinks that she cannot lead a life alone. So willingly she withdrew her rebel and surrounding herself to JAK.

The present study is about the new emerging woman of modern cosmopolitan India. Anita Nair portrays women from the traditional subjugated and marginalized to the extremely modern and liberated point of view. In *Lessons in Forgetting*, Anita Nair discussed to redefine the role and the rebel of women. Her writing reveals a story about real people, about second chances and fresh beginning. It deals with love, dependency and betrayal. In *Lessons in Forgetting*, Nair brings about a new and viewed look of Meera, a carefully corporate wife with a successful career as a writer of cookbooks. One day her husband fails to come home after a party and she becomes responsible for the running of Lilac House, their rambling old family home in Bangalore. Enter Professor J.A. Krishnamurthy, a renowned cyclone studies expert on a very different trajectory in life. In a bedroom in his house lies his nineteen-year-old daughter Smriti, left comatose after a vicious attack on her while she was on holiday at a beach side. A wall of silence and fear surrounds the incident for, the grieving father is helped neither by the local police, nor by her boy friend in his search for the truth. Through a series of coincidences, Meera and Jak find their lives turning and twisting together with the unpredictability and sheer inevitability of the cyclone.

Anita Nair in her fiction talks about how women suffer from patriarchal system through her novel, *Lessons in Forgetting* Nair describes how a woman has to make painful choices in order to assert and retain their sense of self. *Lessons in Forgetting* narrates a tale of two individuals, who manages to work through all the odds. Meera the

protagonist of the novel lived in Lilac House with her grandmother, Lily, her mother Saro and two children. Once the Lilac House is chosen for photo shoot Giri is one of the members of it, he sees Meera and falls in love with her and got married by having two children named Nayantara and Nikhil. In one fine party Giri leaves Meera and goes away. He totally disappears from her life. Meera finds it difficult to manage, financially in Giri's absence. Her daughter, Nayantara, reacts harshly for Giri's leaving home and finds Meera responsible for this situation as she does not support Giri. Meera finds her life full of clichés, she does not agree to sell the Lilac house because she cannot sell the house. After Giri's leaving of Meera, everything has been changed. Meera's book has not taken off as expected it to. The publisher does not agree to publish her next book. Giri has promised to find a tie-in to buy back hundred copies, but he does not work on it. As Meera and Giri are separated, publisher refuses to take a risk.

Meera is a socialite. She finds her life in chaos. When her husband walks out on her leaving with her two children, mother and her grandmother. Meera takes up a job as a research assistant to JAK. Giri starts new life and demands for divorce. When Meera's mother dies in an accident Giri does not come to help Meera but JAK helps her.

Meera decides to give up her old identity as Hera as there is no Zeus. She starts her second life as Giri does. She realizes that Giri is entombed in a past and no one has interest in him. The party members just talk with her about her. Anita Nair writes:

"A Woman by herself at a party is like a man by himself." (*Lessons in Forgetting*: 183). Nair suggests that women have to be there for women. Sisterhood is a key to the woman who is alone. Nair also describes marriage as the circle of security that has enchanted the husband and life. It is not the house of the money, the sex, kids or companionship.

*Lessons in Forgetting* is a story of Women's rebel against society, Meera searches for job. She becomes an assistant of Prof. J.A. Krishnamurthy, she becomes financially independent, adjusts expenditures and takes the household responsibilities of family. She decides to start her new life with Prof. J.A. Krishnamurthy. Throughout

the finding of this story, JAK and Meera come close and decide to start a new beginning as both of them have troubled souls.

The another notable character Smiriti in *Lessons in Forgetting* is a teenage girl who rebels against female infanticide in a village named Minjikapuram. When her rebel was exposed to the men in the village, few of them came together and use sexual violence as a weapon to shut her up from protesting against them. Even though the village people knew that injustice has been done to her; no one came forward to support her because of the power men exercised in the village to suppress women. Her rebel against female infanticide did not help her in any way but made her immobile.

Kala Chiti is another example of woman's resistance against age – old traditions. She is renamed as Vaidehi. The name is associated with qualities of ideal woman and ideal wife like loyalty, humbleness, scarification etc. Kala Chiti is well – educated girl. She does not believe in such age – old traditions. When her sister, Sarada, is considered responsible for her husband leaving the home, she strongly raises the question about how she is responsible. Even after her marriage, she cuts hair as she gets. She feels that she is no longer Vaidehi with the downcast eyes. Ambi, her husband decides to remarry because after seven years of marriage they do not have child. Kala Chiti leaves him and her married name, Vaidehi She starts to live with Sarada. She cuts her hair. She takes her old name again Kala Chiti.

Anita Nair's primary focus of attention is the world of women, the struggle of women in the context of modern Indian society Nair's purpose as a writer is to see her women characters as humans with their weaknesses and potentialities who are indeed trapped in the maze of their own obligation. In her novels, Nair focuses on how her heroines are bravely struggling against or helpfully submitting to the relentless forces of absurd life. Though she is pre-occupied with the theme of incompatible martial couples still, one came across different kinds of women characters in her novels.

In short, Anita Nair writes about rebel against the traditional role of the women. She narrates women's breaking the silence of suffering,

trying to move out of the caged existence and asserting the individual self. After having a vivid analysis and understanding the female characters found in the novels of Nair, I would live to conclude saying that even though women rebel strongly against their oppressive forces, mainly patriarchy, they are still being exported by religious, cultural, societal realms of life. Still women are kept in the dark about their rights freedom, individuality and identity. For the protection of women from discrimination, women must be empowered by educating them the right and power so as to enable to fight against male hegemony.

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