



Colonisation of Woman's Body: An Analysis of Anita Nair's novel "Eating Wasps"

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Abstract— This paper analyses the colonisation of woman's body in *Eating Wasps* by Anita Nair with special reference to patriarchy, sexuality, gender oppression and bodily autonomy. Anita Nair presents the emotional and psychological struggles of women living in a male-dominated society where female sexuality is suppressed, controlled and condemned through rigid cultural codes. The novel portrays how patriarchal structures attempt to dominate women physically, emotionally and psychologically by reducing them to objects of desire and instruments of male pleasure. The study examines the experiences of various women characters such as Urvasi, Sreelakshmi, Najma, Megha and Theresa, whose lives reveal the multiple forms of violence inflicted upon the female body. Women who express their desires openly are marginalised and humiliated by society, whereas men escape social condemnation even after exploiting women emotionally and physically. Sreelakshmi's tragic relationship with Markose exposes the selfishness and hypocrisy of patriarchal morality where women become victims of male desire and abandonment. Similarly, the sexual assault of Megha and the acid attack on Najma reveal how brutal masculine power seeks to control and punish women who attempt to assert their individuality and freedom. Further, the paper explores how women themselves become instruments of domination within patriarchal culture. Characters like Theresa attempt to possess and control others through jealousy and emotional violence, thereby demonstrating that colonisation of the body operates at multiple levels within society. Drawing upon Luce Irigaray concept of bodily autonomy, the paper argues that women must reclaim ownership of their bodies and resist patriarchal structures that commodify female sexuality. The paper concludes that Anita Nair exposes the emotional trauma, exploitation and dehumanisation experienced by women in contemporary society while simultaneously celebrating the female body as a source of identity, power and selfhood. Through her women characters, Nair advocates the liberation of women from oppressive cultural ideologies and emphasises the need for bodily freedom, dignity and equality.



Keywords— *Autonomy, Condemned, Dignity, Equality, Patriarchal, Sexual assault, Selfhood*

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indian women's writing largely focuses on the problems faced by women in patriarchal society where gender discrimination, emotional suppression and bodily exploitation continue to shape female existence. Women writers attempt to expose the invisible structures of domination that reduce women to passive objects within domestic and social spaces. Among the prominent contemporary Indian novelists, Anita Nair occupies an

important place for her bold exploration of female psychology, sexuality and identity. Her novels portray women who struggle to negotiate freedom, individuality and emotional fulfilment within oppressive cultural systems. *Eating Wasps* is a significant feminist novel that examines the complexities of womanhood, bodily desire and patriarchal violence in modern society. The novel presents the interconnected lives of several women who attempt to assert control over their bodies and emotions in

a culture that constantly seeks to regulate female sexuality. In traditional patriarchal society, woman's body is treated as property controlled by men through social norms, moral codes and cultural restrictions. Female desire is often silenced and condemned, whereas male sexuality is accepted and normalised. Anita Nair challenges these double standards by presenting women characters who openly express their bodily desires, frustrations and emotional needs.

II. COLONISATION OF WOMEN'S BODY

The novel also explores the psychological consequences of bodily oppression. Women are frequently made to internalise shame, guilt and fear regarding their own bodies and desires. At the same time, Nair portrays women who challenge silence and reclaim their individuality despite suffering trauma and social rejection. The female body in the novel becomes a site of struggle where issues of power, identity, sexuality and resistance intersect. Further, the paper draws theoretical support from Luce Irigaray ideas on the female body and bodily autonomy. Irigaray argues that women must reclaim ownership of their bodies instead of allowing patriarchal society to define female identity and sexuality. Her feminist perspective becomes relevant in analysing the experiences of Nair's women characters who struggle against cultural and masculine domination. This paper attempts to analyse how Anita Nair portrays the colonisation of woman's body through patriarchy, violence, emotional exploitation and cultural restrictions. It further examines how women resist bodily oppression and attempt to reclaim dignity, freedom and selfhood within a society that seeks to silence and control them.

In the traditional ambience, only man's sensuous feelings are given importance. Woman's sexuality is much forbidden in the patriarchal society. The male-dominated society has framed many taboos and restrictions for women. By curtailing woman's freedom of expression, man wants to dominate over woman's body. Mostly woman characters remain mute as the society expects them to be silent. But Nair's women carve their own space in order to communicate their emotions. Modern women have to pay a heavy price for violating the established cultural codes. Brutal, egoistic men can never fulfil the senses of women. As a result, there is domestic disharmony. When a woman walks out of the restricted space, she encounters terrible consequences.

III. MODERN WOMEN

Modern women are allured by many traps. A journalist called Urvasi is a sensuous woman. In the domestic realm, she is not provided with mutual love and respect as there is no mutual rapport between husband and wife. Hence she enters into a relationship with an anonymous man. Then she is disappointed in this illegal love affair. Nair discusses about the emotional turbulence of modern women and her strife between her bodily senses and the destructive masculine world. Sreelakshmi is a spinster who expresses her sexual desires frankly. Markose, a married man meets her and they develop passionate love. Soon after the consummation of their body desires, he walks out of her life. It is because, he being a christian priest, develops guilty feelings after committing adultery. Out of fear, he refuses to look back leaving Sreelakshmi in despair. Nair shows how such selfish men are not capable of facing the consequences of their adulterous relationship. Sreelakshmi is vexed after this unfortunate incident and pours out her feelings thus : "My Lands were clammy. I tried not to think of his face, of the wild abandon as it loomed over mine. The dilated pupils, the slackening mouth, the arched neck, the short bursts of breath, his sweat on my breasts, a drop landing on my lips. The salt of his sex" (242). The reckless venture of a Zoology lecturer Sreelakshmi lands her in great tragedy. Though she is aware of many lusty men in her life as a writer, she runs into an affair with a married priest. She confesses the deep desire in her thus; "My madness told me what to do. I wouldn't go to the wasps. I would make them come to me. But to him, I would go again and again. My desire was insatiable. My sex thrummed like it never had before. My madness was such."(226). Sreelakshmi's stories are disgusted by everyone including her mother and relatives as they expose woman's sexual emotions. Woman's sexuality is a taboo and the society does not approve of such a sensuous woman, who openly writes about her sexuality.

In the case of Sreelakshmi, her illegal passion wrecked her. Love has been utilised as a bait to catch a woman and enjoy her body for a brief moment. Sreelakshmi confesses that she " had been a conquest, a trophy, a way of redeeming his self esteem"(243). The intensity of her love has frightened the insincere coward Markose. For him his honour is more important than her passionate love. The suicide of Sreelakshmi does not disturb the coward Markose as women are treated as sex objects rather than human beings.

Brande Patil is a shuttle cock player. who is always a winner. Due to her obsession with her game, she has lost her feminine feelings. Her body has become masculine,

and so she feels an emptiness forming within her. Unable to gratify her senses, she resigns her career and enters into life as life is more important than popularity.

Even children are sexually assaulted by brutal men. One such victim is Megha who is sexually abused by an adult male who allures her with his honeyed words. Though the child addresses him as 'uncle', he views her as a sex object. Finally what she considered as a honey bee has turned out to be a wasp and the child is brutally molested by the oldman in a school van. As a rape victim, She is labeled as 'damaged goods'.

Man attempts to colonise woman's body in the guise of love. Most of the men characters are cold, indifferent and insincere. They escape from physicality of their love. They reject body senses in favour of power and social states. Like a property, they attempt to colonise woman's body.

Najma wants to elevate her social status by employing herself as a school teacher. Her mother works as a cook and supports her to realise her dream. Unfortunately, Najma's face has been ravaged by acid thrown at her face by a violent, brutal man whose love proposal is rejected by Najma. Instead of hiding her wounded face, she exhibits it in public without wearing burkha. She struggles to maintain her self respect and claims her identity as a woman.

Woman's possessive nature turns her into a cruel monster. Theresa's husband Anto has been attracted to Molly, the younger sister of Theresa. It arouses the jealousy of Theresa. Following Anto's death, she takes revenge on her sister who feeds her by her hard labour. Thus the love expected from her sister is not reciprocated by Theresa. Molly has no guilt feelings about her illegal affair with her sister's husband. She justifies her adultery as it made Anto happy. The characters are justified of their body claims, though it is seen as sin in the point of view of others.

IV. FINDINGS

Women are not allowed to choose their individual life. They are oppressed by cultural codes framed by crooked men who wish to colonise woman's bodies. Rape is a great damage done to the female body. It kills the lively spirit of a woman and her future becomes bleak. Not only man tries to colonise woman's body, but woman like Theresa also is determined to keep her husband under her control. Thus colonisation of other's body occurs in every culture. In "Bodily Encounter with the Mother", Luce Irigaray speaks about the value of woman's body;

It is important for us to guard and keep our bodies at the same time make them emerge from silence and subjugation. Historically we are the guardians of the flesh; we don't have to abandon that guardianship, but to identify it as ours by inviting men not to make us 'their bodies, guarantors of their bodies' (439).

These lines imply that women should have awareness about the value of their bodies. It should not be enslaved by crooked men or patriarchal ideologies. Anita Nair celebrates the woman's body as a prime source of life and procreation.

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