

SAADIYA'S Representation and the Persistence of Underrepresented Narratives

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ABSTRACT

A group is marginalized when its members are treated unfairly in terms of access to resources and participation in decision-making bodies. Feminism contends that patriarchal culture is to blame for women's subordination. The patriarchal system of oppression against women has its roots in the home and has spread globally. The ideal female characters exemplified traits vital to maintaining a home and family. Women were thought to must possess certain traits, like passivity and a lack of curiosity. This blatantly anti-patriarchal forte would bring shame and condemnation onto women. As a result, women were kept at home and expected to strictly adhere to their roles as submissive mothers, sisters, and spouses. Patriarchal ideas on how to best preserve literature also contribute to women's plight. The female body had a special place in the holiness of ethics and religion. The idea of 'femininity' is based on strong patriarchal bias. Females are innately empathetic,

sensitive, illogical, subjective, passive, and dependent. Women authors of the 20th century tackled issues of isolation and confinement at home in an effort to create a more equitable society for women. The marginalization of women in Indian society is a recurring theme in the works of author Anita Nair. Her works portray the existential dilemma of a woman in a patriarchal culture through the eyes of a suffering woman who is consumed with her inner world, her brooding dissatisfaction, and the tempest inside. Anita Nair's *Mistress* is a reflection of the evolving roles of husband and wife in modern society. The topic of *Mistress* is marital estrangement due to misunderstandings and incompatibility.

KEYWORDS: Marginalization, Patriarchy, Alienation

INTRODUCTION

Free bird,

How do you hope to be happy with the cage?

Imprisoned, you have forgotten your own speech

And you speak the words of others mindlessly. (Sarkar, *Hindu wife: Hindu Nation* 46)

Binary systems describe the way Earth works. Both men and women are necessary to keep the planet spinning. The social order has always favored males and been rigidly discriminatory against women. Worshiping women and equating them with the Goddess is an ancient practice, but it has robbed women of agency and identity. We live in a male-dominated, patriarchal culture. Women in such a culture have less room to breathe as individuals and much less room to separate themselves to voice their opinions. From the beginning, her opinion and voice were muzzled. Because of the cruelty she has experienced, she is now a voiceless subaltern.

Women who constitute half of the world's population are paradoxically not treated on par with men in all spheres

from the hands of humans. In spite of the fact that every woman works hard to advance her family—her husband and children—they are nevertheless enslaved, stifled, and marginalized in society. This disturbing representation of women is neither a recent phenomenon or exclusive to India. This is the situation in which women everywhere find themselves. The English-language literature of Indian women has gained attention for the manner in which it questions and reinterprets Indian society, particularly patriarchy and the state. People who have been ostracized in the past are increasingly stepping up in the modern world to express their concerns. As a result, this has an extraordinary impact on the literature of our day. The multidimensionality of the reader's consciousness extends to fictional works in which flawed but ultimately admirable protagonists are presented. An examination of recent literary trends reveals the obsolescence of the spectator's perspective and the ascendance of writings about marginalized people with the power to denote status, while writings by the suppressed restate the actual experience that becomes a work of fine art. Since typical is not accepted in the conventional setup, but rather developed as an experience of culture or tradition, the issue facing the contemporary writer is to shape the unwritten by denaturalizing the natural. Writers from all across the globe have recently begun to challenge the purportedly holistic ethnicity of life in their writings. Women authors not only expose the vengeful power of the dominant system that operates against their people, but they also call for a rewriting of history that erased them. Women authors of this century have given us heroines who are grounded in reality and who understand their place in a patriarchal society. Anita Nair is a well-known Indian author. She humorously and wryly portrays the modern predicament of women via her art. She explores the depths of the human mind to create compelling tales with unique protagonists and settings that take the reader on an unforgettable adventure. She conjures up situations that are grounded in the real world, and her style makes it easy for readers to imagine that the protagonist might be a neighbor or a friend. There is no more fitting location for this book than on the banks of the Nila. The narrative, like the river, is a path to enlightenment. Novelist Anita Nair freely admits that she stole the title for her most recent work from Emerson's famous "Art is a jealous Mistress" quote. A reader may see the light of her book *Mistress* in the radiance of this declaration. She sees it as a metaphor for art's possessiveness and immorality. Writing the work has been a struggle for Anita Nair, who has described the experience as feeling "possessed" or "mistressed" by her craft. The novel is divided into three books, and the third book's ninth chapter is based on the nine Rasas embodied and displayed in the dance form of Kathakali: Srīngāram, Haasyam, Karunam, Raudram, Veeram, Bhayanakam, Beebhatsam, Adbutam, and Shaantam. Nair weaves a spell throughout the novel's three sections with the story of Saadiya, Koman's mother. The story starts in the Muslim-only city of Arabipatnam. The males of the village have access to the public thoroughfares. The ladies only entrance leads to either the kitchen or a side door. The women of the hamlet are relegated to a lower social status, as the name "narrow" implies. Arabipatnam's women have no more rights than any other city since they are safe from males on the streets. The daughter of the ruler of Arabipatnam, Saadiya is the second most important female character in the story. She was raised in a Muslim culture where females are expected to conform to social norms. She may continue to observe and respect the community's norms, traditions of her community, even if doing so goes against her personal desires. Her dad is set on tying the knot with a local lad. She raises the issue that any self-respecting contemporary woman would ask: "Is it the rule that all women born here must live and die hidden by these walls?" She has the want to express her feelings, but she can't since her community won't let her talk about how she feels.

Muslim women's participation in the workforce and in higher education was hindered by cultural and patriarchal

norms. Many Muslim women are oppressed in Islamic societies because of how much these women's conditions have deteriorated. They are not allowed to go to school and are denied other basic liberties. These accusations are not without merit. But it's important to realize that these repressive customs aren't unique to Islam; rather, they're rooted in the cultural traditions of numerous nations. Since Muslim women are expected to remain at home and solely read, this widespread belief holds that they do not need a formal education. In the case of Saadiya, the same customary system applies. Haji Najib Masood, her father, was the most revered man in the community and one of the town's six leaders. Since his father was such a severe guy, she lacks the confidence to instruct him on the nature of right and wrong. According to her culture, males alone are responsible for the care and upkeep of women, and decent women have no business challenging male authority. Saadiya is careful to explore the world and prepares her to go into the common alley, which was forbidden street for women in Arabipatnam, since she recognizes that it is usual for all humans to breach the law in some areas. As she travels to see Nadira, she snatches,

There are many forms and hues of life. Real, breathing, walking life. Chewing and spitting life. A screaming, yelling, living thing. Existence that scurried and hissed and muttered. A pending existence. This was a life she would never have. (M: 102) She looked directly at Sethu as the scent of the city combined with the unveiling of her face. Before settling in Nazareth, a tiny town in California, Hindu orphan Sethu works as a health inspector. His new employer is Dr. Samuel. Saadiya's attractiveness drew him in, his interest was piqued by certain aspects of her, and he developed feelings for her; naturally, Saadiya experienced the same thing. Saadiya has replaced Sethu with Salim, the second son of Akbar Shah. Saadiya is from an extremely traditional and respectable family, therefore when she broke her father's norms, he punished her by branding her with a hot iron on the calf. He had drawn boundaries around their village, and she had crossed them to have a look around. According to M.Rajeshwar in his book Preface to Indian Women, discrimination against those who are most vulnerable—women—is a common effect of marginalization in tradition-bound societies like India. Novelists and Psychoanalysts agree that women are disproportionately affected by the biased application of societal standards and moral rules. When males break the rules, they usually get away with it, but when women do the same or similar things, or try to break free and assert their rights, they face scorn, contempt, and often even the most extreme forms of institutionalized or physical violence. Arabipatnam's Muslim women are in a dire situation. Women were barred from engaging in politics or leisure activities under the Islamic law of purdah. Their situation in life was limited to providing for their families and enjoying the leisure time that was traditionally reserved for males. This gender-based double standard at the time was in line with the social order. Women retreated into their own spaces out of a need for protection and a pervasive lack of self-assurance. They were supposed to be selfless and obedient, humble and respectful. There was still the possibility of torture, tyranny, and other forms of ill treatment. Woman in this community has been always kept in 'Purdah' literally and characteristically which serves as a curtain between the real world and the made-up world of make-belief where women have been set aside for prolonged, not allowed toward the indoors of men. This is the status of women in Muslim community. Infact, Saadiya is not only penalized by her father that is the male society, but also she is damned by her own Ummama and Zuleika, that is even women are against women. Women in the similar group also repress her. All the women in her community have to undergo the same circumstances and they have their limitations. Saadiya thinks of her guilt for the action that has caused anxiety to her family.

I, Saadiya, good girl, with the purest of Arab blood in my veins, branded by my Vaapa and a glance, lay awake. I did not know what it was that nagged at my flesh so. Was it the imprint of Vaapa's anger? Or was it your burning gaze? Or was it the thought that in a day or two I was to be allowed to glimpse the world that existed outside the gates of Arabipatnam? (M: 136)

The complicated circumstances pierce in the life of Saadiya at a premature age as she feels affection for Sethu. Her Vaapa arranged a nuptial for Saadiya with Akbar Shah's second son Salim. For the first moment in her life she prepares herself to voice out her thoughts to her Vaapa about her Malik, Sethu. Saadiya christened him as Malik. Her Vaapa didn't expect this from his daughter. Everyone in the family appealed, convinced, yelled and tormented her to depart Sethu and to marry Salim but Saadiya was strong enough in her choice.

Non-Muslim males, who include traitors, ex-Muslims, and members of other monotheistic religions (such as Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians), as well as atheists and members of other polytheistic religions (such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains), are forbidden marriage partners for Muslim women. In addition, a Muslim woman, whether she was born a Muslim or converted later in life, is forbidden from converting to another religion in order to wed a non-Muslim. This is because converting to another religion is a capital offense in Islam. A good lady of any faith may marry a Muslim man according to the Quran. Women who marry non-Muslims on their own accord face harsh consequences as well. Saadiya is confident in her faith and is

prepared to live with a non-Muslim despite the potential negative effects.

Sethu is a Kaafir in her eyes. Similarly to Vaapa, Saadiya did not want to part with her Malik. Despite the disapproval of her religious leaders and her family, she moves in with Sethu. Saadiya has a gleam in her eye and a lot of respect for Sethu when she breaks with custom and leaves home. She won't let him forget that he's Malik.

True, but... Saadiya's voice was soft. You are my Malik, and I love you. The one who arrived from far away and couldn't be compared. A man of strength and uprightness, someone who can be relied upon to face the dangers of the sea, the wind, and the unknown. My name for you is Malik. What, can't you see? (M: 185) Without the constraints of a wedding, Sethu and Saadiya begin their life together as one. She seems to always be busy around the home. At first, everything was great; he went to work, and she awaited his return each evening at the front door. In Arabapatnam, this was the traditional role of the wife, therefore she was able to get by quite well. One day, when she was home alone, she came to terms with the severed links to her loved ones. She begins introspecting on her background and upbringing.

Sethu and Saadiya's peaceful existence is shattered when the latter makes a demand for the former to retrieve the Koran. He snaps back by bringing home not only the Bible, but also the Ramayana, the Thirukkural, and the Koran. To which Sethu replies, "The Koran is more than a book; it is a way of life." responds by pointing out that Hinduism is older than Christianity and performs the same thing. Saadiya, who is Muslim by birth and Hindu by marriage to Sethu, has a marginal existence that leads her nowhere since she is estranged from both traditions. As a result of her internal conflict between her desire to uphold a dominating tradition and her yearning to break through the conservative barrier, she experiences conflicting emotions and perspectives. Here, she experiences unprecedented boredom and isolation, leading to an existential crisis of epic proportions.

The problems in their otherwise ideal existence start when the wife reveals her independence and takes action to exert her power. She wants an open discussion of her desires. She began fighting for her freedom when she was young, and now she's doing it again with all the vigor she had then. Saadiya quickly becomes cynical about human nature when she gets married. Sethu's marriage eventually falls apart because she refuses to achieve her own potential. A wife and husband are supposed to have a close, committed, and long-lasting relationship. Saadiya and her husband, however, represent the very worst of failed relationships and stand as a symbol of the feelings of revulsion, disappointment, and despair that they evoke. This is the case due to the absence of romantic feelings. It's difficult for Sethu to comprehend Saadiya's perspective, thus the two drift apart apathetically. Saadiya's rebellion and restlessness stem from her dissatisfaction. The negative emotions of guilt, negativity, and low self-esteem that she experiences as a result of her worry, discomfort, loneliness, and isolation prevent her from expressing her dissatisfaction with her difficult relationship. Again, she runs into difficulty when it's time to give her kid a name. Saadiya is profoundly disheartened by men's arrogance, which they use to justify the killing of innocent people and the destruction of religious buildings in the name of their gods. Saadiya chose Omar Masood as her son's name. Ideally, she'd want to raise him to be a devout Muslim. Sethu objected, and they argued until he ultimately told her to leave him and their kid and return home. Saadiya didn't speak a word for five days and hardly left her room. She believes that she would never be able to find inner peace unless she addresses the emotional distances from her past. This is a search for who she really is. After going through a lot of turmoil, she finally realizes who she really is, and is therefore liberated from her emotional chains. Awareness of one's own nature is a prerequisite for change. This prompts Saadiya to critically assess her environment and take deliberate action. This awful ending is the one she has chosen. Societal structures are so potent that they give rise to conflicts, which in turn splinter people's sense of self. The forces that wage war on the individual are exposed through Nair's use of the stream-of-consciousness method. The rising impact of her isolation, worry, and remorse at marrying against her family's wishes may be seen in her actions. She is a practitioner of the job of subjugation, with all its unpleasant and awful consequences, in the same way that a normal Indian wife would be.

Such people are doomed to fail and perish at times of extreme anguish and stress, making mistakes or taking drastic, irreversible measures. Saadiya's suicidal depression is a direct result of her constant arguments with Sethu. Saadiya runs away from home to be with Sethu, but she cannot abandon her faith. This unequivocally demonstrates the distinction between Mind and Body. The body is ready to do what has to be done, but the mind is resisting. Women were stereotyped as helpless victims in the past. They value the joy of others before their own. Women's true selves are hidden by the roles of caregiver and provider. Their cries are just as inaudible to the world as those of the deaf. Today's women have just as much courage as they need to express themselves on whatever level they want. Despite having the inaudible voice of the deaf, they have made it audible in recent years, shaking the foundations of dependence in the process. They are prepared for the arduous voyage of self-discovery to make the whole world recognize them. A certain percentage of women have successfully reached their destination and remaining are on their way to the destination of 'Self-discovery'.

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