

Mapping the Modern Indian Woman: A Thematic Study of Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair's Select Novels

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Abstract: This paper will compare two well-known Indian authors, Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair, based on a common theme, on how they write about modern Indian women. Both writers talk about important issues like what it means to be a woman and what society expects of us, but they do so in very different ways. The simple prose of Shenoy's writing is mostly about personal growth, self-discovery, and freedom. *Life is What You Make It* and *The Secret Wish List* are two of her novels with female characters who always find a way to get through tough times. These novels usually show a positive side to how to get through things. But Nair's writing is more creative and personal, and it looks at the social, cultural, and mental life of a woman. Novels like *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* are about how custom, patriarchy, and the pressures of society affect women and how they deal with life in Kerala as a whole. This paper will do a thorough comparison to show how Shenoy and Nair deal with the problem in different ways. Shenoy tells the story in a very positive way that emphasizes the individual's freedom and emotional maturity, while Nair focuses more on the role of the woman in society's complex structure. Finally, the two writers give the readers a fascinating look into the lives of modern Indian women and make huge contributions to the writing of Indian English stories.

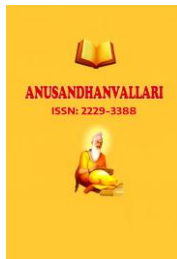
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Introduction

Now that the world is changing so quickly, Indian writing English is becoming more kaleidoscopic and slanted. One important and interesting theme is how modern Indian women are portrayed. Different authors have tried to describe different parts of her complex personality, like how she has many goals, fights, and a place in society that is always changing. Comparing two well-known female authors, Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair, based on a common theme, this paper looks at how they decided to express their identities. While both writers write about the lives of modern Indian women and have large followings, they do so in different ways, with different topics and styles. They also make important contributions to the world of literature.

To explore the ideas of personal growth, mental health, and individual power, Shenoy, a best-selling author, often uses stories that are relatable and easy to follow. This is because her novels give readers power and help them find themselves, which makes them popular with a lot of younger people. An important character in popular literature is Shenoy, who has a trait that is both recognizable and inspiring. Indian by birth, her stories are usually about the problems women face in modern cities. She writes about things like bad marriages, failed careers, and problems in the social world. A lot of the time, her characters are coming to terms with who they are and learning to put their own happiness and well-being first. Her work is one of the most powerful in the fight against the stigma of mental illness and for women's freedom because it gets so personal with her characters' feelings and the things they have done in their own lives.

Anita Nair is a well-known and respected author from Kerala, who uses a more literary and subtle style to explore the complex social, cultural, and psychological issues that shape her female characters. A lot of people in Kerala know about her writings because they are so important to the state's culture and society. In them, she talks about how society and custom affect women's lives in more depth. There is a unique way that she frames some of her works, like *Ladies Coupe*, that really brings out a mosaic of women's experiences by showing how women from all walks of life are trying to live up to their own expectations and wishes. For some reason, Nair's



writing is mostly prose and very thoughtful. She wants her readers to think more about the societal constraints and historical contexts that affect her characters' lives. Comparing the two authors and showing how the fiction stands out as a reflection of the different experiences of women in the 21st century is what this paper tries to do.

Objective

The primary objective of this paper is to examine the thematic content and perceptions of contemporary Indian women in the works of Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair. The analysis will concentrate on the degree to which the diverse writing styles and storylines of the selected novels affect the female characters. Shenoy is readily comprehensible to all individuals, whereas Nair is more intricate and literary. The article will discuss the manner in which Shenoy underscores the importance of individual liberty and self-discovery, in contrast to Nair's emphasis on the harm caused by social conventions and gender expectations. In an effort to comprehend the breadth of Indian English fiction and to offer readers a more comprehensive comprehension of the construction, negotiation, and representation of Indian women and their identities in the fast-paced contemporary society, this paper investigates these two distinct directions. The paper will conclude by demonstrating that the two authors, despite their differing viewpoints, have valuable insights to offer in the context of the discussion of the accomplishments and challenges faced by contemporary Indian women.

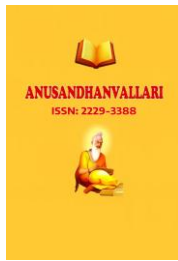
Research methodology

In this paper, comparative theme analysis is the most suitable research design due to its qualitative nature. The most effective approach for conducting an inquiring and interpretive investigation of the two novels that Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair selected and wrote is this method. This approach is distinctive in that it utilizes a close reading of the novels to identify and prioritize the recurrence of themes, motifs, and narratives that are significant to each author. In their respective works, both authors will examine and debate two critical concepts: gender roles, societal norms, and personal development. Assessment of each author's treatment of these themes will be conducted through direct comparison. The approach entails a comprehensive evaluation of the authors' various writing styles, characters, and the cohesive message. Subsequently, a well-informed conclusion is reached regarding the manner in which contemporary writers depict modern Indian women in modern literature.

A Thematic Study of Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair

One of the most fascinating and significant themes in the extensive and diverse realm of Indian English writing is the modern Indian woman. Since their aspiration to minimize and encode their evolving identities, writers have been transitioning between a variety of genres and styles. They intend to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the stratification of her ambitions, the contours of her struggles, and the methods by which she navigated a world that was enduring rapid transformation. The thematic comparison of two of the most significant contemporary women writers, Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair, will serve as the inception of the current paper. Its objective is to conduct a critical analysis of their approaches to the complexities of contemporary womanhood, which are both similar and disparate. Both authors have a significant readership, and the subjects of their books typically pertain to the lives of modern women in India. In spite of this, their primary contributions to literature are significantly dissimilar in terms of the methods of narrative, focus, and style. Shenoy is a prolific author who has authored widely-read and popular works. Her writing is characterized by a complete transparency and honesty, yet she addresses significant changes in the lives of individuals, mental health issues, and the challenges of a modern urban love life in a manner that is both comprehensible and straightforward. The majority of her readers are young adults, despite the fact that the powerful sense of self-discovery and fortitude that emanates from her novels can resonate with individuals of any age.

Shenoy's writing is favoured by a significant number of readers due to her ability to convey a sense of personal connection while simultaneously inspiring them. This makes her a force to be reckoned with in the world of popular stories. Even though she was born in India, most of the time her stories are about the struggles and

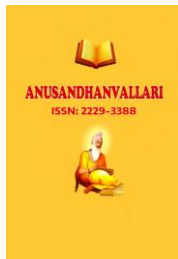


power struggles of modern women living in busy cities. They are about the ups and downs of life, as well as how society sometimes forces women to be subservient and play the power game. Her main characters are almost always shown going through the process of self-realization. This is when they learn to put their own happiness and well-being first, even if it means going against social rules and norms. Her work is especially important for helping to de-stigmatize mental illness and support female agency because it shows how persistent her characters are with their own feelings and how they eventually achieve personal success. For example, in the novel *Life is What You Make It*, Shenoy writes about how the main character, Ankita, struggles with bipolar disorder and how she learns to deal with it. She also writes about how, despite all the odds, she manages to make her life beautiful. To put it in her own words, “life is what you make it, and no matter what, you can always choose to make it beautiful” (Shenoy, *Life is What You Make It*, p. 234). The main idea of Shenoy’s is brought out in this quote, how strength and personal choice helped people get through hard times. Her narratives frequently function as a guide that enables individuals to traverse their own emotional geographies and derive inspiration and solace from familiar objects.

Anita Nair, a revered novelist from Kerala, employs a subtle and intricate style of writing. In her narratives, she significantly influences the female characters by utilizing the multifaceted nature of women in social, cultural, and psychological aspects.. It is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which tradition, patriarchy, and society influence the lives of women by reading her stories, which are profoundly rooted in the value systems, religions, society, and cultural capital of Kerala. In her significant works, such as *Ladies Couple*, Dimple Nair has cleverly employed a discreet frame device of a train journey to articulate a variety of women's experiences. Her objective was to acquire a more thorough comprehension of the obstacles encountered by a wide range of women as they endeavor to balance their personal needs with societal expectations. By continuing to elaborate and delve, Nair provides the reader with a more comprehensive comprehension of the nature of individuals and the circumstances in which they find themselves. She achieves this by conducting a more in-depth and emotional analysis of historical events and systemic failures. In *Ladies Coupe*, Akhila's physical journey is complemented by her profound internal exploration. She eventually seeks the help of other women to determine the importance of the feminine. The novel frequently explores the desperation that obscures seemingly ordinary lives and the tension between personal aspirations and societal obligations. A substantial number of Nair's characters seem to be constrained by their surroundings or by convention. The act of contending or protesting may not be as significant as the awareness that others have of their complexity if the primary method of imagining power as anything is to listen to their voices.

Through an exhaustive examination of their works, it becomes evident that they possess two distinct, yet complementary perspectives on the modern Indian woman. In Shenoy's prose, the agency of the individual is emphasized by an almost ebullient tone. It allows individuals to develop and mature emotionally, demonstrating the accelerated modernization of India. A significant number of her characters discover that they can transcend conventional roles and establish their own course. Alternatively, Nair's work demonstrates the certainty that personal identity is unable to prevail over the intricacy of community and deeply ingrained traditions. It presents a portrayal of the plight of women within a broader social fabric that is more complex and frequently emotive. In her narratives, she describes the process by which women establish their positions, which are occasionally unstable within the culture. The goal of the work is to expose the complete range of contemporary and modern Indian fiction in English from three distinct historical perspectives through a comparatist analysis. It also increases awareness of the diverse paths that women are taking in the 21st century. In terms of their critical realism and inspiring tales, the interaction between Shenoy and Nair creates a portrait of the modern Indian woman, who can simultaneously celebrate her personal accomplishments and continue to endure harassment in a social environment that is constantly changing.

The Differences Between the Popular and the Literary in Content and Style



Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair hold drastically different viewpoints on the portrayal of contemporary Indian women in literature. The authors' unique narrative structures and writing techniques are the source of these concepts. In addition to indicating the reader's response to the text, these distinctions also indicate the social commentary that will be included in the narratives.

The ease of access and emotional appeal of Preethi Shenoy

Preethi Shenoy's writing approach is straightforward and comprehensible. It has garnered her an immense following, particularly among young adults and general readers. Her work has been primarily straightforward, with minimal use of ornate language or poetic figures. By choosing this style, she makes her stories easy to understand, so readers can quickly and deeply connect with the emotions of the characters. Also, Shenoy writes in a very simple, chatty style, and her stories sound more like a confession or a private chat. This kind of honesty makes the reader feel very close to the main characters because they are easy to relate to.

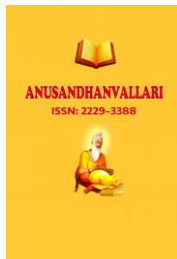
Shenoy tells her stories from the first-person point of view is one of the things that makes her writing unique. It creates a strong connection between the reader and the main character, to the point where the reader can feel the character's thoughts, feelings, or mental struggle. This is shown in *The Secret Wishlist* by Shenoy, where the main character, Diksha, lets the reader into her private thoughts and feelings: "I had always wanted to travel, to see the world, but life had a way of shackling you to responsibilities you never asked for" (Shenoy, *The Secret Wishlist*, p. 78) Because Shenoy can get inside a character's mind, she can also make strong emotional links with her readers. This makes the characters' journeys to find themselves feel very personal and real. As the reader shares both their successes and failures, it produces a sense of shared experience, which is a key part of Shenoy's appeal.

The novels that Shenoy has written also follow a clear linear plot structure that goes from a conflict to a resolution and ends with a satisfactory ending. Even though most of her stories are about important issues like mental health, problems at home, or at work, the story always ends with a character realization or the happy ending of a fairy tale. Even though this framework is very predictable and comforting, it makes her readers feel hopeful and at ease. Characters in her novels have to deal with some pretty big problems, but they are often seen as steps toward a better future, which sends a very strong and positive message. As an example, when one of the characters in her novel loses someone very important to them, Shenoy helps them start over and see the good in their bad situations by using the idea of adaptability as a chance to change. It can be seen in the way the characters are set up; even though they have a lot of emotional problems, they are usually able to find a new path for their lives. As the saying goes, "every ending is just a new beginning, if you choose to see it that way" (Shenoy, *It Happens for a Reason*, p. 198). Shenoy emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive attitude in her conversations regarding her successful entrepreneurship and offering her readers examples of how they can be successful.

Literary Nuance and Critical Realism in the Style of Anita Nair:

The writing style and methods of Anita Nair are distinguished by her adherence to critical realism and her attention to literary nuances. Her works are distinguished from the scarcely serious fiction produced by her contemporaries by this sense of purpose. A portion of her writing is a tapestry, which was characterized by its abundance of imagery and descriptive content. She arranges everything to create a comprehensive and vibrant image for her readers. Although not specifically intended for decorative purposes, this style does serve a purpose and encourages contemplation and engagement. The writer encourages readers to reflect on the multifaceted psychological and social obstacles that her characters encounter.

Nair adopted an approach that he termed "a multi-perspectival art of narration," which is in stark contrast to the single-point perspective of popular fiction. This is one of the most noteworthy aspects of the narrative she composed. She excels in the ability to transition between the perspectives of various individuals in substantial



volumes, such as *Ladies Coupe*. This narrative is organized around a train voyage that Akhila, the protagonist, and five other women undertake. The evidence is that Nair creates a tapestry of the female experience through the expression of voice of each character. Consequently, the entire process is essentially a critique of the very existence of a particular type of woman, the contemporary Indian woman. In contrast, it represents a variety of women with a wide range of aspirations and lifestyles. It has facilitated a more intricate and global comprehension of the experience of being a woman in India.

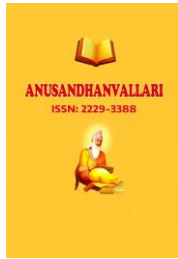
Additionally, Nair's narratives do not follow a straightforward path to a predictable conclusion. Rather, they pertain to the psychological and emotional voyage. Inferred connotations: She consistently concludes her narratives with a loose, taunting tone, rather than an orderly or profound insight. The social constructs of marriage, labor, and motherhood, as well as the issues her characters face, are not solvable. Rather, they are depicted as systemic forces that are pathogenic and necessitate learning and mastery. One critical aspect is her concern for the inner conflict and conflicting emotions of her characters in relation to their culture. It is a candid, occasionally challenging, portrayal of the lives of women. She employs literary realism to challenge the roles and structures of a society that are founded on outdated gender roles. Her work encourages readers to investigate the underlying issues that impact the lives of women in India.

Conclusion

The purpose of this comparative thematic study is to demonstrate the distinct yet significant representations of contemporary Indian women that Preethi Shenoy and Anita Nair present in their respective works. The article contends that despite the fact that these writing relationships are considered to be on the same plane, the two writers contribute to the field of Indian English literature in distinct ways by meticulously examining their stylistic differences and the differences between plot and theme with the use of visual interests. Shenoy's body of work explores the interior self and personal sovereignty, themes that are particularly pertinent to contemporary times, through both confessional and lyrical prose poetry. Many readers of her books, which were generally more optimistic in tone and resolution, identified with her narratives. They desired to be motivated and to read about individuals who had also faced adversity in life. Her other works are also influenced by her personal reflections on the transformative power of free will and mental health awareness. Shenoy not only provides a serene and encouraging viewpoint to help individuals navigate the challenging terrain of contemporary life, but she also discreetly suggests the key to regaining control of one's ship when heavy emotional waves arise: cultivating a strong will and optimistic outlook.

Nevertheless, Anita Nair's essay on the contemporary Indian woman, which is frequently critical and realistic, maintains a contemplative tone. Her labyrinthine prose and multiperson novels frequently explore the profound, widespread, and frequently irreparable consequences of social and cultural constraints, entrenched male stereotypes, and the intricate and occasionally oppressive realities of family life. Nair's protagonists frequently contend with the notion that they are confined by their surroundings. "They acquire power not through openly destabilizing actions, but rather through the cultivation of secret insurrections and an understanding of their own circumstances." Her narratives, which are deeply ingrained in Kerala culture, consistently provide a realistic and unromanticized perspective on the lived experiences of women. They disclose the extent of their sacrifice, the pressure concealed beneath the surface, and the silent struggle that was ensnared in the issue they were compelled to resolve.

The intersection of Shenoy's experimental, ambitious, and emotionally forthright narratives and Nair's literary and critically realistic portrayals reveals a more authentic and profound perspective on the contemporary Indian woman. Shenoy's novels provide valuable insights into the process of creating a space for one's identity through mental health and agency in a world that is constantly evolving. Her positive messages of empowerment will be disseminated to the maximum number of individuals, thereby fostering a sense of belonging, optimism, and



support. She is widely recognized as a popular figure. Conversely, Nair fiercely critiques the structures that women are still obligated to inhabit. This implies that her critique of female identity is both complex and multifaceted, as it is rooted in real-world circumstances and responses. By utilizing the diverse writing traditions and origins they have integrated, they may be able to create a conclusive and significant atlas of the evolving woman of the new India. This compendium will include her accomplishments as well as her ongoing conflicts in a culture and world that are in a state of flux. This has considerably improved the diversity and scope of the new Indian English novels.

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