

**A Review of Literature on Manju Kapur's and Anita Nair's Select
Novels: Perspective on Family Relationship**

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Abstract

Indian English write about Indian and its culture, tradition and heritage. Female novelists like as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Manju Kapur, and Anita Nair discussed about marriage and family in vary comprehensive manner. In India, family is everything- Children play and grow together under single roof, marriage is decided by parents and still sayings of old people mean a lot. The present paper critically reviews earlier research studies conducted on the select novels of Manju Kapur and Anita Nair having family relationship at the core.

Keywords: Family, Society, Relationship, Gender, Psychology.

Introduction

Indian English novels flourishing in both quality and quantity since freedom, novels have surpassed number of stages to attain fame and glory and thereby in the contemporary age, size of readers is grown up immensely. The early names in Indian English writing are Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Toru Dutt, and Romesh Chunder Dutt. Most people point to Chatterjee's *Raj Mohan's Wife* from 1864 when asked where it all began. But Shaikh Dean Mohammad had already put out *The Travels of Dean Mahommed* before that, so his name truly comes first when talking about Indians who wrote and published in English. When the First World War was happening, Shankar Ram, A.S.P. Iyer, and K.S. Venkataramani were the ones writing. Mulk Raj Anand,

R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao strengthened Indian English writing. Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Khushwant Singh also provided depth and popularity to Indian English writing. From 20th century, Indian English authors presented biting realities of life. Gandhian ideology also inspired a number of Indian English writers. During this time, women novelist began to articulate voice of marginalised class of the society at large. Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Manju Kapur and Anita Nair talked about women's right and their predicament. In our country, family is considered everything. Members have love, mutual respect, care and concern for each other. The traditional family system is mostly patriarchal one where male is regarded as head of the family. Indians feel pride about their ancient culture heritage and tradition. Similarly, families exchange their happiness and suffering together. Family constitutes as a single unit rare each member has different sets of duties to perform and bound to follow family's tradition.

That feelings of belonging just comes on its own without anyone teaching it. Things like touching elder's feet, not arguing with parents, making sure no one goes to bed angry — nobody sits down to explain these things, people just grow up knowing them. Marriage in India also means something different. It is never just two persons have liking for each other. Families come into it, both families have a say, and slowly two households become one. That is simply how it works here. A person's happiness and the family's happiness are never really separate, and most people in India would not want it any other way.

Research Methodology

The present paper is based on critical study of on primarily and secondary text. The objective of the study is to discuss and critically evaluates what other researchers have written about the select novels of Manju Kapur and Anita Nair, with family relationships kept at the centre.

About the Select Novels

Manju Kapur's "*Difficult Daughters*" and "*Custody*" are successful in showing conflict between traditional values and modern aspirations in family relationships. In Kapur's *A Married Woman*, Astha has a husband, a home, children — everything that looks fine from outside — but she is unhappy from inside. *Home* is about how much family and tradition can quietly control a woman's life. In *Custody* marriage has fallen apart and the question is what happens to the kids. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* talks about ordinary Indian women in a realistic manner. In *Mistress*, Radha finds herself drawn to someone else, she starts questioning what loyalty really means. In *The Better Man*, a man returns to his village after years away and finds that old family matters, he thought were behind him never really went away. In *Idris*:

Keeper of the Light, the protagonist is a gentle and caring man, not the tough figure-man trying to sort himself out and figure out where he really belongs.

Kapur's women—the daughters, wives, and mothers—are stuck walking a tightrope between the duties they've inherited and a real hunger to be themselves. It turns out that patriarchy in her world isn't just something men due to women. It's a hand-me-down legacy that the women often pass to each other across generations. Family is something more than just a meeting place over a character's head. It actually builds their moral compass and dictates how they grow mentally. Building on that, the study shows how Kapur's take on family values catches India in a transitional phase. The old-school virtues like loyalty to parents and family duty don't just disappear. Instead, they crash into a modern desire for self-determination. have with themselves. This turns the home into a place where they have to ask really tough questions about what's right whereas Nair basically tears down the myth of the "perfectly happy" Indian home. Her stories suggest that home can be your safest spot and your loneliest spot all at once.

Review of Literature

Sripurushotham (2015) described Nair as one of India's most famous novelists. She represents plight of women in society. She deals with human psyche and portrays experiences of mundane life. It facilitates her readers to believe that characters are real ones.

Prasanna and Raja (2016) discussed that Manju Kapur's novel "*Custody*". This novel mainly focuses on the brunt of divorce on the psyche of children. Kapur pinpoints a perceived necessity of a strong argument against the ongoing onslaught of divorce on the mindsets of budding children. She brings to light the pain, suffering and silence existing in the family aftermath of a divorce.

Khanam and Sandhya (2017) pointed out that marginalisation is really about powerlessness and being shut out. It started when a group of people has no real control over resources and no real say in how power works in the society around them and it occurs when someone pushed to the edges of everything with nowhere to go and no real voice. It is not random.

Earnest (2017) explored that "*A Married Woman*" presents the issues and problems related to modern world. Here, in this tale, we have young couple, whose married life starts and grows with the seeds of love and understanding.

Sharma (2018) remarked that Manju Kapur showed real status of Indian women and also highlighted that they are good managers as they manage domestic duties successfully.

Mohanty and Kumar (2018) viewed that novels of Anita Nair's explored journey of self-realization and presented search for identity as well. Nair's characters have pains and anger as well.

Mishra (2019) stated *A Married Woman* presents a tale of a young woman who has obsession for a married man but his wife objects this unethical relationship.

Mona and Neeta (2019) pointed out that Nair's showed suffering of women in a male dominated society. They also noted that Nair's characters have realistic emotions and expressions.

Navya (2020) observed that "*Eating Wasps*" represent struggle and fight of modern women to secure their place and identity in the society.

Manimekalai and Vimala (2021) stated that Kapur raised issues related to motherhood and brought the idea that motherhood can be attainable to a childish woman with the help of medical advancement.

Saranya (2022) expressed that Nair added a new perspective in the gender studies. She said that Nair's narratives present emerging woman of contemporary era where women are bread winner of the family and competing with their male counter parts hand in hand.

Sharma and Chauhan (2023) noted that Anita Nair's novels are about the hard times women face in a society that is still stuck in old ways but her women do not just sit with their problems — they look for a way out and find one.

Sharma, Divyani and Chauhan (2024) revealed that novels of Anita Nair not only provide readers problems of modern women but also solutions and brought discussions about their problems. They also remarked that women of today's world have a very different image that they had never before.

Anup V. (2025) pointed out that Nair's fiction offers a rich and layered look at social commentary — particularly around the varied experiences of women living in a male dominated Indian society. The women characters in her novels do not simply accept the world as it is — they push back against the norms around them and try to find their own ground in a society that has long been shaped by men.

Vandana, K. (2026) discussed that gender and resistance in Kapur's novels serve to enable the readers to understand the journey of Indian women from a typically traditional woman into a highly modern, educated, and independent woman.

GAPS IN LITERATURE REVIEW

Gap 1: Some studies have looked at representative works of Kapur and Nair separately but one has to see how both of them write about family and the roles of men and women.

Gap 2: Earlier research discusses about gender and women's issues but has little attention to how families work as a whole.

Gap 3: When it comes to looking at how things like globalization and people moving to cities have changed the way families are shown in the select fiction of both novelists.

Concluding Remarks

Both Manju Kapur and Anita Nair have written a great deal about women, family, and everyday life. This study looks at how Manju Kapur and Anita Nair write about family relationships in India — the relationships, the roles people are pushed into, and how individuals try to hold onto themselves within all of that. It also shows how family quietly shapes a person, especially women. Kapur deals with middle-class homes and family issues. In *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*, the family has rigid structure having old patriarchal rules. But Kapur tracks carefully how things start giving way — the quiet cracks that appear when women like Virmati and Nisha start getting educated and developing ambitions that their family never planned for. On the other end, Anita Nair gets right inside the heads of her characters. She is more worried about the social “structure” of the house. Instead, she looks at the “cracks” in the wall—the lonely spouses and broken homes that prove the “happy family” is just a myth. The present study looks at how people relate to each other, what roles men and women are normally having to perform, and how individuals struggle to find their identity.

The literature review disclosed that Kapur focuses more on the outer world — the rigid social rules and middle-class norms that trap people without anyone ever saying so out loud. Nair goes deeper into the mind — unpacking the hidden wounds and emotional cracks within families with a lot of psychological honesty. Together what both writers do is quietly challenge the polished and picture-perfect image that Indian family life is often presented as — and show what is really going on behind closed doors. They show that the family is a changing setup that can crush someone just as easily as it can help them grow. By using the family as a main way to look at the stories, this research paper gives a fresh take on Indian literature. It suggests that the home is a necessary place to understand how gender, social changes, and personal growth all crash into each other in the modern world.

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