ECOFEMINISM IN SELECTED NOVELS OF ANITA NAIR

Afroza Siddika*

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the selected novels of Anita Nair which are enriched with the essence of lineage of post-colonial ecofeminism in the Indian socio-political and cultural milieu, an attempt has been made to analyze and interpret the textual and conceptual essence of post-colonial ecofeminism. To achieve this, the relevant ecofeminist theories and perspectives were explored and it was concluded that the author used her work as a means of resistance to the invasion of land and life, pointing towards the hope for the possibility of an eco-friendly and gender-just world order. To achieve this, it is essential to explore relevant ecofeminist theories and perspectives through a vast literature survey.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Ecofeminist literary criticism, Novels of Anita Nair, Feminism, post-colonial

Introduction

Ecofeminism is a term coined in 1974 by the French Feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne. It is a philosophy and movement born from the union of feminist and ecological thinkers. D’Eaubonne’s description focuses on the similarities or interconnectedness of the way women and nature are treated in paternalistic societies. This idea of a parallel between the treatment of women and treatment of nature is one of the hallmarks of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life. Ecofeminism is rooted equally in environmentalism and women’s liberation – two powerful movements that flowered in the 1970’s. Combining the feminist and ecological perspectives, ecofeminism makes the women/nature connections: the domination, exploitation, and fear of both women and nature are

* Department of English, Gono Bishwabidyalay.
E-mail: siddika_afroza@yahoo.com
characteristic of patriarchal thinking. Ecofeminism argues that there is a parallel between women and nature that comes from their shared history of oppression by a patriarchal society. Ecofeminists claim to be part of a distinct social movement. They feel that men dominate women and humans dominate nature. Naturally, then women and the environmentalist should be united in their struggle. Ecofeminist activism grew during the 1980’s and 1990’s among women from the anti-nuclear and environmental movements. Mary Mellor says they draw “connections between exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women” (Ecofeminism and Environmental ethics) Vandana Shiva in her book, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India, criticizes the western ideology of development and its negative impacts on women and nature in the third world countries. She calls this patriarchal Western concept of development as “maldevelopment” as it is least concerned with the well-being of all human beings and other living beings deprived of their position in the society. In the book Ecofeminism, Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies criticize the existing theories and practices and propose a practical as well as ideological ecofeminist perspectives rooted in sustainability to practice in everyday life.

Ecofeminism has its base in literature also. Ecocriticism and feminist literary criticism have contributed to the linguistic as well as literary aspects of theories and ideologies in literature. Ecofeminist literary criticism is not new, but still it is at a formative stage, especially in the context of post colonial literature. In my paper, I would be focusing on the selected novels of Anita Nair, which are enriched with the essence of ecofeminism, especially with its post-colonial lineage in the Indian socio-political and cultural milieu, as a means of resistance to the invasion of land and life, towards the hope for the possibility of an eco-friendly and gender-just world order. The main objective of my present study is analysis and interpretation of the textual and conceptual essence of ecofeminism in brief in the selected novels of Anita Nair. To achieve this, it is essential to explore relevant ecofeminist theories and perspectives through a literature survey. This study attempts to focus on the selected novels of Anita Nair, which are written on the premise that empowerment of women is the ultimate and essential necessity. The novels raise the fundamental issue of the impact of invasion (social, political, economic and psychological) on women and environment, in an ecofeminist perspective. It seeks to bring out the major ecofeminist theories, especially in the Indian context and tries to analyse the novels with the light of that. This research area is not extensively researched so far. It is, thus, afresh and original area to be explored. The present research work is interdisciplinary in character, and its scope is indeed wide.
Theoretical Background

Ecofeminism is an activist and academic movement that sees critical connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women. The term ecofeminism, first used by French feminist Francoise d’Eaubonne\(^1\) in 1974, was hailed as the third wave of feminism. Ecofeminism, as Karen Warren notes,\(^2\) is an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches. One may be a socialist ecofeminist, cultural ecofeminist, radical ecofeminist, ecowomanist, etc. Although the categorization of ecofeminism is a contested point, what holds these disparate positions together is the claim that, as Karen Warren writes, “there are important connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature.”

Ecofeminist activism grew during the 1980s and 1990s among women from the anti-nuclear, environmental, and lesbian-feminist movements. The “Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the Eighties” conference held at Amherst (1980) was the first in a series of ecofeminist conferences, inspiring the growth of ecofeminist organizations and actions. The politics behind these ecofeminist organizations, conferences, and actions were based on an assessment of critical links that were thought to exist between militarism, sexism, classism, racism, and environmental destruction.

Ecofeminism as an ideology and movement finds that the oppression of women is interlinked to the oppression of nature with the same masculine centered attitudes and practices linked to the patriarchal society. The eminent French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne while coining the term “ecofeminism” in her 1974 book Feminism or Death has explained the important role of feminism in addressing environmental and gender issues. Gradually, it has grown out of the definition of mere women and environment. The late20thcentury has identified Ecofeminism as a movement that speaks for women, environment and all the marginalized groups, including queers. There are three major wings of ecofeminism, which are of prime importance in defining the connection between woman and nature. Cultural/Spiritual Ecofeminism emphasises on the natural connection between women and nature as exclusive and unique and supports the concept of “Mother” Earth and “femininity of nature”. They argue that traditional wisdoms of preserving and protecting nature as well as respecting women should be practiced in our contemporary society.

Vandana Shiva mentioned that “Forests have always been central to Indian civilization; they have been worshipped as Aranyani, the Goddess of the Forest, the primary source of life and fertility. The diversity, harmony and self-sustaining nature of the forest formed the organizational principles guiding Indian civilization; the aranya samskriti (roughly translatable as 'the culture of the forest' or 'forest culture') was not a condition of primitiveness, but one of conscious choice.” (Shiva, 53)
Mary Daly, who is a radical lesbian feminist, in her much critically acclaimed book Gyn/ecology analyzes the concept of femininity, its origin and roots. She explains, with the help of theology, that how notions of virtuous womanhood have arrived and perpetuated which forms the basis of patriarchy. (Suasan Griffin and Starhawk) write on the spiritual woman-nature connection. Constructivist ecofeminists like Simone de Beauvoir and Sherry B Ortner of rejects the essential connection of women and nature by stating that the connection is a mere social creation and not natural. They emphasize the essentialist and negative impact of connecting women with nature as this could alienate her from culture by widening the man-woman and culture-nature binaries. In her book The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir points out how man is equated with culture and women, nature, animals etc are separated from it.

Socialist ecofeminism stands somewhere between Cultural and Constructivist ecofeminism. It neither accepts nor rejects the natural connection between women and nature, by de-emphasizing the connection. Socialist ecofeminists, like Karen J Warren and Maria Mies, focus on the critical analysis of the western philosophies of “development”. Maria Mies writes about this nature-culture dilemma.

Novels of Anita Nair
Anita Nair was born at Mundakottakurissi near Shoranur in Kerala on January 26, 1966. Anita Nair is a Bengaluru settled writer and ex columnist from Kerala. She has published various novels, short stories, collection of poems, children’s stories and travelogues. She is well known for her novel Ladies Coupe (2001), which was translated into more than twenty-five languages all over the world. It narrated the lives of six women who happened to share a coupe in a railway compartment. Her major novels on women, environment and empowerment that I have taken for the present paper are her first three novels, namely The Better Man (2000), Ladies Coupe (2001) and Mistress (2005) which are majorly written in the premise of Kerala. She is the novelist of twenty-first century when values, traditions and belief are changing very fast. She takes up the cultural, social and economic aspects which mark the mode of contemporary society and provide a perfect example of victimized women in a patriarchal set up. Her novels are the social document of the twenty-first century.

The Better Man
The Better Man (1999) unveils the reality of Indian women who are still deprived of their rights in love and marriage. Marriage is still a social need, where women seek security and men respect. The novel challenges the patriarchal set up of contemporary society.
Women’s Oppression through Patriarchy

In The Better Man (BM) patriarchy and its outlook towards the female have been the root cause of their oppression and suppression. Anita Nair, through her female characters like Meenaksi, Valsala and Ajanta, projects marriage as a tyrannical institution for woman. Her female characters like Meenaksi, Valsala, Ajanta, and others in The Better Man try to liberate themselves from the trap of man - domination. As the novel begins, it is said that Valsala is the wife of a middle - aged schoolmaster namely Prabhakaran. She is immersed in her daily household chores and watches television every evening. She lives a monotonous life. The coconut, cashew and pepper trees which grow in her garden do not fill her with charm and joy. She is inclined to follow the living style of the glamour world outside the four walls.

Valsala feels that her marital life has not been fruitful for her. She has never tasted the pleasure of her desired fruit during her marital life. So she remains dissatisfied on this level. Now she, to avoid her alienation, starts to associate her suppressed feelings with the natural objects such as pala flowers. Here she is reminded of the words of her mother that the scent of the pala flower is liked by the Gandharvas very much. They always look for virgins to seduce them. They make them captive only for this evil motive. This hope fills her with some optimism. This development causes change in her way of thinking. As the novelist remarks:

“All night, for the first time in many years, Valsala tossed and turned in her bed, breathing in the scent of the pala flowers. Strange sensations coursed through her. Her nostrils flared, her lips parted, her eyes became a little less murky, every pore in her body opened, greedily seeking to fill their depths with this unique fragrance... she went to stand beneath the pala tree, spreading her hair out to dry... she stood there rubbing sandalwood paste into her skin, her bare breasts, and thighs. ‘Come to me, Gandharva,’ she beseeched. Can’t you smell the fragrance of want in me... seduce me with your soft voice and caresses. Make me your lover, your slave” (BM 129).

Female Autonomy

Her unfulfilled desires compel her to yearn for extra-marital relationship. This step indicates female autonomy and projects the mood of contemporary women. She, after many years of married life, feels that she needs a perfect man to satisfy her physical desire. This desire is mainly responsible for leading her to the path of extra-marital relationship and she falls in love with Sridharan. He, in the beginning, appears to her as a neighbour and becomes her lover later on. Soon after, following the guideline of her own conscience, she decides to free herself from the traditional bond of marriage. After releasing herself from this conjugal bond, she develops the extra-marital relationship. When Prabhakaran goes to school, they enjoy freedom unhindered. Now Sridharan admires her and gives her the desired fruit. In
this way, he makes her captive physically and emotionally. Due to this, she surrenders herself to Sridharan completely and starts to take care of her body in order to be attractive to him.

**Portrayal of a New Morality**

This narrative presents, through Valasla, a new morality. This new morality brings focus on the soul and psyche of the female of a new generation and indicates what she expects from the male. She is aware that love, sex, freedom, justice, equality, and so on are her birth right, but these things can’t be expected from a man of hostile nature. In spite of it being so, she willingly follows this trap of the new system that is completely against the traditional concept of Indian Womanhood. Passion and desire for pleasure play an important part in making her do so. By doing so, she undermines the sanctity of the sacred institution, marriage. Her wrong steps compel the ecofeminist writers to consider things from a different point of view. She does not challenge the patriarchal set up of society only with her liberal views and attitude, but also raises the new issues of woman’s sexuality and gender that points toward a radical change of society. As she remarks:

“I am just forty years old. I don’t want to be pushed into old age before it is time. I want to live. I want passion. I want to know ecstasy, she told herself, night after night” (BM 131).

**Life Partnership at the Superficial Level**

Whenever a woman is dissatisfied on a personal or public level, she rebels against the existing set up of society. The same happens with Valsala. The quest for freedom takes her to this path, where she seeks divorce from this conjugal bond of marriage. This development marks the reflection of the contemporary female psyche. Generally, life is an affair of sorrow and joy. She initiates this rebellion on a personal level which affects her husband also. When Prabhakaran complains of his indigestion, she does not seem to care about his health. Now when her revolt comes to the surface, it is revealed that Sridharan and Valsala are life partners on the superficial level only. In spite of her dissatisfaction with her spouse, she decides to remain with him for the sake material gain. We read:

“There was the land she had slaved over and the house she was mistress of - both of which her husband’s. Then there were the retirement benefits he would get when he retired from the Lower Primary School in Pannamanna three years from now. And then there was the sizeable LIC policy ... after twenty- three years of marriage, she thought she deserved to have it all. She didn’t want to give it up just like that. Nor did she want to give up Sridharan” (BM 133).

Now Prabhakaran’s missing is reported and later he is found dead. Now the police question Valsala about the death of her husband, but she keeps the secret. Now she sheds crocodile tears over his death and bangs her head against the wooden pillar. By creating a high - profile drama, she gets a great
deal of sympathy from the readers. But everything is changed, when her involvement is reported in the murder of her husband Prabakaran master. It is reported as follows:

“brutally killed the schoolteacher in his bed on the night of 14 July at Kaikurusssi village. The body was then dismembered and buried in individual pits in a coconut grove owned by Sridharan. The accused had been on the run ever since 8 August when the gruesome murder of Parbhakaran Master came to light” (BM 143).

Revolt

By murdering her own husband, she commits a heinous crime. Here Valsala does not have any feeling of regret for this shameful, criminal deed. She takes this step because she wants to escape from the male domination and desires to lead a life of her own. Everyone in the village says that her behaviour was ghastly. Here Valsala is the image of a “New Woman” who breaks the traditional Indian consciousness and declares the revolt against the patriarchal set up of society. In this fast changing world immorality is on the rise. Love and sex play a vital role in the novels of Anita Nair. Old social and moral values are declining. Anita Nair displays emotional and the painful feelings of the contemporary women in a bold manner. The novelist, through Valsala, projects the woman of the twenty-first century, for whom sex is a new sort of religion. She casts light on the female psyche and conveys the message a woman should be treated as a complete human being. A study of the man-woman relationship as depicted in the modern literature of the East and the West shows that time is changing, so the expectations, psyche and behaviour of the female are under change. Women are now projected as more self-confident, more liberated in their view, more expressive in their behavior and more intelligent as compared to the woman of the past.

Kaikurusssi the village is in a little hollow surrounded by several hills. It has nothing there that would make any one come looking for it. It is neither the birthplace of a Mahatma nor a movement. No miracles have ever happened there. In fact, nothing of significance ever happens there to anyone. [So when something does happen to a person, he is revered to the point of worship.] There is not even a road running through Kaikurusssi or a river flowing alongside it. All Kaikurusssi has to define its topography are fields, wells, a mountain and distant hills.

An elderly bachelor and a retired government employee, Mukundan is forced by circumstances to return to Kaikurusssi, the village he was born in. A village that he fled when he was eighteen. And now back in his ancestral house, he finds himself unable to cope. He is haunted by a sense of failure. For having abandoned his mother. For not measuring up to his still alive and domineering father Achuthan Nair's expectations. For having gone through life without really living it....

And then there is the village itself. Mukundan realizes that he has no role to play in the village. In fact, he discovers that what should have been his rightful place had been usurped by an upstart Power House Ramakrishnan.
The Better Man is set in contemporary India in a little fictitious village called Kaikurussi in the northern part of Kerala. This region was once known as Malabar during the British regime. After Independence, Malabar as a state/region ceased to exist.

Though Malabar has no geographical boundaries, no presence on a map of India, it still exists as a state of mind: laid-back, slow, to live and let live. So much so, the northern Malabaris treat the enterprising and hard-working southerners with a disdain bordering on contempt. A person from Malabar is so entrenched in the past that thinking of the morrow is almost impossible. And yet, there is a discontent that is almost palpable. Perhaps this is the reason why the region that was once Malabar saw the growth of Naxalites [extremists who combined Marxism with violence against all organized systems]; still has the highest recorded number of lunatics and suicides in India and has fundamentalist political groups thriving side by side with communist strongholds.

Kaikurussi, the village is in a little hollow surrounded by several hills. It has nothing there that would make any one come looking for it. It is neither the birthplace of a Mahatma nor a movement. No miracles have ever happened there. In fact, nothing of significance ever happens there to any one. [So when something does happen to a person, he is revered to the point of worship.] There is not even a road running through Kaikurussi or a river flowing alongside it. All Kaikurussi has to define its topography are fields, wells, a mountain and distant hills. An elderly bachelor and a retired government employee, Mukundan is forced by circumstances to return to Kaikurussi, the village he was born in. A village that he fled when he was eighteen. And now back in his ancestral house, he finds himself unable to cope. He is haunted by a sense of failure. For having abandoned his mother. For not measuring up to his still alive and domineering father Achuthan Nair's expectations. For having gone through life without really living it...

And then there is the village itself. Mukundan realizes that he has no role to play in the village. In fact, he discovers that what should have been his rightful place had been usurped by an upstart Power House Ramakrishnan. In the first few weeks of his exile, he meets up with a wayward genius. Bhasi or One-screw-loose-Bhasi as he is known is a house painter and a practitioner of a mongrel system of medicine he has evolved by combining several kinds of healing processes - herbal cures, principles of Homeopathy..... Bhasi is deeply disturbed by Mukundan's anguish and decides to mend the cracks in Mukundan's much battered psyche. He cajoles, manipulates and shapes Mukundan's transformation.

But the superficiality of the change is revealed soon. Power House Ramakrishnan on a cruel whim decides to build a community hall in the village. And chooses Bhasi's piece of land as the site to build on. When Bhasi refuses to sell his land, Power House Ramakrishnan threatens to break his business and run him out of the village. As the richest and most powerful man of the village Power House Ramakrishnan was capable of doing just that and Bhasi knows this as well. So he turns to Mukundan to intervene on his
behalf. Mukundan sets out to save Bhasi's home but is completely swayed by Power House Ramakrishnan. The latter knowing how recognition-hungry Mukundan is and how easily he would succumb to flattery uses that as his weapon to sweep over Mukundan's objections and has him actually agreeing to become a part of the community hall committee.

Mukundan betrays Bhasi his friend and didn’t save the land and alienates Anjana, the woman he is in love with. [Anjana is still married to another man and would therefore be considered an unsuitable love by the community hall committee.] Mukundan however does not perceive it as betrayal and stubbornly clings to the belief that what he has done is right. The situation of Bhasis land and The situation of Anjana are same both are suppressed by the Power House Ramakrishnan who is representing the patriarchy society.

But it takes the death of Achuthan Nair, his father to make him realize how empty his life was and would continue to be without either Bhasi or Anjana. He is stricken by both remorse and guilt. And the realization that he was no better than his father whom he had despised all his life. With this comes the real transformation.

Anita Nair’s first novel narrates the story of Mukundan, who after retirement from Government service, has come back to his native place in Kerala. It is based in Anita Nair’s imaginary village Kaikurussi supposed to be in the northern part of Kerala. The novel records his voyage through memories, regrets and revelations. He takes back his old house where all his childhood memories lay and makes Bhasi, an outcast painter, to help him with the renovation, which starts questions on his evolution to become a better man like his father. Anita Nair’s character portrayal, expressions and plot make the novel rich and earthy. The novel also focuses on one’s connection to his/her land and legacies and the attachment which continues for a life time. The major female characters in the novel, their controlled and exploited life, their yet achieved boldness and actualization are narrated along with the insecure and confused life of Mukundan.

Anita Nair, as a person, believes that there are no particular connection between women and nature that men do not possess. She, ideologically, does not support any kind of essentialism, but feels that women are more affected by both the positive and negative impacts of nature. According to her, “[W]hether it is environmental protection or anything, women are the primary agents of change. Whatever rules are made, ultimately, women are the practitioners of change as they are engaged with the daily aspects of life in a daily basis…. [W]omen, whether they belong to rural or urban areas, they can initiate change.” (Krishna and Jha, 148)

**Ladies Coupé**

The novel narrates the life stories of six women travelling in a Ladies coupe, each of them describing their life to Akhila, the protagonist, who is travelling
to find out what she really wants in life. Akhila is a scapegoat for her family, as she has taken all the responsibility of her mother and siblings when her father died. Even though she is an income generating source, most of the time she is not receiving social independence. Aged forty-five and the background demanding her to be a spinster, she feels lost without having a companion and getting exploited by her sister. The novel roams through the memories of Akhila, interconnected by the story telling of fellow passengers and their empathy towards each other. The Coupe becomes a platform for them to express themselves and support each other. A bond of sisterhood is suddenly created among the women from different caste, class and age. The story of Marikolanthu, a Dalit woman, remains unique and reveals the multiple layers of exploitation she has faced in her life by being a woman, minor, Dalit, and poor. Akhila finally decides to resume her old romantic relationship and take a bold stand in her life.

This is very true that the reader needs to undergo the process of development that all the character travelling in the train undergoes, that development does not involve the embracing what Akila represents: the self as process and fluid possibility but rather means taking full responsibility for one's life and actions, and gaining a deeper understanding of one's situation and lived experience. Against this background, it is clearer why Akila is not fully a moral agent and cannot be a model for emulation. She does not possess Kalpana's command to symbolize her own moral position and to rationalize her actions to others. While Akila's sense of self is strong, maybe too strong, it borders on solipsism because she has little sense of how she appears to the world around her. The author has observed that Akila has never really comes to terms with the limitations of her approach to life.

Akhila is drawn into the most private moments of their lives, seeking in them a solution to the question that has been with her all her life: Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete? When remembering about the only love that entered Akhila’s soul, she forgets who she is and what she was in the society. Anita Nair is very lenient in giving the romantic relationship of both Akhila and Hari. They both became friends in the train. Twenty-eight years old Hari was a draftsman in the railway engineering department. He was a north Indian from a small town in Madhya Pradesh but he had lived in Avadi, the town next to Ambattur, almost all of his life. His father had a sweet shop and his sister was studying at Queen Mary’s College. His Tamil was as good as his Hindi, he said. His parents were keen that he get married soon. The relationship he had with her made him talk to her; of his colleagues, the frustration he felt in his job, a visiting aunt who kept thrusting a friend’s niece at him, a movie he had seen the night before And etc etc. in turn, he drew her out. So that when her stop arrived, she got off the train reluctantly. But there was the consolation that he would be there the next day. Slowly he began to fill Akhila’s every thought and waking moment. She would pause in the middle
of what she was doing, reminded of a silly joke he had made, and giggle. A hoarding would make her think of a phrase he had used once. She would watch her mother crack her knuckles and think of how that was the first thing he did after he sat down in his seat. She would flick through a magazine and a model’s expression would remind her of him. A stranger’s smile would remind her of how his eyes crinkled when he smiled. The moon shone for them. They sat on the beach and Akhila thought: this must be the happiest moment of my life. A little later, they walked back to one of the huts that stood on stilts on the sand. In the confines of their room, Akhila felt awkwardness. What am I doing here? Why am I doing this? The chant in her head wouldn’t stop. Hari stood on the balcony smoking a cigarette. Akhila switched off the light and let the moonlight guide her through her ablutions. She crept into bed fully dressed. When Hari sat down next to her, she could smell the alcohol on his breath. It excited her, that strange fragrance, and she felt a tingling down her spine. When Hari asked for a gift on his birthday, she was ready to give herself and so slowly undressed. That night they made love for the first time. Proper adult love and not all those tentative shuffle that had been the sum total of their lovemaking before. It hurt first and then the sheer rapture of being with him swamped her and the hurt dwindled to content. In the morning, Akhila thought of the stray comments that had floated in the air last night about the relationship that looked very much like brother and sister. Akhila cringed. The words had hurt then. They hurt even more now. She thought of the policeman on the bicycle. She thought of all the strange looks that had come their way as they sat in restaurants, in movie theatres, on the train. They were an anomaly, Hari and Akhila, and nothing he said would ever change that. This constant fear that she would age before he did and he would turn away from her. That someday he would regret their relationship, regret having spurned his family to be with her, regret being bound to her when he could have been with someone younger and more suitable. This constant weight of an with nothing, not even her self-respect. All day Akhila watched him and at night, and after each time they made love, he fell asleep, like a baby. Instantly. In the train as they sped back, Akhila took his hands in hers and said, ‘Hari, this is goodbye. I will never see you again’. ‘Are you done?’ Hari asked. In reply to that Akila said “I’m done and I will never see you again. Please don’t call me at my office or try and meet me. You will leave me with no option but to leave this city. I love you, Hari. I will perhaps never love anyone else but this is not meant to be’. The conclusion of the novel indicates a moment in which Akhila suddenly realizes that it was her separation from Hari that caused her pain, there is no sense in which that insight even remotely enters her mind earlier”. She was in the midst of it, hating it, scared of it, and again she thought of Hari as though they were still friends and talked things over. The protagonist of this novel proved her spinster life to be a pleasurable, worthy one to Hari alone. Comparatively all the other ladies who travel in the train have their own set of experiences that their relationship has brought out.
Prabha Margret and Marikozhundhu... their involvement with husbands lead to other many problems. To show the self and resuscitating nature, Anita Nair’s protagonists seemed to be aware of their role both in the family and society. In Ladies Coupe, of all ladies, Margaret stands first and foremost in sustaining herself without damage. She being a chemistry teacher believes very much in H2O. Her husband Ebe (Ebenezer) is a strong wrong-headed man loved Maggie (Margaret) and entwined into marriage. From the beginning of the story, he dominates and at times insults her among the colleagues. This makes H2O (Maggie) to rise more and more violently. She confesses that she hates him. The resuscitation takes place as she feeds her husband with mouth-watering dishes, fried items, to make him a very fat man. This made Ebe to stop conducting parties at home, dancing and scolding Maggie. The self of Maggie once again regained or revived from the regular norms of the society. Next to Maggie is Sheela, the young girl. As she likes her Ammumma, she cannot restrain her idea of sending the body of Ammumma to the fire without any jewels. Ammumma during the whole of her life, stayed with Sheela, has confined in her about maintaining individuality in spite of others view. Her everyday makeup at the time of her sleep makes her more energetic and erotic. As they started leaving for the graveyard, Sheela hurried the make-up and wearing of jewels to Ammumma for she felt that the identity or the self not to be damaged at the time of her travel to other world. As the ending of the novel confirms, this is a case of major repression, one that has lasted for twenty-eight years.

A Metaphor
By narrating the stories of these six women, Nair moves them from a state of passivity and absence into a state of active presence, from the kitchen and the bedroom to the street and the world at large. These are the stories, which together make a single story, of women discovering themselves. The coupé becomes a metaphor for a utopian world that is liberated from patriarchy, one that is not characterized by false binaries. Hence the conscious action taken by Akhila at the end of the novel, an action that aims at overcoming the contradictions that are characteristic of the traditional world and its essential determinant, that is alienation. Nair is a powerful writer, who through this tender story shows great understanding between women and nature. She portrays women as not only totally cut off from familial, social ties but women, who even while remaining within those orbits, protest against injustice and humiliation in the novel Ladies Coupe.

Mistress
Mistress is a grand saga of relationships. The novel deals with several themes like art and adultery, excitement of new found love, ennui in conventional relationships, squalor and ugliness of love, abuse, dashed hopes and dark family secrets. It is a book which deals with infatuation and obsession across the gulfs of religion, marriage, legitimacy and conventions. It also deals
extensively with pre-marital and post-marital sex. Most of the affairs that develop, come with a whiff of bad endings, like the river Nila, which rarely has enough water and symbolizes the shallowness of the life of the main characters of Mistress.

What holds the novel Mistress, on pre-marital, non-marital and extra-marital sex is the way; the author binds it with Kathakali, a popular and rigorous dance form of Kerala. The principal protagonist is a Kathakali artiste of international repute.

A Journey to Self-realization
Mistress is set on the banks of river Nila which instils in one’s heart, the beauty of art, wonder of creativity, depth of love and passion and the pain of infidelity. Like the river the plot is a journey to self-realisation. Mistress revolves around the life of Radha, Shyam and their morbid marriage against the backdrop of the narratives of Radha’s uncle Koman, the Kathakali dancer and teacher, who lives only for his art. e phases of human emotion.

Marital Rape as the Focus of Mistress
In Mistress Nair has brought to the fore the issue of marital rape, which is often not discussed in public and which does not necessarily amount to violence under the law, because it is the husband who is the perpetrator. Women have been living in pain and silence for ages as victims of male dominance and sexual violence. Anita Nair portrays how women are oppressed and dominated by men through the novel Mistress. Due to this Radha suppresses a lot, she co relate with a beautiful butterfly as it ends its life in a biological lab just an assignment assigned to school students. She feels the agony of flying somewhere away from her spouse.

In Eco feminist terms, Shyam sees nature or woman as a resource for the benefit of man. Both nature and women represent the generative powers of fertility and birth. But it exists as a reflection of nature through the reproductive and productive work of giving birth to children, feeding them and ensuring their healthy growth. Eco feminism argues that Western colonialism and science have damaged this relationship of nature and natural resources. Nature is no longer revered and respected. Shyam runs a resort. He knows that Radha is feminine, but he views her as a passive resource, a decorative asset in addition to being a material asset. He objectifies her by classifying her mentally as “soiled goods”, and yet she retains considerable value for him.

Conclusion
Gender, class, race and nature all must be theorized together if we are to finally move beyond these oppressions. By being aware of how oppression focuses on embodiment we can also theorize other related oppressions such
as those against the aged, the disabled and against alternative sexualities. The potential then for ecofeminism to be a radically inclusive liberation theory are considerable.

Ecofeminism has made a particularly useful analysis of power relations, and rejects any form of hierarchy. The emphasis is on shared power, finding our own ‘power-from-within’ rather than needing to impose the manipulation and control of ‘power-over’. For more on power relations.

Anita Nair not only finely interweaving various ecofeminist and feminist theories in her novels, but also seeks possibilities and solutions for empowerment of women and environment. She also suggests that only through changing our day-to-day relationships and activities towards more harmony and sustainability, we can contribute to the well-being and overall empowerment of the whole ecological system. The literary aspects of these novels have to be explored in detail, by liberating them from the limitations of a research paper. The linguistic links can also be identified and analyzed for a deeper study.

References

Daly, Mary. Gyn/ecology; Re-print 1990 The Meta ethics of Radical Feminism. Massachusetts; Beacon Press.