

# **MARRYING ANITA: AN IRONICAL TALE ABOUT STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA**

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**Abstract:** The present study aims to showcase the problems faced by women in the Modern Indian society with reference to the novel **Marrying Anita: A Quest for Love in New India**. Women are contributing generously to the progress and growth of Indian Society. Yet in present Indian mileu women face kyriarchal oppression. Though, in the Indian patriarchal society we find educated and financially independent women yet they are subjugated by their male counterparts. In matrimonial alliance too women have to play subordinate to their husbands. Though women are contributing to society at large still they do not get their due .A bitter truth is that fiercely independent women are a good company for modern outgoing men. It's ok to sit in a bar and drink with modern women. But it is difficult for these so called modern women to find a suitable match. Marrying Anita is a beautifully frank tale of an honest untenable quest of finding the perfect match. The novel is a subtle account of inequality between men and women in the Indian society.

**Keywords:** Anita, Marriage, Kyriarchal Oppression, Ironical, Marriage.

“To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is a man’s injustice to woman. If by strength is meant moral power, than woman is immeasurably man’s superior.”

--Mahatma Gandhi (MAHATMA, Vol.3,p.33)

**Marrying Anita** is a sharp witted yet honest account of free spirited American’s (having Indian roots) pursuit of a husband in India. Anita is an extremely independent journalist who has had a western thinking and upbringing. She in her search of happiness she comes to tie the knot in matrimonial alliance in India. She wants to fulfill her parents’ expectations of finding an Indian suitable boy as a husband. In doing so she brings to light the comic yet sad element of the Indian society. As in Indian society women are subjugated to humiliation and are looked down upon as out castes in the Indian patriarchal society. All this can be witnessed upon during the entire course ( all of the 307 pages ) of the novel **Marrying Anita** .

To complete her mission of getting married Anita has a string of boyfriends including Rahul, Mustafa the Sufi saint from Kashmi, Gurpreet the ‘mild-mannered Sikh with a sky blue turban’, Aristu the young good looking man and Sanjeev from Gorakhpur all prove untenable in trying to quench Anita’s thirst for getting married. At thirty-three she is really trying hard to get married. Then there is the married Vikram with whom Anita laid down naked in the bed and heard him recite the Urdu couplet by Ghalib in her ear:

**Ranj se khoongar hua insaan  
Toh mit jaata hai ranj  
Mushquilen mujh par padin itni  
Ke aasan ho gayeen  
When man befriends sorrow  
The sorrow itself is erased.**

**So many misfortunes befell me  
That they became easy.<sup>1</sup>**

So, none of the above mentioned men were of help in getting Anita married. Her parents desperately wanted Anita to get married. In order to hunt down a match they came to India. Her father left no stone unturned to get her married. He took out the advertisement in matrimonial alliance newspaper. As mentioned in the novel the Borderval advertisement read "U.S.-educated Jain girl, thirty-three years old. Harvard graduate and working for international newspaper looking for broad-minded groom."<sup>2</sup> Her father clearly wanted her to get married at all costs. The first suitor to come through matrimonial advertisement was a clerk. He was a clerk at a Shipping company, who earned \$200 a month and expected his wife to stay with his parents. Obviously this match was not meant to be. The next suitor to answer the ad was a corporate lawyer at one of the top law firms-Luthra & Luthra. His name was Vinod and he earned very well. But Anita's father wanted to know more about the prospective Son-in-law. So he probed "If my daughter Anita is sick and cannot cook dinner?"<sup>3</sup> Vinod replied back "I have a maid."<sup>4</sup> Papa again threw the question at Vinod "The maid is sick. Who cooks?"<sup>5</sup> Vinod retorted "I have two maids."<sup>6</sup> Father had more arrows in his quiver. He said "Your other maid is sick too. Who cooks?"<sup>7</sup> Vinod replied unblinkingly "I'd hire a third."<sup>8</sup> Father could control himself no longer he said "Forget the bloody maids! What do you do?" Vinod gave his answer "What these hotels and restaurants are going to shut down all at once"<sup>9</sup> That fateful night Vinod drove back home Anita and her parents in his white Mercedes. Fate had decided there was no room for such sheer male arrogance in Anita's life. The next suitor happened to be the "Little Lord Fauntleroy"<sup>10</sup>, whom Anita would definitely not marry. Then there was Sanjeev, whom Anita wanted to get married to but ironically he married a girl from northeast. Last but not the least there is sharp witted Manoj whom Anita liked but he gracefully declined. Anita continued to live alone in Delhi in a three bedroom rented apartment she stayed out at all hours of most nights, drinking and smoking, chilling out in bars with men.

Juxtaposed to the Urban life of Delhi we get a peek-a-boo into the Jain household in the small town of Meerut. Anita's parents are very impressed with their nieces- Nisha and Kshama. Later when Nisha and Kshama join Anita in private they happen to recover the sense of camaraderie of long gone by childhood. They narrate their tale of being a bahu in the Jain household in a place like Meerut or Muzaffarnagar. They tell that "they must seek permission for everything they do from their mother-in-law. When Nisha wanted to take the bangles off her right arm, so that she could wear a watch, she asked her mother-in-law for consent."<sup>11</sup> They kept on spending their time in cleaning, cooking, looking after the children and doing the household chores. Kshama also told "they are so accustomed to using the drain in-laws home"<sup>12</sup>.....She further added, "they used the drain because if they are defecating, which they are supposed to do along with their morning abulations before they bathe and dress up for the day. If for some reason there is midday defecation, then, well, they will have to bathe again and put on an entire fresh change of clothing."<sup>13</sup> Imagine the plight of the bahu.

This proves the dictum that Anita's father utters authoritative tone "India hamesha hi India rahega. Kabhi change nahin ho sakta hai. India will always be India forever. It can never change."<sup>14</sup>

Anita's quest for marriage, love and husband remains unaccomplished. For Indian men it's alright to drive down in company of smart outgoing women, to have late night booze parties with them, or to have them as a comrade (confidante) and acquaintance. Nitisha Kashyap in

her article about wants of Indian men suggests “Men want a partner who can be a good friend and shares the same tastes.”<sup>15</sup> But the bitter truth is stated by Harper in her thesis that women who get married as a consequence of “their marital or de facto relationship incur debt from their spouse/ partner.”<sup>16</sup> Sanjeev described Anita as “too flamboyant and a loud American. In return to Sanjeev’s allegation Anita asks “Why can’t I be a loud Indian?”<sup>17</sup> Sanjeev proclaims “the women aren’t”.<sup>18</sup> This statement is extremely valid from the point of view of Indian patriarchal society. If an Indian man is marrying a woman naturally she comes under the debt of her spouse for being the chosen one. So, she had to be submissive, timid, subjugated and follow his commands. Perhaps this debt was too high a price for marriage and Anita was not ready to pay. Thus, she remains captivated in the cage of loneliness and though the title of her novel is **Marrying Anita: A Quest for Love in the New India** ironically she remains unmarried till the end of the novel.

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