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BA English Honours | Semester VI | ENG6EJ302

Indian Women Writings

Module 2: Indian Women Fiction: Domestic Enclosures and Social Critique • Comprehensive Notes

Chapter 2: Gender, Domesticity, and Nation in Indian Fiction

Indian women's fiction interrogates the intimate micro-politics of the domestic sphere, revealing how the home functions as a primary site of patriarchal surveillance, female labor exploitation, and emotional silencing. Writers such as Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy, and Jhumpa Lahiri map the complex intersections of female psychology, national identity, and diasporic displacement.

2.1 Psychological Realism: Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya

Anita Desai pioneered interior psychological realism in Indian English fiction, portraying alienated female protagonists (in novels like *Cry, the Peacock* and *Clear Light of Day*) trapped within suffocating domestic expectations. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* documents the quiet resilience of rural peasant women confronting industrial disruption and agrarian precarity.

2.2 Postcolonial Subversion: Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things

Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize-winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) dissects the rigid "Love Laws" that dictate "who should be loved, and how, and how much" in feudal Kerala society. Through the transgressive romance between the Syrian Christian divorcee Ammu and the untouchable Paravan carpenter Velutha, Roy exposes how caste, patriarchy, and state police power violently crush female desire and subaltern life.

Advanced Critical Theory, Hermeneutics & Literary Praxis

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1. Hermeneutic Paradigms and Textual Mechanics

Critical inquiry into Module 2: Indian Women Fiction: Domestic Enclosures and Social Critique reveals how textual forms construct meaning through complex aesthetic strategies and structural choices:

- **Structuralism and Semiotic Deconstruction:** The organization of signs, tropes, and syntactical structures establishes narrative authority while simultaneously revealing internal fissures. Binary oppositions embedded within the discourse—such as center versus margin, tradition versus modernity, and subjective interiority versus objective reality—are systematically problematized through textual slippages and ambiguous signifiers.
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2. Historiographical Context and Reception Theory

Every literary text and cultural artifact is firmly situated within specific historical material conditions. Understanding Module 2: Indian Women Fiction: Domestic Enclosures and Social Critique requires examining how contemporaneous social movements, intellectual revolutions, and material shifts in print and digital publishing influenced textual production. Furthermore, Hans-Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations" demonstrates that textual reception is never static; each successive generation of readers reinterprets these works through evolving ethical, philosophical, and cultural frameworks.

3. Comparative Aesthetic and Thematic Matrix

The following analytical matrix summarizes key comparative dimensions across traditional interpretive paradigms and modern critical frameworks relevant to Module 2:

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