



A JOURNEY THROUGH SELF DISCOVERY- LADIES COUPE

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ABSTRACT

The situation of woman is that she-a free and autonomous being like all human creatures–nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. – Simone De Beauvoir

KEY WORDS: chief advocates , Women whether , Indian English literature.

INTRODUCTION :

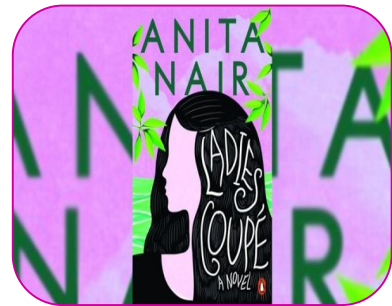
Women are the chief advocates of a rich oral tradition of storytelling, from ancient time through mythology, folklore, songs and fables. Though Literature they started portraying their plight, they paved a way to express their inner self as well as the voice of other women, so the Literature has witnessed the roles of women sprouting through ages. Women whether she in America, Canada, Africa or India the problems of women is still remains the same in this patriarchal society, to overcome the pain she has started writing about herself. Many of the Indian women novelists had dealt with issues which are related to women; they are of woman's perspective or the flora and fauna. Today, they are enjoying an increasing appreciation and reputation. Anita Myles states in her book, "Feminism and the Post-Modern Indian Women Novelist in English" (2006):

In the novel of the 1960's women in Indian fictions were depicted as ideal creature having various virtues, with no concept of revolt. While the later novels portray women as educated and conscious of the right privileges demands their proper place in society. (FPIWNE 125)

Anita Nair is a prolific writer in the field of Indian English literature, whose works explored in different genres. She has gradually been elevating herself by shifting various patterns and novelty in her works, the novel *Ladies Coupe* dealt with the notion of patriarchy, the women at home were as mother, sister and daughter, and those who were wedded to men are the bearers of their children and carriers of their posterity. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* has multi narrators. The novel which is laurel of five tales, narrated to sixth woman in the ladies coupe of a train. Her characters represent women, whose identity has been traditionally problematized.

Anitha Nair focuses the role of women in the contemporary society and a protagonist if a stereotype and tyranny under the patriarchal society. She tries to give a definition of women as a "new-fangled women" she has probed profound into the female psyche and have created an awareness of different kinds of forms of female experience.

Akhila is the protagonist of the novel *Ladies Coupe*, she brawls against male dominated society and its age old conventions which do not allow her to live her life as she wishes, as she bears the burden of her family nobody would bother for her, she has one brother and one sister they both grew up and got married and hardly think about their sister Akhila's needs and aspirations, she was always an extension of someone else's identity as Chandra's daughter, Narayana's Akka, Murthy's sister-in-law. Here Anita Nair tries to



demarcate the sensibility of all the members male or female in society and finds fault with the woman who has been exploited as she herself is observed accountable for her misfortune.

A woman is a consequent being in the male dictated society and is not allowed to pleasure the same prominence with man. Her education and career do not redeem her from familial obligations. Her potentialities are at stake as she has to attend home maintenance. Through her work she conveys that women want to make themselves free from the curbs of tradition. She wants to live a free life in male governing society. This novel persuades women to imagine in relation to their strength and about their self-identity. She tries to integrate the chronic female occurrence in her writing.

Anitha Nair's Protagonists negotiate for their individuality and a respectable place in the society where they can be mentally advanced in the real sense of the world. The writer understands the stance of female psyche and the importance of adjustments and compromises in a family where male plays a major role and suppress the women both physically as well as mentally.

Anitha Nair smidgens the lives of six women as they were travelling in ladies coupe compartment, through their stories she has sympathetically elucidated the women agonies, endurance and their sufferings. Nair attempts to present a portrait gallery of different types of women, One can find the characters of Prabhadevi, Sheela, Janaki, Margarate, Akhila, or Marikolundhu. Nair positively provides a scan into the women's world. At first Prabha Devi began to talk to Margret. "The scent of oranges filled the coupe. And with it a quiet camaraderie's sprung between them. Prabha Devi began to talk to Margaret" (18). Later she offer a bar of chocolate to Akhila, she took a piece, Margret refused to take, and then passes to Janaki and were talking about their children and grandchildren, Akhila heart flabbergasted that she is not married and if she married, she would had a same age of children. Prabha Devi say that she has married to Jagdesh, who is a businessman, owns a jewellery shop; she deeds as a conservative wife. Janaki was also a housewife, than Margaret said, she is a teacher and her husband also principal to that school. Than it was Akhila turn to tell about her, "I am 45years old I have always lived with my family, she said. (20) and working for income-tax department, not married, father died and a took after the family to settle down her brother and sister. Akhila say:

I dint choose to remain single. It happened that way she said. When the curiosity in their eyes, she elaborated, my father died and I had looked after the family. By the time they were all settled in their lives, I was much too old to marry. (20)

Next Janaki spoke, the eldest among them was Janiki, and she is someone who always had a man to protect her. She married to Pabhakar when she was eighteen and he was twenty-seven it was an arranged marriage, she was a pampered wife who desired to live only for husband, she remained good mother and a good wife, these two duties made her home realm. She recognised the futility of being adutiful, submissive wife and mother need to assert and freedom to live one's own life. In the novel the protagonist Akhiala's mother opines the same that; It is best to accept that the wife is inferior to the husbands. Janaki didn't know what to expect of marriage. While talking to Akhila, Janaki says:

Don't know enough about the world or you to offer advice. All I can do is to tell you about myself, about my marriage and what it means to me". "I am a woman who has always been looked after. First there was my father and my brothers; then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son waiting to take off from where his father left off. Women like me end up being fragile. Our men treat us like princesses. And because of that we look down upon women who are strong and who can cope by themselves. Do you understand what I am saying? (22-23)

The next among six was Sheela, a fourteen years old girl the youngest of the six is Sheela, who talks about her maternal grandmother, in whom one could see the expressions of suffragette.

Sheela is depicted as capable girl who can ponder beyond the ordinary social settings. A Sunday afternoon when Sheela went to meet her friend Hasina to her house, rushing in the heat with perspiration beading her upper lip. Her friend's father, Nazar had reached forward and wiped her sweat with his forefinger. Sheela felt ashamed and hurt at the unwanted touching of Hasina's father Naazar. Through this incident, Nair has fetched out the unjust treatment of women by men;

Nazar had reached forward and wiped it with his forefinger. The touch of his finger pricked on her skin for a long time. So Sheela was unable to open her mouth against the physical abuse attempted on her, but developed confidence to protect her from it in future for it is said, "There after Sheela mopped her face with a hanky each time she entered Hasina's home". Even Sheela's friend Hasina and her mother were able to understand the man's attempt to touch her unnecessarily but they were helpless. (66)

Unlike Sheela many girls are subjected to child abuse and exploitation. A female child is always treated as a commodity, the male think that it is an easy target to molest them, they don't think that she is also an equally worthy human being to be loved and respected and cared.

Akhila the spinster, protagonist of the novel, speculated the two ends of spectrum of Sheela and Janiki, a young girl and an old woman whose lives are dissimilar.

Revealing the story of hers Sheela fell asleep, in sleep she was crying in her sleep, Margaret and Akhila awakened by her cry than, Margaret stated talking to Akhila, she said; I was thinking of us, the women in this coupe... They are nice women but they are the kind who doesn't feel complete without a man...Deep in their hearts, they think the world has no use for a single woman. (94-95)

Anita Nair in her novel *Ladies Coupe* tries to illustrate that how people in India still treat women as inferior to men and how they treated lower and given a subordinate position in the society just because of their physical distinctiveness. Nair enforces women to have their own identity in the society where they live. Through these women characters she emboldens women to raise their voice and express their feelings so that they would be able to make other people awake, comprehend the value of their existence in the male liberated society.

The next story shared by Margaret Shanthi to Akhila, Margaret Shanti is a chemistry teacher and gold medallist too. Who had married to Paulraj, the principal of the school she works in, Initially Margaret did not understand the deep entrenched male egoism in Ebenezer Paulraj, as her extreme love for him had made her blind. At times she felt the pain of it she convinced herself saying, from the beginning of the story, he dominates and at times insults her among the colleagues; this made Margret to rise more and more violent, she feel to cook tasty food for him and make him fat and to erode him pride and shake the very foundations of his being. She did it with the sole desire for revenge and compares herself with water, that: I classify myself as a water, water that moistens, water that heals, water that forgets, water that accepts, water that flows tirelessly...In the world of chemicals, water is the universal solvent...He dismissed me as someone of no significance. So I had no recourse but to show him what the true nature of water is and how magnificent its powers are.(96)

She admits herself that she hates him because all the years she had frozen in a solid state, and forgot that she was water. The resurgence takes place as she feeds her husband with mouth-watering dishes, fried items, to make him very fat man. Margret says these words in the text that;

I mouthed the words: I HATE HIM, I HATE MY HUSBAND. I HATE EBINEZER PAULRAJ. HATE HIM. HATE HIM. I waited for a clap of thunder, hurling meteor, a whirlwind, a dust storm...for some super phenomenon that is usually meant to accompany such momentous and perhaps sacrilegious revelations. (98)

In the novel one can find, Marriage has become the fortune usually offered to women by society. In India where arranged marriages are widely customary, the wife all through her life forced to obey the notions and fantasies of man. In the novel, Akhila's mother is a conservative and orthodox, and devoted with her own theory that a wife is always inferior to husband. She is a sort of woman who never takes decision on her own but left all decisions to her husband for she believes. According to her:

A good wife learnt to put her husband's interests before anyone else's, even her father's. A good wife listened to her husband and did as she said. It is best to accept that the wife is inferior to the husband. That way, there can be no strife, no disharmony. It is so much easier and simpler to accept one's situation in life and live accordingly (14).

Ladies Coupe questions the status of women in a traditional bound social order that sees women exclusively in the role of an submissive daughter, a docile wife and a breeder of children. Women in post-colonial India boldly defy such delimiting roles and assert self-dignity and personal freedom.

Thus in the novel, *Ladies Coupe*, Anita Nair has presented an increasingly common concept of patriarchy in which a woman is constrained by tradition to be dependent on men, crippled to realize her own strength. She has presented her women struggling side by side because of patriarchy but at the end has given them a gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Her women have been portrayed as intelligent, questioning women who are not contented with the injustice and rebellion against them. So Anita Nair's women raise the question of their way of life consolidated by patriarchy, and see it not only as the site of their oppression at home and in society but also make it a field of battle to vanquish their oppressors.

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