

# Feministic Perspective in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe

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**Abstract-** Anita Nair is a living postmodern Indian woman writer in English. As a woman writer, she goes deep into the inner mind of the depressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues, which are the outcome of Indian women's psyche and emotional inequalities in a male dominated society.

Anita Nair's "Ladies Coupe" has turned out to be a great success. It is the story of a women's search for freedom and women's conditions in a male dominated society. The novel raises the questions whether the role of an Indian woman as a representative of other women, living under oppressive patriarchal systems in relation to cultural resistance, should be restricted only to their roles as wives and mothers. In such a world, woman's role is limited to reproduction regardless of her own desires and needs. Hence, this paper tries to point out how Anita Nair projects Indian feminism and attitude through women characters in her novels.

## INTRODUCTION

Feminism emerged in the western world as a faction in sustain of the same rights and opportunities for women as for men. Feminism has been specifically handling in the substantial work of English novels of India, Feminism is deviating as a civilizing, fiscal and biased movement that is focused towards establishing sanctioned protector and absolute egalitarianism for women. In Indian writing, feminism has been used as a humble challenge for evaluating the real social circumstances as extreme as women are neurotic. Today's contemporary Indian English novelists are writing for the ample using the theme of feminism, which not only interests the readers but also affects them. Throughout the world, feminism has generated interest amongst the people and India is no exemption.

## SIX WOMEN CHARACTERS

Anita Nair narrates the stories of six women who are travelling together in a Ladies Coupe of a train.

Mainly it depicts the crisis of social norms and inner urge for freedom. Akhilandeshwari alias Akhila forty-five, single and working as a clerk, has been brought up in a traditional family of Tamil Brahmins. Akhila bears the saddle of her family after her father's death. Her brothers and sisters grow up and get married and they hardly consider about Akhila's needs and aspirations. She has never been able to live a life of her own or passes an identity of her own.

On her way to Kanyakumari, Akhila meets five different women – Janaki Prabhakar, Prabha Devi, Margaret Paulraj, Sheela Vasudevan and Marikolunthu. Though, they met for the first time they share their life's experience with each other. Even though they differ in age, educational background and cultural rearing, their stories have a common thread, the tragic predicament of Indian women in a patriarchal social order.

Janaki, the oldest of the six women in the Coupe, grows up in the traditional family of being groomed into a subservient daughter, a loyal wife and a doting mother. She has been looked after all her life by men. "First there was my father and brother; then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son, waiting, to take off from where his father left off. A woman like me ends up being fragile. Our men treat as like princess" (P.22-23).

She is a someone who always had a man to care for her. Someone who was first protected by her father then by brother then by her husband and after him, it would be her son. She recognizes the ineffectuality of being an obedient wife and a caring mother and the need to affirm self-identity and freedom to live one's own life.

The Youngest of the six is Sheela, fourteen-years-old who talks about the female child exploitation by men. Sheela felt ashamed and hurt at the unwanted touching of Hasina's father Nazar as, "one Sunday afternoon when Sheela went to their house, rushing in from the heat with a line of sweat beading her upper

lip. Nazar had reached forward and wiped it with his forefinger. The touch of his finger tingled on her skin for a long time” (P.66). When once Nazar knotted the bows in her sleeves, “She saw the hurt in Hasina and her mother’s eyes” (P.66). After that Sheela took the right decision that “She would never go to Hasina’s house again” (P.66) as a means of her self-protection. Through this character, Nair has brought out the ill-treatment of women by men.

Margaret Shanti, another woman in the Ladies Coupe, is a successful chemistry teacher, entangled in an unhappy marriage with Ebenezer Paulraj, the principal of the school she works in. He is intensive, narcissistic and indifferent towards his wife. Margaret would like to divorce him, but does not to do so because she is afraid of society. Her way of taking revenge is to feed him oily food and make him a fall and dull person.

Prabha Devi is an consummate woman whose embroidery was done with stitches so fine that you could barely see them, whose ‘Ideas were light and soft’, and who ‘walked with small mincing steps, her head forever bowed, suppliant; womanly’ (P.170). After her marriage, her life swished past in the blur of inconsequential days till one day a week after her fortieth birthday. When she realized that somewhere in the process of being a good wife, a good daughter-in-law and a good mother. Prabha Devi forgets how it is to be herself and that’s when she learns to strike a balance between being what she wants to be and being what she is expected to be and a shufti of a swimming pool helps her recognize the need for the corresponding act.

The most heart-rending tale is that of Marikolunthu, thirty-one years old and an unwed mother who is a victim of a man’s lust: her poverty forcing her to do things that violate traditional social, moral injunctions. Now, she is a mother to an illegitimate child. She has experienced poverty, rape, lesbianism and physical torture.

“I was a restless spirit warped and bitter. Sometimes I would think of the past and I would feel a quickening in the vacuum that existed within me now” (P.266).

One night in the Ladies Coupe and her interaction with the five women, helped Akhila to realize that she had given the society a gratuitous power of ruling her life. These women and their stories helped Akhila find the answer to her biggest question- ‘Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman

need a man to feel complete?’. Hence, she comes to conclude that she gets back in touch with the gay who she felt in love with, someone who she did not accept for the fear of the society.

## CONCLUSION

Ladies Coupe questions the status of women in a traditional bound social order that sees women exclusively in the role of an obedient 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. They are to pen their basic physical and emotional needs and acts un-inhabitingly to satisfy them. The train journey in fact symbolizes a journey away from family and responsibilities, a journey that will ultimately make them conscious of their self-esteem and dignity. It is a journey towards self-discovery Akhila travels with the question that has been poignant all her adult life. She meets five women characters in the novel and travels with the same question. This wonderful atmosphere, delicious, warm novel takes reader into the heart of women’s life in contemporary India, revealing how the dilemmas that women face in their relationships with husband, mothers, friends, employees and children.

Anita Nair’s “Ladies Coupe” brings into focus the issue of self-realization. Though Anita Nair is not a feminist, her stories portray the sensibilities of a woman, how a woman looks at herself and her problems.

## REFERENCES

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