

Ecofeminist Currents and Cultural Emergence: *Ladies Coupe* through Raymond Williams Framework

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Abstract-The present paper proposes an ecofeminist reading of Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*, combining feminist literary criticism with ecological awareness using the theoretical paradigms of ecofeminism and Raymond Williams' theory of Dominant, Residual, and Emergent cultures. By foregrounding ecological metaphors within the novel such as still water, parched earth, and breathing space the study illustrates how Akhilandeshwari's personal transformation aligns with broader themes of environmental regeneration and resistance to patriarchal domination. The compartmentalized train space functions as a symbolic ecological enclave where residual traditions are challenged and emergent feminist-environmental identities take root. Key ecofeminist scholars including Vandana Shiva and Carolyn Merchant shape the interpretive context, placing the narrative in recent theoretical discourses about environmental justice in India. This cross-disciplinary method illustrates how literature may criticize socio-environmental conditions in addition to building alternative cultural values grounded in empathy, balance, and sustainability.

Keywords-Ecofeminism, Indian English Fiction, Anita Nair, Environmental Justice, Raymond Williams, Cultural Theory, Ladies Coupé

INTRODUCTION

In modern Indian English fiction, the New Woman figure is increasingly analyzed through interdisciplinary frames of reference connecting feminism, culture, and ecology. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé* offers a singular site for this engagement. The novel places its female main character, Akhilandeshwari, in a state of transition a train compartment, where tales given by other women serve as triggers of change. This article suggests an ecofeminist interpretation of the novel, bringing Akhila's transformation within ecological themes and

cultural becoming. Through this, the paper adds to increasing discussions on how literary works represent and critique both environmental and gendered power relations, particularly in the Indian socio-cultural sphere.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Ecofeminism challenges the common logic of domination which oppresses women and nature alike, providing a coherent critical model for the study of texts that investigate themes of liberation, balance, and environmental justice.

Vandana Shiva insists that ecological destruction and exploitation based on gender commonly coincide, especially in postcolonial nations such as India. Carolyn Merchant takes this criticism further by pointing to the symbolic violence of mechanistic worldviews imposed upon both the earth and the feminine. Raymond Williams' Dominant, Residual, and Emergent cultures theory support ecofeminism through the provision of a structural model for the interpretation of cultural transformation. Qualitative literary analysis is employed in this research, reading metaphors, imagery, and narrative form in *Ladies Coupé* to follow Akhila's transformation through ecofeminist and cultural emergence lenses. Findings

Akhila's change is expressed through potent natural imagery. First described as 'still water' which is a potent symbolization of stagnation. She comes to be equated with 'parched earth', cracked yet open to change. Her acceptance of loneliness in the final scenes of the novel is described as 'breathing space', a symbol of freedom and renewal.

Every woman's narrative in the coupe refers to elemental forces, heat, water, hunger, tides reinforcing the ecofeminist argument that their lived experiences

are strongly connected with natural cycles. The compartment itself is an ecosystem, nurturing contemplation and subversive energy. Through these layers of symbolism, **Ladies Coupé** offers the process of personal and cultural rewilding.

DISCUSSION

By integrating ecofeminism and Williams' cultural theory, the novel presents the story of Akhila as one of individual freedom and cultural development. Her move from the mainstream ideologies of obedience and repression toward newer values of freedom and harmony is that of a feminist-environmental ethic.

This narrative path reflects larger environmental justice struggles in India, wherein women's resistance shares the form of ecological struggle whether in land rights, access to clean water or ecologically sustained agriculture. **Ladies Coupé** not only makes a contribution to feminist scholarship but also issues a literary critique of anthropocentric and patriarchal formations that harm both women and the environment.

CONCLUSION

Anita Nair's **Ladies Coupé** is a strong witness to the ability of literature to map and challenge intersectional systems of cultural and ecological oppression.

The novel speaks through Akhila's story an arising ecofeminist sensibility that grounds individual liberty in the ethic of care, sustainability, and cohabitation.

Raymond Williams' theoretical validation further legitimates the cultural transformation that is occurring, unearthing literature's capacity to create, counter, and redefine socio-environmental norms. In the larger context of Indian feminist literary studies, these narratives not only re-appropriate space for women's speech but also negotiate ecological renewal and justice. Quotes Bhaskar, A. (2015). **Feminist Voices in Indian English Fiction**. New Delhi: Atlantic.

Krishnan, R. (2017). 'Shifting Spaces: Female Subjectivity in Nair's Narratives.' **Indian Journal of Literary Studies**, 12(3), 45-57.

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