

Anita Nair's "Ladies Coupe" The Patriarchal Set-Up of the Indian Family Life

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The women's fiction in the late 20th century clearly shows emergence of new woman, who has learnt to assert herself and to be bold enough to chart the course of her life in the face of social criticism. The women novelists, most of them, try to express their concern for women's predicament in the largely patriarchal set-up of the Indian family life. In the post-independent India, through their education and their entry into the job-market women have discovered their identity and the role they can play in the family as well as in the social sphere as independent individuals. Their active participation in the social and economic field has given them a voice.

The six women characters in Ladies Coupe:-

Anita Nair gives perfect examples of victimized women in a patriarchal system. Anita Nair's women characters are based upon their autobiographical experiences. This article explores how women fight against injustices inflicted upon them by domineering patriarchal systems in Anita Nair's Novel "Ladies Coupe". Shows various women characters in ladies coupe and reveals how they overcome their tribulations by struggling hard against the society and acquire their own identity.

Basically in all Indian writer's novel patriarchy is used concept in all every women's life in which they constrained

ABSTRACT

The paper showcases the theme of the patriarchal set-up of the Indian family life in Anita Nair's "Ladies Coupe".

Anita Nair's "Ladies Coupe" is a great success in literature world. As a woman writer, she goes deep into the inner psyche of the depressed women and effectively highlights the trials and tribulations faced by them in a patriarchal society.

We live in a country whose value system is largely dominated by the patriarchy. It is the story of a woman's search for freedom and their 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, sisters and mothers. Hence, this paper tries to point out how Anita Nair projects the patriarchal set-up of the Indian family life in her novel.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Feminism, Traditional, Sacrifice, Ladies Coupe

INTRODUCTION

Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe fictionalises the patriarchal structure of Indian families. As a woman writer Anita made quite volumetric, qualitative and varied contribution to the Indian English Fiction. Her fiction reveals complex vicissitudes in the life of the Indian women and illustrates their struggle to establish their identity and achieve their freedom.

by tradition and customs. Anita Nair has presented her women are struggling side by side because of patriarchy but at the end of the novel she provided them a gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Usually her women's characters are portrayed as, courageous and intelligent women who are not satisfied with the injustice and rebellion against men. So Nair's women characters raise the question of their way of life due to patriarchy and see it not only as the site of their harassment at home as well as society.

This article studies that women can express themselves very freely and fearlessly through their potential. Paper suggests that Indian Feminism must be welfare oriented and it should target female foeticide, child marriage, dowry system, female illiteracy, malnutrition, all evils and violence against women community. Paper reveals that women in Indian are marginalized as they perform every work at home as well work outside still they don't get the status of working women.

The paper reveals how Anita Nair depicts the pain of Indian girl-child who from the birth suffers from gender discrimination and feels herself inferior in the patriarchal society.

Anita Nair gives an answer to the question whether a woman can survive alone by presenting an insight into the ways of women living in India. There is an aspect of sympathy in all women. The author has touched on many controversial and sensitive subjects but all with extreme elegance and calibre. She talks about untouchability, casteism, cultural and religious bias, betrayal, abuse and disrespect of women, domination of power and money and even homosexuality. The lives of the women characters portrayed by Nair in her novels are deeply affected by caste, class and gender. These fictional women-Akhilandeswari, Janaki, Margaret Shanti, Prabha Devi, Sheela, Marikolanthu can be seen as mirror images of the real Indian women.

Akhila the protagonist is the eldest child in the middleclass Brahmin family. The name Akhila Deshwari means the mistress of all worlds, but it is a misnomer as being a girl, her life is fully controlled by her father and brother at every stage. As a daughter, she is groomed to be a bride, and she has to perform the role of a wife, a mother, carrying on household duties. But Akhila's life takes a different turn when her father dies, and she has to take up a job in his office. She becomes a bread-winner for the family consisting her mother, a sister and two brothers. After her father's death, when Narayan, her younger brother, asks her 'what are we going to do?' She harshly replies".

'Cremate him and thenand then, we'll find some way to keep ourselves afloat and alive.' (Ladies Coupe, p.57)

Janaki's story exemplifies common life of all women, but even she, at the late stage, feels tired of living such life of dependence. But even his typical housewife, she feels some rope of revolt when she finds her husband tries to impose his choice of shoes on his grown-up son. Janaki's story, thus, tells Akhila how the patriarchal control is inevitable in the life of a woman. Akhila had already noticed in her own family how her father was lionized by her mother, while even the children in the family had secondary treatment. Janaki leads a content life until she realizes her meekness. The life which has gone smoothly starts to find its ups and downs. She discovers her true happiness that lies in her, but she is not able to take off the web under which she is captured for a long period.

The story of **Margaret Shanthi**, a chemistry teacher, is about her excessive dependence on and loves for her husband Ebenzer Paulraj, who controls her life and thwarts her in her career, as well as her wish to have a baby, all for his own selfish ends. He exercises Margaret into a position of subservient silence, making her out to be an unnoticed and ordinary girl. A girl, with a sparkling academic career and a warm and exciting personality, is reduced to an average girl. His subtle cruelty to the children in his school gets repeated with his wife too. He controls her completely. She is forced to do B.Ed., though she wants to do Ph.D. She is made to work only for her husband and he nags her all the time. She starts to hate him and the day she realizes her hatred towards him, she feels liberated from some unknown command:

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

But, her love for him blinds her to his selfish motive. She finds her personality being crushed and her selfhood being trodden by her husband. Margaret retaliates by planning a silent war against him. She makes use of a strategy to make him dependent on her.

Anita Nair, with a deep, psychological insight, skilfully utilizes the story of **Marikolanthu** to comment upon the sexual exploitation of Indian women from rural background. Marikolanthu is the most pathetic woman among the six. She is the realistic picture of the humble and miserable peasantry women on whom male oppression is forced on heavily and left unquestioned. In the narration of **Marikolanthu**, there is a story of working girl, which is sexually exploited by the male members of the upper class society. Being a girl from a poor family, she is deprived of education. She was withdrawn from the school as she completed her fifth standard. Only her brothers could go to school in the town. Her mother says there is a risk to send a girl by a bus to town for school. She accompanies her mother to Chatter house, where she becomes a baby-sitter for no pay. This society shuns thinking that the woman is strong-willed to create disastrous consequences if she is completely ignored.

Through the character of **Prabha Devi**, Anita Nair hints at the gender bias which begins from the cradle. The news of the birth of Prabha is denounced by her father in the following words:

"Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans added your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance" (169)

Prabhadevi's father is a perfect example of dominated male, expects a boy-child, is very much disappointed of her birth but gradually changes him to accept her. Suresh Kumar and Leema Rose say, "patriarchy shows its ugly face from cradle to grave". And Anita Nair has chosen the character of Prabha Devi to emphasise this issue. At the age of eighteen she is married to Jagdish. She goes to New York on a trip with her husband. She is left dumbfounded at the confidence of the western women. Consequently, she decides to give herself a modern look. She starts wearing Western clothes, high heels etc. adopting western way of life. However her modern looks invite a wrong kind of attention from her husband's friend, who makes sly and stealthy advances at her. Shocked and scared, Prabha Devi makes a hasty decision. She never again asks for anything new and remains content with what is offered to her. She withdraws herself from life. She starts wearing her saris, waits for her husband at night to return from work and gives birth to his babies. In short, Prabha Devi lived as 'A husband's toy and a baby machine'.

At this time Prabha Devi is forty years old and has a daughter and son. Suddenly, a week after her fortieth birthday, it occurs to Prabha Devi that she has forgotten the sound of her own voice. "She opened her mouth and spoke her name; Prabha-de-vi. A sound emerged that was a little like a bleat and more like a mewl. **So this is my voice, she thought, "Between an irate sheep and a kitten being strangled" (LC 168).**

Conclusion:-

The personal stories and experiences in '**Ladies Coupe**' narrated by the women of different ages and of social status which underline women's plight in the male-dominated society. 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-inhabiting 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 in the patriarchal society.

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