

## **RENEWAL OF WOMANHOOD THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION: AKHILA'S JOURNEY IN ANITA NAIR'S LADIES COUPE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Anita Nair's indianness is the main criterion in her writings. The novel *Ladies Coupe* is a story about woman's strength and independence. Resuscitation of relationship takes place in this novel. The novel's title itself makes a point about how the Indian society treats women. Akhila, the protagonist, a 45yrs old single woman working as an Income tax officer. Akhila is brought up in an environment in which the society had the supreme power and never dare to rewrite the unfounded norms. Akhila's mother belonged to the old school of thoughts. Akhila didn't have a space with her mother. One fine day she realized she has nothing for her life. So, she hunts for her journey. On her way to kanyakumari, Akhila meets five different women. Each one had the story of her own. All of them had one thing in common and that was the search for the real self in life. These women's stories helped Akhila find the answer to her question "Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete?" Those days woman needed man as her companion but in today's world woman needs a partner who shares her ups and downs. Woman doesn't need man as the breadwinner but shares her ideas. Feminist perceptive is revealed in this novel. Thus, women have been awakened from the state of passivity into the state of active presence. Social consciousness and empowerment of women is highly stated in this novel. Thus, the conscious action taken by Akhila at the end of the novel, is the action that aims to overcome the contradictions that are characteristic of the "traditional" world and its essential determinant that is alienation. The paper analyses the revival of relationship among women community.

**KEYWORDS:** Akhila, Anita Nair's, Women Community

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **ANITA'S NAIR'S EARLY LIFE**

Anita Nair was born on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966 in Shornur in the state of Kerala. She was educated in Chennai. Before returning to Kerala, she gained a BA degree in English language and literature. She lived in Bangalore she was an Indian English language writer.

Nair was working as the creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore. First of all, she wrote a collection of short stories called *satyr of the subway*. Her novels "The better Man and ladies coupe have been translated into 21 Language. In 2002, Ladies coupe was elected as one of the fine best books in India.

#### **Other Leading Women Writers**

Anita Desai, a renowned Indian writer, expresses her views through her novels. Her novels were about the distributed psyche of the modern Indian women. She made the psyche of the women reveal through the past memories, self

– analysis daily entries, the place where they lived and visited and also the people whom they had met. women stated observing, the way she was treated by the character in her family. Finally, she understood her oppression in her own family itself. All these qualities were taken place in Anita Nair's novels too Shashi Deshpande, a famous Indian women writer excels in her realistic portrayals of women in her novels. Her notable works such as *That Long Silence And Small Remedies* are sensitive portrayals of women in the patriarchal world. Like, Deshpande's novels, Anita Nair's novels also excels in projecting a realistic picture of the middle class women who had undergone frustrations, convulsions and turmoil in her life. These sufferings had been carried over many centuries.

### **Anita Nair – A Feminist Writer**

In Nair's novel *Ladies coupe*, the story was about the strength and independence of women. Her style of writing was totally different from the other feminist writers. She traces the real position of women in the families as well as in the male dominated society. Finally, she brings a relationship renewal of women which is permanent in her life. Nair brings the permanence by revealing women from fears, dilemmas and suppressions. At last, she exhibits her ripples by taking women as women in the male dominated society.

Anita Nair's descriptions and portrayal of characters are highly appreciable.

For a long time, women existed as

a gap, as an absence in Literature.....

This is not only true of the fiction

created by men, but also by women,

Who have mostly confined themselves

to writing love stories or dealing with

the experience of women in a

superficial manner..... (which) represses

the truth about the majority of their

stories and their lives (85).

Anita's main focus was to attain freedom for women in the Indian society. Majority of women are struggling for their independence both in the families and societies.

### **Motivation of Research**

My intention for this research is that the traditional women no more exists. Women's own identity is being revealed. Women are playing the role of both as individuals and members of families and societies. In today's world, women are given equal rights as men But, even today majority of women, continue to be at home without knowing their own's self - identity, independence and strength. They have been still dominated by males in the society. Thus these women's must realize the majority position they occupy in the fields of society and family. This can be done through the process of relationship renewal in my point of view.

Anita Nair is one of the notable writers in India. She always focuses on the problems of women in our society. Her second novel "*Ladies Coupe*" has achieved a tremendous success in her career.

In this novel, Anita Nair signifies the inequality in relationship her novel usually raises the questions about the role of women in contemporary postcolonial India.

The women character in the novel "*Ladies coupe*" seems to be the personifications of new women who have been trying to throw off the burden of inhibitions they have carried for ages.

They go through the grueling experience of domestic oppression at the hands of the domestic oppression at the hands of the repressive forces of society but finally they revolted against the oppressions and resolved revolted against the oppressions and resolved to discover them and establish them in society.

In the novel, "*Ladies coupe*" traces the lives of six women as they travel the ladies components. It is about a train journey taken by the chief protagonist, Akhila to search within herself for strength and independence and answer to many questions that have disturbed her spinster hood. She meets 5 ladies. Janaki, Margaret Shanthi, Prabhu Devi, Sheela & Marikolunthai.

#### **Akhila – The Protagonist**

Akhila, the protagonist, a 45 yrs old single women working as an Income tax officer. she was born in a conservative Brahmin family. She was brought in an environment where the society had the supreme power and never dares to rewrite the unfounded norms.

Akhila's mother belongs to the old school of thoughts and ideas. She refuses to accept for Akhila's views and though she said, "It is when one wants to prove one's equality that there is warring and sparring all the time. It is so much easier to accept one's station in life and live accordingly. A women in not meant to take on the man's role or the Gods would have made her so. So what is all this about two equals in a marriage".

Thus, Akhila's mother drills her by saying play the man of the house. Akhila started playing the role of main subjects in her family forgiving all her dreams and thoughts she acted as a sister, daughter and sometimes as an account too. One fine day, she recalls her past life and finds out that she had nothing in her life. There was a big question put-up in her career till now.

So, she decides to go to the seaside town of going for the trip makes Akhila's mother to get permission from the brothers one her way to Kanyakumari, she meets five different women, her fellow passengers. Each with a story of her own but all of them had one thing in common and that was their search for the real denotation of life.

#### **Janaki –A Pampered Wife**

Janaki is the oldest women traveled in the train. Janaki plays various roles such as a daughter, a wife and a mother. She is a traditional India women, She lover has husband more than anyone else.

Janaki is being dominated by her husband and the society. The Indian women writers like Anita Desai, Shashi Desphande and Nayantara Sahgal have also written the novels based on the problems of women in the male dominated society.

These writers suggests that women must be treated equal to men and must be given more priority than man. In no way women are inferior to men.

Janaki is about 40 yrs old. She got married at 18 yrs itself. She has a beautiful, comfortable happy married life till 40 yrs old. Her husband name was Prabhakara. She has a son and a daughter-in-law. she finds some strings of revolt when her husband started controlling everyone. even his grownup son she says her husband. “you just want to control him. you want to control everybody. You want everyone to do your bidding” (Ladies coupe 30)

Janaki can't tolerate her husband's overbearing dominance. She finds her life to be with ups and downs. She nomore has happiness in her life she just wants to get rid out from the web of her husband. Her response to Akhila is “*why should a women life by herself? There is always man willing to be with her*” (Ladies coupe 21)

### **Sheela – A Sensitive Girl**

Sheela is the fourteen years old girl. She takes care of the family members. She understand the dynamics of life. Her grandmother teaches her practical life. She gets attached with her grandmother and brings maturity in her life. She knows “women turn to their mother when they have no one else to turn to women know that a mother alone will find it possible to wealth some shred to compassion and love that in everyone else has become ashes” (Lades couple 71). Sheela's grandmother also teaches about men who dominates women physically as well as psychologically. Sheela experiences through her father itself as her father usually says shit, for speaking to boys and for being rude. He encourages her to speak” with a razor - edged wit and a finely developed skill of repartee” (70). When her grandmother dies of cancer, she remembers her “grandmother's words” the only person you used to please is yourself. When you look into a, mirror you reflection should make you feel happy” (Ladies coupe 67). So, she dresses her grandmother's body with jewels. Her maturity is shown by her grandmother teachings. This is revealed by Anita Nair.

### **Marikolundhu – Sexual Exploitation**

Marikolundhu is a girl from rural background. She comes from a poor background. Her mother works as a cook at Chettiar's house which is the richest families in their village. she loses her education. Being a child she is a victim of social and economic repression when her mother goes for work. She takes care of the family. One day, Marikolundhu's mother become ill and she continued her mother's work at Chettiar's house. Her duty was to take care of a child of Sujata akka, the daughter in law of Chettiar. She showers her love and affection upon the child. She hates her son Muthu, who escapes many attempts of abortion. He is the result of seduction by Murugesan. she give birth to a son. Finally she leaves her son at her mother and works in chettiar's family. Sujata's husband also uses Marikolundhu to fulfill his sexual desires. On knowing this Sujata sends her from the house. After her mother's death, Marikolunthu takes care of her child mercilessly, due to anger, she mortgages him at one of the Murugesan's 100 ms for Rs.5000/-. The turning point in her life comes when she sees the dead body of Murugesan burning at the pyre. All the hatred towards Murugesan has gone with the flames of him. She finally thinks at her child and makes up her mind to bring back him. She is surrounded by social and financial problem. The resolve to bring back her child enables a new chapter in her life. Women's loneliness, illiteracy, dependence ignorance and frustration, has made men dominance in the society. She undergoes humiliation and debasement in her life, so far.

### **Margaret Shanti – An Innocent Girl**

Margaret's marriage to Ebenezer Paulraj like a fair tale for her. Her husband loves her from the bottom of his heart, but not ready to accept he lives and dislikes, dreams and aims. her freedom has been tied with her hands, which is portrayed by Anita Nair. She is an innocent girl who says 'yes' to whatever her husband says and does everything for him. He controls her completely she is made to work only for her husband and he nags her all time. She starts to hate her husband and mouthed the worlds. I HATE HIM. I HATE MY HUSBAND. I HATE EBENEZAR PAULRAJ. I HATE HIM. HATE HIM. I waited for a clap of thunder, a hurling meteor, a whirlwind, adjust storm. (*Ladies coupe* 98). The heavy depression of Margaret gave her physical and mental sufferings Anita Desai quotes "understanding was scant, love was meager" (89) in the novel *Cry the Peacock*.

### Prabha Devi - A Bold Lady

Prabha devi is a 40 yrs old women. She begins to realize that she missed sometime in her life after that, she craves to learn swimming, But her husband Jagadesh does not give his consent towards her pleading request, because he wants her to be submissive. Thus, she empowers herself and olds herself to achieve her desire. Simon de Beauvior puts it is right way in her *The Second Sex* "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295).

### Anita Nair's Art

Anita Nair presents the struggle of women who refuses to submit her individual self women in being defeated & undergoes much pain and suffering. Thus, in ladies coupe (2001), Anita Nair traces a women's journey from self – sacrifice to self – realization, self – denial to self – assertion and self – negation to self – affirmation. the feminist voice is heard throughout the novel.

### CONCLUSIONS

On hearing the five stories of women, Akhila gets the resemblance of her own's life story. These incidents helped Akhila finds the answer to her question "Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete ?" Akhila on hearing the indicents a relationship renewal has been renowned in her life. All these five characters have brought a sarcastic renewal in Akhila's life. Thus, women has been awakened from the state of passivity into state of active presence. Finally, Akhila puts a call to her lover as a relationship renewal which reveals in her inner feelings.

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