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## SENSIBILITY OF WOMEN IN ANITA NAIR'S *LADIES COUPE*

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Anita Nair in her novel *Ladies Coupe* gives us the vivid picture of feminine thoughts, inner emotions, feelings and desires. In this novel Anita Nair gives us two different emotions of women. The first one is the type of women who believe in the ancient norms, traditions and culture that they follow in their life. The second one is about women who suffered to survive their desired life and acted as a puppet in the hands of the society.

Anita Nair one of the renowned writers was born on 26 Jan, 1966 in Palakkad district, Kerala. Anita Nair is an Indian writer well known for fiction and poetry. Through her novels *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe*, she has reached the hearts of the readers. Like other authors such as Anita Desai, Arunthathi Roy, Manju Kapur, Kamala Das, She has the affinity towards writing and the courage to present with different type of situations in her novel. She has also written many other works such as *The Puffin Book of Myths and Legends*, *Mistress*, *Adventures of Nonu*, *The Skating Squirrel*, *Living Next Door to Alise*, and so on. The awards won by Anita Nair are Pen or Beyond Margins Award, Orange Prize for Fiction, Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* is the Malayalam translated novel which has turned into a great success. It has been translated into 21 languages. This novel mainly speaks about women's search for freedom and independence. The theme relies on the sensibilities of women and their conditions in this male chauvinistic society. The title *Ladies Coupe* aptly suits the novel as Anita Nair depicts the stories of six women who travel in a train. They share their inner thoughts and ideas to each other in the coupe. This novel resembles to that of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer has formed the work by combining the tales told by the pilgrims in their journey. Following the same method, Anita Nair tells us about the story of six women characters who share their life experiences in a one night train journey.

Anita Nair has given six main women characters in the novel. Akhila the protagonist of the novel suddenly decides to take her life in her hands with her own decision. At the age of 45, nearly annoyed working as a clerk in the Income Tax Department is now filled with the idea of revolt. She decides to take a long journey to Kanyakumari. After her father's death, she became the head of the household. She has sacrificed her desire to fulfill her family's wants and needs. She lives up with the question which continuously ponders her; "Can a woman live without a man and be happy or does a woman need a man to feel complete?"

Akhila's mother belonged to the old school of thoughts both in her words and in her actions. Akhila has been provided to play many roles like aunt, sister, daughter but she never got to be herself in her life. On her way to Kanyakumari, Akhila meets five women in the ladies coupe-Janaki Prabhakar, Prabha Devi, Sheela Vasudaven, Margaret Paulraj and Marikolunthu. They met for the first time in the train journey but they shared their life's experiences with each other. Janaki, the oldest of six women in the coupe is from a traditional family. She has been looked after by all men in her life. She says, "First there were my father and my brother; then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son, waiting, to take off from where his father left off."

Sheela Vasudevan is a 14 year old, generations apart but who have mental maturity. She has the ability to look beyond the things. Margaret Paulraj is a chemistry teacher in the same school where her

husband works as a principal. After marriage she realizes that her husband cares only about his business and his career. Prabha Devi was a beautiful docile, a good cook and a singer. She was married to a diamond merchant. She succeeds to stay balanced both in her life and in swimming, as she loves swimming. Marikolanthu worked very hard in her life to help her mother and to raise her brothers. Akila thinks that she needs a man for companionship, so that she can share her ups and downs in her life. She needs a person not to be a bread winner but someone to share the bread with.

Anita Nair has shown different generations of women in the novel. Akhila's mother and Janaki depict the traditional valued women who accept the society based norms and live according to it. The other similar thing among these women is they both have got a lovable husband who showered love and care in their life. On the other hand, the new generation women suffer and live a depressed life. Marikolanthu at the age of 19 itself she undergoes an unpleasant event which spoils her entire life and she suffers her life as a mother to an illegitimate child. Margaret receives no love and care from her husband though she is well educated and got a job. Akhila suffers in her life to live her desired one. After her father's death she looks after her family. She was an unmarried 45 years old who lives with a question throughout her life and finally finds a solution in the train where the women shared their life's experience.

This novel, though it is a work of fiction speaks more about reality. Like Akhila many women in the society suffers to fulfill the desires and needs of the family by demolishing their own desires in their life. They fail to lead their life as per their desires and wishes. Like the women in the *Ladies Coupe*, many women in reality run their lives in self-discovery. This novel gives us the clear cut idea about women who search themselves in the journey of life. There arises a question Will it be possible for a woman to survive without a man's protection? Janaki first says to Akhila that, if she were to lose everything around her, she would cope up with the life and manage it perfectly. But at the end she says, "Now I know that even if I cope, it isn't the same if he isn't there for me"

Anita Nair gives us a message that every individual's destiny is in his or her own hands. Even though the society discourages, we should lift our foot up from the sand to get foot prints. She also tells us that people should not lose their opportunities given to them. They should grab it at once to achieve their path of desire. Akhila did not think about her desires by keep on fulfilling her family needs. Though she has the desire to marry she keeps on living with the question on her mind, until she gets an answer in the night journey when other women shared their life's experiences. Towards the end she considers her as a woman with good potential. Thus Anita Nair gives a positive tone to it.

The novel is wonderfully woven with its theme and the content that Anita Nair has shown us the reality of mankind with different emotions and feelings towards their life. Her novels give the real description of women's condition and state in the society. Every woman has courage and willpower to fight back against the social evils. The courageous women can change their life into a peaceful one.

#### **Works Cited**

Nair, Anita. *Ladies Coupe*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2001. Print.