

Delineation of Persecuted Women in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*

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Abstract

Violence has a devastating effect on women in the society. It is rooted in gender-based discrimination. Victimization of women happens every nook and corner even today. Anita Nair is a prominent Indian novelist. She is the stalwart marcher of feminism. Her novel *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupé* have been translated in many languages. The novel *Ladies Coupé* presents the sufferings of women in the dominated society. The main theme of the novel is sufferings of women in an unfairly way for a long period of time. It presents a plaintive tale of six Indian Women on their journey in train. This paper intends to portray certain aspects of unfulfillment in their lives and to analyse the relationship between men and women, the concept of marriage and divorce, social and cultural and psychological issue.

Keywords: Discrimination, Victimization, Persecution, Unfulfillment.

Anita Nair is a feminist women writer who strives to uphold the rights of the women through her works. The novel *Ladies Coupé* is one such. This novel presents the life of a middle aged woman Akila as she travels to Kanyakumari. The main theme of the novel is subjugation of women. Her story swaps with another five ladies whom she meets in the ladies' compartment on her trip to Kanyakumari. Delineation means the portrayal of someone or something in a particular way. This article aims to present the delineation of persecuted women in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*

“... How terrible is the pain of the mind and heart when the freedom of mankind is suppressed!”
E.A Burchianeri

In *Ladies Coupé*, Anita Nair reveals the sufferings of women when they lose their freedom in the male dominated society. Their heart and mind broke out of pain because of their vanished freedom.

Anita Nair is one of the most acclaimed writers in English. Her novels focus on real human condition on the earth. She artfully interlaces her stories in the Indian scenario. She is unique in presenting her conceptions and inventive in sharing the experiences of language. There is a wonder-rousing depth in her narration, and the main trust of her novel is confrontation between the self-actualization and family responsibilities of the individuals.

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Almost all her novels are embedded in Indian culture. The writer's story may be said to be ideological as well as practical, based on the structure of Indian middle class family.

In *Ladies Coupé*, Akila is the main character. She travels to Kanyakumari. On her travel she meets five ladies in her compartment. They are Sheelavasudevan, Prabhadevi, Janakiprabhakar, Margaret Shanthi and Marikolunthu. They all share with each other about their plight difficulties and find themselves to be united experiencing similar problem of female suppression.

Prabha Devi, in *Ladies Coupé* has a dream of being rich and married to a rich man.

With swinging hair and confident stride their lives were ruled by themselves and on one else. She power, such confidence and celebration of life and beauty
(LC 177)

Anita Nair has employed stream of consciousness technique in her novel *Ladies Coupé*. Prabha Devi dreams as she knows that she can't be ruled by anyone. In dream her power, confidence, beauty will arise. She had that sense of freedom in her dream.

The peculiar aspect in the writings of Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé* is that she reconstructs the socio-cultural values from a women's viewpoint on the serious issue and complex issues such as sensuality, servility, subjugation and society. However, they are portrayed as potential to handle these issues with a sense of balance without disregarding Indian traditions. The main reason is that it has allowed them to create their own world and set the conditions of them being free from the direct interference of men. This novel stands as a best seller even today because, many women readers feel that they can explore wide range of experience of women characters of the world, also can identify themselves with a range of women character and variety of existence in reading this book.

Margaret, in the *Ladies Coupé* undergoes various crisis in her life. She is a compliant wife devoid of freedom. She is completely submissive to her husband. When she is forced to abort; her love towards her husband became hatred. The words of her:

*I mouthed the words; I hate him
I hate my husband; I hate Ebenzer.
paulraj. I hate him. I hate him.* (LC: 98)

She hated him completely.

Happiness is being allowed to choose one's own life

*To live the way ones wants
Happiness is knowing one is loved
And having someone to love*

Happiness is being able to hope for tomorrow. (LC: 200)

Ebenezer Paulraj keeps Margaret neglected and inadequate. Margaret was a girl of excellent academic career. She was a vibrant personality, but Ebenezer treats her as an average girl. She herself lost her charm. She has undergone physical, mental, and spiritual crisis. Throughout their life she searched for herself.

Janaki, whom Akila meets in the *Ladies Coupé*, is a believer of old tradition. She is having the beliefs that a woman must depend on men always for her livings. Comparing herself to the epic characters of Indian literature like Sita or Savitri is also one of reason for her belief.

“During the childhood a female must depend upon a father, during youth, upon her father; her husband being dead, upon her sin, is she has no sons, upon the near kinsmen, upon the sovereign, a women must never govern herself as she likes. (Rose 44)

At 18 years old Janaki gets married to Prabhakar. She leads a happy life of 40 years. After marriage, she is comfortable. But later she realizes her submissiveness. She feels some soring of revolt as her husband controls everybody even their grown-up son. Janaki says to her husband.

He just Want to control him. he wants to control everybody. You want everyone to do your bidding (LC 30)

Arrogant authority, accuracy and strictness of her husband irritates Janaki.

Sheela in *Ladies Coupé* is a sensitive girl of fourteen years old. She is blessed with deep insight. She understands the dynamics of the life because of her relationship with her mother, father, and grandmother. Her grandmother teaches how to lead a life. Because she is more attached to her grandmother until she dies. This attachment brings in a maturity to Sheela. She is matured in conversing compared to other fellow’s travellers. The comprehension of three generation women can be found in Sheela. She knows that

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 unearth some shred of compassion and love that in everyone else has become ashes. (LC 71)

Sheela’s grandmother pictured men very often to her, who suppressed women physically and mentally. Sheela was reproached by her father incessantly for using shit in

every sentence as she utters and for being rude. He advises her to speak every sentence, *With a razor-edged wit and a finely developed skill of repartee* (LC :70) He controls her whenever she begins to talk like a matured woman. The words of her grandmother echoes as her body are prepared for final rights.

The only person you need to please is yourself. When you look into a mirror, your reflection should make you feel happy. (LC:67)

She dresses her grandmother's dead body in elegantly with jewels.

Akila, the protagonist of *Ladies Coupé* can be called the new dictates of her family from the strength she has gathered from the female bonding in the *Ladies Coupé*. The first woman to narrate her story was Akila. Even Akila's mother never spared a thought for her well-being.

When Akila's father died; two things happened: Sunday became just another day of the week and Akila became the man of the family. Amma had Akila to replace her husband as the head of the household. Akila is considered as the head of the family as she has become the earning member. But she is not given the designated status of being actual "head of the family". Akila also thinks of the vanished hope of marriage in her life which occupies her psyche largely.

Marikolundhu's story is a story of sexual manipulation. Anita Nair skilfully utilizes the story of Marikolundhu to comment upon the sexual exploitation of Indian women from rustic background. Marikolundhu's story remembers her meeting with men and concludes that most men take advantage of women's dependence, illiteracy, frustration, loneliness and ignorance. The culture dominated by masculine society tends to lay down the law. This society eschews to think that women is stubborn as a mule to create disastrous denouement if she is completely ignored. She undergoes obloquy and debasement, which result in negating her son Muthu.

Treating women as a product is an old tradition and finds reflection in our epic. The male only inherits all the property and the power. It affects the culture as male domination is common. Male always stand as the head of the family. During those days caste system played a vital role. It exploited the production, reproduction and reproductive capacity of female. If the female is despoiled, she has to marry the man who abused her. In *Ladies Coupé* the family line is run by Akila. Though she has two brothers, she is the breadwinner of the family. She bears all the pain and struggle hard for her family.

They will tell you home is safe zone.

*No, bitch face is safe zone.
Bitch face is cutting off the ladder,
Willing to burn in the apartment,
if it means he can't get in* *-Olivia Gatwood.*

All six women presented in this novel are linked by chance and circumstance. To pass time they share their life's story. At the end, the protagonist Akila's finds an answer for the million-dollar question that hovered around her head all through his adult life. *Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does she need a man to feel complete?* Though a fiction, the treatment of the theme by Anita Nair is very close to reality. Woman need man as a companion not as a ruler or saviour. Listening to the stories of all other women of her compartment Akila realises and goes in search of her love which she rejected fearing for the society.

All the characters in this novel grapple with problems under patriarchal society. Patriarchal oppression play an important role t in the novel as the characters live in a patriarchal system and Culture. Akhilandeshwari, Sheela Vasudevan, Prabha Devi, Janaki, Margaret, and Marikolanthu are the sufferers of this society. Patriarchal system is used to implement or to foreground the concept that women should not challenge or act or talk against man's authority and that women must always abide by the cultural norms.

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