



Anita Nair's Ladies coupe: Women's Suffering, Emancipation and Self-Discovery

RADHIKABEN. M. MISTRY
Assistant professor,
M.A. GSET. (Ph. D. Continue)
English
Gujarat University, Ahmedabad

Abstract:

Anita Nair is famous postmodern Indian English writer. Her novel Ladies coupe explores the experiences of different women by journey. This novel main theme is self-discovery from the subjugation of Indian male dominated society. Here Ladies coupe means reserved compartment of ladies in train. In post-colonial period most of novels written about women's emancipation and their issues in Indian society. In Indian society male believed to them superior and inferior to ladies and overwhelm to them. Indian English fiction is the reflection of society. This paper focuses on women's suffering, emancipation and at last their self-discovery.

Keywords: *women's suffering, emancipation, feminism, self-discovery*

1. Introduction

Anita Nair is the eminent writer who was born in Kerala. She is novelist, journalist, short story writer and famous poet also. The majority of 20th century novels depicts the women's issues and related their status in Indian society. In Indian English fiction great women writers like Anita desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa lahiri, Anita Nair who depict feminist picture of Indian society. In Indian English Fiction, women writers analyzing issues of women, complex relationship of man and woman, made a victim of society etc. She is the bestselling writer whose two novels Better man and Ladies coupe who translated into many languages in the world. Her other recognized works, Magical Indian Myth, Mistress, Adventure of Nonu, Living next door to alive. Ladies coupe is the best novel whom gave her status of creative writer and feminist spark. Literature is the mirror of our society. Anita Nair shows to us Social realism of condition of women in Indian Patriarchal society. Before women know by identity of relationship of mother, daughter and as wife but now she become conscious about her identity.

Anita Nair's Ladies coupe has the voice of women in contemporary post-colonial India. In this novel have different women characters and their life event. They share their story to each other how they exploited in male dominated society. Ladies coupe is the journey of self-discovery. It is a discourse of womanish. She depicts the plight of women which she has seen. Once she was travelling by lady's coupe then she feels it.

2. Objective

In post-colonial era, women condition is not much improving and they are not leave clutches of male dominated society. Women must have freedom and independence because all men are equal. This paper focuses on suffering of women and how they got self-discovery. By the journey they share their story to one another and they become strong and be powerful.

3. Ladies Coupe: Story of Six Women

It is the story of six women. The heroine of this novel is Akhila or Akhilandeswari. She is listening the story of five women and seeks the solution of her problems from them. In her mind question: 'Can woman stay a single and be happy or does a woman need a man to feel compete?' All women are married except Akhila. She is not married but she has her own story about family and her lover Hari. It has story of Akhila, Janki, Margaret shanty, Sheela, Prabha Devi and Marikolunthu.

4. Janki

Janki is the housewife and elderly lady in the coupe. She is the traditional woman. According to Indian tradition woman must be good as a wife, daughter-in-law likes different roles. If woman tolerates anything then she is a good but if she says true then she became bad. Here Janki is the example of good woman. She was married to Prabhakar. She became subordinates to male in society. Janki believe in good counterpart of male in woman's life. When she was eighteen then her marriage has been done. Her husband loves, obedient, careful to her. Before she was trying to happy his fathers, brothers now she has tried happy to her husband and her son. So, she is submissive wife. In Indian tradition these types of wife be good. She feels revolt against her husband when her husband controlling to all family members. Prabhakar behavior irritates to Janki. So, in her life comes ups and downs. When her son's wife admitted for cesarean then she went for help then jaya her daughter-in-law humiliated to her. After she decided go back with her husband. She finds herself victim of all sorts.

5. Sheela

Sheela is the fourteen-year-old who is so sensitive of the Ladies coupe. She enters the train at midnight. Sheela was grappling with the shock of the death of her Grandmother. Sheela becomes victim of male dominated society. Hasina is Sheela's friend. When Hasina's father touched to Sheela then she feels hurt. One day Hasina's father Nazar has done: "One Sunday when Sheela went to their house, rushing it from the heat with a line of sweat beading of her upper lip, Nazar has reached and wiped it with his fingers." She didn't like unwanted touching. Nazar touched to her for a long time but Sheela didn't open her mouth or tolerate it because he was her friend's father. She feels embarrassed and humiliated. So, this way woman sexually abused by Indian society. When Sheela wears sleeve then Nazar was touched her bows. After Sheela decided she never go to Hasina's home. In India people believe that girl is the burden of the society but people need to change their physical instincts and bad desires. So, this way Anita Nair shows by this story unjust treatment of women by man. This way man has physically abused to woman. So, women become victim of society.

6. Margaret Shanti

Margaret Shanti is another narrator of the Ladies coupe. Her life goes through man physical and mental crisis. She was married to Ebenezer Paulraj whom she loved a lot and she wants to married him. They have done love-marriage. Ebenezer Paulraj is the Principal of that school in which Margaret teaches they're after completes her M.Sc. but Margaret shanti is the student of M.sc chemistry and also a gold medalist. After completes M.sc she wants to do PhD but her husband Ebenezer Paulraj said to her completes B.ed. In Indian male dominated society she was not able to take decision of her carrier. Before one Day of marriage her mother advises to her:

"How a good wife never says 'No', even she is not in mood."(102)

In modern age women are capable for take their decision but after marriage men have rights to take decision of their in Indian Patriarchal society. In Indian society treated to girl's curse and mother always learn to girl household works in spite of study. In recent time woman become breadwinner with household works has done though her decisions take by man in India. After marriage she has done everything happiness for her husband. She is the chemistry teacher in which school Ebenezer Paulraj is

Principal. After eighteen months she was pregnant and she was happy and excited to tell her parents this good news. But Paulraj withdraws it and tells her:

“Margaratham, I am not so sure if we should have a baby now.” (104)

He insisted to her for abortion. After many debates she was agree for abortion for her husband wish. After abortion she feels alone and sad. Ebenezer has crueller attitude. She says to herself:

“I Mouthed the Words: I Hate Him.I Hate My Husband.I Hate Ebenezer Paulraj.I Hate Him.I Hate Him.” (98)

She was always become disillusioned. Margaret sees her husband actually egoist, bully and cruel. One side he loves her and other side he gives her pain and humiliated. Margaret’s love into hatred and avenge to him and teaches a lesson ingenious way. She gives fatty and oily food to him. So, he became a fat man. A man for fondness of eating blunted his razor edge. After she became pregnant again and born a girl. She suffers a lot but now she becomes empower to her and seeks her own ways.

7. Prabha Devi

Anita Nair elaborates her story in this novel. Prabha Devi is another victim of male dominated society. When Prabha Devi only fifteen years old then her father moves to her family school into convent school. By the childhood she faces our Patriarchal society, how treated her father to her. She is a beautiful girl. Once her mother went to cinema house with her friends then she says to her: “I don’t think your father will like it.” (170) In Patriarchal Society women are only dependence on men. After marriage women have done everything by the wishes of men. When Prabha Devi was eighteen years old, her father seeks husband for her. But her mother was not happy by this news. Then her husband says: “What do you want to do? Keep her with you for life? Have you ever heard anything sacrilegious? You were always a strange one.” (171)

Prabha Devi’s marriage has done to Jagdeesh. Life was going very well. His friend Pramod comes often his house. When she was alone, Pramod came with her niece at afternoon. prabha Devi asks to her to takes anything? He replied “No”. He goes to near her and tries to seduce her. When she opposes him, He said, “Oh come now, cerling her wrists with his fingers, pulling her toward him. Quit playing the good wife will you.” (182)

Women are not safe either it is home or outer side. If she blames on Pramod then society didn’t accept. In Indian society, believes that women are only commodity and if she takes even step then society most of blames on her.

Prabha Devi’s husband Jagdeesh wants to her wife be submissive and restricted to her. After forty she remembers something forgets in her life. It is her desire swimming in her life. After she comes outside bondage of marriage and she comes out cages. At last she learnt swimming and she feels empowered because she has done it for herself in life.

8. Marikonthulu

Marikonthulu story is so tragic and as a child she becomes victim of male dominated society. She is the witness how world can be cruel to her? When she was nine years old her father had died. Her widowed mother works as a maid in chettiyar’s house. Marikonthulu goes with her mother for help. She raised her younger brothers so she goes for work at chettiyar’s house. Once chettiyar’s eldest brother’s brother-in-law raped to her. She was child and she became of victim of rape. She made mother of illegitimate child. But Marikonthulu’s mother takes care of her and her child Muthu. After her mother’s death, her younger brothers tell leave house with her child Muthu. So, she became helpless and she has her child also. So, she decided she has done something earn. She goes to mission hospital and join as a helper.

She empowers to herself and become independent. She shows to the world she leads a good life. In India women are sexually abused by men. As a child girl Marikonthulu is kindly but man forced to her and raped her. So, women are not safe by men in this society.

9. Akhila (Protagonist)

Akhila is the protagonist of the novel. She was forty-five years old. She works as income tax clerk. Akhila comes in Ladies coupe for journey. She is the eldest of her family so she has to bear the responsibility of family after her father's death. No one concerned about her marriage even her brothers were married. She acts as a provider of family. One day she thinks about herself and seeks some questions in her mind so she decided to travel. She goes to Kanyakumari by the 'Ladies coupe'. She has met different five ladies and they share their story to each other. Their stories give answers to all questions to her. Akhila's life going to fulfills others need but she doesn't think about herself. She was coming from conservative family. So, she bound by tradition of society and after her father's death she made breadwinner of family. The journey becomes life experience of Akhila which solutions of her all troubled questions. Akhila conversations with them and tell a story of her. She remembered her past Hari her younger lover. They have love affair. One day Hari's birthday and he wants his birthday gift from her. She asks about gift. He wants to nude her on his birthday night. She goes with him but after it she never sees to him because she was not comfortable with him. She feels gap between them and she fears about society. So, she also becomes victim of Society but she empowers herself and comes out from this cage she goes for journey and thinks about her desire

10. Conclusion

Anita Nair shows to us social realism of Indian Society. By this novel she reflected suffering of women and they wants to self-discovery. They must have independence. Women need their own existence. In Indian society believed women are inferior to men. If women are capable for take their decision but they ask for men. In present time woman has done earning with household works better way. Then our Indian Patriarchal society must need to change their thoughts and behavior for women. Anita Nair portraits condition of society and women want to emancipation from the cage. Women want to live their own way.

References

1. Manohar D, Murali. Indian fiction women's fiction: A study of marriage, carrier and Divorce, Atlantic Publishers and Distributers Pvt. Ltd., 1994.
2. Mukherjee, Meenakshi. "Women Creative writers In Indian English Literature". Between Spaces of Silence: Women Creative Writers. Ed. Kamini Dinesh. New Delhi, Sterling. 1994.
3. Nair, Anita. "Ladies Coupe", Penguin Books. 2001.Print.
4. Palmer, Pauline. Contemporary women's fiction: Narrative Practice and Feminist Theory. Newyork: Harvest Wheat Sheaft.1989. Print.
5. Sinha, Sunita. Post-colonial women writers New Perspectives. Atlantic Publishers Ltd, 2008.Print.
6. Tandon, Neeru, ed. Feminine Psyche: A Post-Modern Critique. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2008.Print.