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PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE AND FEMALE DEFIANCE IN ANITA
NAIR'S *LADIES COUPE*'

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In India, English has become very famous nowadays but, at first, the Indians reacted with suspicion towards the English language, but later on welcomed it with open arms. English language was granted a special place in India. The initial requirement of the Indian writing in English was the English knowing people. Various factors contributed in the creation of a mass expressing itself in English. One of the major factors was the introduction of the English education was introduced to create a class of clerks and sycophants. It encouraged the cultivation and mastery of English as a language. Gradually more and more people came in contact of English language literature. The nineteenth century intellectuals began to question the orthodox prejudices, dogmas and superstitions that prevailed in India. The impact of Western gave a new impetus to Indian renaissance. Indian society underwent a metamorphosis.

The revival of Indian classical learning and the introduction and the study of European Arts and Sciences gave rise to an unprecedented awakening in India. For the first time in India, a middle class of intellectuals began to emerge from the feudal society, giving rise to intense nationalism, during which the Indians struggled to articulate their passionate thoughts and feelings through whatever means were available to them. Writers like Bankimchandra and Saratchandra Chaterjee, caught up in the provincial patriotism, revived the regional languages of the rulers, giving rise to a new genre of Indian Writing in English, initially termed as Intro-Anglian literature.

The educated Indian class attempted to imitate Western techniques and literary forms. Western education that was imparted to the Indians through English in the educational institutions founded all over the country, had also a far reaching influence on these developments. If the progressive steps taken by the missionaries and officials resulted in an overhaul of antiquated education, aims, methods, materials and tools; Western education turned the minds of the Indians inside out. It removed the mental blocks and promoted in them a new integral outlook.

The transmission of modern scientific and sociological ideas made the Indians aware of the blessings of materialism and social organizations, of the infinite value of democracy as a way of life and of reason as an instrument of analysis and critical inquiry as the champion of free and independent thinking. The awakened Indian started expressing himself in all Western literary forms; especially in the novel.

Fictions are especially novels describing imaginary events. Novels have different kinds of plot form-tragic, comic, satiric or romantic and to a great extent its characters reveal themselves and their intentions in dialogue. The novel is characterized as the fictional attempt to give the effect of realism, by representing complex characters with mixed motives that are rooted in a social class. It functions in a highly developed social structure. It also mixes up with many other characters. It is like a play with plot and characters. A dramatist must depend on what he can make the readers see and hear for ourselves, but a novelist can describe what could never be presented on any stage. He can tell what is happening, explain it and finally give his own remarks on it. His story may not be symmetrical in exposition, crisis and denouement.

The novel has no strict frame work. Usually foreign critics have commented that English novels lack a sense of proportion even though it has richness and variety in it. Due to

this the author takes full advantage of the freedom he gets. The novelist is eager to represent life in its fullness and its creative urge may overshadow his sense of artistic unity and balance in narrative, description, characterization and dialogue. But this will matter nothing if the author can keep the reader under his control with his plot, characters and narrative style until the story ends. The author's personality is a very important factor. Every novel must present a certain view of life and some of the problems of life. It should be a mirror reflecting the author's outlook of the world with all incidents, characters, passions and motives. It should be our agreement or disagreement with this view of life that decides our choice in fiction.

Through every novel, unintentionally the author comes up with his own views of life and problems. Older writers saw nothing wrong in this and it was a regular practice with them to give a type of running commentary. It was a time when people liked to be lectured rather than entertained. But in modern fiction, readers do not like the author's appearance since it interrupts his story. In fact, the readers like the lesson to be taught revealing through the plot and the characters rather than the author teaching them. The effect of this method will be great.

Indian English literature is not only part of common wealth literature but also occupies a significant role in the World Literature. Indian English literature quite understandably, spurs attention from quarter of the country, making the genre admire in its own right. Wide ranging themes are dealt with in Indian writing in English. This literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values and even Indian history depicts of life in India and recent Indian English fiction has been trying to give expression of the modern predicaments.

Indian English literature (IEL) refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. Its eagerly history began with the works or R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand,

and Raja Rao who contributed to Indian fiction in the 1930s. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian diaspora, such as V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Agha Shaid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie, who are of Indian descent. As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of postcolonial literature-the production from previously colonized countries such as India.

In ancient India, literature originated from stories that were originally orally transmitted. Classical genres included philosophy, poetry, and historiography dramas. The term Indian writing in English in recent times has achieved reputable scholastic status. It is beyond doubt that the department of Indian literature in English has nowadays become a full-fledged one, enhanced with sundry. It is true that genius Indian writer has to convey his own sensibility in a language.

The fact that Indian literatures are a product of a multilingual, multicultural, and socio-historical mixture cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the study of various literatures elsewhere in the world and comparative study of various regional literatures in India is not quite the same thing. The Indian author has a rich heritage of ancient literature preserved against many odds. He is not only emotionally committed to this heritage, but it has also become an obsession with him, guarding him consciously or unconsciously from western influence. In case of Indian literature, it can be said that it presents one thought written in many languages.

The interesting factor of Indian literature is that there is a considerably large corpus of Indian literary works available in English translation. Therefore, there is no compulsion to learn a particular regional language to study the literature written in it. A great body of literary works has been translated from various Indian languages-whether ancient or modern. Eminent scholars in the field are of the opinion that the whole corpus of translations, those from the Indian

languages into English as well as those of Indo-Anglian writings into regional languages should be treated as a component of Indian literature.

Thus, the study of Indian literature has not only helped in establishing a wider sense of a national identity within the country but has also drawn attention of scholars at the international level. In Indian literature, other forms of literature were quite old as their foundations were laid down centuries back but the 'novel' as literary history.

Indian novels are governed by their writer's more general and social interest while a younger generation is more politically and socially aware of contemporary issues. In the second half of the 19th century, stray novels continued to appear mostly by writers from Bengal, Madras and Bombay. A majority of these novels are social and historical, and their models are obviously the eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, particularly Defoe, Fielding and Scott. An interesting development is the surprisingly early appearance of women novelists.

Indian novels in English had begun to be written from various parts of India, crowded with the varied and variegated pictures of life from various lands. The cultural lives are both geographically and socially different, while the common thread is the medium of expression and the First World War, it was found that some of the novelists were influenced by the ideologies that challenged capitalism and colonialism. The most prominent of those was Marxism. In MulkRaj Anand's novels, the readers find the operation of the ideology in the background. His *Across the Black Waters*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *Untouchable* are faithful documents of the lives of the downtrodden. His characters also come alive as real persons of the Indian society.

Among other novelist, Raja Rao is famous for his narrative techniques. He combined the narrative techniques of *Ramayana and Mahabharata* with those modern western techniques of Eliot and Joyce. His *Kanthapuram* put in the mouth of a grandmother. R.K. Narayan is a powerful novelist considerable philosophical bent of mind. It is seen in his novels *The Bachelor of Arts and The Dark Room*.

The tragedy of partition the writers with the occasion to write about the plight of the people in the subcontinent in order to bring home mainly to the western world the impact of British rule, which had previously boasted of “civilizing mission”. India got Independence through bloodshed and migration. Khushwant Singh wrote *A train of Pakistan*. His next novel *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, presents an ironic picture of a joint Sikh family, illustrative of different Indian reactions to the freedom movement of the forties. In fact, the partition theme in Indian novels in English set the dystopian tune, which would be later on carried on to the tone of the postcolonial theories. Post colonialism began as recognition of the dominant post-war economic and political conditions prevalent over the world.

In the first two decades of twentieth century, the Indian English novel of the period was deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement. At the time writers like K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan have started their writing career between the late 1920s and the early 1930s while Bhabhani Bhattachary, G.V. Desani and Khushwant Singh’s first works date from the 1940s. Even during this period around twenty novels were originally written in English by Indian men and women novelists contributed for the new genre of literature in India. India has produced several great writers who have influenced a whole generation and continue to inspire the coming generations by their writings. Their works vividly portray the picture of Indian society and

subtly bring out the ills of it. Indian writers have played a progressive part in the reform of Indian society.

The modern times of India has been producing high quality of literature in nearly twenty languages and India has strong literary tradition before the English language and literature arrived on Indian shores. The Indian English literature is less representative of Indian society than any literature in Indian language and English literature can really contribute something original in the scope of Common Wealth literature.

The seed of Indian writing English was sowed during the period of the British rule in India. Now the seed has blossomed into as ever green tree, fragrant flower and ripe fruits. The fruits are being tasted not only by the native people, but they are also being 'chewed and digested' by the foreigners. It happened only after the constant caring, pruning and feeding Gardener's like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, R.K. Narayan, RajaRao to name only a few looked after the tender plant night and day. In modern time, it is guarded by a number of writers who are getting awards and honors all over the world. It has carved out a new approach, a new vision, a vision that is replete with an answering faith and hope, myths and tradition.

A sizeable number of novelists on the literary horizon have given space to their creative urge in no other language than English and earned credulity to establish Indian English fiction as a prime force in the world fiction. Writers like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, ManoharMalgonkar. Raja Rao, NayantaraSahgal, Arun Joshi, Bharathi Mukherjee, Kiran Desae, and Sashi Deshpande have initiated the process of using English Language as a medium to express Indian thoughts and sensibilities with a distinctive Indian style. The first Indian novel in English, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Rajmohan's wife, appeared in 1864 and created a history whose roots have gone deep enough by this day. The last quarter of the nineteenth

century, may be said to be a significant period in the history of Indian fiction in English because it saw the emergence of a number of good writers, of fiction in English.

The work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. The factors contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women writers have observed no domestic space. The Indian women's perceptions of their aspirations and expectations are within the framework of Indian social and moral commitments. Indian women writers in English are victims of prejudice. Proficiency in English is available only to writers of the intelligent, affluent and educated classes. Writer's works often belong to high social tactics and the reality of Indian life. Most of the novels written by Indian women writers depict the psychological turmoil of the stressful homemakers. This subject matter is often based upon oppressed lives of women.

Women, like men, have always been a part of the human species and in all ages they have made up fifty percent of the human populace. The position of women however in the cultural matrix of the west has amazingly, never been equal to that of men. Women have been looked upon as inferior beings, subordinates in a totality where the two component parts-male and female-are necessary and complementary to each other. The relation of the two sexes has always been asymmetrical. The term Man in general represents the all-embracing term Human. Man is positive as well as natural. Women, on the other hand, is someone who is not a man, she is something negative, and she is a person who is lacking in certain positive qualities-physical, moral and intellectual. This view has lasted till date down the ages, right from times.

Womanhood has been seen as a disadvantage, as is evident in the morning hymns of Jew are men: "Blessed be God...that he did not make me a women." The Bible states that Eve was created by God for Adam for his pleasure and to fill his loneliness. Aristotle said that: "The

female is a female by virtue of a lack of certain qualities” and that “we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness.” In present scenario, modern women writers are changing and challenging men in their writing skills, interpersonal skills and even in leadership qualities. Poetesses, dramatists, novelists, and short story writers immensely changing towards new trend.

Indian women writers have started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination. They are no longer puppets in the hands of man. They have shown their worth in the field of literature both qualitatively and quantitatively and are showing it even today without any hurdle. Today, the works of Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anitha Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Kiran Desai, Sashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur and many more have left in indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English. The creative output of the Indian women writers, especially novelists, is marked by the choice of English, the medium of expression and expression of a woman’s reaction to the varied situation in which traditional as well as modernity clash synthesize. Indian women writers are dynamic witnesses to the peculiar socio-cultural historic, political conflicts faced by women especially in India.

Indian literature has acquired a new dimension at the time of independent struggle. Consequently, the Indian writers mainly concentrated on the country’s freedom struggle. Later, Indian English fiction has witnessed the introduction of new themes and techniques. The new generation of Indian English novelists’ creations evokes the aroma of Indian life. Perhaps, the most striking feature of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the emergence of feminist literature.

Feminism in Indian English literature was by-product of the western feminist movement but it got sustenance from various native source such as Indian freedom movement,

independence, and spread of education, employment opportunities and laws for women's rights. Feminist writers give voice to the sufferings and aspirations of women in a traditionally male-dominated world in their writings. "Indian women's narrative focuses on specific domains in which the individual's suffering; pain and oppression are experienced and articulated."

Women's writings were considered as powerful feminist statements. Human Identity is usually connected to and defined by societal and cultural norms. When it comes to woman, she is defined only in relation to a man and she is deprived of an identity of her own. It's easy to liberate woman in a primitive social structure even if she is uneducated but it's very hard to think of her freedom in a society which is moving ahead at the path of progress and civilization. Women have always been considered as an accessory to man. No independent existence has been allotted to her. Weak, passive, foolish, fat-headed are a few of countless adjectives ascribed to her. Her biological features are connected with her destiny. She is laden with a traditional role and confined within the four walls of the house. Simon de Beauvoir puts it in a right way in her *the Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." (Beauvoir: 295)

The portrayal of women in Indian English fiction as the silent sufferer and upholder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer represented as a passive character. Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and many other novelist have presented women as an individual rebelling against the traditional role, breaking the silence of suffering, trying to move out of the caged existence and asserting the individual self.

Indian Woman writing in English is being recognized as major contemporary current in English language-Literature. The likes of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Anita Desai have

won worldwide acclaim for the quality of their writing and their imaginative use of English. These include the role of English as global *lingua franca*: the position of English in India. The Indian writers in English are writing, not in their native language but in a second language, and the resultant transcultural character of their texts.

India woman's identity is usually connected to and defined by society and cultural customs of a Patriarchal familiar code. Her identity and liberty is defined within structures of her social relationship to men. Indian women are a symbol of Purity Chastity and Sanctity for ancient spirit that is India. The essential spirit of India lies in its God, Religion, Spirituality, Culture, Tradition, and Family. The Patriarchal society has not given equal status to women.

Patriarchy is a social system in which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to social organization, and where Men hold authority over women, children, and property. "Patriarchy recognizes male dominance and female subordination." Women too meekly accept it without any resistance. But in Contrast D.H. Lawrence points out, "The greatest relationship for humanity will always be the relation between men and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary." (Lawrence: 130)

Patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization in different cultures. Patriarchy has a strong influence even in the modern civilization, although many cultures have moved towards a more equal social system over the past century. "The indicative notion of patriarchy bears an obvious stipulation and testimony that while men are already empowered, the women are not". Mahatma Gandhi is against this patriarchal culture. He speaks highly of women, and has always condemned men who do not give due respects to her. "To call women the weaker sex is libel, it is man's injustice to woman".

Anita Desai is one of the established writers of Indo-English fiction. She has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times; her novels are *Voices in the City*(1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird*(1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*(1975), *Fire on the Mountain*(1977), *Clear Light of the Day*(1980). She received a Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*, from the Sahitya Academy, India's National Academy of Letters; she won the British Guardian Prize for *The Village by the Sea*. Desai published her first novel, *Cry the Peacock*, in 1963. She considers *Clear Light of Day* (1980) as her most autobiographical work as it is set during her coming of age and also in the same neighborhood in which she grew up. Her novels are poetic and lyrical in language, and existential in their treatment of human life.

Desai switches from a woman-centered to a male-centered narrative in *In Custody* (1984). Her language is exaggerated, and the similes sound forced, as in this description of the insects in America. In 1984, she published *In Custody* about an Urdu poet in his declining days which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. In 1993 she became a creative writing teacher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her latest collection of stories, *The Artist of disappearance* was published in 2011.

Gita Hariharan is another significant writer who made her debut in the nineteen-nineties. *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Novel in the Eurasian Region. Hariharan's fascination with tales assumes more importance in her novels. Gita Hariharan's published work includes novels, short stories, essays, newspaper articles and columns. Her other novels include *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003), and *Fugitive Histories* (2009). A collection of highly acclaimed short stories, *The Art of Dying*, was published in 1993, and a book of stories for children, *The Winning Team*, in 2004. She edited a volume of stories in English translation from

four major South Indian languages, *A Southern Harvest* (1993) and co-edited a collection of stories for children, *Sorry, Best Friend!* (1997). Hariharan also edited and contributed to a collection of essays entitled *From India to Palestine: Essays in Solidarity* (2014). Her new book is a collection of her own essays, *Almost Home: Cities and Other Places* (2014).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian-American author, poet, and the Betty and Gene McDavid Professor of Writing at the University of Houston Creative Writing Programme. Her short story collection, *Arranged Marriage*, won an American Book Award in 1995, and two of her novels *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of my Heart* were adopted into films. *Mistress of Spices* was short-listed for the Orange Prize. Divakaruni's works are largely set in India and the United States, and often focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. She writes for children as well as adults and has published novels in multiple genres, including realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism, and fantasy.

Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American author. Lahiri's debut short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003) was adapted into the popular film of the same name.

Kiran Desai is an Indian author. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, was published in 1998 and received accolades from such figures as Salman Rushdie. Her style and sensibility have little in common with her mother Anita Desai's. It won the Betty Trask Award, a prize given by the Society of Authors for the best new novels by citizens of the Commonwealth of Nations under the age of 35. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2007. The epic tale takes on the themes of post colonialism and globalization as they relate to a modern India, in which the colonial legacy and the modernizing and homogenizing forces of globalization are inextricably

linked. A lyrical but rational work, it was considered a masterpiece of 21st century Indian literature.

Indian English literature has developed over a period of time and writing in English did not start in a day. It took many years and several distinguished personalities to bring the present status and distinction to Indian English literature. Indian literature is not only about novels, it is also about poetries and short stories. Before the rise of novels, several women writers composed songs, short stories and small plays. It is still believed that women are the upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables, story-telling and more. In the mid-nineteenth century, more women started to write in the English language. With the passage of time, English literature has witnessed several changes in the writing patterns.

Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings and it affected the cultural and language patterns of Indian literature. They have brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing. Nowadays, people enjoy reading the Anglicized novels presented by the new women writers.

Many Indian Women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal Society. Thus, the theme of growing up from childhood to womanhood is current strategy. Santha Romu Rau's *Remember The Houser* (1956). Ruth Prewar Jhabvala's first novel *To Whom She Will* (1955) and her later *Heat and dust* (1975) which was awarded the Booker Prize, and Kamal Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) are good examples. Indian women novelist have given a new dimension to the Indian literature. Among the emerging writers, Anita Nair is the most promising and one of the notable writers in India.

Anita Nair was born in January 26, 1966 at Shornur in Kerala, India. She was educated in Chennai. After that, she returned to Kerala to pursue BA in English Language and Literature. Then, she took up a job of creative director in an advertising agency in Bangalore where she wrote her first book; which was a collection of short stories named *Satyr of the Subway*. Nair sold this book to Har-Anand Press. This book won her a fellowship from the Virginia Centre for Creative Arts.

Nair's next book was published by Penguin India, and it was the first book by an Indian author which was published by Picador USA. Soon Anita Nair became a well-known face across globe and her books were published in several languages around the world. Her novel's *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe*; is one of the bestselling works and have been translated in 21 languages. Her early commercial works were penned down in the late 90s for the Bangalore Monthly magazine (which is now called '080' Magazine) and was published by explicit in the column titled *'The Economic Epicurean'*.

She always focuses on the problems of woman in our society. Her maiden novel, *The Better Man* has placed her among the most self-conscious Indian novel and her second novel, *Ladies Couple*, is in some ways even better than her first, though it is impossible to draw a parallel between the two since they are largely different. *The Better Man*, came in the year 2000; which has also been published in Europe and the United States. Thereafter, her collection of poems, *Malabar Mind*, appeared in the year 2002, and later in the year 2003, she edited *'Where the Rain is Born-Writings about Kerala'*.

Indian writer Anita penned her second novel, *Ladies Coupe* and it was published in the 2001. This novel turned out to be a turning point in her career and achieved greater success than the first two novels. This novel was read far in 15 countries apart from India; which included

USA, Turkey, Poland, Portugal and others. In *Ladies Coupe*, Anita Nair deals with the concept of Patriarchy and signifies a relationship of inequality. Though Patriarchy is a common concept in every woman's life, Anita Nair depicts carefully the diversity within each woman, as she does not want to put the lives of woman to one ideal. In 2002, writer Anita Nair was selected as one of the best five writers in India. Her second novel, *Ladies Coupe* ' was about women's condition in a male dominated society and was told with a great insight, solidarity and humour. This novel was also rated as one of the top five books of the year in 2001.

“The Hindu Literary Supplement” hailed Anita Nair as “an emerging novelist and she is the proud of Nair society around the world. She writes with great energy and creates amazing works at ease. Her style is modern and her views are universal in appeal. She is a positive thinker and a typical 21st century product. Her personality is revealed through her works. What she wants to tell the world is being told through her works. She can move from tender compassion to sensuality to raging hatred and is a compelling teller of stories”. (The Hindu, 4 May 2016).

Anita Nair's deployment of feminist tropes and perspectives accentuate tensed female positions as asphyxiated between male dominated systems and deplorable socio-economic conditions that make survival an even more precarious imperative. Anita Nair is bold enough to tell the truth however bitter it is and simultaneously she forces us to think on the importance of removing adultery to save family life. They are indecisive in many important issues. Nair has very clearly brought this concept in the light that the modern Indian woman may be educated and financially sovereign but still they tie their life in the hands of others. Nair has real passion to write and put them in action. When her passion mixes with action, the whole matter will come as a burst of “song”. Her abilities to create unstoppable passion towards her mature thoughts

will be passed to the readers as well. It is doubtless to say she is emerging as one of the foremost writers in English. Her versatile looks and expression as well as effortless language create explicit perfection in her works.

Nair is deeply fascinated and attracted by the world of words. Her initial interest in journalism motivated her contribution to *aside*, a city magazine in Madras. In Nair's own words: "I was young and naive enough to believe that a journalist could change the world." She had two goals in life; her first goal materialized in form of a rewarding career in advertising. She has established herself as a successful writer. The first break came with the publication of a poem. *'Happening in the London underground'* is an anthology brought out by the poetry society of India in 1992.

Nair's works have been widely published in twenty seven countries, to be precise, and translated. Her work is not only critically acclaimed but also best-selling. She has been publishing regularly for the last seven years. Anita Nair is easily accepted as an efficient practitioner of the genre of fiction. She mesmerizes the reader with evocative language and descriptions with which her novels abound. Anita Nair herself does not associate her writing with the term 'feminism'; she refrains from calling herself a feminist but her writings essentially deal with women from different strata and their collective struggle to establish themselves in a male dominated society.

Anita Nair's *Malabar Mindis* a collection of poems, which is real and corporeal, portrays the landscapes and mindscapes with a rare fluid ease. Her descriptions in this collection beautifully exhibit the everyday casual moments, such as the quirky symbol of toddy shops in Malabar, a full bottle of toddy crowned with a red hibiscus and the stressed drone of television newscasters during war time. Then she turns them into metaphors which cast a glow. She also

suffers the ordinary things with extraordinary dimensions and captures the strength and resilience of life.

Satyr of the Subway (1997) consists of twelve stories, each worked around a dramatically different situation ranging from the mundane to the bizarre. This revised edition includes three new stories and incorporates occasional alterations to text, some marginal, some significant, where the writer has revisited her characters or situations long after she first created them. The result is a fascinating collection of stories that traverse the entire gamut of human emotion, penetrating in their insight into male female relationships and seriously funny in their take on the futility of expectation from life or from lovers. “The stories are powerful gritty and evoke a thousand images.”

Mistress (2005) is a novel of art and adultery. It is an example for a brilliant blend of imaginative storytelling and deeply moving explorations in search of meaning. Anita writes about man-woman relationships and complex Kathakali aesthetics with equal felicity, “Opening up the rich world of Kathakali to English Literature, *Mistress* achieves something rare in Indian writing. It proposes a natural assimilation of our artistic heritage in new fiction.”

Ladies Coupe, as the title indicates, offers us a narrative concerning the chance encounter of six women in that greatest of all levelers, the Indian train journey. The use of the “chance encounter” device, famously first seen in Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, stands Anita Nair in good stead: it gives her an opportunity to bring together women of different ages, experience and social strata. The novel comprises their narratives and an account of Akhila’s life until she embarks upon that journey, and afterwards. Ideal for presentation in the cinematic technic, the narratives flash back and forth in time and place, encapsulating each passenger’s essential experience as a woman in contemporary Indian society. Of course, the

reality of the social situation and that of a woman's existence in India is a plural one and the business of the novel is to give us a taste of that plurality. Still, despite the variety of experiences related by the characters, the essence of the overall statement implied by each seems to be a singular one. Women are secondary in their importance and have been rendered silent and absent as far as the reckoning goes.

The story relate to help the protagonist Akhilandeswari to find a solution for the tormenting question which, taunts her and enable her to establish her true identity. Their individual struggles against the many repressive forces introduce in Akhila a sense of courage and clarity of action. The co-passengers are Janaki Prabhakar, Margaret Paulraj, Prabha Devi, Marikolanthu and Sheela Vasudevan. The train journey is symbolic of an introspect journey within each character. Further, as these women belong to different social background, their struggle and resolution showcase the ongoing battle of establishing female selfhood. The cosy Coupe provides talks, expose of secrets and an unmatched intimacy in conversation. As train chugs ahead, Akhilandeswari, 45 years old spinster questions whether a woman can stay single and be happy or does a woman need a man to feel complete? The story switches over from past to present and present to past. The question Anita Nair poses in the novel not only shakes the ideological ground of man's patriarchal role in our traditional society but also imply the existence of an alternative reality.

Ladies Coupe by Anita Nair spells out some bitter facts of women's life regardless of their geographical, cultural, religious, social or economic differences. Whatever they are, or whoever they are, they share one thing in common, that is, "affliction"; and the first site of this affliction is the family itself that reveal how some of the women characters have acted as catalysts in the life of the protagonist of Ladies Coupe, and have helped her liberate from

cocooned self. In the traditional postcolonial society, especially in India, the problematic question is of women's emancipation and its women writers are more passionate and serious about it. Women's efforts to seek their independence and self-identity started a revolution all over the world. Anita Nair, one of the finest modern woman writers is one such genuine writer who portrays realistic female characters in her works. Her strength as a writer lies in bringing alive the everyday thoughts desires and doubts. Nair conveys her protagonists' dilemmas with freshness and charm. Feminine search for strength, independence and self-identity in patriarchal society are the writer's perspective especially as a woman who has been highlighting feminine issues.

Anita Nair has used a powerful line to kindle one's curiosity enough to decide to give this book a try. Today's generation needs more writers of Nair's caliber-exuding the passion to state one's belief unflinchingly. Nair is splendid at characterizations. Her depiction of each character and their revelations are superb. The manners in which Margaret relate to each person in her life by comparing them to elements from her chemistry class, though sounding queer at first sight, is extremely powerful. Nair's mastery of the language is another facet of hers to marvel about. Anita Nair is said to be one of the finest feminist writers in Indian writing in English with an international reputation.

CHAPTER II

CAUGHT IN A FAMILY BURDEN

The word 'Patriarchy' means the rule of the father or the "patriarch", and it originated from the ancient Greek word Patriarches. Originally it was used to describe a specific type of 'male- dominated family' the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationship by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways.

Patriarchy is something inseparable from the structure of Indian of Indian society. Basically Indian society is male centered and the head of the family has immense power to exercise on the family members which is unquestionable. In the process of this power execute on, often the head of the family overlooks the interests of the family members and decides according to the social norms. The freedom of choice is hardly given to the family members especially to the women of the family. Under the pretext of being the more powerful than others, the decisions are taken on the important aspects of an individual's life and career such as education, marriage, property, etc. women are deprived of access to such power. However, it does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources.

When a man raises his voice in course of an argument and insists on his point of view, without letting other especially women get to utter a single word, his actions is likely to be described as " aggressively patriarchal". If a women complain of sexual harassment at her work

place, and all the men in her office deny that, this could ever happen. The reasoning of men can be described as being “typically patriarchal”. In Indian culture, importance is given to the male. This discrimination begins from childhood and sometimes even before that. There are instances of female foeticide which is an example in itself to the attitude of Indian society towards gender.

Gender denotes socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. It is decided by cultural, social, political and economic for foundation of a structural inequality between men and women. The discrimination based on the gender of a person is perpetuated through the social-cultural and psychology mechanisms prevalent in society. The question of social marginalization and the issue of gender inequality are inseparable.

Indian society has some mechanisms, arrangements, customs, and institutions that act as covert modes of establishing and perpetuating the subjugation of women. Women was denied along with many other rights, the right to education and the decisive power about her own life and was not even considered worthy of treating as a human being equal with man, rather she was, still is, viewed as the other man. The issues like the patriarchal family structure, the custom of polygamy, endogamy, child marriage, unequal share in the family property, the purdah system, state of permanent widowhood etc. have contributed a great deal, as the obstacle for the free development of a woman. Women have generally tended to be excluded from the public discourse and confined to the domestic sphere of home and family and to women’s work because women were only rarely taught to write, there is a relatively little direct documentary material about most of our fore mother’s lives.

Despite the constitutional safeguards today, the situation of the woman in modern India has, if not wholly, remained unchanged to great extent; if equality persists, so does

discrimination, domestic violence, ill-treatment, subjugation and so on; man is still the head of the family, dowry, albeit covertly, is still taken from the bride's family, the cases of sexual assault on women are quite often heard. A woman is yet to be given the complete decisive power about the issues like her career, marriage and many other issues pertaining her life.

In a very general way, patriarchy is a catch word that describes the different ways in which society discriminates women. The Indian caste system also has relevance to the discriminatory women. The features of the caste system like endogamy act as a mechanism of retaining control over the labor and sexuality of woman, the concepts like purity and pollution, which segregate people from each other and regulate mobility of women deprecate the issue of gender equality further.

The most effective weapon which helped in the perpetuation of the untouchability and women's unequal status was the institutionalized denial to the weaker sections of society and women, of access to educational resources. In public speeches that disclaim the subordination of women, this denial is described by the term patriarchy. These examples explain the many different and subtle ways through which patriarchy is expressed in the society. An Anglo-European anthropologist, writing during the nineteenth century, used the term 'patriarchy' widely. In their writing 'Patriarchy', usually referred to a social system where men were family heads, descent was through the father. Men alone were priest, and all laws and norms were dictated by the elders in the community.

Feminists mainly use the term 'Patriarchy' to describe the power relationship between men and women. The concept of Patriarchy is defined by different thinkers in different ways. Mitchell, a feminist psychologist, uses the word Patriarchy to refer to kinship system in which men exchange women. Wallaby defines "Patriarchy as a system of social structures and

practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Wallaby: 202). In Contemporary discourse on gender, Patriarchy is a central concept that feminist writers have been grappling with to explain differential positions of men and women in the society. These writings view patriarchy as the subordination of woman. The Patriarchy system provides self-definition and norms for women. These social norms restrict the social roles of women as mothers and wives.

Patriarchy describes the institutionalized system of male dominance. So we can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men and women, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women. Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant or masculine roles and women always have the subordinate or feminine ones. This ideology is so powerful that men are usually able to secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. They do this through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men. So Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

Feminist theory defines patriarchy as an unjust social system that enforces gender roles and oppressive to both men and women. It often includes any social mechanism that evokes male dominance over women. Feminist theory typically characterizes patriarchy as a social construction, which can be overcome by revealing and critically analyzing its manifestations. Feminism seeks for mutual care and equality as Psychologist Coleman says about man-woman relationships:

The need to love and be loved is crucial for healthy personality development and functioning. Human beings appear to be so constructed that they need and strive to achieve warm, loving relationships with others. The longing for intimacy with others remains with us throughout our lives and separations from or loss of loved ones usually presents a difficult adjustment problem. (Coleman: 73)

Many feminist, especially scholars and activists have called for culture repositioning as a method for deconstructing patriarchy. Culture repositioning relates to culture change. It involves the reconstruction of the culture concept of a society. Prior to the widespread use of “Patriarchy” feminists use the terms “male chauvinism” and “sexism” to refer roughly to the same phenomenon. Author Bell Hooks argues that the new term identifies the ideological system itself that men are inherently dominant or superior to women that can be believed and acted upon by either men or women, whereas the earlier terms imply only men as oppressors of women.

Social consciousness is a feeling that is experienced by all the persons within a society. It essentially means to be conscious of the rules or beliefs and safeguarding their personal interest. It also relates to interdependence of a person and society on each other. All the people have been influenced by culture, beliefs, traditions, norms prevailing in society. However, the extent to which an individual is influenced by the society depending on the circumstances and the level of exposure. An artist possesses a penetrating insight into the reality of things and thus with the help of perceptual understanding, he tries his own way to spread social consciousness and awareness among the people and Anita Nair is one of the such devoted Indian writers of the present time. She valiantly expresses her views on women’s suffering in contemporary Indian society.

As an acclaimed writer, Anita Nair makes it explicable that her intention of writing novels is to give emphasis on the depressed situation of women in Indian society. She is very much anxious about the exploitation of women by the male members which encourages her to write for the exploited. G. Ruby Davaseeli points that “Anita Nair is powerful writer, who through this tender story shows great understanding and compassion for all women and for choices and regrets they cannot avoid. She portrays women as not totally cut off from familial social ties but women who remains with those orbits and protest against injustice and humiliation”. Discrimination towards women in India is going on for a long time. It wholly affects a women’s life.

Anita Nair in her novel *Ladies Coupe* attempts to show that how people in India still treat women as inferior and how they get a substandard position in the society just because of their physical distinctiveness. Nair enforces women to have their own identity in the society where they live. Through these women characters she encourages women to raise their voice and express their feelings so that they would be able to make other people understand the value of their existence. Instead of showing sympathy, everyone blames women. Here Anita Nair tries to delineate the psychology of all the members, male or female, in society find fault with the woman who has been exploited as she herself is regarded responsible for her tragedy. Nair sets down her imagination and breezy thoughts in simple words. She is one among those novelists who made a valiant approach to elevate her tone against the aggression, violence, oppression and exploitation of women.

The novel opens with “sense of escape” for Akhila, an escape from the inevitability of her life which demands her to do “what is expected of her” (Nair 2001, 1). Akhila has no life of her own except the one prescribed by her life of her own except the one prescribed by her family

and are expected of her by the society. She can dream of her wishes but cannot translate them into reality, as it will subvert her role of an unmarried, independent woman, who is in charge of her family. Though dutiful and the eldest, she is not allowed to think of her own. Her dreams and describes always take a back seat when it comes to her family. But the family consisting of her mother, two brothers and one younger sister never appreciated her sacrifice, which is why,

She collects epithets of hope like children collect ticket stubs. To her, hope is enmeshed with unrequited desires. So this then is Akhila. Forty- five years old... sans husband, children. Home and family. Dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching to connect. (LC: 02)

The entire life of an Indian women is fully dedicated to her husband and to her family. One can find an up gradation in the status of women as there are certain laws for their betterment and a wave of women empowerment is there but in reality their condition is still same even in contemporary society. They are not self-dependent or able to live their own life, they are always under the control of their parents and of their husbands after marriage. They are not supposed to think about their own freedom they still feel themselves trapped under the chains which emotionally, physically and intellectually affect them.

Through the ‘Ladies compartment’ or coupe, Anita Nair shares the experience of her female character with the readers. She places her protagonist in a cross-cultural scenario. She explores the immigrant sensibility, duality and flexible identity. Her character comes from all the parts of the world with divergent social, religious and cultural preoccupations. She explores the multiplicity of themes which Centre around her characters struggle to outgrow traditionally inherited cultural values. Her women characters are docile creatures who believe in wrestling with their own problems rather than trying to dominate their male counterparts. Until 1998 there

was a reserved compartment for women on trains in India called the Ladies Coupe' Akhila is in her forties, unmarried and unfulfilled, supporting her mother and family. She decides to take a train journey. Akhila wants to know whether a woman's life can be complete without a man? Five other ladies share the Ladies Coupe with her. Each of them have a story.

Akhila receives a seat in Ladies Coupe', a compartment in a train specially reserved for the lady passengers. In that Coupe, there are five other passengers. Akhila asks them about the condition of women in Indian society. They all enthusiastically tell their story to each other as they all the strangers and never going to meet again. Furthermore, they all are the victims of Indian male dominated society. Mishra states that their backward journey helps them to understand the major bruises and injuries experienced by them in course of their life. Metaphorically, the train journey in Ladies Coupe', turns to be a journey if finding her independence.

Themes of loneliness, deprivation and suppression run through this novel. When Akhila was nine years old, she got a pencil from her friend Karpagam and she showed it to her mother and asked her mother to buy a pencil for her, like Karpagam. But her mother gave a big theory. Karpagam's mother is a dance teacher. She is economically independent. So she can buy anything for her child. But in contrast Akhila's mother depends on her father and also a conservative wife. She doesn't take any decision on her own. Akhila's mother says:

Do you think father would allow such comings and goings on here? Don't you know how strict he is? Anyway do you think your father would let me? 'If I wanted a working wife, then would have married someone like that,' he told me when we were first married *'I want my wife to take care of my children and me. I*

don't want her so caught up with her job that he has no time for the house or for taking care of my needs'. (LC: 14 *Italics mine*)

Akhila dream of getting married and leading a normal life remains a dream. At one point in the novel Akhila waited for Amma or Narayan to say something. To broach the subject of Akhila's marriage, when they didn't, Akhila swallowed the hurt. Akhila's family did not understand her. They had accepted her support and even willed her to support them financially, but they refused to recognize the fact that she may want to have a life of her own. Even the simple decision of deciding what she wanted to eat was denied to her. Being a Brahmin, one of the higher castes amongst the Hindu religion, she was forbidden to eat eggs. But she was curious and was introduced to the taste of an egg by her friend Katherine. Her sister Padma retorts when she saw the egg case in their house as,

'What on earth is this doing here?' Padma's voice swirled round Akhila in waves of incredulity when she saw her bring out Katherine's egg case. I know what it is. I asked what an egg case is doing in this house, a Brahmin household? Padma retorted. (LC: 03).

Akhila is a forty five years old spinster, who takes various roles of a daughter, sister, aunt and the provider of the family. As her father dies suddenly, she even takes the burden of the entire family on her young shoulders. Anita Nair probably hints at the family's easy acceptance of her as the head of the family on a place traditionally reserved for the patriarch in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. The dilemma that Akhila goes through at every point of her life comes to an end. She learns that there was a time when a woman needed a man for protection but now she needs a man for companionship, a partner who would share her ups and downs. This realization makes Akhila get back in touch with the guy she fell in love with,

someone whom she could not accept for the fear of the society. She learns from everyone's experience and as the journey an end, Akhila is ready to act, act according to her wish. She comes back to her place with renewed energy, with the courage of organizing her life.

Anita Nair uses certain characters like Akhila's mother, to express how women are strong conservatives of the patriarchal structure that has framed strict social, political and economic limitations on women. Akhila's mother is a conservative and orthodox mother, a devoted wife her own theory that a wife is always inferior to her husband. She is a sort of women who never takes decision on her husband for she believes, "He knows best" (LC 14). According to her, she has never had to regret any decision that he has taken, even when it was on her behalf. It is so much easier and simpler to accept one's station in life and live accordingly.

Another conservative wife and patriarchy women in this novel *Ladies coupe* is Sarasamami. Sarasamami and Akhila's mother were both sailing in the same boat. Because both of them lost their husbands and depend on their daughters. After the death of Sarasamami's husband Subramani Iyer, as a conservative, orthodox, ritual wife she is compelled to sell her daughter's flesh because Sarasamami begged at every door for a job. Instead of giving job they treated her as a beggar. Sarasamami had no way to take care of her daughter Jaya and her blind son. Sarasamami says,

'If I was younger, I would have sold myself to keep my family fed and clothed. But this is tried flesh. No man has a use for it. And it isn't as if she is consorting with several males. There is just one man. A regular. And she is happy' (LC: 88).

In this critical situation one can take two decisions. One is suicide, next is to sell their honor. Here Akhila and Jaya faced same problems. Akhila is forced to live as a spinster. Jaya is

forced to live as a prostitute. Both the mothers are dependent wives. Orthodox, ritual, patriarchy and dependence killed the two daughter's soul.

When Akhila was nineteen, Akhila's father died and Akhila became the man of the family. She got a job as a clerk in the income tax department. Akhila took a man's role that is her father's role. She is an earner, family supporter. Here, she kindly accepted her family situation and she took a role of her father. Normally this is the age for romance. But Akhila has suppressed her feelings and looks after her sister Padma, her two brothers Narayanan, Narsi and her mother. Next year Narayanan wants to join in the polytechnic college. Narsi wants to continue his school. And her sister was very interested in ribbons and glass bangles. Even Akhila's mother too expects the hands of Akhila.

When Akhila was thirty five, Akhila looked at the man who carried on his shoulders the burden of other people's dream. That she knew all about. That she could understand, as Narsi, her brother became the first graduate and found teaching job and Narayan, the other brother joined the tank factory as a machinist. "Akhila felt the iron bands around her chest begin to loosen: Dare I breathe again? Dare I dream again? Now that the boys are men, can I start feeling like a women again" (LC: 77).

Akhila's burning desire was burnt by her own family members. Akhila feels that their family members had failed to understand the elder sister's feelings. At one point in the novel Akhila waited for Amma or Narayanan to say something. To broach the subject of Akhila's marriage, when they did not, Akhila swallowed the hurt. Akhila,s family did not understand her. They had accepted her support and even willed her to support them financially, but they refused to recognize the fact that she may want to have a life of her own. Anita Nair reveals Akhila's desire through the following words,

Akhila waited for Amma or Narayanan to say something. To broach the subject of Akhila's marriage when they didn't, Akhila swallowed the hurt she felt the anger that grew in her flare. She insisted that a suitable bride for Narayanan be found. *Let both the wedding take place together. Same wedding hall, same day, same time...* Narayanan has taken care of this family and it is not fair he is sidelined simple because Mr. College Professor is in a teaching hurry to get married. (LC: 83 Italics mine)

Though Akhila was the bread winner of the family, she was not considered as the head of the family and her needs and desires were least bothered. Since Narsi was a man he does not ask for anybody's permission to get married. "Narsi decided to get to get marry" (LC: 77). When he told to the family that he was going to marry the principal's daughter, "No one could find fault with his choice and there was nothing anyone could say expert perhaps- Don't you think you should wait for your elder sister to get married before you think of a wife and a family? But who was to mouth this rebuke?"(LC: 77)

Akhila's mother is also the one who accepts the patriarchy. She never takes any important decision on her own or she never interferes with her son's or husband's decision. She does not know the marriage of equal life. This type of accepting patriarchy spoils her life and erases her own daughter's life and desire. Akhila's mother and her brother never asked or thought of Akhila that she too needs a husband, children and home on her own. Mother, brother and sister need only Akhila's earnings. The family members have fixed their mind that Akhila is a spinster and she lives for them.

Even then, Amma and her brothers never asked, ‘What about you? You’ve been the head of this family ever since Appa died. Don’t you want a husband, children and a home of your own? (LC: 83)

When Akhila was thirty five, she asked permission from her mother to go for a weekend tour. Akhila is the eldest and only earning member in her family even then she is supposed to take the permission of her younger brother if she wants to go out, just because of the fact that he is a man she is a women.

Akhila who is now forty five and unmarried, becomes aggravated as “Dreaming for escape and space. Hungry for life and experience” (LC: 2). So she decides to go on a long trip by train search of such an unrivaled question which obsessed her throughout her life. “Can a women live by herself?” (LC: 21). This one question troubled her all life. In an interview Anita Nair Says.

“To me, Akhila in some sense enjoyed being a martyr. She is not an exceptionally strong woman. She is just somebody who has coped.” (The Hindu, 2 Dec, 2001).

Margret Shanthi is another passenger who is portrayed as a well-educated and gold medalist in Chemistry. She is always a good student. So her parents took pride of her and telling to everyone, “We’d like her to study further. Work towards a doctorate and perhaps go to America where brains like hers are highly prized, they added confident that their dreams were mine too” (LC: 108). Meanwhile Margret Shanthi fell in love with Ebenezer Paulraj. He was the principal of the school and with their parent’s permission they got married. After eighteen

months, Margret Shanthi got conceived. She liked to call her parents but Ebenezer Paulraj conceived her to abort the baby. He insisted her to do B.Ed., and he said,

“What’s the point in working for a doctorate? Do your B.Ed. so you can become a teacher and then we will always be together. Long hair doesn’t suit you cut it off. You’ll look nicer with your hair in a blunt bob.”(LC: 112)

Margret Shanthi is a well-educated woman but still dominated by her husband. He never tries to respond to her feelings. Margret Shanthi wants to do doctorate but he always compels her to become a teacher. He tells her to cut her long hair because it doesn’t suit her. As a good wife she always obeys her husband but a deep burst of storm comes in her life when she conceives and her husband tells her to abort their first baby as revealed by her, “He dismissed me as someone of no significance” (LC: 96). Against her own wish she aborts her baby. “Abortion is considered a revolting crime to which it is indecent even to refer” (Beauvoir: 502). When she was going to abort her baby, her husband wished her, “All the Best”.

For the first time, I felt angry. All the Best! What did he mean by that? Was I going to write an exam or recite a poem? Was I going to run a race or perform an experiment? All the Best for what? I had nothing to do but lie there while they scraped my baby off the inside of my womb. (LC: 116)

These words strike her heart like an arrow as these words are spoken to somebody when one is going to do some good work. Margret’s husband does not find any fault in suggesting her to abort her first baby as if she would be doing a good work. As Beauvoir said,

“Men tend to take abortion lightly; they regard it as one of the numerous hazards imposed on women by malignant nature”. (Beauvoir: 508).

In the wedding night, Margret Shanthi's mother said how to be a good wife. "A wife never says no never says no even if she isn't in the mood". (LC: 110). This is the real pathetic and indigestible thing; this problem is faced not only by Margaret Shanthi but also by every Indian woman. Margret Shanthi hopes that the abortion is only to improve their economic status. But the shocking truth was revealed by her husband Ebenezer Paulraj at one night,

My little darling. My lovely girl. With no big bouncy breast and horrible woman's bush. I never want you to change. I want you to remain like this all your life."
(LC: 118).

Here she thinks what is the real meaning for love? The meaning for love is to respect others feeling, rights, desire and their welfare. There are all neglected by her loveable husband. Anita Nair portrays that even well-educated woman cannot escape from the male domination and it was revealed beautifully through Margret Shanthi's character.

When years passed Margret Shanthi's love was transferred into hate. She tries to express her problem to her mother. Her mother simply said, "You are overweight and barren, and added that he is a bust man, you want to adjust" (LC: 119). Margret Shanthi's mother insists her to learn how to live as a good wife. Even her own mother cannot understand her problem. Here Margret Shanthi raised several questions in her mind.

What about me? I wanted to ask. Don't I have a right to have any expectations of him? Don't work as hard as does and more because I run the house as well? Why do you think he is a busy and I have all the time in the world? Shouldn't you as my mother be one my side? Shouldn't you listen to my point of view what

happened to this thing called unconditional love that parents are supposed to feel for their children?” (LC: 120)

At one end Margaret Shanthi got an idea to get a divorce. She firmly knew that her family members won't accept her idea. “I left Ebenezer Paulraj, I would have to be prepared to lose my family as well. What do I do? I asked myself again and again.” (LC: 120). Here, Nair express the demanding patriarchy situation for even well-educated women. Now there is a critical choice whether she wants to either depend on her parents or her husband.

After the abortion, a type of disintegration comes in their marriage, as Margret wants to take revenge for her insult. For the sake of her family and the male dominating society in which she lives, she doesn't allow herself to leave him, so starts feeding him with oily food, till the curves into a stout and becomes fatty. Her revolting sprit has been shown by the novelist,

God didn't make Ebenezer Paulraj a fat man. I did. I Margret Shanthi, did it with the sole desire of revenge. To erode his self-esteem and shake the very foundations of his being” (LC: 96)

Margret Shanthi grooms Ebenezer into a fat man and now he is almost fit for nothing and slowly he becomes fatter and unable to shift and systematize anything. His school was not under his control now. As the time passed, Margret again conceives and gives birth to a baby girl. Anita Nair through the examples of Margaret's character reflects that not even an illiterate woman but also a well-educated women feels herself trapped in such a society. Their low social position can be seen in their homes where they treated like as an object to fulfill men's sexual desire.

Women position in India is a kind of a contradiction because on one side she is regarded as Devi while on the other side she is distressed by her own family members, thus they have to traverse through a long way as their path is filled with number of obstacles. Though Margret suffers a lot, at last she empowers herself and makes herself to come out from the web and finds her way.

The other Lady passenger in the coupe, Prabha Devi one who is very pretty and conscious about her beauty. When Prabha Devi was born, her father was not happy as he wanted a male child and says, “Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans, addled your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance” (LC: 17).

Here Anita Nair presents gender bigotry in Indian society where a girl is still considered inferior to a boy. Nair has expressed the pleasure of Prabha’s mother when she gave birth to her, “This one daughter of hers gave her more pleasure than all her four sons put together” (LC: 170). Discrimination towards women in India has been going on for a long time. It wholly affects a woman’s life.

Prabha Devi is married to a diamond merchant at the age of eighteen. She doesn’t want to conceive as she tells her husband. Nair’s main center of attention is the attitude of an Indian husband towards his wife. She explores how Indian women become marionettes in the hands of their husbands and every point in their life, women are still forced to make sacrifice for the sake of the desires and happiness of others. Margret and Prabha Devi both are facing the same problem; both are trapped under same dilemma as Margret is one who wants to conceive a child while Prabha doesn’t want to be a mother. One is going against her own desire of her husband. Here the husbands have been shown indifferent towards the feelings and desires of their wives.

And also she doesn't want to define herself within a more mechanical and monotonous life of a homely wife and a mother.

Prabha Devi, a wealthy and a modern women wants to be young throughout her life finds nothing wrong in saying no to a child. But in the view of tradition of India, a woman has to sacrifice her desire in order to satisfy her family members. Prabha Devi's pretty and self-conscious beauty was once disturbed by the character Pramod. Pramod admired the physical beauty of Prabha Devi. Once without permission Pramod even entered into the house of Prabha Devi and tried to seduce her.

“Prabha Devi pulled her wrists out of his grasp, raised her arm and slapped him on the cheek. ‘Get out, I said. I never want to see you again.

There's a name for women like you. I don't have to say it. I think you know it.’

Then he turned on his heel and walk out.” (LC: 193)

Pramod and Murugesan are same animal characters. Here, Anitha Nair tries to express that a woman has no protection, either upper or lower class woman. Even now women are not able to withstand alone anywhere.

When Prabha Devi becomes forty years old, she has begun to realize that she missed something in her life. After that she craves to learn swimming. But her husband Jagdeesh does not give his consent towards her pleading request, because he wants his wife to be submissive. He is a typical conservative make. But out of great desire, Prabha Devi ultimately learns swimming without anybody's help. Thus she empowers herself and molds herself to achieve her desire.

In Newark business trip Prabha Devi met her school friend Sharmila. In their school everyone hoped that Sharmila would become an IAS or Doctor but Prabha Devi came to know that their parents tricked her and married to her uncle's relation in between her studies. Sharmila pointed out her mother-in-law and said,

“This is the woman whose son now rules destiny and dreams. My thoughts have been reduced to whether I should cook rice or chapattis for lunch, fry okras or aubergine; load the washing machine with cotton whites or cotton colours...”
(LC: 185).

In *Ladies Coupe*, Sharmila plays a guest role, but this guest role reveals a big truth. Even now, in schools and colleges, the girls are dropped out for their marriage. Here, Anita Nair perfectly portrays how like Sharmila, skilled and talented persons are spoiled through the denial of their studies for the sake of their marriage.

Prabha Devi wore modern dress while she was meeting Sharmila. Sharmila say, “‘You look very nice,’ Sharmila said, eyeing Prabha Devi’s peach-colored trouser suit. ‘Doesn’t your husband mind you wearing western cloths?’” (LC: 186).

Here, Anita Nair reveals how women have no freedom even to wear dress as they like. In India no one bothers about the dress code of male. But there is a rigid rule towards women’s dress code and their appearance.

Marikolanthu, daughter of a farmer, who dies in her early days, lives under the poverty line and the best reflection of the dark side of the society. At the age of nine, she lost her father. She was good at studies but she was unable to continue her studies. Her mother got a job as a servant in Chettiarkottai. After completing the elementary school she was sent to take care of

Chettiar's grandson Prabu Papa. This is the age for playing and learning but her economical problem made her a child laborer.

“We'll send your brothers to the town school when the time comes but we can't afford it on my salary alone,' Amma said, 'You do understand, don't you, that it would be impossible for me to send you to the school by bus every day. It's not just the money but how can I send a young girl by herself... there is too much at risk” (LC: 226).

Marikolanthu was sent to Vellore from Chettiarkottai at the age of eighteen. There she worked as a maiden in the doctor's house Missy K and Missy V. The Missies taught English alphabet to Marikolanthu and they asked Marikolanthu to complete her S.S.L.C. After the small training of nursing, she could become a helper in the hospital. She says “Instead of glass bangles. I began to collect words and these would always be with me, I told myself with some degree of satisfaction... (LC: 245).

This blooming desire soon gets crushed by Chettiar's relative's son Murugesan. He rapes Marikolanthu. A ferocious result of the rape came when she became pregnant. She is forced to marry the rapist “a filthy animal”. She even refuses to marry him. She is a victim but everyone blames her. Here, Anita Nair expresses how the destiny of innocent woman is ruined by the animal like filthy Murugesan. “The girl must have led him on and now that she is pregnant she's making up a story about rape” (LC: 245). The word rape is the most awful word in women's life. When a girl is raped, she feels ashamed as she is helpless and unable to protect her own self. When Mrikolanthu is raped, instead of showing sympathy, everyone blames her.

Apart from Murugesan, Sridaranna, Sujath Akka and Missy K are enjoying the physical pleasure of Marikolanthu with or without her willingness. Everyone's needs were over and they had thrown her away. Here, Anita Nair portrays how illiteracy, poverty and dependence suppress the woman's life.

After that disastrous incident, Marikolanthu spends her days in a phase of complete loss of identity. After some time, she gives birth to male child, Muthu. She is unable to love her baby Muthu, an outcome of that hateful incident and of her helplessness and nothingness. At one end Marikolanthu sells her child Muthu in her own husband's loom. One reason for selling the child is that she needs money for uterus operation and the other reason her thought was that she too vengeance on Murugesan. "It was time Murugesan paid for what he did to me" (LC: 265). He didn't know that this boy was his own son. At this moment, Marikolanthu was flared with happiness and she had a proper sagacity of satisfaction in her mind. When Murugesan died, his body was not fully burnt. So Muthu was given the task to take care of his dead body. After her mother's death nobody is there to support her even her younger brothers tell her to leave the house. But after that, she decides to live on her own.

In these circumstances, she accepts her son and starts enjoying the most important part of her life "The Motherhood". Thus, finally, she empowers herself and proves to the world that she can lead a good life. In the end, she decides to measure happiness as Muthu's Mother. She joins the mission hospital as a helper. She defines her as an independent woman. Though she does not have anything, she does not relinquish her hope. "Becoming a mother in her turn, the woman in a sense takes the place of her own mother: it means complete emancipation for her" (Beauvoir: 511). Nair sets down her imagination and breezy thoughts in simple words. She is one, among

those novelties who made a valiant approach to evaluate her tone against the aggression, violence, oppression and exploitation of women.

Janaki gets married to Prabhakar, when she is eighteen years old and leads a happy comfortable, long married life for forty years. Janaki's husband is a partner and she has a son and daughter-in-law. Janaki leads a happy life until she realizes her submissiveness. She feels some strange of revolt when she finds her husband controlling everybody even their grown up son. She says to her husband, "You will want to control him. You want to control everybody. You want everyone to do your bidding" (LC: 30). Prabhakar's over bearing dominance, exactness and precision irritate Janaki. The life which has gone smoothly starts to find its ups and downs. She discovers herself and her true happiness that lies in her, but she is not able to take off the web under which she is covered for a long period. Her initial response to Akhila's query "Why should a woman live by herself? There is always man willing to be with her" (LC: 21).

Janaki is a typical Indian wife. She, as married at the age of eighteen and her husband was twenty seven when her mother and aunts had taught her the arts of cooking, cleaning, sewing and pickling. It was an arranged marriage. Simone De Beauvoir defines marriage as "The destiny traditionally offered to women by society" (Beauvoir: 445). When Janaki got married she didn't know the real meaning of marriage and her responsibility as a family where she is supposed to play the role of an ideal Indian housewife. "All through her girlhood marriage was a destination she was being groomed for" (LC: 25). From her childhood she had been taught that a husband is an equal to god and it is her duty to serve him. "He is your husband and you must accept whatever he does" (LC: 25). She realizes that her life is not her own life as it's wholly dedicated to her husband and to her son.

“I am a woman who has always been looked after. First there was my father and my brothers; the husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son. Waiting to take off from where his father left. Women like me end up being fragile. Our men treat us like princesses. And because of that we look down upon women who are strong and who can cope by themselves.” (Ibid: 202).

Even in the modern era most of the girl children were brought up one and only for the marriage. Here, Nair reveals that a woman’s destiny is ended with her household work. Indian mothers and Indian society do not dare to believe that women are also the equal part of the society. Instead they stamp she is meant only for household work and carrying the children.

The entire life of an Indian woman is fully dedicated to her husband and to her family. One can find an up gradation in the status of women as there are certain laws for their betterment and a wave of women empowerment is there but in reality their condition is still same even in contemporary society.

Women are not self-dependent or able to live their own life, they are always under the control of their parents and of their husbands after marriage. They are not supposed to think about their own freedom, they still feel themselves trapped under the chains which emotionally, physically and intellectually affect them. Nair explores that every woman should try to be cautious about their rights and for the expression of their individual capability

Chapter III

Feminine search for freedom and Identity in Indian Society

Being a modern woman, Akhila feels sickened with her mother's conventional preaching even then she supports her family and sacrifices all her happiness and her own personal life, right from educating her brothers and marrying off her sisters. They all get settled in their lives, but turn a blind eye towards her desires. Not even her mother thinks about the welfare of her daughter and remains so unconscious to the fact that she has made sacrifices so that her family prospers. The noble deed to prosperity done by her for her family adds to misfortune in her life. She feels caged and rapt because of their indifferent attitude and disdain for her. This makes her a rebellion. She likes everything which is against narrow-minded Brahmin culture.

Akhila's mother is not worried about her daughter's desires as she is a traditional woman. She has own theories and principles as she always teaches Akhila how a good wife should serve her husband:

A good wife learns to put her husband's interests before anyone else's, even her father's. A good wife listened to her husband and did as he said. There is no such

thing as equal marriage, Amma said. It is best to accept that the wife is inferior to the husband.” (LC: 21).

Her mother is an ideal Hindu wife; therefore, she imagines that her daughter should follow her philosophy and thoughts. Her mother leaves every single decision on her father as she thinks that her husband knows best. “We have never had to regret any decision that he has taken, even when it was on my behalf” (LC: 14). When experience such distress and they are failing to make out the accurate path leading to their own character growth. Beauvoir states that,

“Woman is bound in a general way to contest foot by foot the rule of man, through recognizing his over-all supremacy and worshipping his idols” (Beauvoir: 622).

As an acclaimed writer, Anita Nair makes it explicable that her intention of writing novels is to give emphasis on the depressed situation of women in Indian society she is very much anxious about the exploitation of women by the male members which encourages her to write for the exploited. Anita Nair is a powerful writer, who through this tender story shows great understanding and compassion for all women and for the choices and regrets they cannot avoid. She portrays women who remains with those orbits and protest against injustice and humiliation.

Akhila is a changed and revolutionary woman with full of strength and she also enjoys sexual pleasure with a stranger. Akhila had a love affair with Hari, a north Indian young man. It was a diminutive love affair though they made physical love several times. But Akhila suddenly broke this relationship. She says, “Hari this is goodbye I will never see you again”. Because he

was younger than her and she was also anxious that what people and society would think if this love affair would be disclosed. She is so agonized that she mentions,

“Every time I look at someone watching us, we can see the question in their minds: what is he doing with an older woman? That bothers me very much, Hari. It bothers me very much that we are not suited so she decides to remain single.”
(LC: 21).

Akhila's encounter with her school friend awakened her spirit to think of a life to live her own. But even then there sprouted the patriarchal domination. When Akhila boldly tells Padma about her decision to live alone, she without reluctance says, “Do you think the brothers will consent to this? Do you think they'll let you live alone?” When Akhila says for his defiance, for heaven's sake, she does not need anyone's consent, Padma mocks at her telling and they are the men of the family. Everyone including Padma, Narsi and Narayan were strongly rooted in the patriarchal structure and hence were unable to bear the thought of a woman living alone. Akhila's defiance is stronger than theirs that she boards the train to Kanyakumari.

Finally Akhilandeshwari decides to call Hari. He might be married, he might have moved on. Still, it was the effort. She loved Hari “but she desires life more’. If he was available and interested, life could take a turn for the better. If not... the narrative is open-ended. Hari answers the call but Nair does not tell us what he told. Whatever it was, a new Akhila is born- one determined to be heard and noticed, capable of building a new life for her.

Anita Nair has used the character of Karpagam who is a school friend of Akhila to bring an awareness to the society of women's demands and their need for self-expression. Karpagam is portrayed as a strong woman striving for self-definition in a patriarchal social organization. She

is a widow but unlike other widows she wears the kumkum and colorful cloths. She is a courageous woman, who breaks the shackles of patriarchy. She says,

I don't care what my family or anyone thinks. I am who I am. And I have as much right as anyone else to live as I choose. Tell me, didn't we as young girls wear colorful cloths and jewelry and a bindi. It isn't a privilege that marriage sanctions. The way I look at it, it is natural for a woman to be feminine. It has nothing to do whether she is married or not or whether her husband is alive or dead. (LC: 213).

Akhila was fascinated and asks "Karpagam, are you real or are you some goddess who has come here to lead me out of this" (LC: 214). Through her work Nair conveys that women want to make themselves free from the restraints of tradition. She wants to live a free life in male dominating society. This novel induces women to imagine in relation to their strength and about their self-identify. She tries to integrate the chronic female occurrence in her writing. Thus, Anita Nair portrays the character of Karpagam as one who courageously breaks the larger framework of patriarchy that denies personal freedom to women. Karpagam is the one who influences Akhila to live her life on her own.

The good work of Karpagam begins, is continued with the sympathetic intervention of the passengers in the coupe. The decision to go on a journey is Akhila's celebration of her newly achieved freedom when she moves into her own flat. Kanyakumari is the farthest destination she can think of and therefore the chosen one. Young Sheela has understood what. Akhila at 45 has barely begun to think about. Sheela's Ammma used to say that women should groom themselves for themselves, not for others. With help from her co-passengers and Karpagam, Akhila comes to realize that she must take her reins in her own hands, take her own decisions and live life for herself. The "others" has enjoyed far too much importance in her life; it is time

to relegate it to the wings and assume the stellar role in her own life. Too long has Akhila seen herself as “object”. The journey implies both a physical escape from the patriarchal world she has inhabited (and this has involved the use of her individual will) and also the stereotypical metaphoric value invariably attached to the concept of the journey-that of experiences of her co-passengers help Akhila to develop the new confidence that marks her behavior after she disembarks. The metaphor of the journey is further developed into the metaphor of the destination- Kanyakumari is a seaside town with the grand vista of meeting of three seas. The openness of the scene symbolizes the range of possibilities open to Akhila. Akhila who was trapped in her family situation in a small land-locked town in Tamilnadu now sits gazing at an azure sky and playing with the sand. Three oceans meet and mingle at her feet, she realizes with exhilaration. Her realization of her own independence is epiphanic.

In Kanyakumari, Akhila tests her newfound confidence by taking a lover. That, she is able to manage the little encounter entirely on her own terms amuses her. She smiles “because she discovers it is so easy to smile now that she has her life where she wants it to be” (LC: 275). Akhila has no more fears. Why then should she walk with a downcast head? She books a call a Hari. He might be married, he might have moved on. Still, it is available and effort. She loves Hari “but she desires life more”. If he is available and interested, life could take a turn for the better. If not, well the narrative is open-ended. Hari does answer the call but Nair does not choose to tell us what he says. Whatever it is, a new Akhila has been born-one determined to be heard and noticed, capable of building a good life for herself.

Karpagam shows Akhila the possibility of living a full life without a man. Prabha Devi’s swimming adventure underlines the realization that it is never too late to embark upon a new experience. It also shows that something that gives you simple, undiluted pleasure is more

precious than all the riches in the world, or the riches that your husband can give you, as indeed Prabha Devi's husband does give her. Prabha Devi is able to create a life of her own after years of a vacuous life spent in merely waiting for her husband. Nair's version of the old nursery rhyme must touch a raw nerve in every subaltern woman,

The woman her mother had hoped she would be. With eyes forever downcast and busy hands; embroidering, picking, dusting, birthing babies, preserving order and bless in the confines of her home and all the while chanting to herself: this is who I ought to be, this is the way to be happy".
(Ibid: 183-184).

Anita Nair powerfully believes, "You are the person who holds you destiny in your hands, even if the whole world conspires against you to push you down and rub your face into dust, at some point that foot will be lifted off and you will stand up". This type of terminology reflects her courageous and gutsy attitude. She gives an enormous apparition of women's life.

Nair Explores that woman should try to be cautious about their rights and for the expression of their individual capability. The Indian woman normally goes through life with marriage and children as a necessary corollary. She rarely asserts her individuality and it is almost unthinkable for her to spend her life alone. Marriages are arranged even today the Indian marriage portals on the websites have a plethora of clientele looking for the right spouse. As a reader we can very well question Akhila: Akhila has shouldered her heavy responsibility of looking after her family for a long time. She has been successful in what is an essentially male-dominated environment. She is strong and assertive on most occasions. Yet, she is looking for a man now to complete her life.

Indian women have gone through a quiet revolution. Contrary to popular belief, a large number of Indian women work. Though the society has a decisive patriarchal outlook, women are more assertive now and definitely play a positive role in the country's march towards economic progress. Indian women were (and still are) subject to a secondary position in the family setup. The man has the upper hand since he is, more often than not, the principal breadwinner of the family. In the past, Indian women had to contend with a secondary role compounded with literacy, malnutrition, maternity deaths sati (the practice of being burnt alive at her husband's pyre) and dowry. Malnutrition female infanticide, subjugation in the family set-up due to the dowry continues even today. Yet, women are now pushing for their fair share on the sub-continent. Rising literacy, better laws to protect women, a media-friendly image and the women's will to fight the odds against them have made all this possible.

Nair very intensely tries to pay her attention on the subject of women in contemporary society and tries her level best to accumulate the data regarding women's problems and their suffering. Through her work, she conveys that women want to make themselves free from the restraints. She wants to live a free life in male dominating society. This novel induces women to imagine in relation to their strength and about their self-identity. She tries to integrate the chronic female occurrence in her writing.

Anita Nair's fascinating novel *Ladies coupe* raises the questions about the role of women in contemporary postcolonial India. India suffers from a system of sex-role stereotyping and oppressing of woman that exist under patriarchal social organization. Patriarchy, in its different forms has tried in many ways to repress, debase and humiliate women especially through the images represented in cultural and traditional forms. The *Ladies Coupe* deals with such issues by asking fundamental questions that not only shakes the ideological ground of man's patriarchal

role in a traditional society, but also imply the existence of an alternative reality. The novel questions whether the role of Indian woman living under oppressive patriarchal systems should be restricted only to their roles as wives and mothers. In such a world, women's role is limited to reproduction regardless of her own desires and needs.

CHAPTER IV

Desire for high self esteem

Listening to the lives of various women in the coupe, Akhila gets down at Kanyakumari as an empowered woman to rediscover her "Self". The more she wants to get rid of her life she had lived for others, she desires more of her life, that is more of Hari and executes her decision to get reunited connected him over phone. Finally she succeeds in her defiance against patriarchy. She subverts the repressive forces of patriarchal ideas that have chained her not letting to discover herself.

Men and women are contemporary to each other. But, even in this modern era, women are considered not as equal to men but as the weaker class. They undergo suppression in a male dominated society. These women are unvoiced creatures of the society. Anita Nair's portrayal of women in her novel *Ladies Coupe* brings out this fact clearly. And relationship is a beautiful bond that connects people to share pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow and success and failure. A

strong and healthy relationship assures a person that he/she is not left alone on this earth. Everyone is surrounded by such relationship as marital, parental, siblings and friends. Trust, commitment, adjustment, sacrifice and all the above love are prime pillars of a healthy relationship.

After spending the night in the ladies coupe- Janaki who had a happy marriage though it was an arranged one, Margaret Shanthi though married to the love of her life suffered from the agony of an unhappy marriage, Sheela, a teenager who had the ability to look beyond things, Prabha Devi who after years of marriage learnt to strike a balance and Marikolanthu different from all the four women did not succumb to the norms of the society just to gain a right place in the social order helped Akhila realize that she had given the society superfluous power of ruling her life. These women and their stories help Akhila find the answer to her biggest question- *“Can a women stay single and be happy or does a women need a man to feel complete?”*

There was a time when a woman needed a man for protection but today she needs a man for companionship, she needs a partner who would share her ups and downs. She is not in need of a bread winner but in need of someone with whom she can share the bread. So, does this realization make Akhila gets back in touch with the guy she fell in love with, someone whom she did not accept for the fears of the society? The awakening emotional journey of Akhila is inspiring as she learns from her past and from the other women such as Prabha Devi on the Ladies Coupe to realize what she truly wants to do to take the reins of her life back.

A story of a woman who seeks out a sweet vengeance on her husband, a raped woman who seeks the comfort of her mistress and satisfies the lusts of her master, an old lady who is tired of sharing her husband with his family, a wife who learns to lure and leave, a young girl

who sees what others cannot see and several other small anecdotes within these stories with her which go some way in helping her figure out her own life.

From Janaki whose life revolved around her husband and son to Prabha Devi who had all that a woman could want except that she realized that she was a dormant wife for way too long, the narrative moves back and forth between these women's lives and Akhila's memories of her own. While Margaret Shanthi was married to a man who was too vain and self-absorbed to the extent of mentally abusing her every day to young Sheela who probably knew her grandmother better than any of her own children did, the narrative is rounded off with the tragic story of Marikolanthu whose simple, idyllic life is ruined by her owners' desire for lust.

Margaret's story demonstrates how a woman can strategize to get her own way. Margaret's husband Ebenezer Paulraj is the worst example of male chauvinism in the novel. A vain and arrogant poseur ("a male peacock" as his wife calls him), he maneuvers Margaret into a position of submissive silence, making her out to be an unmarked, average kind of woman. A girl with a brilliant academic career and a warm and vibrant personality, she is reduced to a silent extra. He hogs the limelight in their marriage, keeping her firmly in the wings, hardly allowing her even "supporting" status. His subtle cruelty to children in his school (he is headmaster of a school) is repeated in treatment of his wife. He is obsessed with the girlish, pre-woman that Margaret is when he first meets her. When she happily announces her pregnancy, he insists on an abortion in order to keep her "girlish" in his eyes. Margaret is confused and then angry. Tired of her subaltern position in his house, she finally takes her life into her own hands, gathers her forces with supreme will power and turns the tables on him. Having learned from his constant playing of games to get his way, she takes her revenge by inventing the game that will render him harmless to her, an ineffectual gourmand.

Paulraj is dominating, mean and almost perverse. But Marikolanthu's life has thrown up, by way of the men in her life. Only a rapist and an adulterer and Prabha Devi's husband is a typical conservative male who neglects her in what he considers the standard way to treat a wife. Janaki's husband has got her into a routine that makes her completely dependent on him. Now that Sheela's father has successfully silenced her, one wonders what kind of man she will be made, quietly to marry.

The narratives of Akhila's co-passengers in the coupe fairly tumble out of them, revealing the need to each woman to speak to a sympathetic listener. Each woman has been cocooned in her own silence and longs to be heard. The achievements of Prabha Dev, Margaret, Marikolanthu and Karpagam strengthen Akhila's resolve, so that, when she gets off the train at Kanyakumari, she is a new Akhila. Perhaps it is the aura of her newfound confidence, her newly discovered selfhood that attracts the young man at the beach. The fact that Akhila is able to meet and hold his gaze seems to be almost a lateralization of her new position as the "self" and others as "object". She has grown into her selfhood.

Relationship of any sort calls for change. A woman has to change her attitude while performing her varied roles as wife, mother, daughter, or daughter-in-law. Discovery for existence here is more a guidance for assertion and realization of one's own interests, certainly not selfish in the narrow sense. When Akhila Kanyakumari, she stays alone in a hotel and decides to make her own private rebellion. Perhaps her loneliness or her desire to feel happy and wanted again urges her to start a relationship with Vinod who is younger to her. It is, in fact, Akhila who initiates the relationship, which has no emotional involvement on the part of both. She feels as if she is released from the hold of convention and family expectations. Now she is mentally prepared to face the consequences of her decision. She is not bothered about what

others say. After Viond's departure, she calls her old lover Hari and we understand that a man replies at the other end, who, probably, is Hari. Whether their relationship will continue or not is left to our imagination. But it is clear Akhila's quest for self-discovery is complete, her identity crisis has overcome. The idea of self-realization urges her to withdraw from her meaningless seclusion towards new awareness and initiates her union with Hari a better relationship.

In this novel Nair studies the social forces working on the psychology of the Indian woman. All the women, in one way or the other, present their own need for existence and independence. By narrating the stories of these six women, Nair moves them from a state of passivity and absence into a state of active presence, from the kitchen and the bedroom to the street and the world at large. These are the stories, which together make a single story, of women rediscovering their existence. However, this does not imply that these women today wish to disturb the existing social and economic parameters. They are aware of their exploitations, conscious of their rights and willingly though assertively compromise with situations. In such a world, all the female protagonists become bold enough to recognize the demand of their own self and ready to make responsibility of their lives.

Janaki's relationship with her husband is full of friendly love, understanding, and loyalty. Prabha Devi loves swimming because it, metaphorically, gives her a sense of achievement. Margret succeeds in 'disciplining' her narcissistic husband and manages to survive by sheer will power. Sheela's ability to perceive what others cannot saves the way for her own future liberation. Marikolanthu, whose innocence was destroyed by one night of lust, manages to survive by sheer will power. And finally, Akhila manages to replace by fear by self-confidence which is an essential ingredient for happiness in the life of a woman.

Akhila's railway journey to Kanyakumari needs to be studied from another perspective also. Kanyakumari is a pilgrimage town at very tip of India. It occupies a special place in Akhila's mind, since it had got its name from waiting for her groom to arrive. Finding herself adrift with no life of her own, she expects the answers to her questions to emerge from the sea at Kanyakumari. Just as Vivekananda flung himself into the churning waters and the salts of the three seas and swam to a rock upon which he sat resolutely, waiting for answers that had eluded him all his life. Besides, Nair deliberately uses the fictional strategy of the ladies compartment to bring her six characters together. The title refers to the carriage exclusively for elderly people, handicapped and women, a practice in India which lasted until 1998. The word "coupe" suggests confined or restricted or closed space. Akhila's world, indeed, has been a confined space.

Thus, the novel provides a deep insight into the lives of women in modern-day India, illustrating their tough battle for an opening and the restrictions which are still exerted by tradition, religion and convention. After reading *Ladies Coupe*, one observes that Indian womanhood is changing. The life stories of these women given an insight into the expectations of married Indian women the choices they make and the choices made for them. From typical traditional woman Akhila changes to a traditional woman. The character of Akhila is symbolic of all those who are the quest for self-realization. She wants fulfillment in life and gratification of sexual needs and then motherhood. Her experience conveys the message that a woman can survive and get her identity not by keeping herself isolated from male-dominated society, but by cooperating with them. A strong feeling emerges from the novel that women as Akhila want simple things from the society and that they should be considered and treated as human beings most and foremost not as women or sexual commodities.

While listening to these stories and experiences Akhila also recollects her story so far and tries to make sense of the questions that had been making a choice. The book closes somewhat strangely, let that not take away from the fact that this truly is a well written piece of literary work. A really thought provoking read, at many levels. For woman who desires for their true identity and self-worth, this book might be a boon. Especially Indian women who are caught in the constant adaptation to the society as daughter, sister, mother .etc... Through exploration of a single woman living in India.

The book takes the readers to the viewpoint of some different types of people one may encounter in the day to day life without realizing what that person is going through. This book through the views of its characters has opened up the other side. Throughout the book one question lingered in my mind just like it did in the protagonist's mind... does love really become obsolete after sometimes and it is just the companionship that matters? All of us whether married or in relationship have had doubts about it a certain point of time, no matter where we stand in our life, we tend to ask ourselves, is this what I wanted to do or be? Readers see examples around them daily of people who seem content following the norms of society and then there are a few who break the norms, live life on their own, but that comes at a cost of being judged and lonely at times.

Why is the fairer sex expected to be the sufferer so that a family stays together? Is it that women are taken for granted, or, is it that we let others dominate and design our lives. Also, should there be no expectations in relationships or the expectations should be set in the starting itself? Why the status is celebrated for a man as being suspicious of a lady and her character whereas the same status is celebrated for a man as being elite and someone who has not found his match yet? Why do the numbers of age, weight play such a major role in defining a women?

All of us have thought of the above time and again and this book via the stories of different women in a coupe together rekindles the same thoughts again and again.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A major development in modern Indian fiction has been the growth of a feminist or women centered approach, an approach that seeks to project and interpret experience from the viewpoint of a feminine consciousness and sensibility. Feminism assumes that women experience the world differently from men and write out of their different perspectives. A premier preoccupation in recent Indian Woman's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. She has started asserting her substantive identity in action not in words but through her creative writings.

A growth of Indian Women novelist in their in 'between's', hybridity of thought and multi-cultural, multilingual and multi-religious social dimensions have contextualized and lifted

the women's problem in general and middle class and upper class women in particular. When Gynocritics think, they too admit that many women in many countries speak the same language of silence. Some Indian Women Novelists like Geetha Hariharan, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande tried with sincerity and honesty to deal with the physical, psychological and emotional stress syndrome of women.

Recent studies have shown that works that often appear to conform to the established assumptions contain under the surface contrary current suggesting simmering notes of discontent expressed obliquely. This has been demonstrated to be the case with Jane Austen and Bronte sisters whose female characters are portrayed as more self-possessed and capable than most of the man-dominating scene.

Women now are in every career and in every field. But this has its own problems too. They have to be mothers, and as mothers, they have to give birth to children and also to rear them up. This becomes for them a major problem. It is the desire of alphaphets that their children are well looked after; they should be properly nursed and cared for and grow up healthy. The major part of this responsibility falls upon the woman-the mother. Ayes and maids, how much one might pay them, cannot be trusted to look after the children so well and then the Pace of work will not grant the woman a long leave, leave would be granted only according to rules. This becomes a very major problem with women, with a career. And then the home has also to be looked after. It is still, in the Indian Society, treated as the woman's domain. In this way balancing between official duties and his home front presents the women-with a career, enormous problems. Whatever said or done, the Indian society still remains a man-dominated society and the wife may respectably be called the 'better-half, but in practical terms, she does remain the 'worse-half.'

In the 20th century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian English literature. Today is the generation of those women writers who have money and are mostly western educated. Their novels consist of the latest burning issues related with women as well as those issues that exist in the society since long. These books are thoroughly enjoyed by the masses and the publishers make easy money out of them. The publishers feel that the literature actually survives because of these types of bold topics and commercials used by the women novelists. They describe the whole world of women with simply stunning frankness. Their write-ups give a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife.

Since long, feminism has been used by the women novelists. Their novels reflect that the present age women have realized that she is not helpless and is not dependent. They feel that a woman is an equal complement just like a man. Today, a woman has also become a direct money earner and she is not only confined to household works. The women of modern era think on different lines and that is what is depicted in the novels of the Indian woman authors. These facts are incorporated by the women writers. Indian women writers explore the feminine subjectivity and apply the theme that rages from childhood to complete womanhood. Through their novels they spread the message of what actually feminism is, which actually is very broad. These women writers say that feminism means putting an end to all the sufferings of a woman in silence.

Though Patriarchy is a common concept in every woman's life, Anita Nair depicts carefully the diversity within each woman, as she does not want to put the lives of women to one

ideal. Women's suppression is rooted in the very basis of Indian society-in traditions, in religious doctrine and practices, within the education and legal systems, and within families. Traditionally, women bear primary responsibility for the well-being of their families. yet they are discriminated systematically and deprived of access to resources such as education, health care services, job, training etc.

Anita Nair's novels show how carefully she expresses the frustration and disappointments of women who experience in the social and cultural oppression in the male-dominated society. *Ladies Coupe*, is an individual's journey in search of one's true self who confronts the gender oriented tradition. It depicts the plight of a spinster who suffers silently in the name of family. The present work has attempted to analyze Anita Nair's portrayal of Patriarchy and women empowerment in *Ladies Coupe*. It clearly portrays the women's dependency on men and the way men use that to dominate the women and cutting off their wings.

As an Indian, we were born in a society where every girl is brought with an aim to marry her to a prosperous bride. Every Indian mother taught her girl child to cook, sweep, wash, pickling, to look her husband as a god, accept everything he says. A step out of this work is considered as a major crime, even though the girl does this far her own safety.

Analyzing the Anita Nair's major literary work *Ladies Coupe*- women characters in this novel reflects the total women society. And the novel ends by indicating Akhila, as Shakthi, indicating the potential of womankind. From an image of absence and silence to one of confrontation and assertion, Akhila has come a long way. Shedding the patriarchal image of woman as a silence and an absence, as imperfection and incompleteness, Akhila appropriates the voice and the will that has been the province of men and takes an active part in life. Nair has

made a gesture for the advancement of women, that class which, along with untouchables and forest folk according to Mulk Raj Anand constitute the rejected people of our country.

The meaning for Patriarchy is the women dominated by male. This domination differs from one to other, sufferings, poverty, suppress the feeling, and sacrifice come under this topic Patriarchy. The women are suffered in many ways. If we analyze the main reason for domination, the society consider women as weak so she needs support. Another reason for women is that she cannot survive alone. She wants to depend either on her father or her husband.

In *Ladies Coupe* each character reveals how women are patriarchally affected and empowered at the end of their suffered journey. They are the best reflections of millions of women of Indian society.

Anita Nair portrays Sheela as a fourteen- year-old girl, who was disturbed by her father's friend, Nasar. The male society sees Sheela as a prey to fulfill their lust, not as a fourteen-year-old child which clearly reflects the ugly society. Day-to-day's newspaper commonly shows how young female child's life are spoiled by filthy men.

Anita Nair portrays Prabha Devi as a child who faces sex discrimination by birth. Even in the 21st century, the birth of a girl child brings tears & sadness to the family. A girl child is considered as a liability and not as a resource. The expectancy of the male child leads to the explosion of the Indian population as reflectance of the female child affects the growth of the country's economy.

Anita Nair portrays Sharmila as a girl whose wings has been cut off by a single word marriage. This is the clear portrayal of how the female child's talents are compressed to four

walls of the house. Though women are brighter and talented the society does not want them to be allowed and exposed which leads to the decay of the valuable minds in cooking and washing.

Before 1980s, female child hardly goes to school, which finally steps to believe in superstitious thoughts and inferior mentality. At that period, the talent of women is mainly buried in the ashes of cooking.

Anita Nair portrays Margaret as a bright student, who wants to achieve the doctorate but finally ends up her life in marriage. Her desires are totally winded up her husband. Both Margaret Shanthi and Prabha Devi entirely different in their life styles and thoughts, but they both have the right only to think and express their thoughts and feelings, but the decision making authority completely lies with their husband.

The society portrays men as a protection to women but to the cost of it, the women have to pay her everything. Here, Anita Nair portrays Janaki as a women who is satisfied her life but her life to husband and son. She depends on her husband, father all through her life but her sacrifice leads to the criticism of her own son. Anita Nair points out Janaki as an embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, a monument of patience and devotion and a selfless bestower of love and affection.

Anita Nair portrays Marikolanthu – a women undergone sufferings throughout her life. Her education is denied by her mother's sex discrimination. Her life is lost by the filthy man-Murugesan. A man without proper education and proper life partner can survive in this society but a woman like Marikolanthu can only bear sufferings from the society.

Anita Nair portrays Akhila – a women who was longing for love and thrist. Akhila's brother, such because he was a man, he can satisfy his desire within a moment, but as a woman,

Akhila has to wait for her entire life. Though Akhila is the breadwinner of the family, she has to seek permissions from her younger brothers just because she was a girl. All the six characters in *Ladies Coupe*, through their long sufferings and with their discrimination, they get empowered themselves in their own way.

Anita Nair uses the familiar narrative technique of a shared train journey intersecting with shared confessions. The main protagonist and the narrator of the whole story is Akhilandeswari-Akhila for short Brahmin woman. Each chapter of the novel is devoted to one of the women's stories: JanakiPrabhakar, the old woman in the coupe whose relationship with her husband is a "friendly love", Prabhadevi, the rich submissive wife who loves swimming because it metaphorically gives her a sense of achievement, Margaret Paulraj, the chemistry teacher who succeeds in "discipline" her narcissistic husband, Sheela Vasudevan, the fourteen year old girl liberation and Marikolanthu, whose rape, literally and metaphorically, coupled with extreme poverty and class exploitation is the culmination of all other stories. Of all narratives of the six women, the most fascinating and most compelling beautiful story is that of Akhila. She is in the journey of discovering her own identity, because she finally emerges as a skilled barrier-competing victor of life.

Nair successfully provides a glance into the woman's world. The female consciousness and the feminine experience is brought out very successfully. The women that Nair portrays are distinct and different from those of the past. The prevailing social structure, economic condition, modern education and western power have all helped women to change her outlook, her way of thinking and her total persona. Successfully coming out of the conventional wraps, the belonging of the change in women is seen in almost every sphere of human activity. This change has greatly influenced the man- women relationship too. This is one area not fully explored and

people shied away from bringing private and personal issues into public. This positive change in women is helping them to define and redefine themselves in a positive way.

Nair's objective and message is that every woman should seek to find a refuge within themselves, and not elsewhere. Every woman is strong enough to state and as certain that she has a solution to all her problems, instead of being dominated and subordinated by someone. One needs to have a balanced and practical approach towards life and keep working at the wheels of life to keep it going. Broad concept of the book is interesting, but the actual test fell short with some parts feeling forced, bits of prose being too predictable and the ending too cheesy. Still, a few isolated scenes, phrases, and analogies make the book worth the very quick read.

Through their respective journeys or 'quest for self', these six women go through a process of development and towards the end of their stories emerge as strong individuals who possess a greater and deeper understanding of life. Their tales are drawn from everyday life and across the social strata and unfold quietly as if we were embarking on a journey into their minds.

Nair provides several snapshots of the lives of several Indian women who have struggled to find themselves in an extremely rigid society and reminded that many obstacles are common to all women. This book is a window into the Indian culture. She always weaves great stories around characters have shades of gray. "The story of a woman's search for strength and independence" claims the book's tagline.

Grouping representative characters allow Nair to denounce the injustices done to Indian woman as a collective, revealing the intensity of the pressure exercised against them by Patriarchal tradition. Thus, the train journey provides the opportunity to draw a broad picture of

the condition of women in today's India. The passengers diverse subject positions draw attention to individual differences and how they complicate and intersect with gender, but their combined narratives also speak to a common experience of systemic oppression and confining gender roles, a common theme which, in opening a dialogue, gestures towards subversion as the women's critiques at least envision the possibility of moving beyond such subjugation.

Further, this interaction with other women gives Akhila an individual from personal to historical. She realizes that other women have also experienced similar things. These women add to her sense of being as an individual and also as an Indian woman. The concept of 'Indian's helps Akhila understand how she shares communal pressures with these women and also how she can make a place for herself in the existing hostile community. This can both be a source of strength as well as discouragement. But in Akhila's case, this literal and metaphorical journey serves as an educating experience which definitely gives her strength by broadening her horizon.

The concluding chapter summarizes the argument and makes a list of findings deduced from the discussion of the psychological insight into resuscitation of self, relationship and time in the rebellious, liberated and emancipated in the predicaments of women. She presents the vital reality and makes us aware of the miseries of women and injustices done to them by their counterparts in the patriarchal society. However, it is an important fact that though Anita Nair's novels are crowded with female characters, the analysis of the novels reveals that her focus is only on the women protagonists, and the other secondary characters are simply mentioned.

In *Ladies Coupe*, Anita Nair focuses on men and women relationship, marriage and divorce, social and cultural, and psychological issues. Here the character Margaret Shanthi is a chemistry teacher married to Ebenezer Paulraj. He is an example of male dominance. He changes her life because of the power he has in her life. She wants to do ph.D but he asks her to

complete B.Ed. Finally she gets changed herself in an artistic way to win her freedom from her husband.

Janaki, another fellow passenger of Ladies Coupe, is an example for old age tradition. According to her, a woman should be a good daughter, sister, and wife, mother and so on. Indian society also believes that woman should always depend on some man in their life. Sheela is a fourteen year old girl, who is very sensitive with a deep insight. At the very young age, she understands what is meant by life. Her grandmother also teaches her a negative picture of male domination. Her father used to control her whenever she began to talk.

Marikolunthu is another passenger who comes from a poor family. She and her mother work as coolies in Chettiar's house. She was seduced by one of the Chettiar's son Murugesan. Marikolunthu shows her love and affection towards Chettiar's grandson but she hates her own son Muthu, the one who escaped from many attempts of abortion.

Anita Nair provides perfect examples of victimized women in a patriarchal system. In Ladies Coupe, the novelist tries to depict the picture of an Indian woman who stands along with her family despite of all their tortures. The Better Man unveils the reality of Indian women who are still deprived of their rights in love and marriage. Marriage is still a social necessity, where women seek security and men respectability. Domination is the significant in an analysis of the man-woman relationship where the male characteristics are the ones coupled with mental thought and positive activity, at the same time as the woman is regarded as basically submissive, her role to be the respectable of male sexual drive for the subsequent reproduction of the species.

The women in the past were completely traditional, uneducated, superstitious and confined. Being lived in such atmosphere women had become narrow and controlled. They

could never think that there can be a different world outside the four walls of their house, there can be some more roles for her to play. She is completely cut off from such dynamic world. It was so because the men of the traditional society wanted them to be so.

In the novel, *Ladies coupe*, Anita Nair has presented in increasingly common concept of patriarchy in which a woman is constrained by tradition to be dependent on men, crippled to realize her own strength. She has presented her women struggling side by side because of patriarchy but at the end has given them a gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Her women have been portrayed as intelligent, questioning women who are not contented with the injustice and rebellion against them. So Anita Nair's women raise the question of their way of life consolidated by patriarchy, and see it not only as the site of their oppression at home and in society but also make it a field of battle to vanquish their oppressors.

Anita Nair is one of those Indian English novelists who with her impressive technique of novel-writing gives a real description of women's wretched condition in Indian society. On one side Nair explores women's agony and on the other side she suggests a number of ways to fight back against these agonies to make their life a fruitful and peaceful one. Her, women characters are not weak; they are courageous and possess impressive audacity and will power to fight back against social evils. Anita Nair's novels can be considered a microcosm of female world.

Thus, in the novel, *Ladies coupe*, Anita Nair has presented an increasingly common concept of patriarchy in which a woman is constrained by tradition to be dependent on men, crippled to realize her own strength. She has presented her women struggling side by side because of patriarchy but at the end has given them a gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Her women have been portrayed as intelligent, questioning women who are not contented with the injustice and rebellion against them. So, Anita Nair's women raise the question of their way of

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