

Journey of Self Discovery in Anita Nair's *LADIES COUPE*

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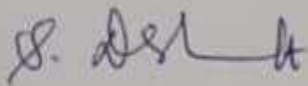
DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Journey Self Discovery in Anita Nair's *LADIES COUPE*** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is carried out by me **HEMALATHA S** during the period from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** under the guidance of **Dr. (Mrs.) Grace Priyadharsini Appadurai**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

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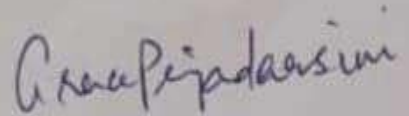
This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Journey of Self Discovery in Anita Nair's *LADIES COUPE*** submitted to in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.)**, is carried out by **HEMALATHA S** during the period from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** under the guidance of **DR.(Mrs.) Grace Priyadarsini Appadurai**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.



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ABSTRACT

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* is an attempt to study the identity, self discovery and a voice against female oppression and the problems of women. Anita Nair portrays different stories through her characters in the novel *Ladies Coupe*. The novel switches over from past to present and present to past. Nair has presented her women struggling side by side because of patriarchy. Her women characters have been portrayed as intelligent and questioning. She analysis six women characters in this novel. Akhilandeshwari, the protagonist is a forty five years old spinster. She takes various roles of a daughter, sister, aunty and the care taker of the family. The narration of the tales is presented in the form of case studies. The novel unfolds itself against the background of a train journey, and each of these characters narrates the story of her life as the train chugs, trundles and troops to its destination. The remaining five female characters also portray women problem and oppression. Thus this project depicts the identity and Self discovery of Anita Nair's novel *Ladies Coupe*. Her novel *Ladies Coupe* explores the experience of different women by journey. The ideas of fraternity, equality and liberty along with the liberal philosophy of individualism made women conscious of the fact that it is the social process that determines her life. The project aims to focus on the theme of women subjugation. The main purpose of the present research is to bring to the readers, an idea on the Indian society which still demands women to play a subservient role in the male dominant society. *Ladies Coupe* has the voice of women in contemporary post-colonial India. The characters of the present novel are women from different classes who share their story to each other how they exploited in male dominated society during their journey in *Ladies Coupe*. It is the journey of self-discovery. Nair portrays her female characters not just as

meeK sufferers but as strong women who struggle for their individuality, freedom from subjugation.

NOTES

In the text, abbreviation is used for the name of the primary text in the parenthetical references which are as follows:

- Ladies Coupe LC

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a soulful creation that leads to the interpretation of life. It is the tool to comprehend life. It is flexible and made up of decorative words to cast decorative and philosophical thoughts. Literature is a tree with deep roots in human minds. The essence of literature can be accomplished by losing oneself to observing life and passing on the observed to upcoming generations. In literature, the human psyche is essential in finding who you are. It is the germination of thoughts influenced by sensory organs. Literature imitates society through genres like novels, poems, and short stories. Literature is closely connected with nature and the environment as it paves the way for the growth of literature.

Literature dwells within us and showers beauty to life. Literature transforms your view and art of living a life. It is a therapy that analyses characters in life. Literature never satisfies you with one meeting, but it dives deeper so you can reach any literary want. The main motto of literature is to render virtues for better living.

Literature stepped into India during the Sumerian civilization, and Mesopotamia was where literature reached human eyes. Gradually, with the help of archaeologists, contemporary people understood the emergence of language. The inscriptions and scribbling on the mud walls were the pioneers of words. The Indus script is known as the first writing in India. English peeped into India during the advent of the East India Company, an association of hundred English men from Britain. They pierced their culture and language in our country. Aurangzeb, an empowered king of the Mughals, witnessed English with a unique eye and issued greater importance as he found his father Babar contributing much to literature through translations. Eventually, English ended up being the official language of India.

An Indian mind is more accessible, but dictums are ample in number. Experiencing Indian mind would give the experience of culture, tradition, and beliefs in manifolds. Projecting through words, the whole living of Indians reached the masses in the name of Indian Literature. Writings by Indians in English can be defined as Indian Literature. India, shining in diversity, stands with the same glow in writing. The major themes that Indian literature focuses on include the history of India, class discrimination, and religion. The languages that contributed to the literature of India are Sanskrit, Bengali, Pali, Hindi, Bihari, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Urdu, Rajasthani and Sindhi.

In this world, people live where a profession prevails, with less competition and heavy recognition. Such a profession is called 'human'. It is not essential to be a human being, but its importance lies in being a human. These teachings are cultivated by ancient philosophers who are believed to be sages and hermits according to Hindu mythology. Indian literature is rich in such great teachings, originating in the Vedas. Four Vedas, namely, *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*, belong from 1500 BC TO 1200 BCE. These are made up of enlightening methodologies to live a dignified life. It can be repeated with the genres of philosophy that it deals with. It facilitates human behavior, acceptance of life through the path of truth, and spreading happiness and peace. Upanishads are the feather in the cap of Indian literature. It is considered the oldest form of directive principles for a human to survive as a cultured social animal.

Indian literature widely opens its arms to poetry, drama, and fiction. Life lessons and writings were thick as thieves. Indians commonly know poetry as Kavya. The first poem written by an Indian writer named Valmiki is *Ramayana*, which is an epic poem. It is still taken as an art of inventiveness. Few prominent poets of India are Valmiki, called the

Adikavi, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore and Kabir Das. Drama is the masterpiece of Indians. An observation of rustic life is the foundation of creating such dramas in India. It arrived with pleasure at every commoner's house. The tool to educate the people then was plays. The culture called Therukoothu is still a perpetual habit of Tamil people. The pioneers in the drama genre include Asvaghosa, a famous Sanskrit dramatist who created *Buddhacarit*. Kalidasa, who lived during the fourth and fifth centuries, wrote *Malavikagnimitram*, *Vikramorvasiyam*, and *Abhjinanasakuntalam* and one of the powerful emperors of India named Harsha, gave birth to comedy dramas, namely *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika*, and *Nagananda*.

Fiction is a platform to express notions through a constructed story. It is made up of characters, themes, and plots. Some categories of fiction, like horror fiction, deal with imaginary content and produce a feeling of fear among the readers. Fantasy fiction is one genre that deals with exciting the human mind and with illusions that create admiration among the readers. Historical fiction is a category that takes a reader to the past. It is written based on history; this was the first type of fiction done by Indians. Finally, science fiction deals with the field of science and technology. This creates awareness and develops the advancement in literature. Fiction was used to unleash ideologies in the world.

Fiction attained its growth due to few prominent writers in India. Kalidasa planted ancient Vedas into minds from the fourth century through poems and plays. He is called the William Shakespeare of India. Kalidasa has written poems like *Sakunthala*, *Meghaduta*, *Raghuvamsa*, and *Kumarasambhavata* that still create a sensation. He mainly brought in themes from epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Kalidasa wrote mainly about female and their views as a dominant creation of them. Kabir Das, an ancient writer born in 1440, wrote

poems and is known for his mystic poems. His important works include *Songs of Kabir*, *The Kabir Book*, *Kabir Says*, and *Love Song of Kabir*. He was a spiritual writer. He focused on giving virtues to humanity through his writings.

Rabindranath Tagore lived during the nineteenth century and rendered valuable literary works to the field of literature. He was a Bengali poet and writer. His famous works include *The Home and the World* (1916) and *Gora* (1910). For *Gitanjali* (1910), Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, a collection of poems. He bestowed patriotism and modernism through his works. Swami Vivekananda, an Indian philosopher, proved to be a writer by giving tremendous works like *Kali the Mother* (1898), *The Song of the Sannyasin* (1895), and *Karma Yoga* (1896). He focused on *the Bhagavad Gita* throughout his literary works and bestowed philosophical ideas and nationalistic emotion through his works.

Mulk Raj Anand, an English-language writer from India, was born in 1905. His work depicts the position of India when it faced domination and racial discrimination. His famous works include *Coolie* (1936), *Untouchable* (1935), *Two Leaves, and A Bud* (1937). In 1971, he received the Sahitya Akademi Award. Padma Bhushan in 1967, and the International Peace Prize in 1953. Anand voiced out for the unfair happenings within India.

Rasipura Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, a prominent English writer from India, was born on 1906. He was a contemporary writer of Mulk Raj Anand. He wrote his novels and short stories based on a south Indian town, Malgudi. Narayanan is famous for his writings, which made readers enjoy the essence of ordinary and elite Indians.

English. His prominent works include *Swami and His Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of*

Arts (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Malgudi Days* (1983).

Beginning his career as a reporter in a magazine called "The Justice," he flourished in literature. He was awarded prestigious awards like Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Filmfare Award for Best Story.

Khushwant Singh, born in 1915 in India, attracted readers through his writings. His patriotism made him the finest novelist. He began his career as a journalist for All India Radio in 1951 and was a dedicated worker for UNESCO. The partition of India inspired him to write his reputed novel *Train to Pakistan* in 1956. His other important works are *The History of Sikhs* (1963), *The End of India* (2003), and *Delhi*. (1983), *Delhi: A Novel* (1991). India awarded Khushwant the Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship. India awarded Khushwant the Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship.

Ruskin Bond, an Anglo-Indian, was born in the year 1934. He began his career by writing children's short stories and flourished as a novelist. Bond had a subtle style of writing that covered the children. His first novel, "*The Room on the Roof*," was published in 1956 and received the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957. His other works are *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), *A Flight of Pigeons* (1978) and *The Blue Umbrella* (1974). The government of India awarded the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, and Sahitya Akademi Award.

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie, an Indian-born British-American novelist, was born in 1947. He often showers the essence of magic realism. Through his works, Rushdie authored books related to history and travel. His important works are *Midnight's*

Children (1981), *Home* (2017), and *The Satanic Verses* (1988). He was awarded the Booker Prize, Golden Pen Award, and St. Louis Literary Award. Amitav Ghosh is one of the eminent writers in India, born in 1956. He started his career as a journalist in "The Indian Express." Essential works are *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Glass Palace* (2000), and *The Ibis Trilogy* (2019). Rushdie was awarded the Padma Shri, Ananda Puraskar, and Sahitya Akademi Awards.

In India, women started writing years after men wrote. They were not free enough to show their views. It was the period where the stigma for women was framed. Slowly, they started writing but never flourished as men did. Writings of women had grown during the struggle for freedom. Women wrote about their freedom and rights and society's unfair treatment, which is called feminist writing.

The first writing by a writer called Tarabai Shinde was controversial because it spoke about the inequality that remained among genders. Her work, *Stri*, studied the difference between a man and a woman. Shinde's writing gave insights into gender roles. She planted the seed of feminism. Then came many writers following her theme and also with their themes.

Secondly, a Bengali translator, Toru Dutt, contributed to the literature field. She was born in the year 1856 in Bengal. Dutt wrote in English and French. Her themes related to patriotism and reminiscence. Dutt's famous works are *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876), and *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882), *Our Casuarina Tree* (1881). Unfortunately, she had an early death.

Sarojini Naidu was an influential writer and politician. She was born in India in 1879. Sarojini Naidu was a social activist and the first woman to be the president of the Indian

National Congress. She wrote works to boost patriotic emotion among the civilians. Naidu is called the 'Nightingale of India.' Her famous works are *The Golden*.

Threshold (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1959), *In the Bazaars of Hyderabad* (1912), *The Broken Wing* (1917). Sarojini Naidu was awarded the Hind Kesari medal in 1928.

Kamala Markandaya, known by her pseudonym Kamala Purnaiya, was born in 1924, and she is a British Indian novelist and journalist. She focused on cultural aspects and compared traditions followed among countries. Markandaya's essential works are *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), and *Possession* (1963).

Kamala Surayya, a distinguished writer from India, was born in 1934. She is popularly known by her pen name Madhavikutty. Surayya is a poet, novelist, and short story writer. Her main works are *Summer in Calcutta* (2004), *The Descendants* (1973), *A Hot Noon in Malabar*, and *My Mother at 66* (1999). Kamala Surayya was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Asian Poetry Prize, and the Kent Award.

Anita Desai, an esteemed writer and a professor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was born in 1937 in Uttarakhand. After completing her education at the University of Delhi, she began her career as a professor and started writing. Desai wrote her first novel, *Cry The Peacock*, in 1963 and formed her own publication house, Writers Workshop. Her other famous novels are *In Custody* (1984), *Fasting Feasting* (1999), *The Zigzag Way* (2004), and *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011). Desai won the 1978 Sahitya Akademi Award for her book *Fire on the Mountain*. She also deserved the Booker Prize and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship. Desai got Padma Bhushan for her contribution to literature.

Sudha Murthy occupies a special place in the field of Indian writing. She was born in the year 1950 in Karnataka. Sudha Murthy is the founder of Infosys Foundation. She began her career as a software engineer and started her journey into literature. Sudha Murthy's first work is about her young days, entitled " *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read* " (2004). Her other works are *Three Thousand Stitches* (2015), *The Man from the Egg* (2017), and *Here, There, Everywhere* (2018). Sudha Murthy has been awarded Padma Shri for her contribution to literature.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a broad-minded writer, was born in the year 1956 Calcutta. She was a professor who taught creative writing at the University of Houston. Divakaruni wrote for both children and adults. Her famous works are *Sister of My Heart* (1999) and *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) received the American Book Award in 1996. Divakaruni wrote poems, short stories, and novels that include *The Palace of Illusion* (2008), *The Last Queen* (2021) and *Arranged Marriage* (1995). Her novels are adapted into plays and movies, creating a sensation among the audience.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy, an Indian political activist and writer, was born in 1959 in Assam. She is well known for her environmental ideas, and she is an architect. Roy's debut novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), is a famous work that won the Man Booker Prize. Her other famous novels are *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001), *The End of Imagination* (1998), and *War Talk* (2003). Arundhati Roy was awarded the Booker Prize, the Sydney Peace Prize, and the Norman Mailer Prize. The central theme of her books deals with the caste system and biased cultural practices. Arundhati Roy portrays the natural lives of Indians.

Kiran Desai, an eminent English writer, was born in 1971 in New Delhi. She is the daughter of Anita Desai. Kiran Desai lived in England, and that made her learn more about cultures and beliefs followed worldwide. She wrote beautiful works such as *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Her works were limited, but her views on humanity and cultures were not limited. Kiran Desai was awarded the Booker Prize for her second novel and the Man Booker Prize. She also received criticism from Western writers, which made her known to the audience.

Anita Nair, a novelist and poet from India, was born on 26th January 1966. She was born in Shoranur, a district in Kerala. She was cultivated at N.S.S. College, Ottapalam, Kerala. Nair moved to her native after an extended stay in Madras. She got into her marriage life with Suresh Prambath and was blessed with a son and a daughter. Nair began her career as a creative artist. She worked under an advertising agency in Bangalore. Nair shined as an advertiser. She was buckled up with many creative minds that made her creativity grow. Literature is interconnected with creativity, which drives her towards literature.

Her innovative ideas and writing style made her journey into writing splendid. Nair approached the audience with creative ideas through words. Her words related to the common the most. The audience was related to the characters in her novels. Nair set a trend that came from rural areas rather than urban areas. She observed the world and presented it to the audience. Anita Nair wrote nineteen novels, two plays, a collection of poems, and one screenplay. She could comprehend the life of a typical South Indian and thus cast her characters to mirror the nature of Indians. Nair has also supported the UNHCR, commonly known as the U.N. Refugee Agency, since 2020. She was moved by the hardships faced by the marginalized and rendered selfless help to them.

Anita Nair also began her foundation to develop creative thinking and writing among youngsters under the name 'Anita's Attic.' Her classes help many young minds learn creative writing in Bangalore. She has her diction for literature and as a writer. According to her, a writer has two ways of living a life: a writer must live a life as an everyday life and transfer to real life as a writer.

Anita Nair portrays women wonderfully in all her works. She gets connected to the novel and works on it in such a way as to give a solid social message to society. Nair has given crime novels that make the audience actively participate in the climax as she leaves the decisions to the audience. She writes in a commoner language with decorative words. Anita Nair selects her character names from remote areas to relate her novel even to the commoner.

Anita Nair's themes are self-discovery, male domination, crime, betrayal, and cultural following of society. She is addressed as the finest storyteller by The Hindu. Nair was given high recognition as a writer by the Kerala government by giving the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for her literary contribution. Nair also won The Women of Substance Award from The Times Group for her excellence in literature. The FLO FICCI was awarded the Women Achievers Awards in literature. Her eminence was recognized internationally.

Anita Nair began her journey in literature during her Bangalore days as an employee at an advertising agency. She wrote a collection of poems named *Satyr: of the Subway* in 1997. It comprises 12 stories that deal with common and uncommon situations. It gives an outline of human emotions, and it also brings male and female relationships. Their expectations of each other are discussed widely.

Her first novel, *The Better Man*, was published in 2000. Here, Mukundanthe, the protagonist, always faces failure and leaves his native country. He gets back at the age of sixty. The protagonist greatly loved his land, which his family had owned for years. He betrays his friend Bhasi to own extra land and legacy. Finally, a fantasy enters the novel where he meets his dead family members and transforms into genuine people. The novel ends with a question about whether his transformation was forever. This novel elevated her to be a successful woman in writing.

A collection of poems was given as an audiobook, which was a great success. It is named *Malabar Mind*. It speaks about the nature of the state of Kerala. Unusual activities were observed and drafted as poems by Nair in 2002. She captured the people of her native country by writing about the ambiance of Kerala.

In her novel *Mistress*, Anita Nair adds beauty to her writing style in 2005. She uses the traditional dance of Kerala, Kathakali, to narrate the main character's emotions. Koman, Radha, and Shyam are the main characters. Nair also brings cultural collaboration between Westerners and Indians. The character Christopher is added to bring the difference between traditions. The writer also brings religious collaborations. Muslim community's traditions are discussed widely. The concept of Marriage is brought in through the characters Radha and Shyam, but Radha gets interested in Christopher and leads the readers to the nature of the human psyche. The positive attitude of a character named Maya gives a zeal towards life. Thus, by bringing all kinds of emotions, Anita Nair impressed the audience.

The novel *Lesson in Forgetting* was published in 2010, creating a sensation among readers. It is about the life of Meera, the protagonist of the novel. She is a young woman

living with her mother and grandmother in a male-dominated society. The family lives in a house called the Lilac House, which is meant to be very expensive. Giri, Meera's lover, marries her to get her wealth. Marriage life gave them two children, and happiness between them faded when Giri approached and demanded the sale of the house. Meera was uninterested in the sale, so he left her with two children. Here, one learns how far money matters and how it feels for a woman to live alone having two children in society. Meera goes ill mentally and toils with her days with penury. Her grit to have the land as pride and her idea of contentment is a lesson to the generation of youngsters long behind in wealth.

Cut Like Wound is another prominent novel that deals with the Hijra community, published in 2012. The writer shows the concept through a deductive narrative style. Bangalore is set up as the place where frequent murders take place with the same pattern of killing. Bhuvana is the central character in the novel who transforms herself into a transgender person in order to enjoy the physical relationship that she has with men randomly. The murder cases are investigated by a central character called Borie Gowda, who finds the reason behind her killing. If there is anyone who finds her original gender, she will kill them by cutting the veins of their neck. The novel deals with the sexual desires of both men and women. It also speaks about the third gender community, and the twists given by Nair create a search within the novel. The life of a commoner and his transformation into a psychopath is focused here in this novel. Sexual harassment is done to Ramesh during his younger days, thus pushing him towards becoming transgender to enjoy the pleasure of sex. They show how far sexual assault plays a role in damaging a person's life. Thus, Nair points out the human emotions regarding gender roles and sexual desire's role.

In 2015, Anita Nair became a highly creative writer by publishing the novel *Alphabet Soup for Lovers*. Learning is the central theme of the novel. In her personal life, Anita Nair immensely likes food and eating. She adds food to the way of enjoying life. Here, learning and eating are brought about as a close connection. Lena, Shoolapani, and Komathi are the central characters. They relate learning the alphabet with eating and make learning as easy as eating. Nair brings a cultural element to the novel that helps readers understand the cultural followings of various parts of the world through food.

Good Night and God Bless, a collection of essays written in 2015, is considered prominent because of the content that delivers Anita Nair's ten years of journey as a literature person. It is a collection of essays that is pleasant to read, irrespective of age. The writer allows her words to inspire the readers as she discusses how she leads her roles as a girl and then a woman, leading to the role of wife and mother. Life lessons are received through *Goodnight and God bless*.

Nair's *Chain of custody* was written in 2016. Bangalore is the chosen place by politicians, real estate dealers, and landlords to kidnap children, especially girl children. Money is the main subject spoken throughout the novel. The kidnaps are done to make money out of poor bodies of children. Though *Chain of Custody* is spreading a harrowing feel, it relates much to the contemporary. The need for money and humanity is the main idea of the novel. Nair addresses the reader with a note of advice, showing them the stage of humanity in the present era. Nair exposes a subtle style of writing that triggers the readers to flip pages with curiosity. The novel speaks aloud even today and relates to many situations.

Anita Nair is mysterious in her words. She published her novel *Eating Wasps* in 2018, proving her to be mysterious. This novel is about a woman named Sreelakshmi. She lives an

ordinary life until she meets the pleasure of suicide and finally kills herself. When there was a life about Urvasi, another important character, she brought different perspectives of human minds. Nair spoke about human mentality regarding sex and how desires pop up in minds. The way humans carry on with happiness and pleasure are the themes discussed. A man's hunt for happiness is widely concentrated.

The novel chosen for the research is Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*, an extraordinary novel that concentrates on the psychological aspects of different types of women. Akhilandeshwari, the protagonist of the novel, is a 45-year-old spinster. She lives with her family, including her mother, her two younger brothers, Narayan and Narsi, and her younger sister, Padma. After her father's death, she lead the family, replacing her father Akhila remained a spinster even after her brothers married because she was not offered the chance to be a bride. She turned to be stiff and rigid, and her life was routine as an income tax office clerk. There was one question about Marriage that was disturbing to Akhila. Can a woman live alone? That was the question. She often wants to break the rules of her Brahmin community and thus eats eggs to break her routine and get answers to her questions, so she sets off to Kanyakumari. Akhila moves on a train and meets five women from different backgrounds.

She tries to get answers to her questions from them. The first woman she meets is Janaki, the best homemaker and a woman under the guidance of a man throughout her life. Janaki gives her notion as advice to Akhila, saying that a woman must have a husband and a family as there is no need for a woman to be alone and emotive aloofness. Secondly, she meets a girl named Sheela, who sits mourning for her grandmother's death. Sheela talks about her grandmother, who loved being independent. This character shows how enjoyable it is to self-

love. Then, she meets Margaret Shanthi, who speaks about love and the transformation of love. She lives under the desire of her husband, Ebenezer Paulraj, and as her insights turn against his views, she dares to take revenge. The fourth character is Prabha Devi, a perfect daughter and a wife. She is from a well-to-do family but has lost herself. Devi springs back with answers to her questions by diving into the water. Finally, he meets Marikolanthu, who is a victim of rape. She shares her life experiences that shattered her innocence. Listening to all the stories, Akhila thinks about living and how she wants her life to be. She moves with her decision to patch up with Hari, her young lover. Nair brings the expectations of society from the women's community and their reactions to the expectations.

All the writers in English in India set a standard for literature by defining literature as a pool of emotions. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* also dives into women's emotions. This project deals with the self-discovery of the main character Akila.

CHAPTER II

STRUGGLE OF WOMEN

India is a culturally and historically prosperous nation. Culture is a set of beliefs, customs, and ideas a particular society follows. The birthplace of culture in India is found centuries behind in the Indus Valley. Indians speak many languages and also follow many cultural values and beliefs. There are communities built according to the states and languages. As humans began thinking about development, there came the birth of rules to make lives disciplined. These rules turned out to be our lifestyle. The transformation of moral values into rules and lifestyle rules underwent massive changes that should have been noticed initially. Nowadays, many questions are being asked about Indian ideas and culture.

Psychology is derived from a Greek word called psyche, which means 'mind' or 'soul.' This word is combined with 'logy' to make the complete word psychology, and 'logy' means a study or research. William James wrote *The Principles of Psychology, which* defines psychology as " Psychology, is the science of mental life."(1). It studies human behaviour and how the human mind behaves or reacts to new experiences or stages in life. A human gradually grows physically and mentally. The growth of the mind can be progressive and regressive according to situations or transitions to a stage from a particular stage. Mental health is essential for every human to progress in life. Prominent psychologists are Sigmund Freud, who is called the father of psychology, Carl Rogers, B.F Skinner, and William James.

The novel *Ladies coupe* shows a close connection between psychology and Indian culture. Among all cultures, Indian marriages are prominent to have deep discussion. Marriage, according to Indian minds, is widely spoken in this novel, which is framed by rules and beliefs. The culture of marriage in India witnesses heavy benefits and also drawbacks. Anita Nair brings her characters in connection with marriage and speaks about their changeover within themselves. The characters attain a high level of maturity in viewing marriage and its experiences. Anita Nair indirectly shows the readers how India's culture about marriage influences women. Both positives and negatives of marriage are shown in the novel. Nair promotes independence and identity in a married life. Importantly, Nair speaks about the vital role of marriage in the life of a spinster, Akhilandeshwari, the novel's protagonist. There are other women in this novel who experience mental changes due to the culture and ideologies of marriage.

Akhila, the protagonist of the novel, is a forty-five-year-old spinster. She is from a Brahmin family, sticking to the fundamental rules of society. She lived with her parents and siblings, Narayan, Narsi, and Padma. She had a perfect childhood and was tamed to be a perfect girl in society by her mother. Her mother brought her up, saying, "It is best to accept that wife is inferior to husband. A woman is not meant to take on a man's role." (14). She grew up practicing to be dependent on her father's decision and succeeded in becoming an income tax officer. The Aftermath of her father's death gave her more responsibilities as she stood as the breadwinner of the family.

Akhila's mother witnessed her children grow under Akhila's guidance. Financially and emotionally, the family had only Akhila. The day her brothers proposed their marriage

desires made Akhila understand that her family never wanted her to get into marriage. The family never offered a chance to speak about her marriage, and they did not want to speak too. She expected her family to be concerned about her marriage, but they moved on. She begins convincing herself to be alone throughout her life, but a question about marriage arises: "Can a woman live by herself?" (21). Akhila, by herself, concludes, saying, "As far as I am concerned, marriage is unimportant." (21).

Psychologically, Akhila is affected due to the concept of marriage. Though she comes up with such a conclusion about marriage, notions of the dependence of women penetrate her mind, making her search for answers to her questions. As she had no family of her own, she had to toil only for the needs of others. A famous novelist in India named Githa Hariharan states, "A woman without a husband has no home". In her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, she says these words through an Indian grandmother who facilitates her grandchild with Indian myths. She refers to Amba, a historical character from *Mahabharata*. As Githa Hariharan says, Akhila had no home of her own, thus proving the statement. This shows the pathetic situation of an unmarried woman. Akhila gave her siblings a perfect life and dived into caring for and nursing her mother. She was mentally stressed due to her routine life. She turned out to be a person of rigidity, and aloofness covered her. She never knew the joy of making her own decisions. Though Akhila was the breadwinner, she had to get permission from her brothers to move to a new place.

Akhila was transformed into a machine as she never had a wide circle of relations to make her feel at ease. Her dress showed her mental transition from being a rigid and stone-hearted soul. Nair shows the other side of a spinster who longs for sexual satisfaction. A

hollow heart due to marriage is slowly getting into a lustful experience through dreams. Her mind is filled with lust, and that gives her a chance to cope with Hari, a young boy and a passerby in Akhila's life. She searched for answers related to women's dependence, but she proved herself to be dependent in terms of lust. Marriage is an entity that gives a person completeness with lots of relations, but an unmarried woman feels lonely, thus leading to the path of isolation.

Instead of being a woman with glory, Akhila is psychologically transformed to be a calculator. Her mind deviates from conventional society and moves into the arms of strangers. Her mentality sees Sex as an ultimate goal, and so she longs for such pleasure. At the same time, from the discussion about her sexual desire in the novel, one can understand that as she is away from marriage, she can witness herself in the position of various goddesses; she is a lady of energy, creator of a new universe, one who nurtures dreams and hopes, a portrayal of the material world, one who toils for desires to be accurate, promoting the state of being self-sustenance, a personification of misfortune, a creature of all evil deeds, a seeker to dominate. Psychologically, Akhila attains these positions in life due to her detachment from a marriage, which led her to discover herself.

— Kali. All set to demolish anything that stands in her way of moving through time. Tara. Along with the golden embryo that will give rise to a new universe. She will be infinite and nothingness all by herself.

Sodas. At sixteen, fullness. Fostering aspirations and dreams. Even at the age of 45.

Shivaneshwari. Within her, the tangible world's powers rise. Bhairavi.

Trying to figure out how to satisfy her needs before everything is

meaningless. Chinnamasta. The naked one permits destruction and

renewal in a cyclical order, perpetuating the state of self-sustenance in

the created universe. Dhumathi. Bad luck personified. An elderly hag

riding a camel holding a bird on her banner and a broom in one hand

Bagala. The unsightly side of all living things is the one with the crane

head.

She is all of these things and more: harsh, hateful, and jealous. Matangi.

Attempting to rule. 274l.

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's famous book *The Palace Illusions*, she states, "I am the one who decides to whom I belong." This dialogue is delivered by a historical character named Amba, who fights back for justice regarding her marriage. Divakaruni's character is in the same position as Akhila's, as both search for their future. A woman is the right person to choose her own life, and both characters greatly advocate this ideology. A situation still prevails where a woman has to fight to live according to her wish.

Anita Nair introduces Janaki, who faces marriage at eighteen before understanding the real meaning of marriage. She was married to Prabhakar, who was twenty-seven years old. Janaki entered the life of marriage after getting trained to be a perfect wife. Simon de Beauvoir, in her famous work *The Second Sex*, the fourth part, states, "One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman." (ch Childhood, 273). She means that a woman is made, not born.

The society converts a born child into a woman by invoking the rules to be a woman. Expectations about one's marriage life would lead to any emotion. Janaki had no expectations about her future as she never knew what marriage was. She learned a lesson that made her accept everything her husband says. "He is your husband, and you must accept whatever he does."(25). He joined her on good terms as they were meant to be the golden couple. He set her free whenever she underwent pain physically and mentally. She gradually learned to conquer her revulsions. Prabhakar made her feel beautiful, irrespective of her age. "This man made her forget what the mirror and the daylight reminded her about so annoyingly."(29).

Psychologically, she had both positive and negative experiences with marriage. Janaki's life was always dependent on men. She was too young to make her own decisions before marriage. As she entered marriage, she was petted and patted by her husband. She lived like a baby in the hands of a mother. She enjoyed the way she was treated. Prabhakar perfectly handled the husband's role in certain situations. She was given medication every night with much concern as she had a sleeping deficiency. When she got pregnant with Siddharth, her mind was disturbed by making judgments about their love. A few nights, Prabhakar longs to make love to her, but she neglects her as she begins hating such intimacy after pregnancy. He understood her best. Prabhakar made sure she was happy in various situations. Once, the couple had to spend their days with Siddharth and his wife Jaya. Many guests were conversing and making happy notes when Janaki was expected to stay back in the kitchen to prepare food for everyone. This troubled her husband, and he proved to be responsible for Janaki's mental health and happiness. He stood with her until she finished her chores, though she never wanted him to stay. He often whispered and asked about her

happiness. "Happy?"(32). He also never fails to understand her emotions. He stood away from all the other typical Indian husbands in a situation where the family talked about choosing a shoe for Sidharath.

Prabhakar loses his temper and questions his son about disliking the shoes. Janaki then had to take up the role of an understanding mother, and she shouted back, judging Prabhakar's character. She accused him of saying that he was controlling the whole family and that he was arrogant. However, the reply was pleasing as he never maintained superiority or never had any wrath within him. "He was so different. Her mood swings didn't make her believe that he loved her any less. He simply saw that understanding people are inherently suffering."(31). She did not think he loved her any less because of her mood swings. He just understood that an understanding person always suffers."(31). He understands her completely. They even spoke silently through their eyes. She had perfect mental health until she found her boy grew up.

The husband plays a vital role in keeping a wife mentally sound. Prabhakar entered Janaki through a culture called marriage and stood for her in every problematic position of her life. A woman sometimes needed someone to stand by them and defend criticisms instead of them. Here, Janaki cleanly faces insults. Jaya, the daughter-in-law of the golden couple, gave a note of appreciation to Prabhakar for being such a perfect guide. She commented on his goodness, which led to an indirect idea that Janaki was nothing without him. Janaki knew the power of her husband and felt happy about it, but the indirect idea made her feel insecure. However, she had her husband defend as he gave one of the situations where Janaki was left

alone to do wonders unexpectedly. Janaki was responsible for a person's living. After this explanation, Janaki was seen with a different eye. "Just because she needs me to open the mixer jar or chop onions for her, you must not think Mummy is a weak woman."(34). He explained how he saw Janaki as a warrior but not a worrier.

Incidents proved the love between the couple. He always stood up for her even when his son accused Janaki of being innocent. Through these ways of mental support by her husband, Janaki was happy moving towards her last days of life.

However, one cannot judge the role of marriage only with these incidents because there are incidents that made Janaki feel depressed and disturbed. During her role as a wife, she faced happiness and mental illness. The first incident that made her lose herself was when she had to give allowance to her husband to conquer her body. She left herself suppressed under his wishes not only in bed but also in life. "Janaki learned to conquer her revulsion"(26). She began accepting his nature by tolerating her emotions. This led her mentality towards numbness as if she had no wishes. She tolerated the pain for him. She wanted to live for one particular sentence he used: "You are my wife, you are my wife"(26). Due to this, she began questioning her love for him and about love in marriage. "Have we lived together for thirty-five years?"(24). Questions hurt a person when one has no answers to the question. Jaya questions Janaki's dependent life. Being a daughter-in-law, she examines the couple's role in each other and gives her views. The image of Janaki in Jaya's eyes hurts Janaki. So she feels terrible about herself for not being willing to voice out for herself. During this conversation, Jaya brought the success of her mother, who stood single after Jaya's father's death. This triggered anger

and self-respect in Janaki, but her mind was utterly down. That never allowed her to speak up, but she raised questions about herself." Are you saying that I am a weak, helpless creature, she wanted to demand."(34)

Janaki was formerly under the control of her spouse, who caused her to experience mental instability. There happened a situation where Siddharth started questioning about the Aftermath of his father's death. "Mummy, when Daddy is gone, how will you stay by yourself in that huge house?"(35). These questions saddened Janaki, and she never welcomed thoughts of her aloofness without Prabhakar. She suffered without sleep because of these questions. Planning to let Janaki into their lives disturbed the young couple's mind. Janaki had never thought of it before as it would give her the utmost depression. She changed the subject of the talk to one related to dependence every time it occurred. She was psychologically affected as she deliberately wanted to die first. "Please God, Janaki prayed, let me fall asleep so that I do not have to think."(35). Tears would roll over whenever she thought about her future without her husband. The marriage took her both in the happy memory lane and the sad memory lane. She never had anyone to express her fear, even to her husband, because she never wanted to see him sad because of her. Her love for him made her bury her fear.

Dependence paves the way to innocence. Janaki is also accused of being an innocent old lady. The family saw Janaki as an ignorant little creature that Janaki disliked. During his wife's delivery, Siddharth wanted his mother to be along with him and invited her. However, many words were spoken comparing Janaki with Jaya's independent mother. There entered an inferiority complex within Janaki that made her psychologically weak. She was meant to babysit and be a caretaker but not to perform hospital procedures during Jaya's delivery

journey. As a mother, Janaki was perfect, but her son accused her, making her feel emotionally frustrated. The conversations had allegations about Janaki's generosity, selfishness, and knowledge. She maintained silence throughout the conversation, proving that she was disturbed mentally. "You are spoilt. Everyone you know has spoilt you. Your family and then Dad." (36). Siddharth says that his mother is spoilt by getting over love. Marriage in Janaki's life is seen as an entity, giving both development in mental health and also mental depression.

The novel *Ladies coupe* moves to the next character, Sheela, the youngest of all the other women in the compartment. She seems to be tired of overthinking. Her eyes show sorrow, and Akhila learns the reason behind her sadness. It was because of her grandmother's death. Sheela was close to her grandmother as she was the only person who could understand her grandmother. The death was due to age. Sheela was raised in a family where the importance of being a perfect woman is showered. The character sketch of the grandmother is inspirational as she never minded the comments of the community but dressed young. The sorrows of her life never disturbed her enjoyment of being herself. The main sorrow is that her children left her alone, and they wanted only her property. The grandmother was an essential character for Sheela in her life because of the lessons taught by her grandmother to the grandchild.

Marriage was one of the major hot topics discussed by grandmother to the grandchild. According to Sheela's grandmother, marriage is not as sweet as people expect, but it has many expectations to fulfill, mainly by women. Grandmother, bold and modern in her thoughts, gives ideas about how a married woman must live physically and mentally. The

effects of her marriage life were given as advice to Sheela. The psychological changes entered the grandmother's mind, which paved the way to give instructions or precautions to Sheela.

Marriage changes one's perspective differently according to different experiences attained by one. The old lady has ended up meaning marriage as a service center. She made up her mind to give views to Sheela as "You call that a woman! A proper woman has a good head of hair and a chest full of breasts. And a womb that blossomed readily."(67). A girl can be in any form or structure, but a woman is supposed to marry, and she has to have hair, breasts, and a womb as essential amenities, according to Sheela's grandmother. The old lady also showed Sheela how to live her life, which is not part of her understanding of marriage. She asked Sheela to be pleasing to herself and not anyone else. One day, grandmother spoke to Sheela, advocating dependency even in beauty. The grandmother has told the same ideology to other older women, but they are satisfied with society and have left themselves down. "Yourself is the only one you have to satisfy. The image of yourself in the mirror ought to bring you joy. (68). She argues that no other member, like her husband, must judge and get pleased by your beauty; instead, one has to live for oneself.

Marriage would easily make one live for others, but one has to be careful not to get occupied by others' wishes. Before marriage, girls dress up and shine to please themselves, but after marriage, one is trained by her mind to be beautiful. Psychology plays a vital role because women, after marriage, panic about the love of their husbands. They never wanted the love to fade away because of their fading beauty. This ideology of sustaining beauty is the best service to be rendered, and this was given as a warning to Sheela during a conversation

about Sheela's body, which is thin and pale. The experienced grandmother says, "You are so skinny. No man will want you for a wife. Men do not like bones in bed. Men like curves."(68). So, through these words, one can understand the poor mentality of married women who long to serve better and get complete attention.

Another incident in Sheela's life is an inquisitive question. Sheela, who speaks her mind, proceeds with a habit of using the word 'shit' while she speaks. Sheela's father, who gets furious about her method of talking, comes up with his views on a girl and a woman. He accepted the sense of humour Sheela practiced during her childhood as a girl. However, the same sense of humour irritates her father after she becomes a woman. She used her common way of speaking, but he said it was disrespectful towards parents because answering right after elders' words was uncommon, even when the talk back was needed. Having Sheela's marriage life in mind, he asked her to curb her talk and to maintain a culture in her talk.

Everything was perfect when it was a good piece of advice. However, when he uttered, "Tame her speech and kill her soul. I want to prevent her from being like me when she grows up and wondering what I said incorrectly and what mistake I will make by opening my mouth again."(70) one can understand the expectation from a woman who thinks several times before they speak. This taming by a father created an insecure feeling about marriage.

Age teaches human virtues in life. Sheela's grandmother is old age and is nearing death. Her favourite son kept her in a bed covered with a white cloth. As she filled the bed pale, she suddenly began to call out for her mother, who may be in heaven. The relatives were in shock. She longed to go back into the arms of her mother. Nair, through this scene, shows the impact of marriage, which is less compared to motherly love. Though she was married for

many years, the impact created by her husband was less than that of her mother. She never wanted her husband but her mother to be her side. The mindset, even during her death-welcoming days, was toward love for her mother. Marriage had given her children property and joy, but true love and satisfaction are attained through her quest towards her mother.

"Women turn to their mothers when they have no one else to turn to. Women know that a mother alone will find it possible to unearth some shred of compassion and love that in everyone else has become ashes."(71).

The culture of marriage wants women to be depressed for their whole life when they lose their husbands. The death of a husband will change a woman negatively. Psychologically, women turn out to be devastated after their husband's death. The dressing is one example that is present as a rule in the life of a widow. They are not supposed to dress colorfully, distorting their mental well-being. After marriage, women live for others, and even in a widow's life, she is expected to live for others because her dress or activities would ruin the culture of the society. Sheela's grandmother preached against this and practiced it in her widow's life. Thus, Sheela stood by her grandmother by performing rituals according to her grandmother's wishes. Through her grandmother's life, Sheela understood how a woman must be bold in tackling mental pressures in a marriage life.

A lady named Margaret Shanthi, who is like a butterfly, is introduced in the novel. She is a well-educated and cultured woman. She gets cultivated well and wants to do a doctorate in chemistry. Shanthi loved excelling in her subject. When her life was untouched and happy, concentrating on her studies, she met her husband, Ebenezer Paulraj.

He was a character of attraction initially, but later on in life, his character was hated by Margaret. Both loved each other and got into marriage. Society admired their pair because both were educated and suited best. Ebenezer was the principal of a school where Margaret was a usual teacher. In life, she referred to every person and feeling with chemical names. She experienced happiness at the beginning days of marriage, but gradually, love faded away.

Marriage brought many changes to Margaret's life. She always disliked Ebenezer's dominating qualities. She understood slowly his stubborn character. The reason was straightforward, which was an image. He wanted to be perfect in everything but wanted Margaret to be below him. She named Ebenezer the 'Oil of Vitriol' to express his disgusting character. She also references her character, in which she takes up the position of water. A married woman is expected to be like water, which has the power of healing, holiness, the ability to accept, and the ability to destroy. Margaret says that her psyche has changed after marriage as she finds herself as water with all special qualities.

-I classify myself as water.

Water that moistens.

Water that heals.

Water that forgets.

Water that accepts.

Water that flows tirelessly.

Water that also destroys. (96)

There are lots of references that portray women as water and can configure the whole world. Margaret faces many bitter experiences in her marriage life which tamed her psyche to be different than her usual nature. She says that she has converted her state of being water to 'supercritical water. This refers to the state of mind that has entered this woman because of Ebenezer's domination and his wishes to make Margaret walk the way he wants. One day in school, when the morning prayer was being held, he stood there bold and brisk in front of all the students and teachers. He often feels excited about his position. As a determined character, he would stick to his habits and rituals. On seeing the position of Ebenezer, Margaret takes a minute to witness her position. She finds herself behind and far away from Ebenezer, notably backward.

The place they stood for the prayer showed their proper position in practical life. She found a rage waving in her mind and heart. She began to complain about his response to her doctorate. In order to give her a place next to him but not in front of him, he suggested a bachelor's degree in education and pestered her to do so, so she did what her husband wanted.

Marriage life turned her gold medals into nothing. She underwent depression and ended up disliking him. She is frustrated by his way of addressing her to his workmates. Shanthi thinks about the demerits of marriage and thinks about divorce, too. However, she was already introduced to the notion of society that divorce was not meant for cultured families. Shanthi learned the lessons of marriage from her mother, who said there are unique qualities a girl needs to develop to become a woman, mainly a married woman.

The dislike of women is not noticed by the male community and sometimes even by fellow women in our society. The day before Margaret's marriage, her mother steps in to give

away the rules and regulations to Margaret. She explains the need for a woman to be loyal, faithful, and toiling in carrying on married life effectively. The mother states, "how a good wife never says 'no' even if she is not in the mood." (102). An essential reason for marriage affecting one's psyche is acceptance. Even when she doesn't like the demands of men. The new bride's father also advocates the health and heart of the groom but fails to speak about his daughter's heart and health. Margaret wanted everyone in the family to love Ebenezer, but she was confused about how they overprotected him, trying to use Margaret as a shield of protection.

The life of newness turns to be old and low in quality as days pass, as it is nature. Margaret was pregnant and rejoiced but found Ebenezer to keep quiet on pregnancy. He gave the shock of Margaret's life. He did not want the baby, but he wanted to be accessible and strive for betterment in life. Margaret remembered the words of her mother and allowed herself to take the baby out of her. She hated him after that. "Love comes like lightning, and vanishes in the same manner; if fortune favours you, it hits you. lights if not, you will spend your life yearning for a man you cannot have" (Ch Sorcerers, 63). Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni stated these words in her famous novel *The Palace of Illusions*, where she explains love and its stability. As per Divakaruni's words, Margaret feels sad about her love because of Ebenezer's activities. She never wanted to do anything for Ebenezer because she thought that he was living her life also and he had control of her life, and this made her psychologically dull.

Among typical Indian minds, divorce was something uncommon and not advisable. Margaret also thought about divorce but remembered that her family members said no well-

cultured families met divorce. She accepted the abortion, and this made her less sporty and less confident. Shanthi wandered with questions about marriage and its unfairness. However, as a mother, she fought for her offspring, but all in vain. Ebenezer was strong enough to defend his notion. He stood firm and kept directing her towards abortion. He feared people who wanted her to abort the plan of abortion. The nurse of the hospital where both approached for abortion advised them not to have an abortion, but he influenced Margaret's mind about the future. He also got support from the holy bible, saying it did not oppose abortion. On the day of the abortion, Ebenezer earned lots of hatred from Margaret because he uttered the wishing notes just before Margaret went to kill her child. He wished "All the best!"(109). The wish triggered the psyche of Margaret, that made her decide to take revenge on her husband.

A woman is powerful. She can do her thoughts. Revenge is an activity taken out of furious rage and disheartenment. *Ponniyin Selvan* is a famous work from Tamil literature that unleashes the essence of revenge. Nandhini, the main character in this novel, makes herself take revenge on the people who killed her father. She belongs to the Pandya dynasty of Tamilnadu enters into the Chola dynasty to take revenge. Margaret, who stands with grit to take revenge on her husband, resembles Nandhini in terms of psyche. Kalki, the author, states ("If I complete my revenge, you will be in peace and leave me"; my trans;). These words from Nandhini to her sword show the intense urge for revenge. The words explain that a woman's heart will suffice when revenge is taken, and it will be calm. A woman, when determined, can not step back, and peace lies in accomplishing an action.

The psyche of a woman can be destroyed as well as recreated. The killing of a child made a difference in the mindset of Margaret. Shanthi never wanted the love of her husband. The journey after the demise of the kid was struggle-filled because Margaret was able to hear the voice of the baby within her, questioning the purpose of killing. This disturbed Margaret as already she was in a rage towards the dominating activity of Ebenezer. All the love between the couple faded away. She slowly made a master plan to overcome her rage. She never wanted her dependent behaviour of her anymore. Her mentality became very strong after much of a bitter experience.

Women fall for flattering words, and they long to be pets. The men can console women using the weaker part of women. When the abortion was done, Ebenezer showed extra care to Margaret, referring to her as a child. He called her "My little girl!"(111). Margaret understood that these words were the gift of marriage. Dominating has taken a change in her life. It was the way of giving over flattering words instead of dominating words, but the ideology behind the words is to dominate. The possible way of keeping Margaret in Ebenezer's hands was to care for her so much, not as a wife equivalent to him but as a small child capable of doing nothing but listening to his words.

Psychologically, Margaret was affected, which made her cook so much for Ebenezer. Cooking was an indirect weapon for Margaret and, thus, ended up making Ebenezer a patient of obesity depending on Margaret.

Nair's other character is named Prabha Devi. She was a child and then a woman of contentment. She was born into a luxurious family and also got married into a wealthy family. Her father never liked her birth and thus wondered in disgust about her birth.

Prabha Devi's father says, "Has this baby, apart from ruining my business plans, added your brains as well? If you ask me, a daughter is a bloody nuisance."(169). However, her mother is happy because she thinks she can teach her recipes to Prabha Devi and treasure her jewellery. She was brought up with expensive toys and kitchen sets. She was prohibited from entering entertainment platforms because she was about to be a wife. She was married to Jagadeesh, one of the wealthiest persons in the city.

A woman has to leave her comfortable entertainment or skillful work to take the role of wifehood. Prabha Devi excelled in embroidery when she was a spinster, but she had to leave embroidery to take care of her family after marriage. Prabha's full-time occupation was caring for her daughter and son. Before she was pregnant she had the chance to visit abroad. There, she meets Sharmila, her friend in school. Prabha Devi was the best student in school and was expected to be a civil service officer. However, their marriage life ruined her dreams. She was allowed to study after marriage, but she knew it was impossible because a student's role was challenging to play when she had the role of daughter-in-law and mother. She ended up her life not getting educated. The bitter scenes in her life made her regret for her past. A wife is supposed to devote her life to others, Margaret thought.

Cultures of two countries are also brought in. New York, a place of modernism, changed Prabha Devi. She met people over there and witnessed the dress style of the women in New York. Prabha started dressing like the westers after she entered India. The reaction of Jagadeesh was fearful. She started questioning her regarding the typical Indian minds who wanted the dress of married women to be modest. Prabha Devi enjoyed how she dressed, and many others in the society also enjoyed her dressing using the wrong eye. She lost the

customs of marriage. Every couple married for a year is supposed to carry a child. Prabha Devi wanted no responsibilities as she thought she was young and wanted to live her youth days with entertainment.

Married women are not supposed to dress attractive. They are in the position of responsible homemakers, and so they must not wear pretty dresses as they wish. Prabha Devi did not know these; one incident made her understand the idea behind the filthy society. She dressed for her and her husband, but Pramod, a friend of Jagadeesh, admired Prabha more than Jagadeesh. He took advantage of Prabha and tried to enjoy her. This incident led Prabha into a frustrated mentality, thus paving the way to normality, leaving her Western ideas.

Normality means a typical homemaker who is supposed to wait for husbands to get babies and do all house chores for the family.

Prabha Devi changed her dress and ideology. She got back to shyness and innocence. Jagadeesh was shocked at her transformation but was satisfied with her. Pramod left a few words for Prabha to sleep on. He generally spoke about women who dressed in such a way incorporating attention. He said, looking into the modern outfit of Prabha, "There is a name for women like you. I do not have to say it. I think you know it."(183). On hearing these words from a stranger, never minding that she was married, Prabha turned her psyche into a feature of numbness. She started living for her children, and that is when she questioned her identity. She wanted to do something other than just being a part of Jagadeesh. She discovered her interest in seeing a swimming pool. She wanted to wear a swimming suit again and swim as the children do. Devi wanted to forget every incident that affected her

psychologically. In order to save her psyche, she had to lie to her family about her swimming classes because she was married.

The novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, by Gita Hariharan, shows how a woman feels when she is not allowed to dress in a modern way. A significant character in the novel, Prabha Devi, undergoes cultural fluctuations. Thus, due to her society, she remains traditional in dress and code, as Margaret does in *Ladies Coupe*.

The last concept about marriage discussed by Anita Nair is through the character Marikolanthu. She is from a Tamil family. Her mother is a cook in a grand venue called the Chettiaar kottai. This is a place of crime at times. Marikolanthu was not educated but had the best life experiences. She completed her childhood joyfully, but her education was unfavorable, so she had to become a maid like her mother. Her experiences from her life discuss new ideologies about marriage. Marikolanthu had brothers who were affectionate until a particular stage, and she loved a particular person named Sujata, who worked at the place where she worked. She was adorable and pleasant in the eyes. Both had a good relationship. Sujata wanted Marikolanthu to excel in something, so she planned to send her to Vellore to serve a lesbian couple who were doctors. Marikolanthu enjoyed her work there and dreamt about the nursing course that the couple had promised.

Marriage in any form can affect one's mind. Marikolanthu, who returned to nurse her mother when she was sick, faced the bitterest incident of her life. She was in her teenage when the incident happened. Women are not allowed to get out of their houses after six because maybe they have breasts and wombs to protect. However, Marikolanthu traveled to the workplace to see her favorite person and faced the tragedy of her life. She was raped. An

essential person of the Chettiar kottai did the rape. She pleaded for her freedom, but it was terrific. She managed to hide the incident until she got a baby in her womb. Marikolanthu tried to avoid the rape and also tried to get justice, but she was weak enough to face failure. Marikolanthu was too weak to fight for justice.

A woman getting a baby from a person must marry the responsible person. However, marriage played a sad role in Marikolanthu's life. She was not married. One can understand that without marriage, a child must not be born, and also, the baby cannot be loved. Marikolanthu delivered a baby, but she disliked him. The society accused her. They called her names because of her marriage. Marriage has not taken place in her life, which was eventually the burden of her life. She was disturbed in such a way that she never wanted to look at her child. Marikolanthu gave the child to her mother and moved on with her life. Even after her mother's death, she failed to look after the kid and joined him to work under a company. Her hate was because of an illegal affair that made her a mother. She would have lived a life of pride if she had married the right person. Her hatred towards the baby is shown in her words, "Take him away. I do not want him near me." (220).

A married woman must tolerate anything. Marikolanthu, without any regret or sorrow, watches her husband's funeral. She finds her son helping her father's body to be burnt fast. When the body is wholly burnt, she burns all hurts within herself. Her soul takes a new stand and feels satisfied. Marikolanthu moves closer to her child and cares for him. This transformation is because of an illegal husband's death. A marriage would give a person satisfaction and purity only when done with fairness, following the customs of marriage in India. Sujata's marriage with Sridhar gave love to both, lasting until Prabhu's birth. Sujata

loved Marikolanthu out of sympathy and wanted her to be always with her. Marikolanthu did all kinds of work to satisfy Sujata, including giving sexual pleasure.

Marikolanthu was allowed into Sujata's body instead of Sridar, and he never looked back at Sujata's beauty after a few years of marriage. Marriage vows must be followed till death. The culture is rich because of its rich customs and followings. However, Sridar never followed the customs. He saw Marikolanthu as an object of Sex. He visited often and Marikolanthu satisfied both Sridar and his wife. However, marriage for a woman is highly personal, and she is the sole owner of married relations. Knowing Marikolanthu's attitude towards her husband, Sujata never asked any questions of her husband but expounded Marikolanthu out of the house, forgetting her liking towards Marikolanthu.

After marriage, a woman has to make a change in her attitude. Some situations also push a woman to influence others. Marikolanthu's brothers, who had pure love for Marikolanthu, listened to the minds of their wives after marriage. They sent both Marikolanthu and her son out of the house. Though having a pleasant heart, the ladies of the family react against Marikolanthu to safeguard their future. There are situations for married women to remove their hearts and keep them apart, but they are not responsible for this attitude. Psychologically, they are disturbed because of marriage.

A victim of rape has a decrepit trait. Cases of rape are increasing in India without a solution. An Indian writer named Pinki Virani wrote a book on rape cases and rape victims. She says, "I refuse to be a victim. This, I have attempted in all spheres of life; each time one falls, one must simply pick up oneself after weeping a bit, brush away the tears and dirt, and move on."(3). Virani presents these words in *Bitter Chocolate: Child Sexual Abuse in India*.

Her lines show the pathetic situation in India, where rapists are found as ordinary people rather than criminals. Marikolanthu sees Ranganathan as an ordinary person, but she is isolated and tries to live like the words of Pinki Virani, as there are no other means in India. Women, in general, have to make adjustments and tolerance as their traits. Married women have to follow the footsteps of their women ancestors, or they will be psychologically affected by society.

Thus, marriage has a significant influence on human behavior. Psychologically, married women undergo changes that gradually turn out to be disheartening by themselves. Like the characters in this novel, *Ladies coupè*, in reality, women have various versions of changeover. They, at times, indulge in criminal activities also. Through her characters, Nair spreads awareness about the destruction of peace among the country's women because of society. The following chapter will deal with the solution of such mental depression caused by marriage within the characters of the novel *Ladies Coupe*.

In the present age, women are capable of making their own decisions, but after marriage, men have the right to make decisions about women's lives, especially in Indian society. Indian girls are treated as a curse, and so despite studying, priority is given to household work. Many girls are deprived of educational rights due to a patriarchal society. Mr. Paulraj does not want Margaret to do her Ph. D. because he wants to keep her subordinated to him. It shows that women are always considered inferior, though they are intellectual gold medallists and educated. Marikolanthus is another coupe mate of Akhila. The upper-middle-class women neglect Marikolanthus. The noticeable indication of her class and social grade uplifts her fellow

travelers to ignore her in the space of the compartment. After the departure of another passenger, she narrates her life to Akhila.

Marikolanthu works in Chettiar Kottai after attaining puberty. She looks very pretty, and in order to save her from the clutches of men, Sujata asks her to depart to Vellore to work as a maidservant to the two lady doctors, Miss V. and Miss K. They encourage her to pass the SSL examination and instruct her that they will help her to undergo training to become a professional nurse. Nair here stresses the importance of women's education. Marikolanthu is shocked by the lesbian relationship between the two doctors; they both love each other and never care about their homosexuality. Shocked, she returns from Vellore to her native place and replaces her mother's place as a maid in the Chettiar Kottai. She was loaded with heavy work, and without any complaints, she did it perfectly. A luxurious place is reserved for high-class people with the right of domination, oppression, and exploitation. Murugesan, a relative of Chettiar, ruins her innocent life. She is seduced in Mango Orchard.

Her life is left unquestioned due to Murugesan's brutality and lust. The raped Marikolanthu became pregnant, but no one cared for her, including her brother. Her mother is least bothered about her feelings but fears no one will marry her. The issue is taken to the Chettiar's son, but instead of justice, he, with slight refusal, says, "The girl must have led him on, and now she is pregnant; she is Making up a rape story." (245) The rape of low-caste women is a part of the ongoing anti-caste struggle. The patriarchal structure of our society has given the man unrestricted power to use the body of a woman in any of the ways, whether it may be love-making or overriding her

body against her permission. So a woman is doubly marginalized first because she is a woman, and secondly, she is inferior to a man. For Marikolanthu's mother and Sujata, a woman's life and security lie in her husband. Nair deals with rape, aggression, alienation, and troubled relationship. For Marikolanthu, nothing is worse than a man's raping of a woman, so she finds minor fault in the missy's love for each other and experiences a kind of comfort and happiness to give her love for Sujata, more than her husband does.

Marikolanthu has to provide sexual pleasure to both Sujata and Sridhar. It is true that women, whether educated or illiterate, either from rural or urban, engaged in household or office, suffer varying degrees of physical and psychological violence at the hands of their masters or co-workers. In the second *Sex* (1953), Simon De Beauvoir writes that women bring women up, and their ordinary destiny is marriage, and marriage is a kind of subordination to man. She also writes that if we look at history, we shall find that women have always occupied a secondary role to men and thus have been relegated to the " other " position.

The six significant characters come from different social and financial backgrounds. These women can be divided into two categories: first, women who are doing jobs, and second, those who are homemakers. Akhila, Margaret Paulraj, and Marikolanthu are working women. Out of them, Marikolanthu is an uneducated woman who is also a victim at the hands of culture. The culture makes them what they are from childhood; they are taught to be good daughters, wives, and mothers. Their psyche leads to their oppression. Nair also portrays self-subjugation among women

through the character of Janaki. Akhila is also an example. She keeps others' lives and happiness above her own, which leads to them taking her for granted.

The story of Marikolanthu is unfortunate; she is sexually abused, physically harassed, and tormented all her life. The usual trend of women being blamed for rape is visible in her case. Her story is very heart-touching and tragic. At last, she had to sell her child to Murugesan for five thousand rupees because she needed money for her uterus surgery. Her uterus had to be removed as it was damaged because of frequently getting pregnant. She was exploited not only physically but economically and socially, too. Nair's *Ladies Coupe* is an example of women's subjugation in Indian Society. It is seen that the journey of six women who share their stories on a train and the conversations they share helps the protagonist. Akhila discovers what she needs in her life. It is noticed how each woman is suffering from male dominance in one way or the other. As they began to tell their stories, Akhila felt a kind of connection to each of them, and it helped her to resolve the unanswered questions in her heart.

The *Ladies Coupe* is a story about an outer and inner journey of all these women. A search for self-identity of women who want to break free from patriarchal norms is portrayed touchingly and realistically.

CHAPTER III

SELF-ASSERTION OF WOMEN

The feminist perspective in the fiction is marked by patriarchal hegemony in the structure of the Indian family. In patriarchy, women are colonized, which results in a relationship of inequality leading to injustice. India won freedom, ending colonialism, but women in India are still colonized. Indian tradition, through its mythology and religious literature, has presented women to be the epitome of patience and silent suffering. Restricted to the household chores, she has suffered humiliation, suppression, and abandonment. Now, in the modern world, through education and political rights, her lot appears to be improved, but patriarchy has still got its hold on the domestic life of women. They have yet to struggle to assert themselves through self-discovery and self-reliance.

Akhila, the narrator of the story, is searching for strength and independence and escaping from the responsibilities saddled on her after her father's death. She is searching for strength and independence, which she cannot find as she is caught up in her daily routine. She would like to look for answers to the questions her life has presented before her. However, she is one of the women struggling to discover her identity. Anita Nair, the writer, uses the device Chaucer used in his *Canterbury Tales*. The fellow travelers in a ladies' coupe is the device the writer uses to bring together women from different family backgrounds and narrate their stories.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* presents the life of six different women, traveling together in a lady's coupe," narrating their life stories and experiences. These women,

with flashbacks, recall their experiences and narrate their life stories, their typical experiences as women in contemporary Indian society. Each one is the protagonist in her story. Each of these six women faces different problems in their family. They are accidentally together on the train in a Ladies Coupe and, like Chaucer's pilgrims, narrate the stories of their own lives. Akhila, the protagonist of her story, is not a married woman. Still, from the other married fellow travelers, she comes to know the variety of experiences of these married women, the problems they face, and the way they try to find their way out of their tight situations.

Indian society is even today secluded and traditional and demands a unique code of conduct from women. Gender bias continues to reign supreme, with women playing the largely subservient role in a male-dominated society. Indian society is class-conscious, largely caste conscious. Caste differences reduce women's stature and confine them to a humble role. However, there is a small but distinct change in this suffocating atmosphere. A woman emerges from her essentially restricted role to the front stage domestically and globally.

Anita Nair's novel *Ladies Coupe* questions whether a woman can be alone yet happy. The novel seeks to understand Indian women undergoing a metamorphosis and even catharsis in the modernized ambiance of cities. Identity is a state of mind granted by interaction with fellow beings and by acceptance in society. A woman's identity crisis is where she struggles to achieve as a human being in its complete sense against those forces of society who bind her in chains and reject her as a being in comparison to a man earlier; a woman sought her identity in the relationship as a

wife, mother, and daughter. She accepted this identity willingly. However, nowadays, a woman rejects this relational and traditional identity. Now, she can understand the duplicity of this identity imposed on her by society so that she may restrain herself as a being. However, now, women want to stand on their feet as human beings equal to men. She does not like to know herself as someone's daughter, wife, or mother; instead, she seeks separation from these relations and wants to make her own identity that shows her individuality. She also does not like men's support in making her own identity. It is a quest for identity in a woman who revolts against the traditional image of Indian Women in words and deeds. She is conscious of herself as a being, not as an object. She realizes that she is not an appendage of man. A woman is not what she is not. She no longer creates man. She is an independent being who can learn the path to redemption by making mistakes. It is so challenging for a new modern female to assume the conventional roles of yoked wife and sex object. She symbolizes the emancipated woman, the forerunner of the emerging Indian woman with her liberated womanhood.

In the 20th century, women's writing was considered a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The majority of the 20th-century novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife. The list of Indian women novelists also comprises popular names such as Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, and Manju Kapur. Anita Nair pictures the feministic themes in their novels. Modern female novelists' works are novels of protest and an outburst of reservations and contamination.

They look for some ‘Indian-ness’ for conveying the messages of feminism in an Indian way. Female writers of Indian writing in English are good at analyzing complex issues like complexities of human relationships, man-woman relationships, a woman's psyche, and her potential. Many Indian women's writers in English, with their newly acquired feminist consciousness, have given their writings a new dimension in the portrayal of the latest female writers like *Kamala* Markandaya, Anita Desai, Manju Kapur, Anita Nair, etc., who have probed deep into the female psyche and have created an awareness of different kinds and forms of female experience their protagonists are mostly upper-class and middle-class women, educated and intelligent yet dislocated individuals through a crisis in life as a result of repression within the family, their constrained relationship with their husbands, their disillusionment in marriage, and their lack of assertion and realization of self.

One of the best Indian authors of English is Anita Nair, who has an international reputation. ‘*Ladies Coupe*’ is Nair's second novel, and it has been translated into more than twenty-five languages worldwide. Anita Nair's engrossing *Ladies Coupe* raises what many readers might consider questions about the role of women in contemporary post-colonial India. Nair's India suffers from a system of sex role stereotyping oppression of women that exists under patriarchal social organization.

The novel *Ladies Coupe* is a profound discourse of womanism. All the characters of this -female culturell endure the arduous ordeal of domestic ~~but~~ at the hands of their families, and each of them develops an unwavering resilience that allows them to not only survive but also find their inner source of vitality and creative wellspring.

Anita Nair's "*Ladies Coupe*" is the story of a woman searching for strength and independence. It is also the story of six women who meet on a train journey. Akhilandeswari, the protagonist, listens to the story of five other women in the compartment and gives her seekinga solution to the question that has troubled her all her life: can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete switches over from past to present and present to past and hence, even other than the five women in the compartment, we are shown ofcertain women who are humiliated and debased. India suffers from a patriarchal system that has tried in many ways to repress, humiliate, and degrade women.

The question she poses in the novel not only shakes the ideological ground of man's patriarchal role in our traditional society but also implies the existence of an alternative reality. Akhilandeswari, or Akhila, is forty-five years old and a government employee. She takes the express train to Kanyakumari by herself for the first time. She wanted to acquire more experience in life.

-Akhila felt a great desire to board a train. To leave. To go somewhere was not landlocked like this city of Bangalore. To the end of the world, perhaps. (112)

It was an overnight journey in a ladies' coupe with five other ladies: Janaki, the eldest, Margaret, Marikolanthu, Prabha Devi, and Sheela. P. Sateesh Kumar observes, —The coupe symbolizes their existence and the space they occupied in life and society. All six ladies in the ladies coupe, a second class compartment of Indian Railways, are different in age, class, caste, and experiences. Like Chaucer's Canterbury Tales pilgrimages, these ladies also narrate their stories. However, their stories attempt to find an answer as to whether a woman in a male-dominated society can lead a happy life.

Akhila is a forty-five-year-old spinster who takes various roles as a daughter, sister, aunt, family provider, and income tax clerk. One day, she sets out to seek specific answers for herself; she buys a ticket to a Kanyakumari and is placed in a "*Lady's Coupe*" with five other women, giving her company for the overnight journey. These women share their life experiences with her, thus helping her to gain her full potential as a woman and grapple with the answers to the questions. She has been asking for so long; Nair portrays the protagonist as, by fulfilling her family's expectations, Akhila has forgotten to live for herself. The ties of tradition have always pulled her back and checked her mid-stride whenever she has tried to make her way toward freedom. Akhila had spent all her life for others. She was forced to take care of others since her father had an untimely demise, and there was no one else to be the family's breadwinner.

However, at forty, Akhila realizes she has allowed life to pass her by and must find some pleasure. Her assertion comes in the form of a journey. She buys a ticket to the Deep South, to Kanyakumari, the southern tip of India.

Akhila has taken over the 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. However, she is now looking for a man to complete her life. When Anita Nair was questioned about gender issues in her novels, she replied.

-I do not set out to write anything gender-related. In the process, if anything comes up, then I milk it. I had a story to tell because I was not a great person. I was exploring certain issues that were important to me. (P.H. 126)

According to Indian tradition, a woman is always synonymous with a good wife. A good wife should be faithful, obedient, and virtuous. Janaki is expected to take up this traditional role of women. She plays various roles, such as a daughter, a wife, and a mother, but not an individual who claims her life to be her own. Janaki married Prabhakar at eighteen, leading a happy, comfortable, long married life for forty years. Janaki's husband is a caring partner, and she has a son and daughter-in-law.

Janaki leads a happy life until she realizes her submissiveness. She feels some revolt when she finds her husband controlling everybody, even their grown-up son. She tells her husband you want to control him, want to control everybody, want everyone to do your bidding. Prabhakar's overbearing dominance, exactness, and precision irritate Janaki. Life has gone smoothly and started to find its ups and downs. She discovers herself and the true happiness in her, but she cannot take off the web under which she has been covered for an extended period.

When my husband is gone, my son will wait to take off from where his father left. Women like me end up being fragile. Our men treat us like princesses. It was forty years of her marriage. She was eighteen when she married Prabhakar, who was twenty-seven. It was an arranged marriage. They adjusted and understood temperaments and lived peacefully with their son Siddharth. Her husband helped her with daily cooking, washing, and cleaning. One day, Siddharth took his friends for lunch without informing her. She began to cook for them, but unfortunately, the gas cylinder was empty, and she had forgotten to book the other one. She felt helpless and burst into tears. Siddharth got irritated, and she thought she was not a perfect mother. Siddharth, after his marriage with Jaya, came to visit them. When Jaya saw Prabhakar chopping vegetables while she was cooking and washing dishes, she stacked them. When she washed clothes, he drained them.

Jaya was surprised to see this companionship and said Janaki was lucky to have a husband like Prabhakar. In contrast, her mother does all the household chores and outside work after her father's death. Jaya said with pride that her mother has become a strong woman. Janaki felt she was indirectly telling her inadequate, weak, helpless creature. Prabhakar advocated for her by saying that she looks delicate but is strong and capable when she wants. Then he described how she helped a pregnant lady in their neighborhood by stopping a truck on the main road, taking her to the hospital, and rescuing her and her child's life. At that time, there was no phone, no convenience, and the men were in their offices. Prabhakar tells this story to everyone with pride, but she feels ashamed and thinks it is the only worthwhile deed of her life.

Janaki wanted Jaya to think of her as a composed and contented woman. She wished to be appreciated by her daughter-in-law. She wanted to express her virtues as she has been a Supporting mother to her son and not a demanding wife. She always followed the orders of her husband and son. However, she is now shocked to hear from Jaya about the fundamental virtues of a lady her age. Jaya's mother was courageous and hardworking and could make the right decisions for her and her children's lives. The family visited their son in Bangalore when Jaya became a mother. Siddharth often asked Janaki how she would live by herself after his father's death. He told her to come to his house in Bangalore and that he had a friend dealing with real estate who would help sell the house, but she always ignored him. Siddharth's behavior was gradually changing after his marriage. He always disliked what his mother was saying or doing. Janaki was surprised to see his behavior but unable to find a solution. He began to compare her with his mother-in-law.

One day, when Siddharth told Janaki that she was selfish and not a caring mother while his mother-in-law was ready to give everything to her children, Prabhakar interfered with anger. He asked him to apologize to his mother. He told Janaki they would not stay in Siddharth's house anymore, and they immediately returned home. From Janaki's story, Akhila learned that she should continue living with her family; At the same time, she does not love them, so Prabha Devi tells her not to reach any conclusion at fifty-two while listening to Janaki's story. All went to sleep in the coupe, but Akhila was thinking of the day when her father died on the road. When her brother Narayan asked what they would do now, she assured him they would find some way to keep the rest of the family members alive.

"The tears that had risen in her eyes quelled abruptly. Anger had replaced grief, and Akhila could handle it better. Tears made one look around the room, wildly searching for someone to cling to and unburden one's sorrow. Tears made you vulnerable and distorted your focus. However, anger made one stronger. Anger made one inviolable. Anger prepared one to face things better. (Anita Nair:127)

Sheela, the next narrator of Ladies Coupe, is a sensitive girl of fourteen years old, blessed with a deep insight who talks about her grandmother in one can see manifestations of the feminists. Moreover, Sheela is in the process of being molded by male-dominated hands. Sheela feels embarrassed and hurt at the unwanted touching of Hasina's father, Nazar On. Sheela had come running in from the heat on Sunday afternoon, a line of sweat beading on her upper lip, and Nazar had leaned forward to wipe it with his finger.

His finger left a long-lasting tickle on her flesh. Sheela is unable unable-to open her mouth against the physical abuse attempted on her, but she develops the confidence to protect herself from it in future for she says after that, she mopped her face with a hanky each time she entered Hasina shame when Nazar knots the ruffles on her sleeves She observed Hasina's pain and her own mother's eyes after Sheela takes the right decision that She would never go to Hasina home again self-protection within sheela story Anita Nair has brought in an incident, where a girl named Celine becomes a prey to a man's instincts.

She becomes pregnant because of her friend's father, and her family moves to a place where no one will know about her abortion, but it is said the friend's father went to a faraway town where he would find plenty of young girls to ruin, everyone said. Through this incident, Nair has brought out the unjust treatment of women by men.

Sheela, the student of ninth standard, told Akhila about herself. When Sheela was fourteen, her mother came to live with her family for the first time. She was sixty-nine years old. She was different from other grandmothers. She did not like to be reminded that she was getting old, so she told Sheela to call her Ammumma rather than Ammama, meaning grandmother. They lived in a flat with a balcony facing a park and mango trees. She loved to stand on the balcony, for she felt the smell of her home there. She chose to live with her daughter instead of her sons, for she wanted to punish her for preferring their wives over her. She wanted to make them feel guilty.

She also made Sheela mother's grateful, because one year earlier they had bitter argument about the writing of Ammumma will. Sheela knew her very well because they spent most of their time together. Some times Sheela would pluck the hair strand on her chin. Ammumma told Sheela's mother that Sheela is not a kid but a grown-up girl now and should not be allowed to wander around. She also objects to playing badminton with her father's friends, whom she calls uncles. One of them Naazar frequently puts his arm around her. She said that no one can be reliable and reminded her daughter the incident of their neighbour Celine.

After that, both the families left the colony to avoid shame. Her mother rejected this notion, but Sheela knew that grandmother was right. She realized that her friend Hasina's father, Naazar, tried many times to touch her when Sheela went to her home to play. Sheela proved that she is more sincere than her age by deciding not to go to Hasina's home. She felt her Ammumma was more foresighted and experienced than her mother. Her mother trusts easily anyone, which could be better. Ammumma liked to be a perfect woman with feminine qualities. She always wanted to look beautiful. Even in the last days of her life, she applies cream and talc and then puts on her heavy gold jewelry before going to bed.

Sheela's grandmother is full of liveliness even at the age of sixty-nine. She loves herself and her body, the secret of remaining happy and cheerful. She does not care about what people say when they see her doing makeup and wearing jewelry at this age. She also teaches Sheela that to be beautiful means to be yourself, and one does not need to be accepted by others. She tells Sheela that if she will not love herself, then she will never be aware of how she is valuable. She is about to die but never bothered about it and lives her life to the full extent. Ammumma was suffering from cancer.

One day after overeating, she had to be admitted to the hospital. Sheela's mother's sister and brothers gather at their house. After few days she died and her dead body was brought in a van from the hospital. Sheela went to sit by her side, and then she dusted her grandmother's upper body with talc, combed her hair, plucked a few strands from her chin, and rimmed her eyes with kohl. She adorned her

"Nair shows how a child is powerful, sensitive tape that can register, record and pick the feeblest vibrations and note those details that escape elders because their senses have calcified or selfishness dominates" (Anita Nair)

Sheela was confused by her father's behavior. When she was a child, she used to be like elders; he enjoyed and was pleased with her witty arguments. However, now when she is grown up and talks something sincere, he gets furious. He feels like she is questioning his authority by arguing with him. Sheela wanted to cry, when he scolds her in mostly contradictory statements help your mother enough Sheela mind was not that mature to cope with the changing expectations of her father. She does not dare to say how she can be wandering around and watching T.V. simultaneously. She later understood the cause of his strange behavior. Her father felt that he was no longer the head of the family, for the rich brothers handled every expense of the house in their own way, which was different from her father's.

Akhila became the head of the family when her father died and was appointed as clerk at his place in his income tax office. By the time her younger brothers became men and got jobs for themselves. When Narsi the younger brother said he wanted to marry a girl, he chose, Akhila wanted someone to speak about her marriage. But no one thought about her. She got both her brothers married. Akhila arranged a good dowry for her. All went to other places. Only Akhila and her mother were spending their lives in the same house. She was thirty-four, and everyone had already considered her a spinster. On her thirty-fifth birthday she decided to study further and she enrolled in an Open University for the Bachelor of Arts degree in

history. She often thought that she was the mistress of her house but master of none. What Akhila missed the most was that no one ever called her by her name anymore. Her brothers and sister had always called her akka, which means elder sister.

Her coworkers referred to her as Madam at work. All men were Sir, while all women were Madam. Amma had started referring to herself as Ammadi. It is as though calling Akhila by her name would be an affront to her head of household status. Katherine was working in her office. Akhila saw her eating eggs and felt a great desire to taste them, but she hesitated, what would her mother say when she knew that she had started eating eggs, being a Brahmin? Slowly, her desire overcame her fear, and she brought eggs to her home. Her mother gave her permission but told her to keep it a secret from neighbors.

Akhila could not enjoy her friendship with Katherine for so long, as her immigration papers arrived and she went to Australia, her native country. Eating eggs was her first step towards breaking the restraints of her Hindu Brahmin society. It was Akhila's only brave act for her own identity. She should have shown this courage also in other matters of her life. She was also a living being and not an earning machine. She should speak for her other desires.

Margaret Shanti is another example of how women are dominated by male power. She expresses challenging mental and spiritual crises. Margaret, a chemistry teacher, once adored her husband, an obnoxious headmaster, but grows to hate him later. She marries Ebenezer Paul Raj of her own choice. Ebenezer is the most dominating man and is the worst example of male Chauvinism in the novel. Margaret

does not understand the male egoism in Ebenezer, as her extreme love for him has made her blind. She becomes a dutiful wife to Ebenezer. He controls her completely. Ebenezer asks her not to do a Ph.D. Long hair does not suit you, cut it off; Margaret does everything for her husband's wish. As Margaret aborts her first pregnancy, the more cruel attitude of Ebenezer is that he does not allow Margaret to apprise her of her pregnancy, even her parents.

As Ebenezer becomes more egoistic, domineering, and hypocritical, She is unconsciously compelled to teach him a lesson. She chooses flattery as the weapon to bring down Ebenezer's self-esteem. She flatters and flatters and feeds him with fatty food till fat finds its home on him and turns him into a fat man, a quiet man, and a straightforward man who seeks her help for every task. Though Margaret suffers a lot, she ultimately empowers herself and makes herself come out of the web and find her way.

Margaret, a slim and modern lady, told Akhila that she returned from Bangalore after dropping her husband at a health clinic to reduce his weight. Her university results had been just declared, and she was the gold medallist in M.Sc. Chemistry. She was pleased with her parents. They were happier than her. They were ready to send her to America for higher studies. She also decided to do a doctorate. However, she wanted to live in Kodaikanal, where she always lived.

She loved her home and her pretty garden. She met Ebenezer for the first time in a youth group meeting in church. He was tall and attractive with a dark complexion, dressed up differently from others. She always thought that fine features

were the symbol of sensitivity. He looked like the hero of Mills and Boon's romances, which she reads. She fell in love with him, and he looked at her with the same emotions. They met many times, and after a few months, Ebenezer sent his parents to her house. Her parents also agreed to this marriage, and their engagement date was fixed. All her relatives were impressed by Ebenezer. Margaret's father found him intelligent and charming; her mother was fascinated by his perfect physical appearance. Her uncle praised him for being vice-principal at the very young age of twenty-nine. According to her aunt, who was fond of Walter Scott, they look together like a dark knight and a delicate lady. Margaret felt lucky to have Ebenezer as a husband.

On the day before the wedding, her mother came to her room and tried to make her understand the meaning of being a wife. She told her that a wife must be faithful and patient. To make their marriage successful, a wife should put more effort into it than her husband. She should not say no when the physical part of marriage is concerned. Her father admires Ebenezer as a good man and believes he will be a suitable husband for her. He looks so strong and capable. However, he has a soft heart. Margaret was surprised, but she agreed. The first year of their marriage was excellent. They loved each other very much. She is so fascinated with Ebenezer that she agrees quickly with whatever he says. When he told her to do B. Ed. instead of a doctorate, she agreed. When he wished her to keep her hair short, for long hair does not suit her, she agreed. He said there is no need to go to the church every Sunday.

Margaret learned about her pregnancy; she was happy, but Ebenezer was not.

After many days of abortion, her mind was occupied with the memories of that incident. A sense of guilt for killing her child was always there. She realized that Ebenezer wanted her to be like a delicate little girl, not a woman, physically and mentally. She was supposed to be in the role of a child who should obey his orders, and he was supposed to be in the role of Daddy. Slowly, she discovered that Ebenezer was honest and imbibed into the layers of a humble and perfect man.

After this abortion, she never conceived, and their medical reports were regular. By the time her family began to admire Ebenezer more as a successful man, she was an overweight, barren wife. When she tried to talk to her mother, she said that good and bad days are part of a marriage and advised her to adjust and support him. Her parents were not willing to take tensions like her breaking marriage. They were living a satisfactory life. They want to stay in their comfort zone. Ebenezer was offered the post of Principal in Coimbatore, and he accepted, so they moved from Kodaikanal to Coimbatore. She was offered the post of head of the Chemistry department in the same school. The first thing she hated was the coterie formed by Ebenezer in the school. All the members were supposed to come to Ebenezer's house for dinner with their spouses. At first, there were many members in the coterie, but by then, it was reduced to only six unmarried persons. Margaret had to cook for them, whether she was willing or not.

Ebenezer wanted everything to be perfect and timely, although he never helped her with the household chores. He also did not like to keep the maids. He began to criticize her cooking. She was in the habit of telling everyone about all her activities. One day, she stopped when she realized he showed no interest. Then, there were no conversations between them, only arguments and blame. He thinks his job is more responsible, and he takes it seriously, unlike her. Being a Chemistry teacher, she was fond of chemicals. She began to perceive every person as a chemical to understand one better and to behave accordingly.

Margaret puts Ebenezer on this list of chemicals. She felt him colorless but oily and dense. He was the commander of all chemicals. He was hydrogen sulfate. He plays different roles in different situations. Sometimes he is helpful and soothing, while sometimes rude. Sometimes, he is protective, while at other times, he is destructive. *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is one of the most outstanding books in the opinion of Ebenezer. He carries it with him everywhere he goes. Sometimes, he recites some lines from the book to impress others. Later when Margaret read it, she learned that Ebenezer was fascinated with its title. He also loved to repeatedly watch the movie *Chariots of Fire* by making a friend bring its video copy from the U.S. Ebenezer was fond of running. He always needed an audience to praise him, so he chose his school grounds for running. Every day, Ebenezer waits for the classes to be over; after that, he changes his clothes and shoes and appears on the playground.

The children hovered in the playground, watching the school teams and coaches as they went about their evening football and hockey practice. Ebenezer knew they would all be there waiting, watching. He would go to the school playground and tracks and run for five minutes. When Ebenezer stopped, sweat dripped off him, and his breath would come in little gasps. The children and the coaches would watch him admiringly. She advised him to order food from a restaurant, but it needed to be more helpful. Ultimately, her destiny was to do the things and be prepared for his criticism. When the coterie members arrived at their home for dinner, Daphne and others appreciated her cooking. Margaret likes Daphne while. She knows that her husband also adores her. She tries to remember the last time when Ebenezer gave her the look that he is giving to Daphne presently. Margaret hates his boastings every morning of the coterie meeting; Ebenezer wakes up early and tries to solve crosswords with the help of books of phrases and a dictionary to impress people.

Margaret wanted to reveal the secret, but she didn't. According to Margaret, Daphne recites her latest poems, which were tough to bear. Ebenezer Paulraj says the teachers should report him if there is any kind of misbehavior by any student or a love affair growing between them. He explains that he is skilled in reforming children, as once he did with the long hair of a boy, Alfred.

When they were in Kodaikanal, during lunchtime, when Margaret saw a group of children making fun of Alfred's hair and calling him Alfreda, she undid the rubber band and consoled the crying boy.

Margaret, who is suffering from her husband's mental and emotional torture, makes a plan inspired by the fish. She started cooking good food, especially oily and fatty, to gain Ebenezer's weight. Margaret gains self-esteem by eroding Ebenezer's self-esteem. She succeeds in achieving her emotional fulfillment and keeping the family ties intact, though some justifications contain a modicum of sense that she never bothers about her good or bad image created by others. For this reason, they dislike Margaret even more. The women in her group want to offend her with their comments, and they begin to tease her but she didn't care. She advised Akhila also not to care what people say about her. In this way, she can make herself even happier. After all, one has to take care of one life, and people will not come to help.

When Margaret left, Akhila thought of her strange and scary revenge. She could not believe Margaret was unaffected by people's opinions about herself. She wonders if Margaret is telling the truth or making a story because she does not fit into the parameters of people in her life. Margaret gave Akhila a unique definition of love.

-Love is a colorless, volatile liquid. Love ignites and burns. Love

leave no residue –

Neither smoke nor ash. Love is a poison masquerading as the spirit of

wine! [Nair 121]

She is another victim of male domination. She feels lost after being married for many years. She asks herself if the writer has used the symbol of swimming as a way for Prabha Devi to break free from the bondage in which she is caged. Prabha gets married to Jagadeesh and gives birth to a child who leads a mechanical life. She becomes forty years old; she has begun to realize that she missed something in her life. After that, she craves to learn to swim, but her husband, Jagadeesh, does not consent to her pleading because he wants his wife to be submissive. He is a typical conservative man, but out of great desire, Prabha Devi ultimately learns to swim without anybody's help. Thus, she empowers herself and molds herself to achieve Marikolunthu, the most pathetic woman among the six.

She is the realistic picture of the humble and miserable peasantry women on whom male oppression is forced heavily and left unquestioned. When she was nine years old, she lost her father due to poverty. Her mother worked as a maid in Chettiyar's house. Murugesan, a wicked person, one of the relatives of Chettiyar seduced Marikolunthu's mother; she gave birth to an illegitimate baby called Muthu, is taken care of by Marikolunthu's mother after her death, and nobody is there to support her even her younger brothers tell her to leave the house with her child Muthu she decides to live on her own. She does not depend on any other person. She joins the mission hospital as a helper.

She defines herself as an independent woman. Though she does not have anything, she does not relinquish her hope. Thus, finally, she empowers herself and proves to the world that she can lead a good life. Six women find themselves

together in Lady's Coupe traveling, each for their purpose. This *Lady's Coupe* becomes a comfort Zone where each one begins voicing their tale, and in the process, each one is comforted and convinced of more incredible things. Thus, listening to the lives of various women in the Coupe, Akhila gets down at the Kanyakumari as an empowered woman who can rediscover herself. She decides that she has to live for her, not for others. Ultimately, she breaks the chain of male Chauvinism, which has haunted her for nearly a decade. She empowers herself and makes a call to Hari, her past lover, to make a new life with him, and the novel comes to an end.

In *Ladies Coupe*, Anita Nair deals with self-discovery, searching for strength, and independence. Though her characters have suffered from male egoism, in the end, all are empowered by themselves and successfully redeem themselves from a web called male Chauvinism. *Anita Nair* traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to self-realization denial to self-assertion. Anita Nair beautifully picturizes the feminist voice. Domination by family members and loneliness has become an essential ingredient of the life of South Asian women.

This loneliness and alienation deepen with time and seem to defy solutions. Not only Akhila but almost all the characters experience domination in one form or another. Janaki's husband is self-centered and egoistic. She had lost her identity in trying to be the perfect wife. Her marital life does not bring her any fulfillment. He touched, he stroked. He caressed and fondled, yet all Janaki felt was a lock with the succinct prose conjured a word picture of the helplessness of the hapless wife and her situation. The mid-life crisis of the married woman who has allowed life to pass her

by is expressed in the description of Janaki as a woman who had gotten to a certain age. The mid-life crisis of the married Indian woman is portrayed aptly. She does not even realize that much of her life is over, and she has probably not thought about it much till that time that she could have lived her life in any other way than she had. Sheela, yet another passenger who travels on the train with Akhila, is a young girl in her teens. She carries out her grandmother's wishes, defying her family's beliefs in the process. Margaret, another passenger on the train, experienced suppression and domination in her marriage. She was persuaded to have an abortion by her husband.

Her husband is insufferably dominating and egoistic. He disrespects Margaret. At one point, he degrades Margaret by insulting her in front of friends and saying she is not a great one for discussions and does not have an opinion. On the other hand, Prabha Devi finds herself caged in her marriage. For many years, that was all Prabha Devi for Jagdeesh to return home for the birth of the children. Her existence passed her by in a flurry of unimportant days, and all they could do was wait for anything to happen—their first walk, their first word, their first victory.

Prabha Devi is seen as another victim of male domination. She feels lost after being married for many years. She asks herself if the writer has used the symbol of swimming as a way for Prabha Devi to break free from the bondage in which she is caged. Marikolanthu is probably the most pathetic. Her mother works as a cook for the rich Chettiars, the landed gentry. She is poor and deprived. When she is raped, she does not get any justice. When she decides to take care of the bastard child that was born to her, her family refuses to take care of her. Thus, she is subjected to

hardship and alienation. Women like Marikolanthu not only face poverty, alienation, and deprivation, but they also face the problems of caste distinction.

Marikolanthu's mother toiled in the Chettiars' kitchen and cooked food for the family, but her status in life was akin to that of a pariah dog. When Chettiar brother raped Marikolanthu, there was nobody to reprimand him or pull him up. Bringing him to justice was unheard of since he was rich and influential. Avenging the deed was impossible and unheard of. The man did the heinous deed as if he had the right to do it. His money and power were so supreme they could escape it without murmuring. The poor girl is left forlorn and miserable after the rape. She has no one to turn to and hides the rape till her pregnancy is discovered, and she goes to even higher planes of despair and misery. The helplessness of the women is an indicator of their abject loss of identity. Home and hearth bring them momentary joy, for they realize their merits as wives and mothers there, yet the chasm of not realizing their potential hits them in middle age or as they grow older. This chasm yawns before them, an abyss that seems difficult to cross, even at this stage in their lives.

Themes of loneliness, deprivation, and suppression run through this novel. Her dream of getting married and leading an everyday life remains a dream. Akhila swallowed the hurt. Akhila's family did not understand that he had accepted her financial support, but they refused to recognize 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 in the Hindu religion, she was forbidden to eat eggs. However, she was curious and was introduced to the taste of an

egg by her friend Katherine. Amma, her mother, is forced to accept this when she has no choice.

Male domination in the novel makes the reader aware of the hardships faced by single and married women in South Asian culture. A single woman is a rare entity in this culture and society, and I would like to question why and how she continues to be single. Why should a woman live by herself? There is always a man who is willing to be with her. Being alone is something alien and not accepted in this society. It is also equally ironic that married women are often subject to domination by their husbands, and to break free from this domination is an arduous and often impossible job. So coercive and stifling is this atmosphere.

"All these women, she thought, Janaki, Sheela, and even Margaret, who wears her self-sufficiency as a Halo, are trying to make sense of their existence. I am the same. I am trying to define the reality of my life, justify my failures and my sense of hopelessness! {Ph207}

As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman, I know my country is the whole world.

-Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*

The feminist perspective becomes instrumental in exposing the limitations of the project of modernity as far as gender identities are concerned. Issues related to mobility and freedom are some of the main themes of the women writers. In these novels, educated women may not always be liberated, but many women characters use education and employment as vital means to attain freedom and happiness.

Akhila in *The Ladies Coupe* and her patriarchal family is a site of violence and oppression. The women writers launch a scathing attack on the oppressive patriarchal structures of the family where the identity and aspirations of women, children, and old age are constantly subjugated. In most of the stories, the concept of family is not rejected but rewritten, or the writers envisage a new family based on freedom, equality, and democratic relationships between the members irrespective of their gender or age. It is very accurate that the reader needs to undergo the process of development that all the characters traveling on the train undergo. That development does not involve embracing Akila, representing the self as a process and fluid possibility. Instead, it means taking full responsibility for one's life and actions and gaining a deeper understanding of one's situation and lived experience. Against this background, it is obvious why Akila is not entirely a moral agent and cannot be a model for emulation. She does not possess Kalpana's command to symbolize her moral position and to rationalize her actions to others.

While Akila's sense of self is strong, maybe too strong, it borders on solipsism because she has little sense of how she appears to the world around her. The author has observed that Akila has never really come to terms with the limitations of her approach to life. Akhila is lured into the most intimate parts of the women's lives as she hears their tales and looks to them for an answer to the question that has followed her throughout her life: Is a woman able to be happy without a guy, or does she require a man to be whole? When remembering the only love that entered Akhila's soul, she forgets who she is and what she was in society. Anita Nair is very

lenient in giving Akhila and Hari a romantic relationship. They both became friends on the train.

Twenty-eight years old. Hari was a draftsman in the railway engineering department. He was a north Indian from a small town in Madhya Pradesh but had lived almost all his life in Avadi, the town next to Ambattur. His father had a sweet shop, and his sister studied at Queen Mary College. His Tamil was as good as his Hindi, he said. His parents were keen that he get married soon.

His relationship with her made him talk to her about his colleagues and frustration in his job, a visiting aunt who kept thrusting a friend's niece at him, a movie he had seen the night before, etc. In turn, he drew her out. So that, when her stop arrived, she reluctantly got off the train. However, the consolation was that he would be there the next day. Slowly, he began to fill Akhila's every thought and waking moment. She would pause in the middle of what she was doing, reminded of a silly joke he had made, and giggle

A hoarding would make her think of a phrase he had used once. She would watch her mother crack her knuckles and think of how that was the first thing he did after he sat down in his seat. She would flick through a magazine, a model's expression would remind her of him, and a stranger's smile would remind her of how his eyes crinkled when he smiled. The moon shone for them. They sat on the beach, and Akhila thought, this must be the happiest moment of my life.

Later, they returned to one of the huts on stilts on the sand. In the confines of their room, Akhila felt an awkwardness. Hari stood on the balcony smoking a Cigarette. Akhila switched off the light and let the moonlight guide her through her ablutions. She crept into bed, fully dressed. When Hari sat down next to her, she could smell the alcohol on his breath. It excited her that strange fragrance, and she felt a tingling down her spine. When Hari asked for a gift on his birthday, she was ready to give herself and so slowly undressed. That night, they made love for the first time. Proper adult love and not all those tentative shuffles that had been the total of their lovemaking. It hurt first, and then the sheer rapture of being with him swamped her, and the hurt dwindled to content. In the morning, Akhila thought of the stray comments that had floated in the air last night about the relationship that looked much like brother and sister. Akhila cringed.

The words had hurt then. They hurt even more now. She thought of the policeman on the bicycle. She thought of all the strange looks that had come their way as they sat in restaurants, in movie theatres, on the train, Hari and Akhila, and nothing he said would ever change that. This constant fear was that she would age before he did, and he would turn away from her. Someday, he would regret their

relationship, having spurned his family to be with her and being bound to her when he could have been with someone younger and more suitable.

This constant weight is nothing, not even her self-respect. Akhila watched him at night all day, and after each time they made love, he fell asleep like a baby. The protagonist of this novel proved her spinster life to be pleasurable and worthy to Hari alone. Comparatively, all the other ladies who travel on the train have their own experiences that their relationship has brought out. The female characters of Anita Nair do not merely confirm to male expectations or conflict with the male world. Anita Nair's heroines negotiate for their independence and a respectable societal place.

Anita Nair's heroine is mentally advanced in the real sense of the world, whether she is Sheela, Janaki, Margaret, Prabha, Marikolundhu, or Akila. Anita Nair understands the importance of adjustments and compromises in a family. Almost all her female characters, Prabha Margaret and Janaki, after their marriages, are negotiating here and there in life to make their own and their family members' lives happy.

The harmony in family relationships and their stability also depend on the behavior and pentatonic attitude of a woman as a wife, a mother, a sister, and a daughter. Society, morality, and values are like bondage to them, so they all lead forward ambiguously amid relentless urbanization and far-reaching Western influences. Prabha Margaret and Marikolanthu's involvement with their husbands leads to many other problems. To show the self and resuscitating nature, *Anita Nair's* protagonists seemed aware of their role in the family and society.

In *Ladies Coupe*, of all ladies, Margaret stands first and foremost in sustaining herself without damage. Her husband Ebenezer is a robust, wrong-headed man who loves Margaret and is entwined into marriage. From the story's beginning, he dominates and sometimes insults her among his colleagues. This makes Maggie to rise more and more violently. She confesses that she hates him. The resuscitation takes place as she feeds her husband with mouth-watering dishes and fried items to make him an obese man. This made Ebenezer stop conducting parties at home, dancing, and scolding Maggie.

Maggie's self once again regained or was revived from the regular norms of society. Next to Maggie is Sheela, the young girl. As she likes her Ammamma, she cannot restrain her idea of sending Ammamma's body to the fire without any jewels. She stayed with Sheela throughout her life, which has confined her to maintaining individuality despite others' views. Her everyday makeup at the time of her sleep makes her more energetic and erotic. As they started leaving for the graveyard, Sheela hurried the make-up and wearing of jewels to Ammamma, for she felt that her identity or self would not be damaged during her travels to the other world.

As the novel's ending confirms, this is a case of significant repression that has lasted for twenty-eight years. The protagonist's journey in the search for relationship and independence, no doubt her indomitable will and undefeatable spirit, compels her to carry on her life in a revived manner.

The novelist carefully portrays the shades of pain, love, anger, and frustration in the novel. It is a novel about contemporary Indian society, about the awareness of the conflicts between one's aspirations, visions in life, the threads of intolerance,

anger, violence, and the survival of one's traditional values and ideas still in the present circumstances.

Anita Nair is perhaps the only Indian woman novelist who has made a bold attempt to give voice to the frustration and development of women in a patriarchal world. This novel provokes the readers' thoughts and moves them deeply and quietly.

Social consciousness is a feeling that all the persons within a society experience. It means being conscious of the rules or beliefs prevailing within a society or community, which gives them a feeling of equality and safeguards their interest. It also relates to the interdependence of a person and society on each other. All people have been influenced by society's culture, beliefs, traditions, and norms. However, the extent to which society influences an individual depends on the circumstances and the level of exposure.

An artist possesses a penetrating insight into the reality of things. Thus, with the help of perceptive philosophical understanding, he tries his way to spread social consciousness and awareness among the people. Anita Nair is one of the most devoted Indian writers of the present time. She valiantly expresses her views on women's suffering in contemporary Indian society. Nair also represents how to spread social consciousness among the people through her novel *Ladies Coupe*. One of India's most renowned novelists is Anita Nair. Her constant focus is on the issues facing women in our culture.

The female characters in the novel *Ladies Coupe* represent modern women attempting to let go of long-held inhibitions.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Most of Anita Nair's novels deal with female and their lives. *Ladies Coupe* is a work of feminism. The storyline moves with the lifestyles of five women. The writer focuses on typical Indian women, both educated and uneducated. The novel shows how a woman must survive and must not survive. The novel revolves around a question that makes readers think about their dependency, and thus, the novel proves itself to be reflective and relatable. Five women narrate five stories. The stories are reciprocated among the five women during a train travel. The writer wanted to speak to the readers through every stage of life, so the characters of Nair are from young to old age. Thus, experiences depend upon their age, showing the readers a memory lane.

Ladies Coupe is closely connected with psychology because all the characters face a few psychological changes due to the custom called marriage. Unlike all other countries, India divides a woman's life into two halves. The changes are, unfortunately, less supported by their life partners, thus, leading to mental instability, as shown in *Ladies Coupe*. Women are stressed with responsibilities along with disappointments related to their identity, and this makes them face such mental pressure. The novel's characters cannot bring themselves back because of their loss of identity, domination, and dependence.

The novel is set up with much consciousness of Indian minds. The characters were followers of Indian customs and rules, which turned them into fundamentalists. Akhila, the main character in the novel, loses her space because of her sacrifice. The life of Akhila triggers a question of skepticism toward sacrifice, selfless love, and perfectness. The character, though, lives for her family and gives them lives settled, she does not get any kind

of peace. The virtues are approached with doubt by the readers when reading Akhila. The novel created a new interpretation of human life.

Many minor themes are involved in the novel that show the realistic life of each individual. Human nature can be understood better through the themes. Questioning is one of the minor themes in the novel. Questioning is an attitude that was not found among women years behind. Through this novel, one can understand that questioning is not gender-based. Akhila, the main character, questions life and never finds answers as she travels far and wide to get the answer to whether a woman can live alone with no husband. 'Why' do the characters in the novel ask the prominent question? The characters move into their life along with questions regarding their dependence and dominance. Through the work, Nair shows the need for questioning, mainly among the women in our society.

Fear is one of the minor themes interpreted. Fear of a woman is about her marriage life. Akhila is a spinster who fears about her aloofness. Nair speaks about the general trauma of every woman before and after marriage, which is called gamophobia. Every woman's lifestyle is carried over with some fear, and the storyline deals with whether they break and, if so, how they break their fear.

Sarasa Mami, a minor character in the novel, faces a situation where she has no money because she is always dependent on her husband for money. After she loses her husband, she is pushed into poverty. Sarasa mami strives with penury that allows her to send her daughter into prostitution. The actual color of poverty is seen within their lives.

The family loses their respect and identity because of male dominance and ignorance of women in their previous years. Poverty is also an essential aspect of Marikolanthu's existence. She becomes a prey to the rich. Money determines one's status in life, as Marikolanthu and her mother lived as mere cooks in a dominant position.

Love and lust play a vital role in the novel. Akhila owns both love and lust towards strangers at any age. She plays the role of a lover to a boy the same age as her younger brother. She proves that love has no age bar. She shows a unique portrayal of the age of forty. Akhila has an emotional and physical bond with Hari. Though she steps back, heeding her inner voice that speaks about society and its rules, eventually, she connects her mind with Hari. Vinod, a stranger whom Akhila accepts into her body, even clearly shows the lustful attitude of Akhila. Physical contact with them gave Akhila relaxation and clarity about her choice in life. She plays the role of a prostitute with Vinod, as neither knows the other well. Another incident that defines Akhila's lustful attitude is when she has a dream of sharing her bed with a stranger. The words expressed by Nair show how involved Akhila was in physical relationships and its pleasures.

A widow woman has no chance of bringing back happiness in her life. Nair speaks about the life of a widow through the character Karpagam. She lost her husband at a young age and worked as a homemaker. Karpagam was once happy and slowly buried her happiness and wants with her husband. She framed her life for her in-laws. India is wealthy for its kinship, but the roles are sometimes poor. The relatives of Karpagam never wanted her to be happy for the rest of her life, but she was expected to take care of her family. Remarriage is still a hotly debatable discourse.

Lesbian culture is not so prominent among the Indians. Nair raises a good reaction towards lesbian culture through this work. The characters named Missy V and Missy K are lesbians. They share a house and reciprocate love and sex. People face a dilemma in exposing positive welcome notes to lesbian couples in contemporary. Nair framed the character profile as foreigners expecting a positive response from Indians. The work has given awareness about the relationship among women as a couple. The theory of lesbian love is shown as equivalent to the love shared between a man and a woman. The lesbian couple in the novel took roles as women and men by themselves to satisfy their needs. The novel shows different versions of love.

Ladies Coupe is rich in its style and is a work of symbolism. There must be three elements that will give structure to a novel. The three elements are the beginning, the middle, and the ending. The novels by Anita Nair have a clear and elegant narrative texture. *Ladies Coupè* has a simple and classic beginning and an ending. The novel starts and ends with Akhila, the protagonist. The novel has multiple narrators. According to the storyline, the main focus is the third-person narration by a middle-aged woman, Akhila. The stories are set up in a sequential order. A story deals with one's lifestyle and happenings. The characters' stories are given a clean conclusion, but Akhila gives the interpretation.

The language used is an ordinary man's language, understandable even to beginners of reading. Nair shows her excellence in languages as she uses other languages like Tamil, Malayalam, Sanskrit, and English when she wants to emote better. *Ladies Coupè* work can be considered a cultural study because various cultures are brought within the storyline. Religion is concentrated, wherein the narrator shows the uniqueness of each religion. Akhila's religion is Hinduism, and particular focus is given to the orthodox followings of her family. Non-vegetarian, non-vegetarianism dressing, rituals, and habits play a significant role. Katherine's

life projects the customs and habits of a Christian family where she can feed herself with animals. Religious collaboration is found among the characters. Ebenezer and Margaret speak about the Bible's holiness, showing that humans can choose to abide by religious guidelines given through books.

Ladies Coupè speaks about the cause and effect of marriage and the effect of being unmarried. It answers the questions of ordinary people regarding women's lives and marriage. The title given to each chapter educates the readers on the theme of the chapter, and it adds credit to the author's way of expressing ideas. The narrative style of Nair mainly in expressing the feelings of a rape victim achieved highness. Marikolanthu's character and Sheela's character are examples of sexually harassed victims. One's rage would be triggered by the way the harassment is expressed with much detailed pain in the body and mind. The words of Anita Nair showed the bitter reality of the present generation too.

Anita Nair wrote the book as a work of symbolism. Symbols are used in a unique way that speaks more than words. Among the five senses, smell is spoken widely. Nair relates smell to human emotions. In the first chapter, when Akhila steps out of her house for a trip, she smells the roads and station, and the compartment feels insecure and is brought into a world of mystery. She thinks about her escapism into a different world as and when the smell changes.

Dress, a symbol used by Nair, casts various emotions. The dressing style of the characters shows who they are and how they think. Akhila's dress shows her attitude and her inner feelings. After her father's death, she started draping cotton sarees. The dressing seemed rigid and belonged to the old trend, and thus, it also related to her devastation. She was rigid as her saree was. A modern character, Prabha Devi accepted lots of unwanted experiences

due to her dress. The unique ideology is that dress can change a person, as Prabha changes her character and attitude because of her dress, which also shows a particular culture.

Ladies Coupè is an eco-feministic work. It speaks about women in the natural world. Anita Nair sees through the eyes of Akhila the sight of three seas uniting in Kanyakumari and refers to seas to women. Women are compared to seas with much power and purity. Akhila enjoyed her freedom with verses that compared a woman to a divine personality like Mother Earth. Water has the power to save and destroy humans. This is the main reason behind the equality between women and water.

Margaret shows a clear comparison between water and women in her life journey. She considers herself as water that dives into any shape and any form. Margaret, like water, dived into the shape of her husband's mind. Prabha Devi, one of the characters, sees water as her place of peace. She finds her true self while she dives into the water. Marriage has sent her into the dark days of her life, so she wanders within the water bodies for salvation.

Fire is another symbol used by Nair. She reflects on the life of a poor girl who faces sexual harassment at a young age and battles life after the incident. Marikolanthu, who is the victim, faces many identity issues due to her illegal childbirth. The evening that gave me much pain was the day of 'bogie,' which is an Indian custom. It is a celebration where old things are burnt, and new ones are welcomed. The fire is used to purify the old. The tradition is also used to burn old-school thoughts and to have new, improved thoughts. The time when the fire swallows the old, people rejoice. Marikolanthu, who was all set to enjoy the ceremony, did not experience any happiness because she was attacked and hurt by a more affluent person. The shouts of joy reached her ears. The writer writes about humans' pathetic situation, ignorant of the difference between old and new thoughts. There is no use in celebrating such customs when people survive with old thoughts regarding women.

Many novels and essays project concepts similar to those Anita Nair discussed. Feminism is the central theme of *Ladies Coupè*, though, in their personal life, Nair does not want to show herself as a feminist. Feminism is a political movement that began in the late 1980s and still has separate schools of thought. The main motive behind writing feminist works is to educate women about equality and the importance of women in the world. The process of spreading awareness about gender roles as equal has reached a good hike through literature. The only effective way to cultivate people is through a literature work with an aesthetic plan.

Ladies Coupe has a mysterious end. The writer has given the novel an unexpected conclusion. The novel is embedded with five main stories and three minor stories. Each story ends with a lesson for life. The characters are relatable to every Indian woman. Marriage is a universal custom followed by all countries, but Indian marriages are decorated with few issues, as spoken by the author through the characters.

The most crucial notion one would get after reading *Ladies Coupè* is that a woman cannot live alone all through her life, according to Anita Nair. She concludes her writing by showing the mind of Akhila, who wanted to know the importance of marriage. Akhila's mind turned towards a man with whom she had a relationship, both physically and emotionally. Akhila desired her own space but understood that a man could give her space better. The days when she lived with Padma showed her that she was a caretaker and a body with no emoting rights.

Akhila wanted a break from all restrictions and thus traveled to Kanyakumari. She faced the sea with all her peace in aloofness. She never bothered about other's minds. She enjoyed the pleasure of loneliness. Here, one has a big chance to question a woman's wants because Akhila's wants or desires were not predictable by the readers.

Overall, she explains that a woman's want is not stable. There can be no mind that can judge a woman's want. A want can change into a basic need at any point in time, as Akhila did. She chooses to be with a stranger, finally playing the role of a dominator in the world of sex, which gives her pleasure.

Sexual pleasure is shown as an addiction in *Ladies Coupè*. Akhila is addicted to the pleasure and thus leaves herself. After her stay with Vinod, she examines her mind and remembers all her activities with men. She recalls Hari, her younger lover, trying to connect with him again. Akhila understood that she could not live without a man. She was a person who said marriage is an unwanted custom in one's life, but now, the change has come within her because of marriage. The power of marriage is shown exactly that it twisted her stubborn attitude. The novel ends with a phone call from Akhila to Hari.

As a feminist work, *Ladies Coupe* brings a disappointing change in the climax. The phone call from her side shows that she needs a man. The woman has lost her power of being courageous. Akhila's quest is not stable. Her search is not predictable. *Ladies Coupè* is indeed work, fighting for the originality of women after marriage, but the climax gives a strange insight.

Ladies Coupe influences a lot. The life after marriage is spoken with a detailed explanation of the pain within married women. The new days of married life are not concentrated, but the later days are seen as careful days for a woman because marriage is the final and permanent option for women. Psychological problems occur due to human behavior. There are other reasons for psychological illness, such as overthinking, adaptation, inferiority complex, and disinterest in life. *Ladies Coupè* focuses on the mental problems that a woman faces after a spinster journey.

According to Anita Nair, women are more powerful but abide by the rules framed by others as most of the characters. All the characters can get back their want but never begin to fight because society does not prescribe it. Akhila did not fight to have a marriage. Sheela never questioned her elders' want, which demanded her to be fluff for a man to have her. Margaret never raised her voice even during her child's death, but she only opted for an indirect way. Janaki ceased to be a different woman and followed her husband's rules. Prabha Devi only had to find her inner peace silently, not letting her husband or others know what she was doing. Marikolanthu completed her life as a subordinate but aspires to become someone individual.

Thus, all the characters are fake, wearing masks. Akhila was successful in her quest. She understood life as a one-time entertainment and moved with the flow. She saw the extreme of being different. Akhila's story unleashes a unique way of approaching life. Through this character, Anita Nair leaves the women with a question of purpose in life. Though connected with life, marriage has a greater power in both a positive and a negative way. The definition of love is not easy to define according to the inner voice of every character, as they find love as a bridge and as water that will flow away.

Anita Nair uncovers illuminations for younger minds through her novel. She powerfully wrote through the storylines that marriage in Indian society would heavily change a woman's nature and mental health. *Ladies Coupe* is also a note of advice and a spread of realization of the natural world regarding women's mental health. A woman's mental and physical health is a treasure to future generations.

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