

# Indian family and Feminist perspective in Anita Nair's Novel: *Ladies Coupe*

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## Abstract

The feminist perspective in the fiction is marked by patriarchal hegemony in the structure of Indian family. In patriarchy, women are colonized, which results into the 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 woman 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 in 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 in search of strength and independence and escape from the responsibilities saddled on her after her father's death. She is in search of strength and independence, which she cannot find as she is caught in the daily routine of her life. She would like to look for answers to the questions her life has presented before her. But, she is one of the women who have to struggle to discover their self-hood, their identity. Anita Nair, the writer, uses the device used by Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales*. The fellow-travelers in a ladies' coupe is the device the writer uses to bring together women from different family background, and narrate their stories.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* presents the life of six different women, travelling together in a ladies' coupe, narrating their life-stories and experiences. These women, with flash back, recall their experiences and narrate their life-stories, their typical experiences as women in the 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 in the train in a *Ladies Coupe* and like, Chaucer's pilgrims, narrate the stories of their own life. Akhila, the protagonist of her story, is not a married woman, but 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.

Akhileswari or Akhila, being the eldest child in the family of Pattabhi Iyer, has to shoulder the responsibility of her family of the widowed mother, two brothers and the younger sister. The tragedy of the accidental death of her father turns her into a premature adult, and she takes up a job of a clerk in the Income Tax Office. She has to meet the needs of her younger brother's education, her younger sister's marriage and establish them in their life. Akhila has to play multiple roles such as a daughter, a sister, an aunt and the head of the family to meet the needs of all. No one asks her what she wants. Even her mother does not realize that her eldest child, must also get married. She cares for her family but her own needs are ignored by the members of the family. She becomes „Ammadi“ for the mother, „akka“ for the sister and brothers and „madam“ in the office. But, no one cares for Akhila- Akhilandeswari as an individual, a girl who must get married, that she has her own needs, her future. She is the bread-winner of the family, yet she cannot be the head and occupy the central position in the family, because patriarchal system reserves this place for a male-being. If there is no father, even a younger brother, a male-being, occupies that centrist position. She is the dutiful daughter, who must meet the needs of the family, while her own needs, her future, and her own dreams are suppressed. Even her mother keeps quiet about Akhila's marriage. Her younger sister gets married, her brother also gets married but no one talks about her marriage. She is forty-five years old. She has discarded her rose- coloured glasses and puts on glasses with metal-frames. She puts on starched cotton saris. The writer says, Akhila is (Nair, 2001):

**Forty- five years old. Sans rose-colored spectacles. Sans husband, children, home and family. Dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching to connect (2).**

Women's Coupe is basically an account of Akhila's liberation from the mental servitude. It is an account of her revelation that she can win her autonomy that, being a lady, doesn't force her to stay heavily influenced by some male being, a dad, a sibling or a spouse. A lady can accomplish her physical and enthusiastic opportunity, and she need not be fastened to a family structure commanded by a male being. She takes in her exercise from Karpagam. Karpagam is Akhila's classmate. After numerous years she meets Akhila in a store. In spite of the fact that a widow, Karpagam doesn't resemble a widow. She wears kumkum and puts on brilliant garments, eats samosa and different things with relish without minding what others would state. She tells Akhila (Nair, 2001),

I don't care what my family or anybody thinks. I am who I am. What's more, I have as a lot of rights as any other person to live as I pick. Let me know, didn't we as little youngsters wear bright fabrics and adornments and bottu? It isn't a benefit that marriage sanctions. The manner in which

I take a gander at it, it is normal for a lady to need to be female. It has nothing to do with whether she is hitched or not and whether her better half is alive or dead. Who made these laws and why? Some man who couldn't bear the idea that regardless of his demise, his better half kept on being alluring to other men (202).

Karpagam, after the passing of her significant other, didn't decide to lose herself in despondency and evade common delights of life. It is an item exercise for Akhila, who enabled her group of parasites to appreciate to her detriment, small thinking about her very own life. Karpagam encourages Akhila to (Nair, 2001),

live alone. Construct a life for yourself where your needs started things out. Advise your family to take a hike or whatever (202).

Akhila gained from Karpagam how to rooster a thumb at the world, which guided Akhila in her future course of life. It was after this that she embraced her long voyage to Kanyakumari and met an assortment of ladies in the ladies' roadster. Like Marikolanthu, she additionally needed to wrest control of her fate. Karpagam is an offbeat widow, who has shaken off the weight of convention. She reveals to Akhila that gentility doesn't really include being hitched or being a widow. Karpagam, in her own widowhood, doesn't fret over the inheritance of the code. She is another lady, who isn't worried about what other think. She keeps on putting on „Kumkum tilak“ on her brow. She appreciates hoteling. Akhila recollects lines on the welcome she had sent to her by Anglo Indian companion Katherine, which encourage ladies to pick their own life to be upbeat, that joy is being cherished and having somebody to adore. After her experience with Karpagam, Akhila chose not to enable her family to utilize her any more. She found the lady in herself, who was lethargic up until now, and under substantial weight of duty, and the thought that a lady can't live without anyone else. Karpagam is exhibited by Anita Nair as a solid character who accomplishes opportunity of self-articulation. She restricts male centric thoughts about widowhood.

All through this novel, Anita Nair, the author, suggests a conversation starter through her hero, Akhila, regardless of whether a lady can remain single and be cheerful, or does a lady need a man to feel total? There are various answers given by the ladies she meets in her adventure through the women roadster on the train. Janaki, the most seasoned lady in the roadster, through an amazing record, outlines the need of man, the spouse, in a woman's life. She is a case of a lady who is taken care of by her significant other and afterward, after him, by her child. In Manu Smriti there is a \ proclamation that a lady is taken care of by the dad, at that point by the spouse and after the

husband's passing, by the child, along these lines the lady doesn't merit opportunity " na stri Swatantryan arhati" (a lady doesn't merit opportunity). This is the thing that Janaki says (Nair, 2001): I am a lady who has consistently been cared for First there were my dad and my sibling, at that point my significant other. At the point when my better half is gone, there will be my child, holding back to resume off from the last known point of interest. Ladies like me wind up being delicate (22). Margaret and Prabha Devi, both wedded ladies, attempt to win their opportunity staying inside the man centric set-up. It is just Marikolanthu who rises as an extremely tough lady, who concludes at last to live for her child, Muthu. From every one of these characters Akhila meets, she figures out how ladies need to battle to win their space inside their family life ruled by the male creatures. She gains from their record that she should battle the man centric thoughts and locate her very own space, declare her distinction. Anita Nair has made a universe of ladies in the Ladies Coupe' to uncover the enthusiastic and functional issues looked by ladies in a vigorously male centric culture in which ladies can't consider driving an autonomous life. Akhila's mother, her sister Padma and the women who assemble around Padma, all think it incomprehensible for a lady to live without a dad, a sibling or a spouse. In any case, every one of the ladies Akhila meets in the ladies' coupe uncover how ladies scrape against the male-predominance and attempt to win opportunity in their own particular manner. Indeed, even a young person Sheela acknowledges and regards her grandmother's individual womanly emotions, and she cautiously dresses her dead body, the manner in which her grandma would have preferred. The male individuals from the family detest it yet can't fix it. Akhila, nonetheless, takes in self-statement from her school companion, Karpagam, who gives new perspective to Akhila, revealing to her how to be autonomous and how to discard the burden of duty she has been burdened with, and the desires for the narrow minded individuals from the family. Akhila is generally upset by the acknowledgment that she has no character of her own. She is referred to just as someone's little girl or sister or an auntie. She can't do what she wishes to accomplish because of a paranoid fear of how it will influence the others in the family. It is fascinating to take note of how Padma, who is intensely reliant on Akhila, scrutinizes Akhila, her senior sister and supporter, telling the neighboring ladies that Akhila doesn't do any house work. She says (Nair, 2001):

Why, my multi year old Madhavi is preferable maid over she is. I need to thoroughly take care of my sister, Cook for her. Iron her garments even sew on the missing catches on her shirt (163).

Padma attempts to show how Akhila is of no utilization at home and she is the person who deals with her. Padma tells the neighbors how Akhila isn't even a rehearsing Hindu (Nair, 2001).

She won't light the light in the Puja room or go to the sanctuary or watch any of the customs we Brahmins do. At the point when she has her periods, she keeps on watering the plants and on the off chance that I object, she chomps my head off (164).

What's more, when the neighboring ladies ask her for what reason she should live with her Akka, why she doesn't move and leave her, Padma, a wolf in sheep's clothing, accept the job of a saint and says (Nair, 2001):

I couldn't imagine anything better than to do only that. Yet, she is my senior sister and an old maid, in the event that we relinquish her, she will be isolated - . Regardless of how seriously she carries on, I need to carry out my responsibility. That is the thing that our sacred texts show us (164).

Padma isn't just narrow minded, however clever enough to make a feeling that it is Akhila who is reliant on her and she can't leave her; and how fortunate Akhila is to have such a sister. When Padma's spouse, Murthy, returns home, Padma would send her girl to Akhila's room and crush her protection. Akhila was then exposed to tune in to the stroking murmurs and got control over breath and a murmur "She, she'll hear us - " (Nair, 2001, 165). Padma's pestering and affronts settle on Akhila take a choice to leave Bangalore. Until she got forty five, she didn't get an opportunity to carry on with her very own existence. At the point when she goes out, she is truly allowed to carry on with her very own life. She winds up liberated from the obligations of family, yet in addition of the social shows and desires for the family. She is presently allowed to take her own

choice to her greatest advantage. She gets mindful of her own needs, of her self-hood. These minutes help Akhila to remember Hari; and she laments having left him, releasing him. Akhila met Hari on a train. She for the most part sat on a seat by the window, yet when she came somewhat late, her seat by the window was held putting a handker-boss on it. This is the means by which she became more acquainted with Hari, a youngster around twenty-eight years of age, utilized in a railroad building office as an artist. Hari's issue was the manner by which one can wed a young lady by simply taking a gander at her. Furthermore, every time his folks brought a proposition for him, he couldn't decide and state „yes“. Akhila met Hari each night. Hari trusted in her everything his stresses. Akhila started to consider Hari. His recollections filled her brain, the manner in which he made quips, split his knuckles, the manner in which he grinned, etc. She started to miss him, in the event that he didn't turn up at the station. However, she understood that it was senseless of her to get such a great amount of associated with a man a lot more youthful than her. Hari one day

disclosed to her that he adored her and she ought not regard him as a more youthful sibling. He clearly advises her (Nair, 2001): -

should begin considering me to be a man. As a man who is keen on you and in affection with you (144).

Akhila reacts to this contrarily, which is absolutely against her own sentiments. She requests that he overlook this discussion. That being said Hari demands her to consider his proposition. Following day, it was absolute strike in light of the fact that the well known pioneer, Thalaivar, was dead, and she couldn't go to the station and to her work. She thought of Hari and stressed over him. She had neither his location nor his phone number. Akhila acknowledges how she cherishes Hari, and when they meet once more, in the train, she sits close by. To praise his birthday, they go to a sea shore and live respectively in a cabin for two evenings. In spite of the fact that Akhila appreciates being with him, she can't overlook the comments of others on the sea shore. They take a gander at her and Hari not as a team, yet a youngster engaging in extramarital relations with an older lady. At that point she chooses to bid farewell to him. Akhila is looking for her personality and her opportunity. She might not want to be an augmentation of somebody else's connection. When Karpagam asks her what satisfaction is, she characterizes bliss in the accompanying words (Nair, 2001):

Joy is being permitted to pick one's claim life; to live it the way one needs. Satisfaction is realizing one is adored and having somebody to cherish. Bliss is having the option to seek after tomorrow (200).

This sentiment of being free and having somebody to cherish drives Akhila to embrace her train venture. She gets her quality from the biography of Marikolanthu, who endures inspite of her endeavors to serve and offer joy to Sujatha Akka and even her significant other. This instructs Akhila to assume responsibility for her predetermination. "She tosses her head back and voices her triumph" (Nair, 2001,

275). The female heroes in the narratives described in this novel are for the most part casualties of the severe man centric example in which it is underestimated that ladies are second rate compared to men and they should be reliant on the male in the family. Akhila's mother is a case of this traditionalist perspectives. She never takes her very own choices. For her, whatever the spouse says is the best. Akhila's mother says (Nair, 2001):

A decent spouse figured out how to put husband's enthusiasm before anybody else's, even her father's. A decent spouse tuned in to her significant other and did as he did. It is ideal to acknowledge that the spouse is sub-par compared to the husband. That way, there can be no conflict, no disharmony. It is so a lot simpler and more straightforward to acknowledge one's station throughout everyday life and live as needs be (14).

Akhila's mother speaks to all the old age ladies, who stayed at home carrying out family unit responsibilities and didn't consider taking up a vocation. Akhila's mother doesn't care for her companion, Karpagam's mother taking up work of a move educator. Her better half, Akhila's father, had unmistakably advised her after the marriage that he needed his significant other to deal with him and his youngsters. Sarsa Mami's model shows how ladies need to go to any length to support their family. She falls back on asking or obtaining a bunch of rice, and activity is depicted as progressive by Akhila's mother. In a man centric culture men regularly use savagery against ladies to make them feel sub-par and threaten them. It is regularly found in the Indian family life that ladies are exposed to savagery for venturing past the limits fixed for them socially and socially and to impart dread in their psyche. It is a system utilized by men to guarantee subjection of ladies. This is the thing that Ravindran attempts to do against Anjana in *The Better Man* by Anita Nair. Young lady youngster in India is especially raised to be a perfect housewife later. We can see this from the case of the tale of Prabha Devi, who is made to play youth games, for example, playing with dolls, cooking and playing house and mother games. She ought to figure out how to cook and practice plans educated to her. Customarily, ladies have nothing to do with picking their life accomplice. In *Ladies Coupe*, Valsala, a multi year old young lady, is hitched to an elderly person, Prabhakaran numerous years her senior. Birth of a young lady kid is disapproved of by the dad on the grounds that a young lady is viewed as a risk, the person who can't help in the privately-owned company, which just the sun can do. In Indian family life, ladies shouldn't discuss or examine sex. When Prabha Devi, in the wake of coming back from New York, recommends that her significant other could utilize condom, he is stunned, in light of the fact that sex should be a subject of talk between the couple. She should mutely acknowledge what the spouse does. In Indian social circumstance woman's needs are to care for her significant other and her kids. She is for all intents and purposes treated as a peon. Prabha Devi, for instance, meets her companion, Sharmila, in the air terminal sitting area, who was splendid understudy in the school and could have become a specialist or an IAS official. In any case, she gets hitched, and in playing out the job of a spouse and a mother, she needed to surrender her examinations. Also, presently she is diminished to figure what she should cook, rice or chappatis for lunch. Under the male centric framework, women's lives are governed by their biased spouses. Just the fortunate ones discover a spouse who permits

them opportunity of their profession. This is the manner by which, as noted above, Margaret Shanti's vocation was destroyed by her high and mighty spouse.

light of Widows under Patriarchy:

Anita Nair has introduced predicament of ladies in various social conditions and conjugal status. Hitched ladies displayed by her experience male or male centric persecution and some of them, being instructed, attempt to confront this abuse and win some opportunity or bliss as should be obvious from the instances of Prabha Devi, Janaki and Margaret. Be that as it may, the state of widows in the Indian, rather Hindu, people group is entirely pitiable. Widowhood is viewed as a disgrace. A widow isn't free to approach in any favorable service in the house. There are confinements on her developments, her eating and dressing. She can't put on bright garments, and a kumkum tilak," on her brow. In the cutting edge Indian culture, instructed widows who additionally have

their very own pay, spurn social confinements. In any case, as a rule, widows in the Indian Hindu people group are treated as an unwelcome sight. In Ladies Coupe', Akhila's mother is fortunate to have her senior girl to deal with her. Akhila takes her mom, to a café at times, where she eats the dishes of her decision with no restraint. In any case, Anita Nair has portrayed the heartbreaking story of a widow, Sarsa Mami, who lives just two avenues from Akhila's house and is a family companion. Akhila used to go to her home once in a while to help her in making the „vadaam“ of the sago. Akhila used to get books from Sarsa Mami, who had a trunkfull of books of James Hadley, Chase and Harold Robbins and others. Sarsa Mami's spouse Subramani Iyer, was an extremely delicate man, who cherished his better half and his youngsters. His child Srinu was visually impaired. He was a glad man, however he had adult girls and a visually impaired child. When Subramani Iyer passed on, Sarsa Mami got defenseless. She sold jewelry however when there was nothing to sell, and she should sustain her kids, she utilized her oldest little girl, Jaya. She sent Jaya to cook for the men in the bachelors' quarters, which was actually a front for Jaya's illegal occupation. The neighbors and the entire Brahmin people group reprimanded her, yet nobody had approached when Sarsa Mami had argued them for work, and would lie when she came to request some assistance. She went to each house and was prepared to function as a servant. Sarsa Mami stated, protecting her girl (Nair, 2001):

In the event that I was more youthful, I would have offered myself to keep my family bolstered and dressed. In any case, this is drained substance. No man has any utilization for it. Furthermore,



it isn't as though she is partnering with a few guys. There is only small time normal. Furthermore, she is cheerful (82).

In any case, the Brahmin neighbors would not comprehend Sarsa Mami's defenselessness. Akhila's mother would have been decreased to a similar condition yet for Akhila's employment and backing to the family. She, in any case, hates Sarsa Mami like others. Akhila doubtlessly reveals to her mom that she and her Brahmin companions are truly being horrible to Sarsa Mami. Anita Nair has investigated assortment of issues that the ladies experience in the average Indian Society with its deep rooted moderate practices. Sarsa Mami's story incredibly advances the unfortunate destiny of widows in a male centric culture where moral models are forced on ladies just, while men are allowed to mock them. The tales of Sheela, Sarsa Mami, and Marikolanthu are the most noticeably terrible instances of male controlled society. Suresh Kumar and Leema Rose state (2009),

Man centric society shows its terrible face from support to grave (49-52).

It is a man centric mine-set which causes men to desire for a male youngster. The Indian guardians give off an impression of being more worried about the young men than the young ladies. When Prabha Devi was conceived, her dad was despondent in light of the fact that, this young lady, he thought, would contribute nothing to his business. The ladies heroes in Anita Nair's books seem to battle for building up their character asking themselves inquiries like " Am I a person in my very own right?, „Do I have a personality of my own?“ Akhila, for instance, is pained by this acknowledgment that her acknowledgment is for the most part as her mother's little girl, as „akka“ the senior sister, as aunt, etc and barely as Akhilandeswari. Ladies give off an impression of being exactly what others need them to be. In Ladies car', the ladies depicted by Anita Nair seem to attempt to find their personality, battle strength and beat it, as Margaret and Prabha Devi do. All of them may not prevail in this completely, however they do understand its need. Indeed, even Janaki, who is conventional, shows up at long last to think about this need of self-acknowledgment. Every one of them has a mission for setting up their personality in their family.