

Resuscitation of Relationship in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe

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Abstract : *The novels of Anita Nair contain an 'Indianness' which is essentially an important criterion for Indian writing in English because it is creative as well as resourceful. It is interesting to note that the novel Ladies Coupe is worked up from the combinations of different women's experiences. The most significant element was the conversations between these women. When a women strikes in her passionate direction , if their feelings were not properly reciprocated means, she brings disaster to all concerned and abandons her role of the loving mate .This novel stands against the view of stucturalist , who states that the experience of woman can easily disapppear become mute, invalid and invisible or lost in concern with their family. If relationship does not exist within the mankind, then there arise problems that rarely find solution or else taking a generation back. This paper focus on the relationship resuscitated by the characters in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe.*

Keywords: *culture, family, journey, love, relationship.*

I. Introduction

Relationship plays a vital role in human encounter. It is the music of life. Without it no physical or mental aspect can be given a name. It moves around the world to keep the lives enriched with feelings. Anita Nair has presented in her novels, modern Indian women's search for revival of relationships that are central to women. Her own struggle as a writer is equally symptomatic of the resistance to feminist expression that prevails in India in the middle of the twentieth century. As a women writer her dilemma was either to give voice to women's concern and be branded as a 'women writer: removed from the mainstream of literary scene: or, to deny her feminist and write like a man either with male name or male narrative voice. Anita Nair reveals that her concern is with the exploration of human psyche. She explores the emotional ecology of her protagonists.

Life is fulfilled only if one makes a persistent effort to assure themselves that they are doing the right and one mean nothing against the creator, not withstand the painful reality of Oedipus that those who attempt to know or scrutinize the unknown. The beauty of life is experienced in living through it with all human weakness and strengths to meet the destined will. In short, Ladies Coupe is a fine women's world. It can be understood that if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and father, women will become good wives and rational mothers. Men have had every advantage over women in telling their own story . Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands and recently it is totally changed. The human relationships are better understood through the writers of today's phase. Since the fathers have overwhelming power, the mother's rights were very limited; marriage was the only career open to women. So, ultimately Akila's choice falls over to choose a suitable suit to attain her destination.

To get a better insight on the novels and the view of the author, the researcher tried to get an appointment with the author Anita Nair and she was called to have the interview in author's office at Bangalore on 24th May 2010. Meeting the author gave a deeper analysis about women in common and the characters of her novels in particular. It was quiet happy for the researcher to extend her ideas on the aspects of her writing as well as the realities in her writing. Also, the researcher through the interview could realize that the protagonists of Anita Nair's novels had been a part of her experiences, during her travel around the world.

If Nair is to achieve her powerful final effect she is dependent on having the reader undergo a process of perception that is not unlike that of her character Akhila only the most conscious of writers manage to achieve this mimetic fit between fictional form and what we may old-fashionedly call the moral of the story. Taken as a whole, Akhila's form mirrors the complexities of ethical judgment and displays the difficulty and uncertainty of ethical choices. Akhila "implies that that answer can only come from within, from exploring all parts of the self" (LC 68)._ Finally after years spent living by the rules and expectations of her family and culture Akhila decides to do something for herself regardless of what anyone else thinks. This is the beginning of a journey of self discovery and life altering changes. This would appear to me to be a mistaken interpretation.

One lesson the novel teaches very clearly is that the self is not enough, no matter how many parts of it one is drawing on. Had the self been enough, Akhila with her egocentric individualism would have been much closer to the ethical center of the work. She has certainly explored more parts of the self than her

contemporaries in the society, yet despite her bravado, she never attains the ethical standing of, say, her mother or Jaya mami on the next street. Ladies Coupe is based on this historical practice of granting women a separate space away from the eyes of strange men in the hustle and bustle of train travel throughout India, enabling women to talk about their marriages away from the ears of their husbands.

This is very true that the reader needs to undergo the process of development that all the character travelling in the train undergoes, that development does not involve the embracing what Akila represents: the self as process and fluid possibility but rather 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 more clear why Akila is not fully a moral agent and cannot be a model for emulation. She does not possess Kalpana's command to symbolize her own 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 comes to terms with the limitations of her approach to life.

As she listens to the women's stories, Akhila is drawn into the most private moments of their lives, seeking in them a solution to the question that has been with her all her life: Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete? When remembering about the only love that entered Akhila's soul, she forgets who she is and what she was in the society. Anita Nair is very lenient in giving the romantic relationship of both Akhila and Hari. They both became friends in 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 he had lived in Avadi, the town next to Ambattur, almost all of his life. His father had a sweet shop and his sister was studying at Queen Mary's Collage. His Tamil was as good as his Hindi, he said. His parents were keen that he get married soon.

The relationship he had with her made him talk to her; of his colleagues, the frustration he felt in his job, a visiting aunt who kept thrusting a friend's niece at him, a movie he had seen the night before and etc etc. in turn, he drew her out. So that when her stop arrived, she got off the train reluctantly. But there was the consolation 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 and a model's expression would remind her of him. A stranger's smile would remind her of how his eyes crinkled when he smiled... (143). The moon shone for them. They sat on the beach and Akhila thought: this must be the happiest moment of my life.

A little later, they walked back to one of the huts that stood on stilts on the sand. In the confines of their room, Akhila felt an awkwardness. What am I doing here? Why am I doing this? The chant in her head wouldn't stop. 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 (151-152).

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 shuffle that had been the sum total of their lovemaking before. 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 very 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. They were an anomaly, Hari and Akhila, and nothing he said would ever change that.

This constant fear that she would age before he did and he would turn away from her. That someday he would regret their relationship, regret having spurned his family to be with her, regret being bound to her when he could have been with someone younger and more suitable. This constant weight of an with nothing, not even her self-respect. All day Akhila watched him and at night, and after each time they made love, he fell asleep, like a baby. Instantly. In the train as they sped back, Akhila took his hands in hers and said,

'Hari, this is goodbye. I will never see you again'. 'Are you done?' Hari asked. In reply to that Akila said " 'I'm done and I will never see you again. Please don't call me at my office or try and meet me. You will leave me with no option but to leave this city. I love you, Hari. I will perhaps never love anyone else but this is not meant to be' (153).

The conclusion of the novel indicates a moment in which Akhila suddenly realizes that it was her separation from Hari that caused her pain, there is no sense in which that insight even remotely enters her mind earlier" (85). She was in the midst of it, hating it, scared of it, and again she thought of Hari as though they

were still friends and talked things over. The protagonist of this novel proved her spinster life to be a pleasurable, worthy one to Hari alone. Comparatively all the other ladies who travel in the train have their own set of experiences that their relationship has brought out.

The women characters of Anita Nair do not merely confirm to male expectations or conflict with male world. Anita Nair's heroines negotiate for their independence and a respectable place in society. 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' life happy. The harmony in family relationships and their stability also depend on the behaviour and pent-agonic attitude of a woman as a wife, a mother, a sister, and a daughter. Society, morality, values are like bondage to them, so all of them are leading forward in an ambiguous manner in the midst of relentless urbanization and the far reaching western influences.

Prabha Margret and Marikozhundhu.. their involment with husbands lead to other many problems. To show the self and resuscitating nature, Anita Nair's protagonists seemed to be aware of their role both in the family and society. In Ladies Coupe, of all ladies, Margaret stands first and foremost in sustaining herself without damage. She being a chemistry teacher believes very much in H₂O. Her husband Ebe (Ebenezer) is a strong wrong-headed man loved Maggie (Margaret) and entwined into marriage. From the beginning of the story, he dominates and at times insults her among the colleagues. This makes H₂O (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, fried items, to make him a very fat man. This made Ebe to stop conducting parties at home, dancing and scolding Maggie. The self of Maggie once again regained or revived from the regular norms of the society. Next to Maggie is Sheela, the young girl. As she likes her Ammumma, she cannot restrain her idea of sending the body of Ammumma to the fire without any jewels. Ammumma during the whole of her life, stayed with Sheela, has confined in her about maintaining individuality in spite of others view. 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 Ammumma for she felt that the identity or the self not to be damaged at the time of her travel to other world. As the ending of the novel confirms, this is a case of major repression, one that has lasted for twenty-eight years.

II. Conclusion

There is no better example in the novel of how Nair uses relationship to guide the ethical appraisal of the characters, even if, in this case, the result may be a faulty judgment. Thus, the protagonist journey for search of 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. It is a novel which provokes the readers thought and moves them deeply and quietly.

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