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Women and Marriage in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*

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“Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth”

-Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

The present paper titled “*Women and Marriage in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe*” tries to explore in detail the lives of Indian women caught in the patriarchal web and how marriage is used as a tool of subjugation in our society. Simone de Beauvoir writes: “It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true; but almost always it annihilates woman”. The central goal of every woman born is to get married and have children. All her life she needs to be pleasing and satisfying others. She is expected to sacrifice her life for others but nobody cares and admires her for that as she is always taken for granted. The novel is centered on the search of the woman to fulfill herself basically as a human being, independent of her various traditional roles as daughter, wife, mother and so on.

Anita Nair's novel *Ladies Coupe* (2001) was rated as one of 2002's top five books of the year and was translated into more than twenty-five languages around the world. *Ladies Coupe* is a story of Akhila a spinster at 45 years of age who ventures alone to KanyaKumari, for the very first time in her life just to be herself. It is here in the journey she gets connected with other ladies and their stories in the ladies compartment. “Akhila who is prisoned in the loneliness aspires to set free her will and lead a life of her choice without anybody's intervention. Akhila is that sort of a woman. She does what is expected of her, she dreams about the rest which is why she collects epithets of hope like children collect ticket stubs” (1). Our Indian society sets certain norms for women especially for spinsters and widows but never for a bachelor or widower. There is always a set of virtues for women and Akhila had followed it and long ago she had ceased to wear bright colour, choosing to hide herself in dab moth tones (4). Born and brought up in a traditional environment and mind set taking a decision to travel alone was not that easy. Being a spinster she was always under the scrutiny of her sister who had spying eyes on her. She was always expected to be in a cocoon but this time she had made her mind to fly like a butterfly. Her friend Niloufer was able to book a railway ticket but it was in a ladies compartment, with five other women Sheela Vasudevan, Prabha Devi, JankiPrabhakar, Margaret Paulraj and Marikolanth. Akhila was stuffed with a notion by her family that “A woman can't live alone. A woman can't cope alone”. (16) She is unable to understand and questions “What is about marriage that makes it possible for a man and woman to mesh their lives, dreams and even their thoughts in such a complete fashion?” (10). Akhila very soon gets connected with the other co-passengers in the coupe and tries to find answer to her question ‘can a woman live by herself?’ with their experiences of life.

Anita Nair is an impeccable story teller and the way she has connected the five sub stories to the main story is remarkable. Each and every woman in the coupe narrates her life story of strength and weakness by putting her soul in it. Elderly lady Janaki and her husband Prabhakar have been married for forty long years. Like Akhila's mother Janaki had thought that a woman's duty was to get married, to be a good wife and mother. She doesn't have any idea of what it means to be an independent life as she was always looked after by men, first

father then husband and there would be son. She had believed that women ought to be docile and sweet never they should express their courage and wise. She confesses “women like me end up being fragile. Our men treat us like princesses. And because of that we look down upon women who are strong and who can cope by themselves” (23). Janaki was 18 when she got married and he was 27. She was advised by her aunt’s on the special night of their marriage that “He is your husband and you must accept whatever he does”. Though she took two months to accept his body on his later reciprocated well fearing he may turn to another woman. Then there was a child whose presence made their marriage even more complete. Later they were very eager to be good parents than good partners. All they had was their child and his growth, in his wellbeing and to bring him up as a good person. Her husband was a good understanding man. He understood about her mood swings due to her menopause and took her to doctor and cared about her much. He always took his responsibility seriously as a husband, father and provider when their son Siddharth got married she can feel the lack of compatibility as she feels he is selfish like her. Her daughter-in-law feels she is lucky enough to get husband like Prabhakar who helps so much in the kitchen. He is always by her side whenever she needs him. Janaki had drifted from her husband in bed but the day her son scolded her and compared to his mother-in-law it was her husband who stood by her side. This incident had made Prabhakar to think what if he dies early and how would his son look after her, when in front of him only he treated her so badly. Janaki had taken decision to leave her son’s house the next day itself. That night both of them slept under one blanket and she says “friendly love under one blanket everything was possible, she thought as her eyes closed and his warmth slipped into her” (38). Janaki realizes that all her aspirations and excitements in marriage declined after some time and she felt prisoned in her own kingdom. She had a desire to undo everything and cope alone but now she realizes “Now I know that even if I can cope, it wouldn’t be the same if he wasn’t there with me”(23).

Akhila had conceptualized and visualized her parents’ marriage for almost twenty two years of their togetherness. Her parents were ideal couple who were passionately in love with each other. They were ‘two bodies one soul’. Her mother had married her uncle who had carried her in his arms. In the words of Akhila “They were very happy together. The happiest when they were together” (15) They were so engrossed with each other that they neglected their children so Akhila remembers some lines which says ‘The children of lovers are not better than orphans’. Her mother had designed her life and herself according to the needs and desires of her husband. In the beginning of their marriage he had said he wants his wife to take care of him and his children. So her life’s motto had become to be a ‘good wife’ to her husband. Her Amma had her own theory of good wife that a good wife should learn to put her husband’s interests before anyone else’s, even her father’s. Since no good wife could serve 2 masters – father and husband. According to Akhila’s mother there is no such thing as an equal marriage. “It is best to accept that the wife is inferior to the husband. That way, there can be no strife, no disharmony. It is when one wants to prove one’s equality that there is waving and sparring all the time. It is also much easier and simpler to accept one’s station in life and live accordingly. A woman is not meant to take on a man’s role” (14).

Sheela, a girl of 14 years, 9th grade at the Holy Angels convent was made to talk by Akhila who was “eager to spill her secrets. Anxious to probe into lives. Willing to talk”. (60). The girl was travelling with her father to witness the final rituals of her grandmother who died after a prolonged illness of cancer. Her grandmother was a rich lady and her sons were just behind the property and neglected at her last days. Though she had neglected her daughter she knew she would forgive her and look after her. Her mother would not mind playing with her husband’s friend but Ammamma doesn’t like it. She warned her to be careful and Sheela

was aware of Celine incident who was raped and made pregnant by her friend's father and how both the families left the town in disgrace. Sheela was aware even she could be another Celine as there was her friend Hasina's father Naazar whose intensions were clear to her by his body language and the way he wiped her lips and touched her. Sheela was aware of her grandmother's precautionary words regarding men and decided not to go to Hasina's home. Sheela's grand ma was different, a great one for manifestations of femininity (67). She had guided Sheela "you must not become one of those women who groom themselves to please others. The only person you need to please is yourself. When you look into a mirror, your reflection should make you feel happy" (68).

Her grandmother wanted to look the best even at her death she used to dress well before sleeping. Sheela is an intelligent girl who could judge the changed in her father who always finds faults in her. She remember when she was a little girl, he had encouraged to speak like an adult but now he saw a woman in her so felt only anger and thought of her words as questioning his authority. When Sheela witness any father providing over her daughter's words she feels it is a wrong. The daughter would believe that is the way she need to be but it is better "teach her to swallow her words, make her mouth nice and pleasant, innocuous things kill her spirit and tame her tongue" (70). Though Sheela is third generation she understands her first generation grandmother better than her mother. She decides to give her a clean end. Sheela's grandmother lost her mind at her last days. "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 comparison and love that in every one else has become ashes" (71). Sheela's grandmother had wished for a graceful death. When she saw her in a bad condition she said herself that she would not allow others to see like that and plucked the wiry strands from her chin, plaited her hair, rubbed foundation to her face, shoulders and chest just the way her grandmother liked. She even adorned her with costume jewelry. Sheela was sure that she would be hated for what she had done to her grandmother but she cared not as she was sure that her grandmother would have been pleased by her. Sheela is a strong minded and precautionary girl and does what seems right to her.

Margaret and Ebe's story is of love-hate. Though Margaret is married she thinks woman doesn't really need a man. She feels "That is a myth that men have tried to twist into reality" (95). She had come to Bangalore to drop her husband to a health clinic to control his weight. It was Margaret who made him fat she confesses "I, Margaret Shanthi, did it with sole desire for revenge. To erode his self-esteem and shake the every foundation of his being" (97). Margaret compairs herself to the universal solvent, water which even has the destructive quality. Her husband had neglected her as someone of no significance so to prove herself she took her own way to teach him a lesson. Ebenezer Pauraj was the regent of the incorporeal world. He simply found out what a student like to do best and then forbade the child from doing it for a week or for as long as he deemed fit. Margaret hated him and his was of punishing the children. Her suggestions were neglected by him as he listened to no one but himself. Ebe and Margaret had like love at first sight. There was no objection from either home as Ebe was vice principal of the school, good looking guy and she was MSC gold medalist and pretty lady. Ebe's family was a breed of thinking men and everybody liked him. Margaret had become so blind and obsessed in her love for him. Whether it was her career or eating Bheelpuri it was his choice. "What's the point in working for a doctorate? Do your B.Ed. So you can become a teacher and then we will always be together. Long hair doesn't suit you. Cut it off. You'll look nicer with your hair in blunt bob." He even stopped her going to Church every Sunday but which broke her inside was aborting the baby. He never wanted his wife to be a woman. He wanted a little girl he could rule and mould make love to and

Jolly around. Margaret was upset what would happen to their lives when time caught her and left it marks. This was the root of her unhappiness with Ebe. Her parents would not pay any attention to her as they adore Ebe. Besides there was the stigma of divorce in her family no one had ever divorced. Her mother had already advised on the day before her marriage, “that a wife has to be faithful of putting in more effort than a man ever would to make a marriage a successful partnership” (102).

Slowly things began to change when they shifted from Kodaikanal to Coimbatore with the increased work load in the school irritation increased and she turned to a nagging wife. They started quarrelling for petty things. She wanted him to help her at house chores but a demanding husband failed to understand. Margaret discovery that her husband not listening to her words shattered her she just waited for his response on her silence but it was of no use and conversation declined between them. She lost hope in their marriage when she learnt she can't change him then she gave up and had no more expectations of their marriage or relationship. Though she had lost hopes in her marriage by her own efforts she changed the course of her life. The only weakness Ebe had was 'food' and Margaret took advantage of this and made him to eat more by cooking relishing dishes. A year later she got her success. “Ebe slow became a fat man. A quiet man An easy man” (134). She made him entirely dependent on her for his body and food appetite. Ebe became a man she could live with and a baby girl was been. Her life changed and she took more care of ebe not changing to his earlier size. Before getting down in Coimbatore she gave a piece of advice to Akhila, “Once you stop worrying that the world will think of you, your life will become that much easier to live” (136). Margaret hated the way he treated her and as a man he was very rude with the children so she took revenge on him. She confesses that she “did it with the sole desire of revenge. To erode his self-esteem and shake the very foundations of his being. To rid this world of a creature who if allowed to remain the way he was, slim, lithe and arrogant, would continue to harvest sorrow with a single minded joy”.

Akhila after hearing to Margaret story of love which changed to hate she is reminded of her love for Hari. Hari was much younger to her but they had a comradeship and instantly they became friends. Both shared their day today life. The thirty five minutes of journey was enough to fill the vacant spare in her life. When Hari told he is interested and love her she was unable to believe but that was her dream. Both became lovers and spent evenings and mornings together. He was really serious with her and wanted to marry after her sister's marriage. But Akhila was aware of the truth that she would age first and that she would look like elder sister to him. If they married she would be in a constant insecurity that he might fall to a younger woman. Being from an orthodox family Akhila lied her mother that she would be going on an official tour and offered her body to Hari. Then after when they came back she broke up with him. She had her point of view. “It bothers me that we are not suited. That I am older and look older, and I can't live with the thought that someday you might regret their relationship, that you might turn away and I would be left with nothing neither you nor my family” (153). Later she never met him. When her mother died she took transfer to Bangalore where Padma was living. While leaving her house she found some of the greeting cards sent by Hari and in one of those she found his address and phone number. There was five years gap but still she was burning in his memory. When Akhila was given quarters she was happy to live in her house but Padma forced herself and her family on Akhila. Akhila didn't dare to say it that she want to be on her own, curdled herself in silence. Though Padma had invaded her home she gave a different pose to their neighborhood that she was all tolerant towards the tantrums of her spinster sister. Akhila was much hurt and had longings for Hari when she saw her sister with her husband. She never felt jealous about her sister, but bored of her life.

Prabha Devi who looked confident and content was not like that before. She had struggled a lot and earned it herself. She said Akhila that “One day, I discovered I didn’t like the person I had become and so I changed”. There was a cause and effect like there always is except that in my case, I was both the cause and the effect”. Prabha Devi born to an affluent family had four brothers. Her father preferred and wanted a boy who could continue his business and though a ‘daughter is a bloody nuisance’ (169). Prabha grew to a well-mannered gentle lady. At the age of 18 she was married to Jagdeesh a prosperous diamond merchant so that her father could expand his business. Young Prabha had her dreams about marriage but for the next many years that Prabha did was to wait for Jagdeesh to come home. For the babies to be born. For their first step, their first word, their first triumph.... (172). Jagdeesh had taken her to New York on a business trip. When they returned Prabha had totally changed. She was much infatuated towards the New York women and she just wanted to be like them. “With swinging hair and a confident stride. They summed to know exactly where they were going and once they go there, what they had to do. Their lives were ruled by themselves and no one else. Such poise, such confidence, such celebration of life and beauty Prabha Devi wanted that for herself” (177). Jagdeesh was unable to bear with the changes in Prabha the way she dressed, her walk with stiletto heels. She just wanted to attract others and used to get pleased by seeing the appreciation in their eyes. Jagdeesh’s Tennis friend Pramod was indifferent and unaffected by her beauty in the beginning but Prabha intoxicated him by her looks and one day he took it as an open invitation and had come to her home. This physical attack by Pramod led to a drastic change in her. She just wanted to be a good wife as her mother wanted. She immediately made her mind to be a mother. First Nitya and then Vikram she lost herself in raising them. When Nitya went to college there was not much she needed her mother but Vikram who is fifteen still available to his mother to love and cherish.

Prabha wanted to learn swimming and that too by herself as no coach was there. She lied to her husband and went to learn swimming. She now thinks, “Jagdeesh had never been such a domineering man. I let him rule me and now he knows no other way to treat me” (188). Simone de Beauvoir argues that women are complicit in their own oppression; that is, women internalize the consciousness of the male gaze and the expectations of gender roles. Prabha is eager to teach her daughter about the key tones of marriage but wonders does she know about the middle path? Has her mother taught her or even knew about it she wonders. If a wife shows she is incapable of doing outside works and then happily a husband does it but later he would rule her. If a wife shows she is capable of handling then he won’t be there when she wants him to be. Prabha after retrospection of her life says “For the woman I have become. A meek, mean spirited shadow of who I was. I don’t know how to change, how to restore the balance of our relationship.... It seems to me more and more that I know nothing (190). “She listened, She obeyed, She lived on the outposts of his lie. And frankly, he found himself getting a little irked by her complete lack of self-worth” (190). Day after day Prabha improved in learning how to hold the breath, kick the water. She started conquering the fear of drowning and finally she learnt how to swim. Now she is realizing how with the Pramod’s encounter had changed her life, how she withheld herself from everything. She had feared to lose her husband and family life. Now she discovered that “desire spawns desire, fulfillment begets fulfillment. A kiss for a kiss. A caress for a caress. What one gives comes back manifold” (195). She got clarity in her life. When she learnt swimming she knew her life would change from now “That nothing else that happened would ever measure up to the moment of supreme content when she realized that she had stayed afloat” (195). Thus she successfully retained her ‘Self’.

“Akhila saw herself as a serpent that had lain curled and dormant for years. She saw life as a thousand pettalled lotus she would have to find before she knew fulfillment” (39). External appearance of Akhila was like that of a rigid looking woman. She says “I wasn’t always like this, so stiff and restrained. I had to grow a shell around myself. To protect myself, To deflect hurt and pain. If I hadn’t, I would have gone insane” (41). Akhila’s life got shattered when her father died. At her young age being an elder sister to the other three, responsibility to fill their tummies fell on her. She had a doubt about her father’s death if it was an accident or suicide. As he had tried to cross the road when the traffic was moving. He was a disappointed man, unhappy with his profession and disturbed with his headache. Akhila’s father was a clerk in income-tax office but he never took bribe. After his death her mother got scattered. The only thing she taught her daughter was to how to look after the house chores and be a good wife. She taught her Kolam etc. She wanted her to look after her complexion as “All men want fair skinned wives even if they are black as coal themselves (51). Akhila knew “Tears made you vulnerable and distorted your focus. But anger made one stronger. Anger made one inviolable. Anger prepared one to face things better”(58). Akhila was made to cry by her mother but on the 10th day when her mother was dressed as a bride a stripped her marks of marriage. “Akhila cried because she knew this was what it meant to be a woman” (59). Akhila after her father’s death had become the man of the family being a bread winner. When she took the responsibility of the family it was mother, two brothers and a sister. She got her father’s job in compensation. She had decided to make her brother graduate and can unburden herself. Fortunately her elder brother completed post-graduation and he decided to marry. Nobody not even her mother said let your sister get married before you. So she insisted on her younger brother’s marriage on the same day. Even then, “Amma and her brothers never asked what about you? You’ve been the head of this family ever since Appa died. Don’t you want a husband, children, a home of your own?”. In their minds Akhila had ceased to be a woman and had already metamorphosed into a spinster” (77). Then she worked hard and saved money to give dowry on her little sister’s marriage. Even then she was 34 when her sister was 22 nobody thought about her marriage. The one who saved all their lives unlike SarsaMami who sold her daughter Jaya to fill other children stomach (blind brother and two sisters).

Akhila was against the biased attitude against SarsaMami by her Brahmin community. She had made her mother realize that they would have been in their place but she had said. ‘But I had you’ (84). Never had she thought who is there for Akhila and who would be there for her. From the Gurukula stage of life, she had moved directly to the Vanaprastha. And she wanted no part of someone else Karmic flow (86). Akhila enjoying the nature outside the window says why is it only we humans who resist change? Why do we fight it? why couldn’t her family accept her decision? Until Akhila meet Karpagam, her childhood friend she was not sure but her words echoed in her ears and she decided to be happy being allowed to choose one’s own life, to live it the way one wants” (200). Akhila hated the most was not having her own identity. She was always attached to someone’s identity like Chandra’s daughter, Narayana’s Akka, Priya’s aunt, Murthy’s sister-in-law. Akhila didn’t waned to be a mere extension of this by getting married. She wished for once someone would see her as a whole being (201)

Karpagam was a widow and was living alone even her 23 years old daughter was living alone and she says ‘we are if we want to be’ (202). Though she was a widow she didn’t follow any age old rituals of a widow. She clinches to her femininity and wears kumkum, colourful clothes and jewellery. She wishes to be what she is she says “I have as much right as anyone else to live as I choose” (202) who made this laws anyway? Some man who couldn’t bear the

thought that in spite of his death, his wife continued to be attractive to other men. Karpagam was strong minded woman and Akhila realized with shame that while she had in the manner of a docile water buffalo wallowed in a pond of self-pity, allowing parasites of feasts on her, Karpagam had gone ahead and learnt to survive (202). Akhila decides to buy a flat, a one-bedroom flat and live alone for herself. Her family rejected her ideas. Padma wanted Akhila's support even to get married her daughter. But now Akhila will not save money for Padma's daughters as she had done for Padma. She would not be a scape goat any further.

Anita Nari through the mouth of Karpagam gives her point of view. She has taken women characters from all layers of society; Prabha belongs to rich whereas Mari is below poverty level and middle class Janaki, lower middle class Akhila. The sixth passenger in the coupe was indifferent she didn't like to mingle with others or others excluded seeing her clothes. She is different from other not because of her clothes and looks but because she had lead on unsheltered life. She thought these women are fussing for little things. What would they ever do if a real tragedy confronted them? What do they know of life and the toll it takes? What do they know of how cruel the world can be to women?" (209). Further she says, "Women are strong, women can do everything as well as men. Women can do much more. But a woman has to seek that vein of strength in herself. It does not show itself naturally (210).

The sixth passenger name is Marikolanthu and her's is a tragic story. At 31 years of age Mari had suffered a lot. She has a son and no husband. She didn't have childhood as she was working all the time. Her mother used to work as a cook in Chettiar Fort and she did all household chores and looked after her younger brothers. Mari took entrance to this Chettiar fort as a young girl to look after Sujata Akka's son. Sujata Akka was feared of Chettair Amma who had gone mad so she wanted her to care the baby when she was busy. "She had become mad when her last son was born, something went wrong with her. She screamed each time she saw the Chettiar and refused to feed the baby" (218). Mari was very happy and nicely looked after the baby. Everything was fine until she bled. She became a woman and everything changed all of a sudden. Beauvoir refers to the start of the menstrual flow as a reminder to the girl of her immanence. Sujata Akka who loved her so much and gave her bangles and clothes decide to send her away to Vellore. To look after two lady doctors from abroad. She had said "I know you are a good girl, but it is unwise to leave cotton and a matchstick side by side. One wrong move and everything could go up in flames" (226). Mari being hard working and energetic was welcomed by foreign ladies and she soon liked to be in Vellore than to go back to her village. But there was a sort of strangeness in those foreign ladies which Mari didn't understand at that young age. "Missy K talked to Missy V as if she were the husband and Missy V the wife" (233). Every night Mari had seen Missy K going to Missy V room and early mornings crept back to her room. She wondered why there should be secrecy if Missy K was afraid to sleep alone then they should share a bed. There was nothing wrong if ladies share a bed together she had thought. Sometimes Mari had caught Missy K caressing Missy V's face with her eyes. It had sent a line of goose bumps down her back. Mari had started dreaming a new world for herself, to become a nurse. After she reached 18 she would take SSLC privately and then join nursing assistant course. There was a halt for her day dreaming when she got a call from Amma, who had fractured her leg. Mari was supposed to be her substitute in Chittiar home. Unfortunately her comeback was horrible, her dream of independence and dignified life got shattered. Rani Akka's brother Murugesan raped her. He hated the way the importance she was getting at home. He took a pride in ripping her clothes and said "why are you pretending to be a guileless virgin? I know all about women like you. If the Chettier sons can feast on this body of yours.. remember I' am a relative even if only a poor one and I'm entitled to their pickings before anyone else". (239).

History is evident that rich men always took pride in spoiling the chastity of poor women. Being poor and a woman gets suppressed in such a way that she is treated like a commodity which could be easily used and thrown away. They are succumbed to silence without uttering a word and if they say against them also who would have believed or rebelled against those mighty powerful rich lusty men. He was very confident that nobody would believe her words if she had said Murugesan had raped her so she pretended nothing had happened, nothing had changed and she presumed everything would remain the way it was. She was unwilling to bargain with the rich for her loss and rather decides to be normal but she became pregnant. Her mother was helpless even SujataAkka. Her mother screamed “you were raped and you kept quiet about it. A man steals your virginity and you think nothing is going to change... you expect me to believe that?” (243). Even SujataAkka’s husband didn’t believe that she was raped, maybe she led him and after becoming pregnant blaming him. SujataAkka wanted her to come on the day of the rape so that she would have done something, getting her married to Murugesan but Mari did not understand why these women wanted husband’s protection. “Neither sujataakka nor my mother ever had their husbands look out for them. The men in their lives had done nothing and yet to them a fulfilled woman was one who was married. Everything else was secondary” (246). Mari though young is having different perception. She dint want to get married to Murugesan and every one expected her to be ashamed but she dint feel shame. She had anger and humiliation but never had she felt shame of her no fault. She had tried for unsuccessful abortion without going to a hospital and gave birth to a baby boy. She wanted him to be born dead but he was alive and she hated him for that. It was difficult for her to accept him as her son. His presence reminded what she had become now and how her life has changed. She had lost her sleep and herself. It was her mother who took care of the child and she left to Vellore only to return back soon. Looking at Missy V and Missy K she thought nothing was wrong in their lesbian relation. She knew “Nothing could be worse than what had happened to me. Nothing could be worse than a man raping a woman” (251). With the break up of Missy V and Missy K, Mari was distained to come back to her place. She requested them to get her trained in a hospital but the changes in her was so evident that they rejected as the helper job demanded compassion. Just not to witness the sight of the boy she accepted to be a mad woman’s maid in Chittor home. After the mad woman’s death Sujataakka took Mari as her assistant. She had heard about the foreign ladies relationship from Mari and expected the same from her.

SujataAkka had confessed with her that when she would be with her husband, “What comes after is revulsion. When he comes near me, I feel as though a lizard is crawling up my skin. Bit I close my eyes and let him do whatever he wants to. I know he goes to other women, but if I don’t let him do it once in a while, he’ll find a mistress like his father did, and flaunt beneath my nose”(259). Sujata was worried that she may go mad like her mother in law and thinks may be because of the physical revulsion from her husband she was driven to madness. Mari started to fulfill the frustrated desires of Sujata at afternoons and at night she welcomed her husband into her body. She had become their need. Mari turned herself to a whore to preserve sujata’s happiness but when she learnt abvesujata’s happiness but when she learnt about the truth sent Mari out the truth sent Mari out of her house blaming of black magic on her. So Mari left Chettairfortblack magic on her. So Mari left Chettair fort without taking her salary. With the death of her mother Mutthu became her responsibility. Meanwhile she discovered a tumor in her womb. She decided to mortgage the boy to his father Murugesan’s loom and gets five thousand rupees and gets operated her tumor. A sort of happiness runs through her for selling his own son to Murugesan but it is after his death she finds rest in her restless life. Her hatred towards Muttu is burnt with Murugesan’s funeral fire. It was

Muttu's joyful face without anger or hostility that changed her life. She accepted him as her son and next all she wanted was his happiness and be his mother. She wanted to take Missy K's help to buy him back and find her a job. She says "I had been content to remain a sister to the real thing. Surrogate housewife. Surrogate mother. Surrogate lover. But now I wanted more. I wanted to be the real thing"(268).The Chettiar fort sets as an evidence for many women suffering in and around the institution of marriage. The Chettiar wife with three children had become mad due to her husband's infidelity. She was locked up on the top floor and was never seen outside. The unhappy and frustrating marriage had driven her to madness. Sujata her second daughter in law sidelined her first daughter in law as she was childless and was respected by all as she had brought a fat dowry. But she was frustrated in marriage and that leads to have a lesbian relation. Akhila takes a room by the beach in Kanyakumari and she feels very happy to be alone and enjoys her freedom. She tries all new dishes and even tries a younger guy. By satisfying her lust she feels triumphant and conquers her fear. Akhila makes up her mind to call Hari and is ready to start her life from where she had left. Thus she becomes the master of her own destiny by believing in her 'self'.

Ladies Coupe may be termed as Bible of Indian Feminism. Anita Nair has touched all the women oriented issues in this novel. It mirrors the depressed, oppressed and suppressed women in our patriarchal society. She seems to be aspiring for new society with new women breaking the shackles of patriarchy with new attitude. The social expectations, laws and economic structure always deprive women if their autonomy. All women characters in the novel change themselves and find their own identity by their own efforts. How long women suffer in silence and undergo the trauma,It is a time to flourish in the nourishment of self-help. Janaki's story is similar to that of many Indian women who pass their lives without any aspirations of their own and fail to find meaning in their existence. Akhila's mother seems to be a staunch follower of patriarchal rules and likes to be under the thumb of men. She feels secured in that and is always afraid to go against it. Akhila, the protagonist is always a provider and is not allowed to have her own life and family. Finally she rebels against her family and the social norms and decides to live her life alone. Incidents of sexual abuse of girl children are mirrored in Sheela's story where it's clear that a girl child is not safe in her own house and gets sexually assaulted by her own relatives and family friends. Sheela as a girl is precautious regarding the lusty eyes staring her and takes care of her body. She condemns her father's behavior towards her who sees a woman in her and hates for that. She does whatever she feels right. Assertion of individuality is very important for any woman and that strife is seen in Prabha Devi. Her story even throws light on desire and preference for male child in our society. A girl from her birth is destined to get married and is just trained for that. Powers of patriarchy and its clutches how suffocating is for women and even educated woman are not safe from it is well pictured in the story of Margaret. Her dominating husband Ebel takes away everything, from her right to choice to read, write, eat and to be a mother. She hates him for what he is she hates him the way he treats the students and hate him for depriving her rights. But with her determination changes him into a tolerant man with whom she can live.

Anita Nair being a versatile story teller is able to talk about a sort of radical feminism through the story of Mari. Mari and Sujata indulge themselves in a lesbian relation with hatred towards men. Mari is a pathetic and cruel portrayal of our patriarchal society which makes her not worth for living. She is raped by Murugesan, a rich male chauvinist who considers poor girls are objects of his sexual gratification. Poor girls' chastity is not valued and he thinks it as a commodity to be used and thrown away. Her life changes because of her body and she suffers a lot but the culprit is never made a guilty. She leads her life as it goes but

finally by accepting Muttu as her son gets a new dimension in her life. Karpagam is a role model to all who being a widow is leading an independent life respectfully and as she desires it to be. Chamanlal rightly defines Feminism, “as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is dependence syndrome whether it is husband, father, the community or a religious group. When women will free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes”. All the women in *Ladies Coupe* conquer their fear and continue to lead their life in the light of their strength. Finally they seem to agree strongly with Simone de Beauvoir’s words that, “that fact that we are human is much more important than our being a woman”. Akhila is able to get her answer from the ladies in the Coupe by searching solidarity in their sufferings. Thus she is able to strengthen herself by the knowledge of other ladies success.

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