

THE EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE OF FEMALE BY MALE IN ANITHA NAIR
NOVEL, LADIES COUPE

¹R.Nagarajan, ²Dr. sugantha Ezhil mery,
¹Research Scholar ,
Department of English,
Vels University,
Chennai (TN) INDIA.
²Professor,
Department of English
Vels University,
Chennai (TN)INDIA.

Abstract:

Exploitation is defined as a , “ A situation in which somebody treats somebody else in an unfair way , especially in order to make money from their work”(oxford learner’s dictionary) unfair treatment of someone , or the use of a situation in a way that is wrong, in order to get some benefit for yourself. Behavior that deliberately causes pain to other people or animal , or that makes them unhappy or upset (Macmillan thesaurus) the abuse has been defined as “ to treatment someone in a cruel and violent way ,often sexually , to deliberately use of something for the wrong purpose or for your own advantage” (Longman dictionary of contemporary English).There are many forms of exploitation in to which people can be trafficked and held in slavery . As a result, each case can look very different. Below are some of the most commonly reported forms of human trafficking and modern slavery. sexual exploitation, Labor exploitation, domestic servitude, forced marriage, forced criminality , child soldiers , organ harvesting are the some types of exploitation .Among the emerging writers ,Anitha Nair is the most promising and a writer to reckon with. Her first novel the better man has placed her among the most self-conscious Indian novelist. Her second novel ladies coupe is in some ways even better than her first novel. In Ladies coupe Anitha Nair portrait the suffering and inequality of women. In ladies coupe she describes how the female characters are exploited and abused by the male dominant society. In various aspects of life the female characters are exploited in such a way of sexual exploitation , labor exploitation , forced marriage , domestic servitude and forced

criminality .This paper tries to focus how Anitha Nair projects Indians feminism and attitude through women characters in her novels . Especially the ladies coupe deals with the equality of women, and they should be saved from exploitation. In “Ladies coupe” she has taken up for treatment the theme of estrangement in marriages, issues of premarital and extra marital affairs.

Keywords:

Feminism, self-conscious, exploitation, abuse, estrangement, trafficked, servitude, traditional , uneducated , superstitious , confined – martyr .

Introduction:

Anitha Nair is one of the well-known writers in Indian writings in ENGLISH with an International reputation. Anitha Nair was born in Mundakottakuruthu near shornur in Kerala. she was brought in a suburb in madras (Chennai). Her father worked in a factory. Her grandparents who lived in Kerala . so she visited Kerala often. The visits made her to know the heart of rural Kerala. She did her B.A .ENGLISH literature and language in a small town othapalam in Kerala . At the age of twenty-four, she went to the united states to study journalism. She was working as an innovative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore. When she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories. She concentrates only in her writing rather than the advertising agencies. As she remarks herself that, “being writer is a necessity for me, an addiction”.

Anitha Nair has presented in 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 twentieth century. She explores the emotional ecology of her protagonists. Even though some of her characters are educated and economically independent, they are unable to take decision on their own. According M. K. Gandhi, women depends her father in the childhood, after marriage she depends her husband , and in her old age she depends on her children especially son. She is independent (My experiment with truth, m. k. Gandhi). Anitha Nair being women penetrates deep into the inner mind of the depressed women by virtue of her feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues which are outcome of Indian women’s psychological and emotional imbalance in a male dominated society. Therefore, male dominated

society and its anti women ideology is the root cause of women's backwardness and their exploitation and suffering.

“Anitha Nair, like the veteran author Anitha Desai started writing at the age of seven or eight and both of them began doing so in their moments of emotional outbursts”. (Mishra 100). Nubile stated that “Ladies coupe is a perfect example of contemporary women's identities and their conflictual relationships with tradition, male dominated society, gender discrimination and class and caste constraints. It is a novel in which fiction merges with reality and where female voices are authentic (Nubile 74). Ladies coupe presents the life of six women, all trapped in the unsteadiness of custom and the social order. In this novel she portrait how all the six women characters are exploited in various aspects.

Akhila's Journey Through Self-Discovery:

Ladies coupe follows the journey of a middle-aged Indian women named Akhila as she travels and on the train's ladies coupe. In her search for independence and wanting to learn more about the lives of her travel companions, she swaps stories with 5 different women who inspire her to live of her own life . Akhila is a forty five years old spinster, who takes various roles of a daughter, sister, aunt and the provider of the family .She is the narrator of the novel . She is the first victim of exploitation. As her father dies suddenly she takes the burden of the entire family on her young shoulders.

In an interview Anitha Nair says, “ To me, Akhila in some sense enjoyed being a martyr. She's not an exceptionally strong woman. She is just somebody who coped” (The Hindu , 2 dec 2001).Myles analyses that “Anitha refers to the avatar of the Devi Akhilandeswari to insist on the many .Headed but unitary subjectivity of women's (Myles 128) . Akhila who was born in a middle class Brahmin family, She is unmarried but at the age of 45, she becomes aggravated as “Dreaming for escape and space”. Hungry for life and experience (LC2). So she decides to go on a long trip y train in search of such an unrivaled question which obsessed her throughout her life “ can a women live by herself”(LC 21). This one question troubled her all life.

After her father's death she was the sole breadwinner of the family. So she was considered as the earning machine of her family. She is the victim of labor exploitation. Akhila had a love affair with Hari , a north Indian young man .They made physical love several times

.Because of the family responsibilities , she never think about her marriage . Even though Hari was younger than her , they had a love affair . But she had a guilty of their love. Because she thought that the society will not accept the love affair. She decided to break up the love affair and says ,“ Hari this is goodbye I will never see you again”(153LC). She mentions “every time I look at someone watching us, I can see the question in their minds . What is he doing with an older women” that bothers me very much, Hari. It bothers me very much that we are not suited so she decides to remain single (15a).

Her brothers Narsi and Narayan had their weddings in the same hall, on the same day and time before the marriage their elder sister Akhila. hey never thought about Akhila’s marriage. Even her mother also not interested in her marriage. She holds the full burden of her family but they never accepted her as a head of the family. Amma expected her to get permission from her brothers, the man of family to go on an office tour as she says, “perhaps you should ask your brothers for permissions first”. Akhila argued about their issues, to her mother, but her mother simply says, “you might be older but you are a woman and they are the men of the family”. The family expected her money and labor only . They never think about Akhila’s future life. She felt that her life was tasteless and monotony. She was unable to translate her dreams in to reality. So she wanted to quit the family. She buys a one-way train ticket to the sea side town Kanyakumari to start a new life alone. During the process of her journey, She tries to find out an answer to the basic question which has been in pursuit throughout her life. “can a women stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete?”(LC).On the train journey Akhila receives a seat in “Ladies coupe, a compartment in a train specially reserved for the lady passengers” . In that coupe she met five other passengers. Akhila asked them about the condition of women in Indian society. They shared their lives and described how they are the victims of Indian male dominated society.

Train Companions:

The other five passengers are Janaki, Margaret Shanti, Praba Devi ,Sheela, and Marikolanthu . Janaki, a pampered wife and confused mother. Janaki is portrayed as a happy women , been taken care of by her father and brother in her parents’ house and in her marital life .She is a pampered wife who prefers to live only for husband . She is significant character in this novel by being a confused mother treating her children selfish; comparing them to her husband.

She has developed a 'friendly' love with her husband. she used to stick with the conventional role of women and she calls the home as the kingdom of women. She talks about a time when she felt a sudden disinterest about the same home and later, she realizes that, a women is always a subordinate to man and she needs a man to complete her. She was the victim of labor exploitation.

Class Exploitation:

Marikoalthu , a low caste women is raped and unsurprisingly , she is to blame , “Why does a young women walk alone” it is pleasing to note that Anitha Nair observes the uneducated, poor and rural women, like Marikolanthu , who boldly reject traditions that define their lives in independent relationship with men more strongly than the educated and urban women reject those traditions .Nair asserts that education can empower and liberate women only when it is changing social attitudes . The struggle of educated and rich women for emancipation is not the same as like that of an uneducated and poor woman. Marikolanthu’s greatness lies in her struggle for emancipation in spite of being poor and illiterate. She can be called as an Indian version of Ibsen’s Nora. Marikolanthu , whose rape , literally and metaphorically , coupled with extreme poverty and class . Exploitation is the culmination of all other stories. Marikolanthu was the victim of class exploitation.

Sex Exploitation:

Margaret Shanti is one of the fellow travelers in the ladies coupe. Margaret’s story is story of a women who learns her own strategies to get her dreams true. Margaret’s husband, Ebenezer Paulraj, is an example for male dominance. In this novel Margaret is portrayed as a well educated and gold medalist in chemistry . Her husband Paulraj is school principal. He never respond to her feeling. Margaret wanted to do a doctorate, but he forced her to become a teacher .He tells her to cut her long hair because it doesn’t suit her . As a good wife she always obeys her husband but a deep burst of storm comes in her life when she conceives and her husband tells her to about their first baby as revealed by her, “He dismissed me as someone of no significance”(LC96).

Against her own wish she aborts her baby. When she was going to abort her baby, Her husband wished her all the best, “For the first time , I felt angry, All the best for what? I had

nothing to do but lie there while they scraped my baby off the inside of my womb” (LC109). According to Shanthi marriage is not a union between two bodies but a union between two souls. Anitha Nair through the example of Margret’s character reflects that not even an illiterate woman best also a well educated women feels herself trapped in such a society.

Male Exploitation:

The other lady passenger in the coupe Prabha Devi is one who is very pretty and conscious about her beauty. She doesn’t want to conceive as she tell her husband. But her husband Jagdeesh and his family are interested in the arrival of new baby. Jagdeesh stiffened in shame and embarrassment. What kind of a women was she? My parents are getting impatient. They talk of a grandchild all the time. We have been married for almost a year now, he said, caressing the side of her neck(LC179). Jagdeesh and his family members treated her as a birth giving machine. Prabha Devi is the victim of male exploitation.

Sexual Exploitation:

Sheela is the youngest girl in the compartment. she is only fourteen years old. She doesn’t understand the meaning of masculinity and femininity. But Sheela has to face the sourness of the femininity as her friend Hasina’s father tries to seduce her. He swabs her upper lips with his forefinger, “therefore, Sheela mopped her face with a hanky each time she entered Hasina’s home” (LC66).Most of the time girls feel themselves unable to share these shameful experiences with their family members or others. So Sheela decides never go to Hasina’s house. Here Anitha Nair describe the “sexual exploitation of a girl child displays the dark side of masculinity”.

Conclusion:

Anitha Nair’s female characters in the novel Ladies coupe have faced so many problems and hurdles . They are the victims of labor exploitation (Akhila), sexual exploitation (Sheela , Margaret Shanthi) , male exploitation (Prabha Devi) , class exploitation (Marikolanthu). Even though they are exploited by the male dominant society, they are not weak . Anitha Nair portraits women as not totally cutoff from familial social ties but women who remains with those orbits and protest against injustice and humiliation . Anitha Nair is differ from the other feminist

writer. She says solution for their problems. On one side Nair explores women's agony and on the other side she suggests a number of ways to fight back against these agonies to make their life a fruitful and peaceful one. Her women characters are not weak, they are courageous and possess as impressive audacity and will power to fight back against social evils .

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