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“Ladies Coupe- a reflection of empowerment of New Woman”

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Abstract: Feminism is a struggle for the equality of women or an effort to make women equal to men. It is seen as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression. The debate over the position of women, their condition in their families and society at large, has contributed in giving them many rights earlier denied. Nevertheless, the basic rights for women are still not enough to say that their position is equal to their male counterparts. Although women in general, are said to be in better positions than their earlier counterparts, but they are still in the marginalized position, because the multifaceted gender patterns work differently on women of different classes and backgrounds through culture. To eradicate this marginalization of women, women writers are writing about the predicaments of women in our society. The woman characters in Anita Nair’s novel *Ladies Coupe* seem to be the personifications of new women who have been trying to throw off the burden of inhibitions they have carried for ages. They go through the gruelling experiences of domestic oppression at the hands of the repressive forces of society but finally they revolted against the oppressions and resolved to discover them and establish them in society.

Keywords: Subjugation, Male dominance, suppression, Empowerment, New woman

I. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment means increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of an individual as well as community. It provides confidence for their activity and also improves their capacities. The freedom of woman helps

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her to decide her own wish in marriage education and employment which ultimately leads her to empowerment. Empowerment helps women to challenge the patriarchal ideology and male domination. Empowered women have the courage to decide her Choice of living. She has the ability to identify her ambition and focus on the activities to achieve her goal. She has the capacity to recognize

where she is in the era of Globalization. Empowerment helps to achieve equality with men or at least she can reduce the gender biased discrimination in the patriarchal society by breaking the stereotypical images of women. Women were suppressed for ages and they were denied to participate in social and political activities. In India Postcolonial period is a time of transition for women from tradition to modernity due to various liberation movements and western education. The postcolonial literary writings reflect the liberation of women and their struggle to overcome the social, economic and gender biased discrimination and also delineates the various strategies and wise tactics used by women to empower themselves in the male dominated society. The women writers try to break the traditional images of women of being a devoted wife and mother. Their writings are mainly equipped with women's liberation and new image of women with different perspectives. The changes of theme in Indian writings from traditional role of women to modern and liberated role occurred in twentieth century. Anita Nair is a popular Indian novelist. She is a bold and straight forward writer. Her novels deal with the real life characters. The women characters tries to break the age old conventions. Anita Nair is bold in telling the truth however it is bitter. The characters may have extra marital affairs or sex before marriage but they realize the importance of removing the adultery to save their family life. Nair has written many novels and short

story collections. Ladies Coupe is one of her best novel which has been translated in many languages. The novel questions the position of women in a traditional bound society that sees women especially in the role of an obedient daughter, docile mother and wife, for breeding children. Anita Nair's women are boldly defy such docile role and assert self-dignity and personal freedom. The women characters are economically independent but still their life was controlled by others. Ladies Coupe is a novel that revolves around the central character Akhilawith whom five other women characters are connected with. Akhila, the 45 year old spinster never lived her life instead worked for the wellbeing of others. She was not identified by her name Akhila but she was acknowledged as daughter, sister and madam at office. She got a chance to meet five women: Janaki, Margret shanti, Sheela, Prabha Devi and Marikolunthu with different age, education and social background. Their stories helped Akhila to love her life and it also helped her to find the answer whether a woman can lead an autonomous life. The five women's way of approaching their problem in their life is shown in different perspectives, which suggest Akhila to use altered strategy which will suit her life.

Main Thrust

The traditional metaphor of purity associated with Indian female identity stands deeply questioned in Nair's novels, affirming with the approach of other postcolonial Indian female writers, who yearn for an individual space

through their writings, enabling them a proper release of repressed desires; by rejecting patriarchal hegemony, traditional womanhood and gender roles set by the Indian society. But women's emancipation in society: legal or economic, and from familial bondage as well as their escape from narrow gender roles, isn't always easy to achieve for women. Through her fiction she interpolates and introspects whether a woman is capable to live by herself. The representation of womanhood in Indian female writers is not uniform. Each author has cultivated her own brand in accordance with her personal philosophy and revelations about life. A close look at Nair's novels shows that both men and women want to search who they actually are. There's a good chance that today's women are very good at everything they do. But in their marriages, women have to rely on their husbands. But there are still people left in the society who oppose how men treat women. Regardless of what people think, it's easy for men to forcefully pitch their identity in the society. A woman, on the other hand, is more responsible for the success of family household tasks. In the postcolonial world, women have been made victims by men who are more powerful than them and have to deal with many harrowing experiences by virtue of that. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate Nair's important work, *Ladies Coupe*, through the lens of feminist theory, by examining the female protagonists' struggle to assert their uniqueness and seek refuge in a male-dominated socio-

cultural environment. The title of the book itself calls attention to how women are treated in India and their status as a second class citizen. She looks for strength and independence, and the movie shows that every woman has her own inner strength. The modern Indian woman is more open-minded than ever before. She like the character Akhila from the *Ladies Coupe* has resolved her dilemmas and is more stable in her emotions and in her thoughts than ever before, too. In real life, just like the characters in the book, women want to create a world that is all theirs in the truest sense. They want to break free from traditional norms and be free from inhibitions. Some people argue that the train journey represents Akhila's emotional journey. By the time she gets off the train at the other end, she is in just as much of a different place spiritually as she is physically. In fact, in Nair's *Ladies Coupé*, the rise of a new woman is the most important factor in female emancipation. Anita Nair presents the existential struggle of woman who denies to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. The woman emerging out of such situations is a defeated individual who undergoes much pain and suffering. Such characters exhibit a sense of insecurity due to their traumatic psychic experiences and also due to the collapse of one value system and the absence of enduring values. Thus, in *Ladies Coupe*, Anita Nair traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to self realization, self-denial to self-assertion and self-negation to self-affirmation. The feminist

voice is heard throughout the novel. Listening to the lives of various women in the coupe Akhila gets down at Kanyakumari as an empowered woman to rediscover herself. The more she wants to get rid of her life she had lived for others, she desires more of her life, that is more of Hari and executes her decision to get reunited connected him over phone. Finally she succeeds in her defiance against patriarchy. She subverts the repressive forces of patriarchal ideas that have chained her not letting to discover her self.

Conclusion

Identity is the state of mind that is established by the interaction with the fellow beings in the society and also by the recognition of the society. A woman's identity crisis is that where she struggles to achieve as a human being in the society and family. Earlier she was identified as wife, mother and daughter which she accepted willingly but later, she rejects the relational identity and she wants to stand freely on her feet as a human being, equal to man in the society. Anita Nair shows to us social realism of Indian Society. By this novel she reflected suffering of women and they want to self-discovery. They must have independence. Women need their own existence. In Indian society it is believed that women are inferior to men. If women are capable for take their decision but they ask for men. In present time woman has done earning with household works better way. The time came that our Indian Patriarchal society must need to change their thoughts and behaviour for

women. Anita Nair portraits condition of society and women want to emancipation from the cage. Women want to live their own way. Her women have been portrayed as intelligent, questioning women who are not contented with the injustice and rebellion against them. So Anita Nair's women raise the question of their way of life consolidated by patriarchy, and see it not only as the site of their oppression at home and in society but also make it a field of battle to vanquish their oppressors.

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