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**TOWARDS THE EMERGENCE OF AN AUTONOMOUS WOMAN:
ANITHA NAIR'S LADIES COUPE**

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ABSTRACT:

AnithaNairs best novel Ladies coupe portrays the condition of women in a Male – dominated society. It does have a different plot and the author does narrate her story in a different way. In terms of Language, Nair's Novels are very much contemporaryAnitha Nair's Ladies coupe is a profound discourse of womanism. All the characters of this "female enclave" without exception go through the gruelling experiences of domestic oppression at the hands of their families and every one of them acquires animplacable resilience not only to stay alive, but even to discover their inner source of dynamism and creative wellspring. The novel unfolds itself against the background of a train journey and each of these characters narrates the story of her life as a train chugs, trundles and troops to its destination.Of all the saga of the six women, the most fascinating and most compellingly beautiful story is that of Akhila. Who finally emerges as a skilled obstacle – racing champion of life. The harshness of life and its cruel blows have only triggered her in exhaustible well springs of dynamism.

Ladies coupe is structured in parts where Akhila's narrative comes alternately after the personal narratives recounted by each of the five fellow travellers, Janaki, Sheela, Margaret Shanthi, Prabha Devi, and Marikolanthu. Telling of personal narratives has been acknowledged as a means of forging identify According to Elinorochs and Lisa capps: "Narrative and the self as inseperable in the sense that narrative is born out experience and simultaneously gives shape to it". (N S .19)

One solo chapter is devoted to the story of each of these five narrators who in their different ways through their stories try not only to answer Akhila's question, but put their own actions and experiences in justifiable structures. The third person Omniscient narrator Notes, "All these women are trying to make some sense of their own existence by talking about it to anyone who will listen " (136). The picture of Akhila's life that emerges is a microcosm of the contradictions of everyday life of frustrations and fulfilments, attacks and helplessness. And in the secure space of ladies coupe as all these stories surface and interact with each other, it facilitates a sort of self discovery as well as self fashioning for all its tellers and listeners.

Identify is defined only in terms of others. The fact Janaki the most elderly of all, volunteers to relate her story first to help Akhila trace the decision of life. Akhila's Interior growth is also marked by her ability to take risks. All along she has been taking " the risk of Independence" (Peck 134). It is this inner dynamism that propels her to board the train to kanniyakumari, all in her own sweet company. According to scott peck, risk taking is an important trait of people who are on the quest. Peck clarified:

Thus all life itself represents a risk and the more lovingly we live our lives the more risks we take of the thousands may be even millions, of risks we can take in a life time the greatest is the rise of growing up. Growing up is the act of stepping from childhood into adulthood. Actually it is more of a fearful leap that a step, and it is a leap that many really take in their life times. (134. Peck)

It is this act of undaunted courage that beckons Akhila to take calculated risks in her long trek to freedom. The narrator positively affirms her rational bend of mind" Akhila was not a creature of impulse she took time over every decisions she pondered, deliberated , slept over it and only when she had examined every single nuance and point of view did she make up her mind "(2)Akhila who was " excluded" and "dislocated" gradually discovers what life and love are she has a penchant for solitary reflections. Answers to life's questions surface. She senses that she is very close to some deep experience and muses happily. She feels that she is successfully journeying to the source of fulfilment. She thinks aloud.

Perhaps if I let myself, I too will arrive at happiness. A wild warning a magic content, an inner peace, all from knowing that the past years haven't been in vain and what lies ahead will bring forth more than what I have resigned myself to accepting as my lot. Perhaps it is not too late, Akhila thought. That while what she had lost might be irretrievable, life would toss forth second chance. Like it had for Janaki and for Margaret too in some convoluted way. And then Akhila remembered that there had been the makings of a second chance, but she had not known it to be so at that time..... (154.55)

Akhila has been at the sea Breeze hotel for two days all by herself unashamed and unbashful. she encounters a young man on the beach. She casually picks up a conversation with him' which is an expression of her inner freedom, which would have been unthinkable in former days. Thus it is she who makes the first move "Akhila sets herself a little game: if he makes the first move, I will go no further. I don't want a man trying to broaden his horizon with my body "(272). Akhila who has been so " Frozen out" now begin to call the shots. It an expression of her freedom from oppressive shackles. She like a new asserts her individuality with sparkling confidence. "When he reaches to switch off the light, she still his hand. "what are you ashamed of ? she asks (274).

Having discovered her true self in shared love, Akhila experiences world of pure sensations. The new woman in her is manifested by her body language. She exults in her new found identify and liberty. She cannot hide her exuberance, "This is who Akhila is, Together and separate. Akhila knows this as he body moves through a catacomb of sensations. One wave after another hurling for so many years (275).

Akhila's life now moves in the direction of an ideal social matrix where men and women can become "multi-way bridges" gracefully resonating the consonance of maleness and femaleness without sacrificing her independence as a woman, she has been able to make a life with a man. She thus a life with a man. She thus represents the image of the new Indian women, who can enter into successful and harmonious relationship with men, anchored in mutual freedom and respect without allowing themselves to end up as subjugated sex mates and glorified house keepers. Hence it can be rightly said that Anita Nair's ladies coupe is not only a very potent novel about the womanist discourse but also of a humanist discourse.

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