

BETRAYAL OF THE SELF - "AKLIANDESWARI" IN *LADIES COUPE*

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Abstract

Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe focuses on the latest strength which every individual has. Though ladies do not disclose their life stories to each other in journeys, the protagonist, Akila gets to know her fellow travelers in the intimate atmosphere of the Ladies Coupe which she shares with five other women. This is a story of Akila, forty five and single, income-tax clerk, a woman who has never been permitted to live her own life.

Keywords: *Betrayal, Sensibility and Sexual Emancipation.*

Introduction

"Life" is the best thing among all things that god has given to us. It is not wrong to have self-centered thinking at times in life. In fact, at one point it is a must that we think about our own lives. Love, care, concern and sacrifice are needed to remain as a happy family. In turn everybody should reciprocate all these qualities in a family. When it is not reciprocated it becomes mere exploitation. It is the case of Akila so called Akilandeswari in the novel "Ladies Coupe". Being the bread winner of the family she sacrifices all her desires. No one cares about the feelings of Akila not even her mother. Her mother does not show any concentration upon Akila's life. She aims to settle the future of other siblings but abandons Akila. This paper aims to focus the self-deception of Akila. For the sake of her family, she does not express her feelings and interest about her own life which lies deep within her heart. Anita Nair vividly narrates the pain and longing that lies deep in Akila. The character "Akilandeswari" is a mere projection of a many women in society.

Women as a Bread-Winner doesn't mean that she should not possess any feelings of her own. Akila after reaching forty years realizes that she has been deceiving herself in the name of the family. She also introspects about living a single life and its challenges in the society. The idea she gets from her travel mates makes her understand things better. The journey undertaken by Akila can be viewed into different meanings. Journey to Kanniyakumari and the journey through herself. Her self-deception has destructed her youth life. Her decision to

travel seems to be an outcome of the suppressed desires. She further says that at this juncture of life, "Marriage is unimportant, companionships, yes. I would like that. The problem is, I wish to live by myself but everyone tells me that a woman can't live alone. What do you think? Can a woman live by herself?" (Nair 21).

Akila boards the train for Kanyakumari in search of a viable answer to what worries her. In fact, she joins other women travelers in the Ladies Coupe: Prabha Devi, Janaki Devi, Margaret Shanti, fourteen year old Sheela and Marikilunthu are of different age group and come from diverse economic, cultural, social environment but somehow all have been denied their natural self to grow.

Akila listens to the stories of these co-passengers and she was drawn into the most private moments of their lives, finding in them a solution to the question that has been with her for all her life. She identified who she is and what is her need to fulfill her life. The revelation of the five co-passengers leads Akila towards the path of self-actualization, self-realization and self-fulfillment. Like her fellow travelers, she too is determined to break free from all that her conservative life has bound her to by liberating oneself from the clutches of family a woman can survive only if she has inculcated in her the culture of self-dependence- both physical and mental. But she represents the changing image of woman in today's time- a major theme of the novel. Akila's extramarital adventure certainly indicates the moves towards sexual emancipation. The female characters of Nair are strong, dynamic and articulate their views. Nair's portrayal of women lacking

moral values reflects the moral degradation present in society.

References

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