

FEMINISTIC ANGUISH IN THE NOVELS OF SIVASANKARI'S *BRIDGES* AND ANITA NAIR'S *LADIES COUPE*: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Indian Writing in English is a vast area today, with several new trends Emerging new talents making their mark, new creative and critical branches spreading in different directions. Indian writing in English is getting critical responses all over the world. Indian English is fiction expresses the Indian sensibility in a remarkable way. Indian writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and others. The post-independence india witnessed a spout of fiction writing women writers of greater quality and depth. Some of the most outstanding woman novelists are Sashi Despande, Mehta, Anita Nair, Anita Desai.

Comparative literature is a study in terms of comparisons and contrasts of similarities and dissimilarities of literature and cultures and countries more than one in order to contribute to the mutual appreciation of literary experiences of various peoples. No doubt it is a part of literature history concerning different literary trends of varying national backgrounds. It is also a collection of theories arising out of the existing literary practices and conventions independent and therefore not borrowed from other nations and cultures. Lastly, Comparative literature by itself is creative, not a mere extension of the field of literary criticism. Since comparativism is independent of traditional criticism.

Anita Nair narrates her stories from a wide variety of perspectives, concentrating upon the concept of self within a large society. She has a special eye on characters who are

adventures and explorers, rather than refugees and outcasts and are part and parcel of the new changing society. Anita Nair concentrated on the emotional, intellectual and physical responses of a group of characters when they are placed in a situation not routine to them. She feels that psychic violence leaves a stronger impact on than mind then physical violence on the body. Therefore, her women characters make for interesting psychological studies. There is a continuous urge in her women to build up their fragmented life and to express their affirmation to life. True enough, while they attempt to do so, they appear abnormal in their behavior but this is only a bid to live life on their own terms.

In the novel *Bridges* the female characters are always follows the tradition and superstitious beliefs through that they suffered a lot even though they suffered they are not oppose the customs of their generations. And they all follows the words of male of their family and gave them more important. The novel *Bridges* consists of three generations of female characters. Each generation is different from one another. But all the generations the female characters are treated like the same. In the first generation 1907-1931 the character Sivakammu suffered because of the family members because they compelled her to follow the beliefs. Then in the second generation the character Mythili even though her husband was against the beliefs her family members are not accept it so she also follows the beliefs of her elders.

Feminism is, indeed, a serious attempt to analyze, comprehend and clarify how and why feminity or the feminine sensibility is different from masculinity or the masculine experience. The term Feminism has its origin from the Latin word Femina meaning Woman and thereby refers to the advocacy of woman's rights, status and power. The term

Feminism is an ideology in the making. According to Oxford English Dictionary, the term Feminism was used in the latter part of the nineteenth century and it means having the qualities of females.

Anita Nair is a renowned Indian English writer. She is a fine writer with a great sense of characters, a vivid knowledge of Indian Culture and an eye for telling detail. She was born at Shornur in the state of Kerala. Among various Indian writers, Anita Nair is easily accepted as an efficient Practitioner of the gem of fiction. Her books are set in the everyday world of India. Nair mesmerizes the reader with her evocative language and descriptions in which her novels abound. For Nair, Kerala is the source of inspiration, weakness and strength.

Anita Nair (born January 26, 1966) is an Indian English Language writer. Nair was born in Shornur in the state of Kerala. Nair was educated in Chennai (Madras) before returning to Kerala, where she gained a BA in English Language and Literature. She lives in Bangalore. Nair was working as the creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories called *Satyr of the Subway*, which she sold to Har-Anand Press. The book won her a fellowship from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Nair's second book was published by Penguin India, and was the first book by an Indian author to be published by Picador USA. A bestselling author of fiction and poetry, Nair's novels *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe* have been translated into 21 languages.

In, 2002, *Ladies Coupe* was elected as one of the five best in India. The novel is about women's conditions in a male dominated society, told with great insight, solidarity

and humour. The novel *Ladies Coupe* is about the story of a woman's search for strength and independence. Meet Akhilandeshwari, Akhila for short: forty-five and single, an income-tax clerk, and a woman who has never been allowed to live her own life - always the daughter, the sister, the aunt, the provider. Until the day she gets herself a one-way ticket to the seaside town of Kanyakumari, gloriously alone for the first time in her life and determined to break free of all that her conservative Tamil Brahmin life has bound her to. In the intimate atmosphere of the ladies coupé which she shares with five other women, Akhila gets to know her fellow travelers.

The protagonists and other five women characters not only endure life's hardships stoically but in the process also emerge stronger, providing sustenance and equilibrium to the entire community. On the contrary, they are docile and submissive and they suffered because of rape abortion, madness, betrayal and we can see that how each one copes with them. Janaki, the oldest of them, a dutiful wife says, "I am a woman who has always been looked after. First there ways my father and my brothers; then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son. Waiting to take off from where his father left off. Women like me end up being fragile". (22)

Anita Nair's characters strive to attain their space in a male congested society. Margaret emerges as a complex blend of the 'silent women' and 'rebellious woman'. Her individual identity was controlled by her husband. Making her toy with the idea of revenge tired of her husband's domination, she seeks freedom in an unusual fashion. She feeds her husband with irresistible delicacies, she feeds him, until he is fat thereby reducing him to a caricature of his former self.

Prabhadevi is a typical example of a woman who loses her identity and a sense of self

worth several years down the marriage line. It is one day, while watching the swimming pool that she decides to again be her own self. As she slides into the swimming pool, the water touches her body and she gets a feeling of liberation. For too long she had denied herself the pleasure of being herself. Nair bring out the urge present in every woman to experience liberty and freedom.

Marikolunthu, another passenger in coupe, admits that she was raped. Though no fault of hers she was blamed and traumatized for making herself available. She decides to fight back, takes revenge and feels relaxed and content. In spite of the onslaughts of the fate Marikolunthu emerges as a strong independent woman trying to strike an equilibrium in her otherwise chaotic life.

Akhila ponders on all the stories that she has feared, yet undecided about her line of action. Was she to follow Sheela Vasudevan, a young girl of 14 who understood the meaning of liberty and did exactly what she wanted? Akhila was suddenly struck by the condition of individual lives. This sets Akhila thinking that the other women are merely patterns of consciousness of a single psyche. All these women, in one way or another advise Akhila to go against social pressures and to discover herself. All of them are mates not only in her physical journey in the ladies compartment of the train, ladies coupe but also in her spiritual and psychological journey.

The answer to the question whether a woman can survive alone, is yes, she can, the security provided by marriages is illusory. Women must be courageous and claim their own lives and possibilities. The coupe becomes a metaphor for a utopian world that is liberated from patriarchy, one that is not characterized by false binaries. In the novel 'Ladies Coupe', Nair has created Akhila's character which is universal. Akhila symbolizes the Indian woman

whose inner strength when evoked can be an epitome of strength and courage.

Sivasankari (born October 14, 1942) is a popular Tamil writer and activist. She is one of the four Tamil writers asked by the United States Library of Congress to record their voice as part of the South Asian article on Sivashankari. Sivasankari was born in Madras. One of her novels was made into the film 47 Natkal (1981) directed by K.Balachandar and starred Chiranjeevi and Jayaprada. She is author of the novel, which was made into a TV series called as Subah on Doordarshan in 1987.

Bridges is a saga of three generations of upper caste Tamil women. The novel gives the reader rare glimpses into customs and traditions typical of each period it covers - with an unjaudiced eye, great attention to detail, compassion and humor. The women in *Bridges* are the central figures in the novel - are quite often strong characters. Even the orthodox widow of the early part of the 20th century, with her blind acceptance of hidebound belief systems and rituals, emerges as a personality in her own right, a sense of duty and devotion to family underlying her every action. Each succeeding generation of women is stronger and more emancipated than the previous one. The story spans nearly a century and although its women have different life experiences, the leitmotif is the strength that runs through all of them, making each react with courage and dignity to whatever life offers. The men too provide an interesting mix of characters, each a product of his time and milieu. In the process of telling this compelling family history, Sivasankari succeeds in capturing the many nuances of the lifestyles of the times.

In this novel also we have three generation of women and they followed the customs and tradition of their tradition. And in this novel also the female characters are suffered by the male and mother in laws domination. Especially in first generation the character Sivakammu suffered

a lot because of her mother in law because her mother in law insists her follow the tradition perfectly and she says her to follow the words of male of her family. Then in second generation we have Mythili she also suffered not by her husband but by her mother in law and grandmother. Because when her husband allows her to free her mother doesn't allow her and she always insists her to do the rituals of their family. Then we have the third generation in that the character Charu always suffered by her husband so she decided to free from him and she get divorce from him and settled down in Poona. Where she lives lonely with her child and her aunt namely Vimala insists her to do the traditional works.

Through this three family Sivasankari the author explain the concept of feminism. The character Charu lives her life lonely in Poona and her child lives life modernity there. And we can compare this third generation with *Ladies Coupe* because in *Ladies Coupe* the Character Akhila first suffered a lot and she always help her family but no one care about her. Same like in Charu's life she suffered a lot by her husband then she decided to lead her life Independently. Same like Akhila at the end of the novel she also decided to lead her life independently.

Bridges represents male domination and also the rituals and superstitious beliefs where as *Ladies Coupe* fully represents the male domination so Anita Nair writes about the sympathy of women, which made by men in our society. Even though the women are in the 20th century they follows the superstitious beliefs it cause them a difficult situation but they didn't come out of that. We think that women has developed fast, we do not know that how many women are suffered by men. Even though they suffered they do not have the brave to say about their sufferings openly because of our customs and culture not only men woman also be against of

another woman in our society. We expect that the society should be help to develop the life of women and also give safe to the women.

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