



# Need For Gender Equality: A Critical Study Of The Novels Ladies Coupe And Mahashweta

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*Abstract:* Men and women have equal roles to play in Society. However, women's roles are subjugated and marginalized. Most of the time, their voices are not heard. 'Ladies Coupe' by Anita Nair and 'Mahashweta' by Sudha Murthy delve into the unspoken desires and frustrations of young women trapped in marriages and expose the silent struggles of Indian women. This paper analyses how Society portrays women as inferior. It explores how men oppress women for their gains and how other women impose oppression. By depicting this, the paper aims to convey the vital need for gender equality

*Index Terms* - Gender inequality, patriarchy, societal expectations, and women's desires.

## INTRODUCTION:

In this 20th century, the world is growing very fast. A lot of development took place in many fields. However, there is a lack of equality in every development. Gender inequality affects all the people throughout the world. Till now, women are not able to participate in many roles. Society has divided men's and women's duties, forcing them to accept them. This paper aims to portray the importance of gender equality in Society through selected works.

Anita Nair is an essential figure in Indian English literature; she was born in Kerala. She is a poet, novelist, essayist, and playwright. Her works are The Better Man, Ladies Coupé, Mistress, Lessons in Forgetting, etc. She has authored the crime series Inspector Gowda. She has received many awards, including the Central Sahitya Academi Award, the National Film Award, and the Crossword Prize. Her books have been translated into many languages worldwide.

Sudha Murty was born in Karnataka. She is the first female engineer to be in India. She gives her voice for women's rights and children's education. She supports the use of technology in education in Karnataka. She started the Murty Classical Library of India at Harvard. She worked as a professor at Christ University. Her works have made an enormous contribution to literature. The Mother I never knew Three Thousand Stitches, The Man from the Egg, and Mahashweta. She has received many Awards, including the Best Teacher Award, Award, R.K. Narayan's Award, Lifetime Achievement Award, etc.

#### *Glimpse of the novels:*

Ladies Coupe by Anita Nair' was published in 2001. The protagonist of the novel is Akhilandeshwari. She was 45 years old. She works as a clerk in the income tax office. She has worked for her father, mother, brothers, and sister. Until her realization, she thinks about their life. But at one stage of her life, she starts thinking about who she is and her needs. With all these questions, she travels in her life. One day, she travels to Kanyakumari by train. She met 5 women on that train: Janaki, Margaret Shanti, Prabha Devi, Sheela, and Marikolanthu. She hears the incidents happening in their life and tries to seek the answers to her questions.

*Mahashweta by Sudha Murty* has links with Banabhatta's classic work, Kadambari. Kadambari by Banabhatta ends happily. But life is not the bed of roses. So, Sudha Murty ends Mahashweta with sorrow. The protagonist of the novel is Anupama. She is an intelligent person. She had a huge interest in acting in the plays. Throughout the book, she has worked in many plays. Dr. Anand was fascinated by her beauty. Both of their families agree to their marriage. After marriage, she suffered from leukoderma. Because of this, she was sent from her in-law's house. Her father and her stepmother start to hate her. Her husband also left her with sorrow. With all courage, she went to Mumbai and worked as a clerk. Later, she worked as a Sanskrit Lecturer in a local college. Ultimately, she rejects Anand's proposal and lives her life alone with courage.

#### *Need for gender equality:*

Men play an equal role in Society. But most of the time, women's roles are marginalized. So, gender inequality occurs in all aspects of Society. When the children are born, roles are segregated for them by their gender. Education, family, religion, law, and many other factors recreate the structure. If anybody come out of this structure, they will be heavily criticized. Men must be robust and courageous and should not cry. Without anyone's permission, they can make their own decisions. In the eyes of Society, they are the ones who should be taking care of their family. For women, they should be emotional. They should be expressive. They should depend on men in every activity, and they don't have any writing to decide. In the novel Ladies Coupe by Anita Nair Akilla, a child, her friend, Karpagam, brought a long pencil. So, Akilla liked it. But when she asks her mother to buy a pencil, her mother says Karpagam's mother cannot afford that pencil because she is going for a job. But she cannot buy that kind of thing because their family depends on their father's salary. When Akilla finds that her mother has the habit of good singing, she

suggests she teach singing as Karpagam's mother. But her mother dislikes Karpagam's mother because she is going to the job. She is not able to accept the reality. She says her father will not agree with this decision. Before their marriage, he says:

“If I wanted a working wife, then I would have married someone like that,” he told me when we were first married. “I want my wife to take care of my children and me. I don’t want her so caught up with her job that she has no time for the house or for taking care of my needs.”(13).

Her family would have been better if she had gone to the job. She could also have bought a pencil for her daughter.

Thus, despite her poverty and her daughter's happiness, she prioritized Society's expectations.

Society sees women as a beautiful object. When their beauty disappears, Society questions their dignity. Her needs, talents, and everything will be shuttered. She starts to lose her self-confidence. In the novel Mahashweta by Sudha Murty, Anupama is stronger. Annand was utterly fascinated by her beauty. He did not care about her talents in acting in plays, her interest in providing education to poor people, and her needs in life. But her sister-in-law was not happy with her beauty. Through this, the paper tries picturing the stereotypes of women's beauty. In that novel, when Anupama had a leukoderma, they never treated her as a human.

Along with her husband, her father, her stepmother, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and stepmother saw her as a curse. The whole village started to spread rumors about her. All the people made her think about the suicide. She repeatedly sends the letters to her husband, but he refused to answer any of the letters. He never thinks about Anupama as a woman and his wife as having equal rights in Society. He accepts his mother and is ready to marry.

Thus, Society made women accept the rules as they are. It did not let them question or criticize the regulations. The paper tries to expand this with the essay Understanding Patriarchy by Bell Hooks. In that essay, the author narrates her life incidents to the readers. She likes to play the marbles with her brother. But her father asked her to stop because it was a boys' game. Because of her interest, she didn't stop to play. So, her father takes a board and starts to beat her. He says, "You're just a little girl. When I tell you to do something, I mean for you to do it."(hooks2). When she was crying, her mother came, and she served as a mouthpiece for her father. She says, "I tried to warn you. You need to accept that you are just a little girl and girls can't do what boys do."(hooks2). Her mother didn't even say that her father had done wrong; she accepted the ideas of the patriarchy. Rather than men alone spreading, patriarchy society uses women as a tool to spread patriarchy.

Apart from this, women are treated as sexual objects. There, my entire life will be destroyed by this. If women are abused, Society is not ready to hear their voices. Instead, they try to prove that they suffered because they didn't follow the rules made for them. Otherwise, they are heavily criticized for stating that

they are spreading rumors for their gain. In *Ladies Coupe* by Anita Nair, The small girl Marikolunthu was raped by a wealthy man in the village. While doing this, he assures her no one will believe her. When she tries to address her problem with her mother, she doesn't believe her and calls her a slut.

Thus, in all aspects of Society, women are treated as others. In her book, Simone de Beauvoir's "Second Sex," Beauvoir pictures how women have been consistently portrayed as "others" throughout history. According to her, every Woman is mainly understood in the context of her relationship with men; Woman is not an individual autonomy. This objectification portrays women as objects free from feelings, emotions, and desires. Women should have the quality of being soft, nurturing, and taking care of people. Whatever men say, women should accept without a doubt. Otherwise, their life will be miserable.

The paper tries to create a society full of opportunities for people to pursue their lives as they wish. This paper emphasizes the importance of identity. Because of the separate roles for each gender, people lose their identity.

#### *Summation:*

The paper emphasizes the positive solutions to the problem. Both genders should survive in this world with their own identity. This paper tries to convey the intricate ways men and women experience suppression. Examining various facets, it aims to illustrate how societal norms impel men to repress themselves and women to suppress themselves. Thus, this paper concludes that every gender has its feelings and emotions. So, the paper emphasizes an equal amount of respect for the feelings of every gender.

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