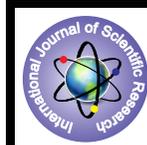


Positive Concept of Marital Life



Social Science

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ABSTRACT

Ladies Coupe is an enlightening attempt to reveal the psychological trauma. It is about five women who talk freely about their personal relationships which ultimately leads to a mutual sensitivity about their needs. The novel has two sides one is the positive and negative concepts. Here Janaki is the older generation woman who had a positive notion on marital life and she believes that woman can not live alone and she need help from her husband and son.

There is old Janaki married for forty years to a man absolutely adores her. In spite of her mood swings, she cannot understand Akhila because she thinks it is unnatural for a woman wanting to stay alone without a husband for a prop. Then there is Margaret Shanthi, a gold medallist in chemistry, married to a narcissistic husband, whom she gradually grows to hate. At one point, blind love for him had compelled her to abort her child only because her thought it was the right thing to do. As their marriage grows, so does his indifference towards her, making her toy with the idea of revenge. This she does by cooking sumptuous meals for him which he cannot resist thereby reducing him to a caricature of his former self. Her revenge is complete. Prabha Devi, is a typical example of a woman who loses her identity and her sense of self worth several years down the marriage time. Marikolanthu whose character is the most interesting, has suffered personal anguish more than all of them put together. Her plans for her future come to a halt after she is raped at the age of eighteen in her village. She forsakes her son soon after his birth, unwilling to acknowledge his place in her life, and is ostracized by her brothers. For a brief period she becomes the lover of the mistress Sujata akka and her husband Sridhar anna much misunderstood. She is asked to leave. Her perpetrator later dies with him for her bitterness. She accepts her son. As for akka, Akhils gives up the love of a younger man, Hari, for fear of social contempt. Now she reduces a younger man to prove to herself that this sort of relationship does not matter. She then gives her desire and calls up. Hari, wondering if he would still has her affection after so many years.

The three women Janaki, Margaret Shanthi and Prabha Devi from ladies compartment look marriage from totally opposite perspectives. They are tolerant in their married lives but gradually Margaret Shanthi changes her life according to her will while Janaki remains comfortable being submissive all through her life and Prabha Devi lives an acquiescent life and seeks happiness. 'Marriage' is usually considered as a destiny traditionally offered to women by society and this is clearly depicted by Anita Nair in her work *Ladies Coupe*.

Mutual understanding between the husband and wife

Janaki, an elderly lady, is an ideal wife, submissive, tolerant and her sacrifice makes her what she is. She is confused and cannot understand that though she has not even spoken to the man until their first night together, it is suddenly okay even if he undress her and that as her aunties said, it is the solemn duty of every woman to please their husband and be submissive to what ever he does. In spite of the series of adjustment by Janaki, she is not recognised as equal to her husband, Prabhakar. For Janaki, marriage provides greater fulfilment and happiness than staying unmarried. Janaki recalls her marriage which was according to traditional customs, "Theirs was an arranged marriage; the horoscopes matched, the families liked each other and they were considered perfectly suited for each other. Janaki didn't know what to expect of marriage". (24)

As per the custom of Indian traditional mode of preparing a woman for marriage. Janaki is groomed by her mother and aunts to perfect her in all the "skills of marriage-cooking and cleaning, sewing and pickling ... she wasn't expected to know what it really meant to be married" (25). Her aunts main intention is to advice her to hold the strings of marriage no matter whatever is the altitude of the man. They said "That if she didn't give him what he wanted, he would go looking for it elsewhere" (25). So Janaki learns to conquer her revulsion, match her husband's careless and she discovers the pleasure hidden in togetherness within weeks after her marriage.

Janaki is well cared and adored by her husband. Being married for forty years, she lines a life with a man who makes her feel comfortable and happy in all aspects of her life to the extent that, Janaki is unable to think or to act on her own. When she gives birth to a son she feels proud that like a perfect wife, she gave birth to a son. The duty of a good wife according to the Indian Manu, the Hindu law giver. Each time "they looked at the child and saw themselves in him. He was an extension of their images".(28) Janaki and Prabhakar's married life is fulfilled to a large extend by their son whom both are proud of.

At parties they were the golden couple. When she was ready to leave, he knew it would rise from his chair, setting aside the drink he had been nursing all evening. She would smile and murmur polite words of farewell while he pumped various hands and laughed through his leave -taking. (29).

Thiers is an understanding of each other's needs and their strong blend is forged over a long period of her husband who pampers her. Janaki says that all men, even Prabhakar grew bald a little but still insists on checking the door after the door is locked when she is in. She also states that, "The beating of his heart slowed him down, sometimes it crashed in his ears, but he didn't forget his place as a husband, father and provider" (31). After the forty years of married life, its marriage that fills her with satisfaction security, happiness and pride. This is revealed when she tells her co passenger Akhila, "Tell me, do you know of any other couple like us? Our son is well settled. We are secure and healthy. We live in our own house. After forty years together, what more can one ask for?" (31)

This is perfect companionship and friendship between the couple. It is trust, mutual understanding, love communication, and acceptance which bring domestic peace to their marital relationship. Prabhakar gives a helping hand in the household chores whenever Janaki need it.

A synchronized performance that year of practice had fine-tuned to perfection. He chopped. She cooked. He washed the dishes. She dried and stacked them. She hung out the clothes to dry. He brought them in. She turned down the bedclothes. He switched off the lights (33).

This kind of love makes the woman absolutely dependent on the man. She is unable to do a single thing in the house without his help. When their daughter -in-law, Jaya talks of her own mother she says, "Even since Papa died, Mamma has had to do everything by herself. But she says that has made her a stronger woman than most" (34). The hint makes Prabhakar defend his wife and he says, just because she needs me to open the mixer jar or chop onions for her, you mustn't think mummy is a weak woman... she might seem delicate and cosseted to you, but she is a strong woman. Mummy us very capable when she wants to be (34).

Janaki does not worry about the space 'she should get in marriage because she takes the role of a wife for granted, as she has no expectations from it'. There is no marital discard as such, but certain aspects make her feel uneasy, especially when Prabhakar refers to her as 'mummy' she wants to scream, Don't call me mummy. I'm not your mummy. I am your wife. Remember, you used to call me Janu once. Wife. Darling. sweetheart. And if you find it hard saying those, call me woman, but don't call me mummy "(34).

Whenever their son, Siddharth asks Janaki, "mummy, when daddy is gone, how will you, stay by herself in that huge house?" (35). Janaki is petrified. The very thought of her husband's death and being no more fills her eyes with tears and a fear creeps into her. She is unable to think of being "Alone, alone" (35). Friction develops between mother and son after the marriage of Siddharth. She finds that is a transformation in his character. There were take side (36).

Siddharth tells his mother that she has been spoiled by her family and also by his dad. He blames her for behaving like a princess wanting everything to be done by others, in her own way. He also compares her with his mother -in-law and unkindly asks, "when have you ever thought of anyone but yourself?" (36) This makes Janaki feels her husband in directly responsible for her trouble and suffering. Prabhakar hearing all this comes from his room and says in an ice-cold voice, "Janaki, pack your things. We are leaving right now. You don't have to take any of this nonsense from him. How dare he talk to you in that tone of voice". (36) This concern and understanding shown by her husband helps Janaki regains her strength. It relieves her of her sorrows and pain. Siddharth blames his father for making Janaki the way she is. However Prabhakar is not ready to listen to his son's words. Instead he wants his son to apologize to his mother saying, "all if blame to Janaki and she feels a sense of belonging and trust in Prabhakar's strength. Their relationship grows stronger

as the years pass by they rely on each other for comfort, support, love and care. Janaki has ever expressed her love for him through words in spite of living with him for so long. For the first time she whispers, "I am lived of sharing you with everyone, I want you to myself". (38) The warmth between them is felt and understood by the concern they have for each other. Their love for each other is strong, true, and pure and gains its strength in the togetherness of years. Prabhakar, is an understanding husband who respects Janaki's individuality and feelings. Janaki also accommodates her body and mind to marriage and what it offers to her in life. From a wife to a mother to grandmother Janaki's life actions revolve around the necessitated care of her husband.

Conclusion:

Thus this couple is portrayed and considered as the "Golden Couple". Rachel Bari observes the nature of a woman as, "un protesting and self - sacrificing nature is typical of the ideal traditional Indian wife and mother". (44) Prabhakar, is a provider and supporter, caretaker who loves his wife and son. He is the ideal husband and father. Married for so long, they are still in the process "of hand holding hand, hear linking heart heading in the direction of a successful marriage and everlasting love" (ibid).

REFERENCE

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