CHAPTER IV
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Introduction

In this chapter two novels of Anita Nair are examined. The first novel we examine is The Better Man (1999) in which Anita Nair shows the oppression of a man named Mukundan by his father. In the second novel, Ladies Coupé (2001), Anita Nair portrays the life of a woman, Akhila, who sacrificed her life and did not get married according to her family’s wishes. Akhila had some questions. In order to find out their answers she listened to different life stories of women who were with her in the same coupé.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy means the rule of the father. Anthropologists first used it to describe this condition in all societies. The older male has a privileged position in relation to other members of the society, younger males and those males not related by blood. Feminists do not restrict the term to a certain kind of society but use it refer to male dominance as found in all societies.

Anita Nair in The Better Man illustrates the concept of patriarchy in relation to male domination. She shows how the rules of the father operate in the family and the extension of his power in the society. Mukundan was brought up to follow his father’s wishes. He was not allowed to do anything according to his own wishes. For example,
When Mukundan was thirteen, he loved literature but his father did not want his son to be a writer. So, he restricted him to writing only official letters. Later on he did not dare read any books, because: “It caused too many inexplicable emotions to surface.”(Nair-1999: 18)

Patriarchy as Kate Millett describes is twofold; first, the female is dominated by the male and second, the younger male is dominated by the older. The forms of patriarchy vary according to place and historical background of the society in which these forms occur.

Sylvia Walby (Adbott-1988) in her book *The Theorizing Patriarchy* defines patriarchy as private and public. She explains that the former refers to men’s control over women in the family and the second refers to men’s control over women in the marketplace. Looking at Achunthan one could see that his patriarchal power over men extended beyond the private domain to the public where he subordinated villagers outside of his immediate family relations. Once Krishnan said: “...I am filled with a strange nervousness and find myself stammering and faltering when I speak to him” (Nair-1999:45). Achunthan as a father in a patriarchal system subordinated both—the mother and the son.

*Patriarchy* is explained and defined in a number of ways. Women face various kinds of patriarchy in their everyday lives. Patriarchy is a system of symbols that provide the male control over woman’s sexuality and fertility and that are used as to affirm the authority of the institution of male domination (Widge-1995). Patriarchy is also used to characterize the system and social arrangements that organize and maintain women’s
oppression. In all spheres of social life, patriarchy can be seen; it is not constrained to 
the family, it extends to the economy, policy, medical science and many other 
institutions. Patriarchy describes how the father's role extends to the public and 
determines which roles women have to play in public (Widge-1995:39).

The male-dominated system persuades men to think only of their assets and property. 
Whatever they do is in order to maintain and improve their assets. For example at 
fifteen, Prabha Devi moved from the family-owned school to a convent school to be 
groomed well by nuns, speak English properly, and to be learn to be more fashionable. 
The way her father brought her up and the facilities he provided her were in order to 
find a groom who might help him in his career. In other words he invested in her.

Luce Irigaray (1985:22) uses the theory of sexual difference to explain the system of 
patriarchy and its values. She uses Freud's thought to elaborate the theory of sexuality 
because he deals with an issue that applies to all thinking — the sexual indifference 
underlies the truth of any science and logic of every discourse. This form of sexuality is 
defined in terms of the masculine. The feminine is defined in terms of deficiency as the 
other sex has a monopoly on value. Her sexual identity is determined by as penis-envy. 
Irigaray (1985:69) asks how can one accept the idea that women's entire sexual 
development is governed by her lack of a male organ? The implication of this idea is 
that women's sexual evolution can never be understood in terms of the female sex itself. 
Freud in describing female sexuality completely overlooked the fact that this sexuality 
might have its source specific to the female.
Luce Irigaray (1985:70) sees Freud as being trapped in a patriarchal power structure and ideology. One symptom of the fact that Freud’s discourse belongs to an unanalyzed tradition lies in his tendency to consider the anatomy as the only reliable criteria of truth. Irigaray adds that no science is perfect, and scientific data is interpreted in different way (1985:71).

However, no such consideration keeps Freud from justifying male aggressive activity and female passivity in terms of anatomical-physiological imperatives, especially those of reproduction. (Irigaray-1985:71)

It is obvious that the ovum is not as passive as Freud has claimed. He says, the power and value of penis come from its status as reproduction organ, and the female genital organs just participate in reproduction.

In order to protect and justify a theoretical position in his description of women’s sexual development, Freud takes support from features of the anatomy. Freud claims (Irigaray-1985:71) that “Anatomy is destiny.” Deriving their anatomical destiny from his conceptions of the libido women are taken as less favored by nature; they are frigid, nonaggressive, and nonpossessive. They are considered outsiders where cultural values are concerned unless they take part on them through some sort of mixed heredity, and so on. In other words, worth of their sex was denigrated.

Our society is based upon the exchange of women (as explained below). Women are told without the exchange of women, society falls back into the anarchy of natural world, the randomness of the animal kingdom. Social order is assured through men circulating women among themselves, according the rules of the incest taboo.
The source of female exchange is their identification as be "scarce commodities...essential to the life of the group," as Levi Strauss Claude (Iriagary-1985:170) says. The term scarcity appears, because of the polygamous tendency that exists in all men, that's why the number of available women seems insufficient. He adds even if the numbers of women are enough; these women are not all equally desirable therefore the most desirable women form a minority.

These exchanges are the base of patriarchal societies and occur exclusively among men. Women, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another, therefore the labour force and its products, including those of mother earth, are objects that are exchanged among them.

Man uses fear to maintain the position of father in the patriarchy system. Mukundan did not dare to help his mother and took her with himself to another city because of fear of his father. Fear can be added to the many ways that patriarchy controls men and women in society. Achunthan frightened others through his appearance to assert his superiority:

Only his eyes remain the same. Deep brown swamps of arrogance giving nothing away. Reflecting no emotion. They could be the eyes of a dead man or a murderer. The eyes of Achunthan Nair, Mukundan's father. (Nair-1999: 80)

He wore wooden clogs. Hearing its noise when he walked warned others to be ready to obey him.

Here is a man who has seen the world. Here is a man who is to be respected. Here is a man whose authority is not to be questioned. (Nair-1999:70)
Subjectivity

As Luisa Passerini (2000) says becoming a subject needs passing a complicated process that refers to different forms, actions and expressions of “collective subjects”. The subject is always in the process of construction. But to be a subject there is no need to be similar to others, because as Hegel (Passerini-2000) says to be an I means to be singular. Regarding this issue we see that Anita Nair hints at the wrong perception of Paru Kutty towards subjectivity. She persuaded Mukundan to be like her father.

Anita Nair’s definition of subjectivity emerges through her strong character Bhasi. In her view subjectivity means to learn to say, no, and put one’s self first as Bhasi did: “…not to bow and buckle to any pressure. To overcome a childish need for the world’s approval.” (1999:104) Bhasi had passed through some very difficult stages to become a subject. Later on he was involved in healing of people—physically and mentally. He wanted to help Mukundan recover from his pain, the pain that settled deep down in his mind. He knew that the remedy existed in Mukundan’s own mind. He wanted him to realize his energy and strength in order to become a subject free from the tyranny of patriarchy. Bhasi showed him the internalized “rule of father” in Mukundan’s mind and showed him how to step into the process of becoming a subject.

Mukundan did not want to be considered only as Achunthan Nair’s son. He wanted to be counted as a worthy and powerful man as his father was. So he had the desire to be a member of the Committee Hall. As a result he pushed Anjana to the margin and ignored whatever he promised to her. He also did not try to solve Bhasi’s problem. He allowed the Power House Ramakrishna exile him.
It is true that women have always been in any case the subject of their lives but the kind of subjectivity we discuss here is beyond the unimportant decisions they made over their lives such as the kind of food they had to cook, or which part of the house had to be cleaned first. Donovan (2005) shows how both psychoanalytic theory and philosophy deny women a social existence as independent subjects and link women to the area of inert, lifeless, inessential matter. She thinks that one sex (female) need not exist at the expense of the other (male), women have to search for a new identity. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Rajan-2003:15) talked about how subjectivity varies according to differences among women. Women differ in class, race, age, nationalism and ethnicity. But only through the homogenizing of the category of women such as middle-class, heterosexual, white, Hindu, Brahmin can the women’s movement go ahead. As a result there are differences in the desires of each. For Akhila subjectivity meant to be away from all the responsibilities which were put on her shoulder, to live alone, and to stop thinking about the future of others. She wished to live for herself and make decisions for her own life, but achieving that wish took long time because in man-dominated system, finding a position and holding it is very difficult for women. Apart from that, women are not trained to move in public from childhood or to take risks.

Simone de Beauvoir (1974) states that if woman is taken as inessential, it is because she fails to show herself as essential. She continues that Proletarians called themselves as we, Blacks also. Using the term we to address oneself is a sign of considering oneself as a subject. But the problem with women is that they do not consider themselves as subject, and do not use the word we. Prabha Devi corrected herself through the following words: “We have a jewelry business; I shouldn’t say “we”. He has a jewelry
business. I am a housewife" (2001:18). Most of women in *Ladies Coupé* try to make some kinds of change in their lives and move towards subjectivity.

Freud’s thought of female subjectivity as a deformed and “insufficiently developed form of male subjectivity.” In contrast Irigaray introduces the notion of “feminine-feminine” or “nonphallic feminine” as a basis for women to find their selfhood and own subjectivity (Tong-1989). She states that the only subject we know is “masculine-feminine.”

**Term I and Bhasi**

Bhasi the narrator of the novel hides himself behind the third singular pronoun but two times Bhasi talked about himself with the use of first person singular *I*, once in part twenty three on page 281 and the second time on page 334.

Marica Cavell (2006) draws on philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the sciences of the mind in a fascination and original investigation of human subjectivity. In her view a subject is a creature who recognizes herself/himself as an *I*, taking in the world from a subjective perspective; an agent, doing things according to reasons, and able to presume responsibility for herself, and her actions. Such a definition can explain why Bhasi used the term *I*. He recognized that he is not perfect and admitted his faults. Such admission counters the symbolic superiority of men.

> I had let myself believe that I could shape a man’s life as surely as God does...Like the firefly trying to match the brilliance of the stars, I had let the limits of my knowledge rule me. (Nair-1999:330)

Self-reflection happened when he expressed his fear using *I*: “I felt an overpowering presence loom over me. I was afraid” (Nair-1999:282).
Damayanti, Bhasi’s wife, is taken as an object in order to highlight the subjectivity of Bhasi. “She would always need me. She would never outgrow me. I would always be the most important person in her life” (Nair-1999:25).

Bhasi was isolated from society, and in the absence of other subjects he saw himself as I. He used the word I as a testimony to ask for justice.

Ever since I began to live in Kaikurussi, the landscapes of my life have been green valleys, green meadows, endless green fields lush with hope, blessed with peace...But you, Mukundan, pulled out the tufts of green from beneath my feet that night and showed me the menacing rocks that had been biding their time till they could cut my feet and bleed my dreams dry. (Nair-1999:329)

He used I when he was considered as Other, the outsider in the village. The word I also highlights the slippery of the margin/centre where one is marginalized and at the same time in the mainstream. Bhasi was marginalized in public, yet he remained in the centre in private at the cost of making his wife Other.

Subordination

Sebasti, L. Raj in Quest for Justice (1991) defines the oppression of woman as any situation in which her legitimate rights are denied. He speaks of the internal and external oppression that make women unequal socially with men and economically dependant. External oppression is the “social conditioning and a wrong value-system which woman acquires through the process of socialization.” These values force her to believe that the way she is forced to live today is the way for her as a woman. Internal oppression is the internalized patriarchal value system which acts as the “voice of
conscience” in woman. Patriarchy is the social order of male dominance which leads to the exploitation and marginalization of women.

There are three kinds of subordination—man subordinating woman, man subordinating another man and woman subordinating another woman. The subordination of the female is a common feature in all stages of history but the subordination of a male in his family as Anita Nair shows in The Better Man is not a general issue. The example of a woman who tried to subordinate another woman is Padma, Akhila’s sister. She subordinated Akhila by her words and deeds to show the inadequacy of Akhila to achieve a sense of completion.

The urgent work of feminism is to analyze the root cause of women’s subordination while considering different forms of discrimination against women. Many factors have contributed to subordination of women in society—such as inculcating socio-cultural values, attitudes and the practices of those values. These factors keep women perpetually subordinated.

**Marginality**

Women are considered as a part of nature because of their reproductivity. Women reproduce life instead of producing material goods, but men are considered as a part of the culture because they participate in the production of material goods. As a result, women are marginalized in the decisions regarding the “ordering” of society. Historically, this led men to take on the task of ordering society. The only ones who define the “social order” are men (Widge-1995).
Spivak states that the margin is at the service of the centre. She believes that when the cultural identity permits only one as the center, then the centre needs a margin to validate itself (Leela Gandhi-1998:84). The marginal existence of Mukundan and Paru Kutty is to validate the centre belonging to Achunthan. As Mukundan grew up his marginalization decreased. He wrote a letter to a factory and started to work there and took control of his life.

Anita Nair gives an example of how a male child can enter the mainstream:

The little boys are not allowed to climb the Pulmooth mountain, for once you have climbed it, then in the eyes of the village you are a man which means they will expect you to do many things. (1999:51)

A male child has to go through a process, the process which includes a number of steps. The first step for Mukundan was to mature physically and climb the slippery narrow road of Pulmooth mountain, and then climb the mountain successfully. The process of achieving manhood is a kind of ritual. It is culture that gives men stable roles by having them pass through some stages. The mental strength of the male child is not considered. The issue here is that patriarchy system does not consider the mental maturity of a man when giving him the responsibility of controlling society.

The slipperiness of the term marginality is shown through the terms “mistress” and “age”. Ammini was the mistress of Achunthan that sent Paru Kutty to the margin but at the same time it was Paru Kutty who had the power to prevent Ammini from staying in the same home with her. Later Achunthan was marginalized by his own daughter for being old, yet after shifting to Mukundan’s place he took a central position again. In
contrast Bhasi was pushed to margin by the members of the Committee Hall for being young.

Looking at the condition of Akhila, we see how she played both roles in her family. She belonged to both the centre and margin in her family. So long as she continued to support them financially her position was equal to that of the father but when she wanted to go a trip and enjoy herself, she was told to get her younger brother’s permission. At work Akhila was marginalized because of her unmarried status. She did not marry and she had no children she could talk about to others. She lacked a common ground between herself and others and so she kept them at a distance and put herself in the margin. Anita Nair shows that women are not always marginalized by force. Sometimes they voluntarily marginalize themselves.

Gender

Central to the understanding of patriarchy is gender oppression. Theories based on gender inequality see women as not being the equal of men. Gender is “the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time” (Lerner-1986-238). Gender concludes a set of roles. It is a custom in which men and women partner in an unequal dance.

What is the difference between “sex” and “gender”? Feminists have different perspectives on gender and gender role in society. Liberal feminism generally describes gender inequality in terms of sexism, an ideology similar to racism that refers to prejudices and discriminatory practices against women. According to these theories, because of sexism, females are socialized from childhood through the restrictions and
requirements of their gender specific roles to move into their adult roles as dependent, mindless, subconsciously depressed beings (Widge-1995).

Friedan (1982) elaborates her view towards gender and gender role in her book, *The Second Stage* (1982). She (1982:42) says that some signs of the second stage can be seen in the new questions that men are asking about their lives. Some have to work sixty-to-eighty-hour weeks with the result that he and his wife become like strangers. They ask how they can live for themselves not just for the company. Some others ask what it means being a man and what they have apart from their job. We now find that many men are in the process of dropping out their traditional roles.

The question Freidan (1982:44) asks is whether men and women are moving in opposite directions and following illusion of liberation by simply changing their roles—the roles that the other has already found imprisoning? She continues that perhaps there are some other choices that women and men did not want to face or do not have to face. She says that perhaps there are no real choices and that is the question has to be investigated in the second stage.

Friedan (1982:44) feels that the only way to find out answers is that women should share all their new uncertainties—their fears and shameful weaknesses, their joys and strength and their insoluble problems—problems that their daughters, they themselves and even men have to face. She says that there is no way back. If their daughters enjoy moving in the new world, earning and having some power and voice, it is only because of women's movement efforts.
Dangerous reactionary forces are playing to those unadmitted fears and yearnings with the aim of wiping out the gains of equality, turning women back to the old dependence, silencing women’s new voice and stifling women’s new active energy that threatens their own power in ways we do not yet clearly understand. (Friedan-1982:45)

Friedan (1982:46) believes that the women’s movement was necessary, but the movement for the liberation of women is not finished. The equality they had fought for was not liveable or workable. The first stage was fought within and against the old structure of unequal male and female sex roles but it is time to transform the structure itself. She believes that women’s movements are unable to solve these problems by itself, that’s why she suggests asking the experts of psychology, sociology, economics, biology as well as the new feminists to search for new structures for the new struggle. Such a struggle can only come from collecting all the experiences: the agonies and happiness of their own transition as women, new possibilities and problems for their daughters, and also the confusion of the men. She believes that women have to go beyond the assumptions of the first stage of the women’s movement and start again considering personal truth and begin a new chapter as the feminists had done through the feminine mystique. She believes that saying no to the feminine mystique and fighting with discrimination is only the first stage. She asks women to transcend the polarities of the first stage and reach the second stage to restructure the institution on the basis of real equality for women and men, so they can live with love and choose whether or not to have children. Attaining such a life involves economic and sexual dynamics in order that the energies that had been subverted by power in the past can be liberated in the service of life for all of them. Hence, the personal and political aims of the second stage transcended the polarization between women and women and between women and men to reach a “new human wholeness” that was the promise of feminism.
where they could go ahead and solve the concrete, practical every day problems of living, working and loving as equal persons (Friedan-1982:47).

Marxist feminists talk about gender in the context of the contemporary capitalist system. Within any class, women have fewer advantages than men with regard to accessing material goods, power status and possibilities for self actualization. These feminists believe that the root of this inequality lies in the structure of capitalism itself (Widge-1995).

Socialist feminism hints at women’s oppression. Their view of women’s oppression brings together knowledge of class oppression and gender oppression. “Capitalist Patriarchy” comes where class oppression combines with gender oppression in centring on the oppression of race, ethnicity, age and sexual preference (Widge-1995).

Capitalist patriarchy appears in the capitalist mode of production, with its patriarchal structuring of the relations. The commodity production is in the control of men and the production of life or labour power is in the hand of women. The first is considered as privileged activity. The production of labour power lies outside the area of generating profit. Capitalists also do not consider the household to have any value that it is essential for the capitalist class. The control of the sphere of wage labour is in the hands of men and is their source of social power. Women are busy with their roles in reproduction and caring for the things they are not paid for.

Radical feminists see patriarchy as the power of men over women especially over their sexual functions. They look at all aspects of society regarding women’s oppression.
They view gender as the basis of the patriarchal system. They place all the sources of power in society in the hands of men.

In all theories of patriarchy, social control is built on gender inequality is maintained by social control mechanisms. Any tendency to remove this inequality is seen as deviance, therefore women are seen as all purpose deviants. Even their sexuality and their power of reproduction are considered as the grounds for deviance.

Anita Nair depicts several situations that demonstrate unequal gender role of women and men in Indian society. She shows that it is not as if women are always suppressed, or that men are not suffering from being forced to have play a particular role. In The Better Man, Mukundan had no right to show his weakness and his fears, because the system of patriarchy expects men to be strong, not to be afraid of anything and be as supermen (Friedan-1963). In Ladies Coupé, Anita Nair shows the weakness of Akhila’s father who commit suicide to seek relief from the burden of her family through Akhila’s words: “Oh, Appa, why? What was so intolerable that you had to end your life to escape it?”(57)

Meenakshi and Mukundan’s relationship when they were children illustrates gender equality. Their behaviour was free of the influence of hierarchy, nor did they feel they belonged to different sexes: “They know each other’s bodies and minds as well as they know their own” (Nair-1999:53). But later they were forced to consider each other as two different sex. Consequently binary opposition of feminine/masculine puts its effect on their relationship.
Narayan, Akhila’s brother, had to go to polytechnic college; Narsi, another brother of Akhila, had four years to finish school, but she needed nothing except ribbons for her hair and glass bangles for wrist. Both of Akhila’s brothers were trained for serious tasks while Padma only needed to play with bangles and ribbon.

Simone de Beauvoir says that throughout her childhood the little girl feels herself to be an autonomous individual. Her future is only a dream. She continues:

While the adolescent boy makes his way actively towards adulthood, the young girl awaits the opening of this new unforeseeable period, the plot of which henceforth is women and towards which time is bearing her. She is already free of her childish past, and the present seems but a time of transition; it contains no valid aims, only occupations. Her youth is consumed in waiting, more or less disguised. She is awaiting Man. (The Second Sex-367)

Simone de Beauvoir sees the boy as the adolescent who longs for a woman, but this woman is just one element among others in his life. She is not considered to be his destiny. A girl since childhood has seeks fulfilment and escape. She thinks that through marriage, she will be under her husband’s gentle authority and will find again the same security she had in her father’s arms. She has been taught to accept male superiority and its economic and social foundations: “... men are surely masters of the world” (1972:368).

In a male-dominated society women always represent all the negative points. Often in myth we find it is the woman who is associated with images of blood. For example in The Better Man we find a Yakshi who seduces men and sucks their blood in the forest (190). The tree which was the case of Bhasi’s father death is personified as a woman.
One morning, like a woman who had lost interest, it loosened itself from his embrace and carelessly thrust him away to his death. (Nair-1999:98)

The absence of women in the Communal Committee Hall shows that there was no space for women in public in the village. It is a man’s world, structured by men, and if women move in that space they carry with themselves the shyness of being women as felt by Meenakshi in her times in the world. When she worked out of the home she ran a Creche, was a shopkeeper, and later an insurance agent; actions which were disapproved of by men.

Akhila’s case is a complex one. She shifts from the role of female to male and vice versa. After her father’s death, regardless of her gender, she was forced to assume his position at home and at the income-tax office. It was she who decided her mother should not shave her head and wear a saffron Sari and it was she who in order to preserve the order in her family behaved with military precision and soon this attitude became a part of her personality.

Imbuing her every action and word with a delicate film of stiffness that soon became her natural way to talk and to be. (Nair-2001:76)

But at the same time a contradiction came when she was asked to take her brother’s permission to go a trip.

Anita Nair once portrays Akhila when she was in a railway station looking at a man who had to go to a middle-Eastern country to work.
Aldiila looked at the man who carried on his shoulders the burden of other people's dreams. That she knew all about. That she could understand. (Nair-2001:9)

Akhila made a comparison between her situation and him. She saw that both were the head of family and breadwinners, and both were not happy playing that role.

**Individuality**

Betty Friedan (1963:92) notes that Freud's concept of super-ego frees men from the tyranny of *shoulds*, the tyranny of past that prevents the child from becoming an adult. But it puts women into a new tyranny of *shoulds*, chains them to an old image, does not give them any choice to grow, and denies their individual identity. Friedan (1963:93) believes that Freud had insight into important problems of the human personality. But he was the prisoner of his culture in describing those problems. It is true that he created a new framework for their culture, but he could not get rid of his own, because no social scientist can completely free himself from the prison of his own culture. He can only interpret what he observes in the scientific framework of his own time.

Most of the things that Freud believed rooted in biology, instinct, or changeless later on were shown by modern research to be the result of specific cultural causes (Friedan-1963:94). Since he did not have the knowledge of comparative cultures, he was unable to evaluate cultural processes (Friedan-1963:334).

Freud wanted to explain all psychological phenomena in sexual terms. His view that all adult personality problems are the effect of childhood sexual fixations came from his
background in medicine. He assumed that something described in physiological terms was solid, real and scientific (Friedan-1963:95).

The fact was that to Freud, women were a strange, inferior and less-than-human species. He saw them as childlike dolls, who are there only to love man and serve his needs. Freud grew up in the culture of Victorian Europe which believed in the superiority of men over women. He thinks that its women’s nature to be ruled by men and it is her sickness to envy him.

Freud (Friedan-1963:105) never gives proper attention to the growth of ego and self even in men. He defines women according to their sexual relationship with men. Often the women he saw had severe obstruction to the growth of a full human identity or they were completely immature. Society did not give women many opportunities in terms of education and being independent. Women had no opportunity to realize their full potential, and nor did they have any chance of achieving those interest and ideals that might stimulate their growth. Freud saw these deficiencies but used penis envy to describe them. Freud’s aim was to adjust women and men with to the norms of society.

Helen Deutsch (Friedan-1963:108) criticizes Freud’s idea that all women’s troubles originate in her sense of penis envy. He equates femininity to passivity and masculinity to activity in all spheres of life not just sexual sphere. The fundamental identities feminine-passive and masculine-active have appeared in all known cultures and races in various ways.
Betty Friedan states:

Normal femininity is achieved, however, only in so far as the woman finally renounces all active goals of her own, all her own 'originality', to identity and fulfil herself through the activities and goals of husband, or son. (1963:108)

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan says that:

Feminist theory provides different perspectives on the question of “women”. Whether as a (biological) sex, a (social) class, a (sociological) community, or a (theoretical) category. (2000:14)

Women have traditionally been identified in terms of a binary opposition to men, a difference that focused on the biological aspects of their sex and reproductive abilities. Feminists’ rejection of this biological essentialism took away one of the available forms of female identity, Sunder Rajan says (2000:14).

Asthा took her father’s place. She had authority over the members of her family but she had to ignore her own needs. Her family members expected her to just give them what they needed sacrificing her own wishes. Nobody saw her as having any rights over her life: “In their minds Akhila had ceased to be a woman and had already metamorphosed into a spinster” (Nair-2001:77).
How Women Define Their Marriage

Women define themselves in marriage according to how their cultural evaluates them. In India women are asked to accept their lives as they are. Valsala in The Better Man is told to accept her fate of not being considered as subject. Women in The Better Man mostly are ignored and humiliated by their husband but in different ways. Paru kutty who was the most silent of them all, was oppressed her entire life. She was never taken as the individual with any rights. Her husband and her son expected her to sacrifice herself unquestionably.

And then it is Anjana who described her husband through these words: “She saw the nest of snakes in his armpit, the matted fleece on his chest, the vicious porcupine quills of his moustache and shuddered. Thin black filaments of brutish callousness” (Nair-1999:223). She thought of him as the stranger. The stranger she allowed entry into her house, her life and her body.

Ravindran, Anjana’s husband, was not a successful man and could not support his wife. By hitting his wife, he wanted to soothe his sense of humiliation in society. He made Anjana as the Other to support his self position.

The other is Meenakshi who married in order to leave the village but her husband left her a few days after marriage and did not return for ages. However, in the end she found a job that helped her to leave the village. She describes herself as: “I am a constant reminder of everything each one wishes to forget. Unhappy daughter. Abandoned wife. Wheeler-dealer mother” (Nair-1999:250).
Damayanti was the only woman who was never exploited by her husband. Damayanti was a widow when she was married Bhasi; she was self-contained and never complained. She thought of herself as marginalized in terms of Bhasi’s life because of her ex-marriage.

Anita Nair like Betty Freidan is more concerned about middle-class woman. Akhila was single and financially independent. Janaki was an old lady who behaved as a princess all her life. Margaret had MS, worked as a teacher and had a well-known husband. Prabha Devi behaved as she wanted. But all were not happy, because they lacked in terms of identity as Betty Freidan says (1963). They could not be satisfied, because their needs and desired were not taken care of.

In terms of difference several theorists believe that women are divided by caste, class, race and nationality the result their interests are identical. They are embedded in structures of family, community and neighbourhood and get their primary identity from them. They do not cohere in groups in any significant numbers (Rajan-2000:14). Anita Nair portrays this through the characters of women in Ladies Coupé. She shows how women differ from each other in terms of specific class, cast, geographical (urban-rural), and age.

Simone de Beauvoir says marriage is the destiny traditionally given to women by society (1974:476). Marriage is always different for man and for woman. Two sexes need each other, but this necessity never leads to a condition of reciprocity between them. The exchanges and contracts of women with men have never had an equal footing. A man is a socially independent and complete individual. He is seen as a
producer whose existence is justified by the work he does for the group. The reproductive and domestic role of women do not guarantee her the same degree of dignity.

When a girl is asked what her plan is for the future she replies “I want to get married” (De Beauvoir-1974:482). But no young man sees marriage as his fundamental project. Economic success is what he thinks about. Such success may imply marriage—especially for the peasant—but it can also preclude it. Now the condition of modern life is less stable and uncertain than in the past. Marriage is considered as a burden on the shoulders, especially the shoulder of a young man. It is true that marriage can bring about certain material and sexual conveniences. It frees the individual from loneliness, and gives him security in space and time by giving him a home and children but its advantages are less in terms of sexual satisfaction.

Janaki and Prabhakar marriage was arranged. The criteria for her parents to choose a groom were to match horoscopes and that each family should like each other. In her marital life she depended on her husband so much that she did not do any work without her husband’s presence. But whenever her husband called her as Mummy, Janaki was hurt because she wanted to have her own identity not linked to anyone else.

A discontinuity of history is found in the case of Akhila’s parents. Their situation shows that Women are not always exploited. Akhila’s mother and father were happy together and the presence of one soothed the other. Akhila’s father declared: “That’s because we are so well suited. We are two bodies and one soul” (Nair-2001:10).
In *Ladies Coupé* we see Margaret who according to the experience of her married life believed that a woman needed a man but not to make her whole. She believed that it was myth that men had promoted as reality.

A myth always implies a subject who protects his hope and his fears toward a sky of transcendence. (De Beauvoir-1974:161)

Women do not act as a subject and therefore have no virile mythic figures in which their projects are reflected. They dream through men’s dreams. Men exaltation themselves in the events of virile figures such as Hercules, Prometheus, and Parsifal: but women play only a secondary role in destiny of these heroes.

Prabha Devi defined her marriage with the word *wait*. Her whole life she waited—waited for her husband to come, for her babies to be born, for their first step, for their first word while her life passed “...in a blur of significant days.” (Nair-2001:172)

**Otherness**

Women are Others because of the lack of power not because of the loss of the phallus. De Beauvoir (1974) in order to explain women’s oppression turns to the ontological explanation based on women’s being. She says we should recognize ourselves as *subject* and *free being* (1974). It is the free being who can make decisions regarding her life. In some part of their lives, Paru Kutty and Anjana both are able to make decisions at the time they find out they are free beings and have the right to chose.

One of the most important works of de Beauvoir (1974:734) deals with the issue of the separation of “woman” (as a biological entity) from “feminity” (as a social
construction). She argues that biology can not be understood outside of its social, economic and psychological context and that biology alone is insufficient to explain why women are considered as the Other.

Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself. (De Beauvoir-1974:734)

Generally women are seen as Others by men, because men represent humanity as a whole. Anita Nair shows that women in defining themselves as self look at other women as Others. Marikolanthu in Ladies Coupé did not belong to the middle-class as the other women in the coupe did to some extent. She was considered as Other through the women’s process of self-definition. They thought: “She was not one of them” (Nair-2001:16). There was something in her face, “human fickleness and fallibility,” that made her an other. The other faces were not marked by experience and suffering. She also could not speak English as the others did. There was no common link between her and the other women, and so when ticket collector left, she climbed to the top berth and went to sleep.

Brahmanism and Hinduism are the other social influences which arise in Anita Nair’s novels which contribute to the construction of Other. Akhila’s mother considered those who were not Brahmin as Others. She wanted to eat in a restaurant where only Brahmins chopped, cooked or even washed up. She forgave Jaya for selling her body just because she was Brahmin. The Hindu community took action against non-Brahmin and non-Hindu people. Katherine Webber was a girl who wore a calf-length dress and whose hair fell around
her face. She was considered an Anglo-Indian. She was isolated and considered as other because she did not follow moral standards as Hindus did.

Language is a powerful tool for maintaining otherness and protecting the self. The example is Achunthan Nair who ended his every conversation with a question such as: “I’m proud of you, my boy. Who did I say I’m proud of?” (Nair-1999:51) It was task of other to confirm his words. In this way he showed himself as the subject and forced others to be passive.

Self-Realization

Friedan in her book The Feminine Mystique (1963:269) says that scientists of human behaviour are interested in the basic human need to grow: “Man’s will to be all that is in him to be”. Thinkers from Bergson to Kurt Goldstein, Jung, Adler, Rank, Tillich and the existentialists speak of some positive growth tendency within the organism drives it towards fuller development, to self-realization. Many of these thinkers redefine the notion of normality in terms of the psychologically healthy man. They see normality as “highest excellence of which we are capable” (Friedan-1963:269). The hypothesis is that man is happy, self-accepting, healthy, without guilt, only at the times he can fulfil himself and become what he can be.

According to this new psychological thinking, psychologists try to understand what make men human. They believe it is not enough for an individual to be loved and accepted by others or to simply adjust his culture. He has to look at his existence seriously and make a commitment to life and to the future. By failing to fulfil his entire being, he has lost his existence.
Betty Friedan (1963:169) says that for years psychiatrists tried to help their patient’s conflicts by having them adjust to the culture. But fitting in to a culture is not a cure at all, because it prevents the realization of one’s entire being. Friedan (1963:269) believes that it is destructive for women to subscribe to the feminine mystique because it does not allow them to make any commitment of their own to society or to the future.

The new thinking, which is by no means confined to existentialists, would not analyze ‘away’ a person’s guilt over refusing to accept the intellectual and spiritual possibilities of his existence. (Friedan-1963:270)

Friedan noted Rollo’s point of view that: “the patient was guilty because he had locked up some essential potentialities in himself” (Friedan-1963:270).

The hierarchy of needs in human beings ranges from instincts to self-realization. Achieving the former needs depends on the satisfaction of physiological needs, e.g. the man who is extremely hungry has no other interest than food.

Friedan says culture (1963:273) has blocked the development of women at the physiological level. They are put in the situations that have no needs higher than the need for love and sexual satisfaction. The higher needs of women according to Friedan are:

The need for self-respect, for self-esteem, and for esteem of others-the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. (1963:274)
Feeling can be divided in two parts—high and low dominance in Freidan's view (1963:276). She says high dominance feelings deal with self-confidence, self-assurance, high evaluation of the self, feeling of superiority, lack of shyness, timidity and self-consciousness or embarrassment. And low-dominance feelings deal with lack of self-confidence, self-assurance and self-esteem, extensive feelings of specific inferiority, shyness, timidity and fearfulness.

High-dominance women are not feminine in the conventional sense because they are strong as individuals. They are free to choose instead of being bound by convention. They are stronger individuals than most women.

High dominance women want to be treated a person, not as a woman. They like to be independent, stand on their own feet. They are strong and purposeful and live by the rules they have arrived at personally. Low dominance women are different. They normally do not dare to break rules, even when they disapprove of them. Their morality and ethics are usually totally conventional. They do what they have been asked to do by their parents and their teachers.

Professor Maslow (Friedan-1963:277) finds that it is the greater strength of self in a woman that makes her more concerned about other people and the problems of the world than herself. While the main thoughts of the conventional feminine low dominance woman are they themselves and their own inferiorities, high dominance women are more like men than low dominance women. Professor Maslow suggests that the term masculine should apply to both high-dominance men and women or that the terms masculine and feminine should be removed because they are misleading.
A High-dominance woman is psychologically freer and more autonomous while a low-dominance woman is other-directed. Low-dominance women respect others more than they respect themselves. Their complete voluntary subordination leads to hatred, envy, jealousy and distrust.

While high-dominance women are free to get angry, Low-dominance women do not have the nerve to show their anger and say what they think when it is necessary. Their feminine silence is a sign of shyness, inferiority, and the feeling that anything they say is stupid and may be laughed at. Such a woman does not want to be a leader; she is afraid of responsibility and being in the forefront.

Professor Maslow (Friedan-1963:279) in his study find out that self-actualization or the full realization of human potential is hardly possible for women in our society. Friedan (1963:280) says that in her society, love for women means a complete merging of egos and a loss of separateness, a togetherness and a rejection of individuality. But individuality in self-actualizing people is strengthened. The ego merges with another but at the same time remains separate and strong. Maslow sees more intimacy, honesty, and self-expression in the love of self-actualizing people. These people can be themselves. They can show their faults, weaknesses, physical and psychological shortcomings freely. Among these people there is no hostility between the sexes. They do not make sharp distinctions between the two sexes in terms of their roles and personalities.
At Friedan’s time (1963:283) education, freedom, and the right to work on the great human frontiers were open to women. All the roads by which men could recognize themselves were open to women and only the shadow of the past of the feminine mystique kept women from finding their own roads.

Friedan (1963:297) says that giving any easy answer to the problem of women that has no name is wrong. It is hard, painful and also takes a long time for each woman to find her answer. At first she has to say no to the role of housewife that does not mean that she has to divorce her husband and give up her home. She says there is no need to choose between marriage and career. She believes combining marriage and motherhood with career is not difficult. It just needs a new life plan.

Betty Friedan later on in her book The Second Stage (1982:22) says that listening to her daughter and sons and those from their generation, makes her understand that something is wrong in the terms of trying to live the equality we fight for. These daughters, who are working so hard and decide not to be trapped like their mothers, have pain and a sense of uneasiness and almost bitterness that they hardly can admit. Even with all the opportunities that Friedan and others won for them, they are not satisfied. She (1982:22) gives some examples. For example a television producer in California who was proud of being an equal opportunity employer, was told by his executive assistant, a young lady:

I know I’m lucky to have this job’, she says, defensive and accusing, ‘but you people who fought for these things had your families, but you already had your men and children. What are we supposed to do? (Friedan-1982:22)
Another woman in her third year of Harvard Medical School told Betty Friedan (1982:23) that she was going to be a surgeon. She did not want to be trapped like her housewife mother, but she would like to marry and have kids. She had to work thirty-six hours in the hospital, twelve off. How could she have a relationship with hours like that? She claimed that she was not a superwoman. As a result she could only follow either her marriage or her medical carrier.

A woman told Friedan (1982:26) that she was a manager and she gave everything to her job. It was exciting at the beginning, being in a position that women had not had before. But it was in the end it was just a job and the loneliness of life was horrible. She could not stay in my apartment alone every night. She wanted to have a child even without a father. She wanted a better way to live. The other woman blamed feminism for the lack of traditional caring that women had for the other women, men and children.

The women's movement had changed the lives of all women and surpassed our dreams, and so their daughters took their personhood and equality for granted, Friedan (1982:29) says. Women found that it was not at all easy to live with or without men and children. The choices and opportunities they won, no matter how far from real equality was converging into new economic and emotional urgencies. She believes that this phase has finished because the battles, won or lost, were not relevant to the personal and political reality. The first stage is over, and the larger revolution, evolution and liberation have begun.

Twenty years after World War II the feminine mystique bombarded women and denied the very existence in women of the need to be—to be in the society, recognized as a
person and as an individual who has any rights. She says that they broke that image. After nearly twenty years of writings about, by or for women—to describe women's need to be, to find themselves, to fulfil themselves, to see their own personhood and to remove playing the role of being as servants in the family, and to take control of their own bodies, their own lives and to see their identity as separate from men, marriage and children, and to ask equal opportunity with men, power in corporate office—power is still in the hands of men. She says through organizing the women's movement, women broke the barriers that kept them from moving, working, and speaking in their own voice in the mainstream society, but it appears to be an unfinished battle.

Freidan (1982:36) accepts the fact that they had to do what they did; they had to participate in the battle in order to come out of the shadow of the feminine mystique. They had to fight for equal opportunity to participate in the larger work and decisions of society and for equality in the family. But this was the aim of the women's movement in the first stage. It happened because women could live just to bear children, or to be a wife. Women for the first time in history freed themselves from their passive role as breeders of the race. Women still have to consider that it is unfinished battle.

Self-realization happens through a series of steps for Mukundan who wanted to know who he was. He wanted to be better than his father, who is respected and considered as a wise and powerful person in the village.

Three times Mukundan went inside the urn to overcome internalized issues. The first time was to become free of the tyranny of his father, the second time was to make a decision about his affair with Anjana, and the third was to be who he wanted to be. He
understood that: “His greed for recognition and acceptance, importance and adulation, had blinded him to every one else”(Nair-1999:349). After all he turned to a new man a better man: “…no uncertain ties, reined by no inadequacies”(Nair-1999:351).

Anjana finds a way to react towards the conflict between individual right and society norm. Mukundan’s self-realization allowed him to choose the relationship with Anjana and Bhasi instead of being the member of Community Hall committee according to his conscience. Anjana found out that she was still a woman who needed to be loved and protected and had the right to say no. She believed she was less than a prostitute who could say no.

Bhasi became self-realized. He found out what man could be—his condition in the system, his limitations, his loss and his mistakes.

Man cannot change the movement of the planets with a sweep of his hand. Every man is guided by a force that is individual and unfathomable. Man can heal, but a little. Man can aid self-discovery, but only a little. No man is the master of another man’s destiny. For man is not God. Fireflies are not stars. (Nair-1999:330)

Janaki who always thought about her home, started thinking about her husband as a companion who she needed to live with. Achieving that step satisfied Janaki. Prabha Devi ignored her self for long time. Then she wanted her lost self back, so she managed to do something for herself to make herself happy and satisfied. She found out that learning how to swim could bring her joy. The life of Prabha Devi is an example of how the body of women can change their lives. As the matter of fact it was her body that made her to go to the margin and again it was the floating body on the water that brought back her lost self. The power that she got through the floating body helped her
to overcome her internalized condition of being passive even in intercourse. Marikolanthu’s process of self-realization started when she began criticizing herself for not valuing herself. She did not ask for anything for herself, she did not pay attention to her own needs. She was there to fulfill other’s wishes—her mother, her brothers and her employers. The death of Murugesan removed all the hate she had kept for a long time in her heart. She, who always ignored her illegitimate son, wanted just to be his mother. Akhila went through other processes and found out the need to put her wishes first. She wanted to think about her need, find them and fulfill them. In the end she discovered a woman in her self.

**Body and Woman**

Freud (Donovan-2005) introduces the idea of an imaginary body with regard to the Ego and the Id. He says the ego (self-consciousness) is neither strictly a psychic phenomenon nor a bodily phenomenon. The ego is formed in relation to a body. It means that infant understand his or her selfhood in relationship to his or her bodily existence; the body that an infant attributes to himself or herself is not objectively understood. It is the mind understands of the body. Hence, a person’s understanding of his/her body is based on some degree of fantasy and imagination.

Lacan (Donovan-2005) expands Freud’s view on the bodily ego into a theory about the imaginary anatomy in his essay “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I”. He states that the first key moment in subject formation is the projection of an imaginary body. And this happens at six months. The understanding of one’s body arises only in conjunction with an organization in language and image that begins in the mirror stage, and it is
further complicated by the next stage of ego formation- of entrance into the symbolic order.

Irigaray (Donovan-2005) agrees with Lacan that how we understand our biology is largely influence by culture, and also accepts the idea of an imaginary body. Irigaray uses the Lacanian imaginary body in her discussions of the Western culture's bias towards women. She says that a culture projects dominant imaginary schemes which then affect how that culture understand and defines itself. According to Irigaray, in Western Culture the imaginary body that dominates at the cultural level is the male body. Bryan S. Turner also says:

...to control women's bodies is to control their personalities and represents an act of authority over the body in the interests of the public order organized around male values of what is rational. (1984)

Marikolanthu in Vellore was plain and simple. Missy K and V liked her in that condition. But her mother thought in different way and trained her to be as she wanted:

Blooming and pretty; with a merry laugh and the coquettish wiles of an eighteen-year-old seeking the world's admiration and willing it to fall at her feet. I tossed my head when I talked. I developed a sidelong glance. I swayed my hips when I walked. (Nair-2001:237)

Such a body was raped by Murugesan.

**Listening**

Luce Irigaray (1996) gives her perspective of silence in her book *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*. In this book she moves from the critique of patriarchy to an exploration of the ground for a possible inter-subjectivity between the two sexes. Continuing her rejection of the demands for equality, Irigaray poses the question: how
can we move to a new era of sexual difference in which women and men establish lasting relations with one another without reducing the other to the status of object? Drawing upon Hegel, Irigaray proposes a dialectic appropriate to each sex as well as a dialectic of their relation. She argues for what she calls "sexed rights" and a right of persons based on the right to life, not the right to property. Using the results of her research into the sexing of language, Irigaray analyzes how women seek communication in discourse with the other—an other, pre-occupied with his abstract or concrete object, who does not respond. She proposes another syntax for communication, one that does not incorporate the other as the object of the subject but allows for an indirect relation. Thus "I love "to" you" replaces "I love you." In Irigaray's vision of the happiness possible in sexual difference, the love between a man and a woman finds its "reason" not in property or children, but within the couple. Arguing passionately for a new language of personal relations, "I Love to You" looks toward a future where nihilism can be overcome by "love in sexual difference."

In Chapter Eleven “In Almost Silence,” She begins with the question of “how am I to listen to you?” She says, I am listening to you is not to expect or hear some information from you. I am listening to you means to listen to your words as something unique, irreducible, especially to my own, as something new, and unknown. I am listening to you to understand and hear the words as the manifestation of an intention, of human and spiritual development.

Irigaray says:

I am listening to you, as to another who transcends me, requires a transition to a new dimension. I am listening to you: I perceive what
you are saying. I am attentive to it. I am attempting to understand and hear your intention. (1996:115)

Such listening does not result in Luce Irigaray comprehending her, or knowing her, and so there is no need to listen to her, and she can plan a future for her. This kind of listening can be seen between Mukundan and Bhasi, Mukundan and Anjana, Bhasi and his wife in The Better Man; and Akhila and Hari in Ladies Coupé.

There are other processes that linguists, philosophy and psychoanalysis claim are necessary for communication. However, these processes never inspire thoughts of one with the other in the serenity and the occasion of being with, respecting difference. They remain within the horizon of single subject-more or less realized or fulfilled-in the horizon of the same, in the order of genealogy, of hierarchy. Consequently as Irigaray (1996:118) says: “The you is then the same as me, more prefect, older, or the opposite.”

Violence

Women in India are socialized to accept the violence of their husband towards themselves. The violence against women can be physical or mental- Physical as in slapping women but mental violence has different kind and shapes which is too complex to be documented by simple statistical methods (Radhakrishnan-1995:185).

Mental violence looks more painful than physical. Achunthan tortured Paru Kutty, his wife, by describing his sexual relationship with Ammini, his mistress, e.g. “He regaled her with tales of what he and his mistress did in bed, outside it, on the staircase and in the barn.”(Nair-1999:78)
Ravindran tortured Anjana physically in order to humiliate her and prove his superior position:

He used her body with brutality that scared her. Punishing, punching, pummeling. Some nights when he had finished with her. She wondered what heinous sin she was paying for. (Nair-2001:232)

Radhakrishnan (1995:186) in his book says that the right of a man to sexual intercourse with his wife, at any time, is socially sanctioned by law. A woman has to give sexual service to her husband, whenever he wants, whether she likes it or not. While rape is defined as "intercourse without the woman's consent." The law says explicitly that a married man can not be said to commit rape with his wife, because she has given her consent when she married him (section 376 of the Indian Penal Code). Husbands, as we see here, do not respect their wives' right to say no to sexual intercourse and women are socialized to accept it as their duty. Hence, marital rape is a concept which needs to be recognized by the law. Violations against women are reported the least because women are socialized to feel ashamed and go through self-blame. The domestic violence issue counters the myth that the family is a safe space compared to the outside world. Violence within the family shows the power of inequalities and discrimination originating in the structure of the patriarchal family.

Feminists in India focus on the family and discrimination against women within the family. Wife battering often occurs. Wives are treated brutally by their husbands. They are burnt alive or forced to commit suicide. The worst is that some of this violence has gained social acceptance (Radhakrishnan-1995:185). It is the right of a man to slap his wife every now and then to control her ensures that she obeys him. Every woman accepts this as destiny and inevitable.
Rape is another means by which men subjugate women. Sunder Rajan defines rape as:

Literally, rape as the forcible penetration of the female body by the male sexual organ is the expression of male sexual domination and hence of patriarchy itself. (1995:77)

Feminists consider the issue of rape within a more complex politics based on the recognition that patriarchy is not the only form of oppression in the society. Rape is viewed as an act of male sexual violence found in all heterosexual relations or as the sign of aggression in a system of social lawlessness. Women's sexual vulnerability is shown clearly by their identity formation as class and racial subjects.

The fear of rape and its consequences is shown in Ladies Coupé. Once when Akhila wanted to visit her friend, Sarasa Mami, two streets away, her mother told her that the street was full of dangers for a girl like you. She said:

They would rob her of her hymen before it was legally perforated by the man who would be her husband. Thereby bringing disgrace to her father, their family and the whole Brahmin community. (Nair-2001:52)

As it is seen Akhila's mother was not concerned how rape could hurt her and destroy her life. She did not even hint at the psychological pain that her daughter would go through. The mother's words show that here concern is not for the trauma the girl will experience after rape but to the disgrace it will bring to the family.

Sunder Rajan (1995:77) says in India cases of reported rapes based on caste are institutional rape, which means rape perpetrated by members of repressive state forces like the police or the army, or groups like landlord, upon helpless women of the oppressed classes. She says the most commonly reported rape refers to the rape of
lower caste women by upper-caste landlords, the very thing that Anita Nair describes through Marikolanthu. Rape in India is mostly understood as the expression of male violence rather than of sexual desire. Rajan believes that:

For women to ‘speak’ rape is itself a measure of liberation, a shift from serving as the object of voyeuristic discourse to the occupation of a subject-position as ‘master’ of narrative. (1995:78)

Marikolanthu was raped but nobody believed her. It confirmed Murugesan’s words that:

No one will believe you. You might think you are our equal, but you are not. I’m the chettiar’s nephew, his daughter-in-law’s brother and you are only the cook’s daughter. No one will dare question me. (Nair-2001:240)

The condition of a woman after being raped is taken under consideration in Ladies Coupé. Anita Nair portrays the psychological trauma that the raped goes through alongside with being isolated by the society for being raped. All these pains made Marikolanthu a difficult woman with no compassion in her eyes with no peace inside and consequently she lost her chances of having a good life.

The state of India passed legislation for the protection of women that overrides traditional practices in favor of democratic and universal human rights. But the status quo has not changed sufficiently in terms of judicial practice and law-enforcement.

In rape cases the police often blame the victims: “the girls invite trouble by sitting outside on the pavements at odd times” (Rajan-2000:346). These cases need specially trained police in order to handle its technicalities in order that the victim escapes the wrong judgment of legal forces.
New Women

Friedan (1982:33) says that in the first stage, women's aim was full participation in a profession, in the main stream power, having a voice inside the party and political process. She hesitates to claim that this had changed women lives. She believes that women have to overcome their own feminine mystique in order to come to terms with the new reality of their personal and political experience and enter into the second stage.

Ellen Goodman (Friedan-1982:38) in her essay “We were to be the first generation of superwomen.” writes that half-formed feminism of the early 1960's told us in order to achieve fulfillment women had to fit in. They had to fit in to career ladders, fit in to their husband's goals and also into the idea of womanhood. During 1970's, women discussed about what kind of equality they wanted: whether women wanted equal access to the same system or the power to change it; whether women could change the system only by becoming a part of it; whether this system could change women once they enter into it, Goodman asks.

Women found it easier to fit in than to restructure their situation. The male standard was considered to be higher. For women it was easier to reach up than to convince men to reach down. It was simple for women to “dress for success than to change the definition of success.”

Friedan (1982:40) says:

I write this book to help the daughters break through the mystique I myself helped to create-and put the right name to their problems.
But now they have to ask new questions, speak about the unspeakable again, and admit new and uncomfortable realities and also put their pain into works, because they do not fit either the new image of women or the old, Friedan says (1982:40).

The younger have more questions to ask such as how can they have the career and the kind of marriage they want and also to be a good mother? How can she make her husband share more responsibility at home and make decisions at home? Can she make it in the world of men? Does she want to be like men? How can she remove her loneliness, except through a man? Do men really want equal women? Can she risk losing herself in marriage? In response to all these questions Friedan (1982:40) suggests moving to the second stage.

Betty Friedan (1982:345) says that it is very important that the new generation or as she notes “their daughters and the sons” keep in their mind the dream of equality in the years ahead, and keep in their mind that they would face new problems. They have strength and confidence. They can also say “no” to the superwoman standards and feel enough good. She believes that they definitely have problems, but they will not have as many problems as Betty Freidan and other women in their age had. The daughters have more choices and all those choices may appear to be a burden for them. They know that they are strong enough to risk pain, loneliness, rejection: to risk of not being prefect and to risk making mistakes, to risk not being controlled, and also to risk falling in love if they want.

In the second stage, the daughters will stop searching for supermen. They have begun to find out that a little dependence is not a huge matter to be afraid of. The daughters begin

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to see that young men are as afraid as they themselves are. They may be even more afraid if they still want to be supermen (Friedan-1982:347).

They have to now deal politically with the problems of this stage, as women and men have already acknowledged them personally. They want a diversity of fluid, shifting approaches considering the concrete demands of the individual situation and whatever means are available. Friedan believes if they can remove the false polarities and appreciate the limits and true potential of women’s power, then they will be able to join with men and follow or lead them in the new human politics. The new human liberation will enable them to use precious, limited resources of the earth and the everlasting resources of their human capital to make new homes for all their dreams and confirm the new and old family bonds and at last producing their name as women and men.

The term new Indian woman in the contemporary discourse of women in India includes a sense of having evolved as women and responding to the times and also of being modern and liberated. Ipshita Chanda points out that adjectives like new, liberated and modern are taken to be metonymies—"saying one is to imply all the others by the logic of this sign-system that groups itself around the figure of woman.". She is Indian in order to take a pan-Indian identity she escaped of regional, communal and linguistic specificities, but still she does not become westernized (Rajan-1995).

The image of the new Indian woman is derived from the urban educated middle-class career woman. Advertisements for consumer products are addressed to this class of women who have an independent income and can spend it as they wish. The construction of the new Indian woman focuses both on her national identity and her
modernity; she is Indian as well as new. The Indian identity is affected by the nationwide reach of commercial advertisements. Though Indian manufacturers and advertising agencies know the need of having region-specific advertising, they send a homogenized message across the country. In the Indian context women are expected to be modern and yet maintain a traditional Indian attitude where they represent the honor of their husband and the family. It is only the female subject that can achieve a balance between (deep) tradition and (surface) modernity (Sunder Rajan-1995).

In the Ladies Coupé all the women became new women according to their ability and their will and among them it was Prabha Devi who caught between the traditional and the modern and who later preferred to follow tradition and became a married woman according to Indian tradition leaving modernity aside.

Nightmares

The nightmare is an important image in The Better Man. The definition of the term dream by psychologists helps to understand the reason behind Mukundan’s nightmare.

*A dream is the experience of envisioned images, voices, or other sensations during sleep.* (Dream-Wikipedia)

Dreams show events that are impossible in physical reality and they are always out of the control of dreamer. Dreamers may experience strange emotions in their dreams and such dreams that frighten are called nightmares.

Scholars give different explanations for the reasons behind dream. In India, Charaka (300 BC) gave his explanations as follows.

The causes of dreams are seven. They are what you have seen, heard, experience, wish to experience, forced to experience,
imagined and by the inherent nature of the body. (Dream-Wikipedia)

Sigmund Freud (Dream-Wikipedia) in the late 19th century said dreams were a reflection of human desires and were activated by external stimuli. Both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung identify dreams as the interaction between the unconscious and the conscious. They also saw that the unconscious is the dominant force of the dream. Fritz Perls (Dream-Wikipedia) says dreams are the projections of parts of oneself that often have been ignored, rejected or suppressed.

As a result, these nightmares can the projections of Mukundan’s part. He felt guilty towards his mother but tried to ignore his feelings and suppressed it. Once after his nightmare he told Krishnan Nair:

When I came home, she asked me to take her away. She said she was unhappy, and she wanted to be some place far away from where he was. But I didn’t. I didn’t have the courage to confront him. So I made excuses. (Nair-1999:45)

Age

The life history of individual women depends a lot on her physiological destiny. Each period in a women’s life is uniform and monotonous; but the transitions from one stage to another are very sudden. “They are manifested in crises—puberty, sexual initiation, the menopause” as de Beauvoir (1974:693) says. At each step women are expected to behave more and more according to their cultural norms and values.
Marikolanthu’s situation highlights the importance of age in women’s lives. At the time of her first menstruation she was told not to run around like a little girl, to wear a davani to hide her bosom, and to walk with her head bent like all modest women did.

De Beauvoir (1974:640) says by the time woman becomes old, she becomes a different being, unsexed but complete: an old woman. The crisis of her dangerous age has passed. But it should not be supposed that henceforth her life will be an easy one. When she has given up the struggle against the fatality of time, another combat begins: she must maintain a place on earth.

Anita Nair in *Ladies Coupé* describes the condition of senior women through Janaki’s words:

> When you get to a certain age, nothing matters. You only want to cling to your serenity and leave the dreaming and storming for those with steaming blood in their veins. Emotions are for the young; the elderly have no use for them. (2001:33)

Friedan’s view towards of age is different. She in *The Fountain of Age* (1994) says that, through interviews with a number of senior women she found that their language has been filled with images of age as loss and grief. These images deny age as a unique time of life. That is why Friedan calls it as another problem that has no name. Both men and women are terrified of losing their sexuality, defined exclusively in terms of physical attraction and vigor.

After completing the interviews Friedan (1994:612) discusses a wide variety of options for love, retirement careers, avocations and lifestyle. The point that she makes is that the choices of older people are most successful when they are true choices. She
moves beyond the discussion of these problems to discuss age as adventure, to discuss the intellectual and spiritual richness of *generatively*. She notes:

> The unexpectedness of this new quest has been my adventure into age. I realize that all the experiences I have had—as daughter, student, . . . , moment of despair and exaltation, is part of me now. I am myself at this age. It took me all these years to put the missing pieces together, to confront my own age in terms of integrity and generativity, moving into unknown future with a comfort now, instead of being stuck in the past. I have never felt so free. (Friedan-1994:612)

**Conclusion**

In *The Better Man* Anita Nair talks about the marginality, subordination and oppression that a particular man faced. He was a man who did not feel any subjectivity in his maternal place. The misbehavior of a dominating father made life miserable for him where he constantly wanted to be far from his own family and home. He was a victim of the patriarchal system who always felt alone and passive in the world. But the need to be powerful was always within him.

In *Ladies Coupé* we see different characters with different personalities. She portrays the condition of a woman who did not marry at all, one whose husband passed away, one who raped and had a baby after all, and she almost includes one who got divorced. Akhila was a spinster who had no right to think about love and passions. She was supposed to sacrifice herself without question for her family. The most important thing was that she also forgets that she was a human being and she had rights over her life.

Anita Nair focuses in *Ladies Coupé* on Luce Irigaray's point of view. The women in *Ladies Coupé* were not equal. They focused on *sexual difference*. They wanted to be
seen as feminine feminine not as masculine feminine. As Luce Irigaray narrates these women sought a revaluation in thought and ethics to establish sexual difference in the society—a re-interpretation of the relations between the subject and discourse, the subject and the world, the subject and the cosmic, the microcosmic and macrocosmic (Moi-1987).

Anita Nair by showing Akhila’s objection towards being addressed as “Akka” by her brothers, “Madam” at her office and “Ammadi” by her mother wanted to show how she needed to be considered as an individual as one who had her own special identity. Consequently Akhila preferred the company of a good man than being married to someone. She did not wish to be the extension of anybody’s identity. She wanted to be seen as “a whole being.”