

READING GROUP GUIDE

Ladies Coupe

by Anita Nair

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Introduction to *Ladies Coupe*

Meet Akhila: forty-five and single, an income-tax clerk, and a woman who has never been allowed to live her own life - always the daughter, the sister, the aunt, the provider - until the day she gets herself a one-way ticket to the seaside town of Kanyakumari. In the intimate atmosphere of the all-women sleeping car - the 'Ladies Coupe' - Akhila asks the five women the question that has been haunting her all her adult life: can a woman stay single and be happy, or does she need a man to feel complete?

This wonderfully atmospheric, deliciously warm novel takes the reader into the heart of women's lives in contemporary India, revealing how the dilemmas that women face in their relationships with husbands, mothers, friends, employers and children are the same world over.

Praise for *Ladies Coupe*

"Modern India's vivid, sticky beauty is evoked beautifully...Nair's compassion for her characters shines through every carefully chosen word."

- *Sunday Tribune*

"Nair's strength lies in bringing alive the everyday thoughts, desires and doubts of these six ordinary women."

- *Times Literary Supplement*

"A deeply serious, enjoyably lucid book about real terrors and joys, full of sensual and surprising details."

- *Scotland on Sunday*

"Nair conveys her protagonist's dilemmas with a freshness and charm."

- *The Times*

Reading Group Guide Questions

1. How did Akhila's mother feel about her?
2. Why did Akhila's sister Padma treat her so badly?
3. Does Akhila learn anything from the way Margaret Shanthi handles her difficult husband?
4. Should Akhila have married Hari? Would she have been treated better or worse by her family?
5. Why does Janaki's son Siddharth ask her to come and stay and then get so angry with her? Is Janaki spoiled?
6. Was Sheela, the young girl, right to dress up her grandmother after she died?
7. After her husband's friend propositions her, Prabha Devi retreats into herself. At the end of her story she thinks, "That nothing else that happened would ever measure up to that moment of supreme content when she realized that she had stayed afloat." What does she mean by this?
8. What does Akhila learn from Marikolanthu's story? Why is her story the last one that Akhila hears?
9. What does Akhila learn from the women on the train?
10. Why does Akhila sleep with the young man Vinod?
11. At one point Akhila thinks that what she desires most in the world is to be her own person, why then does she call Hari?

About the Author

Anita Nair lives in Bangalore, India. Her books have been published in several languages around the world.