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## Search of Strength and Independence of Akhila, a Protagonist of 'Ladies Coupe' a novel by Anita Nair

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### Abstract:

*Anita Nair is one of the leading Indian English writer in Post Independence era. She is the greatest exponent who depicts the real image of society through her writings. Her novels reveal is the effect of social conditioning on women. Therefore, she is able to portray the authentic picture of Patriarchal society and the struggle of woman and her efforts to prove her identity. The present paper also shades the light on the search of woman's inner strengths and her labors to be independent way of life.*

**Keywords:** *self-discivery, contemporary, Indianness, inner-strength, self-realization, struggle etc.*

### Introduction:

Anita Nair, a prominent writer in India, who always focuses on the troubles of woman in our society through her writings. Her maiden novel "The Better Man" has positioned her among the most self-conscious Indian novelists and her second novel "Ladies Coupe" has achieved a incredible success in her career. She makes an effort to show the quality of strength in a woman. Anita Nair also adds that potency is not usually considered a woman as thing. Her styles eventually vary from other feminist writers. In other words, she is a 'feminist with divergence'. She traces the real position of women in the families as well as in the society. She has created ripples in the society of male domination by taking women as women in a serious manner. Her attempt to exhibit the predicament, fears, dilemmas, contradiction and aspiration of her women's character is notable. Her key focus of interest is the world of women, the struggle of women in the context of contemporary Indian society. Her novels depict the real life of her characters. Her novels reveal the effect of social conditioning on

women. Society uses many different means to spread belief we have literature as one of the means to bring these ideas further. Similarly, *The Better Man*, another of Anita Nair's novels, presents the same theme of self-discovery. The hero of the novel, Mukundan, seems to be an escapist, who runs away from responsibilities and is afraid of the society. But, above all this, what dominates his disposition is his deep rooted fear of his father imbibed by him right from his childhood. Like Akhila of *Ladies Coupe*, he too is governed by societal pressures, does not live for himself but for others.

#### **Characterization and Setting of Anita Nair:-**

*'Anita Nair is a fine writer with a great sense of character vivid knowledge of South Indian culture and an eye for telling detail. She can move from tender compassion to sensuality to raging hatred and is a compelling teller of stories.'*

#### **- The Hindu Literary Supplement**

Anita Nair in her works primarily focuses on the genuine human condition on the world. At the same time, she is crafty in interweaving her stories in the Indian scenario. Almost all her novels are encircled with Indian culture and the characters and settings are inherently Indian. Her stories may be said to be ideological as well as practical, based on the structure of Indian middle class families. Anita Nair mirrors the society in her literary happenings. Her writings explore deep into the contemporary obnoxious condition of human beings. She explores the immense condition of human experiences and expresses them with full stream of her emotions. In addition, her works are a mixture of realism as found in Indian culture that appeal to the universal.

As a novelist, her strength lies in ushering the everyday reality in her writings. Her art of characterization is the backbone of the story she writes and many of characters experience sex before entering the social institute of marriage or blemish in extra marital affairs that is firmly against the Indian society. She breaks the chains of the society in portraying her women character which can lead to its destruction. She is bold enough to tell the truth however bitter it is. *Ladies Coupe* is one such novel which deals with a woman's pursuit for strength and independence. It also focuses the complex nature of man woman relationship which is considered as the one of modern tendencies highlighted in today's literary genres.

*'The changing pattern of man-woman relationship is presented not only in the novels, but also in films and television serials. Bold themes and diverse issues are now being taken up by the media. The mosaic of stories highlights the fact that man-woman relationship is a very complex and subtle issue.'* (Mukerjee 25)

Thus the characters in the novel leave a lasting impression for they are more realistic than being idealistic.

#### **Self Identity and Strength of Akhila in Ladies Coupe:**

The story of a woman's search for strength and independence, Ladies

Coupe focuses on the inner strength every human being possesses.

-The Asian Age

The above expression published in the Asian Age is too right about the novel Ladies Coupe, as it depicts the inner strength of all the female characters portrayed by Anita Nair. While going through the novel we come across how six women who meet for the first time in their lives, share their experiences, even though they differ in age, educational backgrounds and cultural upbringing, their lives have a common thread that is an Indian woman's life dominated by a man or woman in one way or another.

The protagonist of the novel Akhilandeswari, is the center of all the happenings, she is a single forty five year old, working as a income tax clerk, who unfolds the story of the novel. We see that Akhila, whose life has been taken out of her control, decides to go on a train journey away from family and household tasks, a journey that will eventually make her a different woman, that prove her strength and self identity. The introduction of Akhila, is a great indication for the readers to feel how she wants to be away from her bonds. *"This is the way it has always been: the smell of a railway platform at night fills Akhila with a sense of escape"*. (1)

While on train journey Akhila's interaction with other women gives her an individuation from personal to historical. She realizes that other women have also experienced similar things. These women add to her sense of being as an individual and also as an Indian woman. The concept of 'Indianness' helps Akhila understand how she shares communal pressures with these women and also how she can make a place for herself in the existing hostile community. This can both be a source of strength as well as discouragement. But in Akhila's case this literal and symbolic journey serves as an educating experience which definitely gives her strength by broadening her horizons of knowledge and experience to a way of life. The novel, then, can be taken as one which is about the self-discovery of a woman by herself. Further, the place, Kanyakumari, where Akhila is going, has mythological implication attached to it. Kanyakumari is named after 'Kanyakumari'- the virgin goddess who "like Akhila, had put her life on hold, condemned to an eternal waiting." Her protagonist, Akhila would not be a virgin in perpetual waiting but rather a rebellious figure who refuses the goddess like position. Akhila is more like Narendra(Swami Vivekanand) who is in search of answers and who finally achieves *"bliss of insight"* and turns into Vivekananda- "the saint who gave the motivational mantra to the world to "arise, awake and stop not till the aim is achieved." Akhila towards the ends gains a voice, gains wisdom, she has gone through the process of individuation. She now possesses the seeds which can inspire others to search their souls, their inner self's and look for answers which lie within them. After listening to all these stories of different women in the coupe Akhila finds herself more determinant, more strong. She also realizes that there

is no one perfect solution to her dilemma all her life she has been continuously haunted by the question “Can a woman stay single and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete?”. (2).

### **Conclusion:**

Anita Nair, through this novel tries to deal with an issue that has subtly existed in Indian society. Each chapter of the novel is dedicated to one woman and that’s how we meet the five other women protagonists.

Nair successfully provides a glimpse into the women's world. The female realization and the feminine know-how is brought out very effectively. The women that Nair depicts are distinctive and unusual from those of the past. The prevailing social structure, economic condition, modern education and western power have all helped women to change her outlook, her way of thinking and her total persona. Successfully coming out of the conventional wraps the belongings of the change in women is seen in almost every sphere of human activity. This change has greatly influenced the man-woman relationship too. This was one area not fully explored and people shied away from bringing private and personal issues into public. This positive change in women is helping them to define and redefine themselves in a positive way.

Anita Nair, like many other writers of novels of mainstream literature, has chosen self discovery as the central theme for her novels *Ladies Coupe* and *The Better Man*. The idea of self-realization is a fundamental part of Indian philosophical and theological systems, be these Vedic, Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh religions. Self-discovery, as adumbrated in Anita Nair’s novels, however, is different from the religious self-realization. Self-discovery here is more a guidance for assertion and realization of one’s own interests, certainly not selfish in the narrow sense. The language, theme, characterization, narration and the stories reveal Anita to be an excellent writer.

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