

**CONCEPTUALIZING INDIAN WOMEN STATUS IN ANITA NAIR'S FICTIONAL
WORLD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LADIES COUPE**

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Abstract

Since the ancient period women were targeted by different reasons and it remain continued through many ages. The stereotype image of women set in this world is the passive, child taker, submissive to men throughout their lives. The Hindu scripture Manusmiriti defines woman that she remain dependent upon male in her whole life since a daughter to old age mother in different forms. This book also asserts that women should not be given liberty and kept them behind the four walls of house. Ramayana, another ancient literary text, which includes that women should remain faithful to men and should not protest against male hegemony i.e. patriarchy and always remain dutiful to her husband. Thus all these instances signifies the fact that female status in Indian society remain secondary from many ages and still such ethos could be seen in Indian families as well where old age people mostly believes in these things. Though the changing image of women identity can also be seen in Indian society in modern period after social awakening and consciousness among the people but these new modern image of women exist only in urban and in metro cities and village women still living life stucked with old traditional conventions in which she associate their identity with their partners. Above all the literary women played profound role to sketches different image of women from obedient to independent and ambitious in their writings. Anita Nair is one of the Indian female authors in contemporary Indian literature whose writings mostly deal with the women subjects and themes. Her novels depicted women image into different roles and also talks about breaking stereotyping of silence and tradition by the modern educated Indian women. This paper will analyze Nair's fictional female characters who represent Indian women societal status, their problems and changing scenario regarding their individual identity.

Keywords: Anita Nair, Ladies Coupe, Indian women, different roles, female authors, women status.

Indian women writings helped to bring out the problems of women into public sphere and also attempt to change the mindset of the people and awareness among the new young generation women of the country. Though Indian society is based on old fashioned traditional ethos and principals in which female are categorized subordinate to men and male is perceived superior and protector of women but in the age of globalization this stereotype image is getting changed intermittently with the efforts of open mind, intellectual people as well as by social welfare agencies. Indian writer Sunanda Chauhan remarks regarding the changing status of women in country: “An Indian woman poet in English evolved her full identity as a modern woman only in the post-independence period... The variety of new tensions encountered by contemporary women stimulates Indian feminine progress from tradition to modernity.” (Chavan, p.04) Another prominent writer Arundhati Roy spoke over the present modern status of women in India that is the result of long struggles and efforts made by earlier erudite women according to Roy:

I mean, do they know what battles were fought? Every freedom we have today, we have because of feminists. Many women have fought and paid a huge price for where we are today! It didn't all come to us only because of our own inherent talent or brilliance. Even the simple fact that women have the vote, who fought for that? The suffragettes. No freedom has come without a huge battle. If you're not a feminist, go back to into your veil, sit in the kitchen and take instructions. You don't want to do that? Thank the feminists.
(Roy)

Though the significant change occurs regarding female status in our country but still there is not complete emancipation from male hegemony and patriarchy. Women have to confront various challenges at different level of life because of stereotype image of them i.e. the problems could be observed in working place, marriage institution, education, social customs and other ill practices which have strong roots in society. All the problems are discussed by the women English writers and their fictional characters reflects the real aspects of society in many ways. Anita Nair presents examples of various women in her novel *Ladies Coupe* that reflects her perspective and observation of the Indian society in the context of women status. *Ladies Coupe* is mainly a feminist novel which includes the stories of some women during their accidentally meet in a train journey. The major characters Akhila, Janaki, Radha, Meera and Sheela present the patriarchal structure and women's place in this environment. The novel includes the journey of five women in a train and each character narrates their own story of life which consist their female opinions, arguments and attitude towards patriarchy, social customs and other constrain modes of life in which they find themselves suffocative and confined. Janaki is portrayed as sensible and submissive who finds her marriage life healthy, loving and full of fidelity while another persona Prabha Devi finds sense of completeness in her ambition of swimming. Another woman Margaret narrates her suffocative life in the hands of devilish husband and how she rescues herself from him by

using her sense of awakening and identity realization. Sheela's tale of life shows her daring and defiant nature which helped her to emancipate from patriarchy clutches. Marikolanthu, a co-passenger in train with other female personas, utters her story of betrayed in love and loss of innocence with a man and lastly his attempt to come out from such pathetic situation. Lastly the major character is Akhila whose character exhibits strong, resistant and woman of strong will. Her story presents her powerful struggle to surpass depression and fear by her inner strength which she assumes essential form of delightment. One of the Indian writer asserts her views over the novel significant themes:

Show him you are incapable of doing anything beyond the periphery of your home and he will manage your life, from sending postal orders to balancing cheque books to booking railway tickets to managing household expenses. He will pet you and cosset you first, for after all, you are appealing to the male in him to protect and safeguard. But it will be only a matter of days before he turns into a tyrant who will want to control your every thought. (Nair, p.188)

The novel opens with the Protagonist Akihla whose illusionary minds contain numerous thoughts at railway station and somehow reflects her suffering and events. Nair portraiture of five women and their views on life reflects contemporary modern women with sheer will power of existing in different surroundings. Through their persona Nair talks about many subjects which are observed taboos and socially prohibited such as sexuality, illicit affairs etcetera. The Character of Margaret present how she manipulate her husband by her sensual tactics though he is dominating and dictating according to her. She does all the thing just to cop up problems and difficulty she face in this relationship:

Ebe slowly became a fat man. A quiet man. An easy man. A man who no longer needed his coterie or defaced books. A man whose fondness for eating blunted his razor edge. Since I was the one to appease his appetite, he sought me more and more...He needed me like he had never before. And Ebe became the man I could live with once again. (Nair, p.134)

Besides Nair commemorate women identity in the novel by glorify their individuality, strong will, inner virtues and other positive aspects, she adds that: "Women are strong. Women can do everything as well as men. Women can do much more. But a woman has to seek that vein of strength in her. It does not show itself naturally. (Nair, 2001.P.210) Thus this novel projects contemporary women who seek to find out their own identity as ambitious and stable in society. Meanwhile their stories also signify their struggle and indomitable spirit which is described meticulously by the writer.

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