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SELF DISCOVERY IN ANITA NAIR'S *THE BETTER MAN*

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ABSTRACT

Anita Nair is an Indian best-selling author of Indian poetry with her famous novels, "The Better Man" and "Ladies Coupé". Born in Kerala and raised in Chennai. Anita always had an affinity towards writing and the courage to pursue it under all the situations.

In every novel, Anita Nair always thought about the woman's search for freedom and self-realization. In Anita Nair's fictions, her characters have come out of their struggles and quest their self identity. Her Novels explore the freedom of the woman to fulfill herself basically as a human being, Independent of her various traditional roles as a daughter, wife, mother and so on.

This article deals with the self discovery as seen in the works of woman writers. Anita Nair in her debut novel shows the external and internal identity of her female characters.

**KEY WORDS:** Self Identity, Patriarchy, Relationship Husband & Wife.

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INTRODUCTION

Indian Writing in English has placed an independent status in the realm of Indian literature. Fiction by women writers occupies a major role in the contemporary writing in Indian English. Women writers have come away from traditional portrays of enduring, self -sacrificing women toward conflicted female characters searching for identity and defined their victim status.

Anita Nair is one of the finest writers in Indian writing in English. She was born at shoranur in Kerala. Anita was brought up in a suburb in Chennai. Her grandparents lived in Kerala. So, she made her visits to Kerala and that enabled her to know the heart of rural Kerala.

Her first book, a collection of short stories called "**satyr of the subway**" (1997), won her a fellowship from the Virginia Center for creative Arts. Her second work "**The Better Man**" (2000) published by Penguin India. Her third work "**Ladies Coupe**" (2000) was rated as one of 2002's top five books of the year. Her poetry has been included in "**The Poetry India Collection and a British Council Poetry Workshop Anthology**".

Nair works have been widely published in twenty seven countries. Her novels are passionately woven on the thread of human nature and values; with a female oriented subject. Nair conveys her protagonists'

dilemmas with a freshness and charm that marks her story feminism. Anita Nair writes with great energy and creates amazing work.

The theme of my paper is self-discovery and problems on **"The Better Man"** by Anita Nair. This paper is a critical study of the characters named Valsala and Anjana in Anita Nair's **"The Better Man"**. Nair's women are real, flesh and blood protagonists who are awesome with their relationships to their surrounding, their societies, their families, their mental makeup and themselves.

Valsala in **"The Better Man"** is the wife of Prabhakaran, an aged schoolmaster. Valsala is not satisfied with him. So, she falls in love with Sridharan. She doesn't bother about society. She realizes her inner mind and becomes the mistress of him. This incident shows the feminist point of Valsala in the form of morality. As a matter of fact, she is aware of the fact that every woman needs the energizer of love, freedom, equality and sex. She puts forth the new issues of woman's sexuality and gender. She justifies herself as,

"I am just forty years old. I don't want to be pushed into old age before it time. I want to live .I want passion. I want to know ecstasy, she told herself, night after night" (Nair BM: 130).

Valsala emerges as a "New Woman". She breaks the traditional Indian society. So, she is sexually satisfied with her affair with her neighbour, Sridharan and does not feel guilty of it. Valsala tries to achieve an identity in life but against the traditional manner. Valsala resorts to freedom not only psychologically but sexually too. When she resolves her inner conflicts, she is able to conquer self identity.

Next, I discuss about the second character Anjana, in the novel **"The Better Man"** was grown up in a beautiful atmosphere. When she married to Ravindran, at the age of twenty seven, she has lost all her independence in the name of marriage. Her married life is not good. Whenever Anjana is ready for conversation, Ravindran feels irritated and leave the place. She longs for love and freedom, but it ends in failure. So, she develops to hate all the things including herself.

One day Anjana goes to her parent's home in order to look after her mother. This gap becomes an escape from her conjugal life. Ravindran's business failed and he decided to start a new one. Ravindran doesn't care about her and tries to forget her. This "Silence" makes their marital life grows unsteady and dismal. By seeing this gap, Anjana's father raised a voice against him.

"When I gave you my daughter's hand in marriage, it was with the hope that you would love her. Cherish and protect her for the rest of her life. If all you intend to do is hurt her, and made her unhappy, then there is no need for such a relationship. My daughter can manage very well without a husband like you". (Nair, BM: 232)

In order to save their daughter from the brutality of her husband, her father finds a suitable teacher job. She enjoyed her job and reading books and magazines. From this, she come out of her married life .she comes to realize that life can always be made possible. Now, Anjana becomes a mature woman. The writer tries to explore that patriarchal set up which is responsible for the woman's condition in the Indian society. The novel also traces the growth of the character from weakness to maturity.

Anjana wants healthy life and degree of control over her life, as an educated woman.

"She gave away her colorful sarees and took to wearing starched cottons in shades as insipid and dull as her life. She locked up all her jewellery in a safe deposit box in the bank and swept all her fripperies away into the waste basket". (Nair BM: 234).

Finally, Anjana comes over the traditional Indian consciousness and creates the words her own. Anjana's emergence from her unsuccessful marriage, with the determination to live as a free individual, is an assertion of her personal freedom. She meets mukundan and falls in love with him. In mukundan's company, she realizes that she has to free herself from her unhappy married life. When Anjana tells her love to mukundan, he said,

"Anjana', Mukundan said, 'you must listen to me. It knows you think I am a good man a gentle man. Someone you can depend on completely. I don't know if I am that man you make me out to be. My mother begged me to rescue her and take her away. But I didn't. It was afraid of my father, and so I

made excuses. If I had done as she asked me, perhaps she might be still alive. That is the kind of man I am. A weak and undependable creature. Do you want to be part of such a man's life"?

"All of us have our weakness, but we seldom have the courage to accept them. Or even declare it as you have done now. To me, that makes you braver than anyone else. I love you .My love tells me that this right for me?" (Nair, BM: 244,245)

Anita Nair seems to be deeply concerned with women's freedom as Anjana wants to stand on her own wishes and liberty. After a long struggle, Anjana turns out to be a woman who can make choices, take decisions and makes up her mind to start a new life with Mukundan.

Anjana's positive attitude towards life, work financial independence, and self-identity helps her to go ahead in her life with hope and optimism. She has also created her gender identity and found a new life with Mukundan.

The novel depicts the real women in the form of Anjana who faces all the matters of patriarchy society and then after a lot of suffering in her marriage then she found love when she met Mukundan. Again she got disappointed when Mukundan denied to accept her before society but this time she become so positive and find her own way to live her life.

Thus Anita Nair has examines the inner identity of her all female characters in a psychological way. Like Anita Desai, Nair also depicts the psyche of her women characters of all age groups. She also focuses on the tactics of re-adjustments her female characters in order to create an identity of their own.

The woman in the past was completely traditional, uneducated and confined. They could never think that there can be different world outside the four walls of their house. Nair was completely cut off from such dynamic world. The woman living in such a traditional society become so habitual to their surrounding that the marriage is their destiny and their husbands are their master. Their duty is to obey him and serve him and his family. Nair being a woman penetrates deep into the inner mind of the depressed women by their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and bring to light, which are the outcome of Indian women's psychological and emotional imbalances in a male dominated society.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, self understanding is an essential part of Indian philosophical and theological systems present here. Self-discovery here is more realization of one's own interests in the narrow sense. Anita Nair has real position to write and put them in action. This persuaded and kindled to take up the writings of Anita Nair to examine, revive and study her works and is therefore anticipated to be a ceaseless incident of enrichment and reward. Anita Nair, like many other writers of novels of typical literature, has chosen breaking the patriarchy and establishing self identity as the central theme for the novel "**The Better Man**".

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