



FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE OF A NEW WOMAN IN ANITA NAIR'S *THE BETTER MAN*

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ABSTRACT:

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. Women's liberation is an analysis of the overarching social conditions, which have avoided ladies from the predominant male culture, social, political and scholarly interests. Innovation is plainly clear in the development of the new lady composing. She places her protagonists in the social milieu of modern India and portrays them convincingly. In *The Better Man*, Anita Nair explores the interdependence between family, marriage, kinship and gender. She rejects the image of the 'confined' woman by replacing it by that of an independent person who is trying to expand her space both literally and symbolically. The story of the novel *The Better Man* presents the chief character, Mukundan's self-realization, his mistakes and the causes for a great transformation in his character.

KEYWORDS: feminism, women in Indian Culture, Anita Nairs Better Man, ladies, Indian women writer, female personality, Ladies Coupe, Social rights, selfhood, independent woman.

INTRODUCTION :

Indian English writing has got its own lion's offer in world writing. Crafted by these Indian women journalists have left their permanent impact on the pages of artistic history, which can't be deleted easily. Indian women journalists likewise settled their very own personality by investigating female subjectivity in their scholarly posterity and endeavoring to bring a character for ladies, by featuring different immaculate and unnoticed aspects of life.

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".

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 neighbor, 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)

Thus the world of her desires tempts her initially after the blooming aroma of pala flowers to taste the pleasures in her life. She attains a near-exemplary level of female autonomy. For the first time after many years of her married life she believes that she needs a perfect man to satisfy her sensual pleasures. She falls in love with Sridharan, who first appears in her life as a neighbour and then becomes her lover. Soon after the realization of her inner self she decides to free herself from her husband. She enters into a sexual relationship with Sridharan as a natural pinnacle to her emotional involvement; she decides to be the mistress of him. Since Prabhakaran master went to school they enjoyed open-handed freedom emotionally and physically. She sets her heart on enjoying her life with Sridharan, as her *gandharva*. Sridharan admires her and flatters her beauty by his words as a female Valsala completely for that reason she starts to take care of her attractive body.

This narrative presents the feminist attitude of Valsala in the light of new morality. Of course this brings into the focus her soul and psyche, for she expects the human attitude from

the male. As a matter of fact, she is aware of the fact that every woman needs the energized of love, freedom, equality and sex. But she is also certain, that is quite impossible from hostile men. Accordingly she is willing to trap the new system against the backdrop of traditional concept of Indian Womanhood. She stirs the entire society with her liberal views and attitude, and 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 is time. I want to live. I want passion. I want to know ecstasy, she told herself, night after night. (Nair BM: 130)

The character Valsala resorts to freedom not only psychologically but sexually too. For her sexual starvation she is anxious to seek out to extra-marital sex. Here, Freud's lexis of the sexual craving as "motor force of life;" could help to understand the situation better. Since her sexual hunger is provoked or repressed, Valsala's strive for expression through sexual affiliation or affair with men other than her husband. Valsala's affair with Sridharan seems to be temporary substitute for her discontented marital life. Valsala represents the "new woman" who is on her way to an erotic sexual utopia, where informed mutually consenting individuals could fully realize themselves sexually without public opprobrium or private guilt. (The New Sexuality; 1989)

So, she is sexually satisfied with her affair with her neighbor, Sridharan and does not feel guilty of it. The novelist belief is to take shelter in the self which means that the "self" is not metaphysical but psychological. In other words, Anita Nair means that her characters in future, assert themselves; they will no longer allow their "she" to get departed. By this assertion of the self Nair certainly takes her heroines to the pole of feminism, though she may not have aimed at propounding any such "ism". And the women have certainly begun their protest as indicated by their sexual emancipation. Valsala tries to achieve synchronization in life but against the traditional manner, by her own new way. Her new sense of self-awareness empowers her with an understanding of her feminine quality. When she resolves her inner conflicts, she is able to conquer self-identity.

Is this sexual prolificacy an indication of a fast spreading "new morality?" Or is it a sign of the approaching sexual exclusion or promiscuity? It is true that while men have enjoyed sexual freedom from time immemorial, women have been hedged around by unbreakable taboos. The character Valsala has broken them, like Nora, in "*A Doll's House*" by Ibsen. As Nora a new woman, Valsala is called a new woman. They do not represent the typical western woman who holds the sexual autonomy in her hands. And hesitation lingers over the question of whether these Indian heroines will find a position in a well-defined environment of living. The solution to this sexual dilemma too remains at crossroads and depends only on the individuals solving problems on her own.

All these characters assert their individuality after having led difficult lives with men in their aggressive lives. Having gone through the vile way of life they all develop a strong sense of confidence to decide their lives positively or negatively. Their lives prove the fact that women are not weak creatures or pitiable victims but they can achieve everything they need, all by themselves, even without the help of man. But one should impart a role to their conscience. Nair being a woman penetrates deep into the inner psyche 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 imbalance in a male dominated society. She also focuses on the tactics of re-adjustments of her female characters in order to create an identity of their own.

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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