



A COMMON MAN BECOMES A BETTER MAN IN ANITA NAIR'S NOVEL *THE BETTER MAN*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is about how a common man becomes a better man in Anita Nair's *The Better Man*. This study is an attempt to have a common man who has an unlawful life during his childhood and adulthood. He has a fear, guilt and hurt in his past life. The protagonist faces hardship to become a better man and he never knows the relationship with his father. Despite the feelings of guilt, fear and hurt, he overcomes from his past misery and proves himself by giving a piece of land to his friend as a better man with the help of his friend Bhasi.

KEYWORDS : Self-doubt, guilt, fear, responsible, better man.

Introduction

Anita Nair's novel *The Better Man* is about Mukundan's life story that is basically on the escapist who fails to undertake responsibilities and afraid of his dominating father whose approval is always needed for any of his actions. The novel describes, how an escapist person becomes confident. His talent makes him exceptional than sweat and sacrifice makes him better. His roots make him humble. Many happenings in life makes him who he is, what driven him from within, what makes him great and enough bold person.

Relationship of Mukundan with his father Achuthan Nair

Mukundan's problem starts from his early childhood. He has seen his father Achuthan Nair only in the photograph. Achuthan Nair returns all of a sudden from Burma. His father as a tall person and dressed black in colour, he becomes more fear and his mother comes to pacify him. The very first meeting shows a gap between the father and the son relationship. Achuthan Nair talks in awkward manner to Mukundan:

Come here, the man said awkwardly. Mukundan clutched the kitten to his chest and ran to stand behind a pillar. 'Come here, son,' the man beckoned once again. But Mukundan stood rooted to the place. When the man came towards him, he bawled loudly, Amma!' (69).

When Mukundan is 8 yr old, there is no improvement in their relationship. Achuthan Nair does not show any caring towards his son instead he show his violence power. His father's lecture begins on the discipline and ends up in curse to him that he is fit for "Ploughing the fields". Achuthan Nair words make Mukundan self-doubt and selfless feelings. Achuthan Nair's attitude towards Mukundan shows dominating power. If Mukundan comes back home late. Achuthan Nair asks questions as:

'Where have you been, you Vagabond? It's been more than an hour since the school bell rang. What have you been doing all this while? (72)

Mukundan tries to explain the reason of coming back late but Achuthan Nair never accepts his explanations. He shows his power as well as his weakness sees only threatening his son. Anita Nair shows the poor relationship between the father and son.

Achuthan Nair betrays his wife and he do not feel anything about his son and wife. He even accepts his son's hatredness on him and ready to stay with his second wife's daughter. Achuthan Nair is not allowing his son's dreams of becoming a famous writer. Instead of threatening his son, he says that Mukundan should not waste his life to be a writer. Here again father shows the dominating power and ill

treatment to son. By the ill-treatment of his father, Mukundan wants to escape from him. Mukundan's mother dies in a mysterious way and even he suspects his father. But he doesn't have the courage to ask his father. He is having fear, hatred and anger towards his father. He feels guilty about his mother that he is the responsible for his mother's death as she begs him to take her away before her death.

Achuthan Nair being a father he never shows his duty of finding a bride for his son. Instead, he blames Mukundan that every man should find his own woman. Further he says that Mukundan is not a man enough to find a bride. Mukundan gets insults and ill treatment from his father and he is having hatred towards his father, even though during his visits he brings gifts, apart from the gifts he sends money every month as the duty of a son. His anger and hatredness with his father is for destroying his life. Still he is trying to find a means to enter his father's heart. Thus, the novelist brings out the relationship between Mukundan and his father Achuthan Nair.

Mukundan becomes a better man

Mukundan has been suffering from his mother's death for years. He has seen the ghost of his mother who is furious and haunted with him. His house is a nightmare for Mukundan. He still thinks that he has done a big mistake by not helping his mother and her soul consequently hates him. Mukundan always have the feeling of guilty for what happened to his mother. He never tries to overcome that trauma and he is almost growing older, and he considers himself as a victim of father's callousness as well.

Bhasi, the painter has experienced a sad love story but he manages from that and starts a new family and has become a healer. He is the one who recognize about the past, the psychological problems, trauma and restless of Mukundan. Bhasi only helps him to transform from his past problems. Bhasi says to Mukundan:

Mukundan how long will you continue to run away from yourself? Look at you, the pitiful creature that you are. Fifty-eight years old and still floundering in a swamp of uncertainty. Afraid of your father. Haunted by guilt. Shying away from relationships (189).

Bhasi analyze the trauma, fear, guilt etc, with the healing power, makes transformation and shows the sign of Mukundan's better man. Now Mukundan feels comfortable at his home and he is able to start a deep friendship and a good relationship. For the first time in his life he is deeply falls in love with a woman called Anjana. Both of them plan to marry after Anjana's divorce from her ex-husband. Anita Nair shows in her novel that it is important to take the responsibility for oneself and for others.

Achuthan Nair's conditions and comes to stay with Mukundan makes him to postpone Anjana's matter. Meanwhile, the Power House Ramakrishnan decides to grab Bhasi's land to build a village community hall. Bhasi comes to help Mukundan and he is unable to trust Mukundan. When Mukundan tries to help Bhasi, he comes to know that he is also among a member of the community hall committee. He becomes dumbfounded that he is torn of his desire and his long dream of getting recognition. Bhasi quarrels with Mukundan on his change of behaviour and says:

'You don't have to. I'm not a fool. Do you think I haven't noticed the change in your behaviour? That's the problem with you youngsters. You don't understand the priorities in life. If something doesn't happen the way you want it, then you are quick to reject old ties, old relationships' (328).

Here Mukundan shows his selfishness. This selfishness makes him to change from his emotional thought.

Mukundan ponders over Krishnan Nair's comment – "Better Man than his father or the extension of who is his father had been?"

Krishnan Nair, a caretaker of Mukundan's house realizes his mistake by leaving his family members. Now he decides to leave Mukundan's house and goes towards his wife and children to satisfy them. At last, Mukundan becomes a better man by giving a part of his own land to Bhasi. And he asks Anjana to come and join with him after pooram. He put gun powder in the community hall building in order to satisfy his friend Bhasi. So he becomes a better man.

Conclusion

Mukundan undergoes an important role in the novel. The novelist brings out a better man from a common man, the person who is unable to feel responsible neither for himself nor for the others whom he loves. With his friend Bhasi's help, Mukundan is relieved from the memories of his childhood days which is terrifying him of his domineering father.

Every man is guided by a force that is individual and unfathomable. No man is the master of another man's destiny (330).

Though, Mukundan is ill-treated by his father. He forgives his father and does his duty of as a son, his father's death ceremony is conducted with a lot of relatives as per Achuthan Nair's wish who come to attend the feast. And Mukundan gives Bhasi a piece of his own land and seeks Anjana's forgiveness. He chooses his own path to become a better man. He learns that happiness cannot be had by causing others unhappiness.

The edifice to the man he had been would no longer exist. This was the moment that had eluded him all his life. When he would become a man. A better man than he ever had been" (361).

His character is a reflective moral which can be learned by the youngster in this society.

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