

# CULTURAL DEVIATION IN ANITA NAIR NOVEL *THE BETTER MAN*

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## Abstract

**Anita Nair's novels mark the mode of twenty first century. She is one of the talented women writers in India. Anita Nair portrays patriarchy, norms of marriage, child and child-parenting relationship, love and sex in her novels. Nair depicts the deviation of culture in her novel *The Better Man*. She portrays Valsala's character and the behavioural disposition in the society. Women are trained to live or work for humans only. The subjugation endured from their husband like Prabhakaran pushes them to abnormal situation. They deviate from the norms of culture and carry on with reinsure activities.**

**Key words : Deviation, Patriarchy, Reinsure, Subjugate, disposition.**

Culture is the way of life of the society. Every society has its own culture. Anita Nair depicts both the Good and Evil ideas of culture. Human nature and culture is more important to identify social life. Culture is the bases of life in any society. Culture means integrated customs, tradition and human behavioral pattern. Various studies prove that culture is a system of learned behavior and its transmitted by the group of people.

Mukundan, a middle - aged bachelor, is forced to return to his native Kaikurussi, a sleepy village in Kerala. Determined to conquer old ghost, Mukundan decides to restore his childhood home and hires One - Screw- Loose Bhasi, an outcast painter, to oversee the renovations. A practitioner of a unique style of healing, Bhasi is intrigued by Mukundan's unhappiness and sets about mending his troubled friend. But the durability of Mukundan's transformation into a better man is soon called into question.

Valsala is the wife of a middle-ages schoolmaster namely Prabhakaran. She is immersed in her daily household chores and watches television every evening. She lives a monotonous life. The coconut, cashew and

pepper trees which grow in her garden do not fill with charm and joy. She is inclined to follow the living style of the glamour world outside the four walls.

Valsala feels that her marital life has not been fruitful for her. She has never tasted the pleasure of her desired fruit during the marital life. So she remains dissatisfied on this level. To avoid her alienation, she starts to associate her suppressed feelings with the natural objects such as pale flower that is liked by Gandharvas very much. They always look for virgins to seduce them. They make them captive only for this evil motive. This hope fills her with some optimism. As the novelist remarks:

All night, for the first time in many years, Vasala tossed and turned in her bed, breathing in the scent of the pala flowers. Strange sensations coursed through her. Her nostrils flared, her lips parted, her eyes became a little less murky, every pore in her body opened, greedily seeking to fill; their depths with this unique fragrance... she went to stand beneath the pale tree, spreading her hair out to dry... she stood there rubbing sandalwood paste into her skin, her bare breasts, and thighs. 'Come to me, Gundharva,' she beseeched. Can't you smell the fragrance on want in me... seduce me with your soft voice and caresses. Make me your lover, your slave. (BM 129)

Her unfulfilled desires compel her to yearn for extra - marital relationship. This indicates female autonomy and projects the mood of contemporary women. She, after many years of married life, feels that she needs a perfect man to satisfy her physical desire. This desire is mainly responsible for leading her to the path of extra- marital relationship and she falls in love with Sridharan. He, in the beginning, appears to her as a neighbor and becomes her lover later on. Soon after, following the guidelines of her own conscience, she decides to free herself from the traditional bond of marriage. After releasing herself from this conjugal bond, she develops the extra- marital relationship. When Prabakaran goes to school, they enjoy freedom unhindered. Sridharan admires her and her the desired fruit. In this way, he makes her captive physically and emotionally. Due to this, she surrenders herself to Sridharan completely and starts to take care of her body in order to be attractive to him.

This narrative presents, through Valsala, a new morality. This new morality brings focus on the soul and psyche of the female of a new generation and indicates what she expects from the male. She is aware that love, sex, freedom, justice, equality, and so on are her birth right, but these things cannot be expected from a man of hostile nature. In spite of it being so, she willingly follows this trap of the new system that is completely against the traditional concept of Indian Womanhood. Passion and desire for pleasure play an important part in making her do so. By doing so, she undermines the sanctity of the sacred institution, marriage. Her wrong steps compel the feminist writers to consider things from a different point of view. She does not challenge the patriarchal set

up of society only with her liberal views and attitude, but also raises the new issues of woman's sexuality and gender that towards a radical change of society. As she remarks "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" (BM 131). Whenever a woman is dissatisfied on a personal or public level, she rebels against the existing set up of society. The same happens with Valsala. The quest for freedom takes her to this path, where she seeks divorce from this conjugal bond of marriage. This development marks the reflection of the contemporary female psyche. Generally, life is an affair of sorrow and joy. She inticates this rebellion on a personal level which affects her husband also. When her revolt comes to the surface, it is revealed that Sridharan and Vasala are life partners on the superficial level only. In spite of her dissatisfaction with her spouse, she decides to remain with him for the sake marital gain. We read:

Then there were the retirement benefits he would get when he retired from the lower Primary School in Pannamanna three years from now. And then there was the sizeable LIC policy.... After twenty – three years of marriage, she thought she deserved to it all. She didn't want to give it up just like that. Nor did she want to give up Sridharan(BM 133)

Prabhakaran's missing is reported and later he is found dead. The police questions Valsala about the death of her husband, but she keeps the secret. She sheds crocodile tears over his death and bangs her head against the wooden pillar. By creating a high- profile drama, she gets a great deal of sympathy from the readers. But everything is changed, when her involvement is reported in the murder of her husband Prabhakaran master. It is reported as follows, "brutally killed the schoolteacher in his bed on the night of 14 July at Kaikurysssi village. The body was then dismembered and buried in individual pits in a coconut grove owned by Sridharan. The accused had been on the run ever since 8 August when the gruesome murder of Prabhakaran Master came to light" (BM 143).

By murdering her own husband, she commits a heinous crime. Valsala does not have any feeling of regret for this shameful, criminal deed. She takes this step because she wants to escape from the male domination and desires to lead a life of her own. Everyone in the village says that her behavior was ghastly. Vasala is the image of a "New Woman" who breaks the traditional Indian consciousness and declares the revolt against the patriarchal set up of society. In this fact changing world immortality is on the rise. Love and sex play a vital role in the novels of Anita Nair. Old social and moral values are declining. Anita Nair displays emotional and the painful feelings of the contemporary women in a bold manner. Through Vasala, Nair projects the woman of the twenty- first century. For whom sex is a new sort of religion. She casts light on the female psyche and conveys the message a woman should be treated as a complete human being. A study of the man- woman relationship as

depicted in the modern literature of the East and the West shows that time is changing, so the expectations, psyche and behaviour of female are under change. Women are now projected as more self – confident, more liberated in their view, more expressive in this behaviour and more intelligent as compared to the woman of the past.

### **Works Cited**

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