

Psychological Transformation of the protagonist in Anita Nair's "The Better Man"

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Abstract

Anita Nair's *The Better Man* explores the theme of how characters navigate personal growth challenging social norms. It also deals with the themes like love, identity, and self-discovery. The novel explores the complications in human relationships and social expatriations. Additionally it touches up on the relationship between a dominating father and fearful son and the impact of choices on one's life.

Keywords

Personal growth, Human relationships, Dominating

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Introduction

Anita Nair's "The Better Man" unfolds the life journey of Mukundan, initially portrayed as an escapist grappling with the weight of his dominating father's approval. The narrative intricately weaves his transformation, revealing that while innate talent sets him apart, it's the perseverance and sacrifices that make him truly exceptional. The novel beautifully explores how life's experiences, coupled with his roots, contribute to his humility, confidence, and the emergence of a bold and great individual.

Journey into Mukundan's Past

Anita Nair's novel "The Better Man" delves into the complications of human psychology, portraying characters who undergo significant transformations. One of the central characters undergoing psychological transformation in the novel is Mukundan, a retired government employee. First He was introduced as a troubled and

frustrated young man, Mukundan returning from Trichy after his retirement. While coming to his native Kaikurussi he revisits his memories. Until the age of seven Mukundan saw his father Achuthan Nair in photographs only. One day suddenly his father returned from Burma. The towering figure of Achuthan Nair and dressed in Black, Mukundan got afraid and his Mother Paru Kutty came to pacify him. The first meeting itself shows the relationship between Mukundan and his father. Achuthan Nair talks in an awkward manner to his son.

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!' (The Better Man 69).

When Mukundan was 8 years old, there was no development in his relationship with his father. Achuthan Nair failed

to do his duties as a father. Instead of showing love and care, he showed violence. Achuthan Nair Always scolds and discourages him. And he tells that he is fit for nothing this made Mukundan to have self doubt. Mukundan wants to become a Writer but his father doesn't allow him to do as per his wish. Achuthan Nair blames Mukundan for everything. Even though he comes home late. It shows the dominating power of Achuthan Nair. This is one of the reasons for Mukundan's problems. "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)

Then Mukundan decided to leave his father Achuthan Nair. Then he came to Trichy and got a government job. During his holidays he goes to his native to see his mother. Achuthan Nair betrayed his family and lived with his concubine. There comes a news that his mother died in a mysterious way. But Mukundan knows that his mother was killed by his own father but Mukundan can't able to question him. His mother's death made him more guilty and stressed because his mother asked him to take her with him before her death. But still Mukundan tries to go inside his father's heart. This was the main reason for Mukundan's lack of confidence.

Mukundan's realisation

Then Mukundan tries to realise his friend Bhasi. Bhasi is a popular person in Kaikurussi village and a painter. Before that he was a lecturer in a college. Bhasi was Mukundan's best friend who becomes the healer of Mukundan and guides him for his psychological transformation beyond his past troubles, 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 is like Mukundan's guide and cheerleader, help-

ing him through tough times and pushing him to be his best self. With Bhasi's encouragement and wisdom, Mukundan learns important lessons and becomes more confident and happy. Through their relationship, Mukundan learns valuable life lessons and discovers his inner strength, ultimately transforming into a more confident and fulfilled individual.

While returning to Kairurussi after his retirement, Mukundan meets Anjana, a married woman who is not happy with her husband Ravindran. Anjana also faced the same problems as him. Her intelligence, strength, and independent spirit admires Mukundan and finds attractive, leading to his growing affection for her throughout his life and he feels more comfortable with her. For the first time Mukundan falls in love with a woman. They both have decided to marry each other after Anjana's divorce with Ravindran but Achuthan Nair's health condition forced Mukundan to delay in his plans with Anjana. Simultaneously conflicts arise with Powerhouse Ramakrishnan the famous person in Kairurussi who tries to build a community Hall and he needs a plot from Bhasi's house but he does not agree. Then Powerhouse Ramakrishnan came to know that if Mukundan asks Bhasi will not refuse, then Powerhouse Ramakrishnan used a strategy that if Mukundan helps him in Bhasi's issue he will be appointed as one of the members in committee. Mukundan convinced Bhasi and bought his land only for his own benefit. This shows being disloyal to the person who brought joy into his life and his selflessness.

'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)

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

Krishnan Nair believes that Mukundan is a better man than his father or even an extension of his father's good qualities. He sees Mukundan as someone who embodies the positive traits of his father and perhaps even surpasses them. This made Mukundan to realise his mistakes. He decided to give a portion of his land to Bhasi, becoming a more compassionate person. And he joins Anjana. Now he is psychologically changed by not being selfish and being escapist.

Conclusion

Mukundan plays a pivotal role in this Novel, where the author transforms an ordinary man, burdened by the weight of his past and an overbearing father, into a responsible and liberated individual with the assistance of his friend Bhasi. The narrative underscores that every person is propelled by a unique and mysterious inner force, shaping their journey towards self-discovery and growth. "Every man is guided by a force that is individual and unfathomable. No man is master

of another man's destiny". (330)

Even though Mukundan was mistreated by his father, he forgives his father and does his duty as a son. Achuthan Nair's death ceremony is conducted with a lot of family members as per his wish. Mukundan gave a piece of land to Bhasi and seeks Anjana's forgiveness. He discovers that true happiness doesn't come from causing others pain, and he forges his own path towards becoming a better person.

His character serves as a moral reflection, offering valuable lessons for young individuals in society to learn from and apply.

References

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