



# அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சல்

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ஆகிய மாதங்களில் வெளிவரும்

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# Aran

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International e Journal of Tamil Research

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(Peer Review)பீர் ரிவியூ செய்யப்பட்டு பதிவு செய்யப்படுகிறது என்பதைத்  
தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.





ஐங்குறுநாறு 'சிறுவெண் காக்கைப் பத்து' பாடல்களில் எடுத்துரைப்புச்  
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குறுந்தொகையை தழுவிய இக்கால படைப்புகளில் இலக்கியநயம்  
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புறநானூற்றில் தமிழர் பண்பாடு  
திருமதி கா.சுகன்யா,

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இ.ராபர்ட் கென்னடி

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வேளாங்கன்னி.ஏ

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கணிதித்தமிழ் வளர்ச்சியில் இணைய நூலகங்கள்  
கு.நிவேதா

மொழி வளர்ச்சியில் ஊடகத்தின் பங்கு  
முனைவர் ஈ. இசக்கியம்மாள்

*1.The Predicament of Women in Patriarchal Society in Anita Nair's The Better Man*  
K. Nesapriya

திரைப்படக் கதைசொல்லலும் சமூகத் தாக்கமும்: அசுரன் திரைப்படம்.  
(திரைப்படக் கோட்பாடுகள், தொழில்நுட்ப அழகியல் மற்றும் பார்வையாளர் வரவேற்பு)  
திரு. விசுமாப்போடி சசிகரன்

பாலக்காடு மாவட்டத்தில் சூமை தாங்கி  
முனைவர் வே.இரவி

கீழடி அகழாய்வு - தமிழரின் தொன்மையான வரலாற்று பின்புலம்  
முனைவர் அ. மதலேன்

சம்புவராயர் கல்வெட்டுகளில் அறியலாகும் நாளும் ஊரும்  
முனைவர் அ. அமுல்ராஜ்

பரதநாட்டியத்தில் நால்வகை விருத்தியின் வகியங்கு  
கலாநிதி தாஷாயினி பரமதேவன்

அட்டைப்படம் உதவி

இணையம்

நன்றி

A background image featuring a dense field of pink flowers, likely Hibiscus, with green, feathery leaves. The entire image has a soft, warm pinkish-orange tint.

**ആന്ദകീലം**

## *The Predicament of Women in Patriarchal Society in Anita Nair's *The Better Man**

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### **Abstract**

Anita Nair does not merely agree with the prevailing patriarchal beliefs in society and the subjugation of women. After realizing the disparity between the sexes, she begins investigating the actual mechanism that sustains this inequality. The stereotype that portrays all women as victims and all men as oppressors worries the author. The oppression of women is deeply ingrained in Indian society, especially in customs, religious beliefs and practices, the judicial and educational systems and Indian families. She provides common instances of women being persecuted in patriarchal societies. Anita Nair wants that women must be allowed to make use of their talents and jointly with men they have to fulfil their duties towards their families and to the patriarchal society. She is of the opinion that women must be treated equivalent to men and their survival must be recognized as that of any human being. The male-made society, lust and female inequality are all topics covered in her work *The Better Man*. The character Paru Kutty in *The Better Man* is a helpless sufferer of patriarchy. The patriarchal order is broken by her through the novel. This paper examines that Anita Nair brings out the limitations related with a women's life from their childhood to womanhood in patriarchal society.

**Keywords:** Patriarchal, Womanhood, Post-Colonial & Male-Domination.

### **Introduction**

Indian English writing has matured. It has come a long way and is now famous all over the world. Since it seems to be a location, a lot of work needs be done to connect its concepts and substance to other Indian literatures as well as to global knowledge. Women authors' novels make up a significant portion of contemporary Indian literature in English. It offers wisdom, common sense, rich material and a starting point for conversation. Women's issues are the focus of female novelists. It is crucial that they do this since women are the only ones who can truly and nuanced grasp conflict, with all of its complexities, ambiguities,

and contradictions, as the majority of women's information does not penetrate men's thoughts. There are many reasons, therefore various critiques and various aspects of Indian writings can be adequately presented without a single book by Indian women writers. It does not mean that gender is a pervasive issue in modern society, or that there is not much research focusing on women anymore. In fact, thanks to recent research on women and their performances, the social environment in India has become more accessible and therefore gendered. (Monty and Dhawan 9)

Indian literature in English emerged at the end of the eighteenth century as an expression of the momentous meeting of power and business in England and the ambivalence and uncertainty in India. Since then, it has been a way to express and express hope and despair, passion and discontent, joy and pain, as India moves from freedom to slavery and from slavery to Indian, history to freedom and from freedom to reconstruction. Slavery, servitude and subjection are both degrading and demoralizing. But the mind-numbing shock of defeat slowly crept into his consciousness. This is a tortuous force, with the progress of new education, changes in writing, the revival of intelligent countries, the emergence of new knowledge that is not only reliable and based on national culture, but also important and modern in our files and documents. "Indian writers writing in English have managed to develop a creative wing of self-expression without denying the inheritance from cultural history." (Iyer, "Preface")

Women writers in India are moving forward at a steady and consistent pace that corresponds to the global pace. We watch them bursting forth in full bloom, each with their distinct fragrance. They are admired for the originality, flexibility, and indigenously that their creations express. Rajni Walia observes, "Since the male point of view has been accepted as the norm, even women tend to internalize the culturally conditioned and received image of woman. Therefore sometimes even women-authored texts present images of women, which confirm the male typecasting of women." (Walia 34)

Marriage and family are the most important institutions of patriarchal society. Endogamy has been the outstanding feature of caste in India. These social institutions have never been stable but continuously changing. Joint family system or extended family has been replaced by nuclear family. "Marriage is one of the most important and sacred institutions of patriarchal society because it is a socially approved sex relationship of the two or more people of the opposite sex which is defined and sanctioned by custom and law also expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and the birth of children" (Rao 32).

*The last six decades played key role in bringing changes in its traditional pattern because the arrival of industrialization, urbanization, Westernization and advancement of IT contributed much to the family disorganization. Agriculture industry began to lose its traditional set-up, daily earning and factory-going unskilled workers were also affected this new emerged development. This new life pattern brought changes in their way of life, attitudes, emotions, and psyche to the traditional family system which gave rise to modern family system or nuclear family system. Work demarcation in nuclear family set-up is quite different to the joint family system where both the person may be working also. "In modern family set-up, a husband may be projected helping to his wife in the kitchen and other household works also that had been taboo in traditional Indian family system." (Prasad 50)*

*The majority of Anita Nair's articles focus on her women and their struggles against the backdrop of patriarchal society in modern-day India. In her works, she subtly portrays the socio-cultural norms and beliefs that shape the perception of Indian women and their assigned duties. The main contribution of Anita Nair's fiction is its examination of the moral and psychological quandaries and consequences faced by the female characters, as well as their attempts to overcome these difficulties and find a new balance in their relationships with both themselves and their environment. They frequently serve as testimonials from women about the challenges and difficulties they encountered in traditional Hindu households. They were torn between the devotion to the old ideas of home and family and the application of new values. These novels touch on issues such as working women's crises, marital adjustment, the desire for uniqueness, and motherhood concepts in greater detail. Instead of totally rejecting the conventional culture, she works with middle-class Indian women, who are representative of most educated Indian women who find it difficult to adapt.*

*The contemporary women novelists also have an excursion to middle class family and recognize sensibility, attitude, deeds, needs, expectations, cultural milieu, economic status, worries, experiences, psyche and vulnerability of them all. They also observe generation gap, preference for boys and gender discrimination. Either consciously or unconsciously, they document the reality of middle class consciousness with their own ideological views. The views may be analytical, critical and judgmental. Their ideological thinking is determined by the existing social environment. The type of socialization that they live are the cause of their creativity and ideological expression, the secret behind the success of them is their vision about life and their idea about the positivity of women and this makes them create such strong minded characters in their fictional world.*

Anita Nair's women characters are not fixed entities that possess feminine essence. On the other hand, they are women who question their existence in a male dominated family structure while at the same time they also assimilate the patriarchal values. All her women emerge through the fabric of family life where they have to wait for the male authority for approval for their actions.

*The Better Man* was the first novel by an Indian writer to be published in the United States. This novel centres on the protagonist Mukundan Nair. He is a retired Government officer. He returns to his village in Kerala and lives in a house inherited from his mother. He feels guilty as he does not save his mother from his father as she desires that she wants to be with Mukundan in her life. A house painter called One Screw-Loose-Bhasi becomes his friend and he helps him overcome the guilty consciousness. Both Bhasi's and Anjana's friendship rescue him from the morass of the past. Balan's wife Meenakshi in *The Better Man* swears of reunion with her husband. She gets liberty and harmony in life without negotiating her requirements and responsibilities. The story of each character in the novel depicts a basic human predicament. She has proved her spirit by fathoming the deepest alcoves of man's psyche.

Anita Nair has shown the psychology of women who try to establish themselves as human beings with some reason for their birth in a patriarchal society. She also recommends women to develop self-awareness and self-confidence. Even though she highlights women who bear the brunt of patriarchy, she does not like to be termed as a feminist writer. Her novels mirror the reality of the Indian society and also she reconsiders and reinterprets women's position that helps them to rejuvenate their values, identity and their status in human community. Her fiction gives a more transparent picture of the status of Indian women. At the same time she is not prejudiced against men and bears no bias towards her female protagonists.

Anita Nair wants that women must be allowed to make use of their talents and jointly with men they have to fulfil their duties towards their families and to the patriarchal society. She is of the opinion that women must be treated equivalent to men and their survival must be recognized as that of any human being. She brings out the limitations related with a women's life from their childhood to womanhood. The stigma that is attached to women should be eliminated.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century's saw a significant shift in how women were portrayed in literature. During this time, feminist voices started to challenge the conventional

portrayal of women in literature. Female characters with deeper depth, intellect and wit were created by writers such as Jane Austen (1775-1817) and George Eliot (1819-1880). Their works frequently questioned patriarchal boundaries, examining issues of freedom, individualism and the constraints of marriage for women.

Anita Nair eloquently illustrates the feeling of estrangement that results in a condition when a person's emotions are suppressed, ultimately making the self and the outside world appear unreal. Eric Hoffer states, "To a man utterly without a sense of belonging mere life is all that matters, it is the only reality in an eternity of nothing, and he clings to it with shameless despair" (65). Second category 'Familial' issues deals with relationships within the family and the society namely husband-wife relationship, parent-child relationship, man-woman relationship and relationships with a fellow being in the society. Next vital issue dealt is 'Subaltern issues' which encloses several discriminations like class, caste, communal and gender. Arundhati Roy claims "They are only deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard" (Sydney Peace Prize Lecture 2004). People who are socially, politically, and geographically isolated as outsiders by the hegemonic power structure are referred to as subalterns.

Anita Nair exposes the vices of exploitation of minority under the name class discrimination in her debut novel *The Better Man* through the painter Bhasi. He is one of the supporting characters encouraging the protagonist Mukundan Nair in his entire endeavour in becoming a better and perfect man. He undergoes double discrimination being an outsider or a non-native of the village and scaled as lower class by upper class people like Power House Ramakrishnan and others. Even his nickname 'One Screw-Loose Bhasi' by the village illustrates his state of being neglected by the villagers and their ill-treatment. Though he is well educated, he only identifies himself as a painter by excluding his past identity.

In the opening of the novel *The Better Man*, Anita Nair wisely hints at his psychological state of being discriminated and labeled as non-entity of the village and thus he ruminates, "I am not even in the class of Shankar... Nor am I like Postman Unni or Barber Nanu or the village crier, Pavithran" (BM 4). His craving for identity and the urge to become one among them consistently and hauntingly grows within him. Along with painting, he acts as a healer. Those in trouble solicit his treatment and recommendation in private. Even his craftsmanship and reticent are appreciated only in the private realm. Even the beneficiaries never extend outwardly their reverence or gratitude.

Both the sexes are not considered as equal even after the marriage. Men's domination and women's submission are the respected norms of the society. The attempts taken by women

to surpass men socially and economically are not accepted in the patriarchal system. The women in the past centuries were hardly educated and so they were controlled. They were not allowed to think or talk beyond the four walls of their houses. Men always followed the old philosophy that taught them that women should be under their control. Anita Nair makes the injustice to the women in the society explicit through her female protagonists.

Anita Nair's Paru Kutty in *The Better Man* is a helpless sufferer of patriarchy. Her husband Achuthan Nair smashes all the social norms and establishes himself as a pitiless tyrant both in his own house and Kaikurrussi village. At his house, he is the uncrowned emperor who commands his wife Paru Kutty and son Mukundan to obey. "I was scared of my father. I didn't have the courage to confront him" (BM 45). He makes his wife to be on her toes, he even pushes her to an unfortunate death. Paru Kutty is the victim of domestic violence.

Paru Kutty represents the large section of middle-class Indian women. At first she accepts her subordinate position in the family. Right from their childhood women are trained to succumb to the patriarchal norms of the society. It is an unwritten law that man's hegemony and woman's acquiescence are the perfect norms of the society. Paru Kutty is a timorous character and is not a highly educated woman and bears within her the massive weight of the past tradition of India, her caste, her religion, and her function as being wife and mother.

Paru Kutty is not rich and sensitive by nature. She is a normal and ordinary good-natured housewife and she is satisfied with her allotted part, but she is subjugated by her loud firm and tough husband, Achuthan Nair. He is a hazardous hateful man whose attitude brings a total negligence of his wife's requirements. Achuthan Nair is the representative of Indian society who forgets to respect the othernesses of other. To him Paru Kutty is simply a device to gratify his needs and desires. Matters become worse when he tries to bring his mistress home. Paru Kutty finds herself psychologically scaffold. She is a pawn in the hands of Achuthan Nair. Gayathri Spivak, the Indian philosopher and third world women writer has contributed subaltern theory to post-colonial studies. She has added critical views towards the theories like Marxism, Globalization, Identity and Feminism. She has the view that the lives of many women are so versatile and incompetent that they have not been recognized or categorized in a frank way. She draws attention towards the subaltern and gets the conclusion that the subaltern is not given the chance to articulate what they have to say and also she draws attention towards the voiceless position of the subaltern people. (306)

The passive character Paru Kutty, the wife of Achuthan Nair carries out her responsibility as a good wife. She is very particular in serving him good though he treats her as a slave

and frightens her always. Above all he makes his wife as a housekeeper and has a mistress for him. Whenever he speaks to Paru Kutty, he would first shout at her to show his authority and power and then only would he communicate his message. She leads an unhappy life with him. She expects nothing from him but little love. On the contrary, he does not mind her. When Achuthan Nair conveys the message to his wife that he is going to bring his mistress to the house, she could not bear that. When Paru Kutty hears this news, she loses her endurance and becomes a new woman by daring to say “no.” She has started to rebel against her husband. Her feelings are expressed as, “I am your wife and I insist you treat me with the respect due to me” (BM 74). She digests her throbbing and she mumbles that she has the power to make a decision that who has to live in the house and who should not. Even though he throws the harm arrows, she protests herself with the help of the shield new woman.

The realization of Paru Kutty as a new woman helps her to come out of her dread and prove herself. When Achuthan Nair tries to bring a concubine to her house she has the courage to question the extra marital affair of her husband and she has the power to resist and ready to chase them away. She lives alone with self respect. She pictures the power of women and their confidence. In such a way Anita Nair imbibes into her characters the courage and transforms female victimization to self respect.

Though she is a passive wife she objects her husband s bringing his mistress to his house. She becomes daring and rebels. With the help of the character Paru Kutty, the writer illustrates the Indian woman psychology that she would not be ready to leave her position as a wife. When his wife Paru Kutty objects to his bringing his mistress Ammini to his house, Achuthan Nair constructs a house across the street for his mistress. Paru Kutty says, “I m your wife and insist you treat me with respect due to me. ... As for the rest, she didn t care” (BM 74-75). Her psyche longs for respect and an honourable subordination from her husband.

In the novel *The Better Man*, Anita Nair delineates the concept of alienation through the characters Mukundan and Bhasi. In the case of Mukundan, he is ostracized by his dysfunctional family that consisted of his mother and father. He undergoes fear and frustration in the hands of his father whom he happened to meet only at his fifth year. He could not relate oneness between his real father and the picture of him which he has developed so far and accepted. This meeting ended futile and lead Mukundan to hide behind the pillar which also created a sense of rejection in Achuthan Nair. Thus Nair states “Achuthan Nair stood there furious, his lip curling in disgust at the mass of tears and sniffs before him. And a little hurt that his own

son should reject him so. In time Mukundan began to accept Achuthan Nair as his father. But the tone of their relationship had been set in that first meeting.” (BM 69)

In today's world, parental prejudice is more prevalent when parents do not treat their children fairly and the results can be either positive or negative. The behaviour and pentagonal attitude of an individual with their various roles also affects the stability and harmony of family connections. Anita Nair's writings teach us, among other things, that compassion for others is encouraged and that love alone is insufficient. Living through life with all of our human frailties and strengths in order to fulfil our predetermined will is what makes it so beautiful.

Discrimination can be defined as any attitudes, behaviours, or institutional procedures that marginalize or subjugate others. Humans are discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, when segregation is enforced. Direct discrimination, which is defined as deliberate prejudice against an individual or a group, is one overt kind of discrimination. The effect of a policy or practice that may seem neutral on the surface but systematically disadvantages members of a certain minority group in comparison to others is the focus of indirect discrimination. A person may be discriminated on various bases as race, religion, age, politics, gender identity, sexual orientation, a past criminal record, lifestyle, their disability, social class, strata, community, caste and many other reasons. The study drafts discrimination based on class, caste, community, gender and disability.

Anita Nair, a renowned and rightly called socially conscious writer is well aware of the still prevailing different forms of discrimination in the society. Being a torch bearer of the society, she brings to limelight the numerous guises of discrimination that have been in existence from time immemorial. Anita Nair portrays the society as it is and the positivity of men also helps the women to achieve their credibility in life. Through the characters Bhasi and Mukundan, Anita Nair portrays the positive side of men. Anita Nair's *The Better Man* throws light upon women's issues. She shows how traditional women like Paru Kutty as well as modern women like Anjana become stronger to become new women. She also brings out the negative character Valsala in *The Better Man*.

Anita Nair explains in detail how even now people are preoccupied with rigid caste systems and notions to impinge discrimination selfishly for their betterment. At the end of her theory, Spivak declares that, “The subaltern cannot speak” (308) which indict controversies. Her standpoint is that the subaltern can raise their voice since articulation is an involuntary act of

human being but what required is the patience and concern to listen and consider them with conscience.

At the psychological point, Anita Nair deals with myriad variety of characters. Paru Kutty, Meenakshi, Saadhiya, Mukundan Nair, Koman and Bhasi are put together for the analysis. At this juncture she provides varied layers of psyche of an individual and their transfiguration as well. Psychological factors induce one's hope, dream, choice and action. Psychological dilemma leads to riot, sometimes cut short their action, blocks their path from further movement or improvement, diverts them to the other side which they normally do not prefer, and sometimes fills only with curiosity and sometimes with fear, aversion and angst.

All are born alike with free will but their exposure to the internal and external issues of the society constructs them either in positive or negative way and makes them valorous, confident, dignified, vigorous or cowardice, inferior, malice and sluggish respectively. Perplexity in one's psyche and wandering thoughts disport them from their common life, generates complexity and makes them entangled with various difficulties in life. Anita Nair's portrayal pictures vividly of an individual's dilemma, false hope, dream, vacuum and scary things that alter the personality of individuals.

All the women characters of Anita Nair are crushed individually and so they experience a great suffering. The characters reveal a sense of anxiety because of their traumatic psychic experience. Anita Nair's feministic voice can be heard in all her novels. The women characters have personal calamities like isolation, maltreatment, rape, abortion, psychosis and betrayal. The writer depicts her women's willpower to come out of the barriers and appear unharmed even though they are under controlled situation. All her women characters tolerate numerous repressions as this stereotype has been implanted in their psyche already. They are sufferers of patriarchy.

A depth analysis of Anita Nair's book reveals the profound and impending predicament of Indian women, who feel constrained and suffocated in a patriarchal system. She uses the ray of her female characters' hopes, anxieties, frustrations, and trusts to characterize them. Despite being conscious of their strengths and weaknesses, they are unsatisfied with the pressure from the male-dominated society. She draws attention to their subordinate roles and the resulting devaluation in patriarchal society.

### **Conclusion**

The new women in Anita Nair have the dreams of successful life. They do not want to lose their sense of individuality by being fettered in marital relationships. They do not want to

remain in the bondage to men and so they try to frame and follow their laws. There are vast discrepancies between the traditional and modern women. The former suffer in their traditional role where as latter suffer more as they have to play the dual role in perspective society. Their psyche is deeply drenched in the influence of patriarchal society. Anita Nair's women protagonists are victims of the common gross gender discrimination and societal norms. They are aware of the inequality and injustice done to them by the social rules and they fight against the suppressive and unequal environment of the society that limits their ability and existence as women. Bound to their multiple roles in the domestic sphere, they question the subordinate status intended to them. Her concern for women is imbibed strongly in her fictional world.

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# அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சல்

## அறிவிப்பு / Announcement

அன்பான தமிழ்ச் சொந்தங்களே

வணக்கம்.

வரும் 2026, ஜனவரி மாதம் வெளிவரும் அரண் பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சலுக்கான ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரைகள் ஆய்வாளர்களிடமிருந்து வரவேற்கப்படுகின்றன.

கட்டுரை வந்து சேர வேண்டிய கடைசி நாள் - ஜனவரி 10. அதற்கு பின் வரும் கட்டுரைகள் ஜூலை இதழில் இடம்பெறாது என்பதை தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.

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