



**PLIGHT OF
MARGINALIZED IDENTITIES
IN LITERATURE**

EDITORS

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Editor(s): Dr. S. Geetha, D.Wilfin John, K. Shunmuga Jothi

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FOREWORD

Literature broadly is any collection of written work. Marginalized Literature shows people in the different perspectives that exist in the world in which they live. Marginalization exists in multiple forms, and against many groups of people. People can be marginalized due to multiple factors; sexual orientation, gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, displacement, conflict or disability. Poverty is both a consequence and a cause of being marginalized. Once people uncover these perspectives, they are able to interpret the unique situations that encourage them to act in the ways they do.

I congratulate the editors for choosing the title of contemporary social issues. The contributions of the inquisitive authors have made this volume a voluminous one. I hope that this book will further stimulate research in Marginalization Literature. This book will also be a probable guiding tool paving way for many researchers who need academic novelty and deep insight in Marginalization Literature. I feel honoured and privileged to bring out this book with the best research articles in this field.

I wish the editors and authors a grand success!

Chanthiramathi

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FOREWORD

I am glad to write a foreword for this volume titled 'Plight of Marginalized Identities in Literature'. Marginalisation study is an academic genre that examines the meaning, nature and consequences of marginalization. Literary representations of marginalization open up discussions about some of the most pressing issues of the age such as quest for identity, minority status, social care, feminism etc. In accordance with this, in this book, I see brilliant articles loaded with literary insight and intellectual deliberations. I also believe that researchers at every level can enrich and strengthen their research by the articles presented in this book.

It is my hope that this book will provide an active research experience for all Literature professionals. Congratulations to the authors whose work were selected; they can be justifiably proud of having their work chosen for publication and I am happy to acknowledge their achievement.

I would like to express my appreciation to all editors, who worked hard and managed to collect the articles for this edition. Special congratulations to them for their strenuous efforts in arranging the articles to achieve the aim at maxim level.

Best wishes!

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We win half the battle when we make up our minds to take the world as we find it, including the thorns.

The book is centred on research conducted on 'Plight of Marginalized Identities in Literature'. We are grateful to our friends, well-wishers, and colleagues for encouraging us to start this work and finally bring those research articles in book form.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Lord Almighty, for he has given us the power to believe in our passion and pursue our dreams.

We take this opportunity to render our sincere gratitude to our college for the publication of this wonderful book.

Special thanks are due to those who gave their time and read or edit the manuscripts. Your valuable suggestions and advice helped us refine our ideas throughout the preparation of this book.

It has been a remarkable experience of satisfaction and pleasure for us to work out on this task. We are indebted to all the research scholars, friends, and academic professionals - for contributing their treasured research papers.

We thank Muthra Publishers, Tamil Nadu, India for publishing all the research articles with ISBN Number.

Thanks a lot, to one and all involved in bringing out the research articles in the form of book.

Our special thanks to our family members and friends who contributed more towards this achievement.

Thank you everyone...

Editors

PREFACE

Marginality is an experience that affects millions of people throughout the world. People who are marginalized have comparatively little control over their lives, and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in delving contribution to society. A vicious circle is set up whereby their lack of positive and supportive relationships means that they are prevented from participating in local life, which in turn leads to further isolation. This has a tremendous impact on the development of human beings, as well as on society at large.

As the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy a productive, healthy, and creative life, it is important to address the issue of marginalization. Development is always broadly conceived in terms of mass participation. Marginalization deprives a large majority of people across the globe from participating in the development. It is a complex problem, and there are many factors that cause marginalization. This complex and serious problem needs to be addressed at the policy level. The articles published in this book deals with the problems of marginalization and the ways to reduce them.

We hope that our readers will find the articles presented in this volume of 'Plight of Marginalized Identities in Literature' interesting and informative. The editorial team would like to thank the elite authors for their innovative thoughts and fruitful literary contributions. The collection should serve as an archive for the readers and scholars in the long run.

With very warm wishes to the readers!

Editors

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**QUEST FOR SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND SELF-REALIZATION IN
ANITA NAIR'S THE BETTER MAN**

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ABSTRACT

Anita Nair is one of the post- modern women writers of the Indian English fiction. she has written novels, short stories, poems, essays, stories for children, plays, travelogues and has edited works since 1997. She is best known for her novels *The Better Man and Ladies Coupe*. Her novels have been translated into 21 languages. The female characters in Anita Nair's fiction have portrayed the life of women, on the back ground of Indian social and family life, in which her female characters undergo a variety of experiences often painful, under the patriarchal oppression in the family. They face physical violence, obstruction of their career and abandonment. In the present novel she explores the independency of the woman to satisfy herself basically as a human being, independent of various traditional roles as a daughter, wife, mother and so on. This paper focuses with the theme of self-actualization as seen in her novels *The Better Man* exhibits the external and internal identity of her female characters.

Keywords: Anita Nair's, self-Actualization, The Better Man.

The novel *The Better Man* is of different temperament. Mukundan Nair the protagonist suffers from a kind of guilt because of his mother's death. In this novel each and almost every major character suffers from a kind of psychological problem that arises out of disappointment, guilt and selfishness. Bhasi another main character has got a worst part of a failed past love. Though he seems to have come out of it and become a healer, he has no self-fulfillment in his living till Mukundan accepts his friendship. Anjana, Mukundan's beloved is disappointed with her first marriage and finds solace and comfort in Mukundan's friendship that is almost sixty years of age.

Mukundan even after having passed the age of 58 suffers from inferior complex. From his childhood he was not given chance to bring out his true self. When Mukundan was thirteen he discovered the manifest power of the written word: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (14). When he read these words from David Copperfield given by his English teacher, he felt his insides quiver with the certainty of knowing. Mukundan realized that this was going to be his repetitive phrase all through his rest of his life. "Write. Make words express the dictates of his mind. With words, he could rule kingdoms, swim treacherous currents, bring tyrants to their

knee. I will be a writer, he told himself again and again, hugging the thought with a furtive joy” (15)

But his heap of joy was brought down to nothing when his father Achuthan Nair tore not only the sheets of paper he had written the Brontes and Dickens but also his desire of becoming a writer. “Let me tell you boy, banish that thought from your mind. No son of mine is going to waste his life trying to be a writer” (16). Even as a child Mukundan found his self-went unrecognized. This attitude of his father created a dislike in the boy’s mind. Mukundan was forced to get the approval of his father for everything he desired from his childhood. Though he disliked his father’s attitude he feared him and surrendered himself to his father’s desires. As Nadine Richters observes: Even if he senses his desires, he learns to sacrifice them for the sake of his father’s satisfaction. Here living becomes more for the other self than for oneself. He often felt his self-beaten. These sacrifices lay the foundation to his gradual loss of identity (101)

Nadine Richters observes this situation and comments: “One can conclude that his father’s prohibition not to become a writer is a horrible trauma to Mukundan” (7). The unconscious mind includes the instances of traumatic memories of the past that it effects on the present being. Mukundan does not want to keep the memories alive but at the same time cannot keep himself away from his dreams. Achuthan Nair keeps on tailing his son’s life as: “when he began to live alone and no longer had to fear his father’s wrath, Mukundan still could not bear to read a book. It caused too many inexplicable emotions to surface.” (14). Mukundan seems to run continuously away from his true self. He is a pitiful creature being at the age of fifty-eight still floundering in a swamp of uncertainty, afraid of his father and haunted by his guilt.

When Mukundan comes back to his native village Kaikurussi at the age of 58 after his retirement he is not able to be at peace in his house where his mother had died. He is troubled and tortured by nightmares. He saw his dead Ammuma, his three Cheriyyammas and Balamaven staring at him with accusing eyes for having killed his mother. “When he turned, he saw them. Sitting there watching him, immobile, silent, but with accusing eyes” (29). Mukundan has an unconscious conflict of being the reason for his mother’s death. He is often reminded of his mother’s last words to him, “Take me with you, son I am so unhappy here” (31). Nadine Richters Says, “Mukundan knows that he has been scuff. He is haunted by a sense of failure for having abandoned his mother” (3)

He carries this conflict within him even when he is sixty. This unconscious conflict has become the source of his neurosis. Moreover, his extreme love for his mother is because of his Oedipus complex towards her. When Mukundan was a boy, his mother had tried to shield him from his father’s cruelty. But now he suffers from a sense of guilt as he had not shielded her from his father’s cruelty. Mukundan till he is sixty has never realized this trauma and has never made an attempt to come out of it. When he is back in his house Krishnan Nair comes to his rescue. But he is not able to do anything for the betterment of Mukundan’s psyche.

Bhasi, the one-screw-loose Bhasi, a housepainter by profession and healer by vocation, makes it his mission to get to know Mukundan and heal him: “I looked at the cracks, the degradation of strength and wondered at what must be the condition of the inner walls, the inner man. And I knew I caressed the sad walls that these could be repaired. You can be healed” (11). Once upon a time Bhasi was Bhaskar Chandran who had all dreams to live his life to its fullest with the kind of education and enthusiasm he had in life as a lecturer in English. He often dreamed of a life that would be sweetened by Omana, his student.

But one day when all these dreams and hopes were shattered, he felt that he wanted to cling to the last fragments of self-respect and would have to leave. He had come to Kaikurussi not only escaping a train accident but also escaping the unpleasant remnants of his past. He himself conquers his self as he says: “To human body has a natural in-built capacity to heal itself. To safeguard against trauma and disease. All I do is reinforce that natural vitality. I don’t work miracles. I don’t have a wand to kill diseases. I simply find a remedy for the baby to fight that disease” (9)

But Mukundan is reluctant in accepting Bhasi neither as a friend nor as a healer. The same reluctance in taking a decision to take his mother along with him had resulted in her death. Though he is not directly responsible for his mother’s death, he suffers from a sense of guilt for being reluctant. Yet he is reluctant in letting himself to overcome the sense of guilt. But Bhasi’s constant encounter with him results in success. He is made to sit in an earthen jar that is like a woman’s womb. It is his mother’s womb that helps him to rewrite his destiny: And so Mukundan has been healed from the hurt that he had carried in him like a secret malignant tumor gnawing at his insides. Hence in Mukundan there has occurred a sudden, dramatic outpouring of emotion that has resulted in the resurrection of his trauma. He has experienced an insight that has made him aware of the source of the emotion of the original traumatic event and he is on his way to become a happier and better person. Bhasi, though happy over Mukundan’s betterment, suffers from a nameless fear if the betterment could take Mukundan away from him.

Bhasi is afraid that Mukundan the man capable of love and happiness now will make him incapable of love, happiness and inner strength, that would result in losing his power to heal as he says, “For as you discover what you accomplish by yourself, you will realize that you don’t need me anymore” (187). So, the healer Bhasi has turned into a mere painter Bhasi, the one-screwloose- Bhasi. It is quite natural that everyman searches for a recognition in his dwelling place and Mukundan does not escape this. When Mukundan enters Kaikurussi soon after his retirement he thinks that he is of no significance in the village.

He felt bad that he had worn the costume of self-deceit. He found his self-null and void in that costume. Now he asks himself “Who am I? A better man than my father or merely an extension of who my father had been? This is what I have to discover” (344). All these years Mukundan had been a creature who had hidden his inadequacies by using his father’s domineering methods as an excuse to explain his own weakness of character. Only now he feels the nakedness of his self-challenging him. He has been a selfish being whose world and happiness revolved around the kindling of his fragile ego.

Mukundan has never been so alone in his life. Now when Krishnan Nair says that he is going home Mukundan is surprised. Krishnan Nair too has had a past. He has done the same to his wife and family. But now he is on the nearest possibility to discover the happiness of his self. "In the few years left to me, I'm going to try to make her happy, and in the process find some happiness of my own" (347). Before leaving Mukundan, Krishnan Nair leaves a meaningful question to him, "What is the point in surviving if you have no one, to share your happiness or grief with?" (348)

With the question of Krishnan Nair, begins the transformation of Mukundan. One last time he sought the confines of the earthen pot high in the attic. Cradled in its stillness, he called forth the man he knew was there somewhere within him. That being that had eluded him all these years. The confusion of his tortured spirit churned until what rose to the top was the means to his release. It was an end to the repugnance he felt for himself. When he climbed out of the urn, he kicked it on its side and smashed it to thousand pieces. He was confident that he would never need it again. From then on Mukundan did what his conscience told him right. Between the individual and society, he made his choice. He wants to be a better man. He wants to know what it is to love and to give and in turn to be loved. He is a man who had discovered happiness, harmony, contentment and fullness of living.

Anita Nair has presented an infinite variety of characters both male and female, with their infinite variety of life. She exposes the darker and brighter side of their existence. She interiorizes the turmoil and troubles of their mind and their self being fragmented and lost in the social predicament. She presents a vivid picture of their inner conflicts, their wounded dreams, their wounded psyche and their strife in their journey of seeking their self. Thereby she has developed and established the fact that there is a process of making of the self in every human in the deepest level of the unconscious, in which an individual grows, develops and slowly seeks the goal of his individuality.

In Anita Nair's fictional canvas, the individual is given more importance than the social or cultural milieu. But she qualifies the individual by connecting it with the milieu and that is the locale of her novels. In *The Better Man* Anita Nair portrays the characters how they struggle under the male domination over coming the obstacles and finally the happiness of achieving Self-Actualization.

WORK CITED

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