

## Cross-cultural in Anita Rau Badami's the hero's walk

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### Abstract

Anita Rau Badami was an Indo- Canadian women writer. Her novels "The hero's walk" (2001) spans India and Canada in its cultural and physical context, whilst denies Nandana the concubines children explores life between India and Canada. However, it is not simply the setting, or the cross- cultural nature of these novels that registers a move towards a redefinition of national discourse with in a pluralized Canadian space. In this paper shows on the cross- cultural effect on Indian families in India and Canada.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural, Rau Badami's, physical context

### 1. Introduction

Anita Rau Badami was a writer of south Asia who settled in Canada. She was a writer of Indo- Canadian Diaspora. Her novel "The Hero's walk (2001) [1]" depicts the cross-cultural effect on Indian families in India and Canada. The immigrant female characters Maya in "The Hero's walk." Her novels handle with intricacies of Indian family life, cultural gap that was come upon by the immigrants who settle in the West. The hero's walk describes the problems in the family life and at last how peace evolved in the family. In "The hero's walk" Anita Rau Badami depicts the emotional tensions that present in the south Asian diasporic as a diasporic text. The novels reflect Canadian culture and society. Narrate the Indian society and poverty-stricken communities, patriarchal set up, socio-religious rituals, colonial set up etc. Through their memory as well as their relatives, especially parents of both of them in India. Canadian culture was both a real hand experience by the immigrants as well as the myth, imagination of their relatives in India. Badami makes her readers aware about both the cultures and especially in the Indian culture, subaltern status of women. The novel describes on the Indian society, climate of Toturpuram, celebration of festivals, issues of women, political condition, casteism, issue of education, beliefs in astrology, religious and social rituals in Indian culture and tradition. The issue of settlement of Nandana—a foreigner in Indian tradition. Sripathi's harrowing loss of his daughter and his journey to Canada that require him to remember and re-enact the past, mark him as diasporic and cross cultural character.

India was a country which gives a lot of importance to family and its values. Indian families follow a stereotypical patriarchal system with father as the head of the family who in most cases acts as the sole bread winner of the family. Family was the strength of each individual and one was identified and revered based on his family and its history. Indian born Canadian author Anita Rau Badami's novels mostly deal cross cultural off with family life, the similarities, the differences and such factors that bind its members together and help them to stay intact and forge on with life.

Badami was exposed in the different women to the cross cultural, and one such power full portrayal was that of Ammayya who was a uproarious character, everything about her was amusing, her habit of using chemical formulate for, water her occasional Latin terms, and she proves her might through her display of knowledge which she gained while helping Sripathi learn the encyclopaedia Britannia by heart through his father's insistence. Every month she tonsures her head to show herself as the bereaved wife of Narasimha Rao, on the contrary she wears all her gold chains and bangles.

The sensitive portrayal of ordinary life in an old culture with old traditions and values springs to life with the creation of characters like Ammayya. Ammayya never allows outsiders to enter her house, even koti the house maid has to enter the house through the back door and she was strictly instructed to use a separate bathroom and when Arun uses it. Ammayya frowns and was disappointed by his unbrahmanical ways. She was disappointed by his abstemious and unimpressive life and she recollects that it was the thing "with men in this family. Arrived in the world with a lot of noise and did nothing to deserve all that initial attention" (277).

Badami interestingly captures the little fights that go on between husbands and wives in families which is usually followed by comparisons and mocking of physical traits and characteristics. Making fun of Sripathi's thin mouth, Nirmala says,

*"It looked like a Zippered purse...he had always found her to be like a bar of lifebuoy soap- Functional but devoid of all imagination" (4).*

Like in many homes for everything that goes wrong, Sripathi scolds Nirmala and even hold her responsible for Maya's love for a foreigner, He says that being a mother she should have known that something was not right with her daughter even in the beginning and it would have been easier for them to cut her budding love for Alan. The new avatar of Nirmala frightens Sripathi, she was the one person whom he could always take for granted, one with whom he was friendly and

could speak his heart out but post Maya's death she distances herself giving him hard-eyed cold looks. He could always

*"Depend on her for simple wisdom and goodness, but now she seemed to be changing before his very eyes" (293).*

Women in Indian society are expected to stay indoors, their sole purpose being cooking for the family and bringing up children. They are also taught to live within their means,

*"A good Hindu wife had to maintain the pretence that her husband was supporting the family" (14).*

The plight of Indian women in yester years where they could not even question a husband who takes a mistress was put forth in the novel. Ammayya's mom consoles her that she must feel proud that her husband was able to support two women and that since she was treated like a queen there was nothing to worry about and also instructs her to continue her role of a wife efficiently. Along with portray of this novel India in microcosm through life in a small fictitious town Toturpuram near Madras. It was about Sripathi Rao, his wife Nirmala, and their families. It complex traces the lives of ordinary Brahmin people through extraordinary times of political and social transformations in power structures in southern India, and the resultant shifts in individual values, expectations, and lifestyles. The plot of the novel was constructed with the present mingling with the past events through the memory of character. Badami has used novel technique of informing about incidences in India and Canada. In the same way the heritage of Indian culture was found in the title itself of "The hero's walk" she named it behind classical Indian cultural dance from Bharathatyam. Badami claimed on their loyalty and emotions to their homelands as reflected in the novels.

This novel was also the followers of Hinduism, who are impacted by religion in one way. Badami has incorporated the religion into these character's lives very cunningly throughout the novel, Hinduism believes in the birth and renaissance of souls which are immortal and indestructible. Thus, one does not necessarily have to physically return home to be a part of a diasporic but some concept of home collective memory and group history must always be part of the theoretical and emotional discourse of the cross- culture.

Early morning worship to god by people of different religions was marker of our identity as a secular country. Through the disliking of Sripathi Rao, Badami depicts the secular Indian society and their tradition of worshipping God. Sound of the Krishna temple bell and nasal call of mullah from the thousand Lights mosque in the early morning on a parallel street.

As a press reporter, Sripathi Rao narrates the incident of cleanliness because of marriage of chief Minister's son. There was one occasion where during the election an MLA has been considered a faithful adhering to Indian values where everybody in the country appeared to have abandoned Indian values for American ones.

Arun as an activist brings some harsh realities about India. He says: "see, you had your Independence of India and all to fight for, real ideals. For me and my friends, the fight was against daily injustice, our own people stealing our rights

*No water to drink, electricity keeps getting cut off; you can't even play on the beach without getting all kinds of rashes on your legs."(239)*

In India post-death rituals are equally important to get peace and solace after death and to get better birth in the cycle of birth and death. When Sripathi comes back from Canada with Nandana, Nirmala asks him whether death rituals have been followed properly in case of Maya or not. She asks:

*"Did they close her eyes with coins? And put one in her mouth as well?.. My poor child has gone like a beggar, without any proper rituals. Her soul will float like Trishanku between worlds."*

*"If in an accident she had died before her husband, it would have been better for her. She would have gone to Yama-raj as a Sumangali in her finery with wedding beads around her neck and Kum-kum on her forehead."(173).*

Caste and religious consciousness has remained part of Indian identity since ages. When Karim, a Muslim mechanic, comes to drop Nandana who went away without informing anyone, he does not enter the house as Ammayya may throw bucket of Ganga water on him to purify the house.

The novel reflects beliefs in superstition and Indian myths which were inherent in Indian culture and tradition. Though modernity and advancement of science have challenged it, it cannot be totally removed from the mindset of the people.

Indian culture considers woman as a Laxmi, but in patriarchy, her condition was subaltern, submissive to husband and his family. The ceremony that Ammayya as a widow had to undergo after the death of her husband is narrated:

*"To Sripathi's embarrassment, she insisted on having her hand shaved like the widows of the previous generation... She swore off certain vegetables. Like garlic and onions that were believed to have aphrodisiac qualities and were therefore forbidden to windows." (65)*

Nirmala thought about marriage was a very important ceremony in Indian families, and in Hindu homes horoscopes are matched, priests are matched, priests are consulted, relatives are called forth and after a lot of such formalities marriages happen. Arranged marriages and the events that follow are portrayed with much relish by Badami. The arrival of the prospective groom and his family to the bride's house, the discussions about jewellery and the elaborate snacking arranged provide a very familiar picture for the reader. When ceremonies are followed strictly and with much care, the people who are to be married are not asked for their consent and liking. The elders decide and the young are expected to accept it wholeheartedly without any grudges.

Putti, being a woman, were not allowed to do a job. In patriarchy, men are accepted from loyalty in married life. In Canada, Maya loves Alan and asks her parents to break her engagement with Prakash in India. Hearing this, Sripathi's suspicion was:

*Had Maya slept with the fellow? Was she pregnant? How could she share her bed before marriage?"* (110).

Ammayya turned down the proposal from the young engineer from America saying that she heard rumours that men from abroad already had white wives and used their Indian ones as maidservants. As per Indian tradition unmarried woman was only an exception. When Maya gets an opportunity to study in Canada, Nirmala says:

*"The girl is already twenty-one, time for her to married. This scholarship and all was fine, but more important was marriage."* (98)

As a submissive daughter, Maya was expected to honour her father's name and wish and, of a middle-class Indian expatriate, she was also expected to *"fit into life in the West without losing sight of our Indian values"* (100).

She would be the custodian and nurturer of cultural traditions in "renewed patriarchal structures" to foster an imagined unified and self-sufficient cultural community with strong ties to the old world. But Maya abandon her engagement with prakash to marry a Canadian man. By defying her father's wishes and forsaking her family duties, Maya, on the one hand, initiates her own transformation into a diasporic subject with multiple belongings and groundings; on the other, she confronts Sripathi with the changing reality of his social, personal and work environment and the moulder of the civil society of India's nation-state.

The novel reflects Canadian culture and society. This novel projects the issue of love marriage of Maya with a foreigner. Before going to Canada for higher studies Maya was engaged to prakash, but later she thinks Alan, living with her in Canada would be better suited for her. Her father cuts off relation with her. Maya and Alan's sudden death creates great turmoil and disturbance in Sripathi Rao's personal life and at his home.

After the death of Maya and Alan, the procedure for preparing financial papers, death certificates, cremation and adoption of Nandana by Sripathi in Vancouver, show that though validity was the basic requirement for preparation of all the documents, it was less trouble some in Canada than in India.

Maya had written letters to his relatives informing the minutiae of student life in a foreign country and other interesting bits of information about the world across the seas. Maya's mother informs her about Yugadi festival, as she was attached to India. There was a mention of Halloween celebration in Canada and Deepavali in India. Maya wears a sari at Nandana's school on international day in special dress. Nandana, as a kid in Canada, used to listen about India from Maya, her mother. When Maya had shown pictures of her house in India, Nandana curiously asked: if any ghost inside the house. "Are there ghosts inside house?" When Maya's husband Alan brought second hand furniture at home, Maya commented: *"In India we never accept leftovers. Only beggars do."*(91)

Sripathi Rao was a stranger when he goes to Vancouver to take his orphan granddaughter Nandana. Food, clothing, people, rituals and culture were alien to her. Nandana could not adjust herself with Indian food. Nandana brings the postcolonial moment of what Homi Bhabha has famously termed the "unhomely" (9) into the confidentiality of the Big House, Sripathi's family home. Sripathi's family has to

contain this troubled little girl and Nandana must come home to terms with the death of her parents and her new life in India. The responsibility of the grandparents was to treat Nandana felt unfamiliar with the roots, customs, people neighbour, environment, education system of India society, climate of Toturpuram, celebration of festivals, issues of women, political condition, casteism, issue of education, beliefs in astrology, religious and social rituals in Indian culture and tradition and the issue of settlement of Nandana a foreigner in Indian tradition.

The Indian culture and Canadian culture are different the Canada born Nandana fears of following Indian culture. Her home was in Canada and not in India. Being alien to Indian culture, she feels troublesome of following Indian custom. Through their memory as well as their relatives particularly parents of both of them in India Canadian culture was both a real hand knowledge by the immigrants as well as the myth imagination of their relatives in India. As a writer of diasporic Badami makes her readers cognisant about both the cultures and especially in the Indian culture subaltern status of women. The characters in the novel use their memories to reach a final consensus of searching for their identity in relation to their identity in relation to their separate but intertwined worlds. Through Nandana, Badami has portrayed an Indian woman brought up in an orthodox environment of limitations where her wishes were crushed but she wanted her daughters to follow their own choices. Anita Rau Badami represents the multi-cultural society. They conceptualize cross-fertilizations between Canadian literature and intervene they thematize the ways in which the effects of environmental and economic global restructuring, along with the degeneration of received local forms of national and cultural identification, transform the microspaces of social life.

## 2. References

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