

REFLECTION OF IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN ANITA RAU BADAMI'S NOVELS
THE TAMARIND MEM AND THE HERO'S WALK

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Abstract

Migration appears as an essential product out of colonisation. The forced migration turned into willing immigrants in search of better prospects in the west. Migration has become an indispensable component of human experience. It appears both as a promising experience as well as a shocking one. Anita Rau Badami South Asian Diaspora writer living in Canada is identified strong voice of the modern Indian diaspora. Her novels deal with the cultural gap that forms when Indian people move to the western countries. This paper aims to explore the mental and physical agony of immigrant in the novel *The Tamarind Mem* and *The Hero's Walk* and also about the cross cultural conflict they face in the society.

Key words: Migration, cultural gap, diaspora, immigrants, dislocation and psychic trauma

Introduction

Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem* shows the sufferings, alienation and helplessness of immigrant women in the western countries. It also shows the cultural conflict between the generations in the family. In Badami's novel it is witnessed that two cultures are influenced by the characters. She also portrays the problems of immigrants after migration. Her novels represent the manners, religious rituals, beliefs customs and the way of adapting themselves with the Indian and Canadian cultures. Each of the immigrant group has its own set of cultural and tradition which accords with its own regional ecologies, values customs and tastes embodying its own spiritual and philosophical opinions. With the increasing rate of migration the migrants became the creator of cultural and custom groups. Diaspora fiction has become a medium of expression for the issues like displacement, alienation, cultural dislocation, isolation experienced by immigrants. This paper highlights how immigrants are being targeted on every issue from their clothing to cultural aspects.

Anita Rau Badami is a traveller from very early age due to her father's transfer job. The constant travels in varied geographical areas in India shaped her nature as a nomad. Her interactions with Indian culture various languages and people, childhood memories shaped her writings in analytical vision.

Badami in her novel *Tamarind Mem* portrays Kamini Moorthy as an inhabitant of India is at present residing in Canada. In the first half of the novel is the narrative of the daughter and in the second part discusses the mother Saroja. Saroja was deprived of education, freedom love and identity for the sake of social pressure and tradition which transfer her into a harsh and bitter tongued person. But as a mother she concentrates on her daughter's education which would guarantee her promising future. As a grown up girl far away from her mother in Calgary, Canada. Kamini realises that probably her father was responsible for what her mother has turned into. Kamini is portrayed as an immigrant. In the alien world she stands alone always heavily burdened by her nostalgia that she conceives glorious past.

The nicest thing about Ma's flat was the gulmohar tree that scattered its flaming red flowers all over her balcony. Here, in Calgary, I had no gulmohar outside my window, but a lilac bloomed in summer and filled my home with its delicate fragrance. Sometimes I wished that I could trap the beauty of those flowers to last me through the winters, as well. But as Dadda told me once, there are some things you cannot keep forever youth and beauty and the breath in your mortal body. (*Tamarind Mem*)

Kamini and her sister Roopa settled in abroad. Kamini always remembers her childhood memories in railway colonies in India, and the days she spent with her grandparents' house at the time of Roopa's birth. This character uses their memories as a tool to create a relationship between their two worlds of separation. Memories collide with a changing culture and customs that results confusion in social institutions. Kamini finally sees that the social and traditional restrictions that are

faced by her mother Saroja. She also realises that her mother is the reason behind her courage and pursuits that push her forward in all her endeavours. Saroja as a frustrated woman confined to the social and cultural restrictions that left behind to perform the traditional role.

I, on the other hand, am married to a man who has no feelings to spare for a wife. A dried out lemon peel whose energise have already been squeezed out carinf for a sick mother, worrying about his sisters, inherited his dead father's unfinished duties. It ate up his youth. With my tamarind tongue, never yielding a moment, I use my grandmother's strategy of words to ward off the pain of rejection. His aloof, merciless cool, my defensive anger. I will not beg for the affection that is due to me, his wife. Why, even a cat demands a caress, a gentle word. Deprive it of attention and it will wander to another home. Tamarind Mem)

In Badami's second novel *The Hero's Walk* the protagonist Sripathi Rao is a stunted patriarch of a stunted family, is a stubborn and a little petty, selfish but not hateful person. Sripathi's daughter Maya marries a Canadian and flies to far away to Vancouver. Maya dies in a car crash along with her husband leaving their seven years old Nandana. Young Nandana crosses borders from Canada to India and enters the circle of adults uprooted by hidden injustice of the past. A Canadian raised orphan returns to her grandparents in India where she faces the cultural and traditional conflict between the east and west.

Nandana had tried to find her way back to Vancouver two weeks ago, and a man who sat under a tent on the road with broken things all around him had brought her home, even though she had struggled to get away. She was angry with him. If she had walked another few minutes, she was sure she would have reached the railway station where they had arrived long, long ago. And then she could catch a plan from the airport. She did not want to live in this horrid house. She hated the cockroaches that came creeping out of the kitchen sink at midnight. Some nights when Nandana couldn't sleep, she thought that she could hear them rustle under her bed. (*The Hero's Walk*)

Badami discovered India through the windows of passengers trains. She succeeds in weaving a tale of nostalgia exploring the ceremonies Indian life simultaneously rich and painful. Badami's second novel *The Hero's Walk* limelight the living condition of Maya, a professional medical person living in Vancouver marries a person from Canada after her engagement with another young man of her father's choice. It's considered as a punishable offence in the eyes of her father Sripathi. She was excommunicated from the family in India. She leads a miserable life by missing her relations and emotional moments in her life. Frequently her calls are avoided by the father but her mother Nirmala supports her. When Maya left her little daughter Nandana in the foreign land, Sripathi gives hand to her and bring Nandana to India. Then Nandana returns to her grandparents in India, she faced many problems in a very new place Toturpuram. Nandana feels troubled in adjusting the new Indian culture and customs. Slowly, she accepts her mother's parent as her own. She struggles to balance between east and the western country cultures. This shows the sense of displacement in her life and also it shows the insecure feeling in the immigrants.

Conclusion

The cultural difference between India and Canada is focussed in Badami's novel. The cultural identity creates sufferings and problems in life which is reflected in Nandana as well as Kamini's life. The sense of alienation is always felt by Kamini and Nandana. The inner feelings and the needs of all people are same. But they get adapted their situation for survival. The cultural gap and problems of immigrants are focussed through different incidents. The strong feeling of rootlessness and displacement and their struggle to accept their present land leaves the experience of immigrant as a traumatic one.

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