

## **Struggle for Equality in Anita Rau Badami's The Hero's Walk**

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“We have to free half of the human race, the women, so that they can help to free the other half.”

-Emmeline Pankhurst.

### **ABSTRACT:**

*This article entitled as Struggle for Equality in Anita rau Badami's novel The Hero's Walk discuss about the survival life of a traditional Indian Brahmin women Nirmala. Badami skillfully weaves the life of Nirmala as a struggling woman for freedom but not for her life but for her younger generation genders. Badami also portrays Nirmala as women full of optimism. Badami's feminism is not radical but of humanistic, so that she maintains the Indian family relationship though she rebels the orthodox Brahmin rules. Key words: female hero, survival, Brahmin life, struggle for freedom.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

A major development in modern Indian fiction has been the growth of a feminist or women-centered approach, an approach that seeks to project and interpret experience from the viewpoint of feminine consciousness and sensibility. Feminism assumes that women experience the world differently from men, and write from their different perspectives. As Patricia Meyer Spacks remarks, “there seems to be something that we might call a woman's point of view... an outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the centuries”(5). One of the newest women writers in the vibrant field of Indian sub-continental literature is Anita Rau Badami. She is an eminent woman novelist who contributes to the emancipation of women and her novels have strong female protagonists and deal with their peculiar problems.

Badami's second novel **The Hero's Walk** is an acknowledgement of ordinary and extraordinary acts of heroism of daily life. This novel is about an Indian Brahmin family finding its way within the Hindu tradition at the end of the twentieth century. Still believing in conventional attitudes but also being confronted with contemporary problems they have to adapt themselves and reconsider their opinions about what is important in life. Award Winning Badami in her novel **The Hero's Walk** discusses various contemporary themes related to immigrant life, feminism, and struggle for identity in the postmodern world.

Badami discusses the recent trends of globalization and transnationalism in her novels. Said says in his introduction to **Culture and Imperialism**, “although authors are not determined “mechanically” by their cultures, they influence and are influenced by the event of their time”. Anita Rau Badami reflects the newer forms of imperialism and their effects on the microcosm of family and the macrocosm of society, and is a testament to the process of shaping as pointed out by Said. Though old forms of colonialism disappeared in south Asia in

1947, colonialism has since been transformed into a creature of many heads, of which globalization and transnationalism are the newest. Badami portrays the concept of gender inequality in the Indian family in an effective manner. Badami as an Indian cultured woman exactly pictures how the society treats the boys and girls of the family especially an orthodox Brahmin family of south India. Badami is very careful in choosing the Brahmin family rather than other castes because in twentieth century the tradition of Hindus was strictly followed by the Brahmins. They never accept the transnationalism and globalization of the modern world.

### **NIRMALA A BRAHMIN WOMAN**

Badami weaves a story of the struggle for identity of the Brahmin family in the postmodern world. An imaginary setting of the novel is a Brahmin Street Toturpuram in south India. Head of the family is patriarch Sripathi who is a copywriter a domineering late middle age, nearing retirement from a job which he has no passion. Nirmala a traditional Brahmin wife of Sripathi Rao struggles for freedom in the manner of respect from her husband's family. Her mother-in-law Ammayya, who is more orthodox, spinster sister putti, her son Arun, Who has no regular job even at the age of twenty-eight and her daughter Maya is a professional medical person who lives in Vancouver. Under these problematic surrounding family members, Nirmala, is one descent, long suffering anchor in this vortex of dysfunction.

### **NIRMALA'S PASSIVE WALK**

Nirmala a heroic person lives with full of hope, who teaches the hero's walk to the children in her dance class. About the hero's walk and the villain's walk – with a few different flourishes. "We walk that fine lines between being completely good, completely bad, and completely stupid." However, Nirmala walks as a passive wife to Sripathi. He loved her wife should be like a bar of lifebuoy soap functional but devoid of all imagination. Nirmala behaved as a good Hindu wife. A good Hindu wife had to maintain to keep her husband in a calm and happy mood. She does not tell him about the economic crises. Her married life once was filled with full of laughter arisen from love. However, later the laughter had run away from her life. After Maya's departure from her life, her life changed into the pair of bullock yoked together, endlessly turning the water wheel round, and round, eyes bent to the earth. Not even a note of eccentricity to set, them apart from other couples. Her love for her husband changes into anger when she heard about the death of Maya. News of Maya's death creates a clutch of panic in Nirmala. She blames her husband for Maya's death. "Your fault, your fault, your fault! You killed my daughter. You drove her away from me! You! You! You!" (35). she beat him in a full of agony. Sripathi wishes to console her by asking apology. However, perversely he maintains the dignity, he found himself becoming angry with her. He thinks, "How dare she raise her hands to him, her husband?" Sripathi slapped her to stop her crying. It makes her even angry she questioned him, "you hit me?" she said stunned, "you killed my child, and now you are hitting me also? Evil man." (36) It makes Sripathi crumble inside, because he hit her in front of his whole family and the maidservant.

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## **NIRMALA'S HERO'S WALK**

After a tragic death of Maya, Nirmala changed into a new woman. Generally, woman are tries to get rid off from the obstacles which she faced and control her from the right to participate in the activities of the outer world and it has not taken her long to establish her ability to do so. In many activities, women are not just as good as men are, but better. Therefore, in a single generation, the caged birds have learned to wing their way to the sky. Nirmala too learned to wing her into the modern world. She never wants to be passive wife, no longer. She protest and force Sripathi to bring back Nandana to home. Even she changed into a rebel for her survival still she maintains a peace in the home. For woman her home is still her life and soul. She makes her home beautiful, bears all responsibilities of her family, and meets the demands of social life, balancing her own workload all the time with domestic duties. Nirmala advise and warn her son when he scolded his father. "Don't say things like that about your father," Nirmala said automatically, anxious as always to maintain peace in the house. "He is very upset." (45). Woman's role as a mother have them a responsibility to create a next generation without sufferings. She never allows her child to suffer. Nirmala gives freedom to her daughter Maya; but she fails to save Maya from the troubles. She is helpless due to her passiveness to her husband. After Nandana's arrival, Nirmala became a caring grandmother for her daughter's child. She changed as a primary care giver. She heroically goes on, providing day-to-day sustenance to Nandana and to the rest of the family. Her experience also causes a psychological transformation in her. She feels that she should not have obeyed her husband so docilely, that she should have demanded that Maya be allowed to visit. Badami depict a daily heroism of a Hindu wife in a traditional Brahmin family. She struggles for emancipation not only for her but also for her next generation women too. Nirmala's tolerance in spite of all her protests and arguments played a role of a perfect loving passive wife and a good mother, a caring grandmother to Nandana, and a pathfinder for her sister-in-law putti. Nirmala's tries for bring Nandana back to life from the shock of her parents' death was herself escaping from the misery in her heart created from her daughter's death. The misery makes a fire of agony in her heart and burst out to burn both Nirmala and Sripathi. From Maya's death, before Nandana's arrival she had a fear of Sripathi's solid, impenetrable anger, unwilling to force a confrontation of any kind. She never uses any hard route to break the rule like Saroja a sour tongued **Tamarind Mem**. She uses an easy, conciliatory route as bringing the memories of Maya to Sripathi. Badami represent Nirmala as a predictable line of a woman who while fulfilling societal expectations as a wife, a daughter-in-law, and a mother. It makes enough chutzpah in her to question such role-playing. Her resilience and adaptability finally make her a survivor (when her daughter dies), and a pragmatist (when she initiates the marriage between putti and Gopala and crosses caste boundaries). Her daughter's loss makes her a survivor and her granddaughter makes her a protestor. Her habit of obedience, of respect for one's elders, of subservience, ran strong in her blood. These are women's characteristics which is insists in them by the makers of the society. They never analysis the rules taught to them. Nirmala created a kind of courage to question Sripathi and hurt Ammayya. She broke out her passiveness prison. Her rebels activities were openly understand by her husband Sripathi. Her change makes a kind of fear among her family members. Her frost look makes her husband Sripathi frightened. For Sripathi, Nirmala was the one person in the house that he could always take for granted, always depend on for her simple wisdom and goodness, but now she seemed to be changing

before his very eyes. Badami praises her survivor women through the patriarch men. Sripathi had always been grateful for her stolid practicality, her ability to carry on with the business of daily living without breaking down. However, his grateful was only a funny one. His grateful was not an honest one. He wanted to dominate her. However, her change did not allow him to do so. She refused Sripathi's caste discrimination; she makes friendship with the low caste neighbor Munnuswami's family. Her protest, "...Then I will go, I am fed up with always listening to your nonsense. This is not right, that is not okay, what will people say? You have ruined my life because of all this nonsense... I will ask our neighbor for help." (294) she also ready to break the caste discrimination wall, which built up by the old generation orthodox Brahmin people. In taking decision on marriage of her sister-in-law putti with the low caste Gopala, she never await for the pleasure of Sripathi and Ammayya. She makes on on-the-spot decision, determined that putti, should not have to repeat the pattern of Maya's life. She only planned to get support from her husband and son rather permission. She broke out the patriarch rules. Her cruel tactics to convince Sripathi was her daughter Maya's life. His caste and creeds were useless before Nirmala's weapon. A woman, in general leads a life as a candle, gives their life to light other's life. Nirmala uses her loss in her life to bring a light in the life of spinster putti. Nirmala for fails to save her daughter's life now saves two women's life.

#### **NIRMALA AS A MODERN WOMAN**

Badami reveals Nirmala as an optimistic modern woman. Women are better than the men in leading a life are. She must be something higher than what she is. Nirmala's optimistic qualities was an unreachable aim for Sripathi. Nirmala leads three kinds of life in her survival i.e., sacrificial life, optimistic life and a modern life. She crossed the caste boundaries without caring the powerless curse of Ammayya. Unlike Bibiji and Saroja, Nirmala survives in every moment in her life and got success in her walk. She unlike Saroja never hates everyone for her suffering but she convinces everyone and organizes everyone together. Unlike Bibiji in **Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?**, she never makes any ambitious desires and destroy others life.

Badami's description of the title **The Hero's Walk**, "It's about heroism at many different levels. I find it touchingly heroic to just see people living from the day they're born until the day they die, so full of hope. You just wake up every morning and expect the next day to go well. And I find that touching. I wanted to work with that idea: that notion of heroism..."

Nirmala walks a heroic walk every day and succeeds not only in her life but also in her success gives a bright future for her next generation women Nandana and Putti. Nirmala's achievement is a victory of modern women. Nirmala's success laid in making a family unity.

For a women's survival she needs to develop her talent and learns to improve her unique qualities. She never wants to be a submissive woman in the male-chauvinistic society. For her survival, women need a special-sufficiency, which can come only with the consolidation of female power. Badami's Nirmala is the perfect example of the united power of the women. Nirmala survives for her next generation woman's future, succeeds in it without breaking the bond of relationship

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## CONCLUSION

To sum up, Badami as a woman successfully portrays different kinds of women survivor in her novel. Their ability, self-respect, self-will, and desire for freedom were shows women's power in general. Nirmala's optimistic ways of life and her talent of making her failures as rising steps for success are qualities, which make women successful conquerors. Badami predicts not the traditional woman but a modern woman who fights for her rights, who tries to get the power of control in her hand. Badami's focuses on female protagonists is one of the consequences of now putting more emphasis on female heroism in literature, was the differentiation between the conventional, more passive woman within a novel, whereas a female hero as in Badami's novels implies the concept of an active female protagonist who is not exclusively subordinate to a male hero. In Badami's novel **The Hero's Walk** Nirmala portrayed, as a symbol of transformation from traditional inequality to modern equality. Nirmala was considered as one of Badami's female heroes. Nirmala an active female hero who survives to break the wall of inequality created by patriarchal society succeeds in her struggle. From life of Nirmala, we conclude that Indian women must try to fulfill two conflicting roles, one as a traditional wife and mother and the other as a modern woman with full of hope.

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