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## Exploration of Social and Cultural Confluence in The Hero's Walk by Anita Rau Badami

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**Abstract:** The socio-cultural confluence reflects on the assortment of socially constructed cultural propensity. Cultural confluences have a propensity resulting in multiplicity, amalgamation, hybridization and society. While all these cultures get merged themselves with each other and it is not possible to find out their distinctiveness. This article explores the Social and cultural confluence in the perspective of Diaspora opined in the novel *The Hero's Walk* by Anita Rau Badami. *The Hero's Walk* spans India and Canada in the context of Multiculturalism. It registers the cross cultural nature towards redefining national discourse within a pluralized Canadian space. Anita Rau Badami explores the cross cultural and traditional conflicts. The novel presumes that the cultural clashes between the East and the West are conspicuous.

**Index Terms:** Diaspora, multiculturalism, culture, societal activities, ethnicity and spirituality

Diasporic literature started with the persecution-and expulsion that led to the dispersal of Jews. It has been influenced by migratory experience and displaced communities. One of the important parameters of Diaspora is the retention of cultural identity in the host society. Diaspora portends variety of culture, language, history, people, place etc. The Indian immigrants in Canada have been varied a lot. They vary in terms of their regional, religious, caste, professional, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. It is observed that culture is the way of life of a particular society or group of people, including prototypes of thought, belief, behavior, customs, traditions, rituals, dress, language, art, music, literature and to a certain extent our way of thinking and perception. Overall, culture plays a very significant role in the construction of a person's identity.

Robin Cohen says that cultural Diaspora highlights cultural transformation or acculturation of the immigrants. According to Cohen, the foremost problem that any immigrant faces in the new land is cultural shock and they find it very difficult to assimilate into the new culture as soon as they land. It may take few days or even few years for them to get adapted to new culture. Diasporic writers cleave to cultural, linguistic, ethnic and spiritual difference. Despite the fact that diverse in culture, they share a profound curiosity in developing diasporic culture. One such writer is Anita Rau Badami. Her writing is exemplified by cultural clashes. She scrutinizes the diasporic perception by the gratifying representation of women characters in her novels.

Anita Rau Badami is a reputed Diasporic writer of Indian English Literature. Badami's novels are highly appraised as it often scrutinizes the intricacies faced by an Indian family with the social and cultural confluence when they move from one culture to another. Badami's novel *The Hero's Walk* reveals the theme of an individual's search for identity and their dual marginalization in their own society and outside the society with regard to culture. *The Hero's Walk* creates a confluence between the old and new generation which in turn creates a social and cultural confluence between the modernity and conventional values as depicted by Chennareddy.

Badami in *The Hero's Walk* tries to explore the cultural confluence between a modernized society and a conventional society. The novel also focuses on how several distinctions exist between two different generations conveying a change of culture in a modernized world. For example in *The Hero's Walk*, Maya breaks up her engagement to an Indian man to marry a Canadian with in Vancouver. "I want to cancel my engagement to Prakash. I am in love with Alan Baker, whom I have known for two years. We want to get married and with your blessings"(109). This creates a great rift between Sripathi and his daughter Maya. He shouts at his daughter "never show your face in this house again. Never" (113). He says "Dishonour was what she had given them in return for the independence they had granted her" (113).

At the same time Sripathi's son, Arun who works as an environmental activist, chooses his own life to lead his life by rejecting the best career options desired by his father. He often remarks about the challenges of the present generation which are different from those of Sripathi's generation.

See, you had your independence of India and all to fight for, real ideals. For me and my friends, the fight is against daily injustice, our own people stealing our rights. This is the only world I have, and I feel responsible for it. I have to make sure that it doesn't get blown up, or washed away in the next flood, or poisoned by chemicals (239).

Owing to all these reasons Sripathi is not happy with both his children. He wants both his children to live as per the wishes of the society that he lives. *The Hero's Walk* deals succinctly about burning problems of culture which is constructed by the society and investigates the beliefs and ideas of the perished social systems faced by the contemporary Indian family.

Sripathi's sister Putti goes against the convention of her mother, Ammayya and marries a man of low caste. Ammayya is a despotic, devious, selfish, and caste-conscious woman. It shows that there is prejudice and bias about western culture in India. "Why can't she be happy for me? She never wanted me to get married, I know. Why should I care how she is feeling now?" (339). There is a cultural rift between tradition and modernity. Ammayya represents the rigid tradition of her culture, whereas Putti and Maya represent modern and cultured individuals.

*The Hero's Walk* focuses on the story of Sripathi Rao, who dedicates his entire life for the well-being of his family. However, his daughter Maya shatters the family principles and civilization by marrying a Canadian. Sripathi Rao does not accept this marriage but after Maya's death, he is forced himself to realize his mistakes and transforms himself. He later takes back his silent granddaughter Nandana to India, who is trapped between the cultural forces and social anxiety represented by Canada and India. This fiction epitomizes the heartbreaking tensions that explore existing ideas of the South Asian diaspora. In the article entitled "Articulating a World of Difference Ecocriticism, Post Colonialism, and Globalization", Susie O'Brien talks about two voyages: the allegorical journey of a Sripathi Rao, from a rural area to a more globalized country, and the literal voyage of his granddaughter, Nandana, who comes from Canada to India to reside with her grandparents after the death of her parents, Maya and Alan Baker. Both these journeys bring culture confluence in Sripathi and Nandana's lives.

The novel's main narrative focuses on the relationship between Sripathi Rao and Nandana, his Canadian granddaughter and Arun, his son. At the beginning of the novel Sripathi comes into view as a contemptuous and self-centered character. He has been humiliated by the society a lot by his son's work as an environmental activist and he is also unable to forgive his daughter Maya for having married a white Canadian rather than the man of his choice of Indian origin. *The Hero's Walk* replicates the configuration of diasporic identities as a communally dependent process of an individual's self-discovery and social reconnection with a home rather than a global level. Sripathi for the first time moves to Canada to bring his granddaughter Nandana.

Heike Harting in his article entitled "Diasporic Cross-Currents in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk*" presents how Nandana keeps herself silent due to the severe shock of her parent's death, and her moving from Canada to India. The presence of Nandana made Sripathi realize that he had not "...known his daughter's inner life, the secret world of dreams and fears, the complexes and affections that follow children through their youth" (147).

William Safran in his book *Diaspora in modern societies: Myth of Homeland and Return* characterizes Diaspora as

- Immigrants who are dispersed from the 'center' where they actually belonged to at least one or two 'peripheral' places.
- They may maintain their memories and vision about their homeland.
- They cannot completely assimilate into the host countries.
- They long to return to their ancestral home when the right time arrives.
- They are committed to maintenance or restoration of their home land.
- They continue to have their relationship with their homeland

In *The Hero's Walk*, we come to know Canada through Nandana. Nandana experiences all the characteristics of Diaspora mentioned by William Safran where the idea of moving to India creates a fear in her. The idea of home fills the hearts of Nandana with nostalgia. For Nandana, "home" is, "250 Melfa Lane, Vancouver". BC, Canada, North America, the World" (16). To her, Canada is an attractive and tidy place to lead a peaceful life. It is home to her but in India, she sees herself as a foreign person. Nandana struggles hard to have a balance between the east and the west. The life with her grandparents is entirely different with the life she had in Canada with her parents. Nandana is assimilated and acculturated by the social and cultural phenomenon.

In India, she begins her protest through muteness, since everyone is a stranger to her and she believes that speaking to strangers is against the wishes of her parents and it may break the charm of her parent's survival. Nandana attends Girl's Christian school in India, which seems entirely different from attending a public, co-gender elementary school in Canada. In her school in India she does not even talk to her friends in school.

*The Hero's Walk* expresses the contemporary experiences of Globalization and transnationalism. Diaspora here is used as a common term for the cultural confluence and transformations. It constructs a difference between the old and new concepts of Diasporic ideologies. The new concept of Diaspora mentioned by Harting puts forward the enormous dislocation and resettlement of people and expatriates whose countries of origin often undergoes western and imperial control, are besieged by neocolonial and fraudulent governments, and are marked by the erosion of the civil structures of the postcolonial nation-state.

The Canadian multicultural society is a postmodernist society where diverse cultural groups and different ideological communal groups are repeatedly in varying situation: nothing is inflexible. The Canadian stories reveal that attitudes of hostility, alienation, racism and manipulation are not determined by location of period but rather they are integral parts of the human mind, whether coloured or white. The Canadian diaspora is diverse in terms of religion, education, language, and regional origins. In spite of their different backgrounds, the various sub-ethnic groups have many general features.

Nandana experiences diverse conditions. Initially she hated her new environment but later on progressively she made herself to accept India as her home. Nandana was trapped between two different cultural backgrounds, one is the host culture and the other the home culture and this creates a huge disparity in the construction of her identity. Nandana in *The Hero's Walk* is greatly prejudiced by the social and cultural upbringing of Canada. Thus, she finds herself driven out in India. But for the sake of survival in the land of her mother, she finally accepts its values.

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