

DIFFERING CONTEXTS OF DIASPORA IN THE FICTION(S) OF ANITA RAU BADAMI AND ROHINTON MISTRY

Hemant Kumar

Research Scholar, Department of English, SBD Degree College Dhampur, Bijnore, Uttar Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

Diaspora, or diversion from the sphere is used as a key term now days to refer to all kinds of issues related to diversion, occurred from different countries to various nations. Indian Diaspora is one of the major Asian Diasporas which is advancing with rapid growth these days. Both male and female authors have contributed to its ocean. Rohinton Mistry and Anita Rau Badami are two such names who have discussed the diasporic experiences but with different lenses. Both Rohinton Mistry and Anita Rau share equal respect for Indian heritage. Though the area is similar still the difference occurs because of their being of different gender.

KEYWORDS: *Dispora, Gender, Themes, Male and Female Perspective etc*

INTRODUCTION

Diaspora has been divided into two- Asian and European diaspora. And both these diasporas have been further subdivided into various nation's diaspora. Amartya Sen, Salman Rushdie, V.S.Naipaul, and Rohinton Mistry are the male names who represent it at the global level. The female contributors who add to its glory are Bharti Mukherji, Kamala Markandaya, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerji, and Anita Rau Badami. The writings of the female authors also represent their feminine approach and view point towards Diaspora.

Anita Rau Badami is relatively a new name. She preserves her identity as an Indo-Canadian. Comparatively, Rohinton Mistry is more a acknowledged name. He is also known as an Indo-Canadian author. Both have spent the earlier time of their lives in India, and both the writers left India and settled in Canada. Both the authors reflect a deep and strict bonding with the advancing Indian atmosphere. They share this bonding and their experiences of Indian atmosphere in their writings.

Badami reflects herself as a very sensitive author through her writings. Her fiction reflects her sensitive way of looking at things, perceiving them and presenting them. Author of four wonderful novels- *Tamarind Mem, The Hero's Walk, Can you Hear the Nightbird Call and Tell it to the Trees*, Badami has her own unique way of presenting her characters. Badami makes a minute observation of the psychology of her characters. Badami is a very wonderful storyteller. Stories have been a very significant part of her own life as well as of her fiction.

With the transferring movement of her father in his transferable job, her stories too reflect a mobility of time and space, perhaps as a result of her own experience of moving from one place to another. Her stories mixing with her

autobiographical constituents create an emotional, realistic world to her readers. Once they enter in it, they also begin feeling the part of it. Rohinton Mistry, the another novelist on the current face of the world literature, specializes short stories and fiction as his genres of writing. Shortlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize and winner of the Hart House Literary Prizes for his collection of eleven short stories 'Tales from Frizosha Bagh', Mistry is an eminent author of *Such a Long journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*.

Rohinton Mistry is a writer who enjoys a wide publicity due to his talented fiction. Mistry has been a controversial figure too, due to his fiction. But his departure from India was the result of expectations of his peers. He himself confessed it in a literary journal 'Rungh' (1993), "After finishing college in Bombay or elsewhere in India, one had to go abroad for higher studies. If possible, one had to find a job after finishing a Master or a Ph.d. In the states or in England, find a job and settle in the country. That how success is defined by Indians. So that is why I say that coming to Canada was in some ways decided for me."

Thus, Mistry moved to Canada as a destined work and Badami moved to Canada by herself or by her own choice. Ultimately, both became the victims of Diaspora. Both left India and settled in Canada. Now, one can observe that along with many similarities, both the authors also preserve their own individualities due to their differences. The differences can be traced through their characters, themes and their diasporic experiences.

In the same way as Badami has suffered the mental condition of being diverted from one place to another, her characters also enact. They suffer mentally and feel distance from their roots. They long for their homeland and roots. Badami marks her specialty as a keen observer of things, people and situation. She depicts the things in the same way as she observes them. She herself states, "What keeps me anchored is the writing life. Writing is my passion and my profession. I translate everything I know, think, feel, experience, touch see or hear into written word." (www.anitaraubadami.ca) Therefore, one can notice a kind of sensuousness in her fiction, which tickles senses of the readers.

OBJECTIVE

Thus, the objective of this research is to study the writers living at the same coast community, still having difference in their perspective in portraying the same land and same diasporic experiences. The difference which they share is between a male's diasporic experience and a female diasporic experience.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In her review of *The Hero's Walk* Ann Skea finds the story of the novel simple and beautiful. She finds that the novel attracts to all our senses. (www.electia.org) Judith Palmer has also reviewed the novel and added a subtitle to it after reading it, "A breath of new life in the stuffy Big House". He views Nandana's arrival to Sripathi's house as the coming of new life or a ray of hope in the distressed lives of the people living in that house. (www.independent.co.uk)

India Today viewed the novel from the perspective of the definition of a hero. It concludes Sripathi's wife as the real hero, "..., the true hero in Anita Rau Badami's charming and lyrical second novel *The Hero's walk* is *Nirmala*,..." Mark Medley in his article 'The Art of Fiction' opines that the writings of Anita Rau Badami is very artistic.

Makarand Paranjape in his paper 'One foot in Canada and a couple of Toes in India: Diasporas and Homelands in South Asian Canadian Experience', discusses about Anita Rau Badami. The paper discusses the headline of 13th Globe and Mail Supplement, Toronto, where Badami holds: "I was 29 years in India and a couple of toes here." Paranjape has commented over it and says that the statement expresses her Diasporic experiences.

Sonia Kamal reviewed Badami's *Can you Hear the Nightbird Call?* and opines that the novel explores the political and personal relations. It tells the story of survival among tragedies. Lisa Salem Wiseman perceives the novel from historical perspective. Valerie Miner in the paper 'Dislocation, dislocation, dislocation' talks about Badami's 'The Hero's walk' and Radhika Jha's 'Smell Combinedly'.

Miner observes the novels from the perspective of human relationship. Miner writes, "In these intricate, dramatic novels, Anita Rau Badami and Radhika Jha ask pointed questions about the relationship of Self to family, culture and national identity. Characters balance precariously between honoring and breaking tradition while constructing expatriate lives." Frederick Luis Aldama writes, "In her second novel, *Tamarind Woman*, Anita Rau Badami again proves to be a wonderfully gifted storyteller. In a dramatic turn from her male-centered bildungsroman, *A Hero's walk*, Badami plunges her readers deep into the coming-of age trials and tribulations of her young character, kamini."

Rick Gekoski has written about Rohinton Mistry. Rick writes, "Mistry has a great eye and a huge heart, and if the world he describes is often cruel, and capricious, his characters have a remarkable capacity to survive." Further, he writes, "Mistry likes to work slowly outwards, beginning in the family, developing character and exploring where the fault lines lie, and gradually widening into the social, cultural, and political worlds that his characters perilously inhabit. The novels have a leisurely pace without ever losing the reader's rapt attention, they can be remembered and distinguished, and the details of their experience are chronicled with a painter's sensibility."

Judith Palmer identifies a similarity between Badami and Rohinton Mistry. Palmer writes, "Much reminiscent of Rohinton Mistry, *The Hero's Walk* teems with memorable characters and wry cameos." Valerie Miner writes, "Badami who moved to Canada in 1991, is a provocative, compassionate writer, whose fiction recalls the works of another Indian – Canadian novelist, Rohinton Mistry, in her broad social sweep and close attention to emotional nuance...."

RESEARCH

Badami's novels deal with a strong presence of diasporic elements. In *Hero's Walk*, a strong sense of disagreement of the third generation Nandana with her first generation maternal grandparents has been observed. In *Tamarind Mem Kamini* can be seen trying out to trace out her root connection into her mother. A dominant presence of the nostalgia and attempt for reuniting with the root can be found in her *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*. *Tell It to the Trees* is a novel about migrated Indian family who is trying to preserve Indian values in a foreign land. Thus, all her fictions consist of diasporic elements. Badami's novels deal with the different issues like relationships, past memories, nostalgia, culture and generation gap, feeling of displacement, psychological turmoil, frustration, adaptation, children-parents relationship are the dominant themes of Badami's fiction.

Mistry as a writer, is a wonderful explorer of relationships. He explores his character's cultural identity through his fiction. In his stories he throws light on the diasporic Parsi experiences. Mistry's works portrays the socio-economic ways of life in India, Parsi culture, customs and religion etc. Rohinton Mistry explores social cultural, economic and political India.

The themes of Mistry's works are related to the lives of married couples, people's cultural attitude, the effect of politics on their lives. As a diasporic author, he presents the first, second and third generation people's lives and their mutual relationships and understanding of cultural and social view. Three generation presence, Parsi community's customs, Step father-children relationships, husband-wife relationships, love, social atmosphere of Shiv Sena at Mumbai are the vibrant themes of Mistry.

Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance* is a story about a widow lady Dinabai, who hires two tailors, Ishwar and Om for helping her in earning her livelihood. The tailors share a three generation history of their ancestors with them. Badami suffers double marginalization first as a woman in the male dominated society and second seclusion and distance from the homeland. This marginalization is also present in her fictions. On the contrary, as a male Mistry undergoes only one suffering of leaving his homeland. Badami's writings present the picture of how deeply does diasporic constituents effect a woman's complete life. Her writings also reflect the worst parts of it in a woman's life. She put emphasis on the sufferings which affect the individuality of a woman. At the other hand, Mistry talks about the impacts of Diaspora on the lives of married couples. He emphasizes upon how political and social atmosphere affects their lives.

CONCLUSIONS

Both the writers deal with the themes of exile, migration, self-alienation, nostalgia, belongingness, rootlessness, and physical mobility. They not only talk about geographical dislocation but also emphasize upon socio-cultural sense of dislocation and their psychological effects. They brought out the psychological sufferings of their characters. They depict their emotions of fear, nostalgia and uncertainty. They present their identity crisis, mysteries of identity, psychological suffering and a strong sense of personal and cultural dislocation. Still, a big difference between their presentations of these can be noticed.

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