

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Survival and Identity in Adversities: An Existential Reading of Badami's *The Hero's Walk*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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March, 2010

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Tank Prasad Sharma has completed his thesis entitled "Survival and Identity in Adversities: An Existential Reading of Badami's *The Hero's Walk*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from August 2009 to February 2010. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Survival and Identity in Adversities: An Existential Reading of Badami's *The Hero's Walk*" by Tank Prasad Sharma, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to my respected teacher and supervisor Mr. Hem Lal Pandey, an assistant lecturer at the Central Department of English, Trivhuwan University, for his valuable guidance to carry out this work. Without his kind help, I couldn't have reached here. I am sincerely grateful to my teacher and Head of Central Department of English, Kirtipur, Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, for his precious inspiration and motivation. Moreover, I am extremely grateful to all of my respected teachers who directly or indirectly helped me in topic selection and some other important hints.

I am really indebted to my parents Mr. Hari Lal Sharma and Mrs. Hira Devi Sharma, sisters Kusum and Shanti and elder brother Mukund Sharma who managed me financial and academic environment. I must not forget the encouragement of my friends Deepak Sharma, Govind Sharma, Chandara Joshi, Kali Prasad Bhatt, Keshab, Krishna, Laxmi, Sailendra, Shankar, Shyam and Shankar Joshi who regularly helped me to bring this thesis into being.

I again like to remember to all my relatives, friends and sirs who helped me during the course of research.

Tanka Prasad Sharma

March, 2010

## **Abstract**

*The Hero's Walk* by Anita Rau Badami exposes the protagonist's struggle for existence in the society. The protagonist searches meaning and orders through struggle, amid the sorrow and pain without complain. Other characters of the novel also seek a way for freedom in order to create their identity. With sorrows and pains, he seeks for the value and meanings of life out of such dilapidation, which enables him to overcome the anguish and contingency. He gets rich feeling of his own existence after he undergoes struggles throughout his life. Sripathi Rao, the protagonist of the novel, faces different problems but he never tires and surrenders, rather he faces these problems one after another which shows his existential struggle for creating meaning in his life.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Anita Rau Badami and Her Existential Vision Projected in Her Writings**

Anita Rau Badami tries to depict the protagonist's freedom, his choice and struggle by neglecting the old values and norms in her writings. Most of the characters of her novels are alienated from sorrows and disasters in order to make their lives free. They make their own life what they want. Badami focuses on characters who want to play with the word 'free' because of their frustration and alienation. Her thinking and existential norms begins when she publishes her first novel *The Tamarind Mem*, in which she focuses on how the characters come out from alienation and loneliness in life. In her every novels, she talks about characters struggle for existence and freedom. Her main concern of her writings is to emphasize on the characters' struggle and freedom, in order to survive in the society. Her writings are very simple, lucid and clear. They also focus on characters' behavior, alienation and freedom. Most of her characters are frustrated and alienated from their lives.

She has been living in Canada since 1991 as a journalist. She has published many journals about the issue of existentialism. She was a daughter of a mechanical engineer and attain designer in the railroad. In her journal, she says that her father worked hard in order to survive and maintain her family life. She grew up in a household where English was primary language. She always enjoyed writing and she sold her first story for a seventy five rupee at the young age of fifteen. She worked very hard in order to maintain her career through writing. She earned bachelor's degree in English at University of Madras. Before becoming a full fledged writer she had various jobs. She worked as copywriter for advertising agencies in Bombay, Bangalore and Madras. She wrote for newspapers and many stories about children's magazines. She worked very hard in every sector for building her career and maintains her position safe and secure.

In the writing process, she found her life very hard and shocked because she did very hard work and struggled in the writing period. Her writings are mainly concerned with the issue of struggle, freedom and choice. This sort of issues can be seen in her novel like *The Tamarind Mem* (1996), *The Hero's Walk* (2001) and *Can You Hear The Night Bird Call?* (2008). She is mostly regarded as an existential author who demonstrates on the hero's struggle his existence freedom and choice. She has used these types of issues in her three novels. By writing such issues, she won Regional Common Wealth Writers' Prize, Marina Engel Award as well as the *Washington Post* Best Book Award of 2001 for her excellence in fiction. Protagonists in her novels are scattered here and there for freedom, they make their own life where her characters are lively, independent and multidimensional heroes who make their own choices.

Badami a versatile author continues to forge her own way in literature offering new perspectives on living heroes with freedom and independence. Badami's second novel, *The Hero's Walk* deals with the issue of freedom of choice and struggle. Badami reflects the shadow of the protagonist who seeks the path of choice and freedom which is achieved through hard work. The publication of this book gave her familiarity as a talented writer. It also explores how the protagonist changes his life by making an existential hero. In the novel *The Hero's Walk*, the male protagonist Sripathi Rao seeks the way of freedom because he is very shocked by different disasters that occur in his life and he wants to avoid such events from his life by working hard.

### **Badami and her Other Works**

Badami's works mostly deal with the issue of an existential issue in which she talks characters' a way for freedom. In her novels male protagonist come out of the difficult condition and tension but in such condition they are very mute and unable to express their

inner feelings. That type of tension and consequences can be seen in the protagonist's life. It adds that the protagonist works hard for survival on the one hand but on the other he searches a way for freedom on the other.

Badami is a mature writer, capable of engaging the reader in story in which little happens and that moves at a leisurely pace. She spent her childhood visiting through her native country India. Her first novel, *Tamarind Mem* is an autobiographical issue which is based on her past memories. These sorts of memories haunt Badami for reforming her living life style freely. This novel reflects the shadow of alienation upon female character like Saroja who does not become an Ayurvedic doctor due to her parents' ignorance. She is frustrated from her own family and spends her life freely. She is not only ignored by her parents but also by her husband left her for a long period without any cause. In every angle she is suffered a lot and makes a plan to live alone with full freedom. She blames her parents that frustration comes from her parents not to take care of her inner desire on the one hand; her husband's leaving style with her small daughter leads Saroja on the other. In that sense she wants to spend her life freely without any tension and loneliness. She struggles very hard to take care of her small daughter by doing business. She also started writing in order to quench her thrust of pain and frustration of past. In every sector she was frustrated and spent her life freely. Another female character Puttiyaiji loses her husband in her early age. She is alienated and suffered a lot due to her husband's pain and suffering. She negates these things and tries to live by working hard for maintaining her life. All the memories she draws upon her novel *Tamarind Mem* by capturing the cinematic role of frustrated characters; their seeking way for freedom and choice.

Badami's second novel *The Hero's Walk* takes place in the dusty seaside town of Toturpuram on the Bay of Bengal. Badami portrays the protagonist of the novel as an existential man who works hard to sustain his family even if the situation is very

thunderstruck. His journey begins as a copywriter by working hard and ends to become a man of struggle. His daughter's elopement with Canadian and death itself through a car accident makes Sripathi very shocked and amazed. He has a tension of his family like his sister's unmarried life, his jobless son his mother's regularly complaining attitude and his wife's misunderstanding lead him in the journey of frustration. This very sort of frustration ends when he works hard for the way of freedom. He spends his life alone because of such frustration. Badami's most of the characters believe in the aspect of freedom. They make their lives themselves. Badami's great skill of creating character is to make them free.

Badami explains that *The Hero's Walk* is a novel about so many things: loss, disappointment, choices and the importance of coming to terms with younger and the circumstances of life without losing the dignity impelled in all of us. Her great skill is that all characters come to their lives that are totally believable, they have their own choices; they do what they want. So the novel shows how the author reaches deep into her characters, shares the surface and more profound thoughts and emotions.

Badami's third novel *Can You Hear The Night Bird Call?* (2006) presents a frustrated female character like Bibiji who is driven by her husband. She is very much suffered woman from her husband and tries to search the path for loneliness. Due to such alienation and frustration, she chooses the right way for freedom. Badami, in this novel, shows how an ordinary man lives even if the tragic condition is in Nimmo and her family who are destroyed by bomb attack on Air India 182 which headed from Canada to India. The novel also focuses on characters that are living freely and independent. All characters have their own choices and live right way of their lives.

All of these novels deal the issue of existentialism in which all characters have to choose the way of freedom and their own choice to live. All novels hint the point of choice,

freedom and struggle. In *The Hero's Walk*, the protagonist Sripathi Rao, struggles very hard in order to assert his existence in the society. The death of his daughter and the incessant complains of his mother irritate him beyond tolerance. Despite these adverse circumstances he works hard in order to sustain the family and win back what he had lost. He is very shocked but does nothing rather he only tolerates and works hard for survival. To establish his identity and assert his existence he struggles very hard.

Sripathi's anger and humiliation filled reaction to his daughter's elopement and continuously works hard to respond to the complaints of his mother, highlights the characters' struggle for survival and identity in circumstances. Sripathi Rao also works hard to sustain the family members on the hand but on the other hand to get rid of such shocked condition. Despite these ups and downs, the protagonist tries to assert his existence through tolerance which is signaled by muteness.

In Anita Rao Badami's *The Hero's Walk*, the research will focus on the protagonist's struggle from the perspective of existentialism. After the publication of the novel, *The Hero's Walk*, it has been received many critical perspectives. Different critics have viewed the text differently. But, this research attempts to focus on the protagonists struggle with the use of existentialism and his desire to get freedom.

Regarding Anita Rau Badami's, *The Hero's Walk*, the critic James Gerein says that the novel explores intergenerational dysfunction, the erosion of the caste system of Indian culture. He says:

*The Hero's Walk* takes an extended look at extended family living in the small city of Toturpurnam on the Bay of Bengal. Though this family, she examines intergenerational dysfunction, the erosion of the caste system. This is a novel of extraordinarily strong characters living simple, believable lives. In an

inspired moment, Sripathi thought about the chanciness of existence, the beauty and the hope and the loss that always accompanied life and felt a bounder slowly roll off his heart. (134)

The protagonist Sripathi is seeks a way of meaningful existence, the beauty and the hope which is surrounded in an extended family.

Another critic Judy Mcaloon comments “the novel exploring the predicament of the Indian the life of the family”(45). He says:

The plot revolves around the life of the family as part of Indian culture and how Nandana and her grandfather both begin to adjust to their circumstances. The Rao family could be anyone’s family and they all find some peace and hope for the future at book’s end. Nandana has not said a word to anyone since the accident and moving a new country and living with these old stronger is difficult for her. (61)

Badami shows the generation gap which occurs in two conflicting cultures collide and traditional values clash with modernity on the one hand but also capture the life of middle class people in India on the other.

Another critic Marina Budhos comments that this novel explores the cruelties of parents upon their children. He says:

The novel depicts the cruelties of multigenerational India households when members complete for dwindling resources. The grandmother is an angry matriarch who can’t forgive her son for not becoming a doctor and Sripathi is still bitter about his daughter marrying a foreigner. The Raos have grown as stagnant as the mossy water that surrounds their crumbling house. (80)

There is a problem of all generations because all generations have their own life experience. Due to gap generation, it has brought vast problem in the family life.

Likewise, critic Valerie Miner comments that it explores the relationship between the family members in the male dominated society like India. She says:

Sripathi struggles at a Medicare job to support his dragon of a mother, unmarried but lovelorn 44 year old sister, subservient wife and layout son. It is the perfect set up for a domestic wife; unit fate intervenes with the sudden death of his daughter Maya and her husband in Vancouver guilt ridden for having refused to communicate with Maya because she humiliated him by marrying out of her caste and race. Bandami's portrait of a bereft and bewildered child is both restrained and heart rending. Sripathi brings his seven year's old orphaned grand daughter Nandana back to India. (368)

Sripathi is still injured from the old values and culture system of the Indian society that capture his mind inactive which is the main cause of his daughter's death. Nandana is not able to adjust in Indian culture because it is new for her so that she is living a sorrowful life.

Many critics have given their own views differently. Their perspective of the present research is quite different. Most of the critics have talked about the novel relating to the Indian culture, values and norms which is based on the Indian society. Beside it, they have also talked about cruelties of parents upon their children, caste system. No critic seems to have made research on the issue of existence of the protagonist through the struggle and hard working. Hence, the present researcher will be exploring the protagonist's struggle in order to sustain the family on the one hand and at the same time being ready to forget all bygone memories from his mind and for the involvement him on the way of struggle for establishing his identity in the society on the other. He has been working hard for survival and wins back what was lost. In such difficult condition, how the protagonist is ready to struggle hard by forgetting ups and downs in order to assert his existence which is signaled by muteness.

For the purpose of carrying out this research issue mentioned above, the research work is divided into four chapters: the first chapter is introductory which partially reflects the whole thesis and its issues; the second chapter is about methodology of existentialism, this methodology will be used in the third chapter to analyze the text. The third one is the analysis of the text in the light of the ideas developed in theoretical modality chapter and fourth chapter concludes the thesis by restored issue and what the researcher has discussed in the entire research. The last chapter summarizes the whole research.

## Chapter II: Methodology

### Existentialism

Existentialism draws attention to the risk, the void of human reality and admits that the human being is thrown into the world in which pain, suffering, frustration, alienation, sickness, content and death dominate. It supports individualism, subjectivity, introspection and inner desire and feeling. It is probably the most dynamic and appropriate philosophical movement to define and interpret anxiety. Thus existence means to stand out in the universe that is against us. Moreover existentialism means “pertaining to existence”. Regarding the existential philosophy, M. H. Abrams writes:

To view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing into inherent truth, value or meaning and to represent human life, as it moves from, the nothingness when it come toward nothingness where it must ends as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (1)

The existentialists do not go with the traditional attempt to get the ultimate nature of the world in the abstract system of thought. Instead, they search for what it is like to be an individual human being in the world. The individual must continually decide what is true from false, what is right from wrong, which belief to accept and which to reject, what to do and what not to do. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Furthermore, since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they have their freedom and therefore their responsibility thrust upon them. Existentialism focuses upon individual struggle their freedom, and choice. Human beings must not slip away from thier responsibilities. They cannot find any purpose; their existence is only a contingent fact and their beings do not emerge from necessity. If a human being rejects the false pretensions like

the illusion of his existence; he encounters the absurdity and the futility of the life. So that man's role in the world is not predetermined but every person is compelled to make a choice. Choice is the thing that human beings must make. Things are not described, fixed and rigid rather a human being is free because he can add essence in the course of his life and he is in a constant state of flux and able to comprehend his condition. Human beings don't live in a predetermined world instead they are free to realize their aims and dreams. One motto of existentialism is "existence precedes essence" or existence is prior to the essence. It means that meaning of existence is determined by the course of life rather than life by human nature.

Existential philosophy itself represents a concept of strongest denial of any metaphysical ideas. The only task of philosophy according to existential philosopher is the description of things as they appear in front of us. One of the leading philosophers, Jean Paul Sartre defines existentialism, "a doctrine which makes human life possible and in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and human subjectivity."

(Existentialism and Human Emotion)

Existential philosophers emphasize the individual but differ in varying degree, on how one achieves and what constitutes of fulfilling life, what obstacles one must overcome, what internal and external factors are involved including the potential consequences of existence or non existence of God. Many existentialists also regard traditional systematic or academic philosophy in both style and content as too abstract and remote from concrete human experiences. It is a set of philosophical ideals that stress the existence of the human beings, the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life. Existentialism is less of an-ism than attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of positions associated with existentialism, no single strict definition is possible; however, it suggests one major theme: the stress on concrete individual freedom, and choice. Ryan gives an explanation of existentialism:

Hence, there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However it may be said that with the existentialists the problem of man is central and that they stress man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom, and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be.(639)

Every individual has to confront important and difficult decisions with only limited knowledge and time in which to make these decisions. They find human life as being basically a series of decisions that should be made with no way of knowing consequences or what the correct choices are. The individual must continually decide what is true from false; what is right from wrong; which beliefs to accept and which to reject; what to do and what not to do. "Yet, there are no objective standards or rules to which a person can turn for answers to problems of choice because different standards supply conflicting advice," says the *World Book of Encyclopedia*. (437)Existentialist thinkers conclude that human choice is 'subjective', because individuals finally must make their own choices without help from other external standards as laws, ethical rules or tradition because individuals make their own choices, they are free, but because they freely choose, they are completely 'responsible ' for their choices.

Existentialism places an emphasis on the lack of meaning and purpose in life and the solicitude of human existence. This implies that human beings have no essence, no essential-self, and are no more than what they are .We exist, we find ourselves here free, because there are no prescription and we must decide for ourselves, define ourselves as the kind of person we are going to be. Human beings' existence is the first and basic fact: they have no essence that comes before their existence. This nothingness and non-existence of an essence is the central source of the freedom and human beings face in each and every moment. Human beings have liberty in the view of their situation, in decisions which make them solve their

problems and live in the world. Hence; they can't realize their freedom and the futility of their existence. Ryan summarizes this concept:

Man is free and responsible, but he is responsible only to himself. As with Nietzsche, man creates moral values .besides being free, man does a finite and contingent being exist in a world that is devoid of purpose. The pessimism resulting from this posits on is likewise expressed by Camus doctrine of "the absurd". Absurdity or contradiction arises from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown. (639)

Existentialism is a set of philosophical ideas that stress the existence of the human being, the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life. Existentialists are really concerned to the problem of a man. They focus on man's concrete existence, his personal freedom and his responsibility for his choice.

The existentialist's emphasizes that freedom is necessary accompanied by responsibility. Since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they have their freedom therefore their responsibility thrust upon them. Sartre is also a convenient representative because for a time he actually acknowledged being an existentialist and offered a definition in Decartes' subjectivism, Husserl's analysis of consciousness. Heidegger's concepts of existentialism and themes place in the two major thinking of existentialism, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. From Nietzsche, he takes the concepts of 'Death of God' and from Kierkegaard; Sartre takes individual's existence.

Existentialism has been categorized into two groups: Theistic and Atheistic. Theistic group includes Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marsel who are supposed to believe in Christian faith and god. In the second atheistic group like Jean Paul

Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Fredrick Nietzsche, Albert Camus and other French existentialists who do not believe in the existence of god rather they focus on individual's freedom and will. The atheistic existentialists discard the concepts of god as an authentic shelter. They regard human beings as optimistically free. With such division between theistic and atheistic group, the present research is based on atheistic group especially focusing on Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus with their idea of choice, freedom and struggle.

One of the proponents of French existentialist was Albert Camus (1919-60). Camus believes that the decline of religious belief in modern period compels people to realize the condition of modern man as an insane crying inside a closed glass vessel. This type of absurd human life is presented in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, who is doomed eternally to roll up a stone to the hill, a boulder that will always fall back just as he is about to reach the top. Camus borrowed from Heidegger the sense of being abandoned in the world, and he shared with Sartre the sense that the world does not give meaning to individuals where as Sartre surpassed Heidegger in insisting that one must make meaning for oneself. Camus concludes that the world is absurd, a term that has come to represent the whole thrust of existentialism thinking.

If human life is hopeless and meaningless, he is at once liberated and put in a position to exercise his freedom in a revolt against absurdity. According to Camus when the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and helplessness but he does not surrender himself in front of death. Instead he acknowledges the consciousness of absurdity as a reliable guidance to revolt against it. According to him, man exists by creating his own human value in this Godless, absurd world for that purpose he has to revolt. But he rejects the destruction of human values in the name of revolution. *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel* are his philosophical novels which give us a clear picture and vision about his absurd atheistic existentialism. Camus is concerned with the freedom and

responsibility of the individual, the alienation of the individual from society, and difficulty of facing life without the comfort of believing in god or in absolute moral standards. It also includes that difference of the universe, and the necessity of engagement in a just cause. He is in the opinion that human existence is absurd. The modern world is full of injustice and millions of work in repetitive exploitative jobs. He thought that we should rebel against the absurdities by refusing to participate in them. In *The myth of Sisyphus*, Camus asserts that by refusing to surrender, Sisyphus, the representative of modern man, can create meaning through a free act of affirmation in which he gives meaning to a situation. According to him, man exists by creating his own human value in this Godless absurd world for that purpose he has to revolt. He also says that human life is unique and dreadful. In human life, we find always the conflict and diversity. He argues that the transcendence of absurd is only achieved through intense struggle and continuous process not through the passive acceptance of situation.

Camus believes that human existence is absurd. The modern world is full of injustice; millions work in repetitive explorative jobs. Camus in "*The Myth of Sisyphus*" says:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds once burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the god and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor fertile. Each atom of that stone, each minerals flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the height is enough to fill a man's heart, one must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

To get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world, one may go against the rules of God or he may submit himself in front of death for freedom. But either of these choices is ridiculous and bad for the absurd man. The living of the absurd man depends upon the

maximum struggle against this absurdity. The world is full of absurdity, but Sisyphus teaches revolt through action that offers freedom and justification for continuing life. The punishment of Sisyphus is a punishment just because it is an endless exercise in futility; Sisyphus is stuck in an eternally pointless task. Now, if the world and everything in it are pointless, the task of Sisyphus is identical to everything that we will ever be doing in life. We are no different from Sisyphus and if his punishment makes the afterlife a hell for him, we are already living in that hell. Camus further says:

If this myth is tragic, that is because it is here is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope succeeding upheld him? The Workman of today works everyday in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But, it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. (68)

Hence, Sisyphus struggles to put his life in front of death for challenging the God. He chooses the way of struggling to move the absurd world. Human condition is essentially and ineradicable, absurd and that condition cannot be avoided. Death follows us from our birth, it is inevitable. How much we try to get happiness from choosing the opportunities that much we fall in the problems. But we have to choose because it is necessary to choose and bear the possibilities. None of our choices is perfect; all of them create meaninglessness and nothingness. Though the life is inside the wheel of obstacles we know, we have to struggle until our death.

The hero of Sisyphus has worked hard but not to surrender in front of God because his intention is to challenge God. He struggles very hard to achieve life of freedom. He is unable to escape his condition through suicide. According to him man exists by creating his own human works in this modeless, absurd world for that purpose he has to revolt. What can Sisyphus do to make his life endurable? He can just decide that it is meaningful. The value

and purpose that objectively do not exist in the world can be restored by an act or will. To live one's life one must exercise the freedom to create a life. Just going along with conventional values and forgetting about the absurdity of the world is not authentic. Authenticity is to exercise one's free will and to choose the activities and goals that will be meaningful for one's self with this approach; even Sisyphus engages and satisfies with what he is doing. He is still insisting on freedom, struggle and choice through his philosophy by emphasizing the world of absurdity.

Another French existentialist is Jean Paul Sartre who emphasizes upon freedom, struggle and choices. He believes that there is no fixed human nature or essence and so an individual has to choose his/her being. Sartre defines the term existentialism, by following both Husserl and Heidegger. He uses the phenomenological method to define his central thesis that human beings are essentially free. Retreating from Heidegger's attack on the Cartesian view of consciousness, Sartre argues that consciousness is such that is always free to choose and free to negate the given features of the world. One may be cowardly or shy, but such behavior is always a choice and one can always resolve to change. "Existence precedes essence" is the main doctrine of existential philosophy in which all the existentialists agree. To clarify this doctrine he writes:

First of all man exists, turns up, appearance on the scene and only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is definable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence. (*Existentialism and Human* 15)

Sartre turns his doctrine of existing choice into doctrine of engagement. Engagement of individual means the engagement with the society because individual is a component of the society. His choice affects not only for himself but also for the society. This choice brings with its responsibility. Man himself is everything, so he himself is responsible for his every action because he is free to choose. To clarify about human will and his responsibility he further writes:

There is nothing in heaven: man will be what he will have planned to be.

Because by the word “will” we generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves. Existentialist's first novel to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility if his existence rest on him. (*Existentialism and Human* 16)

According to Sartre, we have various choices among them we have to choose the best one.

For that purposes we must have power of conscious decision which is known as “will” in existentialism that enables us to choose the more spontaneous choice among the choices.

Sartre’s deepest interest is in individual human beings, his effort of understand them, to form a general concept of human being has nevertheless been heavily dependent on a number other such conceptions.

Fuller and Memurrim have charged upon existentialism and Sartre’s responds in the following lines:

existentialism in general, is pessimistic, he [Sartre] replies that such a charge can come only from those who are fearful of the truth that life is genuinely difficult “existentialism”, he has written is nothing else than on attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. The discovery that there is no god and the man is above in the beginning of a genuine humanism

that dignifies man as the free creator of all values and of whatever meaning there is in human existence. (*A History of Philosophy* 612)

Sartre proposes an interesting view on free will when he says, “either man is wholly determined (which is admissible, especially because a determined consciousness i.e. a consciousness externally motivated becomes pure exteriority and ceases to be consciousness) or else man wholly free.”(145) This shows us that he believes in man as free to do what he wants. Again, after telling us that man is wholly free, he tells us that since we are free we are responsible for our actions.

Sartre emphasizes upon the subjectivity of an individual. But the individual is not free from other beings. He gives a total freedom to the individual and insists that he should not choose his freedom in accordance to the values or dogmas of society but, on the other hand, he leaves the individual’s freedom in relation with the freedom of his community so that the community's freedom directs him to act in certain ways. Sartre has used two term: “being for itself” and “being in itself” in his most important philosophical book *Being and Nothingness*. According to him being in itself applies to things, a thing exists in itself. This means a thing is basically what it is. In case of man: existence precedes essence, so man is being for it not being in itself. To make this view clear he writes:

Being is in itself. Being is what it is. Such characteristics in which the preliminary examination of the phenomenon of being allows us to assign to the being of phenomena. For the moment it is impossible to push our investigation further. This is not yet the examination of the in itself which is never anything but what it is which will allow us to establish and to explain its relations with itself. Thus we have left “appearances” and have been let

progressively to posit two types of being the in itself and for itself. ("The Pursuit" 29-30)

According to Sartre, existentialism lays emphasis upon the existence of individual. First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only afterwards defines himself. He further writes, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself." (87) For existentialists, man himself is responsible for his action and its effects. It is this feeling of freedom and responsibility that is the source of man's anguish. Man is free of routines and conventions, he is thrown naked and face to face his destiny.

Moreover, existentialism is a philosophical movement which focuses on human existence, freedom, choices and struggle. Existentialist's thinkers' focus on the question of concrete human existence and the condition of this existence rather than hypothesizing a human essence, stressing that human essence is determined through choices. A central proposition of existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the actual life of the individual is what constitutes what could be called his or her "essence." Thus, a human being through his consciousness creates his own values and determines a meaning to his life. Existentialist thinkers' emphasis on an individual freedom along with choices and struggle, however, it is a philosophical concept of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century but it's source begins from Danish philosopher Kierkegaard who is called first leader of existentialism. Despair, anxiety, angst, alienation, death and absurdity are the remarkable theme of existentialism. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. So, it is a set of philosophical ideas that stress the existence of human beings, the anxiety and depression which surpasses each human life.

In this way, most of the existentialist's ideas are different when they define the term existentialism in their philosophy. They have focused on an individual freedom, human choices and struggle as well. But they have supported one motto i.e. existence precedes

essence. To highlight the term existentialism, they have focused individual subjectivity, their freedom and choices which are really different from other group of existentialism.

The present novel *The Hero's Walk* by Anita Rao Badami also focuses on an individual freedom, choices and struggle which is highlighted through the protagonist Sripathi Rao. The protagonist, as a copywriter tries to handle his family from this small job despite the different consequences happened in his life. Through this small job, he has kept his family safely. The protagonist suffers from different disaster like his daughter's elopement with the Canadian person, his old mother's talkative manner, his sister's unmarried life and his son's jobless condition. From such circumstances, the protagonist gets torture and generates courage for struggle. Despite these ups and downs, the protagonist attempts to struggle for survival and establish his identity in the society.

### Chapter III: Textual analysis

#### Struggle for Existence in Badami's *The Hero's Walk*

Struggle for existence involves continuous tension between life and death. In *The Hero's Walk*, the central character Sripathi Rao searches for the meaning of his life, struggles in the last age of his life. Sripathi works very hard in order to assert his existence and create his identity in the society by forgetting past events. He tolerates this entire thing without showing any response towards others. In the last age of his life he labors hard but on the other hand to assert his existence and identity. Sripathi expects no reward and no vindication for the suffering. His continual struggle with patience and courage is not only for survival rather it is existential struggle against indifferent universe.

The protagonist works very hard to establish his identity and survival in the society even if the condition is shocking. From the beginning to the end, he works very hard to live in the society despite the sorrowful situation. He endures all the pain and anguish and takes courage for existence in the society. He fights against the indifferent world which makes Sripathi a tragic hero. To eliminate such sufferings and pains, he takes the help of patience and courage in which he struggles very hard to uplift his family and creates his identity in the society. The suffering makes Sripathi face the truth in its fear and terror of his situation. It also gives him the moral strength to rise out of the grave of despair. Amid such pain and suffering, his struggle of life gives him courage to confront the unknown disaster. Sripathi's anger and humiliation, reaction to his daughter's elopement and continual hard work to respond to the complaints of his mother highlight the character's struggle for survival and identity in adverse circumstances.

Sripathi Rao is one of the main representations of his family. He leads his family smoothly despite his suffering. He has a burden of his old mother Ammayya who complaints

regularly for his daughter Maya's death, his sister Putti's unmarried life and his jobless son Arunt to sripathi. Despite these ups and down, he tries to assert his existence through tolerance, signaled by muteness. He struggles very hard to get rid of such suffering and pain. His journey begins as a copy writer for advertising agency. Ammayya's dream is to make him doctor and she wants to show his son's position as great as his father Narasimha Rao. In this condition, Ammayya says:

You will have the right to order me around when you are earning a living when you are a doctor, then you can tell your mother what to do and what not to do, "she told him fiercely. Your job now is to concentrate on doing us in school and getting into medicine. We have to show people that Narasimha Rao's son is as brilliant as he was. (Badami 66)

Ammayya seems so proud towards her son Sripathi. Sripathi works very hard for publishing magazine in order to exist in the society as a best copywriter. His mother Ammayya full of traditional norms regularly makes his son Sripathi conscious about his responsibility to look after the family members. She says:

Sripathi, you are the son, and it is your duty to think about your mother and your sisters. You want to abandon us like your father did; I knew this would happen someday. Oh God, Why am I cursed with such sorrow? Listen Sripathi this is my order to you. You should do well for your family members. You should be responsible person for us and do not turn your mind in other things, Ammayya cris. (69)

Sripathi struggles and takes all pain and suffering lightly that he gets from his life. He chooses the way of patience. He even such sorrowful condition, he does not surrender himself in the arena of despair. Rather he goes ahead to pave the right way of life in which no one

will disturb his life. He chooses the way of freedom because he wants to; leave such painful life. Ammayya listen her granddaughter Maya's accident in Canada. She finds herself a tragic mother after hearing such bad news. Ammayya takes care of her granddaughter Maya even if she is eloped with a Canadian person without her permission. She murmurs and says "I was only thinking of you, my darling. Inside my heart is heart is breaking, my grandchild is dead and I am alive. Why can't Yama Raja take me away from this word?" (77).

Ammayya feels so bad after hearing the death of her grandchild. She wants to die instead of her grandchild Maya's death explained by the above line. Sripathi's daughter Maya wants to spend her life freely who elopes with the Canadian person without her parent's permission? She denies her parent's proposal for marry with Prakash she avoids one kind of choice denying her parent's proposal. She chooses other kind of choice to spend life with the foreigner. Maya chooses the way of freedom in which no one will interrupt in her life. This sort of choice she explains on her letter where she says:

I don't know how else to say this, so let me be direct. 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. Let's see what will happen in life. We hope that we will be able to celebrate the wedding in Toturpuram this summer, after my studies are over. (108)

Sripathi and his family find themselves in a bad condition have very shocked after hearing such news. Sripathi tries to stop his daughter but the time is over and Maya neither accepts her father's proposal nor her grandmother's demand but she chooses her right track of freedom to spend life. This sort of news makes Sripathi Rao very displeasure and at last he doesn't wants to interfere his daughter's proposal. But the tragedy happens when his daughter dies through a car accident in Canada. This event shocks Sripathi and his family.

After hearing the death news of her daughter, Nirmala [Sripathi's wife] blames to her husband as a killer of her daughter Maya. Nirmala weeps in a long time and sounds that you are killer of my daughter Maya. Your fault, your fault, your fault I you drove her away from me I you! You! You! Again and again she hammered her first against his body, slapping and punching in frenzy. Sripathi sat still his head in his hands like a penitent being flogged for his sins. You killed my child and now you are hitting me also. (35)

Nirmala blames her husband for killing her child which shocks Sripathi. He can't do anything against his wife. He tolerates such pain and suffering and seeks the right path of solace. He is alienated not only from his family but also his relatives and friends who are continuously blaming to Sripathi Rao as a killer of Maya. This sort of event moves Sripathi to live a free life in which no one will come. Despite these ups and down, he doesn't show any reaction towards his family rather he tolerates this sort of blaming and suffering and determines to struggle hard to live freely. His decision turns Sripathi Rao in the solace life which indicates that he exists in the world without any hindrance but spends his life freely.

Nirmala, wife of Sripathi, takes her daughter's soul like the Trishaknu River. She is highly shocked after she listen the death news of Maya and wants her death daughter be free and solace in the heaven. She insists her matter and says:

She is dead, and after death, nothing matters. Maya is beyond all these rituals. By heaving such matter from Sripathi, Nirmala responses that nothing ever Matters to you, hey? Like a stone you are my poor child has gone like a beggar, without any proper rituals, and you say it doesn't Matter? Her soul will float like Trishanku between worlds. It will hang in purgatory forever. (173)

Sripathi moves here and there on the ditch of pain and suffering but never react towards the death of Maya. He not only frustrates from his family but also other relative too in which Sripathi chooses the way of freedom. His mother Ammayya continuously complains about his daughter's death which makes sripathi irritates but does nothing rather remains mute. He is unable to express his sufferings. Despite these pains and sufferings, he struggles very hard to exist in the society. Sripathi's sister, Putti, who spends her life without marriage at the age of forty. Putti remembers the past days with Maya but her mother doesn't allow her to go anywhere. From such circumstance, she is stitched like a dog but her inner desire looks for a way of freedom. She wants to live her life freely but her mother Ammayya doesn't go from the house, she is so alienated to see her life and she wants to get rid of such frustration life. She wants to spend life freely and independently. Because of conservative behaviors of Ammayya, Putti spends her life in a burden some way. The following remark shows Putti's shocking condition. She says: "May be but my fate lies within the walls of this house. See today I am forty two years old and still I am stuck here. Even if Maya had sent me a ticket, Ammayya wouldn't have allowed me to go. Maya told me before she left for Amerca that she would send me a ticket to visit. But I knew it would never happen" (179)

The protagonist Sripathi Rao doesn't fear death and other disasters of life. He negates these kinds of events from his life and his journey takes him in a headlong of struggle. He labors hard being a copywriter at the age of fifty seven for survival and asserts his existence in the society. He faces all kinds of suffering and anger in order to preserve his existence in the society. He is the main leader of his family, that's why he is leading his family by convincing, believing and caring. He has a burden of his old mother Ammayya who regularly nags him beyond tolerance. Sripathi Rao, a man at the far reaches of middle age, labors hard all his life to do his duty. He shares his deteriorating conditions towards his son Arun, his unmarried sister Putti and his ages and cantankerous mother Ammayya, a woman whose

heart fills of the rage. But, on the other hand, he is unable to express his bitter feelings to anyone which he has found from his daughter's death. Even in such condition he moves forward to create a new identity in the society. The death of his daughter and the incessant complains of his mother irritate him beyond tolerance. Despite these ups and downs, he works very hard to sustains the family and win back what had lost.

Sripathi becomes very shocked after hearing the death news of his daughter Maya. He feels himself humiliated when he contemplates on the breaking engagement with Prakash. He thinks himself as the blamer of his daughter when his wife Nirmala threatens him. He thinks that the curse which she gets from Prakash could one cause of his daughter's death. He finds himself in humiliating condition in front of Prakash and says:

How can I face my grandchild when I am responsible for her mother's death?  
sripathi asked himself the more he thought about his actions eighty years ago, the more convinced he was that his anger had somehow brought about Maya's demise. He had cursed her for her refusal to marry Prakash, for humiliation him by breaking the engagement, for obliging him to face Prakash's father when he went to return the jewelry they had given Maya as a gifts, for blackening the family name in the entire town. And the curse had killed her.

(245)

Sripathi tries to assert his existence through mute and silence. He does not surrender himself as a weak person, rather wants to be courageous and strong. Even in such humiliating condition, full of anger and sorrowful life, Sripathi forgets all these disasters and moves ahead to take care of his family and complete his duty as an honorable man. He works very hard till the end of his life in order to complete his duty towards family and society.

To create his identity and survival in the society, he labors hard as a copywriter in which he tolerates different events in his life. Due to Ammayya's conservative concept, her daughter Putti loses many suitors from his life. From every angle, Sripathi gets torture and tension but does not do anything. Ammayya breaks the boundry of her daughter Putti due to her traditional concept. The following remarks of Ammayya turn Sripathi in the life of irritation and anger but tolerate it and turns down in another world that is to say he repents these types of disasters and moves towards to complete his duty. Ammayya angrily says:

Sripathi, did you hear the way sister spoke to me? And you just stood there and listened like a wet mop? While I was insulted left and right. There was a moment of silence while her mother digested this unexpected response and then the floodgates opened. Ammayya wailed and beat her chest, she hiccupped and wheezed, turned blue in the face and declared that she was about to faint. Finally, she smacked her cane petal angrily on the floor and whined. (294)

Although sripathi gets pangs from his mother Ammayya but as a son he completes his duty towards his family and society till his last life. Sripathi struggles very hard in his life. Sometimes he gets torture and pain from his family but other time he gets relief. Really, he does not fear to death and other disasters of life. He tolerates all these events and moves to complete his responsibility and duty towards family and society. He gets pain, torture and sorrowful events while completing his journey. The following events prove Sripathi's sorrowful events:

The rain, which had thinned to a drizzle, began to drum again heavily as he reached the huddled shape of Karim mechanic's shop, now shrouded completing in Tarpaulin. he stopped his scoter lying on it's like a wounded

animal amid the mechanics debris. It was sheltered in plastic and tied with heavily ropes to a tree. Thunder rolled across the sky. Sripathi shook open his umbrella and increased his pace. A wind started up, shaking the branches of the ancient Caesalpinia trees liming the road like old warriors, and the umbrella strained and bucked in his trall. He pressed his body against the wind and continued to walk down the road that stretched out before him, long and dark and strongly unfamiliar, even though he had spent his entire life traveling it. (295)

The above remarks suggests that how Sripathi crosses the different disasters of life. However these events can make Sripathi passive but he neglects all pains, sufferings and sorrows in his life. Sripathi's mother Ammayya treats badly towards her daughter Putti and daughter in law Nirmala about the small issue which makes Sripathi very irritated. Her full of traditional norms breaks the boundary of putti like breaking mirror because she stands against putti. Putti wants to spend her life freely but Ammayya breaks her life after saying anything what she wants she is alienated or estranged from her mother Ammayya due to her ill doing behaviors towards her because of which she looks a way for freedom.

One of the Existentialist themes is alienation in which the female character like Nirmala and Putti can be taken from the novel. Existentialists believe that all of our personal human relationship is poisoned by feeling of alienation from any 'other'. Alienation and hostility arise within the family between parents and children, between the husband and wife, between the children. Alienation that exists in society rejects upon the alienation of individual human beings, who look for their own desires in estrangement from the actual institutional workings of their society. Putti is the fine example of alienation in which she says "Listen Ammayya I don't want to live what you want but I want to play with my desires.

I have lost many suitors from my life due to her. Actually I am seeking that way in which I can adjust herself what I want" (191).

Nirmala is frustrated from her husband's angry behaviors and threatens her in useless matter. She tolerates everything and remains silence. Sripathi says:

What is this nonsense you are talking? Punish how you can punish somebody all the ways. There from all the way here? Nirmalla demanded [...] why you always have to tell me what to do what not to do? He snarled at her. Is this my house or not? Did I ask you for money to pay layers? Did I ask you for anything at all? You came like a pauper to this house, and you talked as if you are some maharani. (39)

In this way, Nirmala starts to quarrel with her husband and comments on his activities. As a result, there arises negative thinking towards Nirmala's behaviors in Sripathi's mind. Nirmala gets bad behaviour from Sripathi and wants to move her life in another world of freedom. She cannot adjust herself in such brutal life so that Nirmala seeks a way for freedom.

Struggle for existence is another theme of Existentialism. People exist in a different way. Individuals are uniqueable to contemplate about themselves and the world in which they find themselves and make choices. They can choose because they are free, and the choices they make establish the future into which they project themselves. Man is a conscious subject, rather than a thing to be predicted or manipulated: he exists as conscious being and not in accordance with any definition, essence, generalization or system. Maya who elopes with a Canadian without her parent permission. Maya chooses her life that she wants.

Existentialism believes 'existences precede essence' which suggests the actual life of an individual that constitutes what could be his/her essence. This sort of existence can be seen in the characters like Maya who chooses the Canadian man as her best choice after her parent's proposal. She wants to preserve her existence of living to marry with the Canadian man. This indicates that to preserve her existence means to reach in the essence. Maya's dream completes after getting married with Alan Baker not her father's choice but her own.

She ignores her parent's proposal, because she wants to play in the independent life. She chooses the Canadian husband from her inner desire. Maya denies her parents' proposal and chooses her wish to marry with Canadian man Alan Baker. In this response, maya remarks: "Appu, you know life is struggled to get, I choose Canadian because this is my choice that I like. I don't know how else to this, so let me be direct" (110).

The above remarks of Maya prove that how Maya is adjusting herself by denying her parents' proposal. In this way Sripathi's daughter Maya leaves her parents decision and plays with her own choice.

Sripathi's mother Ammayya, who goes with the conservative norms, doesn't allow Putti to go outside. She wants to keep Putti under her. She is old now and memorizes her past events she is telling everything in front of Sripathi and Nirmala in order to understand her past suffering that how she struggles hard to take care of her family members on the other hand she also understands without father how children suffers. She remarks that it is very difficult to bring up children without a father. Sripathi and Nirmala both are heaving her past suffer which are really very harsh and unbelievable. Ammayya who is an old mother of Sripathi struggles very hard to live freely. The following remarks say that how Ammayya works hard to exist in the world. She says: "Gowramma, my old friend, nobody knows the

weight of obligation better than me. All my life I have carried it on my shoulders. My back has become bent under it and still I stumble on” (193).

### **Choice and Freedom**

Choice and freedom are two features of existentialism. Existentialism focuses on the person’s freedom and choice in which one kind of choice substitutes other. This sort of choice and freedom can be seen in the characters like Maya, Nirmala and Putti. They fight against the indifferent world because their demand is to create their own identity and existence in the society. They want to spend their life as free human beings. This sort of choice and freedom can lead them towards another world i.e. the world of freedom.

Ammayya, 88 years old mother of Sripathi, suffers a lot in her early life. She is very disappointed after her husband’s death. Everywhere she is alienated and frustrated. She wants to spend her life without any obligation even she wants to live far from Nirmala (Sripathi’s wife) whose behavior leads Ammayya to live freely. She is very shocked and alienated after getting such pain from Nirmala who does not understand the inner feeling of other women, in every time she says in the old age "no one is cared, they are throwing me like ball" (39). Her feelings prove that how she has suffered from her daughter. She chooses only one way of freedom in which she will lead her life what she wants. Such alienation and frustration leads Ammayya in the path of freedom. Her inner feelings lead Ammayya to create a new way i.e. freedom. In the novel, Nandana is very much sympathetic character who endures bitter feelings from her life. Nandana (Sripathi’s grandchild) loses her parents in an early age. She doesn’t know an Indian culture because India is new place for her. Her parents die through a car accident when she was eight years old. After her parents' death, Nandana comes with her grandfather in India.

In the early age, she is recognized as bastard child. Sripathi bring Nandana in India but she doesn't settle herself in India. Every time Sripathi threatens Nandana not to go anywhere, "this is your home, and you should be here until you alive" (78). But Nandana wants to get rid of such burden so she has tried to runaway from there. She is very much disappointed towards Sripathi because of his unnatural behavior. She wants to live her life freely. She thinks about her parents many times and weeps very harshly. She wants to go run away from there because she doesn't adjust herself in her grandfather's home. First of all, Indian place is unknown for her, she loses her parents in the childhood and her grandmother Ammayya's behavior is not digestable to Nandana. This sort of condition leads Nandana to live her life alone. She tries to run away from there because the Indian place does not recognize Nandana. All the members of the family are strange for her. She is not familiar with any one because that is the strange place for her. She is frightened from her grandmother Ammayya who is very old woman in that house. Ammayya demonstrates love and affection towards Nandana but she does not like so. Sometimes Ammayya says "this is your house where you can do whatever you want but Nandana replies this is not my house, my house is in Vancouver." (154)

Putti also very disappointed girl who hasn't yet married due to Ammayya's conservative belief. Ammayya shows aggressive behavior towards her daughter Putti because of which she doesn't want to go anywhere. Putti is highly shocked to get such behavior from her mother. Her desire is to get married and spends life freely but the marriage door is blocked from her own mother Ammayya who wants Putti to stay at home and take care until her death. On the other hand Ammayya breaks her living boundary not to marry. From such behaviors of Ammayya make Putti very shocked and disappointed. Putti wants to spend her life freely and independently. She wants to get rid of from such condition because her desire is to spend life freely. She does not agree on Putti's proposal. Ammayya threatens to

Putti not to follow others' instruction as a daughter of Ammayya. Ammayya shows negative reaction towards Putti but in front of her mother Ammayya, Putti doesn't do anything rather she remains silent. The following remarks of Ammayya prove that how cruel mother she is towards her daughter Putti in which she says: "Putti if you marry this loafer you will be dead for me forever. My curses will be on your head. A mother's curse is the blackest of them all your children will be born deformed. They too will abandon you and that evil fellow will beat you every single day" (333). Putti wants to marry with Praksh but her mother always rejects to be so. Therefore, because of her mother's this very tendency she becomes frustrate.

Everywhere Putti is alienated and frustrated and she determines to live alone, leaves such painful and suffering life. She deprives from her living free because of such cruel circumstances. That very event makes Putti to live alone in an independent way. Putti struggles very hard to live life. Sometime she feels ashamed bitterly because of Ammayya and other time she is disappointed from other family members too. To get rid of such condition, she paves the way of living independently that means to exist. In the society even if she is unmarried struggles very hard.

Existentialists emphasize an individual's freedom, choice and struggle, In the novel *The Hero's Walk* all characters are alienated and frustrated to see their own lives because everywhere they are estranged and entangled with small issues. Existentialists' focus on individual's freedom that can be seen in the Nirmala's case. Sripathi's wife Nirmala is a woman suffered because Sripathi gives a lot of trouble to her. Time and again she expresses her interest to do anything she wants but her desires are neglected by Sripathi. Nirmala is so much frustrated not only from her husband Sripathi but from Ammayya too. She wants to spend her life freely because she is irritated from her family. So that she seeks a way for freedom. Time and again she shows her desire to meet her grandchild but Sripathi doesn't let her meet her grandchild because Nirmala's daughter was not allowed to come in their home

for her intercaste marriage. Nirmala's existence is ignored. Her desires are always neglected. Therefore she is alienated and frustrated from her husband Sripathi. Nirmala loves Sripathi as a husband but Sripathi behaves badly towards Nirmala which results into Nirmala's frustration. She says: "Leave me alone, no one comes here and there. I don't want to live in such kind of humiliation life. She is very much disappointed and frustrated towards Sripathi because he has neglected her inner desires when she says I want to see my grandchild" (301). This is one example of a frustrated woman who seeks the path for loneliness i.e. freedom. Nirmala has struggled very hard to live her husband's home despite these ups and downs. Each and every moment her desires are neglected that proves the following line of Nirmala:

She remembered how many times during their phone conversation, her daughter had asked mamma is it okay if I come home? And she too afraid of going a getting Sripathi so completely, had said no, not, now wait, I will speak to your father. But Nirmala had never spoken to him; intimidated by his solid impenetrable anger unwilling to force of confrontation of any kinds she was too much of a coward to such unpleasantness head on. (287)

The above remarks prove how Nirmala is frightened in front of her own husband which suggests Nirmala's weakness as well. It also proves that how Sripathi has neglected of Nirmala's inner desire so that her decision is to get rid from such circumstances and spends life what she wants.

Moreover, Nirmala as a frustrated woman seeks a path for freedom. Likewise another female character Putti who is still unmarried even in forty two years old age, spends her life in a frustration condition. She loses many suitable people because of her mother's traditional concept not to marry what Putti wants but her own way. Many times her sound goes towards

Ammayya "leave me alone, I want to abandon this world of alienation, oh god help me to spend my life freely" (155). But Ammayya always tortures her daughter Putti outwardly and inwardly.

Anxiety is also a theme of existentialism. It is the sense of anguish, angst a generalized uneasiness, a fear or dread which is not directed to any specific object. Anguish is the dread of nothingness of human existence. It is the underlying all pervasive universal condition of human existence. Anxiety arises from one's realization that destiny is not fixed but is too open to an undetermined future of infinite possibilities and limitless scope. This kind of anxiety is within Putti's life that deprives her marriage. She thinks her life meaningless and compares it with the wall of the house. Outwardly Putti seem happy but inwardly she has agony that makes her suffer. Putti want to avoid from such difficult condition because everywhere she sees alienation and frustration. Her agony is not to marry with person what Ammayya wants but what Putti herself wants. Her mother searches a boy of her own interest not that of her daughter's so Putti finds her life meaningless but neglects it and moves ahead to get free down. Her mother never asks her what she wants and what kind of boy she wants to marry:

From the outside Putti looked as content as well milked cow but within her seethed that an ocean of desire that would have shocked her mother. she could feel frustration building in inside her likes heat in pressure cooker. She had only recently realized slowly unwilling to believe it at first, that her mother meant never to let her marry. (80)

In this way, Ammayya blocks the free life of Putti and her inner desire. Putti's desire for freedom exists in her mind in which she wants to come out from such painful life. She wants to be free from such painful life in order to establish her identity in the society. Ammayya

regularly criticizes her daughter Putti's life which makes her very shocked and she doesn't want to listen such useless matters because this type of matters can destroy her inner desire.

A putto again gets trouble from Ammayya's misbehavior and her wish is to avoid such things from her life because really that thing will disturb Putti's life. She wants to spend her life as a free human being. She finds her life very tortures from her own mother who is one of the blamer of her life not to marry what she likes. Every activity of Ammayya makes Putti very disappointment. Even if there is such condition Putti doesn't surrender herself but struggles hard to exist in the society even though she is leading an unmarried life. She, being a free woman, wants to spend her life without others' interruption. In every side, Ammayya stands against Putti and makes Putti very amazing in which Putti chooses a way for freedom. In One time Ammayya warns Putti about her outward appearance in which she says:

“Puttamma, my darling, listen to me, I have lived years longer than you, so I know light will makes your skin darken and drying. And it will turn your hair completely white. Then who will marry you tell me?” (79).

This sort of activity of Ammayya makes Putti and her life very difficult. In that sense she is very much frustrated and alienated to see her life. She wants to go outside in order to get freedom rather than confinement. She wants to live her life freely in order to avoid such alienation and frustration. She struggles very hard to exist in the society. The protagonist Sripathi suffers a lot after his daughter Maya's death in Canada. In every corner, he sees Maya's images which makes Sripathi very tragic hero because that picture brings a sort of pain upon him. He shares those sufferings with Nirmala, his wife, in order to get rid of such painful events. He is very shocked when he thinks his daughter Maya and her husband's death. He wants to eliminate such suffering from his life by doing working hard.

In the novel *The Hero's Walk* all characters search a way for freedom. They want to spend their life freely. The protagonist Sripathi Rao, a responsible person of his family, works very hard for survival despite these ups and downs. His wife Nirmala who is far away from his love because of his misbehavior she doesn't want to live with Sripathi rather chooses another way for survival.

According to Sartre, we are free to define our identity. We are all free, and we all bear the responsibility to find the answer to the existential riddle. For Sartre, there was always the perception of a power struggle when two people face each other: who will gain control, who will define their relation. Characters struggle for their existence time and again. Struggle for identities are struggles within individual. The same process can be seen in the life of protagonist Sripathi Rao who struggles for asserting his identity in the society.

Sripathi Rao works very hard to take care of his family and his existence in such painful life. To get rid of such sorrowful events, he involves himself in the small job of copywriter. As a copywriter, he works very hard in order to sustain in the society. In the conversation between Sripathi and Nirmala, Sripathi wants to suggest about the value of life that is to say to work very hard in order to exist. Nirmala doesn't care what Sripathi tells her but sripathi's aim is to teach the value of life. It indicates that Sripathi wants to demonstrate his labor of earning money for Survive. Nirmala is careless woman who doesn't know how to earn money. Sripathi faces all problems in life where he wants to teach his wife Nirmala. He further says that no man will be ready to support us when we have lack of money. This sort of remark can be seen in the following lines:

Already I have so many debts to pay off- father bills, the house Mortgage,  
Maya's airplane ticket. So you know how much that costs? Foolish woman,  
just to please other people we must push ourselves in to the poor house?

Stretch your less only as far as your cot goes! From tomorrow we will all sit with wet towels over our stomachs to shrink the hunger, and do you think anybody will help! Oh no, they will be too busy digesting the food we fed them at this stupid engagement. (102)

Despite these ups and downs, he never repents to see such events rather tries to avoid from his life and works very hard in order to create his identity and preserve his existence in the society.

Sripathi's mother Ammayya though very old, still she struggles for existence. She suffers a lot after her granddaughter's death on the one hand and on the other she is not liked by the family members. So she is so disappointed from her family members every time she says no one is here to understand her inner suffering which always remains within her. Her sufferings and sorrows are within her. She doesn't want to tell such sufferings but keeps these within her. But once she shares her inner suffering to her old friend Gowamma in order to redeem where she says: "You don't know what problems I have even days, Ammayya. I don't like to tell, that's why nobody is aware smile, smile and smile that is my policy. But inside my heart is a big cloud" (192). This sort of remark indicates how Ammayya has bitter feeling of her past. In the old age, Ammayya finds herself suffered woman but such sorrowful event she tolerates it and struggles very hard for existence.

Nirmala frustrated by her husband Sripathi, because every where she is treated as animal. Even if leading such burdensome life, Nirmala behaves very calmly and stays by working hard. In every moment, Nirmala is treated bitterly from Sripathi, which brings alienation and frustration in Nirmala's life. Ammayya and Sripathi both are the responsibility of their case. Nirmala tolerated everything what Sripathi behaves but some time they are near to fight. Nirmala is blamed for being angry all the time and is mostly seems having argument

and debate with her husband. Nirmala is frustrated and alienates from her husband's behavior when he says: " you think you are good at all. You should think what type of person you are and where are you come from? Did you ask me for any things?"(39).

Nirmala takes everything lightly and becomes a passive woman. After listening to such matter from Sripathi, Nirmala feels very bitter value of life. She is amazed, alienated and frustrated to see such behavior doing towards Nirmala. So that she also seeks a way for freedom. She doesn't want to live in such difficult position. Putti and Nirmala both are badly treated by Sripathi and Ammayya. They are alienated and frustrated after getting such behavior from them.

In this regard the protagonist Sripathi Rao and other characters work hard in order to assert their existence and create their identity in the society. But he is also unable to express his bitter feelings rather remains mute.

## **Chapter**

### **IV: Conclusion**

*The Hero's Walk* by Anita Rao Badami exposes issue of struggle and freedom. All characters of this novel are directly and indirectly frustrated and alienated from their lives because of their family atmosphere. They search a way for freedom despite their alienation and frustration environment. He gets torture and feels humiliated in front of society but he ignores this type of things and works very hard for survival and preserves his identity in the society.

Ammayya's regular complain irritates Sripathi but he takes them lightly and goes ahead for struggle. After getting the death news of his daughter Maya in Canada, Sripathi finds himself an unfortunate fellow. His alienation and frustration is because of his old mother's talkative manner. He digests all these sufferings, humiliations and angers works hard as a copywriter in order to survive and exist in the society. He struggles very hard till the last breath of his life as a copywriter in order to handle his family and himself. Sripathi from his small job as a copywriter brings peace and prosperity in his family as well as his life. He tolerates pain, suffering humiliation and anger and makes his life fruitful. He becomes mute even if there is such painful condition because he wants to establish his identity and survival in the society. Despite these ups and downs, he tries to assert his meaning of existence which is signaled by muteness.

On the other hand, female characters like Nirmala and Putti suffer a lot in their lives and they also struggle for freedom in order to create their identity what they want. Nirmala wants to live a life of freedom because she doesn't want to live such a boredom life. She struggles very hard to establish her own identity in the society. But her mother in law and husband are the burden of her life. She doesn't however; want her life in the painful condition so she

wants to get rid of such condition. But in the novel her wishes are destroyed by her husband and mother-in-law. When Nirmala gets her daughter's death in Canada, she becomes very pathetic and only contemplates on her daughter but in such painful condition her husband doesn't listen to what she says. After Maya marries a Canadian man Alan Baker Nirmala wants to invite Maya to her house but her husband doesn't allow doing so. Due to such events, Nirmala is very much frustrated and alienated to see her life. Moreover, she struggles very hard to exist in the society. She also ignores such painful life and struggles to exist. Putti, on the other hand, suffer a lot from her mother who lives an unmarried life at the age of forty two. Putti also wants freedom from life and creates her own identity what she demands but her demands and aims are destroyed from her mother's behavior. Ammyya chooses the bridegroom for Putti but not as per Putti's choice. In every line of novel, Putti threatens and rebukes Ammayya for destroying her life. Ammayya doesn't want Putti's marriage because at the concluding part of the novel she says "her daughter Putti is with me till an end of her life" (258). Because of such expression, Putti neither marries nor lives with Ammayya that is to say, Ammayya is dead at the end. Putti suffers and meets pathetic condition from her own mother Ammayya but she also ignores it and struggles very hard to create her identity and guarantee her existence in the society. Even though she gets torture from Ammayya, she doesn't become passive; rather she struggles with hope in order to exist in the society.

Maya the daughter of Sripathi chooses her own way to marry with a Canadian man without her parents' permission. Maya ignores her parents' selection and chooses her own wish in order to lead her life. She also wants freedom but not burden.

In a nutshell, the study finds that all characters of this novel struggle for existence and meaning of life and they want to establish their own identity. Even in such humiliation, anger and painful life, Sripathi becomes mute and unable to express his feelings rather goes ahead for struggle in order to sustain in the society. In this way most of the characters of this novel

are frustrated and alienated to see such burdensome life so that they seek a way for freedom and try to preserve their identity in the society through struggle.

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