



Tamarind Woman

Anita Rau Badami

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Kamini has recently moved from India to Canada. Plunged into the past by acrimonious telephone calls and odd postcards from her mother, she tries to make sense of the eccentric family she has left behind. Why was her Mother as bitter as a tamarind with her lot in life? Why did she seem to love Roopa best, rubbing almond oil on her skin at bath-time and never scolding her for getting her sums wrong? And where did she disappear to while Dadda was away on business, leaving her daughters in the care of a superstitious old ayah? A wise and affectionate portrait of two generations of women in an Indian family, Tamarind Woman is a beautifully evocative novel that explores the mutability of memory and unravels the deep ties of love and resentment that bind mothers and daughters everywhere.

Tamarind Woman is the author's debut novel.

Tamarind Woman Details

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Author : Anita Rau Badami

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From Reader Review Tamarind Woman for online ebook

Janaia says

I loved this book and read it twice! Very good story telling. Opened my eyes to some of the culture of India. After I read it the first time I went straight to an Indian restaurant to immerse myself into the spices of India and searched for more books like it. The book is divided into two parts. The daughter's story and then the Mother's. Loved it, loved it, loved it!

Lakshmi Mohan says

I am obsessed with Indian authors. The book was interesting, maybe not an unputdownable one(I couldn't find any other word that conveys the feeling), but worth giving a shot. It is a cliched plot but that shouldn't stop you from picking it up and reading till the end. There wasn't an element of surprise or novelty, only familiarity. That made it easier to read. Like comfort food, or clothing.
Indian women always have an air of mystery around them. I do not know if the perception of Westerners is different, but I would say most Indian women carry some secrets with them to their grave #randomthoughts.

Diane says

i liked it a lot, but i am very partial to indian authors, so i wouldn't recommend it to many people.

Amy says

I really enjoyed the narrative thread of this novel. I liked reading from the daughter's perspective (Kamini) and then from the mother's (Saroya). It reminded that though you think you know someone and how they feel, in reality, we only know pieces of that person and their story. You have to listen with your heart and to want to know the story in order to really hear it. I learned this from this book--and I was engaged in the story and the characters throughout. None of them were wholly one thing or another: they were woven out of a variety of threads by Badami--and that made for a satisfying and, to me, fulfilling story and message. I had the feeling at the end of the novel that I really did not want it to end yet. The story was relatable, and it made me think--as did the characters. I would definitely recommend it, especially for those who enjoy novels set in India.

Darla says

Just couldn't get through it... Badami didn't do a good job at explaining terms specific to Hindi, and left the reader to figure out things that were not always easily discernible via context.

Divya says

I liked what Tamarind Woman had to say. Hers wasn't an exceptional life as most lives tend to be. The first half is narrated by her daughter and the second half by the Tamarind Woman herself. There aren't any facts in this world. Just emotions built on perceptions. The book ends with the tamarind woman, now old, taking a tour on Indian trains, alone. The daughters abroad are worried that their mother may hurt herself or die. They are convinced that she has gone senile. But the Tamarind Woman is now just living for herself. She knows that her children think she is turning crazy. But she wants to explore cities. She is living how she wants to, without explanations or expectations.

Rose Moore says

"Tamarind Woman" is the story of two generations of Indian women, a mother and daughter, as they work through their memories and their family history.

Filled with wonderful descriptions of growing up in India, Badami paints a careful picture of the differences in how both women saw the man of the house throughout the years. I loved how the twists and turns within the narrative aren't solely in the facts of the story, but also in how each character perceives the others.

Illuminating and well-written, "Tamarind Woman" is a lovely read that will leave you wanting to call your mother, but that may not stay with you for long after you've hung up the phone.

Kat says

I found this book boring beyond belief and really struggled to finish it. Was there even a story or was it all just incoherent ramblings? I really enjoyed the author's other three books very much but this one was horrible and hard to believe it was by the same author. Disagreeable unlikeable characters and nonsense useless dialogue and a complete waste of time.

Sarah says

I picked up this book because I wanted a rich way of exploring parent-child relationships in a South Asian context. It's well-written, I guess, and not without some worthwhile reflections. But you have to dig very, very deep, past a lot of ugliness in traditional Indian culture, to find them. And I couldn't be arsed to do so.

So to me, the book is needlessly depressing and contains no positive messages. It's more along the lines of: "Hey, life may suck and be loveless and suffocating for women, but at least you can write beautifully about the sadness that comes with it, intermingled with the smell of jasmines." Nope. Not my thing.

A book in the same genre that fared much better for me was A Cycle of the Moon. It's more about familial relationships than parent-child ones, and it conveys very worthwhile messages in an understated way without

taking itself too seriously. What I loved about that book (especially now that I'm comparing it to Tamarind Mem) is that it is so unapologetic and doesn't stumble over itself trying to explain the norms to a non-Indian. It's a refreshing change from the popular "Innocent Indian women as helpless victims" narrative.

Bonnie says

I had high hopes for this book as I am very fond of Indian literature. It was very well written. Although, I didn't like a few things. I didn't like that there were no chapters. There were only 2 sections and I was thrilled when I got to the second part! The book dragged on for me and it took me quite awhile to finish it. It wasn't one that pulled me in.

Carolyn Gerk says

I found this book in a used book store and grabbed it having previously read and enjoyed Anita Rau Badmi's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* Sadly this story didn't live up to my expectations. Following an Indian mother and daughter and telling each woman's story, *Tamarind Mem* fell really short. I felt little to no connection with any of the characters and, truthfully, found them all to grow a bit wearing after time. There wasn't one character with whom I felt any connection nor did I feel any desire to pick up the novel each time, but I gave myself a little pep talk and plodded through. The novel didn't really redeem itself, and I imagine that it won't take me long to have forgotten everything I've just read. Unfortunately lacklustre, *Tamarind Mem* is a swing and a miss from an author I know to be talented. The only reason this forgettable novel gets two stars instead of one, is that every now and then, a hint of the author's poetic skill with words would poke through with a glittering phrase or delicate description. These would all too suddenly be swept away by a clunky tale full of bland or distasteful players and a disjointed series of events.

Patty says

I have to admit that one of the reasons I started reading this book was because it has the word tamarind on its title. I love tamarind, tamarind juice, tamarind candy or that tamarind syrup that they put on top of shaved ice. But besides that, I also wanted to read this book because it talks about India, and I love books about India. Also because it talks about mothers and daughters and that's a topic I care about.

I ended up with mixed feelings about this book. While I did learn things about India by reading it and also got to explore a mother-daughter relationship, at the end this wasn't enough to make the book captivating. I got so bored while reading the first part and felt like the story was going nowhere. The second part, the one that was narrated by the mother, I did like that part but there was too much boredom before it to make it worthwhile.

Jaclyn says

My second (third?) attempt at reading this book, and I still can't get into the writing / story. Too bad, I

remember liking Hero's Walk, but I'm finding this one boring.

I'm moving on. DNF at page 30.

Rosemary says

I see the South Asian community in Canada and know so little about the people. This is a poetically-written book about Indian women--mother and daughter and women of the household. An insight into an arranged marriage and the limitations on women in other parts of the world.

The daughter decides to go to a university as far away from Madras as possible."Calgary!" exclaims the mother. "Canada, Canada and where is that place? In the North Pole, that's where," and Canadians will read this and laugh. Better for all Canadian women to know from whence other women came.

Mary Curran says

Wow, it took a long time to read this short book which I got signed at the author's reading in 1997. I really enjoyed it, which was why I kept it on the list of Currently reading when it got reshelved and fell out of circulation for a couple of years.

Doriana Bisegna says

I know that Anita Rau Badami is a great writer! This book however didn't grab me and didn't hold my attention! Even though the premise of the story was wonderful (an Indian daughter's story and then her Mother's story) the characters weren't rich enough for my liking. They started to grate on my nerves and that is not a good thing! I must admit I thought of abandoning this book halfway through but trudged on like the faithful bibliophile that I am. I still look forward to reading The Hero's Walk and Tell It To The Trees. Now those I have heard are very good!

Trish Yap says

This went straight to my "favorites" shelf! What I liked about this story is how it explored parent-child relationship throughout generations. Reading from Saroja's perspective allowed me to see a mother as an individual being who has her own dreams, feelings and beliefs apart from those for her children. It's an eye opener for the numerous sacrifices that women make for her family. I also loved reading this book because I was able to take a glimpse of the life and culture of Indian women and their struggles as women in such a patriarchal society. It made me think of how women all over the world experience the same things, although in varying degrees, no matter where they're from.

Over all, I would definitely read this again and recommend it to many of my friends. We could all learn something from this book.

Saleh MoonWalker says

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Sarah says

I really enjoyed the story about family life on the Indian railway, but I had a few issues with the story. It took me a while to realize that the novel was chronological with breaks for the narrator's present interactions with other characters. I also missed the chapters, but that was for my own personal convenience to know when to take a break. Badami offers two sections - one narrated from Kamani's perspective and another from Saroja. I wish she also offered one from Roopa. I would have liked to learn what her experiences were when observing their mother. Finally, other readers pointed out the struggle with the Indian terms. As an Indian-American, I didn't have great difficulty with the Hindi words and phrases, but there were some other words that were completely new, and I was at a loss at what the writer was trying to relate. A glossary would be helpful for all non-English terms.

Nalini says

A 3.5 really. The first half of the book was a tedious read because it was from a child's perspective and as such was daunting. However, it picked up its pace when the Memsahib started her tale.

I related better to her experiences, her emotions because I have always wondered about arranged marriages and the underlying effects, which for me in this book, some light was shed.

Not a bad read.
