

Striking Balance between Tradition and Passion in Amulya Malladi's *The Mango Season*.

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Abstract

Amulya Malladi is a diasporic Indian writer in English and she is very famous for her seven novels namely *A Breath of Fresh Air* (2002), *The Mango Season* (2003), *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004), *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* (2005), *The Sound of Language* (2007), *A House for Happy Mothers* (2016) and *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017). She received her bachelor degree in Electronics Engineering from Osmania University, Hyderabad India and master degree in Journalism from the University of Memphis, Tennessee, United States. Her novels have been translated into many languages like Dutch, German, Spanish, Danish, Romanian, Serbian and Tamil.

Literature is an artistic creation especially in a written form with high and lasting merits. Although there are various literatures globally, the Indian writing in English has its unique taste among the readers. It is an amalgam of multilingual, multicultural and socio-historical themes. They are the exquisite creations of the Indian writers in English language. It also includes the works of the Indian diasporic writers. Malladi's novels mainly focus on misunderstanding between two generations, changing status of women, family tension, conflict between modernity and traditional values, elusive nature of mind, etc. *The Mango season* is a dramatic portrayal of a modern young woman Priya, who must ultimately decide between the dogmatic tradition and heartfelt emotions. It is a fabulous novel written by Malladi in Indian traditional family setting. The novelist has clearly portrayed the conditions of women in Indian families, even though they are well educated and empowered. This paper deals with the culture and patriarchal heredity of

India and how it affects the women characters even after moving to an alien land. Due to race, religion and cultural changes the heroine Priya Rao struggles to decide between the love of her family and the love of her life.

Keywords: Diaspora, tradition, passion, culture, family, society, religion, caste, race, empowerment, love, resilience.

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“A nation’s culture resides in the heart and in the soul of its people.”

Mahatma Gandhi

The word culture is derived from the Latin word colere which means to nurture, to cultivate and to tend to the earth and grow. According to Oxford dictionary, culture is the arts and other manifestation of human intellectual achievements collectively. It is also the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular group of people or society. The western culture has its origin in the classical period of the Greco-Roman era and by the rise of Christianity in the 14th century, while the eastern culture is widely influenced by various religions. In the name of culture, the way of living of a group of human beings is transmitted from one generation to another. The culture of India is a mixture of many different cultures across the world. India is the birth place of many religions and it is very rich in its ancient age old social, traditional and cultural heritage.

According to Jawaharlal Nehru, the former Prime Minister of India, “You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women” (Amar Nath 13). Though India has been accomplishing in many fields, its culture of male chauvinism, inequality, injustice and gender bias are still high in rural and in many parts of the urban areas. Though women are empowered, graduated and guaranteed equality under the constitution of law, the patriarchal tradition still prevails. According to Malladi, the Indian women carry heavy burdens of their family and society. They enslave themselves for their husband, children, family and society. Indian women take pride in their sufferings and live with subjugations entrusted on them for centuries by the patriarchal society.

Today Indian women started to write on the age old tradition, culture and patriarchal social chains of their motherland. The works of Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantara Sahgal, Sashi Despande, Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, Rama Mehta, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukherjee, Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapur, Jumpa Lahiri and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English. It also includes the works of the Indian diasporic writers like Suniti Namjoshi, Sujata Bhatt, Anita Rau Badami, Meena Alexander etc. Literature is an artistic creation especially in a written form with high and lasting merits. Although there are various literatures globally, the Indian writing in English has its unique taste among the readers. It is an amalgam of multilingual, multicultural and socio-historical themes. They are the exquisite creations by the Indian writers in English language.

The Mango Season is delightful trip into the heart and soul of a well-educated traditional young Indian woman Priya Rao. It is a piece of art about women in Indian traditional family setting. Malladi wonderfully sets Priya between two opposite worlds. She is a modern woman with full of knowledge but could not break her grandfather’s heart with the betrayal of marrying a foreigner. This paper deals with the culture and patriarchal heredity of India and how it is entirely different from other nations. The Indian heroine Priya Rao leaves her motherland at the age of twenty to do her studies in U.S. She is allowed to go to America to do her Master degree in Computer Science at Texas with all the precepts of usual Indian parents:

Do not eat beef (The sacred cow is your mother!)

Do not get too friendly with foreign people; you cannot trust them.

Remember what the English did to us.

Cook at home; there is no reason to eat out and waste money. Save money.

Save money.

Save money.

DO NOT FIND YOURSELF SOME FOREIGN MAN/WOMAN TO MARRY. (3, 4)

The last rule is highly significant and much insisted by her family. She pursues a reputable job in Silicon Valley and she always avoids visiting India but this time the situation forces her to visit her native land. She wants to share a deep secret with her highly orthodox Brahmin family which has imposed the sacred customs and traditions upon her:

I didn't want to go. I had to go.

I didn't want to go. I had to go.

The twin realities were tearing me apart.

I didn't want to go because as soon as I got there, my family would descend on me like vultures on a fresh carcass, demanding explanations, reasons, and trying to force me into marital harmony with some "nice Indian boy."

I had to go because I had to tell them that I was marrying a "nice American man."(3)

After seven long years she returns to meet her family with the news that she is engaged to Nick Collins, a loving and kind American. Priya is enormously overwhelmed while returning to her own country. She obviously knows that it will surely break the hearts of her family. During her childhood the summer season was all about mangoes, she and her brother Nate enjoyed the

mangoes, the sweet juice that dripped all over her hand, neck and mouth. But now she sweats as if she never faced the Indian summer. When she describes India:

The road was bumpy and the auto rickshaw moved in mysterious ways. I realized then that I couldn't drive in India. I would be dead in about five minutes flat. There was no rule; there never had been. You could make a U- turn anywhere, anytime you felt like it. Crossing a red light was not a crime. If a policeman caught you without your driver's license and registration papers, twenty to fifty rupees would solve your problem. Everything that had seemed natural just seven years ago seemed unnatural and chaotic compared to what I had been living in and within the United States. (13, 14)

In India her relatives remain the same. Her parents insist her marriage with a nice Indian boy. Priya could not possibly tell her family about her passion for Nick. She loses her balance when she is forced to choose between tradition and romance. It is clear through her words, "It was as if there were two people inside me: Indian Priya and American Priya, Ma's Priya and Nick's Priya. I wonder who the real Priya was" (69). She is in love with an American, but the ancient family tradition forces her to marry a groom from their own caste. Priya's torment becomes extreme when she could not confess her family about her love. As she could not deny her mother she agrees to meet the young Indian man who desires to marry her.

When the heat increases, at a point Priya reveals the truth to her family. After a great struggle she manages to convince them, but she forgets to tell the colour of Nick, "I froze. Damn it! Had I forgotten to mention Nick was black" (224). When she returns to U.S, she sends the wedding invitation, a letter and a picture of Nick to her Indian family. At last Priya holds the hand of the man whom she loves desperately. She crosses all the barriers and overcomes all her difficulties to hit her passion. Though the situation is not supportive, she manages to fight back with valour she possesses great courage to become a victor. She acts as a perfect role model and great example for the women of present age. The trust on herself and on her love is so powerful to make things possible. There is no vacillation and there is no second thought, her stubborn will for her love drives her to attain her destiny. Though she is caught between two cultures, Priya strikes balance and overcomes the cultural hindrances by being resilient.

Although time changes, yet full freedom is not attained by the Indian women. They desire their due and rightful place in the family and society. They want their family to trust, love and respect their uniqueness and individuality. If people understand their feelings and appreciate their qualities of selfhood by giving them proper freedom and opportunities surely they will dazzle the whole world. Through the character Priya, Malladi makes her readers understand that anything is possible with strong determination and fortitude.

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