

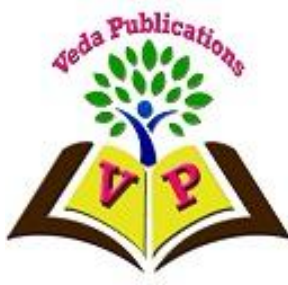


THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE AND CULTURE AS PORTRAYED IN THE NOVELS OF AMULYA MALLDI

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ABSTRACT



This paper tries to examine Amulya Malladi and her themes and writing techniques. Amulya Malladi is the author of five novels. They are *A Breath of Fresh Air*, *The Mango Season*, *Serving Crazy with Curry*, *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* and *The Sound of Language*. Her five novels have a consistency and largesse of vision that drove them. She impressed the readers and the critics as a wonderful storyteller.

Keywords: *Writing style of Amulya- Pictureseque- Survival- Betrayal.*



Indian English Fiction constitutes an important part of the world literature today and Indian Women Novelists have established themselves on par with their male counterparts on the international arena. They have given a new dimension to the Indian Literature. Some of the major Indian women novelists include, Ruth Pravar Jhabwala, Kamala Markandaya, Santa Rama Rau, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy and such others. This list is by no means exhaustive. A new name that stands on the contemporary scene of Indian English Fiction is Amulya Malladi.

Amulya Malladi's writing style is unadorned and simple. In simple language, Malladi tells simple stories of love, betrayal, jealousy, guilt and forgiveness. In some of her novels she gives the readers a glimpse into a foreign culture, which is always a treat, and her novels combine that with characters with whom we can empathize, as they deal with universal problems and emotions. Her novels are rich in insight into Indian culture and psychology, while they present truths which are universal. With her fluent style she has the ability for capturing the voices of her characters, and to focus on a topic and a region which she chooses to portray in her novels. She uses simple, direct prose to paint fascinating pictures of people and places and allows them to come to life without being either subservient to them or patronising.

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Amulya Malladi is the author of five novels. She chose to use the Bhopal gas leak of 1984, which killed 3,800 people and permanently disabled thousands more, as the key event within *A Breath of*

Fresh Air, her first novel. It is the story of Anjali who waits for her army officer husband to pick her up on the night of December 3, 1984, at the train station in Bhopal, India. In an instant, her world changes forever. Her anger at his being late turns to horror when a catastrophic gas leak poisons the city air. The language of Malladi captures the physical and emotional anguish of the victim Anjali as she lies in the hospital.

I could not concentrate clearly on anything, but I heard the faint voice of a newscaster saying something about a Union Carbide factory and some gas that had leaked into the city of Bhopal. (*A Breath of Fresh Air*)

Anjali miraculously survives. But her marriage does not. Anjali is a school teacher and remarried to Sandeep, a professor and loving person. If their son's health is not declined they would be happy. But Anjali's first husband comes back in her life unexpectedly. So she has gone back to her back days and it was troubling which impacts everyone around her. Then she is uncertain of her future. Anjali thought that time and conviction had healed her decision to divorce, and about her place in a society. In this situation she struggles a lot as a wife, mother, working woman and ex-wife. This is the situation of modern Indian women.

Malladi's second novel *The Mango Season* is set in India at the height of the mango season in which a young woman must decide to follow her heart or tradition. Priya Rao left India when she was twenty to study in the U.S., and she's never been back. Seven years later, she has to return and gives her family the news that she's engaged to Nick Collins, a kind, loving American man. Returning to India is an overwhelming experience for Priya. When she was growing up, summer was all about mangoes—ripe, sweet mangoes, redolent with juices that dripped down your mouth, hands, and neck.

I remembered stealing mangoes from the neighbor's tree and biting into them with the relish of a theft well done. I remembered sneaking into the kitchen at night to eat the mangoes. Ma was saving for something or other. I remembered sitting with Nate and eating raw mangoes with salt



and chili powder, our lips burning and our tongues smacking because of the tartness. Now, I couldn't imagine putting that piece of white and green fruit inside my mouth. It was not about taste, it was about hygiene, and suddenly everything everybody had warned me about India came true. (*The Mango Season*)

Priya suffers a lot with the sweat as if she has never seen such summere before in her life. Priya's parents forced her to get marriage with a nice Indian boy. But she cannot tell her family that she is in love with an American boy. She is already engaged with that boy secretly and it is revealed later. Now she has to choose either to the love her family or Nick, the love of her life. *The Mango Season* is a delightful trip into the heart and soul of both contemporary India and a woman on the edge of a profound life change.

Amulya Malladi's third novel is *Serving Crazy with Curry*, a dark comedy in which suicide is the center of the story. The reader is allowed inside the thoughts of Devi Veturi as she ponders killing herself, plans it, attempts it, and then tries to recover from it while living with her crazy family in the middle of California's famous Silicon Valley.

Suicide was stressful business.

First, there was the question of how, which she'd pretty much decided on, but there were lingering doubts. Second, there was the question of when. Last night she thought she'd do it at night, in the quiet, but doubts kept her awake, alive. Now it was morning and even though there had been several such mornings in the past months that followed empty, contemplative nights, this morning was different. This morning nothing had changed with the break of dawn as it usually did. This morning her heart was as heavy as it was last night when she started to think seriously, once again, about death. And that's why she could feel that this was the day it would happen, the day she would make it happen. (*Serving Crazy with Curry*)

Yet Devi's plans to "end it all" fall short when she is saved by the last person she wants to

see: her mother. Forced to move in with her parents until she recovers, Devi refuses to speak instead, she cooks nonstop. Devi's parents, her sister, and her brother-in-law can't get enough-and they suddenly find their lives taking turns as surprising as the impromptu creations Devi whips up in the kitchen each night. Then a stranger appears out of the blue. Devi, it appears, had a secret-one that touches many a nerve in her tightly wound family. Though exposing some shattering truths, the secret will also gather them back together in ways they never dreamed possible. This story mixes humor, warmth, and leap-off-the-page characters into a rich stew of a novel that reveals a woman's struggle for acceptance from her family and herself. In this novel Malladi creates a family of characters that one can imagine on the big screen: the jealous younger sister, the doting father, the nagging mother, the grandmother, and the good son-in-law.

Amulya Malladi's captivating fourth novel, *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*, is the story of one woman's life in modern India, reflecting changes in the status of that nation's women over the last 40-odd years. It is an intelligent and absorbing novel. An epic tale, *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* tells the story of the residents of an ashram called Tella Meda, "The House with the White Roof." Those who live there are poor and destitute and have no place to go. One of the main characters is Kokila, whose name means "cuckoo bird." Kokila is an orphan who is placed at Tella Meda upon her marriage at age 11.

Tella Meda was an ashram, a religious dwelling where a guru led her folk to the right path through prayer and the reading of scripture. But it was not a conventional ashram either. The guru, Charvi, refused to be called guru or Amma as the norm was for those as enlightened as she. Charvi went by just Charvi and would not call her home an ashram but just a home, hers, which she willingly and openly shared with those who were in need. (*Song of the Cuckoo Bird*)

Her husband allows her to live with him but she rejects his proposal and tells that she will never leave Tella Meda. So she cannot change the course of her life forever. Not only that, Kokila has fallen in love



with her caretaker's son, Vidura. She should not come back again. This is a remarkable tale of a family of misfits, while at the same time the book itself chronicles major events in India and changes that affect those who live at Tella Meda.

Amulya's fifth novel, *The Sound of Language*, is a great story about a young Afghani woman who is adjusted to a new life in Denmark. This story is finely written and also it is eloquent, sensitive but free of false sentiment. This is the story of an Afghan refugee girl, Raihana, who comes to Denmark, just a few months before 9/11. She settles with her relatives in the strange, severe cold, damp country of Denmark to escape the disorder heartbreak of war-torn Kabul. She dares to attempt to start a new life, feeling difficult to adjust in a new society. Her husband has been taken into custody as a prisoner by the Taliban. Immediately Raihana finds herself in a language school, struggling to learn Danish, which she thinks sounds like the buzzing of bees.

Raihana used the same buzzing sound to hear when she visited her uncle, Chacha Bashir in Baharak. Her uncle is one of the wealthiest men in the town with his silk and bee farm. But later the Taliban killed him and no body knows what happened to his family. That was how the Danish language sounded to Raihana, like the buzzing of Chacha Bashir's bees.

Raihana has taken a training to improve her speaking skill from a widower, Gunnar, who is continuously withdrawing from the world around him. He even neglected the bee colonies. He worked hard to cultivate with his late wife. Through out the course of the bee season, Raihana and Gunnar forge relationship and despite the disapproval of their respective friends and relatives.

Amulya says that this novel is not a love story. It is a story about a unique friendship between two people who cannot communicate clearly with each other because they don't speak the same language. This is a story about immigrant life in Denmark. And most importantly, this is a story of courage and of stepping beyond the confines laid down by society and culture and finding something precious and important – happiness.

Amulya Malladi's five novels have a consistency and largesse of vision that drove them.

Malladi impressed the readers and the critics as a wonderful storyteller. In all her novels she always has something to say. Her background and her interests and the things she seems to care very deeply about fall in tune with the contemporary lives. She has a feel for the contemporary cosmopolitan pulse and together with a talent that is not slight, she weaves all these disparate things into stories that almost anyone will care about.

Amulya Malladi's writing style is unadorned and simple. In simple language, Malladi tells simple stories of love, betrayal, jealousy, guilt and forgiveness. In some of her novels she gives the readers a glimpse into a foreign culture, which is always a treat, and her novels combine that with characters with whom we can empathize, as they deal with universal problems and emotions. Her novels are rich in insight into Indian culture and psychology, while they present truths which are universal. With her fluent style she has the ability for capturing the voices of her characters, and to focus on a topic and a region which she chooses to portray in her novels.

Amulya Malladi uses simple, direct prose to paint fascinating pictures of people and places and allows them to come to life without being either subservient to them or patronising. In her novels India is portrayed like a living picture before her readers. She creates tales of the irrefutable power of love, and also provides insights into the predicament of non-resident Indians who are torn between the two cultures of their native and adopted countries. It is said that while some books are noted for either a great story line or a great set of characters, Amulya Malladi's book can boast both.

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