

**VEDA'S****JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)***An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal*

Impact Factor (SJIF) 6.12

<http://www.joell.in>**Vol.9****Spl. Issue 1****2022****NATIONAL SEMINAR**

ISSN: 2349-9753

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF AMULYA MALLADI**B. Subhashini^{1*}, Dr. Ande Bala Sowri²**^{1*}(HoD, Dept. of English, Dr. Lakireddy Hanimireddy Govt. Degree College, Mylavaram, Krishna Dt., A.P)²(Lecturer in English, Hindu College, Mylavaram, Krishna Dist.)DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.v9spli1.07>**ABSTRACT**

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, Gita Hariharan, Namita Gokhale, Anita Nair, Manju Kapoor 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. Her novels deal with various issues and discourses devoted to current transnational globalization: borders, migration, 'illegal' immigration, repatriation, exile, refugees, assimilation, multiculturalism and hybridity.

Author(s) retain the copyright of this article

Copyright© 2022 VEDAPublications

Author(s) agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License



Malladi is the author of five novels. She was born and raised in India and graduated with a bachelor's degree in engineering from Osmania University, Hyderabad. She received a master's degree in Journalism from The University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA. After living in the United States for several years, Amulya now lives in Copenhagen, Denmark with her husband and two sons.

A Breath of Fresh Air, 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. Amulya Malladi 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. 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. Anjali miraculously survives. But her marriage does not. A smart, successful schoolteacher, Anjali is now remarried to Sandeep, a loving and stable professor. Their lives would be nearly perfect, if not for their young son's declining health. But when Anjali's first husband suddenly reappears in her life, she is thrown back to the troubling days of their marriage with a force that impacts everyone around her. Her first husband's return brings back all the uncertainty. Anjali thought time and conviction had healed—about her decision to divorce, and about her place in a

society. In a landscape as fascinating as it is unfamiliar, Anjali's struggles to reconcile the roles of wife and ex-wife, working woman and mother, illuminate both the fascinating duality of the modern Indian woman and the difficult choices all women must make. *A Breath Of Fresh Air* is not only the story of the gas explosion that occurred at the Union Carbide factory in India, but also it is the story of how this major tragedy changed the life of one naive girl, and helped open her eyes to the real world.

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. But after years away, she sweats as if she's never been through an Indian summer before. Her parents insist that it's time they arranged her marriage to a "nice Indian boy." Just as Priya begins to feel she can't possibly tell her family that she's engaged to an American, a secret is revealed that leaves her stunned and off-balance. Now she is forced to choose



between the love of her family and 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 illustrates many of the difficulties of modern day Indian culture. Seeing everything through Priya's eyes, the Westerner who has returned home, casts and even sharper and brighter light on everything she sees. Priya is appalled by the lack of acceptance, by the low value put on women, and it's difficult for her to realize that her family is just as guilty of this as those abstract Indian families she reads about in the news. At the same time, though, Priya loves her family. She knows her grandfather is racist and a bigot, and isn't afraid to challenge his views. She stands up for what she believes is right, but at the same time, she can't help but love her grandfather.

Amulya Malladi's third novel is *Serving Crazy with Curry*, is about a young woman who committed suicide. 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. 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. She will be allowed to live with her husband but she



rejects her spouse and states that she will never leave Tella Meda, thus changing the course of her life forever. Instead, Kokila has fallen in love with her caretaker's son, Vidura, who, along with many of the other inhabitants of Tella Meda, eventually will leave and never be heard from 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.

This haunting novel can be seen as a generational saga set in one truly special home in Southern India, a place where the desperate ones—those without family, without caste connections, without hope—become fatefully connected to each other, while holding tight to their dreams. Once there Kokila made a choice that altered the fabric of her life. Instead of becoming a respectable woman, a wife and mother, youthful passion and fear drove Kokila to choose to remain at Tella Meda under the care of the young and beautiful guru, Charvi. Through the years, Kokila often questions her choice, as she struggles to find her place in a country where un-tethered souls like hers merely slip through the cracks. Having spurned the conventional life that could have been hers for the taking, Kokila must make a home in Tella Meda alongside strong and deeply flawed women who are also misfits in society. Sometimes they are her friends, sometime enemies, but always family.

The Sound of Language, Amulya's fifth novel is a powerful story about a young Afghani woman adjusting to a new life in Denmark. Malladi's story of two wounded people beset by prejudice has a ring of authenticity. *The Sound of Language* is finely written, spare but eloquent, sensitive but free of false sentiment. It is the tale of an Afghan refugee Raihana, who comes to Denmark, just a few months before 9/11. Raihana settles with distant relatives in the strange, cold, damp country of Denmark to escape the disorder heartbreak of war-torn Kabul. She bravely attempts to start a new life, trying hard not to ponder the fate of the husband who was taken prisoner by the Taliban. Soon after arriving, Raihana finds herself in a language school, struggling to learn Danish, which she thinks sounds like the buzzing of bees. To improve her speaking skills, Raihana apprentices herself to Gunnar, a recent widower who is steadily withdrawing from the world around him, even neglecting the bee colonies he worked so hard to cultivate with his late wife. Over the course of the bee season, Raihana and Gunnar forge an unlikely relationship, 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. *The Sound of Language* is an eloquently written novel follows the transformation of two lost souls, an Afghan refugee and a Danish widower, who must come to terms with the hand that each has been dealt. Despite a language barrier, they manage to find a commonality that guides them into uncharted waters which ultimately threatens their very existence.

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. But when the violence Raihana thought she had left behind in Afghanistan rears its head, she and Gunnar are both forced to confront the ghosts of the past as they navigate the uncertain future. This powerful story about a young Afghani woman adjusting to a new life in Denmark can also be seen as the story of two wounded people beset by prejudice. It has a ring of authenticity

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 novels are built on the familiar notions about womanhood, fidelity, and family but she draws us into her novel with such characters who are refreshingly free of stereotype. She has successfully managed to avoid sentimentality and melodrama in her handling of emotional material and "that is no mean achievement for a first-time novelist" said Chitra Divakaruni about *A Breath of Fresh Air*. Susan Kurosawa said that Malladi writes with a restraint reminiscent of Anita Desai. She writes dispassionately and yet movingly of love and destiny in modern India; she takes the humdrum details of family heartbreak and raises them to the level of clear-eyed, well-crafted art. Mindi Dickstein comments that "Malladi writes with a steady, sure hand; accumulating details casually, she catches the reader unaware with the depth of her insight into love and loss."

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.

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 some novels like *The Mango Season* Malladi gives the readers an insight into the workings of families and their rituals, customs and hierarchies in contemporary India. 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. Some of her novels also portray expatriate nostalgia and are shaded heavily with immigrant identity anguish and generational conflict, by a leading

multicultural voice. But Malladi's portrayal of the Indian immigrant experience in America is refreshingly candid.

REFERENCES

- Malladi, Amulya. *A Breath of Fresh Air*. 2019.
- Malladi, Amulya. *The Mango Season*. Ballantine Books, 2007,
<https://doi.org/10.1604/9780345450319>.
- Malladi, Amulya. "Serving Crazy with Curry." *A Novel*, Ballantine Books, 2004,
<https://doi.org/10.1604/9780345466112>.
- Malladi, Amulya. *Song of the Cuckoo Bird*. 2006.
<https://doi.org/10.1604/9780345483157>.
- Malladi, Amulya. *The Sound of Language*. 2008,
<https://doi.org/10.1604/9780345483164>.