

**Familial Anticipation and Personal Inclination in Amulya
Malladi's *The Mango Season*: A Study of the Woman
Protagonist's Triumph in Overcoming Conflicts**

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Abstract

A writer of immense talent, Amulya Malladi holds an important place among Indian diasporic writers. Her novels explore many themes like cultural conflicts, social issues pertaining to matriarchy and patriarchy and human relationships. Her crowning work *The Mango Season* presents the intricacies and inner reality of Indian society. It focuses on the Indian family, the Indian summer, the Indian tradition, the typical Indian marriage system, and caste discrimination prevalent in the Indian society. Priya, the protagonist of the novel *The Mango Season*, is a highly educated woman from an orthodox Indian family. After working in America for seven years, she returns to India, which leads to an unexpected turning point in her life. She

desires to marry her American boyfriend, Nick, but her family expects her to marry an Indian of its choice. She is caught between her traditional family's expectations and her own desires in this novel. Using behaviorism theory, this research paper investigates Priya's predicament and her ultimate triumph. This study shows how her situation influences her behaviour. Even though Amulya Malladi portrays Priya as a well-educated and independent woman, she is still stuck between familial anticipation and personal inclination. She struggles to decide whom to satisfy – her family or herself. This paper aims to depict how Priya struggles and ultimately achieves her desire to lead a life of her own choice.

Keywords: Tradition, Expectations, Conflicts, Behaviorism, Desires, Modernity.

In Indian English literature, diasporic writings occupy a special place. Diasporic literature consists of works of writers living abroad for a long time. It focuses on displacement, alienation, nostalgia, rootlessness, and identity. It includes different genres – non - fiction, fiction, plays, and essays – through which it expresses the nostalgia for the native land and the challenges faced in foreign lands. They portray different characters in their works so as to reveal different diasporic experiences. They often focus on issues such as marginalization, racism, social problems, and oppression in alien lands. They also deal with themes such as gender, class, racial discrimination, and the quest for identity. Indian diasporic writings are not just writings; it is the expression of deep feelings associated with their displacements and cultural conflicts encountered by the diaspora.

Amulya Malladi has gained an important place as a novelist in Indian diasporic writings. She was born into an Indian army family; her father was an Indian army officer; and he served in various parts of India, and thus she spent her early life in different parts of the country. She is familiar with most of the traditions of India. After obtaining her bachelor's degree in electronics engineering in India, she studied her master's degree in journalism in the United States. She worked in California. And there, she met a Danish man, and they fell in love

and got married. At first, as an immigrant, she was baffled by the Danish language and culture. Now, she leads a peaceful and happy life with her husband and two children.

Amulya Malladi was greatly inspired by the works of Enid Blyton at the age of eleven. She admired Enid Blyton's writing style and her works, so she started to write a fifty – page book at a young age and it paved her path as a writer. Impacted by the Bhopal gas tragedy, she started her writing career. At the age of nine, Amulya Malladi and her family lived in Bhopal because her father was stationed there. At that time, the tragic gas leakage claimed many lives. This incident affected her deeply. As a result of this incident, she began to work on her first novel, *A Breath of Fresh Air*.

Her works consist of *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), *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017), and *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You* (2019). She even created a book series, *The Gabriel Praest Series*, which includes *A Death in Denmark* (2023) and *Backlash Blues* (2024).

Amulya Malladi's writing style is different from that of other writers, and her novels are unique contributions to diasporic writings. She has travelled extensively and lived in many countries throughout her life, which has given her a deeper understanding of life. Just as she has moved to many countries, her fictional characters also travel across nations in her works. Through her writings, she has portrayed people of all echelons. Her characters come from different backgrounds. They are realistic. While many writers highlight patriarchy, she focuses on matriarchy in most of her novels. She also handles the stream of consciousness technique effectively in her writings. Her writing is spontaneous; and with remarkable clarity she comprehends life's complexities and portrays them with verisimilitude. She expresses enormous respect for India, Indian culture, and traditions in her works.

Amulya Malladi's *The Mango Season* emphasizes the clash between tradition and modernity in an Indian family. She highlights many issues through this novel, and it shows the real behaviour of contemporary society. The story revolves around Priya's life. Priya hails from an orthodox Telugu Brahmin family, which adheres to Indian culture and tradition very deeply. This paper explores the struggles faced by Priya on account of her family's anticipation and her personal inclination regarding her marriage in *The Mango Season*. The study investigates the conflict arising out of family's expectations and Priya's intense personal desires in her life. Through this anticipation and inclination, a serious conflict is created between them. Priya is caught between her family and her American boyfriend, whom she wants to marry. Amulya Malladi carefully elaborates on the contemporary issues faced by diasporic women in this work.

Culture and tradition are two essential aspects of Indians' lives. Indians never ignore them. In India, most families prefer arranged marriages for their children. They involve themselves in the match - making process for their children's marriage. Through this, they want to ensure that their family status is safeguarded. However, Indian youth today have many desires in their lives, particularly regarding their education, job, and marriage. They seek to decide on their own. But their desires are controlled by their family, and youngsters often feel they are not allowed any choices in their lives. Their desires are unknown to their families, and they always hide their emotions. Like many an Indian youth, the novel's protagonist, Priya, also faces the same problems in her orthodox family.

At the age of twenty, Priya goes to America for higher studies, leaving India. After she completes her studies, she starts working in America. In the meantime, she never thinks of going back to India, and she makes several excuses to avoid going. However, after seven years, she wants to visit India because she wishes to convey to her family that she is betrothed to Nick, an American. She wants to ask her family for permission for their marriage. But she is

afraid of her family members, and she does not know how to handle them because her family is an orthodox Telugu Brahmin family; they follow Indian tradition and culture very strictly, particularly her maternal grandfather. Priya's return to India creates a huge impact on her family.

Priya's family is a joint family; her grandfather is the head of the family. He is the only one who makes all decisions in his family, and he does not give those rights to anyone else. He gives importance to traditional and conventional morals in his life, insisting that other members of the family should also follow them with respect. He would ignore anyone who disrespects his family traditions, including his own family members. Priya's family eagerly awaits her arrival because they wish to arrange a marriage for her. In her family, members should marry members from a Telugu Brahmin family only; otherwise, they would not be considered as members of the family. They like to give importance to Telugu Brahmins, so they are searching for a Telugu Brahmin groom for Priya. Her family's anticipation is the biggest cyclone that rages in Priya's life. Thus, the core of the problem lies in the familial expectation and personal inclination of Priya.

It is interesting to study Priya's state of mind through the application of behaviorism theory. Here, the theory of behaviorism is applied to point out how Priya's situation changes her behaviour. It helps analyse identity crisis, culture shock, alienation, cultural conflict, and the real diasporic experience. In the history of psychology, John B. Watson is an important American psychologist; and he is considered the father of behaviorism concept. Behaviorism is a theoretical perspective. It provides us with an understanding of the behaviours of humans and animals. It shows that behaviour is an offshoot of our encounters with the social environment. Clearly, it is a process from stimulus to response, and it shapes a person's behaviour. This paper explores how Priya changes her behaviour owing to the impact of the American environment.

The stimulus is Priya's family's expectations, and the response is her revelation of her secret engagement with Nick. When she lived in India, she accepted her family's decisions. Later, when she lived in America, she rejected her family's decisions made on her behalf. While living in India in her younger days she allowed others to make decisions on her behalf, but now in America, she decides not to allow others to make decisions on her behalf. It is clear that her American lifestyle acts as a stimulus, and she reacts to that stimulation. In America, she gets full freedom to live her life, while in India, she faces many restrictions to decide on a life of her choice. After returning to India, she faces conflicts in her inner self. The clash is between the Indian Priya and the American Priya. That is how the struggle between familial anticipation and personal inclination began.

Murali Krishna Reddy. P and Viswanath. V (2021), in the research article entitled "Cultural Displacement in Amulya Malladi's Novel: *The Mango Season*," examine Priya's desire for freedom. Naganandhini. R (2021), in the article titled "Conflict of Tradition and Modernity in Amulya Malladi's *The Mango Season*," investigates the trauma of characters caught between tradition and modernity. Akalya. S (2019), in the article "The Theme of Diasporic Cultural Clashes in Amulya Malladi's *The Mango Season*," analyses the cultural and generational conflicts faced by Priya. Many researchers have largely focused on the conflict between tradition and modernity, displacement, cultural clash, and diasporic experiences; however, they have not highlighted familial anticipation and personal inclination as key themes. This paper aims to fill that research gap by emphasizing both the themes as central concerns.

The researcher has applied a qualitative approach with thematic analysis to emphasize the themes of familial anticipation and personal inclination. The primary source was read multiple times to point out the passages regarding family expectation and individual desire. These passages make references to the culture, tradition, moral values, rituals, social pressures,

clashes, and personal freedom. The thematic analysis helps the reader understand the conflict between anticipation and inclination. It also helps to know about the family structure and gender roles in Indian society. This method used here provides an in – depth interpretation of this novel.

Amulya Malladi begins her novel by presenting the expectations of an Indian family, where arranged marriage is seen as a significant norm. Priya escapes an arranged marriage by leaving India to pursue her master's degree. Indian parents often fear for their children when sending them to a foreign country and provide a list of rules before they move. They want their children to follow Indian culture and ignore the alien culture in a foreign land. Parents repeatedly remind their children that they should marry only an Indian and expect them to marry within their community as a matter of pride and family's honour. Likewise, Priya's family insists that she should marry only an Indian before sending her to America for higher studies. Through this, Amulya Malladi reveals the anticipation within Indian society regarding marriage.

After seven years, Priya comes back to India. She is eager as well as anxious. She is eager because she would spend time with her family in her native land after a long time. She is anxious because she wants to reveal her engagement to Nick to her family. She does not know how to convince her family members to allow her to marry an American of her choice. She knows that her family's strict adherence to Indian culture and traditions. They would never allow her to marry an American, and they have often demanded that she marry only an Indian. But still, she would try to convey her engagement to her family and ask for their permission for her marriage. She is very affectionate toward both her family and Nick. She does not want to be separated from either of them. As an Indian, Priya loves her family, and at the same time she cannot sacrifice her deep love for Nick.

In India, Priya feels uncomfortable with her surroundings, mainly due to bad hygiene. She spent twenty years in India and aware of all the things, but now it all appears new to her. During the seven years of her stay in America, she had no connection with India, so now she is facing difficulties in her own country. She wants to wear a pair of shorts to get rid of the summer heat, but her mother harshly criticizes her. After that, she wears a salwar recommended by her mother. Priya's mother expects Priya to wear only a saree or salwar; she does not want to give her freedom even in matters of dressing. Priya's Indian friends who are working in America shared their bitter experiences with her. They said that everything in India looks different. At first, Priya could not understand what they were saying, but now she is in the same situation. She does not want to deal with the Indian summer or her mother's nagging, so she wants to go back to America.

When Priya arrives, at her maternal grandmother's house, her whole family gathers. Every year, Priya's family comes together to make mango pickle; it is a ritual performed in the summer season. In this pickle – making process, all her family members assemble, which is why Priya chose to visit India at this happy time. She thinks it is the perfect time to reveal her secret engagement to all her family members at the same time. Priya's family includes her father, mother, brother, maternal grandfather, and grandmother, as well as her uncle Jayant and his wife, Lata; her other uncle, Anand, and his wife, Neelima; and her aunt, Sowmya. They are all her family members, and she wants to tell them the truth, but she feels quite nervous to face them because it is a deviation from her family norm. She knows very well that if they come to know about her engagement, they will feel unhappy and disappointed. So, Priya is worried about them and struggles within herself.

In Priya's grandmother's house, after a long time, her family members have a lovely conversation with her. She happily gives gifts to her family members. She knows there is a ritual in her family, a homecoming ritual, which meant she must give gifts to her family. They

all expect this but never reveal it openly. This is an unspoken rule in her family; she has to follow it and should never ignore it. Buying gifts is also a very big task for Priya; she has to satisfy all her family members with her gifts. After receiving the gifts, they start to cut mangoes for pickle. Only a skilled person could make perfect mango pickle and cut mangoes properly. They follow a traditional methodology for cutting mangoes and making the pickle. Priya's grandmother, mother, and her aunt, Lata, are experts in it. They expect Priya to do the same, but she does not know how to do it. They are disappointed because of her lack of chopping skills, and nobody in her family ever consider that she is a skilled database programmer.

In America, Priya lived her life joyfully with Nick. Their first meeting happened at their friend's house. Priya fell in love with Nick at first sight, and he was also attracted to her. They never planned for this, but it just happened. Priya and Nick loved each other very passionately. She has never imagined falling in love with an American, she never thought about it. She believed that Indian society trains women to attract only Indian men, but here she is, attracted to Nick. They start dating, and after that, they moved their relationship into living together. They wanted to secure their relationship, so they got engaged. Then, they planned their marriage, and Priya decided to ask for permission from her family. In America, Priya had the courage to do everything, and she made her own decisions in her life, but in India, she feels afraid to tell her family about her heart's desire.

While Priya loved Nick and enjoyed a peaceful life in America, her family was disappointed by her younger uncle Anand's elopement. Anand had fallen in love with Neelima, his colleague, and they married secretly without asking permission from their families. After Anand's marriage, his family was deeply hurt. As a result, Priya's grandparents and parents began phoning her regularly. In each conversation, they warned her about love marriage. Through these conversations, Priya became aware of her family's suffering on account of Anand's love marriage. It was at that time; she decides to reveal her relationship with Nick to

her family before their marriage. Priya always loves and respects her family members and follows their wishes. However, now she wants to spend her life with Nick, and she is confused about whom to satisfy herself or her family.

During Priya's stay in her grandmother's house, she understood how her family behaved towards Neelima. The reason was not only Anand's secret marriage but also due to the fact that Neelima belonged to a Maharashtrian Brahmin family. Priya's family was Telugu Brahmin, but Neelima was not a Telugu. Because of this, the problem arose, they never considered her a member of their family. Even though she was pregnant, they ignored her. Priya's family did not accept Neelima's baby as their family heir. So, they planned for their rightful heir and then insisted that Lata give birth to a son. Jayant and Lata already had daughters, but Priya's grandfather wanted an heir through his son, Jayant. Because their marriage was an arranged marriage, Priya's grandfather expected a baby boy from his son. These incidents broke Priya's hope. She realized her grandfather would never accept Nick, and she did not know what to do.

Priya is losing hope with every moment she stays at her grandmother's house. The incident of Anand's secret marriage and Neelima's pregnancy left a huge impact on Priya's mind. Priya's grandfather would never accept anyone who disrespected his family traditions, including his own son. Her family had unassailable faith in their tradition and culture; they never wanted to ignore that for their children's wishes. Many situations gave Priya a lot of fear, so she still delayed revealing her engagement to her family. Priya's aunt, Sowmya, was treated poorly by her family members because she was unmarried. Priya knew how Indian society would treat women if they were not married at a particular age. She knew her aunt's situation and did not know how to handle her family. However, as an independent woman, now she struggles to convey her desire to her family.

Like Priya, her aunt Sowmya, unmarried, was thirty years old. Her family treated her like a maid; they never supported her through her difficult situation. Sowmya went through sixty – four matches, but none worked out. She was rejected by others because of her lack of beauty and education. In arranged marriages, physical appearance and education play an important role in every woman's life. Sowmya wanted to go for a job, but Priya's grandfather never allowed her. Her family insisted she wear only sarees, but she liked to wear salwar suits. No one allowed her to do what she wanted; they never considered her desires. Throughout her life, she cooked for her family and cleaned the house, even though they had servants. Sowmya had always been treated disrespectfully by her family members. She never tried to change anything; she just lived her life as her family expected.

In many Indian families, sons are always considered more important than daughters. Today, women have all abilities like those of men, but society still treats them differently. A son's primary responsibility is to inherit the family name, while a daughter's role is to live in another family through marriage. Women are never treated equally like men in society or in their families. In Priya's family, her grandparents believe that only their son, Jayant, will protect their family name and status, and they decide that only their son's son will be their family heir. They think their daughter, Sowmya, will destroy their family name if she does not get married. Like Priya's grandparents, her parents act the same way: they permit her brother to do what he likes, but they never allow Priya to do what she wants. Amulya Malladi portrays with remarkable verisimilitude how Indian families treat sons and daughters differently.

At the time of Sowmya's bride – seeing ceremony, Priya comes to know that her family has planned an arranged marriage for her as well. She does not know how to stop the ceremony or to tell the truth to her family. Meanwhile, she shares her feelings about Nick with her brother, Sowmya, and Anand. They understand her emotions, but they have no right to decide anything. Priya speaks to her parents about cancelling the bride – seeing ceremony, but they ignore her

opinion and convince her to attend the ceremony. Faced with no other option, Priya accepts the situation. She feels pain in her heart and does not want to appear at the ceremony, but she is unable to do anything. She does not want to betray Nick, but her situation forces her to do that. Priya is caught between respect for her family and loyalty to her relationship with Nick.

At Priya's grandmother's house, her father's friend's family arrives to see her. Honestly, Priya likes her groom, Adarsh, but she loves Nick more than anything else. She thinks Adarsh is a genuine person because he shares his past love relationship with her. Priya respects her family; that's why she attends the bride – seeing ceremony. But now, she feels guilty about disrespecting her relationship with Nick, and she decides to stop Adarsh's marriage dream. She does not know how to escape this circumstance. She cannot tolerate things done by her family. She wants to escape all this, but she does not know how to overcome it. Priya is scared to reveal her relationship with Nick to her family. She feels extremely stressed by both internal and external pressures.

The event of bride – seeing ceremony creates an impact on Priya. At that time, her brother is the only one to comfort and support her. He encourages her to tell the truth to her family, and she decides to reveal it. At first, she conveys her secret to Adarsh, but he becomes angry. Later, he understands Priya's true love, and after that, he accepts the truth. As a result of this incident, her family comes to know about her desire. She conveys her engagement with Nick to her family and tells them about her desire to marry him. Her family never expected such news from Priya and is shocked beyond measure and disappointed with her actions. They could not believe how she had done this to them because they trusted her very much. After revealing the truth, Priya's mind becomes calm, but she does not know what would happen next.

After knowing the truth, Priya's family is shocked and becomes angry towards her. In particular, she feels that her father and grandfather are hurt much more than any other member

of the family. Though she likes them a lot, after that incident, they never talk to her. She feels guilty about her family's situation, which is created by her, and she tries to convey her point of view, but her family ignores it. In her family, the younger generation accepts her decision, but they do not have any right to make decisions. Only the elder generation has the right to make decisions, but they do not accept her wish. The younger generation always agrees with the modern lifestyle, but the elder generation never agrees with it, and they always like to live in a traditional way. In Priya's family, everyone reacts badly to her relationship with Nick, and she struggles to convince them. At first, she is stuck between the love of her life and the love of her family. Finally, she decides to stand up for herself, even though she is affectionate towards her family, she chooses her lover.

In a foreign country, parents never make decisions for their children's lives. Instead, they allow their grown-up children to take decisions on their own. Similarly, Nick's mother accepts her son's decision about marriage without hesitation. She never feels disappointed by Priya's nationality and always respects her Indian culture. She focuses only on her son's happiness, and she loves Priya very much. During Priya's moments of confusion, she offers support and encouragement to her. Nick and his mother patiently await acceptance from Priya's family. This shows how they wholeheartedly agree with whatever Priya desires. Unlike Indian parents, parents of other countries never have expectations from their children. Indian parents want their children to obey them. This often leads to conflict, similarly, Priya struggles with her family's expectations.

Priya's father initially refuses to accept her decision; he never expected such a revelation from his daughter. He does not react to his son's love relationship, but he does not like his daughter's love relationship. Priya expresses her feelings to her father and tells him about how Nick loves her more than anything else. At first, her father could not accept her relationship with Nick, but later he accepts his daughter's love for Nick. Although he does not

completely agree with his daughter's decision, he partly agrees to it for the sake of her happiness. He then tries to convince Priya's mother, but she remains angry and disappointed with Priya's actions; she does not want to accept the reality. After a lot of discussion, she agrees to her daughter's relationship with Nick because she respects her husband. Priya feels relieved because of her parents' acceptance. She struggles a lot to attain happiness, and finally, she achieves what she desires.

Finally, at Priya's grandmother's house, all her family members accept her wish except her grandparents. Her grandfather never likes anybody disrespecting his family traditions. He does not like Priya's choice, as he has always wanted to give priority to a groom from his own community only. He never favours a modern lifestyle and prefers to follow only the traditional and conventional way of life. He insists that other members of his family also follow his way. Priya's parents try to convince her grandparents, but they do not accept their views. After many arguments, Priya's grandfather decides to separate his family into two. He does not want to maintain a relationship with them and disowns his daughter's family. Though the separation of Priya's family hurt her, finally, she attains her desire. At the end of the novel, except for her grandfather, her whole family accepts her decision to lead a life of her own choice.

The changes in Priya's behaviour stated in this paper are due to her situation and circumstances. Every incident act as a stimulus for her response. This study shows how Priya's behaviour gradually changes in every situation she encounters. Typically, Indian families expect their children to follow their cultural values. Priya's family also has many expectations of her, but she desires to live her life according to her own choices. This research paper gives equal importance to both familial anticipation and personal inclination. Priya struggles with the conflict arising between her family's expectations and her own desires to lead a life of freedom. Finally, she reveals her wishes to her family; at first, her parents do not accept it, but later, her parents accept her decisions because it will offer her happiness. Nowadays, there is a

change in the mindset of Indian parents as many parents approve of their children's decisions, and they prioritize their children's feelings above all else. Amulya Malladi's female characters are always portrayed as powerful and independent individuals living in the conservative society. They are shown to face many difficulties, but they handle them carefully and cautiously and overcome them in the end.

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