

An Interrogation Of Diasporic Double Consciousness Of Indian Women In Amulya Malladi's The Mango Season

S.J. Saravanan¹ & Dr. V. Gnanaprakasam²

¹*Ph.D Research Scholar, Part -Time (Ext), Department of English Annamalai University.*

²*Associate Professor, Department of English, Annamalai University.*

This paper examines the diasporic double consciousness of Indian women in Amulya Malladi's *The Mango Season*. Priya Rao, the protagonist of the novel, travels to America to continue her education and then returns to India after seven years. She struggles to adhere to her family's traditional customs and feels alienated in her native country. When she discloses her covert relationship with Nick Collins, a black American, she is viewed as an outsider. Priya, who is very sentimental, hopes her parents would embrace her love for Nick and longs for their love. She hovers between two realities. With her parents' approval, she marries Nick at the end of the novel. The characters, in the novel, long for the place they once called home. They feel as though they are living in a condition of double consciousness after vacillating between two cultures and yearning for their heritage. In the novel, Malladi has tried to emphasise Indian customs and culture. In diasporic contexts, women are portrayed as having a fractured psyche. They hover between Western and indigenous cultures. Finally, they learn how to keep their emotional ties to their homeland while assimilating into the host country.

Keywords: Diaspora, Women, Double-Consciousness, Marriage, Culture, Acculturation

Introduction

Amulya Malladi is one of the most influential diasporic Indian women novelists in English. Malladi has adapted the two cultures, two ways, and two challenges. She explores the cultural shift, displacement, and tensions faced by both native-born people and immigrants. Her writings now frequently address the experiences of being torn between two cultures, complete with cultural tensions and quandaries. As a postmodern author, she depicts the tensions between Western and Eastern culture, creates people from all social classes, and ultimately brings the two cultures together.

Malladi's depiction of ambivalence is different in *The Mango Season*, as the immigrant, Priya comes back to her homeland, India from America. Her perception on India has changed because of her acculturation to American culture. She is unable to recognise the Indian environment. She feels ambivalent because she is caught between her old country and her new one. When she looks back on her host country with nostalgia, her feelings of ambivalence are inverted. Her incapacity to adapt to the Indian environment during the mango season is clarified in the story.

The storyline of the novel centres on Hyderabad's traditional Telugu Brahmin family. After seven years in America, Priya travels to India. To obtain her master's degree in computer

science, she travelled to America. She was employed in Silicon Valley at the time. She sees India from a different angle because she is used to American culture. Even after seven years, she believes that her relatives' attitudes have not changed. Priya starts to despise both India and them. Through Priya, Malladi skilfully captures the psychological anguish of diasporans returning home. She is relieved to be free of the arranged marriage tradition in America. She returns to India, nevertheless. She feels as though America has been ripped from her. "I had sat there contemplating the new life that awaited me in the country of opportunity that is the United States. I was eager to depart, to board the aircraft, and to fly away from my parents' house and all its associated issues" (178). Unlike other diasporans, Priya exhibits ambivalence. She has already assimilated into American culture. However, she has conflicting feelings about her emotional ties to India. She is fully aware that her traditional family will not permit her to wed someone who is not a member of the Tamil Brahmin community. She believes that full acculturation will allow her to break free from her caste and customs. She is therefore conflicted about her Indian ties.

In the lives of diasporans, memory is essential. Her family taught her to adhere to local customs and culture prior to her arrival in America. They told her not to follow the American way of life. To conserve money, they advised her to cook at home instead of dining out. They advised her against being married to a foreigner. Priya initially felt obligated to follow her parents' guidance and respect Indian customs and culture. Their most crucial piece of advice is that she should not marry a foreigner in the United States. She acknowledges that she has changed significantly from her Indian sensibility after living in America for seven years. She forgets her parents' instructions after being seduced by American society. She develops feelings for Nick. She goes back to her own country after seven years to tell her family about her relationship with him.

The diasporans gain a lot of new knowledge about home during displacement. Their emotional ties to their motherland are severed. They feel as though their viewpoint has entirely altered when they return to their native country. Priya's internal conflict becomes apparent as she decides to travel to India. "I was reluctant to leave. I had to leave. I had no desire to go. I had to leave. I was being torn apart by the twin realities" (3). Not a single diasporan wants to return to their own countries and settle down again. Because her family would look for a suitable Indian husband, she is also opposed to travelling to India. She is visiting India to tell her family that she is in love with Nick. She feels uncertain about whether to follow Indian marriage customs. Her mixed consciousness of India and America is a clear indication of her psychological strife.

It is challenging for Priya to reclaim her ethnic identification values because of how strongly the acculturation process has affected her sensitivity. She struggles to adjust to Indian life because she has assimilated to American society. She finds the scorching Indian summers intolerable when she returns. "However, after enduring twenty Indian summers, I was now struggling to adjust to my native country" (8). After acculturation in the other country, it is uncommon for many diasporans to feel uneasy with their own culture. She is unable to display an affinity for India due to her diasporic sensitivity and her progressive assimilation into American culture.

Because of their potency, memories serve as conduits for their diasporic sensibility. They serve as the entry points that keep diasporans from transgressing their moral principles. They are

unable to develop an emotional bond with their hometown due to the harsh reality. Priya remembers fighting with her brother Nate over the mango in India as a child and eating raw mangoes with him. For her, the main source of pleasure is these recollections. She does not eat mangoes now that she is settled in America, though. She refrains from eating a mango on her homecoming visit to Monda market. Because of the unsanitary circumstances at the Indian market, she detests eating it. Despite having an emotional connection to their motherland, diasporans who live elsewhere criticise it. Almost all diasporans experience this type of double consciousness. Differences in geography and culture give rise to ambivalence. “You can never really go back home,” (13) Priya recalls her friends saying. She also recalls the bad times she had on vacation with her mother, when they visited Kulu Manali in Himachal Pradesh. For one rupee, her mother haggled with a shopkeeper. Priya dislikes the way her mother haggles with a street vendor. She views this type of street activity as disparaging. She is unaware that shopping for such street deals is a common practice in India. She muses that in America, she does not have to haggle. She laments that the poor enforcement of traffic safety regulations prevented her from driving in India. She believes that people can make U-turns anywhere they wish and that some Indian trespassers do not think it illegal to cross a red signal. She therefore concludes that travelling on Indian roadways is not convenient or safe for her.

After residing in a host country for a while, diasporans express their disapproval of their home country. Seven years ago, Priya was used to the conventional Indian lifestyle, which she now criticises in India. Because of tradition, her mother wants her to be obedient. She finds her mother’s attitude annoying. She feels disgusted when her mother requests that she follow the rules set forth by her family. She aspires to be self-reliant in both attitude and behaviour. She declines Adarsh’s proposal of marriage. She is furious when her mother threatens to beat her with slippers. She asks her mother to be sensitive to her emotions. She begs her mother to embrace her for who she is. Priya tells the truth about Nick and her affection for him when her neighbour asks about her marriage proposal to Adarsh. On the other hand, she dislikes when people meddle with her private affairs. However, she is fully aware that Indians are more likely than Americans to meddle in other people’s affairs.

For traditional Indians, marriage is a significant life-event. In India, arranged marriages are accepted by society. Priya dislikes being married in an arranged marriage. She believes that marrying a stranger is impossible. The girl is more familiar with her home’s milkman than she is with the groom. Despite being a well-educated and sensible woman, she was unable to leave the confines of her home culture. Being watched over and counselled by her mother all the time makes her feel constrained. Women are typically discouraged from dressing in western attire in traditional Indian households. To tackle the heat in India, she would want to wear shorts. Her mother rejects it. She is unhappy with her experiences and is reluctant to remain in India, particularly with her mother and her relatives. She finds the rigid guidelines of the family custom annoying. She does not express her acrimony to anyone. She acknowledges that her relocation to America has caused her to miss her friends and relatives in India. She dislikes being cut off from her American way of life.

An iconic illustration of diasporic ambivalence is Priya. She thinks that America is “a land of opportunities” (134). She has assimilated into American society. She starts attacking every aspect of India. In her opinion, they are peculiar. She feels ambivalent despite her acculturation. She is unable to integrate into Western culture due to certain social taboos.

Ambivalent consciousness is the result of homeland customs interfering. She claims that because Indian food is so hot, she is unable to eat it every day, even if she likes to eat at KFC. However, because cows are revered as mothers in India, she refrains from eating beef because she views it as immoral. She expresses diasporic ambivalence in her remarks. Diasporans criticise their native country because of adapting to it. It is made clear by Priya's conduct. Priya and her brother Nate used to quarrel over a mango stone when she was tiny. In America, she starts to examine all her previous Indian experiences. She finds it savage to eat mango pickles with her bare hands in America. She misses the joy of eating it in India. When she feels like she is a part of American culture, her adaption is nearly complete.

Migrants' identities are ambiguous, and identity crises frequently arise in these kinds of ambivalent circumstances. According to Priya, she lost both her Indianness and India. The loss of her nation does not cause her any pain. She prefers not to adhere to Indian customs. Because she has adapted to American culture, she is so adamant that she is prepared to leave India. People migrate in the modern world for a variety of reasons. They first traverse geographical boundaries and encounter inclement weather. They also experience social isolation and cultural problems. They eventually learn how to fit in with the host country's culture after a few years. Their ambivalent attitude towards their birthplace is the result of gradual adaptation. Priya enjoys eating American food and stays away from Indian food. Despite being a Telugu Brahmin, she frequently eats chicken for breakfast in America. She transitions to Indian food when she gets back to India. She claims that while she was in America, she forgot to eat sambar and rice. She enjoys eating Indian food, and she believes that eating it with her family enhances the flavour. Therefore, the migrants' sensibilities are likewise determined by their geographic bounds. She has contradictory inclinations in her sensibility. Even though she sometimes misses India, she is content with how she has adapted to western culture in America. Her comment makes it clear. She claims that because of her Americanized perspective, everything in her native country appears more foreign to her than it did before.

Malladi depicts Priya's shifting allegiances as she enjoys the privileged life in America. She therefore has no desire to return to India. The immigrants are unable to separate themselves from the memories, even though they adjust to the host country. She occasionally felt relieved to have lost her Indian home. She regarded America as her home because she had gradually assimilated into American society. All her Indian connections seemed odd to her. Her sensibility did not entirely shift in America. Her Indian sensibility prevented her from accepting anything American, even though she was drawn to the materialistic aspects of America.

The symbol of contemporary immigrants, Priya, mocks her native country in an insensitive manner. She struggles to fit in with American Indian culture. She views "home" from an American perspective. Tara, Nate's girlfriend, has a normal American girl's appearance. She typically arrives at nine o'clock at night to meet Nate and Priya. Tara, who is dressed in a tight yellow top and a tiny skirt, is disliked by Priya. Tara enjoys listening to American pop music a lot, and she dances to the lyrics. Tara's passion for the bizarre western way of life astounds Priya. Despite having assimilated into American society, Priya finds Tara's free-spirited way of life intolerable. The immigrants experience ambivalence in this way. They have conflicting and ambiguous opinions regarding the host country and their birthplace.

When Priya travels to India, her ambivalence is also made clear. The whims and fancies of her family members are beyond her comprehension. She brought them presents. She criticises them after giving them those gifts because she was unable to please everyone. Indian families are so strong because they are based on relationships and affection, in contrast to families in western societies. She is not a part of the Indian environment because of her Western way of living. She starts to doubt ideas like Indian society, family, and home. She claims that in India, she has lost her emotional and physical equilibrium and that her centre of gravity has changed. Neither in India nor in America can Priya support herself. She fumbles and hovers between these two realities. "Life has a very claustrophobic sound." She remarks, "I Wish I Wasn't Here," (19) while in India.

The economic standing of women in Indian society has improved during the past few decades. They have shifted from conventional roles to contemporary fashion. Their perspective has become more liberal. They continue to experience injustices in the political, social, economic, and household domains, nevertheless. Priya dislikes Adarsh, the groom her parents selected. She does not hesitate to voice her opposition to the family's choice to marry him. She views exile in this context as a means of escaping her native country. In America, she believes she can solve the marriage problem. Therefore, exile is seen by diasporans as a means of escaping the customs, religion, and social structures of their native country.

Priya is unable to make decisions about marriage on her own because of her ongoing ambivalence. She believes in Indian tradition very much. She is therefore a little anxious about going too far. Her Indian sensibilities prevent her and Nick from cohabitating in America. "Unmarried couples living together was exactly the kind of thing I had been raised not to do," (141) Priya tells him frankly. Indian women are supposed to follow social norms. The reputation of the family is impacted by any abnormal behaviour by an Indian woman. In traditional Indian families, morally deviant behaviour is taken severely. She rejected the idea of living together outside of a marriage when Nick proposed it. Fearing social censure in India, she promptly refused it. But because of her intense love for Nick, her boyfriend from the West, she gradually broke free from the constraints of family custom. As a result, they live under the same roof and share a bed and bread. Priya moves towards Western culture and society because of her communication with her partner.

Malladi uses the bride-seeing ceremony to vividly illustrate the state of Indian women. She reveals her affair with Nick when Adarsh declares his desire to wed a traditional Indian girl. Priya concludes that she loves Nick more than she loves her Indian family. She begins to understand that she might have to give up her relationships as a daughter, granddaughter, cousin, and so forth if she decides to pick Nick in her life. She has a hard time getting her Indian relatives to approve of her marriage. Her ambiguous sensitivity is a problem. "You cannot mesh two cultures without making a mess of it," (170) her grandfather informs her. He requests that she marry Adarsh and move on from Nick. Priya is not interested in hearing what her grandfather has to say. "I want to live a happy life," (179) she says. She goes on to say that she can only be content if she marries Nick. Nate says that her family and relatives would not be happy with her marriage to Nick. However, Priya wants to persuade her parents and other family members to allow her to marry Nick in America. She is unsure whether to choose her ties to India or America because she is an Indian diasporan. She fluctuates in ambivalence as she is perplexed. Priya understands that her family acts as a barrier to keep her safe.

Priya naturally vacillates between loyalty and love when her family does not approve of her marriage to Nick. Since identity is never static and change is unavoidable, an ambivalent condition is constantly fluid. It takes time for Priya's sensibility to change. She believes that partnerships hold individuals together because of the sense of home. She believes that Hyderabad is not her home, and she will not adhere to the customs of her homeland. When Priya cannot persuade her family that she loves Nick, she experiences emotional turmoil. Her ambivalence is obviously brought to light by her emotional anguish in India. As a free woman, she considers that she cannot lead a happy life if she strives to be a perfect daughter. At last, she can obtain her parents' approval to marry Nick. However, her grandparents disapprove of her union. Priya is thrilled when she returns to America. Her marriage, "...a Hindu ceremony followed by a Baptist one," is an example of cultural convergence (229). Displacement and hybridity are normal and even encouraged in the age of globalisation. An immigrant, on the other hand, is aware of the importance of his culture and how to fit in with the host country's culture.

Between two cultures, the diasporans are confined. When two cultures coexist, cultural conflicts arise between them. The materialistic prospects are the primary emphasis of the new generation of diasporans. A person's identity is undoubtedly shattered when two cultures are compared side by side. When they return to their native country, some diasporans experience feelings of alienation. They are incapable of assimilating into the local culture. As an example of this new sort of diaspora, Priya experiences alienation in her own country. Her statement, "It was as if there were two people inside me: Indian Priya and American Priya, Ma's Priya and Nick's Priya," reveals her double consciousness. "I pondered who Priya's true identity was" (69). She experiences relocating between two diametrically opposed cultures as part of her quest for identity. She becomes a hyphenated person who lives between her home country and the host country because of her identity dilemma.

The diasporans have a strong bond with their homeland. They experience alienation, identity crisis, and cultural clash because of their double consciousness. They have deep origins and close links to their homeland. As a result of their assimilation and acculturation to the host country, diasporic women begin to question the fundamental standards of traditional society and confront prejudiced and superstitious views. Despite having diasporic ambivalence, Priya can connect both countries. Despite first detesting her country, she struggles with ambivalence. She eventually understands the value of her native country and accepts western culture as well.

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