

Self – Realization and Empowerment: A study of Immigrant Woman’s Experience in Amulya Malladi’s *Serving Crazy with Curry*

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ABSTRACT

Man’s unquenchable thirst for money makes him restless. He travelled to different places in order to fulfill his thirst for food and money. As time progress, quest for power made man ambitious. He starts fighting with his own clan to become dominant. Thus colonies are formed to protect their territories. In the twentieth century, migrations are caused for employment and educational development. The enriched facilities in the host land make the migrants to settle there. The children of immigrants face problems due to their inability to follow both the cultures simultaneously. The second generation immigrants face several problems in the host land.

In the era of globalization, migration of multinationals has become a common phenomenon. In 586 BC, Jews were forced to move outside their homeland, Israel. Their migration has become the image of diaspora. Today people move to different parts of the world in order to overcome the problems and changes that they face in their life in the contemporary globalized world. Immigration to the alien land makes people happy because they are away from the clutches of tradition, religion and social system of the homeland.

Today, people all over the world irrespective of caste, colour and religion scatter to the host countries for better employment and educational opportunities. During their stay in the host land, they undergo innumerable problems like nostalgia, loneliness, alienation, cultural conflict, ambivalence, plural identity, homing desire and so on. They face physical dislocation as well as mental disorderness. Their problems are both physical and psychological. The second generation immigrants also face severe problems like the first generation immigrants. Anita Desai, kamala Markandaya, Kiran Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee, Meera Syal, Chitra Banerjee, V.S.Naipaul, K.S.Maniam, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie are some of the prominent writers of Indian diaspora literature. They analyze the problems of first generation immigrants in the alien land. Writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Amulya Malladi and Anita Rau Badami come in the same plane because of their deft portrayal of the problems of second generation immigrants living abroad.

Amulya Malladi is one of the greatest Indian diasporic women writers in English. She was born in a small town Sagar in Madhya Pradesh in 1979. Her father devoted his life by serving the Indian army. It made Malladi to travel to every part of the country. Her higher education begins by enrolling in the Electronics Engineering stream in the Osmania University, Hyderabad. She completed her Master’s degree in Journalism in the University of Memphis, America. Through her novels, she analyses the problems and tension experienced by the immigrants in U.S.

Malladi explores the problems of first and second generation immigrants in the novel *Serving Crazy with Curry*.

Avi migrates to America after working for several years in the India army. He lost his arm in the war against enemies. He retires from army and decides to start his own business in America. Saroj, his wife does not want to follow his husband’s decision on migration. But she involuntarily migrates to America with her one year old child, Shobha. Saroj is homesick. She always thinks about her homeland and tells Avi to make plans to go to India as soon as possible. She longs for her homeland. She expects the milkman and vegetable vendor in America because she chats every morning with them when she was in India. She likes to listen to the music of Lata Mahgeshkar and Kishore Kumar whenever she turns on her radio. Saroj feels bored with her life in America due to her constant longingness for the homeland. The first generation immigrants have close attachment with their homeland.

When she becomes pregnant for the second time, she wishes to go and stay with the care of her mother in India. She hates America completely because she does not have anyone to take care of her. She longs for the care and affection that she misses in the host land. But Avi denies sending her to India. He wants her to deliver the child in America. Saroj’s lonely life without any familiar people makes her irritated. She becomes mentally sick due to her isolated life in the host land. Her mental unrest affects the foetus in her womb. She has labour pain for thirty five years to deliver the second child, Devi. Even during the birth Saroj tells her husband that this girl is going to be a big trouble for them.

Saroj who strictly adheres to the native tradition, wants her daughters to follow the Indian tradition in America. She insists her daughters to dress traditionally like the India girls. She cooks Indian food in her house and advises her daughters to avoid eating host land’s cuisine in the American restaurants. When her daughters request her to cook host land’s food items, she refuses it. Cultural differences in the family create disharmonious relationship between parents and children. Shobha follows her mother’s advice strictly. She accepted the groom selected by parents. Her marriage held in a very traditional way. It makes her mother happy.

Saroj is not happy with the behaviour and attitude of Devi. Even from the childhood days, Devi contradicts her mother's ideas. She follows the culture of the host land. This is evident with her illegal relationships and life style. Saroj tells Devi not to mingle with white people. But Devi never listens to her mother's words. When she is in her fourth grade, she is accused for stealing pencil from her classmate. Though she does not engage in stealing, she is ill-treated because of her Indian identity. She does not reveal the reason for hitting her classmate; instead she stops speaking for a whole week. During her eleventh year, she kisses a white boy Dylan while playing football. The boy refuses to kiss her again stating that she is 'brown'. Devi becomes upset because of the discrimination that she faces due to her Indian identity.

The environment in which she lives has its own impact on her life. She cannot become either Indian or American. Saroj's close affinity with her own tradition makes her to allow Devi's sexual intimacy with the Indian boy Ashish in America. Devi is happy with her relationship with him and decides to marry him. But he rejects her, stating that he wants to marry a nice Indian girl who will be selected by her parents from India. This irritates and upsets Devi a lot. She loses faith in the Indian customs and tradition and completely hates it. She easily assimilates with the host society and starts living like a complete American girl. The influence of her ancestor's culture followed by her parents, affects her identity. She is not accepted as an American by the white people.

Devi lives away from her family. She wants to be a strong and independent woman like her grandmother. But she is more like her mother, "...a complete failure at everything she ever attempted –live, lover, finances, children, job, relationships, everything" (6). She becomes upset and decides to commit suicide due to the failures that she has faced in her life. She thinks, "No, she wasn't ready to die, she decided and then she realized that she wasn't ready to live either" (117). She could not bring in any sea change to her monotonous, boredom life with full of misfortunes. Resultantly she chooses to commit suicide after scrutinizing the reasons to die and not to die several times. She has struck out the reasons like 'slept with a married man', 'had relationship with a married man' and 'fell in love with a married man' (4). The reasons that she has struck out are not evil in America. But it is considered as sinful in the Indian society. Though Devi is accustomed to the American culture, she has imbibed the Indian morals and values from her mother. The Indianness which she has inherited from her mother makes her feel guilty. Cultural shock is faced by Devi due to her exposure to two different cultures. Native land's consciousness makes her restless and she has disharmonious relationship with the host land. Her attempt to end her life becomes unsuccessful because she is saved by her mother. She considers it again as a great failure in her life. She decides to stop talking with everyone. The psychiatrist Mara Berkley tries to find out the reason for committing suicide from her. But she keeps mute to her also.

Though Devi does not speak with anyone, she adopts a unique way to overcome her frustrations. She starts cooking to exhibit her feelings. When she is in an angry mood, the food is spicier; dessert items are cooked by her when she feels happy,

the food would taste bland when she feels bored. Devi has never cooked in the house before the suicide attempt. Everyone in the family gets shocked to see her terrific cooking. But all the food items cooked by Devi are praised by everyone in the family. She feels happy and considers it as a success in her life. The psychiatrist tells Devi, "...inside you there's something that wants to live, taste and explore" (87). Cooking helps her to develop self-confidence. It helps her to explore her own identity. She overcomes all her failures and decided to make her life meaningful. She wants her father to join her in a culinary school. The close introspection of psyche of Devi shows that the second generation immigrants live an unhappy and uncertain life in the host land. They try to ascertain their own identity despite dislocation, alienation and mental despair. Cultural discordance makes dislocated individuals to face psychic unease and physical dispossession. But Devi overcomes the problems in the host land and ascertains her identity.

Abraham Maslow in his theory of hierarchy of needs has explained about how the individual after fulfilling the basic needs, strive to achieve the higher order needs in one's life. He classifies the five basic needs of human beings as Physiological needs, Safety and Security needs, Social needs, Esteem needs and the last stage is the need of Self-actualization. The physiological needs aims at satisfying the basic need of human beings such as food, clothing and shelter. In the safety and security needs, an individual desires for security and protection such as physiological security, economic stability and so on. In the social needs, an individual desires to have good friendship, companionship and affection from others. Esteem needs is also called as ego needs. During this stage, an individual expects self-respect, recognition, appreciation and acceptance from others. The last and the highest order of needs on Maslow's hierarchy theory is self-actualization. In this stage an individual realizes his potential and strongly determines to accomplish and achieve his goal. An individual concentrates on self-development and tries to fulfill it until he gets completely satisfied in his goal.

Devi after her suicide attempt stays with her parents. She slowly gains confidence in her life because she is under the care by her parents. Her basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter get fulfilled in her parents' house. Her companionship and affection showered by her family members makes her happy. It makes her to concentrate on esteem needs. She adopts cooking to explore her skills. When she cooks different food items, everyone in the family appreciates her. Her mother recognizes and praises her culinary skill. When she satisfies her lower order needs, she concentrates on the highest need of self-actualization. She understands her interest and ability in cooking and decides to join cooking school. Maslow's hierarchy of needs clearly portrays how Devi overcomes her crisis in life and finally ascertains her identity.

Thus, every individual tries to satisfy their needs despite the physical, special, emotional and psychological problems in life. Self-motivation helps one to overcome every stage successfully. Devi who faces problems due to her second generation immigrant identity, overcomes her problems through her self-motivation. During her muteness, she re-invents

herself. She silently motivates herself and finds out her interest in cooking. Gradual metamorphosis takes place in her character. She overcomes her past failures in life by cooking various food items. It helps her to bring out her emotions too.

When all her lower order needs get satisfied, she concentrates on her own 'self'. This in turn enables her to have stable identity. Adapting cooking helps Devi to overcome her identity crisis and she ascertains her hybrid identity.

Work Cited

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