



A Perception Of Humour, Irony, Satire And Sarcasm In Amulya Malladi's The Mango Season

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Abstract

The Mango Season is Amulya Malladi's second novel in which she has employed humour, irony, satire and sarcasm to pinpoint Indian people's peculiarities and absurdities followed in the name of tradition and culture. The central character, Priya Rao is an Indian, has migrated to USA to pursue her higher studies and has been settled there by getting a good job. Accidentally, she falls in love with an American and they start living together without the knowledge of her parents in India. Malladi tries to say in a humorous and sarcastic manner how the protagonist gets the approval for her marriage. Malladi has sprinkled her novel with humour, irony and satire abundantly to express Priya's internal conflicts and her changed perception of India.

Keywords: *humour, irony, sarcasm, satire and ridicule.*

1. Introduction

After Priya Rao's higher studies she starts working in Silicon Valley. She falls in love with an American named Nickolas and has started living together with him for two years in San Francisco. She feels guilty of the vows taken before going to USA that she would never adapt herself to foreign culture and she would never marry an American. She finds it is easy to follow the American culture rather than her own Indian culture. When she returns to India during that summer, it is time for mango pickle making ritual in her family. All her family members will gather up in her grandmother's house and it is usually funny being there. But Priya Rao is not able to enjoy the happiness as she is torn by the thought that she will miss her family if she tells them about her love affair.

Malladi discusses humorously how Priya feels embarrassed when her mother batters with every vendor. Though her mother likes the tastes of the mangoes with one of the vendors, in order to subside the rate, she bargains with that man and finally she is successful in reducing the rate. Priya infers her mother as, "From her eyes I could see she was excited. From the myriad mangoes she had tasted all morning, this was the one that would be perfect for her pickle. But she was not going to let the mango seller know it" (Malladi 13).

After coming home, she orders Priya to bring an auto rickshaw to take them to her grandfather's house just for rupees fifteen. She says to her not to yield to him even if he asks extra one rupee. And knowing her mother's nature of haggling, Priya tactfully manipulates everything by giving the auto rickshaw man fifteen rupees in advance and asks him to collect the remaining amount from her mother so that her mother could think that the auto rickshaw man has accepted to come for just rupees fifteen only. Priya says to the auto rickshaw man thus, "I will give this to you now and my mother will give you another fifteen" ... "And don't tell my mother that the price is thirty, just fifteen" (Malladi 22). Moreover Malladi's choice of words in apt places evokes laughter when Priya says about the auto rickshaw man's reaction thus, "... he looked at me quizzically" (Malladi 22).

Amulya Malladi discusses sarcastically through the character 'Ma' (mother) about how all Indian women gain weight after eating carelessly but without conscience they casually put the blame on the doctors or others for their obesity. It is not only humorous but also an eye opener to the readers thus, "Ma blamed her weight problem on birth control pills. They did the damage, she would accuse, as if eating mountains of white rice with lots of fat smeared on it was not responsible for the abundance of fat tissue in her body. She also blamed the doctor who had prescribed the criminal birth control pills to her almost twenty-seven years ago" (Malladi 28).

Amulya Malladi mocks on Indian family politics in an interesting manner through her characters. On their way to Priya Rao's grandmother's house Priya's mother advises Priya of what to do and what to talk. Every conversation is preplanned in India. Priya is not accustomed to this kind of family politics and intricacies. In America there is no backbiting, gossiping, and no nosing business into other's life. But in India it is their major business. Priya is completely irritated by these predetermined Indian family politics. Her mother instructs, "Now, if Amamma wants to give you something, just take it, okay?" ... "But if she gives you something very expensive, like jewelry, then," ... "ask me if you can take it." ... "I will ask you to take it," ... "But that doesn't mean you have to take it right away. Nothing wrong in showing some reluctance" (Malladi 23).

Malladi mocks at the Indian people's mentality to give preference only to Money and Property in case of match making. Already Ma sought a Chicago alliance for Priya. Now Ma accuses Priya for rejecting that alliance. Even though Priya told Ma about his contact with a girl for three years Ma was stubborn to arrange it as she considered more about his lucrative salary and so she tried to convince Priya that on the passage of time he would forget the girl he loved. When Priya refuses thus, "I wasn't going to marry a man who was in love with another woman" (Malladi 24), her mother insists, "Love, it seems, is very important" ... "He was making eighty thousand dollars a year. Do you know how much that is in rupees?" (Malladi 24) Even through Nickolas, the American, Malladi conceives jokes. When Priya Rao hesitates to reveal about her love affair to her family reasoning their staunch orthodoxy and they would renounce her, Nick takes it casually and jokes, "Tell them I'm a Brahmin from Tennessee" (Malladi 28).

During mango pickle making ritual, Malladi's sarcasm predominates through her characters. When the grandmother asks Sowmya not to mix their mangoes with Radha's, Radha becomes so angry and tries to pick a quarrel with her mother. Malladi creates an impression that Indian women are warrior like and garrulous and first and foremost in the place of domestic disputes. Though Radha is furious with her mother, her quarrel evokes laughter as she has a knife for cutting mangoes for pickle making but one can see Malladi's subtlety in creating certain symbol and scene. When Radha outbursts, "Amamma didn't want her mangoes mixed up with. "Are you saying my mangoes are bad?" ... her eyes blazing, a knife held firmly in her hand. Warrior Pickle Woman was ready to defend her mangoes" (Malladi 41). The Indian women's skill of sensory perception is also extolled by Malladi in a humorous manner. Grandmother advises Priya, "you have to use your senses . . . your sense of smell to buy mangoes. I will teach you; if you learn from your mother, you will pick mangoes like these" (Malladi 41).

According to Indian culture, the elder brothers should marry after making their younger sisters get married. In this novel, Anand, Sowmya's elder brother marries a Maharashtra Brahmin girl against his parents' wish. So, all the women in the house try to find fault with the newly wedded bride Neelima.

Priya says how tension heightens in her family by their heated conversations. When Neelima says, “My older sister didn’t get married until she was thirty-one” (Malladi 45), Priya’s grandmother retorts, “In our family we don’t let our daughters chase and marry men from other castes” (Malladi 45) It evokes humour when Priya admits, “Here.” She gave me a paan that I stuck inside my mouth with the hope that I would not speak up against the injustice” (Malladi 45)

Finally, the sixty fifth bride seeing ceremony becomes a successful one to the thirty years old Sowmya. When she expresses her grievance thus, “He lives with his parents” ... Thatha demands her sarcastically, “Why? You don’t want to take care of his parents?” (Malladi 124). In another scene, Priya arranges a meeting for Sowmya with the lecturer in a restaurant. When he asks them what they want to eat, Priya answers quickly as ‘Masala Dosa’. According to Indian culture, Women are not taught to express their emotion in the public. It is their pride and dignity if they fuss and show some reluctance in the public. Priya’s impertinent talk creates laughter, is a welcoming change in the minds of the readers in the Indian society.

Malladi satirizes on the Indian bride seeing ceremony and their match making thus, “It’s like finding a job. The job you get is equivalent to your qualifications and what you want does not really matter” (Malladi 32). Priya also talks about an incident with exasperation but it makes the readers burst into laughter thus, “A friend of mine, who had now been relegated to being only an acquaintance, had been appalled when I told him about Nick. His instant reaction was “How can you, Priya? He’s not even Indian” as if that made him a cat or a dog” (Malladi 45).

Malladi’s discussion over Priya’s mother’s advice during her bride seeing ceremony and Priya’s reply all sounds humorous and ironical. Ma instructs Priya, “If you both want to *just* talk a little, go sit on the swing in the veranda”... “And don’t swing your legs like a *jungle* when you sit there. Be ladylike” (Malladi 113). Malladi ironically calls the Indian bride seeing ceremony as a cow selling market or fish selling market. When Ma asks, “Why don’t you kids sit outside on the veranda and talk while we old people eat some *ladoos* and *bajjis*” (Malladi 115), Malladi’s humours flow through Adarsh’s mischievous talk thus, “What, no *ladoos* and *bajjis* for us?” (Malladi 115) When Adarsh opines, Priya looks like a traditional Indian, her answer evokes laughter, “I’m not very Indian either,” ... “Don’t be fooled by the sari and the *bindi* and the jewelry ... I drink an occasional glass of wine and I’m known to smoke a cigar to bring in the New Year” (Malladi 117). When Priya refuses to marry Adarsh, her mother satirizes Priya thus, “Adarsh, a nice name. But probably not good enough for Priya maharani, our very own high-and-mighty queen” (Malladi 111). It becomes the height of humours when her family once again call Adarsh to their house saying Priya wants to talk to him. Priya stuns to know this and asks for the apology to him for she has been engaged to an American.

Malladi ridicules Indians’ curiosity in gossiping through Mallika Murthy’s reaction when she comes to know about Priya’s engagement with an American thus, “Her mouth stayed wide open for almost fifteen seconds.” ... Mallika Murthy would be dialing the phone number of ten of her and Ma’s closest friends to inform them about my fall from grace” (Malladi 162).

Priya is shocked to see that her father has drunk along with his son. Nate is lying on the sofa and unable even to open his eyes under the heavy influence of the visky. Nowhere could it be seen as father and son drink liquor together. This depicts that her family being orthodox is easy adaptable to the Western cultures in case of drinking and other kinds of notorious action. But in the case of Priya’s marriage with an American, they are not able to conform to it. Malladi sarcastically expresses her feministic perspectives through their attitudes thus, “We just drank a few pegs of whiskey last night.” ... “Well, after the first three pegs we lost count Nanna said. Nanna usually didn’t drink like this, may be a peg socially and never with his own son. Looked like they were connecting on the alcohol level—a whole new kind of closeness?” (Malladi 163).

2. Conclusion

Through this novel *The Mango Season*, Malladi tries to impart the advantages of cultural assimilation and she ironically points out the faults of Indian culture and tradition through the characters. Malladi

also tries to examine the feminism that predominates in their inveterate tradition. Malladi's literary style helps the readers travel with the characters pleasurable without any pressure. Malladi through her skillful writing has juxtaposed scenes and conversations which could evoke laughter even in serious situations.

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