

## An Analysis Of Unexpected Failures And Disappointments In Amulya Malladi's Serving Crazy With Curry

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### Abstract

This paper examines Amulya Malladi's portrayal of her characters in *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004) as warriors, combatants, and fighters against life's unexpected failures and disappointments. The plot centres on moral and professional failings, stress, despair, an extramarital affair, remorse, family, resentment, and redemption. Devi is always plagued by the guilt of having a connection with her sister Shobha's husband Girish and the ensuing miscarriage, which drives her insane and makes her want to end her life. Saroj prevents Devi from taking her own life in the novel, but she is unable to break her daughter's vow of quiet. Devi begins using her culinary talents to express her feelings. Her cooking conveys her feelings through its flavour, colour, and aroma. Because of her sinister secrets, she falls into a deep despair. The whole family is devastated when the secrets are revealed, but by staying with her, her family members can identify and diagnose her mental condition. Devi is prevented from falling into depression by the family members. Through Devi's severe depression episodes, Malladi teaches the world to embrace one's imperfections and fortify one's mental fortitude against anxiety. Her theories about the sociological, moral, and psychological aspects of immigrants and refugees are examined in the novel. Despite their terrible pasts, these protagonists overcome all obstacles and win the title for themselves with unwavering persistence. They learn to overcome their characteristics and break free from the entangled situations. The protagonists in the novel rely heavily on their families for support. Despite their discomfort, they receive love and attention. The protagonists' perseverance and familial ties help them get past their deep emotional challenges. Hope helps when the obstacles ensnare them.

**Keywords:** Failure, Barrier, Psychological, Family, Moral, Disappointment

Amulya Malladi is one of the most influential diasporic Indian women novelists in English. Malladi has joined a distinguished group of Indian authors, and her writings are published in a variety of languages, including Tamil, Danish, Dutch, Spanish, Romanian, German, and Serbian. India and her familiar locations are the main subjects of her novels. Her novels offer enlightenment, a plethora of knowledge, a storehouse of interpretations, and a starting point for debate. She consistently draws readers' attention to the ability of psychological and emotional metamorphosis, which allows one to consciously alter their life, via the choices, decisions, mistakes, experiences, and victories of her characters. Her characters inspire other characters to change themselves and demonstrate the potential for self-transformation. Her writing is entwined with the intricacy of relationships and features a wide range of character portrayals.

Malladi's *Serving Crazy with Curry* revolves around the two sisters, Shobha and Devi. Both of Veturi's daughters find inspiration and influence in Vasu's way of life. Although Vasu is a rebellious woman who served as a doctor in the Indian Army and retired as a brigadier, Malladi portrays her as a kind, compassionate, and caring person. Because Ramakant, a bank employee who is adamant about his patriarchal views, disapproves of Vasu's decision to continue her education at a medical college and her work, their arranged marriage ends in divorce. He perceives Vasu as distinct from other women who spend their days at home as housewives and is unable to comprehend that she is doing this for the benefit of the family. Because of her tenacity and strong will, Vasu is unable to give up on her education or her goals. She cannot be influenced by anything, not even her pregnancy during her last year of medical school.

Malladi highlights the ways in which marriage restricts women's freedom. Ramakant loses his job, and Vasu enlists in the Indian army as a doctor. He devises and implements several novel strategies to increase his income and get affluent, but everything fails miserably, leaving him feeling inadequate. Vasu becomes enraged when Ramakant steals money from the house, and their marriage, which "already hung precariously on mere legalities completely fell apart" (38). When the argument gets unbearable, she makes the decision to dissolve her marriage. Ramakant, who "couldn't even imagine a woman would do something like this," (38) is devastated by Vasu's divorce choice. When she takes Saroj, who is five years old, under her care, Ramakant loses it. She makes a daring move towards her future and has the guts to recognise her marriage's collapse. Three months after Ramakant moves in with his brother, she learns that he had taken his own life. By Ramakant's death, the novelist has slapped the face of that civilised lot of humanity where social and familial obligations are disregarded in favour of personal fulfilment. According to Malladi, Vasu is a straightforward woman who can directly influence her fate and change who she is. She is a difficult woman because of how sharply she makes decisions, speaks, and acts, and she never regrets her choices. She is denigrated by her family and society for being

divorced, but she just gives a damn about how she feels. Vasu is the most unusual person in the entire family. He feels that some marriages do not work and will not succeed, so it is best to break up and start over because life is too short to deal with troubles, disappointments, and melancholy that last a lifetime. Therefore, Malladi wisely explains the circumstances of an Indian woman, who must live with her husband regardless of her feelings for him, his house, or his family; the only thing that can separate them is death. When a woman bravely files for divorce, society perceives her as an outsider, disobedient, unlucky, repulsive, and a sign of bad luck. For Vasu, nothing matters more than happiness.

Malladi's portrayal of Vasu reflects his radical, urban, and contemporary consciousness. At the age of thirty-one, three years after her husband's passing, Vasu is assigned to Poona, a large city in the western Indian state of Maharashtra. Shekhar, a forty-eight-year-old married man who was a colonel and a commanding officer in the Indian Army, enters her life. He is handsome, attractive, and captivating. Vasu does not want to be in a relationship after Ramakant's suicide, yet an unforeseen romance does occur. Shekhar is not happy in his marriage, but social expectations prevent him from leaving his Indian wife Anu. His wife "never spoke with" (221) him after learning of the affair, and Vasu "couldn't go to her and apologise" (221) because she "loved Shekhar" (221).

Because of their interdependence, men and women cannot disregard their biological demands for very long. Vasu chases desire without holding back. Shekhar and Vasu have been together for twenty-five years. When he visits the United States, she even goes so far as to let him use her bedroom. Even after Shobha declares that it is unethical to for such an illegal romance to take place in their house. She is not prepared to live by social norms or devote much effort to studying her inner self. She pursues her happiness despite being aware of the risks involved with her choices. Vasu is still in good health even after Shekhar's passing, and Saroj "had felt admiration and resentment for Vasu then." After Shekhar, how was that woman able to maintain her strength? Was she crushed by anything? She had considered" (225).

Through Saroj's portrayal, Malladi illustrates how diasporic women feel alone and alienated in their new nation. Malladi characterises Saroj, the daughter of Vasu, the wife of Avi Veturi, and the mother of Shobha and Devi, as a "unwanted wife and unneeded mother" (83). Saroj is completely Indian in her thoughts, words, and deeds. Saroj's marriage to Avi was her greatest life accomplishment. Her feelings of loneliness and longing for her native India worsen. She yearns "to go home where she might buy veggies from the sellers in her front garden and converse with the milkman in the morning" (85). Compared to her husband and children, who have adapted to western culture, she is quite different. To stay connected to her native country, she makes relationships with other Indian women from the diaspora. She attempts to return to her own country by watching a tonne of Hindi films, dressing in Indian attire, and cooking in an ethnic manner.

Saroj uses the kitchen as an evocative space to fill the void left by nostalgia. She feels a sense of belonging since she can connect to her native country through touching, smelling, and tasting the food. Her time in India "was the happiest days of Saroj's life ... a swamp in Jorhat for the rest of her life" (84). She is defined as a Guardian who never considers anything other than her family's well-being when melancholy takes hold of her. In stark contrast to her mother Vasu, Malladi portrays Saroj as a passionate, emotional, and traditional woman. She is more concerned about her family's reputation, particularly that of her children. Throughout the novel, Avi and Saroj are on the verge of being divorced, but they manage to work things out and get back together.

Children and grandchildren are greatly influenced by the lives of their parents and grandparents. Malladi depicts the strength of parental influence in the lives of Devi and Shobha. Devi claims that although her mother is a terrible woman, she is an excellent cook. A housewife was described as "a lazy woman who sat at home pretending to have a full-time job" in Devi's "book of definitions" (133). Both of her daughters develop a healthy disdain for housewives after meeting Saroj. At all ages, children depend on their parents, and they anticipate that their siblings will receive a similar amount of their love, care, affection, and support. Shobha worries about this to her spouse Girish even after they are married. Devi and Shobha's relationship broke down because of this parental disparity. While Devi languishes, Shobha flourishes with notable accomplishments. Despite her desire for her father's affection, Shobha inherits his ability to overcome all obstacles and succeed in life.

Despite being adored by her father, Devi is unable to win his soul. Shobha's achievement as a "vice president of engineering at a software company at the young age of thirty-two" (7) has her overcome with jealousy. Shobha marries Girish, a Stanford professor. Girish is a wonderful man, but Devi believes he is "too much of a foreigner" for Shobha (17). "A little stiff but I think we'll get along" (110) is how Devi expresses her optimism about life and relationships when she publicly remarks that Girish is not a good fit for Shobha.

Devi becomes envious of Shobha's success both at work and at home, which leads her to gradually torture herself and compare her life to her sister's.

Shobha hopes Devi will lead an independent life. Shobha, however, does not wish to harm other mothers' feelings. They feel envious of one another, which causes them to emotionally distance themselves from one another. Shobha is tormented by the fact that even Girish likes Devi and always supports her. He even leaves home for a day when she asks if he wants to sleep with her sister. However, he subsequently starts dating Devi, his wife's sister. The two sisters' relationship is harmed by their sibling rivalry, bitterness, and jealousy.

Malladi highlights the issues and predicament of the new generation of women who have received western education and whose inner voices are simultaneously shaped and nourished by traditional norms and beliefs. Even yet, Shobha controls herself whenever Girish ignores her, even as her feelings for Vladimir - a senior engineer, her coworker, her crush, and a godlike monster from Ukraine - intensify. She occasionally yearns for a physical union with Vladimir, who shows her a

great deal of love and interest, but she does not want society to know that she has developed feelings for an ex-Soviet macho man. For the benefit of her family and society, she refrains from thinking such obscene things.

Despite her attraction to him, Shobha decides to live for the approval of society rather than herself. She accuses the feminists of having revolutionary views because she wants to live a calm and carefree life, but they have destroyed it. "Some bitch burns her bra, and all of a sudden I have to work for a living and take care of the house," she declares. "I would be content to do nothing at home while Girish brought the money home if it were the good old days" (132). Devi represents the modern woman, whereas she represents the traditional woman. Shobha, the co-protagonist, strengthens and enriches the novel. It is challenging for second-generation immigrants to accept social norms as essential. The main character, Devi Veturi, is a twenty-seven-year-old woman who leads a westernised existence.

Devi believes that physical needs are like the desire to drink water when she is thirsty. Like her father and grandmother, she aspires to be independent, free, and successful in both her personal and professional lives. She believes her father is too accomplished in life and respects his intelligence. Humans are consumed by feelings of desire. Devi is driven to do anything since she wants to be on the list of achievers. She constantly switching jobs and boyfriends, yet she "ended up joining one failed start-up after the other" (20). The girl's constant failure in whatever she attempted was appalling. She becomes worried and devalues herself because of this emotion.

Downsizing and massive layoffs have been a major problem in recent years, impacting the mental health of many people. She has emotional oppression and low self-esteem because of her layoffs. Malladi has highlighted the psychological effects that layoffs have on people's psyche through Devi's predicament. It breeds uncertainty, which breeds sentiments of self-destruction. Mental stability can occasionally be impacted by the difference between one's expectations and reality. Devi has high expectations for her life because she was raised in an achiever-focused home, which causes her to worry about her ongoing failures. Devi lists the absurd reasons why she should end her own life. It is clear from the writing that she is grieving for them in her heart. Her shattered relationship with her mother and sister is another source of grief in her heart. Her sole motivation for living serves as a reminder to readers that everyone needs a supportive family, and children expect that. When someone has a loving family, they will naturally feel guilty when they let them down or cheat on them. She feels like she is destroying her house.

Devi has a severe psychological despair in her late twenties because of her identity crisis and her personal and career setbacks. It took her "several months before she reached this point" (9) to have a suicidal idea. Because "she wanted to be like her grandmother: strong, independent, and smart," (6) she believes that her suffering is overpowering and irreversible. Rather, she resembled her mother in every way: she was a total failure in life, love, children, work, relationships, money, and everything else. She lacks the emotional intelligence and mental clarity necessary for success in life. Because of the deep emotional letdown and her inability to connect with people who can help her, she believes that suicide is her only alternative. It is challenging to survive after a suicidal attempt because you have to deal with feelings of remorse and shame. Devi tries at suicide, but her mother saves her. Sahukar observes that "the mother confronts life using all her mother force as counter power and learns through events and imaginative responses in thought and action" (128). Even when her kid tries to get away from the family net, Saroj still has her. She saves her life by coercing her daughter into giving her the extra key. This incident casts a very strong and negative shadow over Devi's family. Even Dr. Mara Berkley, the psychiatrist at the hospital, who Devi finds alien-looking, will not engage with her. She is upset with her family for disclosing personal information to a stranger and does not want to be psychoanalysed. She closes her eyes and pretends to sleep because she is frustrated and does not want to deal with her emotions. For being alive, she despises herself. She is left powerless when the psychiatrist poses the difficult question of whether she wants to return home with her parents. Devi is too depressed, disappointed, and ashamed to go see her own pals. She has nowhere to go, yet she does not want to cope with her family. The doctor's severe recommendation that she remain with her parents for six to nine months seems like a courtroom verdict, and she is unsure whether to live or die. She sees herself as a prisoner who, if she follows the rules, is eligible to be released on parole. Her want to leave the white hospital room is intense. Because Devi recalled her ex-husband Ramakant during the suicidal attempt, Vasu is incredibly anxious and afraid. Vasu is shocked to learn that Devi has accepted failure, much like her grandfather.

Malladi makes use of the scientific fact that cooking can help people feel less stressed and mend broken hearts. Devi can enter her mother's kitchen through a suicidal attempt, and it brings her great joy to enter and begin cooking. By preparing delectable meals, she stimulates her six senses, and by slicing veggies, she reduces her stress. Devi is constantly driven to do something novel and distinctive. Her question to her mother, "Why can't we add parsley in the dal?" (19) demonstrates this. Even when it comes to cooking, she does not want to adhere to tradition. She wants to try everything and see how it turns out. The kitchen is a place and a stage where one may express oneself and be creative. After having a novel experience, she reflects, "She was a general now, even though she had never cooked or served in the kitchen militia" (133). It was a hit with her. She stops analysing her ideas and past to get through the barrier. She focusses on assisting herself by overcoming the present challenges. Since she was unable to communicate with them, she attempts to re-establish her relationship with them in the name of liberty by using her recipes. The woman who harbours animosity towards the homemakers comes to the realisation that it is not as disrespectful as she once believed. Her love of cooking inspires her to make food a part of her work. Cooking gives her the ability to produce food that will nourish both herself and her loved ones. She has never denied or acknowledged her lifelong love of cooking.

Devi eventually breaks free from the past and realises that the present is a time of change, during which she says her cooking gives her voice. She begins using her kitchen knife to combat the anxiousness, but guilt was a constant companion. There was a great deal of shame, as though it had been bought in bulk to save money. It was like a giant mountain hanging on her head. She felt guilty for not talking for days, for sleeping with Girish, for getting pregnant, for losing the baby, and for not telling anyone about it. Everybody must make decisions. Since Devi resides in Silicon Valley, she is free to make her own decisions in life.

Malladi believes that everyone should be allowed to make their own decisions on their own terms, particularly women. Devi, Shobha, and Vasu come to the realisation that life moves on and that instead of becoming fixated on the past, one must start over by discovering a way out of the shadows. Devi, Shobha, and Vasu's metamorphosis demonstrate the unwavering spirit of identity discovery. By embracing their inner strength and arming themselves with adequate self-knowledge and self-learning, they destroy life's demons.

Devi's family's efforts to free her from the web she has created for herself are the subject of the novel. By the end, the highly tight-cornered female characters - who are torn between the humiliation of being laid off and the demands of marriage to become a typical conventional Indian wife - achieve total independence. Additionally, Indian women's roles have evolved from traditional to modern, from housewives to professionals. The protagonists yearn for professional success. They feel autonomous only when they achieve success in their careers, despite having loving families who grant them total freedom. They are highly sensitive, intelligent women. They begin to long for an unrestricted mind. They disavow all the societal constraints and long-held beliefs. They are part of a new generation of women who want to be treated equally to men in all spheres of life.

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