



A Study on Amulya Malladi's *Serving Crazy with Curry*: A Search for Identity Through Food

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ABSTRACT

One of the main concerns of the diasporic population is the search for identity. The diasporic population is always looking for their identity, or "self." Food is one of many cultural activities that are crucial in the development of an individual's identity. It is unquestionably an essential identifier. Food and mental health are closely related, just as much as physical health. Numerous writers from the diaspora examine numerous topics related to eating. *Serving Crazy with Curry* by Amulya Malladi is one book that explores self-discovery. The main character of the book is on a journey to discover who she is, and she uses food to do it. This article explores how the protagonist's quest to discover her own identity is brought about by the process of cooking.

Keywords: Diaspora, Food, Identity, Migration

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It's a challenging task to assimilate into a new society and way of life, in addition to that they are also in search of acceptance and belonging in a hostland. Despite their best efforts to gain recognition, immigrants frequently suffer injustices. They never stop looking for their true selves; they never stop looking for their homeland in everything that has been lost in the motherland. "Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself" (Hall 20).

Indian-born author Amulya Malladi is a diaspora writer who currently resides in Denmark. Eight novels, including *A House for Happy Mothers* (2016), *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017), *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004), *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* (2005), *A Breath of Fresh Air* (2002), *The Mango Season* (2003), *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017), *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You* (2019) and *A Death in Denmark* (2023) have been written by her. Her works have been translated into other languages. *Serving Crazy with Curry* is one of Amulya Malladi's works that highlights



diasporic themes through the use of food as a major literary device. The author uses Devi, the main character, as a tool to help her discover her "self." Devi is successful in accepting who she is.

Devi, the main character, undergoes a significant metamorphosis in the novel *Serving Crazy with Curry*. Devi's loss of her career and baby has left her extremely depressed. She decides to take her own life since she despises herself. Her mother saves her, and she gets admitted to the hospital. She stops speaking to anyone after the tragedy and goes mute. Subsequently, she began to cook by transforming the classic Indian recipes. She communicates through food and, at last, she can discover her identity using cooking.

She communicates through food and, at last, discovers her identity through cooking. She refused to talk about her feelings, so the psychiatrist who was treating her after the suicide encouraged her to keep a notebook in which she could record whatever she was going through. She decides to use Saroj's recipe book as her journal. Saroj requests her to have the samosas and mint chutney which she has prepared after she gets back from the hospital. She walks into the kitchen and begins chopping chipotle chilli peppers, ginger, apricot, and mint to make a new kind of chutney. Everyone complimented her on the chutney as it had come out very well "Pride swelled inside her and for the first time in a very long time she felt a small measure of confidence" (Malladi 72). She named the chutney "Anti-Saroj chutney" (Malladi 78)

The metaphorical meaning of food, which needs to be treated with care, therefore permeates into human relations creating similarities between food and human emotions" (Assella 132). Food and human emotions are comparable because food has a symbolic meaning that should be handled carefully and permeates human relationships. Devi uses food as an instrument to communicate her feelings when she needs to say something. Devi prepared ludicrous meals each day. The food tasted bland when she was bored, hot when she was furious, and a

dessert when she appeared happy"...Devi cooked outrageous meals every day. When she was angry, the food was spicy, when she seemed happy, there was a dessert, and when she bored, the food tasted bland" (Malladi 77). Devi attempted suicide again a few days later, but she was unable to carry out the act because, as she recalls, her doctor told her, "There's something inside of you that wants to live and taste and explore" (Malladi 87). She decides to continue what her heart desires. Devi became quite good at cooking and felt a connection to her mother that she had never known.

...She loved it. And she realized that she owed her culinary epiphany to her mother. ...

Her food tasted different from her mother's but she had learned to cook from Saroj and that made Devi feel closer to Saroj in a way she never had before. Silence and kitchen had brought them together, and it was a time and place that Devi had to relish. (Malladi 133)

Devi urges her father Avi to enroll her in a cooking school when, four weeks after the doctor's visit, she finally begins to speak. When they get back from the hospital Saroj has already prepared dosa and Sambar anticipating them. She takes pleasure in her mom's meal. I have very clear memories of eating hot dosas with pickle and sambhar on a Sunday morning. I'm happy to be back in this place so I can rediscover the one thing I never was able to do before appreciating Mama's delicious South Indian food. "My memories of Sunday morning of eating hot dosas sambhar and pickle are vivid. I'm glad that I'm living here again so that I can learn to appreciate the one thing that I never did learn to do before: Mama's impeccable south Indian cooking" (Malladi 212). Devi embraces her passion for food and her Indian heritage.

Devi was able to overcome her insecurities because of her passion for cooking. She even forgot she had a baby after she started cooking. She is a better, new person, and cooking has greatly altered her. She also discovered who she truly was after losing herself. She and her mother now have a great relationship. She is now aware that things are not always the same in life. Devi finally comes to terms with the fact that life

isn't flawless and that she just needs to get by. Devi accepts full responsibility for what she has done, begins to cherish her Indian background, becomes closer to her mother, and—above all—learns to love herself and her flaws.

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