

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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Life After War

A Study of Amulya Malladi's *The Sound of Language*

Sajeetha S. M.A., M. Phil.



Amulya Malladi

Amulya and Her Characters

Amulya Malladi, born in 1974 in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India is the author of five novels, who has also shown her talent in poetry as well. She earned her bachelor's degree in electronics

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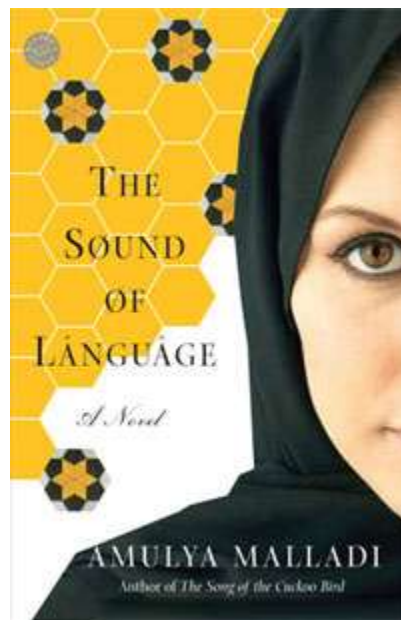
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engineering and her master's degree in journalism. She now lives in Denmark with her family. Amulya has lived all over India ranging from Himalayan foothills to the southern city of Chennai, because her father served in the Indian Army. Her residence in various parts of India and her vast travel experience has helped Amulya to describe the beautiful places and cultures of Indian society in interesting ways. Her characters are victims of suffering because of various traditions and traits in the society in which they live. Amulya shows how they are able to come out of their suffering circumstances victoriously. In most of her novels Amulya gives prominence to female characters.

Amulya's Novels



Amulya's novels include – *A Breath of Fresh Air* (2002), *The Mango Season* (2003), *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004), *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* (2005), *The Sound of Language* (2007)

The Sound of Language

The Sound of Language portrays the successful story of Raihana, a refugee, and Gunnar. They, as victims of societal rules, suffer, but they come out victoriously, breaking the rules of life that unnecessarily bind them.

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It is a story of bravery, tradition, and the power of language. Raihana, an Afghan woman, and Danish widower Gunnar form an unexpected alliance. Raihana, escaping the turmoil and heartbreak of war-torn Kabul, settles with her distant relatives, Kabir and Layla, in Denmark. Raihana bravely attempts to start a new life, though her husband Aamir was taken prisoner by the Taliban and murdered brutally. Though she is homesick and suffers all turmoil in her life, she weaves her life beautifully.

Language and Sound

Every language is mélange of sound. When one hears a language that one does not understand, he or she hears only the sound. Some sound like music, others like stones rattling in a steel container and some others like the buzzing of bees. Here in this novel the character Raihana feels that the Danish language sounded like the buzzing of bees. Soon after her arrival, Raihana finds herself in a language school, struggling to learn Danish. She also thinks Danish sounds like the buzzing of bees. Bzzzz, that was how she thought it sounded. Bzzzz, like the buzzing of thousand bees.

Apprenticeship

Raihana apprentices herself to Gunnar, a recent widower who was steadily withdrawing from the world around him, even neglecting his bee colonies that he worked so hard to cultivate with his late wife. Over the course of beekeeping Raihana and Gunnar forge an unlikely relationship, of care and respect for each other giving a new meaning for their friendship. Despite the disapproval of their friends and relatives, they continued their friendship.

Story of Unique Friendship

The *Sound of Language* is a story of unique friendship. Every language has sound and beyond that sound is acceptance. Here Raihana and Gunnar are united even when both are not able to speak or understand each other's language.

Getting Used to Strange Culture and Loving It

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Amulya Malladi made up her mind that she has to write a novel based on the place she has come to stay especially because of the language and the refugees, for which she took a few Danish language classes and met many refugees there. The refugees wanted to go back home, but they were used to **the** life in the west. The author explores this idea in this novel not just for Raihana but also for most of the refugees undergoing the hardships.

Raihana had escaped a second brutally cold winter at the Jalozei refugee camp in North Western Pakistan when the Danish government offered her asylum. It was difficult for a single woman with out a family, a husband, and education to survive. Her choices were limited. She could either die in a refugee camp where the cold wind from the mountains fingers through the almost peeled the skin off the bones, or she could go to this country where her distant cousin (Kabir) and wife (Layla) had agreed to give her a home.... She was not foolish to go back to Kabul. Everyone knew that Osama Bin Laden was responsible for the plane attacks in America and everyone knew that the Taliban were the same species as Alquida. America retaliates and the Taliban would fight back, and though the Afghani in Denmark, like many others did not like the idea of American troops on Afghan soil, it was better than the Taliban. Some thought the Taliban had been unjustly ousted out of power, and that they were good guys. (4-5)

War and Bloodshed, and Varying Responses

But in all cases there was only bloodshed, loss of lives and materials in war. War caused only destruction where many were killed, wounded or taken as refugees. Here in the novel *The Sound of Language*, Raihana, a refugee, comes out of her life in a most successful way.

Raihana joined the small number of refugees living in Denmark, all of whom watched the news with desperation, wondering when they could go back.... They hoped, Afghanistan would no longer be synonymous with tortured men and women living in penury. May be things would change and Afghanistan would become a safe haven, a progressive country, a normal country. (5)

Kabir would say almost every day

“Have to go home someday, can’t live here all our life can we?” (5)

“Don’t unpack everything, Raihana, we’ll go back soon.”(5)

On the other hand we have Layla who tells Raihana,

“If you keep one foot in Afghanistan, you will be neither here nor there.”(11)

A Positive Approach

Raihana takes a positive approach in life along with Gunnar, a widower and an unhappy man. Gunnar is resistant to have Raihana work for him at first, but slowly she warms her way into his life and helps him to come back to his normal life where he starts loving his bees and life. Gunnar in return makes Raihana leave her past behind and embrace her future. She negotiates the line between her old and her new environment and life by accepting the challenges, and not shying away from what is uncomfortable and new. Raihana flees the atrocities of the Taliban where she is told that her husband is dead. She begins a new life with Gunnar.

Not a Usual Love Story: Two Hearts in Need of Healing

This is not a love story. This is a story of unique friendship between two people Gunnar and Raihana who cannot communicate clearly with each other because they don’t speak the same language. This is a story about immigrant life in Denmark, and most importantly, this is a story of courage and of stepping beyond the confines laid down by society and culture and finding something precious and important – happiness.

This is a tale of two hearts in need of healing, a story of reaching across that invisible line of fear to take the hand of a stranger and being drawn into a new light of understanding.

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