



Resilience in marriage: An analysis of the emotional bias in Amulya Malladi's *A Breath of a Fresh Air*

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ABSTRACT

Resilience is the ability of a person to snap back to life after facing adversity. In literature emotions are discussed in different contexts. Human beings emotions are an incredible part of life. Feelings are genderless. Either we react or respond to the emotions. There are instances where we have to manage our feelings, hostile emotions. First we have to understand ourselves better in order to understand the emotions of others.

The present paper is an attempt to understand emotional bias in the novel *A Breath of Fresh Air* by Amulya Malladi. Malladi is a versatile young Indian woman writer. The paper aims to explore the cognitive bias in the marital relationships. Being empowered the protagonist tries to get a grip on life. The actions that she takes during her journey brings her closer to achieve her goals. Her never give up attitude helps her to face challenges with hope and determination.

Key words: human feelings, emotional bias, marital relationship, women empowerment.

Resilience means moving forward in life despite facing challenging situations. Education is a vital factor in the empowerment of women. Women with the requisite skill, knowledge and confidence participate fully in the development process of the society. Independent identity and equality are essential for gaining self respect in gender based society.

The present study focuses on emotions of women in the novel *Breath of a Fresh Air* by Amulya Malladi who is a young Indian woman writer. She has profound knowledge and awareness on the contemporary issues of Indian women which often stands a core theme of her writings.

A Breath of Fresh Air her first novel, published in 2002 speculates her childhood experiences to her readers. In 1984 at Bhopal, there was a leakage of methyl iso-cyanate gas from the Bhopal's Union Carbide Plant on 3rd December which resulted in a worst disaster. At that time, Malladi was staying with her family in the Army center which was located few kilometers away from the power plant. She remembers that the victims were totally fourteen thousand. She realised that she has to use the medium of writing to give life to the images that influenced her mind and heart. Malladi's writing style is unornamented and simple. She sketches some remarkable women. In the novel, Anjali the protagonist has witnessed the pains and perils of life. It is her will power that helps her to take right decisions in life.

The article portrays how the protagonist on the brink of disaster miraculously survives and mends her life. Anjali a woman of thirties who works as a school teacher at the Ootacamund School, Ooty and lives with her husband Sandeep and son Amar. Sandeep knows about Anjali past life at Bhopal with Prakash and their misfortunes. Fifteen years ago she had been leading life with her husband Prakash. They were separated because of a misfortune in the form of a methyl iso-cyanate gas accident.

Some people say deeds are boomerang. Unfortunately after fifteen years, one day in the local market Anjali is been called by someone who is none other than Prakash her ex-husband. She faces him courageously even though he left her alone in Bhopal railway station. She faces him with more maturity and without reminding any past events such as the following manner.

“Anju” he repeated. It's me, Prakash.” I didn't need him to tell me his name, I thought angrily. I wouldn't forget him. I couldn't forget him.

“Prakash.” I said, and cleared my throat unnecessarily. “What are you doing here?”

“I am posted in Wellington,” he said, his eyes still filled with disbelief. (Malladi, 2002,p.02)

Anjali does not shaken by her memories of the past. Cognitive biases may initially appear to be negative, but it enables faster decisions that can be desirable when timeliness is more valuable than accuracy. She decides to be in the present with Sandeep, her husband and Amar, her son. She is emotionally biased that she renders her preference to the present and not to the past. As Prakash asks whether Anju is married, she replies him yes. In the middle of their conversation, a woman asks him “I need your purse” (Malladi, 2002,p.04).

“Namaste,” his wife said, trying to figure out how her husband would know me. She looked at Prakash quizzically and he blurted a few disjointed words, saying nothing, confusing everything.

“I knew Prakash a long time ago,” I said easily, enjoying his discomfort.

“Ah,” his wife said, and we all stood together in uncomfortable silence.

Unable to stand it any longer, I made my excuses by saying, “I should be going,” before hurrying away. (Malladi, 2002,p.04).

Another incident which haunts Anju’s life is the impact of Methyl isocyanate gas accident which has caused her son Amar’s lungs infection. Anjali and Sandeep have consulted many specialists but it is helpless. Amar couldn't get enough oxygen. The twelve year old boy Amar faces death, even though his mother has tried everything to save his life. At that moment also, Anjali expresses courageously her emotions in a practical way. “I smiled through the pain.” He wanted a breath of a fresh air, “I said”. (Malladi, 2006,p.01)

In both her relationships she stands as a self reliant person. Her life comes to a standstill when she meets her ex-husband. Though there were a lot of imperfections in her life she tried to perfect it with her decisions. Her optimistic outlook paved the way for success.

Dependent women are not empowered women. Komal, Anjali's sister in law who is a young widow lives with her brother Sandeep and his wife Anjali. Komal depends Anjali and Sandeep for the rest of her life. Komal who lacks in education, often involves in gossiping along with her neighbours, argues with Anjali for silly things that makes her frustrated. “Komal had been living with us ever since her husband died five years ago. Sandeep had told me she had no place to go and didn't ask for my permission before he invited her to stay with us. He had consulted with me, but what I had to say was immaterial. Komal really had no place to go.” (Malladi, 2006,p.05)

Anjali accepts Komal and understands her situation. But on the other hand Komal treats Anjali as the normal mother in law treats. “you should have been home an hour earlier”, she bellowed, as soon as I took my Kohlapuri slippers off on the wide veranda. “Do you think I'm the maid in this house?” she demanded. (Malladi, 2006,p.05) Anju does not respond her as she has to perform multiple roles like a wife, a mother, an employ, a friend etc. She has learned early on that Komal had a knack for asking rhetorical questions. This shows Anjali's maturity which she has attained through education. She transcends herself as an empowered woman. It is perseverance and self assertiveness that showcases her unique personality. If Komal has obtained education she wouldn't have treated Anjali in such a way.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said: “If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”(Qtd in ‘African Proverb’). Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives. Education plays a very significant role in every one's life. Even though she undergoes anxiety and depression both in her family and occupation, it is education that helps her to reach the pinnacle of glory.

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