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Representation of Women Protagonists in the Novels, The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi and Goddess of Fire by Bharti Kirchner.

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ABSTRACT: The article discusses the women protagonists of two novels, *The Mango Season* by Amulya Malladi and *Goddess of Fire* by Bharti Kirchner. Priya is a modern woman who has fallen in love with an American man and she is about to stun her family back home about that. Meena is rescued by a British officer, eventually finds the purpose of her life. Priya overcomes the hurdles and finally reveals the news of her engagement, to which, her family consents. Meena aka Maria attains an important status in the Company but succumbs to conspiracy and heartbreak. The two protagonists journey is rendered beautifully, by the Diaspora novelists in these gripping and compelling narratives.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, suitor, culinary, bloodline, psyche.

The paper intends to study two contrasting representations Indian women by two Indian Diaspora writers, Amulya Malladi and Bharti Kirchner. Literature, as an art form, tries to capture the method of incessant evolution of our society. This change is often brought about by the variations in the environmental factors affecting human life experience. The significance of literature is in extrapolating the direction of such change which, in turn, would indicate any positive or negative progression in the context of human evolution. This article aims at studying the two novels of contemporary woman Diaspora novelists namely, *The Mango Season* by Amulya Malladi and *Goddess of Fire* by Bharti Kirchner. These novels try to explore the position of women in our society is reliant on multiple factors, as well as the trials and the struggles involved in it.

Amulya Malladi is a renowned author of eight novels, including *A Breath of Fresh Air*, *The Sound of Language*, and *The Mango Season*. Her books have been translated into several languages, including Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Danish, Romanian, Serbian, and other languages. Currently living in California, she is a Danish citizen who was born and raised in India

India-born author Amulya Malladi's novel *The Mango Season* (2003) is set over the events of a few days in the southern India city of Hyderabad. The protagonist Priya Rao, a twenty-seven-year-old Indian woman IT professional returning from United States after seven years, having worked in Silicon Valley the past three years, to her native Hyderabad, is in a moment of reckoning. It is the woman as the central character of the novel, narrated in first person. Priya's mother, Radha (Ma) and her father, Nana, persuade her to keep up with their family values and fulfill their expectations. As typical Indian parents, who would ask their daughter while flying abroad, to follow the basic rules of maintaining an Indian diet, to be parsimonious and above all to not to venture any affairs with foreign men. Unfortunately Priya falls for Nick, a kind-hearted American. She lives with him in San Francisco. She worries this misadventure might ruin her family structure and her affiliation with it, she prefers her engagement to be a secret until she reaches home.

It is summertime in India, which is marked by the mango fruit and its seasonal culinary preparations. Priya is pre-occupied about her moment of a major decision-making situation, as she is on the verge of breaking the news of her engagement with an American Nick Collins to her traditional family. After her life at the United States for the past

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seven years, Priya is shocked at the domestic untidiness and is about to bring her traditional Brahmin family down with her secret tryst with an American man. Returning to India is a crushing experience to Priya. Her childhood summer was all about mangoes—ripe, sweet mangoes, replete with juices that drenched the chin, hands, and neck. But after all those time away, she is strained by the hot Indian summer, tormented too much to bear. The streets feel unclean, surroundings feel strange to her. The local culinary recipes, which is just a tip of an iceberg of a long-lasting Indian tradition, summon her. She prefers the American environment to Indian setting. Priya is handed with a gargantuan task of a life-altering twist to her family, which is immersed itself in tradition and a demands her to toe along to its lines of the society, by marrying an suitable local boy. The grandfather stresses over the purity of bloodline. The societal expectations and traditions are the villains in this novel. It's the family versus the individual aspirations that are at odds here.

It is also a commentary over the cultural differences between her homeland and America. The sole purpose of her visit to grand parents' house is to be a part of exciting mango seasonal activities. All she experiences is an unfriendly weather and a nauseating unclean lifestyle. The mango season is a time where the mangoes are marinated into pickles which are preserved and used throughout the coming year by the family. It is also a season of marriages too. A time when all the family women come together for a fun time, laugh, banter over the pickling of tender mangoes. The author details the different south Indian recipes of mango pickles like Avakai, pappu etc in each chapter. Amidst her parents' doubt as to why Priya is yet to to a suitor, priya is asked to take part in a traditional bride interview, where the groom's family accepts the girl as the bride. Time runs out for her as she prepares for the final showdown, as she is about to disclose the frightful news. Meanwhile the e-mails from Nick stop unreasonably only to escalate her anxiety. She is also aghast at her family's scorn about an inter-state marriage in their family. Finally when she unburdens her heart about her American engagement, though startled at first, her family complies with her daring decision. Later she delivers the closing cultural shock to the traditional family that Nick is not white, but an African-American man.

Priya represents a sensitive girl who is submissive to the delicate feeling of love, yet is consistent with her family sentiments. She is neither capable of cutting her ties with family, nor break her promise to Nick. She finds the societal expectation too much to control yet withstands the test of patience and wins over her family with her sincerity. While Priya is successful in striking balance to her marital and family life, Meena of 'Goddess of Fire' leads a miraculous journey from a survivor to the position of a ruler.

Bharti Kirchner is the author of eleven books— seven critically acclaimed novels and four cookbooks and several short pieces for magazines and newspapers. Her novel, Goddess of Fire, was a blend of historical accuracy and exploration of human psyche. Her earlier novels include Tulip Season, Pastries: A Novel of Desserts and Discoveries, Darjeeling, Sharmila's Book, and Shiva Dancing.

History is retold from the woman perspective in the novel The Goddess of Fire. That a British officer named Job, in 1684, rescued a seventeen year old widow from her jumping into her husband's funeral pyre custom in Bengal, later married her is history. The novelist narrates the story from a woman's perspective providing insights and interpretations to the social and professional struggles of a survivor. While the process of Meena transforming herself into Maria, is no less than a fairy tale, her determination to fight the societal shackles which started from escaping the pyre and climbing the job ladder by becoming an important person in the East Indian Company, is as much real as it is hard to believe. Forced into exile, they retreat to Hooghly, along the banks of the Ganges. Here Maria thinks of creating a shelter for the people living in the villages nearby. Slowly, starting a new life as a average kitchen maid, she fights the circumstances and adversaries to rise through the ranks of the British East India Company and to found the great city then known as Calcutta, becomes a story more certainly magical than to be real. Her journey is not entirely colourful, but with grey areas, as she finds her family members pay the price for her breaking the Sati custom. Ultimately she becomes a victim of conspiracy. No one comes out unharmed in this fateful game of life. But the details and depth that is achieved by the novelist lifts the whole novel into a evocative experience. Kirchner adds the emotional quotient to Maria's turmoil and

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turbulences, ranging from coping with environment in the 'factory,' to her adoration of Job as a gentleman and the subsequent heartbreak, when she realizes that he is not who she thinks, makes this novel compelling and mesmerizing. Amulya malladi focuses on a woman's experience of a grave moment of her life and her success in facing it, providing it with all the details about American and Indian setting in her novel, *The Mango Season*. Priya stands for a global woman who is courageous enough to listen to her heart's voice and yet be successful in making her family accept her decision. She has the society as her nemesis. She is apprehensive about the foreboding Indian society, which is yet to realize the freedom deserved by a woman. This novel is also a document about the under-development of third-world countries like India. Priya is modern character while Meena is historical. Bharti kirchner takes up a historical event and paints it, in her own hue, in her novel, *Goddess of Fire*. The voice of woman is heard clearly telling her history. She adds emotional and circumstantial flesh to the skeleton story of Meena's evolution into Maria. Meena is critical about a society which deems a woman's life worthless without her husband. It is her sheer willpower that makes her to overcome the obstacles and make the colonialists to treat the natives with less disdain. Both novelists lend credibility to their protagonists. Both main characters are credible and connectable. In this regard we can say that Amulya malladi and Bharti Kirchner have given justice to the protagonists of their novels.

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