SYMBOLS CONTAINED IN THE CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL THE MANGO SEASON BY AMULYA MALLADI

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ABSTRACT

The study "Symbols Contained in the Characters of the Mango Season Novel by Amulya Malladi" aims to uncover the secret meaning the author intended to express through the symbols he used to create his work. In this book, the sign analysis is done using the Objective technique. This study aims to define the symbols used in the book The Mango Season. The research in this study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology and focuses on the significance of symbols. While the description of symbols connected to the characters in this study uses Kennedy's theory which divides them into object symbols. Reading and recording methods were utilized in this study to acquire data. Primary and secondary data from the book The Mango Season were used. Data analysis was done by reading and comprehending the entire novel The Mango Season, creating a synopsis, explaining how a symbol appears at a crucial point in order to understand what it means, and drawing conclusions. The findings of this study suggest that there are multiple actual instances of a symbol that the novel's author is attempting to communicate through peculiar things that the book's readers might not be aware of. Among them is a scene in which Priya, a character, encounters the cultural disparity while in America.

Keywords: Meaning, Symbol, Objective, Descriptive Qualitative

INTRODUCTION

Humans and symbols in life are closely related. Humans in living their lives cannot be separated from symbols. Through symbols, humans can run more efficiently with their life processes. Besides, humans can also communicate with each other through symbols so that with the intermediary of symbols, humans can create a better understanding of the meanings of world life.

Symbols based on Landy (1972, p. 271) is something that contains more meaning than it actually does. In a literary work, symbols can be words, phrases, scenes or episodes and also actions that lead to something that can be seen directly but also lead to other things. Further in his explanation, Landy (1972, pp. 272–273) says that sometimes the author summarizes or even clarifies a situation or idea into a symbolic scene and does not change the essential meaning of the story.

Symbol generally means symbol or sign. Symbols are the most widely used signs in language where language activities are carried out by humans all the time. For example, in the life of the Indonesian people in the event of a death, the community will put up a yellow flag around the funeral home as a sign or symbol to convey the message that someone has died in the house.

Symbols are also found in literary works where there is wisdom in meaning if readers and literary researchers dig deeper into the literary work. The discussion of symbols is contained in the

object of this research through characters, situations, conversations contained in the novel The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi.

The symbols in this novel are sown by the author through culture, tradition, and family. This novel presents many symbols that are full of meaning through its character named Priya Rao where she pursues her education and career in America for seven years. This is not the only reason Priya left her homeland, but with this pretext she escaped from the binding arranged marriage tradition of her family's caste, the Telugu Brahmins.

Based on the phenomenon that researchers took from the novel The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi, this is the basis for choosing the research title because there is symbol wisdom in it. So that researchers are interested in conducting research on this novel by taking the title Symbols Contained in the Novel Characters of The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi.

There are methods or techniques used by the author to describe the characters in the story. According to Abrams in Lidiawati (2021) the method of describing characters in narrative works is divided into two, namely showing and telling. Showing or also called the dramatic method is a description technique in which the author displays the character's personality from the character's speech, actions, thoughts, feelings, and inner responses to events. The author leaves this method entirely to the reader to interpret the motives and characterizations contained in speech and action. Telling is a technique of characterization by describing and evaluating the motives and qualities of characterization directly by the author.

This research aims to reveal two problems, namely (1) Describing the description of the characters portrayed by the author in the novel The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi. (2) Describe the symbols connected to the characters in the novel The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi.

DATA SOURCE

The data source in this study uses the novel The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi. The novel was published in 2003 in the United States by Ballantine Books with 229 pages in English. The focus of this research is to analyze the description of the characters portrayed by the author and the symbols connected to the characters in the novel.

METHODS

The method used in this research is a qualitative method which is used to find out or describe the reality of the events under study so that it is easier to get objective data. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is research that involves the use and collection of various empirical case study materials, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observations, history, interactions, and visual texts that explain habits and problematic moments, as well as meaning in individual lives. (Wahyuni, 2015, p. 2). Based on the understanding of these experts, it can be seen that qualitative research is a natural research and the data produced is descriptive.

This research uses an objective approach. An objective approach is one that is within the scope of the work itself. According to Abrams (2013) the objective approach is an approach that focuses on studying literary works singularly and is not influenced by extrinsic factors such as the environment, writers and readers. Things outside the literary work, although still related to the literary work, are considered unnecessary for consideration in analyzing literary works. The author and objective reality

are considered as supporting elements and therefore do not need to be ignored. Thus, the objective approach is very strict in maintaining the principle of autonomy of literary works in its practice.

The technique used in this research is the read and write technique. This technique focuses on recording a data from the data that has been read. Reading in scientific work is done by giving attention that is really focused on the object (Ratna, 2010).

The stages carried out in this technique are as follows:

1. Reading technique was carried out by reading the entire content of the 1984 novel carefully and thoroughly.
2. Writing technique, after the data is found from the reading results, the data needed is recorded and then analyzed on the data.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Character

Character is a term that is often used in the world of fiction. Characters are created by literary authors through various approaches, including physical descriptions, dialog, actions, and thoughts of the characters. The interactions and conflicts between these characters bring the story to life and provide readers with a powerful reading experience.

Characters in literary works play an important role in conveying the author's themes, values, and messages to the reader. They can serve as representations of society, representations of internal or external conflicts, or representations of different perspectives of the story. Thus, it is concluded that character can mean the actor of the story and can also mean characterization. This is in line with Abrams' (2013, p. 48) opinion that characters are people presented in a dramatic or narrative work who are interpreted by readers as having certain moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities through inferences from what is expressed in speech and done in action.

Characterization

According to Nurgiyantoro (2010, p. 166) the term characterization is broader in meaning than character and characterization because it includes who the characters are, how they are characterized and their placement and portrayal in the story so as to provide a clear picture to the reader. Based on the opinions of the experts above, it can be concluded that characters are actors or people who play a role in the story with moral qualities attached to them, while characterization is the portrayal of story actors who are clearly described to the reader.

There are methods or techniques used by the author to describe the characters in the story. According to Abrams (2013, p. 49) the method of characterization in narrative works is divided into two, namely showing and telling. Showing or also called the dramatic method is a description technique in which the author displays the character's personality from the character's speech, actions, thoughts, feelings, and inner responses to events. The author leaves this method entirely to the reader to interpret the motives and characterizations contained in speech and action. Telling is a technique of characterization by describing and evaluating the motives and qualities of characterization directly by the author.

Symbol

Symbols according to Noth (1995, p. 115) in a broad sense are equations of signs while in a narrower sense symbols are defined as a class of signs grouped into three categories namely symbols as conventional signs, symbols as types of icon signs, and symbols as connotation signs. According to Abrams, a symbol in a broad sense is anything that signifies something else, which means that all words are symbols. Meanwhile, in the literary sense, according to him, the term symbol is only applied to words or phrases that signify an object or event that signifies something (Abrams, 2013, p. 392). According to Kennedy (2005, pp. 236–238) symbols in literature refer to something that suggests more than its literal meaning. Symbols are divided into: object symbols in fiction tend to be visible or a word description that is able to make us imagine it; character symbols feature a brief cameo that is not fully known and makes the character mysterious, and; action symbols that are a gesture of greater meaning than usual or in the sense of a symbol that has more meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the discussion that will answer the problem formulation regarding the description of the characters portrayed by the author and the symbols connected to the characters in the novel *The Mango Season* by Amulya Malladi.

1. Description of Characters Described by the Author

a) Priya Rao

Data 1

I had escaped arranged marriage by coming to the United States to do a master's in Computer Sciences at Texas A&M, ... by inventing several excuses not to go to India. Now, seven years later, I had run out of excuses. (Malladi, 2003, p. 8)

Priya is an Indian woman who studied for a master's degree in Computer Science at Texas A&M and easily found a job in Silicon Valley. She used this as an excuse to avoid her family's traditional arranged marriage. But now, after seven years in America she is running out of excuses and needs to return to her homeland.

Data 2

I was unmarried, I was twenty-seven, and sometime soon she was going to find out I was living in sin with the foreigner I intended to marry. Life would have been easier if I had fallen in love with a nice Indian Brahmin boy-... (Malladi, 2003, p. 19)

Priya is twenty-seven years old and unmarried but the fact that she has been living with her American lover scares her mother who considers it a sin. Priya's inner self tells her that life will be easier if she marries an Indian man of her mother's choice who is selected like a catalog or better not to fall in love at all.

Data 3

I JUST WISH THEY KNEW I WASN'T SINGLE- ..., WE'RE GOING TO GO MANGO PICKLE MAKING AT AMMAMMA'S HOUSE AND I THINK I COULD TELL THEM THEN. I WISH YOU WERE HERE. NO, THAT ISN'T TRUE, I WISH I WASN'T HERE. (Malladi, 2003, p. 19)

The data above is an email that Priya sends to her American boyfriend Nick. Priya wishes Nick was with her at the traditional mango pickle making event to face her family and tell them the

truth that Priya is in a relationship with Nick. Even her mind tells her that she wishes she wasn't in India.

Data 4

LOOKING FOR APPROVAL. SOME KIND OF OKAY SIGN FOR MY MARRIAGE PLANS. I NEED THEM TO SAY, "YES, IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR YOU TO MARRY THE MAN YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH." ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 20)

Priya desperately hoped that her family would understand what she wanted; to give her approval for her wedding plans with Nick. She wanted her family to say "Yes, you can marry the man you love."

Data 5

"What are you looking forward to the most?" Nick asked, as we were parked on the 101-South carpool lane on our way to the San Francisco International Airport. "HAPPINESS," I said without hesitation. (Malladi, 2003, p. 8)

What Priya yearns for and wants is happiness as she says when asked by Nick what she is looking forward to the most. Thus referring to their relationship which Priya will soon announce to her family in the hope that they will give her their blessing.

Data 6

"Yes," Sowmya said. "You are more . . . stronger. You stand by your opinions a lot more than you used to and you don't let your Thatha get away with everything." (Malladi, 2003, p. 76)

Based on Sowmya's words, she said that Priya is now stronger in dealing with problems with her family. She can defend her opinion by not giving in to *Thatha*.

Data 7

"What are you looking forward to the most?" Nick asked,
...HAPPINESS was a concept. A feeling. Triumph over a sibling. I had forgotten all about HAPPINESS until Nick's rather pertinent question. (Malladi, 2003, p. 9)

Priya considers happiness a concept and a feeling like a victory over a sibling until she feels she has forgotten all about her happiness when Nick's relevant question is posed to Priya; what do you crave most?

Data 8

I was doing that complaining-about-India thing that all of us America-returned Indians do. I had lived here for twenty years, yet seven years later, the place was a hellhole. ... and I love my country. (Malladi, 2003, p. 19)

Priya felt the discomfort of returning to India after seven years of pursuing her education and career in America, even though she had grown up in her country for twenty years. Any Indian returning to America would feel the same way. No matter how much he complains about India, he still loves his homeland.

Data 9

... but I was angry and furious at being treated like a five-year-old. I was a twenty-seven-year-old woman; I was not a child. When would they learn that? And then again, when would I learn to act my age?.... (Malladi, 2003, p. 68)

Twenty-seven-year-old Priya always felt treated like a child by her mother and she did not like that. Whatever her opinion was when arguing with her family would not be taken well by her mother.

Data 10

... but I wanted her to accept me the way I was, not the way she envisioned me to be. I wanted her to love Priya the person, not Priya the daughter who didn't live outside of her imagination. (Malladi, 2003, p. 69)

Priya feels the need to be recognized/accepted/loved for who she is as a child, not what her mother imagines her to be. Her mother demands more of Priya according to what she imagines to be an obedient child without considering Priya's feelings/desires.

Data 11

I waved back, the brave soldier that I was, and walked toward the plane that was going to take me home to India, mangoes, and hopefully HAPPINESS. (Malladi, 2003, p. 10)

All Priya could think about when she arrived at her home in India was mangoes and especially the happiness she wished for.

Data 12

... He was well educated, came from a good family, made good money-if my parents were to arrange my marriage it would be to someone like him, only he would be Indian and a Telugu Brahmin. (Malladi, 2003, p. 28)

Priya thought that if only her family could accept Nick on his other merits; educated, from a good family, and financially well-off. But with Priya's parents' tradition binding, they would only marry her off to an Indian man from the *Telugu Brahmin* caste.

Data 13

Independence was not just a word to me, I wanted to stand on my own two feet, not run back to Thatha and Nanna at the first sign of trouble, financial or otherwise. (Malladi, 2003, p. 75)

Priya has a promise to herself that shows that she is an independent woman. She does not want to continue to depend on her family, especially in a financial context. Priya is a person who holds the principle of independence which is not just a word, but she must be able to be responsible for it.

Data 14

"I'll tell them tomorrow," I lied yet again. I had no intentions of telling them about Nick anymore. I couldn't.(Malladi, 2003, p. 102)

Priya often lied to Nick saying that she would tell her family about their relationship as soon as possible and that she would not commit arranged marriage. However, Priya no longer had any intention of telling her family about Nick after she found out that he was going to carry out the arranged marriage tradition that was given to Priya simultaneously.

Based on the data describing Priya's selfhood above, which is not conveyed directly by the author of the story, but by the character in the story, Priya herself. Thus, Priya's character uses the method of character *showing* which can be known through what is described by Priya's words and actions which contain the thoughts, feelings, and inner responses of the character.

b) Nicholas Collin

Data 15

When Nick dropped me off at the international terminal he made sure I had my papers and passport. Careful, caring accountant Nick! (Malladi, 2003, p. 9)

Nick's action of escorting Priya to the international terminal by making sure she has her papers and passport with her shows that Nick has a careful and caring attitude towards Priya and their relationship.

Data 16

"Tell them I'm a Brahmin from Tennessee," Nick had joked when I told him that my family would most likely perform death rituals for me if we were to get married. (Malladi, 2003, p. 28)

As bad as Priya's thoughts were about the possibilities that her family would do to Priya and Nick's relationship, such as holding a ritual death ceremony for Priya if she married Nick. But Nick always calmed and consoled Priya by joking to her that he too was a *Brahmin* from *Tennesse*.

Data 17

...I HAVE TO ADMIT A PART OF ME IS/WAS AFRAID THAT YOUR FAMILY WILL/WOULD CONVINCE YOU TO MARRY A NICE INDIAN BOY. RATIONALLY, I KNOW YOU'RE COMING HOME TO ME... (Malladi, 2003, p. 42)

Based on what Nick said in the email sent to Priya, Nick had concerns that Priya's family would convince him to marry an Indian man. Nick has faith that Priya will return to him and it is rational for Nick.

Data 18

"He's nice, a good guy. An accountant, ... he plays racquetball; it's like squash. You'd like him. ...He's tall, dark, and handsome, at least I think so. He's stubborn, hates long lines, does this crazy thing when he has the hiccups." (Malladi, 2003, p. 140)

The data is what Priya said to her younger brother Nate that Nick is a good man and he is an accountant who likes racquetball. Nick has physical characteristics: tall, dark skinned, and handsome according to Priya. He is stubborn, hates long lines, does crazy things when he hiccups, and all of that makes Priya fall in love with him.

Based on the data describing Nick's selfhood through what he says, does, and the description of his physical characteristics conveyed by Priya's character, it shows that the author uses the *showing* method in describing Nick's character.

c) *Nana* (Priya's father)

Data 19

"You will leave someday," he would say. "She is all I have got and I don't want to eat at some cheap Udupi restaurant for the rest of my life. She is right and you are wrong-always, end of discussion." (Malladi, 2003, p. 16)

Nana is a wise father, loving to his family, and always supportive of his wife. This can be seen from what he said to Priya "Your mother was right and you were wrong"; that one day his children will leave him because of marriage and he has nothing left but his wife who is always there for him.

Data 20

My father disliked my grandfather and disliked him immensely. Nanna always had a tough time fitting into my mother's family, but he tried and I commended him for that. (Malladi, 2003, p. 47)

Based on what Priya said, her father disliked Priya's grandfather. He always had difficulty adjusting to Priya's mother's family, but he still tried to adapt well and that made Priya respect his father. This shows that *Nana* has a wise attitude in respecting the family.

Data 21

Nanna was a tall, lean man and his skin was dark... He wore a small gray moustache. As his hair was growing white, he looked dignified and handsome. ...I think he liked being in his fifties and looked forward to being sixty. (Malladi, 2003, p. 83)

Based on what Priya said, *Nana* is tall and thin with dark skin. *Nana* has a thin gray mustache and his white hair looks dignified and handsome. *Nana is* happy at the age of 50 and will be heading towards 60.

Data 22

Nanna always wanted to be a good father. I think it was one of the goals of his life. He probably had it written down somewhere: ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 163)

Based on what Priya thinks, *Nana* wants to be a good father and that is one of her goals in life. Other goals are: saving for retirement at the age of sixty, avoiding arguments with his wife, marrying off Priya before becoming an old maid, and dying peacefully.

Data 23

Nanna was a meticulous man. When he packed something, it was done neatly and tightly. If he planned a vacation, he would plan everything, leaving nothing to chance. He made notes constantly. (Malladi, 2003, p. 164)

Nana is a meticulous person. Anything she does will be neat and she will prepare everything very nicely.

Data 24

A father's job according to my father was to keep his children happy. (Malladi, 2003, p. 164)

Nana is a father who loves his children very much and according to him, a father's job is to always make his children happy.

Based on the data contained in *Nana's* character, there is a depiction of her physical self through Priya's words and a depiction of her nature through her actions. This shows that to reveal *Nana'*s character, the author uses the *showing* method.

d) *Ma* (Mrs. Priya)

Data 25

"You go to America and you want to look like those Christian girls. Why, what is wrong with our way? Doesn't a girl look nice with long, oiled hair with flowers in it? (Malladi, 2003, p. 12)

Ma dislikes all things American as she says by criticizing Priya for imitating a Christian girl. *Ma* thinks women will be beautiful with long oiled hair and wearing flowers. Priya, on the other hand, does not do things that fit *Ma's* criteria.

Data 26

"Eight rupees," she said, ... "Eight-fifty," he countered. "Eight," she prodded and the man made a "since-you-twist-my-arm" face, giving in to her bargaining skills. (Malladi, 2003, p. 14)

*Ma'*s stubbornness can be seen from the incident when bargaining for the price of mangoes with the merchant. She stubbornly wanted to pay eight *rupees* while the merchant offered eight and a half *rupees,* but the merchant lost to *Ma'*s bargaining skills.

Data 27

she explained. If it works out, you will be married and happy. It will be a load off my chest. An unmarried daughter. . . What must the neighbors think?" (Malladi, 2003, p. 24)

Ma is the one who cares about what the neighbors think about Priya being unmarried.

Data 28

According to her, a woman was happy only if she was married. She had not once asked me if I was happy now. The question was moot; how could I be happy if I wasn't married? (Malladi, 2003, p. 34)

Ma has a different concept from Priya where she is more concerned with her own ego. She thinks that the concept of happiness will come after marriage. She does not ask whether Priya is currently happy or not and they debate the question that outlines Priya's marriage problems, namely how a woman will be happy if she is not married.

Data 29

A boy could get a good wife irrespective of how he looked if he was financially viable; for a woman, however, physical appearance was important ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 27)

Ma argues that even if a man is physically unattractive but financially well-supported, he can freely get even a perfectly beautiful woman. But on the contrary, women are required to be perfect if they want to get a perfect husband.

Data 30

Ma blamed her weight problem on birth control pills. ... she would accuse, as if eating mountains of white rice with lots of fat smeared on it was not responsible for the abundance of fat tissue in her body. (Malladi, 2003, p. 28)

Ma has the trait of blaming others without self-introspection. It can be seen in Priya's statement that *Ma* blames birth control pills for her weight and overlooks the fact that she consumes a lot of rice.

Based on the data describing *Ma'*s selfhood above, the author uses the *showing* method in describing this character. This can be seen through *Ma's* actions, words, thoughts, as well as things about *Ma'*s selfhood described by Priya's character.

e) *Thatha* (Priya's grandfather)

Data 31

...my illustrious and narrow-minded Thatha said, was not for women of our class...With her education, at best, she could be a secretary or a clerk...Those were careers and jobs for people with a lower socioeconomic status than his. (Malladi, 2003, p. 32)

Based on what Priya revealed, *Thatha* has a narrow mind and limits the desires of her daughter who dreams of freedom in her life. However, *Thatha* always limited her daughter's dreams with a

caste wall where anything her daughter did would be appropriate or not based on the caste tradition. For example, a job as a secretary is only for castes lower than *Telugu Brahmins*.

Data 32

You were measured in heaven by the blood of your heirs and Thatha didn't want to fall short. At his age, where life was behind him, it was more important than ever that the Somayajula family name be carried on. (Malladi, 2003, p. 47)

Based on the data revealed by Priya, *Thatha* holds a firm belief that charity in heaven will be measured by the blood of the heir. Thus, *Thatha* is very concerned about the *Somayajula* clan being preserved through the lineage to his grandchildren despite his age.

Data 33

Thatha was a man from an era long gone. A white burly moustache on his creased face made him look distinguished and his eyes were bright as if he couldn't wait for the next day. (Malladi, 2003, p. 47)

According to Priya, *Thatha was* very much loved by her. *Thatha* is an old-fashioned person, she has a white moustache on her wrinkled face and has beautiful eyes.

Data 34

... "Love isn't all that it is cracked up to be, Priya. Marriage needs a lot more than love." ... "You fall in love later," he said with a patriarchal wave of his hand, "after you get married and have children" ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 49)

Based on what *Thatha* argued, marriage requires more than just love. She tells Priya to fall in love after having children. This shows that *Thatha* has a disposition that prioritizes duty over happiness.

Data 35

Thatha spoke up, and exhibited his ignorance. "All white people do is exploit the others. And the black people kill. That country is just . . . no family values, nothing. All the time they get divorced." (Malladi, 2003, p. 64)

Thatha's thinking based on what she said illustrates her narrow way of thinking about white and black people in the west.

Data 36

"...but, Thatha, you don't accept Neelima because she comes from another state. You don't accept Indians and you expect me to believe I'm accepted in this society..." (Malladi, 2003, p. 66)

Based on what Priya says, *Thatha* has a trait where her words are not accountable to her. She thinks that India will accept her people but she doesn't do the same for her daughter-in-law Neelima because she comes from a different caste.

Data 37

"Now don't foranget to call . . . often. . . as long as you have the money," Thatha told me. "And if you need money, you are really short, then call. . . . I will send you some." (Malladi, 2003, p. 75)

Despite her stubborn thinking, *Thatha* has a caring attitude towards Priya, in that *Thatha* loves Priya as her granddaughter.

Based on the data containing *Thatha's* selfhood above, it can be seen from his traits described through his speech and thoughts and his physical description conveyed by Priya's character. It can be concluded that *Thatha* uses the *showing* method to describe his character's selfhood.

f) Sowmya

Data 38

The subjects of dowry and marriage were a soft spot for Sowmya. She had been twenty-seven years old for the past three years and those "three years" made her feel a little less like an old maid. (Malladi, 2003, p. 31)

Sowmya was a woman in her late 20s and unmarried. She is not confident about her physical appearance. She is resigned to her situation which makes her assume that her dowry will be small.

Data 39.

... "Very nice. If this works out. . . a big burden will be off our heads. I can't wait for this marriage to take place. Ten years. . . ten long years. . . Now I want to see my Sowmya married." (Malladi, 2003, p. 12)

Based on *Ammamma* or Sowmya's mother's words above, it shows that Sowmya was a burden to her because she had not yet married. When the proposal for Sowmya's marriage was successful, her parents, especially her mother, were happy because the burden that had been weighing on her would soon be married.

Data 40

"I am going to change my life, Priya. I am going to change it. I am not just going to sit down and let them do what they want. . . . I am going to decide what I want to do." (Malladi, 2003, p. 144)

After going through several conflicts in her life, Sowmya had a desire to change her life. She will decide what she wants to do and doesn't want to continue following her parents' wishes that make her feel inferior.

Data 41

Sowmya would be considered plump; she wore thick glasses and had dark skin-... Her hair was curly and thin and she was not a beauty by anyone's standards. But what no one saw was that Sowmya's heart was as big as the pot.... (Malladi, 2003, p. 32)

Despite being unattractive from any perspective and standard; fat, wearing thick glasses, dark skin, thin curly hair, Sowmya has a big heart.

Data 42

Women like Sowmya get caught in no-man's-land. ... someone who has been rejected by numerous suitors for being less qualified. (Malladi, 2003, p. 32)

Sowmya has been rejected by many applicants because of her qualifications which are considered less qualified or do not meet the standards of beauty/perfection of a woman in the eyes of the applicants.

Data 43

First, it had been because she was overweight and then because her hair was falling out ... She took care of Ammamma and Thatha, ran their house for them, and they treated her as if she were a burden. (Malladi, 2003, p. 46)

Based on Priya's account, Sowmya has the physical features that her parents *Thatha* and *Ammamma* were worried about: overweight and hair loss. Sowmya is always there for her parents in fulfilling her duties as a child, but she is treated as a burden to her parents because they are tired of Sowmya's unsuccessful arranged marriages.

Data 44

The sad part of it was that Sowmya accepted it as her fate and did nothing to change any part of it and write her own destiny. She probably didn't fantasize anymore, didn't even dream about a husband and family anymore ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 32)

Sowmya surrendered to the fate of a life that she could not manage on her own. She could no longer envision the husband or family of her dreams.

Data 45

Yeah, right! Poor Sowmya, caught in a society where she couldn't step out of the house and couldn't stay in. (Malladi, 2003, p. 44)

Based on the data above, this is an inner conflict that rages in Sowmya's life, where she can only surrender to circumstances that are not in her favor.

Data 46

"And he wants his wife to take care of his old parents. Haven't I done enough? How many people do I need to take care of? What about me? Who will take care of me?" The tears fell. (Malladi, 2003, p. 125)

Sowmya's inner self shows that she is tired of looking after her parents. When she meets a suitor who is serious about marrying her, he demands a dowry and asks Sowmya to look after her elderly parents. Meanwhile, Sowmya herself wanted to be taken care of and wanted someone to understand her inner desires.

Based on the data of Sowmya's character above, which contains the character's selfhood through speech, actions, inner responses and what Priya says about her physical and psychological state, it shows that Sowmya's characterization uses the *showing* method.

2. Symbols Connected to Characters

a) Object Symbol

Data 47

Summer, while I was growing up, was all about mangoes ... The smell of a ripe mango would still evoke my taste buds, my memories, and for a while I would be a child again ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 8)

Priya's memory of mangoes refers to summer in India during her teenage years. Mangoes symbolize happiness for her and the memories of the sweet and sour mangoes she tasted as a child bring her back to that time.

Data 48

"...Men beat up their wives and the wives stick to their marriages. At least in America they have a way out. They can walk out of their sick marriages. Here people don't decide who they should marry..." (Malladi, 2003, p. 66)

India and America for Priya; America symbolizes freedom where at least women can find solutions to unhealthy married life. India, on the other hand, for her symbolizes the restricted rights of women such as arranged marriages that are still strong in the *Brahmin* caste tradition.

Data 49

"You only live in the States. It is not your country. They will never accept you. You will always be an outsider there, a dark person. Here they will accept you and don't use foul language in this house," Thatha said. (Malladi, 2003, p. 66)

India and America for *Thatha*; America symbolizes evil and corrupt people where according to him Indians will not be accepted in America unlike the other way around, India will always accept its people.

Data 50

"All this is the influence of America," Ma concluded. "You were never such a bad or rude girl before." (Malladi, 2003, p. 69)

India and America for *Ma*. America symbolized a bad influence for Priya, as *Ma* argued that before Priya set foot in America she had never behaved rudely or disobeyed her mother.

Data 51

In Telugu, the word for girl is adapilla, where ada means theirs and pilla means girl. In essence, the creators of the language had followed the rules of society and deemed that a girl was never her parents', always the in-laws', ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 70)

A woman for *Telugu* Indian women; a daughter does not belong to the parents who gave birth and raised her, but she symbolizes a woman who will always belong to her in-laws and her future husband.

Data 52

Sowmya knew better than anyone that a daughter was a piece of property, something you unloaded after a certain point. Sowmya had already become excess baggage and my grandparents were waiting to get her married and out of their house. (Malladi, 2003, p. 70)

A woman to Sowmya; symbolizing a property to her parents, she is depicted as a burden to them because of an unsuccessful arranged marriage. Sowmya's parents are waiting for her to get married and take her away with her future husband.

Data 53

"But I'm not just a daughter, I am me," I said wearily, trying not to sound like a cliché. "No one seems to give a damn about me. Everyone is interested in their daughter, granddaughter . . ." (Malladi, 2003, p. 70)

A woman for Priya; Priya insists that she is herself. A woman for her symbolizes not only a child who is required to always be something imagined by parents and family expectations, but a woman with her own independence.

Data 54

"You stay out of it," Ma bellowed, and Sowmya immediately moved away from her. "She is my daughter and I will do as I want to do." (Malladi, 2003, p. 71)

A woman to *Ma*; a daughter to her symbolizes a child whose mother is free to do whatever she wants without regard to what her daughter wants.

Data 55

"You are too young to gain my respect and you have done nothing so far to gain it," she raged. "Respect! Children respect their parents...I am not your classmate or your friend that you can speak to me like this." (Malladi, 2003, p. 71)

The position of parents for *Ma*; symbolizes the highest position in the family hierarchy. Respect will only be earned by this highest position. Children are not entitled to the same respect because parents are not peers with whom they can communicate.

Data 56

The eternal problem! My mother wanted to be a textbook parent while I felt that I was old enough to warrant being treated as an equal ... (Malladi, 2003, p. 71)

Parents for Priya; Priya's parents, especially her mother who is often involved in conflicts with her, symbolize that her parents are the embodiment of parents in a mere written book where this kind of parental treatment does not show the same respect as what is done by children to them.

Data 57

It would have been imperative to have a male child, especially for Thatha, and it must have been pure torture to wait every month to see if she had a period or not. (Malladi, 2003, p. 78)

A boy symbolizes a pure-blooded heir to the *Thatha* family in the *Telugu Brahmin* caste. It is important to have a son to maintain the lineage of this caste.

Data 58

I spent so much time trying to get away and now I'm scared that I won't be allowed back in. They've always been my safety net. I have always been daughter, granddaughter, sister, niece just as I have been woman and fiancée. (Malladi, 2003, p. 140)

Family symbol; for Priya, her escape to America was to escape the demanding family traditions. But no matter how long she is away, she still returns to get the family's approval of her relationship with Nick. Priya sees her family as a safety net for her, she will continue to be a child, grandchild, sibling, niece, and just as much a woman and a fiancé. It makes her who she is and she cannot cut ties with her family. Based on the data, family symbolizes the unbreakable bond of the soul where there is found a safe place for her to return to.

b) Character Symbol

Data 59

"I'm sure you'll convince them otherwise," Nick said, and then hugged me. "You'll be fine. They'll yell and scream for a while and then . . . What can they do? You're a grown woman." (Malladi, 2003, p. 10)

Nick's behavior shows that he loves Priya with all his heart and assures Priya that Priya can make her family go along with his decision and they will live together. Although Nick is aware of his relationship with Priya and that it is unlikely that they will get the blessing of Priya's family as they are of course different countries, religions and castes. However, Nick remains loyal and supports Priya by giving her more time to tell her family about Nick. Based on Nick's portrayal, this character symbolizes loyalty and patience.

Data 60

"No," Sowmya said as she stood up. "No, we don't. If I had a choice, I would have gotten a job, gotten outside the house. Who knows, met someone. But Nanna wouldn't have it." (Malladi, 2003, p. 126)

Sowmya had no choice in her life. Although she is a scholar, she does not spend the rest of her life working or leaving the house, not even meeting any men because her parents do not want her to. Based on this data, Sowmya symbolizes one of the many Indian women who obeyed their parents' traditions and principles, such as arranged marriages in the *Brahmin* caste.

c) Action Symbol

Data 61

I had escaped arranged marriage by coming to the United States to do a master's in Computer Sciences at Texas A&M, ... by inventing several excuses not to go to India. Now, seven years later, I had run out of excuses. (Malladi, 2003, p. 8)

Priya's action of going to America for seven years to pursue her education and career has another purpose, which is to avoid her family's caste-bound arranged marriage. The action symbolizes Priya's escape.

Data 62

Cutting mangoes for making pickle is a skill that is honed over years of practice, ... wives and daughters were trained in cutting mangoes as they were in everything else that pertained to keeping order in the household. (Malladi, 2003, pp. 42-43)

Cutting mangoes in the tradition of making pickles symbolizes the skills of a woman, a *Brahmin* wife and daughter who must be honed and mastered as she looks after her own household.

Data 63

I celebrated Christmas and Thanksgiving with him and he celebrated Diwali and Ganesh Chaturthi with me. But we were hardly religious and all festivals on either side were about good food, spending time with friends and family, and alcohol. (Malladi, 2003, p. 117)

Celebrating the traditions of both countries; Priya and Nick celebrate *Thanksgiving, Diwali* and *Ganesh Chaturthi* together. They have no problem with different traditions. During festivals they celebrate by eating and drinking with friends and family in America. The different traditions celebrated by them symbolize the mutual respect in their relationship.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on symbols seen through the perspective of characters and characterizations in the novel The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi, the author concludes that the description of the characters depicted by the author is using Abrams' theory through the method of showing or depicted not directly by the author of the story but obtained from speech, actions, thoughts, feelings, and inner responses to events.

The author takes six characters to portray both physically, psychologically and through ideas. The characters are Priya who is depicted as twenty-seven years old and unmarried and argues for pursuing education in America to avoid an arranged marriage attached to her family's caste, the Telugu Brahmin caste; Nick, an American national, is depicted as Priya's lover who loves her very

much, is loyal and always supports her under any circumstances; Nana as Priya's father who has authority and is the family loving type; Ma as Priya's mother is portrayed as having an ego that imposes her will on Priya's marriage; Thatha as Priya's grandfather is portrayed as having outdated thinking where everything is bound by caste traditions; and Sowmya as Priya's aunt who is unattractive by anyone's standards and often fails in arranged marriages.

While the description of symbols connected to the characters in this study uses Kennedy's theory which divides them into object symbols, character symbols, and action symbols. There are 12 object symbols which include: the symbol of India and America for Priya, Thatha, and Ma; the symbol of a woman for Telugu Indian women, Sowmya, Priya, and Ma; the symbol of parental position for Ma and Priya; the symbol of a son's offspring, and; the symbol of family. There is 1 character symbol symbolized by Sowmya as a representation of one of most Indian women from the Telugu Brahmin caste who are subject to caste ties. There are 3 action symbols: Priya's action of going to America for seven years symbolizes an escape from arranged marriage; the act of cutting mangoes symbolizes a skill that Telugu Brahmin Indian women must master, and; depicted by Priya and Nick as mutual respect between differences symbolized by the act of celebrating two countries.

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