
**An Interpretation of Diaspora and Nostalgic Reminiscences in Amulya
Malladi's novel *The Sound of Language***

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Article Received: 10/01/2026

Article Accepted: 11/02/2026

Published Online: 12/02/2026

DOI: 10.47311/IJOES.2026.8.01.231

Abstract:

This paper analyses how Amulya Malladi's *The Sound of Language* focuses on nostalgia, acculturation, immigrant sensibility, and women's liberation in the host land. The lives of Afghan immigrants in Denmark are shown in the novel. Through the main character Raihana, Malladi examines the issues faced by immigrants and their methods of surviving in the foreign country. She flees to a refugee camp in Pakistan from war-torn Kabul. She hopes that Aamir, her spouse, will accompany her to the camp for refugees. However, the Taliban kill him. Her relatives Kabir and Layla grant her shelter in Denmark. Raihana had a rough first few days in Denmark. She learns beekeeping as an apprentice to Gunnar, an Englishman. After his wife Anna passed away, Gunnar, who lives a solitary existence, is persuaded by Raihana's companionship. She is taught Danish by him. Raihana undergoes a gradual transition during which she comes to terms with the changes in her life. She consents to the marriage that her relatives have arranged with Rafeeq, a Pakistani immigrant. Immigrants experience alienation in their new environment when they move to the host country. Their emotional yearning for the homeland is depicted in the novel. However, they have no desire to return and establish themselves in the host country. They can get over their sense of loneliness due to memories of their hometown. By analysing the past, individuals can overcome their issues and gain authority in the host country.

Keywords: Diaspora, Homeland, Nostalgia, Immigrants, Memory

Introduction:

Amulya Malladi holds a unique place in the corpus of Indian diaspora, as she writes about the experiences of immigrants in the later part of twentieth century. She is a member
of

the later generation of diasporic Indian women authors. She admits that because of her immigration and transcontinental experiences, she is a global citizen. Her novels are set against the backdrop of her life as an immigrant. The genuine people she encountered in various locations during her life had an influence on her characters. Cultural struggle, the search for identity, gender inequality, racial prejudice, multiculturalism, transnational culinary experiences, and ethnic consciousness are among the recurring themes in her works. Most of her stories focus on women's issues and identity struggles.

In *The Sound of Language*, Malladi portrays the life of Raihana, a young Afghan refugee in Denmark, in a moving way. Raihana first resided in her native Afghanistan. She fled Afghanistan and is currently living in a refugee camp in Pakistan because of the Taliban terrorists' amazing rule. Aamir, her spouse, promised to accompany her to the refugee camp, so she waited for him. He was a young, attractive, and well-educated individual. When their parents proposed to Raihana, he fell in love with her right away. They resided in Afghanistan in a modest home. Aamir fought against the Taliban and was a rebellious man. He participated in clandestine gatherings and battled the Taliban for democracy and women's equality. Because he disregarded the Taliban's severe regulations, he taught science and mathematics in defiance of their orders. After a few months, he was freed from prison.

Raihana desired a quiet life with her spouse. She counselled him against acting against the Taliban. Aamir rejected what she said. He sent her to the Pakistani refugee camp when things in Afghanistan deteriorated. She spent a year at the camp for refugees. She wished Aamir would accompany her to the camp for refugees. She learnt that the Taliban had slain her husband, sister-in-law Assia, and Assia's husband Ismat while she was in the refugee camp. The terrorists also killed Raihana's thirteen-year-old brother and her father. Kabir and Layla, Raihana's distant relatives, stepped up to assist her when she was in the refugee camp. She was granted asylum in their Danish home. Raihana moved to Denmark against her will and now resides there. She felt like a ghost in the first few days of her visit in Denmark and avoided social interaction. While making the local cuisine, she reflects on her experiences of Afghanistan. She initially thinks the Danish people are weird, and she finds the Danish language to be like a beehive.

Immigrants in Denmark are required to learn the Danish language. To study Danish, Raihana enrolls in a language school. She struggles to understand the Danish terms her teacher, Christina, is teaching her on the first day of her language class. She assists Raihana in obtaining an apprenticeship with beekeeper Gunnar. Raihana did not like Gunnar when she initially arrived at his residence. She did not talk to Gunnar. A true relationship eventually formed between them. He taught her the Danish language and the craft of beekeeping. Working with bees is something Raihana adores. Her relatives Kabir and Layla arrange for her to receive a marriage proposal.

A thirty-eight-year-old Pakistani immigrant named Rafeeq works in a factory. He lives in Pakistan with his wife and two kids. However, he desires to start a family in Denmark. Because Raihana is still haunted by her deceased spouse, she declines the marriage proposal. She frequently reflects on her lifetime spent in Afghanistan with him. She reluctantly consents to marry Rafeeq. She experiences a mental transformation because of embracing the second marriage.

Memories abound in *The Sound of Language*. Raihana frequently becomes sentimental. She remembers her previous life in Afghanistan while she is in Denmark. She experiences mental anguish because of her forced relocation and the death of her spouse. She did not talk to anyone when she initially arrived in Denmark. She worked around the house and looked after Shahrukh, the son of a relative. She is desperate in Denmark because of her life of exile. The strange surroundings make her feel alone. She does not tell anyone about her previous existence in Afghanistan.

In Denmark, Raihana does not wear an abaya and a hijab. She worries that Kabir would force her to adhere to the Afghan customs there. However, Kabir does not place any limitations on her. She enjoys preparing Afghanistan's national dish, kabbuli pulau. Raihana is capable at cooking both Danish and Afghan meals. She likes the local cuisine, though. The Danish rye bread does not appeal to her. For lunch, she makes a white bread sandwich with roast beef and chicken. She brings Afghan cuisine to Gunnar, such as bread and lamb or chicken curries. The curry's garlicky aroma captivates Gunnar. He expresses his desire to sample some of her native Afghan cuisine. Gunnar enjoys the hot lamb curry and naan that Raihana makes for him. Raihana and Gunnar's connection grows because of food. As a result, in a diaspora setting, food becomes a crucial unifying factor.

In the immigrant's mind, "home" is created by the host country's memory, customs, culture, and religion. Raihana feels the strain of living in a strange place. Her loneliness and lack of roots allow her to explore her past. She dedicates her time to recollecting memories of her native place. One of the biggest obstacles to acculturation for diasporans is language. Raihana finds learning Danish to be challenging.

Diasporans' lives in their new country are complicated. Most of their time is spent maintaining their passion for their mother tongue. In everyday conversation, Kabir insists that his son utilise the Afghan phrases. He chastises him for referring to his mother Layla as "Mor" in Danish. He requests that he refer to her as "Ammi." He constantly declares that they will return to their motherland shortly. "Have to go home someday, can't live here all our lives, can we?" (5) he asks Layla and Raihana. Layla has no desire to return to her native country. Raihana remembers her traumatic experience in the Pakistani refugee camp when she sees Layla and Kabir's conversation about returning to their homeland. Raihana hoped that Amir was still alive and that they would return to Kabul from the refugee camp, despite

the rumour that he was killed by Talibans. But when she learnt that Aamir had passed away, all her aspirations were dashed. She fled the refugee camp and moved to Denmark rather than returning to Afghanistan. The diasporans' emotional stability is derived from their relationships with their homeland's citizens.

Raihana suffers from despair because of her lack of roots in Denmark. She feels alone in a strange place. She answers the enquiries posed by her friends and family without discussing her history. It seemed strange to Raihana that she was in this chilly, rainy nation instead of Afghanistan. At times, she would close her eyes and imagine herself at her native place, surrounded by the aromas and fragrances of Kabul. She occasionally had internal turmoil when she recalled the flavour of sugarcane juice.

Raihana's transformation is gradual rather than abrupt. She initially encountered many obstacles and challenges when attempting to comprehend Danish language and culture. However, she is reluctant to think of her home in Canada as her nation. However, Layla enjoys preserving her Danish identity as well as her native customs and culture because she is a strong believer in it. Even though Raihana has trouble understanding Danish, she picks it up fast. Since she intends to return to Afghanistan shortly, she makes the decision to pass the language module examinations as soon as possible. Raihana's plan to return to her homeland is rejected by Layla. She suggests that she avoid thinking about her previous life. She claims that the unjust political situation that exists there prevents them from returning to their homeland. "We are here, Raihana, and we live here," she continues. "You won't be here or there if you have one foot in Afghanistan" (11). Raihana's difficulty integrating within the host country is highlighted by her dire circumstances.

One of the diasporans' defence mechanisms is recalling their country memories. They feel at home in the host country as they savour those recollections. Sylvia Hoffman, Raihana's teacher, greets her in English when she first enrolls in the language class. But because she is thinking about Aamir, she does not reply to Sylvia. She recalls how, while she was in Kabul, Aamir taught her English. She also recalls attending an English-language school for a year while living in a Pakistani camp as a refugee.

Raihana is aware of Aamir's death. She longs for him to visit Denmark and bring her back to their own country. Despite living a safe life in Denmark, she was unable to get over her sense of homelessness and displacement. She misses her native country. "If only Aamir could figure out how to get here. What if he arrived at Kabir and Layla's house? Is that possible?" (14). She was shocked to learn of her husband's passing. It was a charming dream, akin to a child's longing to go to the moon or encounter dinosaurs. It was a hopeless endeavour. She was not prepared to accept that Aamir was most likely dead, even though several others had told her so. As a result, she finds herself torn between her native country and her new one, between her past and present.

Throughout the entire novel, there are many sentimental memories. Raihana recalls the time she and her neighbours fled Kabul. Aamir assured her that he would accompany her to the Pakistani refugee camp. He failed to show up as promised. She discovered a man's lifeless body on the street while travelling from Kabul to the refugee camp. He resembled Aamir. That horrifying picture comes to mind every time she thinks of her husband. She was concerned about the possibility that Aamir had been tortured by the Taliban before to his passing.

Raihana's nostalgia demonstrates her sentimental ties to her native country. She enters Gunnar's home to reheat the meal, which she brought. The place is filthy, she discovers. Then her own home in Kabul comes to mind. In Kabul, she shared a one-room flat with Aamir. During the Taliban onslaught, bullets damaged the house's windows. Plastic was used to cover the windows. To raise the funds necessary for her to flee Kabul, Aamir sold the flat to his neighbour.

Raihana detests how messy Gunnar's home is. As she did in Kabul, she cleans the house. She constantly switches between the past and the present. She enjoys working with Gunnar. She learns how to raise bees from him. The way Gunnar interacts with the bees astounds her. He takes the frame with his bare hands and does not wear any protective gear. To prevent bee stings, he advises her to wear a protective suit.

Raihana recalls her early years spent in Afghanistan. She used to play with the bee hives with her buddies. She was pleased to see the bees dispersing after striking the hives with a stone. She struck the hive and fled inside to escape the sting of the bees. Throwing a stone at hives of wild bees on tall trees had been a sport. "Raihana and her friends would run as quickly as they could to enter a house before the bees could catch up to them, and the bees would swarm in frenzied spirals if a stone struck the hive" (67). When Raihana had similar experiences in Denmark, her thoughts return to the past regarding beehives in Afghanistan.

No matter where they reside, diasporans love to follow their native customs. Raihana dislikes adhering to Afghan customs after gradually assimilating into Danish culture. Wahida, on the other hand, is different from her and suggests that Raihana dress in an abaya and hijab to be a decent Muslim woman in Denmark. However, according to Raihana, abaya and hijab alone do not constitute a respectable Muslim woman. "I don't think a Muslim woman is good because she wears a hijab and abaya," (27) she says to Wahida. She ends her friendship with Wahida as a silent protest. She dislikes speaking with Wahida and KhalaSoofia, who criticise her apprenticeship with Gunnar. She is steadfast in her resolve to collaborate with the Danish man. After moving to Denmark, she becomes aware of the changes that have occurred. She is a brave and fearless woman now.

Raihana was extremely weak and brittle in Afghanistan. She complied with the Taliban's threatening orders. Aamir, however, was a rebellious guy who battled the Taliban to restore democracy and women's equality. Against the Taliban's directives, he taught science and maths. He should not fight them, Raihana said. But because of his defiance, the Taliban executed him and put him under custody. She was deeply affected by Aamir's passing. In remembrance of her husband's passing, she purposefully refrains from donning an abaya and hijab.

Tatjana, a Bosnian immigrant, informs Raihana that her spouse lost his life during the conflict. She begins to cry as soon as she hears the words. She tells Tatjana about Aamir's passing, stating that her husband was killed in the prison after being detained by the Taliban. She adds that during her journey from Kabul to the refugee camp, she suffered an abortion. "The words came out so naturally... The truth had now made its way out of her heart, perhaps because Tatjana had also lost a husband and asked the question. In fact, perhaps it was time for her to come to terms with what had happened" (168). Raihana progressively learns to confront life with courage in Denmark due to her diasporic lifestyle. In this case, Layla and Kabir had planned for Raihana and Rafeeq to get married. He is an immigrant from Pakistan living in Denmark. Raihana declines her families' proposal of marriage. She longs to be with Aamir again since she thinks he is still alive. Raihana is reprimanded by Layla for her lack of resolve in making a marriage decision. Kabir verifies that Aamir was already slain by the Taliban after asking his acquaintances in Pakistan.

Raihana is stuck in a bind. She considers whether she should wed Rafeeq and start a family or take advantage of her freedom and lead an independent life. According to Danish TV outlets, she aspires to be like a free woman. She wants to live a free life as the Danish women do. She is in dire need of a job to make money. Her Afghan family wants her to start a new life by being married to Rafeeq. Raihana remembers when she was asked to marry Aamir in Afghanistan. She had a distant relative named Aamir. She agreed to marry him in accordance with her parents' wishes. However, the Danish marriage proposal with Rafeeq is very different. The marriage cannot be fixed by elders. Denmark gives her a sense of freedom. She can escape the grip of tradition due to her displacement.

Raihana no longer feels bound by the patriarchal laws of her country. However, when she meets Rafeeq, she experiences psychological desperation. She has a hard time moving on from her deceased husband. Her husband's image lingers in her memory as she looks at Rafeeq. Rafeeq does not look like Aamir, in her opinion. He has a dark skin, is tall, and has a cigarette odour. Rafeeq's physical size does not impress her.

Raihana contrasts Aamir and Rafeeq. She is aware of Aamir's lack of religious beliefs. He did not force her to adhere to the rigorous customs and culture of Islam. She is concerned about Rafeeq's potential liberal views. She questions if he will let her continue

working with Gunnar once they are married. After marriage, she confidently asks him whether he would let her work with Gunnar. He grants her request to collaborate with Gunnar. He claims that they may live a better life if she makes money. Rafeeq's attitude reflects the materialistic mindset of today's diasporans. They have no desire to return to their native country. Raihana finally agrees to marry Rafeeq after considerable deliberation. She is still plagued by recollections of her husband. She had a dream on the day of consenting to marriage that she and her spouse are living in Kabul. Despite living in a tiny Kabul home, Raihana and Aamir were content.

Raihana's obsession is her husband's memories. In her daily life, she encountered numerous conflicts. She dislikes living her traditional Afghan life in Denmark. She questions whether returning to Afghanistan will cause Rafeeq to change his mindset. She aspires to be an independent woman. She does, however, still face racial discrimination in Denmark. Three Danish lads who adhere to Hitler's ideology oppose the immigrants' continued presence in Denmark. They believe that Denmark is exclusively for Danes. Because she is an immigrant Muslim woman, Raihana becomes their victim. On her way back from Gunnar's residence, they struck her with a stone.

Tradition, culture, history, and memory are all forms of home. The imagined home takes the place of the sense of being uprooted from the country. To avoid becoming entangled in political turmoil, Raihana and Layla are unwilling to return to Afghanistan. Though it is also fuelled by the memories of the motherland, the host land becomes home. According to Raihana, living in Denmark is better for her. For them and their kids, home turns into a haven. She understands that she will have nothing when she returns to her homeland. According to her, Denmark has become her home. Despite their longing for their native land, diasporans make the host country feel like home. However, they only use their memories to journey back to their hometown. Only in the diasporans' imaginations does home exist. They have a deep bond with their roots. Their longing for their own home stems from their obsession with nostalgia. However, they have no desire to go back. Through her memories, Raihana vacillates between her mother country and abroad. Her emotional connections to her family and culture also hold a great hold on her. She remembers her native country with resentment. Her mind is often shifting between spaces, even if she has bad memories of the past. She has good cause to be completely knowledgeable about her native country.

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