



## Marital Entropy in Amulya Malladi's *The Copenhagen Affair*

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### Abstract

*Marriage is considered entropy by some married couples in their marital relationship. Entropy, the second law of thermodynamics is a quantitative measure of disorder in a system either remain constant or increase. Duncan says entropy is caused by inattention to a marriage that needs constant attention. This paper delineates the entropy in marital relationships where the disorder increases day by day. Sanya is a middle-aged woman whose two decades of marital life is an entropy system, which makes her undergo a nervous breakdown in her forties. To overcome her nervous breakdown Sanya catches in the hands of Copenhagen's cafe class and corporate lifestyle. Amulya Malladi as a marketing executive for fourteen years assimilates her personal experience of the Copenhagen lifestyle through Sanya.*

**Keywords:** Entropy, Marriage, Nervous breakdown, Psychological disorder, Identity.

### Introduction

Marriage is a legal union between man and woman. Marital Entropy is the principle that if a marriage does not receive preventative maintenance and upgrades it will move towards decay and breakdown. Couples realize that marriage is not a state of constant which requires much effort to maintain stability to nurture. Marriage is relationship entropy (disorder) increased in a closed system. In order to make something good, you need to give your efforts constantly. Marriage is absolute entropy where you have to pay constant efforts to run a relationship better; preferentially disaster will worsen your marital relationship. In the past, there was tolerance among the couples. Today we make much effort to respect others in our family, classroom, workplace and society, but fail to respect our partner which will taint relationship. To lead a better life every one of us makes effort to respect each other in the relationship.

Amulya Malladi is an Indian diasporic writer of eight novels and her books have been translated into many languages like Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, German, Serbian and others. She has fifteen years of experience as marketing executive hence all her novels have career women as protagonists. Her novels are *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), *A House for Happy Mothers* (2016), *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017) and *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You* (2019). She was born in 1974 in Madhya Pradesh, India. She got her bachelor's degree in electronics engineering and master's degree in journalism. Then she worked in Silicon Valley, US. She moved to Denmark and lived there for more than a decade along with her husband and children. Now she lives in US.

Amulya Malladi acknowledges *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017) as a love letter to Copenhagen where she lived more than a decade. After moving to US, she missed the Copenhagen, the city, food, ambience, outdoor cafe culture and friends. She has described various restaurants, cafes, museums and the bars throughout the novel. Sanya, the protagonist of the novel is a successful woman in her career, perfect wife and a lovely mother. But everything is collapsed when she doesn't get the position she deserves in the company where she is working for fifteen years. Sanya has been a victim of relationship entropy for two decades since her marriage with Harry which is deteriorating year after year.

### **Marital Entropy in *The Copenhagen Affair***

*The Copenhagen Affair* is a novel about a couple Sanya and Harry, who have been married for two decades and on the wife's emotional instability, materialistic people and the colorful Copenhagen life style which could either save or ruin the marriage. As all Malladi's novels have career woman as its heroine, Sanya is an Indian American woman, who is working in a company for fifteen years at first as a consultant and then becomes a manager of strategy through her sincerity and hard work. But her company fails to recognize her when her juniors become the partners of the company. As an introvert Sanya never reveals her emotions to anyone. But time reveals, when her company calls Sanya and informs that she is not going to be a partner of the company she bursts out into tears at the first time and says:

I got angry, that was my first reaction. I was angry. How could they? I mean, it took them fifteen years? Brian made a partner six years ago, and he started three years after me. And Santosh became partner last year, and I had four years' seniority over him. So, I was angry, really angry. (229)

Harry's lack of attention and love towards her is one of the foremost reasons for her nervous breakdown. She feels dejected and helpless when the company throws her out, then she calls her husband Harry. But he fails to answer her call and reaches her office lately. On reaching the office, he sees Sanya crying but he doesn't ask her anything instead he asks everyone in the office and asks Miguel whether she was raped? That is the moment when Sanya's marital relationship becomes fragile. Then Sanya shuts herself alone in duvet and stops to speak to anybody. She chooses sleep as drug to avoid people, emotions and Harry who he never tries to understand which is disturbing Sanya.

Harry's irresponsible attitude and carelessness hinder Sanya from recovering the break down. Sanya learned the word thermodynamics from her friend Alec, who was a physicist at Stanford. "The second law of thermodynamics states that entropy is the quantitative measure of disorder in a system. In any closed system, the entropy of the system will remain either constant or increase. If marriage is considered a closed system, then the physics of it starts to make sense. Entropy or disorder increases in a marriage - day after week



after month after year” (03). Sanya knows that Alec is mentioning her marital life as entropy. Among all friends of Sanya, Alec hates Harry and rebukes him for treating his wife crudely though everyone adores him as a handsome and successful man. But Harry never jealous on Alec because he thinks Alec is the perfect man for his wife’s friend, who is single, bald and not good looking. Alec hatred towards Harry is because, he never treats his wife as equal, and always treats her as his home secretary who looks after him and his daughter Sara. Though she is also a working woman, she has to help him to get suits and suit bag.

Harry thinks that changing geographies will be the best remedy for Sanya’s emotional baggage. After four months of her break down he asks her to move to Copenhagen for a year, but not out of his love for Sanya. That was totally a business trip to Copenhagen where he will buy a company. She reluctantly reveals her hesitation that she knows nothing about Copenhagen. But Harry insists her to come along with him as he doesn’t want to spoil his best opportunity. To move or not to move was a question in Sanya’s brain.

Harry and Sanya move to Copenhagen in May and the weather is drastically different from sunny, blue sky of California which is so matched to Sanya’s mood like windy, rainy and gray. He hopes this change will help her to recover from the breakdown. She gets out of the bed and watches television which makes him happy, but he never spends his time with her. He is as busy as Anita Desai’s Gautama in *Cry the Peacock*. Like Gautama, he too doesn’t have time to look after his wife. Gautama is always found busy with his papers and clients and doesn’t find time to spend for his wife Maya which leads her to mental illness.

Harry had been fascinated on her when he first met her. He praised her that she was his Indian princess. In the beginning he was doing some second and third job. His business had thrived when she supported him by taking responsibility of family and Sara. After that Sanya went unnoticed to him. It is narrated in the text as: “His passion for Sanya had been that mad-for-you and can’t-live-without-you kind... Where did it go? Because now, twenty years later, the passion was tenuous” (07). When she hides herself in the duvet, he calls to wake her up from the bed. But Sanya doesn’t respond to his words. He had looked at her disgust and she feel helpless. His insensitivity makes her to cry which disturbs him but he left the place with his hasty good bye. Sanya couldn’t control her tears. She feels: “... when things didn’t work in his way: he pretended everything was normal because he didn’t know how to handle the abnormal situation...” (17)

Harry proves himself a good businessman but fails to be a good husband. Introvert Sanya never expresses or complains anything. He went for three days business trip even after knowing that she is abnormal and there is none to take care of her in Copenhagen. He didn’t call her for three days as he never calls her during his business trip. He received a call from Sanya’s mother who said Sanya once attended her phone and mumble something now she won’t pick up the phone. “I’m in Houston, what do you want me to do now?” Harry had snapped. Get her help, Naina yelled at him. She’s your wife. So pull up your pants and be a man”. (20) Everyone was worried in the family, Sanya’s parents, her sister and brother-in-law. With the pressure he gets from them, he called Alec without any choice, even though she doesn’t like him. “Alec was the intellectual, and Harry was the corporate whore” (21)



One of the best things needed in any relationship is acceptance. Harry fails to accept Sanya's worst days. The routines of marriage life may end in break down. In order to have a healthy relationship each of the couple have to spend some time. Harry got a text message from Alec stating that "She's unwashed, starved, and sick. Looks like shit. Managed to get her into the shower. Get your ass back home. Taking her to the therapist" (21). When Harry came home, he found Sanya sleeping in the couch, Alec is sitting next to her. He thanked Alec for his help and Alec said, "And you need to stay at home and not wander of business trips. I have a job, Harry said defensively" (21). Harry was afraid to be with Sanya, who has swollen eyes and she was not the happy woman she had married. Alec rebukes Harry "be with her for the first time in your marriage. She needs someone to be with her" (22). This clearly shows that Harry never spends his time with her after their marriage.

In high society where white-collar crimes and marital secrets and techniques are more common. Even though Sanya is tempted to pass the ethical boundaries, she balances herself. She faces emotional indiscretions and her husband's infidelity tempts her to attempt a new affair with Ravn in a new ambience. Harry had three affairs of their two decades of marriage. The readers can feel various cracks in the marital life of Harry and Sanya and that paves a way for the new version of Sanya.

Copenhagen transforms Sanya and She is gently caught up with the life style of Copenhagen and starts to go out. Harry compels her presence in the dinner where Sanya meets Anders Ravn, who is the owner of the IT company which Harry is going to purchase and both were attracted towards each other in the first meeting. Ravn is attracted towards Sanya by her Indian blonde beauty and looks the way which Harry fails for so many years. She also could feel the chemistry between them, but her mind is questioning her either to accept or deny: "what to do with how she felt ... she was in love with Ravn - the wild and irresponsible, head-over-heels kind of love. Or was this something else? Lust? Attraction? What did it mean to be in love anyway? (179). And then Sanya's mind is struck with the fact that she has an eighteen-year-old daughter and a part of Indianness is always carried out by her with her morality.

"One damaged person was asking the other damaged person to show her his wounds so that they both would feel less alone" (125). Ravn shares his thought on love and break down to Sanya. He said, "When you're depressed you love no one, not even yourself (109). He shares how he suffered in his old days when his parent left him and how he overcome all the breakdowns. While discussing they felt that they could heal their breakdowns. Sanya was attracted by him because he is also a damaged person like her and his survival is similar to hers.

Infidelity is unfaithfulness in a relationship. It affects the individual's emotional health rather than physical health. Sanya's life absolutely changed when she finds her husband's infidelity with his colleague. Tara Hansen, thirty-five years old brilliant woman is a legal counsellor of Harry's business. They had a sexual relationship when they go for business trips. When he looks the messages from Ravn to Sanya, Harry feels insecure and asks her whether she cheats on him. In response Sanya asks him whether he has been



cheating her or not? But Harry didn't answer her. She is not sure about his infidelity with Tara, but she suspects him and reveals this in her therapist session.

The significance of loyalty in marriage is insisted by Malladi through the marital relationship of Harry and Sanya. Sanya takes perfect care of both Sara and thus Harry is left with so much time to flirt around other women. He realizes that he has failed his fatherly duty as well as a husband's responsibility. Harry realises that Sanya decides to walk away from him and shows the signs of her emotional detachment from Harry.

Marriage is a unique relationship which deserves an extra loyalty, commitment and responsibilities. Harry lacks in all the things and he is not ready to change his lifestyle after marriage. When Ravn takes Sanya to island in a boat he tells her that Ravan in the *Ramayana* who is asura and bad guy kidnaps Sita and falls in love with her. Sanya questions, "And does she fell in love with him?" Ravn replies "No, she is pious and makes a circle of honour around her so Ravan can't touch her" (273). Malladi beautifully compares Sanya with the pure and pious Sita and Ravn to Ravan.

Distractions help the humans after an implosion. From time-to-time distractions divert you from solving your existence and you can get out of your scenario. In Sanya's case Ravn helped her to clear the gray. Love between Ravn and Sanya was so genuine even though she sees him as distraction to come out of her despair. And also, when he knows that she was the one who gave all his information to the reporter, he treats hers with true care and never shouts on her instead he says, "I'm hurt that you didn't love me enough to protect me. But I'm not angry. I brough this upon myself... love is recognizing yourself in another" (277).

Harry returns to Sanya and takes the duty of taking care of his wife with his hugs and promises. He passionately loves her and said to Lucky, "I'll never leave Sanya... and she makes me happy... even like this, being with her is better than being without her" (71). Even though Sanya has the heart to forgive Harry, when Harry approaches that they can reunite and live together, she responds that they can stay aside without getting a divorce. Because Sanya suffers the extreme pain and melancholy thus she needs time to fix again the damaged pieces of her marriage. At the end of the novel, Sanya tells Harry, "If we want to save this marriage and me, I need to figure out who I am and you need to figure out who this New Harry is" (285).

### Conclusion

Julie Lawson Timmer says Amulya Malladi brings Denmark's capitol into brilliant color, a wife's precarious emotional stability and the international business deal that could either save or ruin everything. *The Copenhagen Affair* reminds us that we must each decide what we are willing to risk to build our fortunes and find our true happiness. The biggest problem with marriages is we fall into the habits of that one person compromises all the indifferences and on the other hand the other becomes used to do it and the one who compromises progressively unhappy with the compromises. If you can't restore, it all will boom one day. Harry cannot withstand when Sanya ready to walk away from him and become an extrovert. He is changing himself and tries to rescue her immediately. Marital life is not a Utopia to everyone. It needs extra care, attention, responsibility and love.



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