

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

Diversity and plurality of rich eternal culture, civilization, customs, traditions, religion and spirituality are the cornerstones of Indian literature. There is an interrelation between life and literature, literature and language and language and life. All these are inseparable components which play a vital role in any society. Among them, life provides the base and then language evolves and using the language the literary works are created. Language and cultures are transformed and enriched as they come into contact with other languages and cultures.

Diasporic literature in its multifarious forms is expressed through different languages and the multicultural, multilingual, multiracial and multi-religious fabrics of India are its greatest strength. Dislocation and its consequent loss of identity have been the major themes of diasporic writers who have at least two homes and their writing looks like tightrope walking, through which they balance themselves on the common link of language between two solid and supportive cultures.

The history of India is the history of many displaced communities crossing borders over many thousands of years. From religious preachers, indentured labourers to Indian traders settled in various countries, the trickle of migration has been continuous. Whether the migrants have been labourers or IT professionals, they face similar issues in different contexts like economic trajectory, fractured identity and cultural indifferences in the new world.

The diasporic writers have proficiently articulated these issues in their works, trying to cherish the past due to the fear of loss that makes them preserve their ethnicity for the coming generations. They are different from others in the sense that they operate from the twilight zone as they call the diasporic experience to which they belong as individuals and as members of a community. The diasporic experience is like riding two horses simultaneously, the horses representing the two diverse cultures. The characters who are represented in diasporic writing always constantly negotiate between different aspects of their lives and recreate a third space that transcends the cultural and national boundaries.

The contemporary literature focuses much on the predicament of modern man. Uma Parameswaran goes a step ahead by dealing with the problems of the immigrants whose sufferings are more due to their immigration. The immigrants as they get uprooted from the native cultural traditions and values, losing their indigenous language are mere unaccommodated aliens with multiple injuries which account for the 'identity atrophy'. Uma Parameswaran's work reflects the journey of the immigrant towards achieving a true identity and finding a place in society.

Uma Parameswaran's works bring out the struggle of the immigrants whose identity gets fractured in the host country. During the course of their journey, the immigrants face many problems and obstacles in order to attain a new identity in the adopted country. At every step of their life, her protagonists are able to achieve something and she does not allow the troubles and struggles to obstruct their progress in life.

In the present day multicultural world, the issue of identifying an individual's space becomes a topic of significant concern, particularly for an immigrant writer who is

already burdened with issues of immigration, acculturation and identity politics. The quest for identity by marginal ethnic groups in developing societies emerges as one of the major concerns in diasporic literature.

Canada in recent times has witnessed immigration of people belonging to many diverse countries and cultures and as a result a multicultural ethnic mosaic is established. The immigrants are in the process of forming a new identity, an identity that will be a composite of many diverse cultures. These immigrants, on their entry experience a sense of wonder at the newness of their environment and nostalgia for the land they left behind. With a lot of hardwork and perseverance they slowly settle down and get involved with the society in which they live and take part in all the activities of the majority community. This is the stage when these immigrants express their protest and anger at the discrimination and injustice meted out to them by the Canadian white establishment.

In Uma Parameswaran's works the protagonists like Veejala in *Rootless but Green* are the *Boulevard Trees*, Chandrika in *Trishanku* and Jayant in *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* face identity crisis and they are in search of their authentic selfhood. They do not realize what they are or what they should be. The question of identity arises only when an individual or society is marginalized. Settlement in alien land makes them experience unsettlement and dislocation. The displacement caused by migration creates the sense of belonging to the place of their origin within memory in order to redefine their relationship with the new place and thereby cultural identity becomes intricately woven with the idea of location.

When people interact with one another, there is bound to be change. Sometimes they tend to stick to their cultural identity and refuse to amalgamate in the mainstreams and thus are at crossroads. In order to survive in the host society, immigrants have to shed

their cultural prejudices and enter into the veins of the country they live in. Hence, a lose gain situation arises and the immigrants discard some of their cultural baggage so as to gain entry into the new society. They learn how to cope with the new environment and lead a new life and realize that their struggle is only a ladder to their victory.

In the works of Uma Parameswaran one can find the protagonists trying to grapple with the tensions arising out of the feelings of displacement and the harrowing experiences of ethnic and racial discrimination in the multicultural hybrid Canadian society. The pull between these two opposite forces ie., the Indian and the Canadian does not frighten them. Even if the other immigrants remained suspended between these two forces, her protagonists are happy in that they are able to assimilate to the new culture. The alien country teaches them to live with ease and confidence, in spite of their unstable identity. Uma Parameswaran voices the reaction of the immigrants very boldly in her works.

Since identity is a delicate and complex issue, it cannot be solved easily. Boundaries have been changed so many times and people have been transported from place to place, but the problem remains the same. It's all about survival tactics. The quest for identity is common to all immigrants and Uma Parameswaran expresses this challenge of identity through her characters. She wants to convey that in order to survive in the alien place, the immigrants must redefine themselves and accept each other as they have become part of the host society. It doesn't mean that they have to leave their past behind entirely or grow "roots" like a tree to thrive. As far as the immigrants are concerned their family bond and their link with the past assist them as they go forward. Uma Parameswaran drives home the point that the true identity of a person does not lie in being an Indian or Canadian but in the inner spirit of the person, the true human spirit.

Nostalgia and longing for home characterize the existence of the immigrants' life. They feel alienated in the adopted land as they face racial discrimination. In general, alienation is an inherent character of diasporic life, leading to depression, frustration and loneliness whereby the immigrants think about their past life in their home country. Most of the times, the immigrants are under a state of turmoil and often try to figure out which one is better, their homeland or their present location though with more comforts. Thus the sense of alienation acts as an umbilical cord attaching oneself to one's native place and the cherished past.

The immigrant writers highlight alienation and marginalization at every level in their writings. So does Uma Parameswaran. In *Dear Deedi My Sister*, Sapna the main character and in *The Door I Shut behind Me* the protagonist Chander used to discuss their native place with fond memories because, for immigrants the memories of homeland is a great solace to get relieved from the boredom as well as from the loneliness. However, the younger generation begins to move on and make their own decisions. They find it relatively easier to adapt and assimilate into a new culture as they have lesser strings attached to their home country.

Uma Parameswaran ends her works with an affirmative vision. The depiction of cross-cultural experiences not only gives a distinctive flavor to the writers' work but also renders a global touch in the portrayal of the characters. In spite of the pain of discrimination and the pangs suffered because of alienation, the immigrants realize that life must go on. Hence they take efforts to slowly adapt themselves to the new environment. In the process of adaptation, some immigrants become victims while others experience exploitation, and are not as successful as their white counterparts.

Canada which is considered the least racist among the nations of the world, there exists a citizenship of civility between all residents regardless of whom they are and where they come from. Canada does present a space to ethnic minorities where the official machinery is constantly busy trying to ensure an environment which is politically and economically equitable and socially and culturally protective of their individual or group cultural identities. In Canada, the immigrants are treated with dignity and they are able to preserve their diverse ethnic cultures without hindrance from the governmental machinery. However, racism is not entirely absent in Canada

Though the immigrants do not have enjoyable experiences, the theoretical perspectives indicated by Uma Parameswaran through her work make them significant reading. Multiculturalism creates an alternative world by the exchange of tradition, culture, home and language. They join social and political groups. Once they secure jobs, they will become members of various organizations within their ethnic community. When the first generation immigrants partially assimilate, the second generation immigrants show their willingness to change according to the times and trends. Though they are 'rootless' in the new land, they want to flourish and want to be 'green'. Thus the marginal groups try to insulate themselves with the dominant host group, though conscious efforts are made by the diasporic communities of the first generation to pass on their traditions to the future generation.

Through assimilation the immigrants' living conditions and careers have improved. The parents want their children to be the members of the Canadian society and at the same time want them to conform to their notion of Indian tradition. The immigrants form the marginal group which tries slowly to assimilate, adopt and integrate with the host society, simultaneously trying to preserve their original culture and identity. Assimilation

is a step towards insulation and it is a tool that is used with the continuance of the cultural practices and said customs, along with their religion, language, music, art, dress, cuisine etc., For youngsters, the new world presented is not a fantasy that cancels the reality of the past; on the contrary, it is a readjustment, adaptation, participation and fulfillment.

The phenomenon of acculturation and deculturation has made the youngsters to be aware of their traditional customs. The diasporic Indians living in foreign lands with their tendency to assimilate in the western lifestyle have distanced themselves from their motherland. Those who migrated to Western countries as students, software engineers, and professionals or as petty job seekers changed their name, their accent, their way of dressing, their food habits and sometimes even their religion. The first generations have strong feeling towards their homeland whereas the second generations have the quality of adjustment in the alien land. They live at the juncture between the two cultures and they have become marginalized. With the loss of a sense of security of a known historical past and of a shared geographical space, their need to belong to the uncertain present becomes the main issue. Hence, most of the themes in diasporic literature reflect issues related to younger generation and their struggles, intergenerational relations, complexities of inter-racial relationships etc.,

Under the new policies of multiculturalism, the minority communities are encouraged to integrate, while retaining their own ways of life. The process of globalization and the possibilities opened up by the revolutionary advancement in media and communication technologies have made it much easier for the migrants to keep in touch with their native land. The countries of their origin have also begun to see these migrants as a useful resource of acquiring hard currencies or, at times even lobbying with the western powers.

The fact that Uma Parameswaran has immigrated to Canada allows her work to be part of the Canadian experience and thus she has contributed to a stronger, broader body of hybrid work both to Canada and India. Her dream will come true if there is real understanding among the immigrants who would live in harmony.

Uma Parameswaran's work is unique because she has contemplated on this question through her work for more than three decades. Her understanding of the malleability of identity informs not only a transformation of Canadian literature but also of the possibilities of this world and its literature as well. She uses her own experience as a traveller between cultures. Her own distinct voice and work complement one another.

Uma Parameswaran weaves together numerous narrative threads in her works and presented them in a plain style. Her ambitious crowd praises the subtlety, structural intricacies and thematic resonance of her works. By offering her readers, a deep insight into the immigrant experiences, Uma Parameswaran steers away providing easy answers in a simple and mature manner. The positive aspect of diasporic experience is that, it reflects the several tributaries of our history which constitute as a whole. It allows people to see not merely an imagined pristine glory but also the need to be compassionate towards the oppressed and to be aware of human limitations. The histories of the diaspora act like myriad mirrors which reflect the notions of Indianness, Indian history and Indian identity.

A good literary piece is an artistic imitation of reality which transmits the writer's vision through the techniques used in the works. Creative instinct is the most vital element of a writer as he is concerned only with creating and not in defining art. The moment the writer begins to think in terms of style and techniques, his writing becomes meaningless.

Uma Parameswaran describes the setting of the stage with minute details at the beginning

of each scene in all her works. She uses a number of images from everyday life to convey the meaning. The most frequently used images are gods, rivers, trees etc., The similarity in the themes and techniques used by Parameswaran represent the diverse geographical and cultural milieu of the people. Since Parameswaran speaks from the margins, her protagonists hardly ever take the centre-stage, because it is not 'her story' that is being narrated; instead, the narrative gives voice to community life, to local or national politics and to the experience of being alienated, obscured, peripheralised and marginalized.

In diasporic literature the words like *exile, diaspora, migration, dislocation, deracination and displacement* are leading metaphors employed by the writer to express not only disorientation but also ideological and existential fragmentation of the immigrants. Memory is a literary device used by the ethnic writer to re-create the persistent knowledge of a past filtering into the present which resolves into a creative dialogue. It is a relocating of space and time based on imagined realities of immigrant life. Nostalgic reminiscences are considered more serious and by the act of recreating the past, the writers have become folk historians, myth-makers and custodians of the collective history of their people.

In Uma Parameswaran's writings, memory plays a significant role in the reclamation and recollection of the lost world. Almost all the characters are nostalgic towards their homeland and she portrays the vivid sense of their past life through memories and dreams. As far as Uma Parameswaran is concerned, memory is the first serious act of writing and it becomes a means of self-determination and identity in the multicultural society.

The technique of memory is used by many writers. In Uma Parameswaran's work, memory is not only an image created as a static picture of the society but it also serves as the life force adding new significance and vitality to the experiences of the

immigrants. In her works, the story begins when the narrator gets into the mood of recollection and ends when the experiences of a whole conscious life lead to a moment of decision to shake off her ambivalent attitude. The protagonists' search for the symbols of collective past and their attempts to resensitize their sensibility through communion with heritage is predominant in her works.

Another important technique that one can find in Uma Parameswaran's work is her ability to blend modern experience with traditional myths and stories. She has successfully infused new life and new significance into Indian myths and vision of life in her works. The portrayal of Hindu myth broadens the literary map of Canada by analyzing the mythologies of Norse, Greek, Roman and Christian. All become part of the Canadian mosaic. Since Uma Parameswaran is a firm believer in multiculturalism and in the theory of unity through diversity she envisions a day when the reader will take references from Krishna and Shakthi as well as from Jesus and Mary. The intermingling of the Indian myth of Trishanku with the ascent of Moses to Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments during the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt confers universality on the problem of diasporic identity. In *Trishanku*

“Shall I hang myself in the sky?

As Trishanku did of old?

What new Elect shall I lead

To what Sinai to bring down .(45)

It is appropriate to remember at this juncture that the Jews who formed the original 'diasporas' and were scattered all over the world following successive waves of persecution,

spread over centuries, managed to retain their religious and cultural identity wherever they may have settled. The theme of reconciliation is enriched by Uma Parameswaran's adeptness in transforming the everyday voice into poetry and ordinary activities into mythic experiences. She makes the reader to see that time and spaces are artificial constructs that can be overcome when one carries his God within him. Like the characters in *Trishanku*, the reader comes to understand how a Hindu Temple can emerge at the confluence of Red Assiniboine river and how Ganga can be brought to Canada.

Uma Parameswaran makes liberal use of metaphors in her works. Building a temple at the confluence of the Canadian river Assinibione is an oft repeated metaphor in Parameswaran's work. It shows the Herculean task of forging a new diasporic identity that would preserve the essence of the old as it merges with the new. While emphasizing assimilation, she says in *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees*, "By planting Ontario popular trees in Manitoba, all setup overnight around the new apartment block appearing green and flourishing but which gradually take roots and we shall build our temple at the confluence of the Red and the Assiniboine and then we shall say okay, we are ready to assimilate"(99); in *Dear Deedi, My Sister*, "We must build our temple here, where the Assiniboine flows into the Red; and we shall bring Ganga, as Bhagiratha did of old, to our land, our Assiniboine, and here shall be groves where Uma shall dance with Parameswaran" (54); in *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* "the flooding of the Red and the Assiniboine threatens the peaceful life of Winnipeg, bringing the communities together and removes all the barriers in an unprecedented way" (134); in *Door I Shut Behind Me*, Parameswaran says that "the waters of the river that threatens brown and white alike and

engenders harmony, may perhaps be seen as a leveling and unifying force, and thus becomes sacred to the immigrant consciousness as the Ganga” (35).

The description of the sacred Ganga is intertwined with the racial memories, hopes and fears, victories and defeats of the immigrants. The river Ganga has been the symbol of India’s age-long culture and civilization, ever changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga. It reminds the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight; dark , gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall; a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter and a vast roaring thing during the monsoon; broad-bosomed almost as the sea, the Ganga has been a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. All these lines represent the characters and message from the greatest resources of Indian culture. By representing these ideas Uma Parameswaran expresses the uniqueness of the river Ganga to an alien audience.

The frequent use of Sanskrit, Marathi and Hindi words help the writer not only to make the world of the past real but also to build up an atmosphere of nostalgia and loneliness. For example in *Trishanku*, she uses the Sanskrit, Marathi and Hindi terms like ‘Om’, ‘Vibhuti’, ‘Dhoti’, ‘Rangoli’, ‘Gangajal’ ‘Namaste’, ‘Raat-ki-rani’, ‘Dhobi’, ‘Charpai’, ‘Vilayati bala’, ‘Chunam’, ‘Jamun’, ‘Rakhi’, ‘Shehnai’ and ‘Tulsi’. These types of words clearly give an Indian touch to her poetry.

Uma Parameswaran uses direct, simple and conversational style in all her works. The simple realistic settings make her use an informal language that one speaks everyday in India. Parameswaran feels that the simplest words bring out the best in meaning and emotion. Her prose style gives the impression that everyone can understand the information

as they read the language which is native to the characters. Parameswaran does not attempt to adapt the vernacular idiom or tone. Yet she succeeds in bringing out the texture of the social classes by varying the degree of simplicity and articulation.

Uma Parameswaran makes use of straightforward narration with great effectiveness. The language is plain and direct with mythical or poetic forms. There is a feeling of buoyancy for the language in their writing and they are comfortable with it despite their alien experiences with life. Her novel is highly descriptive. At the same time it is not excessive in detail, conveying only that which is needed to represent the scene. Many of the Indian customs and ceremonies like marriage, Hindu festivals and rituals, food patterns etc., are described in picturesque detail so that the readers can have a better understanding of Indian culture. Such information satisfies the curiosity of the foreign audience. At times, Parameswaran tries to explain some Indian dialects which reveal the fact that she has a non- Indian reading public in mind.

Customs, land, harvest, marriage, birth, funeral, villages, cities are all beautifully delineated with the use of words and phrases. The prose style is simple in keeping with the movement of the story where the scenes are brought alive before the reader. There is a vigour and vitality in the choice of words. Uma Parameswaran's stories present the writer's intercontinental journey during which she gets herself accustomed to both the cultures- by her long stay abroad and regular trips to India during vacation.

Uma Parameswaran's characters are wide ranging from the young to the old, from rural to the urban and they express their views according to their age and social level. Her characters are ordinary individuals with his/her own idiosyncrasies.

Uma Parameswaran's characters are carefully and accurately drawn, thereby allowing the reader to easily identify with them, while her protagonists are all Indo-Canadians with their human authenticity giving them a universal touch. She also records the inner workings of the mind and her characters are life like characters throbbing with life. Though one can see the names of the characters are repeated leading to confusion, it can be said that she might have used the characters' names repeatedly in order to establish the universality and commonality of human experience.

The recurrent use of symbols and the titles of her works like *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, *Trishanku*, *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* describes the rootlessness of the immigrants. These titles reflect the complex thematic implications of the immigrants who suffer from different types of maladies in the host society. As immigrants, they are unable to get rid of their native consciousness. More than nostalgia that attracts these inner sojourns, there is a passionate desire and existential need to relocate the philosophy and the vision of the homeland in the midst of the alien host culture.

The most striking aspect of Uma Parameswaran's work is the use of similes which are apparently inexhaustible and astonishingly varied in form. While expressing the moods of the characters, she writes poems which are rich in similes. For example the opening invocation of *Trishanku* where she invokes Ganesha. The frustrations and grief of the voices of *Trishanku* are made bearable and are transcended through the poet's reverent invocation of the names of the divinities, and her character's belief and trust in the invoked names.

Uma Parameswaran uses words like 'gotta' 'gonna' to give a natural touch to the situation. She uses a series of monologues, spoken by different characters and some voices

recur, while others do not; however, all gather richness and meaning from one another. Each monologue is a poem in itself; each is part of *Trishanku*. These voices show the interrelatedness of community and individual life. Childbirth and child rearing, education, love, marriage and family, death – all these experiences are brought to life by the individuality of the speakers.

Uma Parameswaran is greatly concerned with the necessity to regain her identity through using language as a creative mode. Her lines contain open statements which cover from alienation to the awareness of a sense of discovering the world and its values and roots. The knowledge of the world gives her the knowledge of herself. In spite of the slightly ironic tone employed throughout her descriptions, the final impression is that of an obsession with an admiration of Indian culture and tradition. There is a feeling of buoyancy for the language in her writing and the readers are comfortable with it despite the alien experiences presented. Even if there is any discomfort, it is purely intellectual.

The use of private experiences, especially the inner world of memories and the continuities with the past can be seen as the basis of her writing. She does not attempt to intellectualize and make moral choices; her writings are a retrospective photoflash. Along with these intimate portrayals, her vocabulary is touchingly Indian. The Indian phrases and syntactical patterns transplanted in the English milieu in her writings add a new flavor.

In the writings of Uma Parameswaran, the protagonists search for the symbols of collective past and her attempts with heritage is obvious. Being an immigrant herself, a sense of exile gains not only the perspective which allows Parameswaran to see her home clearly but also has immediate and pressing comparisons to make. Her works deal with the real

life questions of finding a balance. Parameswaran takes full advantage of her position within the cultural borderlands of India and Canada to portray the diverse life experiences of South Asian Canadians.

Uma Parameswaran's works recount the lives of Indian immigrants and their Canadian reared children (like the author herself). The incidents are presented in a plain style and she weaves together numerous narrative threads in her works. Her ambitious crowd appreciates the subtlety, structural intricacies and thematic resonance that brought her collection so much praise. The ordinariness of immigrant tales, which projects cultural sacrifices, material gain, which was hard earned with perpetual adjustment make her works a fresh and worthy contribution to literature. She has proficiently articulated the traumas of immigrants, their identity crisis, the generation gap and cultural differences they face in the alien land.

Uma Parameswaran's tone and outlook are stimulating and vibrant and make the reader, a worthwhile, entertaining read. The simple style is in keeping with the plight of the immigrants caught in the flux of time. On the whole, Parameswaran's writings convey the range of feelings from the ecstasy of transcendence of emotions to the drugged mildness trance of passion, from the feeling of being cleansed by love to the poignant bitter sweet memories of the loved and lost; their flutes playing the nostalgic note from their heart and intellect.

When one analyses the diasporic literature, one can see that it helps in creating a goodwill, a cordial relationship and in spreading of values, virtues and universal peace. No matter where all are scattered across the globe, people are brought closer through the medium of arts, films, songs, concerts, and of course diasporic literature. The immigrants

have the onus of promoting their culture in host society. Through the immigrant writers' works, Indian myths, folktales and beliefs become familiar to international audience. The immigrants have developed a plural identity by changing their social behaviour resulting in the modification of their style of speaking, their ideas, habits, interests, way of living, dressing, thinking etc., Nevertheless, they take all possible efforts to retain their beliefs, attitudes, culture and religion.

Change is the order of life. As one moves forward, he faces many challenges through which he gains new experiences. Through this research, the researcher wants to convey that alienation, insecurity and nostalgia are part of human life. Every human being is alienated in one way or other. In an immigrants' life this alienation is inevitable because his journey is from rootlessness to selfhood and to self-realization. Identity crisis occurs in all parts of the world. Even native people suffer due to identity crisis and alienation. But in the life of the immigrants, it is severe and hence taken seriously. It depends on how people adjust to the new environment.

The expression given by immigrant writers is the voice of the doubly suppressed human beings. These writers talk of human emotions awakened by the human sensibility. Diaspora has played an important role in promoting Indian culture and it helps immigrants to participate in the global scene. At present, immigrants have started giving a lot back to the country financially and politically. Many young people of Indian origin take pride in visiting their home country to study or for research since diasporic studies have become the standard description for academic work in many leading institutions. Identity, alienation and assimilation are inevitable in the life of the immigrants which leads to multiculturalism. In handling such issues, Uma Parameswaran has secured a commendable place among

Indian diasporic writers. If literature helps people to know that success lies in facing challenges, overcoming barriers and reaching out to others, then the world will become a better place to live in.

The subject of the present study recommends further research perspectives in the following areas viz., Portrayal of Human relationship, Cross Cultural aspects and Indianism in the works of Uma Parameswaran. A comparative study can be carried out with other writers, especially diasporic writers who have dealt with similar themes and techniques in their works.