

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Literature is a reflection of the society. It records the thoughts and feelings of great minds. Works of art and literature carry the evidence of the social and cultural practices of a community in its evolutionary history, culture and philosophy and play an obvious social role by serving as a relative memory of traditions and ideals. Literature is considered by the literary historians to be an offspring and an intimate expression of a composite socio-cultural unit, reflecting the impact of diverse ages, races and religions maintaining harmony at different levels of cultural consciousness and intellectual development. A nation's historical past and present are reflected through literature because it is a powerful means of transmitting culture from one generation to another and also to the migrating populace that comes under its influence.

Literary works reflect, probe and critique different socio-cultural identities and ideologies in many ways. They not only simplify the complex, cultural and ideological practices that go into the production of a literary work but also tend to limit the arena of their emotional appeal and social impact. When a community of persons migrates from one country to another, it carries with it a socio cultural baggage which consists of a predefined social identity, a set of religious beliefs and practices, a frame work of norms and values, food habits and language. Literature is one avenue of cultural signification and its modern day significance lies in its ability to assume as Hannah Arendt avers "a curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance" (33).

A nation's relationship with literature is a two-sided one. Nationalism directs literature to have formation of distinct national literatures while literature directs the formation of nations through the creation of national print media like the newspaper and the novel. The significance of great literature is marked when an author transforms everyday experience into an immortal piece of imaginative literature that echoes the soul of the readers.

The enhanced process of globalization, cross-fertilization and transculturation has brought many changes all over the world. When people started moving to Western countries for a better life, economy, education etc., they had many opportunities to grow. However they faced problems like alienation, up rootedness, loneliness due to discrimination, intergenerational conflicts and cultural dilemmas. These issues are brought out well by the diasporic writers, since all of them had such experiences at some point of time in their life. Though there are obstacles, counter forces, distractions and setbacks, they believe that change will happen one day or the other. Makarand Paranjape in his article "Valedictory Address: Interrogating Diasporic Creativity - The Patan Initiative" says,

. . . diasporic literature and experiences need to be subjected to some rigorous class analysis. The diasporians themselves form a stratified society. Those on the top, the creamy layer, get all the accolades and laurels; those at the bottom, end up in the dustbins of history. The inequalities of the home and of the host country are more often than not reproduced, not negated, in the diaspora. Hence the word diaspora actually includes two types of people. One who are doubly underprivileged and the other who are doubly privileged. This is where we have to be able to make our own distinctions. (54-55)

The diasporic Indian writing in English encircles every continent and part of the world. A great deal of Indian writing in English is produced not only in India but also in the wide spread geographical areas of indenture like USA, UK, Canada, Australia and South Pacific countries. Though, the literary representations of these writers are common, their views, responses, resonances and narratives are different. They have different socio-cultural backgrounds and literary ancestry and hence the thematic preoccupations and literary styles are also different.

Diasporic writing brings into focus, not merely the role of an intellectual's relationship with the evolution of democracy but also the language of transformation and hope. It serves as an outlet to the pent up passions, emotions and feelings and helps as a cathartic indignation. The diasporic writings have also helped in casting a new aura around global India and have contributed their share in building a novel image of India abroad. The welfare and wellbeing of the overseas Indians are brought out through these writings.

Diasporic writing today connects the past and the present and forges a new notion of fluid and transnational identities; it opens up spaces for new expressions of a transnational global culture. It is only on this premise that the struggle against racism, class structures and other forms of oppression would gather new momentum. It is a necessary and an inevitable shift which indicates the new opportunities for different social movements.

A study of the diasporic writings reveals that the common features noticed in the writings of diaspora are nostalgia, homesickness, sufferings due to distance from their homeland, mental trauma and anguish caused due to the pull and push factors of

belonging to the land of adoption and at the same time maintaining their cultural traditions and identity.

Etymologically ‘Diaspora’ is drawn from Greek word ‘*diaspirein*’ meaning ‘to disperse.’ Since the nineteenth century, the term ‘diaspora’ has been widely applied to the dispersal of the Jews throughout the Gentile nations and to the Jewish community that lives outside the frontiers of the biblical Israel. The term is now extended to include other populations who are displaced due to slavery, colonialism or forced migrations. Jana Evans Brazil defines diaspora as “historically and typically the scattering of people in their homelands into new communities across the globe” (17). Robin Cohen defines diaspora as “a group that scatters for aggressive or voluntary purposes including revolutionary minorities struggling for an imaginary homeland as well as travelling for commercial trade” (24). A typical example of diaspora is given by the New Webster’s dictionary and Thesaurus of English Language as “the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian captivity.” In the article named “Problematics of Theorizing Diaspora and Situating Diasporic Literature” Swaraj Raj has quoted Homi Bhabha’s views on diasporas:

. . . gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of ‘foreign’ cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or in the uncanny fluency of another’s language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival gathering the present. (52)

Evangelia Tastsoglou in her article “Gender, Migration and Citizenship: Immigrant Women and the Politics of Belonging in the Canadian Maritimes” quotes Avtar Brah’s

views on diaspora: “ the diasporic experience is determined by who travels, where and how and under what circumstance because the diasporic experience is a composite one made up of collectivities, multiple journeys, still points and border crossings. Experiences are shaped by economic positions, personal skills and political relationships between country of origin and of adoption” (204). Hence diaspora is an emotional and psychological state of struggle between two geographical and cultural states.

Diasporic existence is a sentence of history; a sentence that inflicts both corporeal and mental agonies as an inevitable part of human experience. History is a witness of the arousal of unfathomed agony and trauma in humankind when placed in diasporic condition. The very seeds of human diaspora germinated in the traumatic exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to an alien earth. Today the term ‘diaspora’ is used to describe practically any population which is considered ‘deterritorialised’ or ‘transnational’ – that is which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides and whose social, economic and political networks across the borders of nation or states span the globe. However, the term diaspora and diasporic communities are increasingly being used as a metaphoric definition for expatriates, expellees, refugees, alien residents, immigrants, dispelled communities and ethnic minorities. The experience of immigration not only disconnects the individual from his roots but also polarizes his existence which straddles between nationality and exile.

The study of Diasporic literature became popular in the new literary scenario during the late 1990s. With regard to Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions is a central historical fact of colonization. Though the phenomena of diaspora and expatriation are by all means an old one, the term

is widely used now for all the activities of expatriation which lead to emotional and physical displacement. Its impact on the present times is larger and deeper. The growing incidence of the diaspora has given place to dislocation, disintegration and dispossession. All serious study of diaspora traces its history way back to Jewish model of diaspora and migrant writers are concerned about this precarious balancing of two cultures.

Diasporic literature has emerged as a distinct literary genre. It gives a set of perspectives about political repressions, angst, loneliness, existential rootlessness, dissatisfaction or search for identity. It is generally agreed that through literary articulation, a migrant becomes the spokesperson of his distinct identity and thereby puts forth the notion of cultural distinctiveness. The emergence of the study of diaspora is fairly recent. Research on diaspora discussed that there is a basic difference between expatriation and immigration. Expatriation refers to the physical movement of people from country to country without the cultural and emotional integration whereas immigration refers to the fragments of population who have acquired the citizenship of the foreign countries and belong to the country of their migration. Both of them try to portray their homeland poignantly and realistically. They have common characteristics like agonized inspiration, multiple identities, creative memoirs and fresh perspectives on language and life; they face problems like marginalization and are compelled to live in crowded tenements or to be members of associations of different sorts.

The immigrants, whatever the reason for their migration may be – economic, social and political – no matter whether they migrated for trade and commerce or as religious preachers or as labourers, convicts or soldiers, as expatriates or refugees, exiles (forced or voluntary), or as guest workers in search of better life and opportunities, have

shared common experiences. The commonalities as well as differences are based on their conditions of migration and period of stay in the adopted land. Mostly the migrants suffer from the trauma of being far from their homes and the reminiscence of their motherland and the anguish of leaving behind everything familiar agonize the minds of the migrants. William Safran in “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” has observed:

It is a general characteristic of the diasporics that they continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland in a way or another, and their ethno- communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. They always dream of returning home. Diasporas’ consciousness is an intellectualization of an existential condition, a sad condition that is ameliorated by an imaginary homeland to which one hopes one will someday return. (77)

Thus the diasporic Indians do not sever their relationship with their ancestral land. There is a search for continuity and ‘ancestral impulse’ – an effort to look for their roots.

Though the sense of displacement may be an essential condition of diaspora, it is not experienced precisely with the same intensity and it differs according to time and place. Diasporic writers depict the plight and problems they face in the alien land, their fear of the new environment and the struggle they face to discover their own identity in the hostile environment. These writers are deeply attached to their homeland and they are caught physically between two worlds and this double marginalization negates their belonging to either location. Despite their variation, a thread of common themes runs through the diasporic writing. They have an international audience and an international

mindset. However, their diasporic condition, their sense and spirit of exile and alienation and their effort to seek habitation by making symbolic returns to their own homelands bind all those writings into a unified whole.

The writers of diaspora are situated in a complex space between two worlds and two cultures; they can neither forget the world/ culture they have come out of and which would be different if they returned to it now; nor can they fully assimilate into and be acculturated by the world/ culture they have adopted because they cannot subvert their own identities totally. The diasporic writers may be writing about their homelands but the problems that they navigate in their postcolonial discourses are very much related to their present situation as migrants. The complex situation of postcolonial perception found in their writings is reminiscent of Janus, the Greek god with two faces, one looking backward and the other forward; their work explores the context of the past which actually becomes a metaphor for the present. Stuart Hall in his article “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” says

Diasporic identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference  
[ . . . ] It is because this New world is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to the ‘lost origins’[. . . ] And yet, this ‘return to the beginning’ is like the imaginary in Lacan- it can neither be fulfilled nor required, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery. (236)

Diasporic writings are the records of the experiences of the diasporic communities living in varied socio-cultural settings. The diasporic writer writes with homeland in his bones, yet aware of the literary and cultural contexts of the country of his residence. Diasporic creativity may have its traumas, anguishes and challenges but finally it is about open spaces and not about closure. It is about intermingling and interruption. It is the joy of double vision and the pain of being split through and of carrying a nation on their backs as they work through a different history, distant culture and a fluid memory, which characterize the diaspora and its experience. The ethnic writer writes either about the country in which he lives like the main stream writers or about his ethnic world and thus be different from them. Hence by analyzing the themes of their eminent works, one can see the various approaches of diasporic writings.

Life and literature mirror the uncertain territory that surrounds man and the migrant fills them with a feeling of panic or anxiety. The ambiguity of the present retrieved by the past grows from the fear of the future and records an ongoing social transformation. Writers of Indian origin worldwide have contributed towards the documentation of the Indian experience. They are prolific and through their commendable writings they have gained global recognition.

The sense of homelessness and nostalgia for lost home are one of the most important themes for the writers who have settled in other countries. While some writers regret the loss of the land they left behind mythologizing through memory, nostalgia and imagination, others make expatriation a positive act of distancing, conducive to an expanded view of human experience and diverse cultures.

Among the commonwealth nations Canada is viewed as a “last frontier”, a land where adventurous individuals can realize their dreams which are free from the constraints imposed by the conventional society. There were three distinct waves of emigration to Canada. The first wave was initiated in the later half of the nineteenth century by the British who needed to fill the gap created by the abolition of slave trade. In search of cheap labour to work in the plantations of the Caribbean, South Africa, East Africa and Fiji, their agents scoured the countryside of the Indian subcontinent and rounded up thousands of indentured labourers who were shipped away. Illiterate and trusting, these early labourers neither had a clue of just how far they were going to be taken nor of the rigour of their working conditions. The second wave took place after the age of indenture and it consisted of people with a higher level of education or business expertise. The third wave of migration is of those whose forefathers had already left India as a part of the old, colonial diaspora of the nineteenth and early twentieth century to Africa, Caribbean and Fiji islands.

Canada is generally regarded as a liberal country in terms of immigrants especially in comparison to its neighbour in the south. It has two major cultures, the Anglophone and the Francophone. Dual culture is one of history’s harsh gifts to Canada and thereby it has given rise to friction and weakness. As a result of two prominent cultures, Canadian writing is enriched with varied perspectives on common experience. Both cultures are united in the shared psychology of endurance and survival and it is these qualities that engender and sustain modern Canadian writing. Canadian life and literature is marked by this, “northern quality” which relies on the strong seasonal rhythm governing Canadian community life.

Canadian literature has a much longer history than is generally assumed, which includes a long phase of ‘invisibility.’ It was only faintly heard by its own people upto

the 1950s, as the Canadian literary scholarship also shared the fate of the nation's being colonized. It took decades of struggle and persistent efforts to come into "visibility" which came only in stages. It was first recognized politically as an area to enquire into the value systems of the land or to study the distinctive features of cultural nationalism. If the problems of culture and belief created cultural self-consciousness in Canada on the one hand, they paved way for a synthetic and holistic thinking on the other. As a result, Canadian literature, which is not recognized as a voice of flaming genius, has come to acquire the advantage of plurality of voices clamouring to be free from the moribund conventions.

Early Canadian writing portrayed the psychological stress setup by the contrast of wilderness, roughness and homestead. Canadian literature has undergone different stages. The first stage is "pre-creational" stage in which literature fulfills a utilitarian purpose. In this stage, Canadian writing was influenced by the tradition of the Roman borrowings from Greek literature. In the second stage translation of foreign models became a norm. For example Caxton's summary of Trojan wars. The third stage reflects the Canadian locale and setting, whereas in the fourth stage the intensification of the local or independent works gained importance. Canadian literature has developed in this stage breaking away from the monotonous type of writing. In the penultimate stage, literary works are judged by nationalistic standards. In the final stage national literature sheds its national concerns and gains international recognition. By evolving and passing through all these stages, Canadian literature has marched towards self - sufficiency and independent stance.

Canadian literature is often termed as immigrant literature which describes the struggle of adjustment to a new ambience and a new world, the feelings of loneliness, of alienation and of hostility experienced by the immigrants in a new place. In fact the literature

produced by the minority ethnic communities brings a new perspective and a new dimension to the varied themes of immigrant experience that it shares with the earlier Canadians.

The multi-lingual, multi-regional and multi-cultural aspects of the Canadian 'mosaic' have arrested the attention of a good number of Indian scholars, possibly because they themselves are confronted with a similar phenomena in their own land. If Canadians speak more than eighty-five different languages, including two major languages, English and French, Indians use twenty-two officially accredited languages, besides a large number of dialects and other languages. In the book entitled *Regionalism and National Identity: Canada India: Interdisciplinary perspectives* Chandra Mohan examines how the plurality of languages and literatures has encouraged formal and non formal studies in Comparative literature of the two countries. He also says that the wide variety of literatures in both the countries constitutes a "grid of the interwoven strands whose common threads both relate and distinguish, make for a composite identity" (57).

Canadian literature reflects a regionally diverse and multicultural society. Diversity of cultures has given rise to the emergence of varied literatures, the most noteworthy being South Asian Canadian Literature. The South Asian migration to Canada established a diaspora whose immediate need was to articulate its feelings, emotions and responses to the new society wherein the writers have brought not only fame and recognition in the form of awards but also brought the aspirations and tribulations of the South Asian Diaspora to the notice of the world.

South Asian Canadian Literature constitutes the works of writers who acknowledge a South Asian sensibility or maintain a distinct South Asian identity in their writings. They have their own distinct values and heritages. The South Asian Canadian literature refers to the writings of Canadians who trace their origin from one of the following South – Asian

countries like India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All these writers have come directly either from South Asian countries or from British colonies such as South Africa, East Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific islands.

The first South Asian immigrants entered Canada by the Sikh regiment in the year 1890. In the subsequent years a large segment of white population mounted a massive attack on the Asians that effectively curtailed Asian immigration. Later the worst racist episode that happened in Canadian history was the “Komagata Maru” incident where immigrants were sent back without any cause or reason. This dark incident and the incipient and pervading racism were well explained in the English Fiction called “Maluka” written by S.D.Dhami in the year 1937. This novel portrays the authenticity of its delineation of the early years of Indian diaspora in Canada through its mellifluous descriptive passages. From this work one can identify the prejudice that exists at all levels between different races. Several acts were passed for prohibiting discrimination on grounds of nationality, ethnic origin and language. In spite of all these, the immigrants’ condition is not comfortable in Canada. Everyone in Canada is a hyphenated Canadian- an Indo-Canadian or a French-Canadian. While there is a school of thought that celebrates hyphenation as equal recognition, there is another which holds that hyphenation is ghettoization, an implicit relegation to second class citizenship of all those who do not fall into the white Anglo-Saxon or French categories. Hence, the literature which comes out from this speaks about the fragmentation, tracing their heritage, experiences, emotions and records that might serve to enrich the worlds and enliven the literary traditions.

The main thrust of South Asian Canadian writers is away from India and towards Canada. In other words, it is an out of India or away from India experience that is being

recorded. In most cases, the story of their lives has been a rather adventurous journey around the globe. Likewise their fictional characters travel relentlessly; they are far away from home and constantly in foreign countries, while none of the places “abroad” ever turns into a real new home. One may wonder how one can, far from home and dispersed into different countries of the hemisphere, develop a feeling of home and a sense of belonging?

A series of hindrances usually block the road to “home.” Language is one of the crucial barriers that the newcomer has to deal with, but even after many years of living in a new culture, a tiny remaining accent may readily give away one’s origin. Many social, political, cultural and economic aspects play an important role in the condition of life that is termed such as diaspora, exile, immigration, ethnicity or hybridity.

The South Asian Canadian writers have incorporated stylistic techniques and excellent use of language into their writings in terms of style, representation, imagery, expression and the ability to describe and communicate experiences. They give a view of the other and make it possible for a new voice to be heard, especially a voice that had been suppressed and silenced in the colonial period. In addition to this, the writers also project the life that they have lived in all its joys and sorrows in a dominant community.

Every literary movement has a reaction to preceding literary fashions and concerns. As far as writings are concerned, poetry was chosen by all the writers followed by fiction and drama is less known to them. The writers who have received recognition are Himani Bannerji, Rana Bose, Stephen Gill, Rohinton Mistry, Bharathi Mukherjee and Uma Parameswaran. All these writers have struck roots in the adopted homeland and hence there was a richer soil for literary pursuits. They complement each other in time and space and they extend the literary record of a collective experience. The major themes of

these writers are exploitation of laborers in various industries, sex discrimination among the family members, the double standards that repress and oppress women, role of senior citizens and problems related to intergenerational communities.

Himani Bannerji writes in a variety of genres and is perhaps known for her socio-political essays, through which she challenges the dominant culture from an ideological locus of feminism/Marxism/antiracism. Rather than dealing with nostalgia for a lost home or lamenting over a lost cultural self, her work interrogates the state's cultural and political ideology. In her work one can find the frustrations of the immigrant community at large with insistent realism.

Rana Bose occupies a special place in the literary history of the Indian diaspora in Canada. All his plays reflect the ghettoized and hyphenated state of Canada. His work *Baba Jacques* is considered to be the first play in the history of Canadian theatre which portrays the South Asian views of life, the cultural prejudices and political betrayals that are found in Canada.

One of Canada's well established writers is Michael Ondaatje whose writings are characterized by realism or naturalism, richly textured with descriptions that evoke scenes that contrast sharply with the readers own environment. All his works reflect the duality of the softer traits of shyness and gentleness as well as the violence, bloodshed that characterize his writings. In his travel memoir, 'Running in the Family' he has made a reference to the present realities of SriLanka.

The most popular critic of the multicultural literary scene in Canadian literature is Arun Prabha Mukherjee. Her collection of essays titled *Towards an Aesthetic of Opposition*

published in 1988, analyses the cultural imperialism towards universalisation which depicts the realities of history and politics.

Stephen Gill, an eminent Indo Canadian writer addresses a variety of themes and issues in his works. All his characters live in hostile societal milieus such as racist, unfriendly, competitive, materialistic and suspicious of 'others'. His writings are influenced by his interest in world peace, pro-humanism, the experience of people of colour in North America and world injustice. His anti-war sentiment and interest in human interaction are also important concerns of his writings. Though his style is not innovative, his writings directly address these issues which are prevailing in the contemporary Canadian society.

The best known writer in Indo Canadian literature is Rohinton Mistry. His works are focused on the boyhood initiations, everyday frustrations, nostalgia and aspirations with Indian outlook. He has bolstered the India- in- Canada reality by using Parsi words without either glossary or textual explanations such as resorted to by earlier writers in commonwealth literature. One can see the authentic and sensitive delineation of Parsi customs and way of life in his work. He has portrayed the most sustained exploration of Post-Independence Indian society through his chronicles of individual and community lives. His fiction covers many themes, from politics to Parsi community life and economic inequality to national 'events' such as wars rigorously examining the impact of historical forces and social events on 'small' lives. Mistry's prize winning novels and collection of short stories such as *Family matters*, *A fine balance* and *Tales from Firozsha Baag* have been successful both in Canada and on international scale.

One of the most widely known writers of Indo Canadian literature is Bharathi Mukherjee . Her works focus on the issues of migration, the status of new immigrants

and the feeling of alienation experienced by expatriates as well as Indian women. Her own struggle with identity, first as an exile from India, then as an Indian expatriate in Canada and finally as an immigrant in the United States has led to her current state of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants.

The much renowned Canadian writer M.G.Vassanji's works reflect his multinational and multicultural biographies. In most cases, his story has been an adventurous journey around the globe. Likewise, his fictional characters travel relentlessly; they are far away from home and constantly in foreign countries; while none of those places 'abroad' ever turn into a real home. His literary interest led to the formation of 'The Toronto Review of South Asian Writing Abroad'.

Uma Parameswaran's work deals with Canada and recounts stories of the South Asian Canadian immigrant experience. She is an Indian born writer who has successfully portrayed the diasporic consciousness of an immigrant who comes to Canada in search of greener pastures and thus is physically and culturally alienated from his/her native place. Her cultural affinity with India makes her an alien in Canada where she makes repeated attempts to transmute and transform her identity. Exploring the challenges of coping with ambiguous identity, she deals with the issues of assimilation and racism. Her writings comprise of different genres which include short stories, plays and poems with common themes which ascertain her Western experience with the Indian realities. As a creative writer she has used her own experience as first hand observation to reinforce the intensity of social alienation. Her writings have references to Indian culture because she has always been involved in promoting Indian culture in Canada.

Like many other immigrant writers, Parameswaran shows strong thematic interest in the experiences of immigrants, particularly South Asian Canadians with an emphasis on alienation and racial position. She says that life of the immigrant no doubt shapes one's responses to India and the responses may vary a lot depending upon one's own personality and values. Through her writings the readers become aware not only of the South Asian experience but also of the struggles of the immigrants that make them more humane. Uma Parameswaran, like other writers of the diaspora has narrated these experiences in a wide range of her literary works. She reflects upon the issues of expatriation in a way which is different from other practitioners of diasporic writings. Her multicultural lifestyle, with perplexing experiences of these bicultural worlds is prominent in her works.

Indian Diaspora refers to persons of Indian birth or ethnicity living abroad. It has been formed by a scattering of population and not, in the Jewish sense, an exodus of population at a particular point in time. This sporadic migration traces a steady pattern from the indentured labourers of the past to the IT technocrats of the present day. As far as Indian diaspora is concerned, people have acquired a new identity by the process of self-fashioning and increasing acceptance by the West. Somdatta Mandal in his article "The 'Desh-Pardesh' Syndrome: Texts and Contexts of Diasporic Indian Writing in English" has quoted Emmanuel S. Nelson's definition on Indian diaspora as "the historical and contemporary presence of people of Indian subcontinental origin in other areas of the world" (37). Many are first generation expatriates who continue to consider India as their true home, the place of their nurture, values, and extended families as well as their deepest sympathies and attachments.

Generally, the literature of Indian diaspora is considered to be the body of writing in English produced by persons who identify themselves as Indians living outside the nation in such places like Australia, Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana and Mauritius, Malaysia and East Africa, or in Western countries like Canada, the United States and Great Britain..

Every overseas Indian is an achiever in his own way and the success of the evolution of Indian diaspora starts way back in the nineteenth century and it can be divided into three groups. They are Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Periods. The Precolonial period refers to the travelling of Buddhist Bhikkus to remote corners of Central and Eastern India and the expedition of the South Indian Cholas to trade and commerce with Srilanka and South East. In Colonial period Indian diaspora was a crucial phase because the demand for labour force and the opposition of slavery were highly intensified under the names of indentured labour migration, Kangani and maishy labour emigration and passage or free emigration. In Postcolonial period Indian diaspora is a significant phase in which three distinct patterns can be identified. The emigration of Anglo Indians to Australia and England, the emigration of professionals and semiprofessionals to the industrially advanced countries like USA, England and Canada and the emigration of skilled and unskilled labourers to West Asia. Whatever the classifications may be, the Indian diasporic writings record the experiences of the diasporic communities living in varied socio - cultural settings. The Indian diasporic writing covers every continent and part of the world and has made a substantial contribution to the literary output of their host countries and serves as a powerful network connecting the entire globe.

In the past, the Indians were intellectually fed on the thoughts of writers like Dickens, Scott whereas at present, people all over the world are being nourished

by the writers of the Indian diaspora namely V.S.Naipaul, Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Uma Parameswaran etc., The European voyagers, travellers, traders and the orientalist rediscovered the cosmopolitan culture of India. The writers of the Indian diaspora, through their literary contributions have greatly enriched English literature. They have been aiming at reinventing India through the rhythms of ancient legends, the cadences of mythology, the complexities of another civilization, cultural assimilation and nostalgia. They dive deep into the realms of imagination and the ocean of memory to paint something quite different and distinct from that portrayed by fellow novelists. The writers of the Indian diaspora write about India painting the vastness and the complexities of the home country which contains everything in multitudes – multiple truths, multiple crisis, multiple realities and this diversity is portrayed for the world wide reading public.

The story of Indian diaspora is one of sweat and toil often washed with tears, of achievements despite impediments of education, advancements and economic progress. A large number of diasporic writers have given expression to their creative urge and have brought credit to the Indian English fiction as a distinctive force. Since exile has been one of the sources of good literature and sometimes even of great literature in all ages as it is part of human experience. Displacement whether forced or self imposed is in many ways a calamity. It appears both as a liberating experience as well as a shocking experience. The changed atmosphere acts as a stimulant for the writer who consciously tries to justify one end and unconsciously longs for the other.

Exile in the form of migration has been the cause of emergence of a large number of writers who have given direction to the progress of English literature. A major contribution in this regard has been that of the Indian writers like Rushdie and Naipaul who live as

world citizens – a global manifestation of the exilic condition. Indian English writers like Anita Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee, Uma Parameswaran, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Jumpa Lahiri, Vikaram Seth and Rohinton Mistry have all made their names while residing abroad. They have given more poignancy to the exploration by dealing with not only geographical dislocation but also socio - cultural displacement.

Nevertheless, the Indians living outside the geographical boundary of India have made their mark in the field of literature worldwide. Though the experiences of migrancy vary from person to person depending upon the levels of education, age and background, the diasporic Indian writing has made a substantial contribution to the literary output of their host countries. The writers clearly bring out the dual feeling of the sense of wonder and adventure at the sight of the new land and their feeling of nostalgia for the world left behind.

One of the most celebrated expatriate writers is V.S.Naipaul whose writing is a protest against the colonial centre. He discusses how the minority culture adapts to a cosmopolitan society and the changing value system and its impact on the characters. Though he has a magnificent obsession towards India, his sensibility is British because he grew up in Trinidad. He never cared for the land of his birth and his people and he writes for the English speaking people. He considered Trinidad as a destitute society without history and without achievement. Though his ancestors belonged to India, he didn't care for Indian identity either and hence he remained homeless with a split sensibility guided by his western outlook.

Salman Rushdie, an outstanding writer discusses the issue of migrant identity. All his characters like the author himself are migrants drifting from shore to shore in

search of an 'imaginary homeland.' The recurring themes of all his works are 'double identity,' 'divided selves' and 'search for identity.'

The sense of alienation and nuclear insanity in modern American Society are well explained in the novels of Vikram Seth. His work has been described as an American novel instead of an Indo English novel. All his characters are isolated and lonely personalities leading a disintegrating family life in America.

A new dimension of the Indian English works can be seen in the works of Anita Desai. Her writing focuses on alienation, estrangement, anxiety, anguish and threats to individual identity. She articulates the dwindling of conventional value system, marital discords, collapse of joint family system, ambivalent cultural responses to the impact of West, social and economic disparities and the quest for identity in a multicultural world.

Both the novelists Anita Desai and Bharathi Mukherjee discuss the themes of isolation, disintegration of personality and dual cultural shock in their works. The women characters suffer from depression and frustration and take extreme steps of killing their husbands. Apart from nostalgic reminiscences, these writers recreate their past through their writings. They have become folk historians, mythmakers and custodians of the collective history of their people, giving an alarm to the community life, to local or national politics through their experience of being alienated, observed, peripheralized and marginalized.

Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the category of Indian diaspora whose only link with India is her origin. She portrays the loneliness and sense of alienation felt by immigrants; when the first generation finds it difficult to be cut off from their roots, the second generation is ready to get rid of deep seeded Indian sentiments navigating between inherited traditions and the baffling new world they encounter every day.

Kiran Desai, daughter of the distinguished Indo English writer Anita Desai explores the contemporary issues like globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence.

Though the diasporic writers share common features, the differences based on the conditions of their migration and settlement cannot be overlooked. This aspect is expressed by Bhiku Parekh in the following manner: “. . . the diasporic Indian is like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless he has several homes and that is the only way he increasingly comes to feel at home in the world” (110). Hence, diasporic writings occupy a significant position among cultures and countries and the writers of the Indian diaspora through their literary contribution have greatly enriched English literature.

Postcolonialism emerged as a distinct category in the year 1970 and it has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonialization. It deals with the problems of the outcomes of diaspora like migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, caste, class, culture, gender and place. Many critics feel that even literatures of Canada, US, Australia, should be expanded under postcolonialism. It focuses on the marginalizing views of the native people and undermines the Universalist claims made by liberal humanist critics. It is principally correlated with culture; nonetheless, it is pertinent to and applied in a few disciplines as well.

In the words of Charles E. Bressler, Postcolonialism is “an approach to literary analysis that concerns itself particularly with literature written in English in formerly colonized countries” (27). It usually excludes literature that represents either British or

American viewpoints and concentrates on writings from colonized cultures in Africa, Australia and other places and societies that were once dominated by European cultural, political and philosophical tradition. The diversity of cultures present in such nations and the experiences of the members and the varied social group which are all the products of diaspora, become a major concern in framing the term 'Postcolonial diaspora literature' which turns out to be a hybrid of Postcolonial literature. Later it has been further hybridized to be called Diasporic Literature.

Postcolonial theory emerged from the colonized peoples' frustrations, their direct, personal and cultural clashes with the conquering culture and their fears, hopes and dreams about their future and their own identities. Postcolonialism in the words of G. Rai is "an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of gender, race and class" (19). The term 'Postolonialism' marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people, the necessary authority, political and cultural freedom to gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism.

In general, Postcolonial writers concentrate on themes like migration, existential crisis like alienation, loss of identity, rootlessness, displacement and hybridity with a historical vision. The multidimensional exposure of the problems with a humanist, cosmopolitan and postcolonial perception makes their writing interesting.

Postcolonial writing is the longing to reclaim an identity which gives a set of perspectives about the relation between ideas and practices, relations of harmony, relations of conflict, generative relations between different peoples and cultures. It emphasizes on double identity and has posted a new relationship between narrative and migration. The Postcolonial

theorists and critics such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi. K Bhabha, Gayathri Spivak have brought an utopian version of the homeland and project a static picture of the society.

Spivak is concerned particularly with the 'gendered subaltern' and her most significant contribution to feminism and subaltern studies is her postcolonial exposition of the status of the Indian Woman. She asks whether the Indian subaltern woman has a voice or even a voice consciousness. Can the subaltern speak? Will she be heard? And Spivak expresses that the subaltern cannot speak, because their words cannot be properly interpreted. It is therefore, the silence of the female as subaltern is a result of a failure of interpretation and not a failure of articulation. Spivak takes deconstruction as a strategy for negotiating the postcolonial condition. She believes that the deconstruction of postcoloniality bears not only on the status of migrants in the Western metropolis but also on the conditions in the decolonized world especially among the rural poor.

The terms 'ambivalence', 'mimicry' and 'hybridity' have been popularized by Homi. K. Bhabha. He uses the term 'hybridity' which describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterize the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. According to Bhabha 'hybridity' being an integral part of postcolonial discourse bridges the gap between the East and the West. He argued that 'mimicry' is one of the most effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. For Bhabha, the human subject is not grounded in a fixed identity; it rather is a discursive effect generated in the act of enunciation. When migrants, refugees and decolonized take up position in Western discourse, they divide it by repeating it and by creating clear space within it for new and hybrid subjectivities.

If the origin of postcolonial aesthetics lies in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) its theory is found in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Postcolonial

theory is an area that has developed largely as a result of Said's work. Along with Said, Homi. K.Bhabha and Gayathri Spivak form what Robert Young has called 'Holy Trinity' of postcolonial theorists. Edward Said looked about the divisive relationship of the colonizer and the colonized. He tries to show that West was wrong to treat the East as inferior both culturally and intellectually. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is the first book which relentlessly unmasks the ideological disguises of imperialism. Said is of the opinion that since all cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous, the complete separation of the West from the East is highly impossible. Hence cultural hybridity has come to stay and no amount of effort can fence off the East and the West. All these critics either out of their own diasporic experience or through analyses of other diasporic writers' works, offered their observations and studies of this phenomenon.

The idea of postcolonial literary theory emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural origin of postcolonial writing. Postcolonial theories have been developed to accommodate the differences within the various cultural traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across those traditions. Moreover, 'marginality' became an unprecedented source of creative energy. Even though the impetus towards decentring and pluralism has always been present in the history of European thought, the situation of marginalized societies and cultures expedited this process more directly. These notions are implicit in postcolonial texts from the imperial period to the present day.

Since postcolonialism focuses on the experiences of colonized/ displaced communities, they write in relation with the culture of their homeland and at the same time adopt and negotiate with the culture space of the host land. The celebration of cultural

blending considerably blurs the boundaries laid down by Postcolonial theory. Migrants become emblematic figures in postcolonial literary studies because they represent a removal from old foundations and from previous grounded ways of thinking about identity. The strategy that accounts for cultural shock of a migrant is that he tries to construct multiple identities and develops a hybrid vision which eventually becomes an ongoing process of adaptation. Postcolonial critics emphasize on marginality, plurality and perceived 'otherness' as the source of energy and potential change. They help in strengthening the bonds between various countries as they begin to relate through historical, cultural, social, traditional and economic ties.

Admittedly, twentieth century diaspora is voluntary and contemporary diasporic writing is the product of a shared culture and shared history which by implication creates a postcolonial self that answers privilege and power and refuses to acknowledge the superiority of western culture. The postcolonial situation has given writers, the confidence to write creative literature in English. Thus, postcolonial theory is transnational in dimension, multicultural in approach and a movement beyond the binary opposition of the power relations between the colonizer and the colonized and between the centre and periphery.

Uma Parameswaran's works are constantly analysed and interpreted by critics and reviewers taking notice of the reality of her creative writing. Her works have been reviewed in several well-known journals and books. The following review of literature helped the researcher to identify the gap so as to pursue her research.

Supriya Agarwal in her article "Immigrant Spaces – Uma Parameswaran and Sadhu Binning" expresses that Uma Parameswaran's plays move around the problems faced by South Asian and other visible minorities in Canada. Her plays link epic India with

modern Canada through myth and dance. She also observes that Uma Parameswaran's plays present the mindset of the new generation that is grappling with the problems of dislocation and discrimination.

In the article named "Cultural Pluralism in Uma Parameswaran's *The Sweet Smell of Mother's Milk Wet Bodice*" Monika Gupta says that immigrants have highlighted the loss of identity and have been nostalgic about it in their writings. The inevitable non-equation between the colored people and the whites has been heightened by immigrant writings. Through her protagonists, Uma Parameswaran tells us that anyone who migrates to any country should consider the new country as his own home.

Roshni Rustomji in her article "Travelers between Cultures" observes that the voices in Uma Parameswaran's *Trishanku* tell the stories of individual men, women and children. They are very personal, even private narratives are woven together into the story of a small and valiant community. The concluding piece in *Trishanku* is muted and may be stated as a hope for triumph and liberation. She used her own experiences as she travels between cultures and she transforms the voices heard in papers at conferences and in oral histories. The poetry behind the lives of people is portrayed clearly in *Trishanku*.

In the article "Uma Parameswaran" Diane Mc Gifford expresses that Uma Parameswaran's writing is in one sense, a reaction to the Indian diaspora, particularly the experiences of South Asian Indians in Canada, and more specifically in Winnipeg, the city where she has been living since 1966. Her writings explore the lives and experiences of Indian immigrants as they struggle with the painful and bewildering task of adjusting to and claiming their new land. Most Canadians are immigrants and hence, the themes and motifs of Uma Parameswaran's works are no surprise to students of Canadian

literature. As an immigrant she is profoundly Canadian. Yet she writes of these same events with important, necessary and delightful difference, a difference that has its origins in the rich cultures and traditions of her homeland. The major strength of Parameswaran's writing is her ability to blend modern experience with traditional myths and stories.

Christine Singh in the article "Where One Considers Home" says that Uma Parameswaran's characters are carefully and accurately drawn, thereby allowing the reader to easily identify with them and while her protagonists are all Indo-Canadian, their human authenticity gives them a universal reach. All her works are remarkable exposition of human emotion. Her tone and outlook are stimulating and vibrant, making her work a worthwhile, entertaining read.

Evangeline Shanti Roy in her article "A Temple on the Red and Assiniboine: Voicing the Diasporic Self in Uma Parameswaran's Oeuvre" remarks that Uma Parameswaran's work attempts to voice the immigrants' dilemmas and confusion and above all, their feeling of rootlessness and their fear that having been uprooted once, they will never again be able to take root anywhere, despite their best efforts. Uma Parameswaran's work epitomizes the life of typical middle class Indian immigrants in Canada, thereby giving them a sense of continuity and veracity and creating the illusion that she is writing about real people and real episodes.

In the article named "Towards the Centre: The Writings of Uma Parameswaran," Indira expresses that as a diasporic writer Uma Parameswaran relates more positively to Canadian culture, while retaining at the same time her distinctive Indian identity. Living

on margins and trying to perform the role of an ambassador and refugee, Uma Parameswaran seeks affirmation and re- affirmation in a new perspective.

S.Ganesan in his article “South Asian Canadian Point of View about Human Rights: Uma Parameswaran’s *Dear Deedi, My Sister* and *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* expresses how Uma Parameswaran’s works reflect the voices of the immigrants who have registered their protest and their feelings against discrimination and the denial of their rights.

Jyoti Jakhar Dahiya in her work “In Search of ‘Roots’: A Study of Uma Parameswaran’s *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees*” points out that Uma Parameswaran’s work examines the various issues like- the question of identity of a diasporic person; nature of the ‘new homeland’; differences between the first generation migrants and the second-generation migrants; issues of assimilation, racism, non-acceptance, rootlessness and the notion of multiculturalism. She also says that Uma Parameswaran’s work apparently brings forth the complex issues associated with and the vast range of the experiences of the South Asian Canadians in Canada. Her works are political and voice a protest against the ill- treatment meted out to immigrants in foreign land. Although they may not appear as an enjoyable experience to the reader, the theoretical perspective indicated through her work makes them significant reading.

R.Vedavalli expresses her views regarding the immigrant experiences in her article “Sending Roots: A Study of Uma Parameswaran’s *Sita’s Promise and Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees*”. She also opines that her works reflect the expatriate sensibility - the experience of alienation, nostalgia and transplantation- that they undergo during the process of acculturation and acclimatization.

In the article entitled “Cultural Issues in Uma Parameswaran’s *Dear Deedi, My Sister*”, K.Balachandran observes that Uma Parameswaran’s work portrays the problems that ravaged the larger immigrant community in Canada. She brings to light the multiculturalism which is prevalent in Canada and its effects on various immigrants.

S.Ganesan in his work “The Ambivalent Note: A Critical Study of Uma Parameswaran’s *Sons Must Die*” says that Uma Parameswaran’s work portrays the conflict between romantic idealism and the survival instinct. Her work *Sons Must Die* portrays the sad reality of the loss of scores of human lives in an armed conflict.

Shweta Arora in her article “Technique in the works of Bharathi Mukherjee and Uma Parameswaran” says that the depiction of the cross-cultural experiences not only gives a distinctive flavor but also a global touch to their writings. She also says that the predominating theme of all her poems is memory.

N.Kalamani in her article “A Study of Uma Parameswaran’s *Sons Must Die*” says that the strategic concern underlying Uma Parameswaran’s work is the search for home. The act of displacement activates her frequent mental visits home through dreams and literature, so much so that homeland reappears as a series of objects or fragments of narratives. She also says that the speciality of Uma Parameswaran’s literary works is that she unifies an essential Canadian sensibility with that of her Indian historic past.

In the paper named “Evolution from Clannish Exclusivity to collective Solidarity: A Study of Uma Parameswaran’s *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*” Hemalatha, K remarks that Uma Parameswaran gives more importance to family bonds and emotional ties between the family members, the core of Indian culture. Uma Parameswaran who writes

from her own experience of migration focuses on the life of an average Indo-Canadian family which migrated to Canada for better prospects.

Tejinder Kaur in the article “Cultural Dilemmas and Displacements of Immigrants” says that Uma Parameswaran operates at two levels of consciousness, frequently shifting their focus back and forth between the alien and the native land. Their diasporic consciousness introduces both these worlds along with their past and the present.

In the article named “Intersection of History and Fiction in the Memory Poems of Uma Parameswaran” N. Murugaiyan says that memory plays a significant role in reclamation and recollection of the lost world, especially in the writings of Uma Parameswaran. Her works are marked by a relative simplicity. She handles the immigrant theme quite skillfully and brings out the immigrants deep pain of uprooting and re - rooting. He also says that Uma Parameswaran represents ethnic writers in Canada whose cultures or languages are neither English nor French. She maintains objectivity in portraying the several facets of multicultural Canada.

There are many writers who have dealt with the theme of identity and the following is a review of a few works where identity and related issues have been dealt with.

M.K.Naik analyses the “Identity crisis in the novels of Salmon Rushdie” says that Rushdie’s’ works illustrate the permanent plight of individual identity in the hostile modern world. He has also expressed that the quest for identity in Rushdie’s work portray the dilemma that an expatriate faces at every step which creates an imaginary home for himself and reconstructs his roots.

S.Santhakumari who has analysed the “Identity crisis in the works of Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal” discusses the compromising attitude of immigrants between the English and Indian life.

Chitra.K discusses in her article “Quest for identity in Shashi Deshpande’s Novel” the immigrants condition and how they should have an assertive individuality which includes the capability to take decisions about their life and carry them out with a sense of responsibility.

Fancy Paul who has analysed the “Quest for Identity in Kamala Das Poetry” says that woman should emerge from a passive role to the point of discovering and asserting her individual freedom and identity.

Jaya Priya who has discussed the “Suppression of Female Identity in Salma’s Debut Novel” expresses the poignant narrative of the lives of the Muslim women, their everyday struggles and worries and their relationships of love and hatred and of death.

Kavita analyses the “Indian Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Work”. She says that cultural cross over paves way for a hybrid culture and a new process of cultural assimilation. A mixed cultural milieu makes room for vistas of communication and dialogue of cosmopolitan world.

R. Subha Shri discusses the “Cultural Predicament and Displacement in Manju Kapur’s *The Immigrant*”. She expresses her view that patriarchy and the quest for identity against the dogmas of cultural and social critical thinking are predominant issues in the life of the immigrants.

S.Sudha while analysing the “Maximalist Transformation of the Female Immigrant Identity in Bharathi Mukherjee’s Work” says that the psychological transformation of the new American immigrant and the personal freedom can be obtained through the process of self- transformation.

“The Theme of Alienation in Kamala Markandaya’s Work” by R.Thangam reflects the sharp contrasts of culture in the depiction of an individual’s crisis when forcibly caught in the clash of intercultural values.

“Cross-cultural alienation in Bharathi Mukherjee’s Work” by Vadivambal shows that the process of survival of the diasporic individual/ community in-between the home of origin and the world of adoption is the voyage undertaken in the whole process from alienation to final assimilation.

Nityananda Pattanayak discusses the intergenerational friction in the diasporas in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Work. The protagonists’ quest for spatial identity and their obsession with the multicultural realities, their sense of alienation and nostalgia are the issues of the deliberation.

Mary Mathew analyses in the article named “Globalization and Diasporic Family Dynamics” the strategic placement of the expatriates at the cusp of the bicultural apex which prompts the inescapable formation of new subjectivities, aspirations and anxieties for which their literary discourse becomes a site of critical deployment.

In the article “The Evolution of Eriksonian and Neo- Eriksonian Identity Theory and Research: A Review and Integration” Seth. J .Schwartz analyses the evolution of the study of identity development from Freud’s early writings to Erikson’s extrapolations and theoretical expositions.

In “Diaspora Experiences in Multicultural Vs Melting Pot Societies: Lessons from the Indian Diaspora in the U.S. and Canada” Maasud Chand expresses that the Indian diaspora has been a very successful immigrant group in both the U.S and Canada in terms of economic achievement and educational attainment.

In the article named “Repercussions of Globalisation as Seen Through Diasporic Literature,” B.Sreekanth Reddy and P.Padma talk about the issues of multiculturalism, nostalgia, intergenerational conflicts and familial relations of the immigrant.

The above reviews of literature epitomize how Uma Parameswaran’s works have gone through various interpretations and critical analysis and how identity related issues were analysed in the works of many other writers. Hence, the researcher proposes to make a close reading of Uma Parameswaran’s works and explore into the theme of identity crisis, alienation and assimilation highlighted in her works.

Uma Parameswaran – poet, playwright, and short-story writer – was born in Madras and grew up in Jabalpur, India. Receiving the Smith-Mundt Fulbright Scholarship, Parameswaran moved to the United States to study American literature at Indiana University. She earned her M.A. in Creative Writing and completed her Ph.D. in English at Michigan State University in 1972. Currently she is a professor of English at The University of Winnipeg. Uma Parameswaran has devoted much of her time and efforts to the literary field and created an identifiable place in South Asian Canadian diasporic literature.

A Scholar-critic turned creative writer, Uma Parameswaran is the author of numerous books, including plays, poems, literary criticism and fiction. In 1962, she wrote *Sons Must Die*, a play centred on the partition of 1947. Other plays followed: *Meera* in 1971, *Sita's Promise* in 1981 and *Dear Deedi, My Sister* in 1989 which won the first prize

in the Caribe play writing contest. Her major work *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* (1979) and her volume of poetry, *Trishanku and Other Writings* (1988), *The Door I Shut Behind Me* – a short story that won the 1987 Lady Eaton Award explore the lives and experiences of Indian immigrants in Canada.

Uma Parameswaran's writings deal with Indian immigrants, especially - though understandably - women and their plight in the new country. While her audience is primarily Indians, the writings have a social value with an ameliorating effect.

Uma Parameswaran's chose her characters predominantly from the northern part of India because of her upbringing there, though she is a southerner by heritage- as by the necessity of the reality of the situation she is handling. Hence, some autobiographical elements are woven into the stories. The characters' names are repeated, symbolically to reflect the transformation of Indian immigrants after a period of residence in the West. Her commitments to multiculturalism and to her Indian heritage are exemplified in her community activities, particularly her role as founder, producer and host of the weekly television program PALI (Performing Arts and Literature of India).

One of the obvious strengths of Uma Parameswaran's writing is her ability to blend modern experience with traditional myths and stories. As an immigrant she is profoundly Canadian. Yet she writes of these events with important, necessary and delightful difference, a difference that has its origins in the rich cultures and traditions of her homeland. Through her writings, the readers are made aware of not only of the South Asian experience, but also of the struggles involved in the life of the immigrants.

## **Hypothesis**

Globalization, though necessary for the all round development of a nation or individual has brought about many controversial issues. It encourages people to migrate to Western countries for a better life, economy, education, etc., In spite of the open economic system, new settlers when confronted with the traditions and culture of the alien land find it difficult to cope and hence face problems like fractured identity, alienation, uprootedness and loneliness. Due to the concept of intergenerational conflicts and cultural dilemmas, immigrants try to construct multiple identities and develop a hybrid vision which eventually becomes an ongoing process of adaptation. Taking into consideration such observations, this research work intends to analyse the diasporic consciousness of the immigrants, their fragmented identity, feeling of nostalgia and struggle between regression, progression, dislocation and the process of assimilation.

The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the state of the global Indian diaspora and to explore and evaluate its response to the land of its origin.
- To focus on the search for identity in the lives of Indo Canadians.
- To analyse the conflict of the protagonists in the society due to alienation.
- To discuss the concept of assimilation and multiculturalism.

## **Research Parameters and Methodology**

Identity, diaspora and globalization form part of the postcolonial writing which focuses on the important aspects like journeying, loss, the search for community, the arrival of the stranger, the global conditions and eventually the role of the intellectuals in the

third world. Postcolonial writing is an international genre which continues to thrive in the marginal reaches of the societies and that all margins of different cultures interact and breed new methods. Postcolonial critics like Edward Said, Homi.K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak not only analyse the struggle of the native people who want to adjust themselves with the new culture but also deal with the problems of cross identity . Hence, postcolonial hybridity is an important means of broadening the scope of international relations beyond the geographical boundaries of states.

### **Purpose of the study**

The basic purpose of this research is to focus on the displaced identity of the immigrants, the issues of alienation and nostalgia and the concept of assimilation and multiculturalism portrayed in select works of Uma Parameswaran. She delves deep into the human nature to explain the labyrinths of her characters and to explore psychologically the intricacies and complexities of human relationships. As a member of vibrant Indo-Canadian diaspora, Uma Parameswaran voices her experiences and feelings by focusing on the ‘mindscape of characters’ and ‘human predicament’ in its wider perspective. As she is a writer in all genres of literature, the researcher has intended to pursue her research in the following works of Uma Parameswaran.

- (i) *Dear Deedi, My Sister* ( Play)
- (ii) *The Door I Shut Behind Me* (Short Story)
- (iii) *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* ( Novel)
- (iv) *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* (Play) and
- (v) *Trishanku* (Poem)

## **Structure of the Thesis**

The present study consists of five chapters. The introduction highlights on the main aspects of diasporic writing, Indo-Canadian writing with special reference to South Asian Canadian literature along with the major writers dealing with alienation, diaspora and identity. It also includes a review of literature.

The second chapter discusses the agonizing problem of identity crisis experienced by the Indian immigrants in Canada. The dispossessed person's search for identity has become a perennial sustaining force for the immigrant writers. Like all migrants, Uma Parameswaran has not been able to shake herself free of the idea of roots. The situations in her works have been so structured as the real happenings in Indo Canadian families. The quest for identity in some cases remains unfulfilled which results in the fragmentation or even annihilation of the self. The question of identity arises only when an individual or society is marginalized. Related to identity, the immigrants of first generations are ready to bear the insinuations whereas the second generation is not ready to accept it. As far as Uma Parameswaran is concerned, the immigrant spaces are homogenous and it depends on how they adjust and adapt to the new environment and nation. Uma Parameswaran believes that one should feel part of the community that one has adopted and try to grow roots there and for that one has to face the trauma of self-transformation.

The third chapter describes the feeling of alienation and nostalgia in the lives of Indo - Canadians who are treated as strangers in their own country as well as in the host society. The concept of alienation arises when a man loses his identity and detaches himself from nature and this detachment becomes his alienation. The memory of the homeland

remains an important part for the first generation members of Indo Canadian diaspora. They face tough competitions and racial discrimination wherever they go in the alien soil. Many people bear it silently for practical reasons. As a result, they experience alienation and often go on 'nostalgic trips'. Though the rebellious people try to protest against this racial discrimination in the beginning, they slowly get ready to suffer in the alien soil because of the distant vision of the comforts in the host society. The inner conflicts felt by the common minority groups have been worked out and the writer suggests several ways of self-assertion.

The fourth chapter discusses the process of assimilation and multiculturalism. The basic desire of any migrant is to attain better prospects or for a better livelihood in the adopted country. In a nation like Canada, people with varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds enter a cultural 'mosaic' with the expectation that they are accepted as they are, without any change in their identity. Canada has embraced in its generous bosom diversity of humanity of different languages, stock and culture. This makes the migrants accept the new nation as their own and create a holistic development in all aspects. Many are of the view that the persons of the first generation find it difficult to merge completely into a new society. They may be able to adjust, but as far as assimilation is concerned they have their limitations. Uma Parameswaran says if one enters the host country at a younger age, it is easier to assimilate. The length of the stay and exposure to plural cultures help one to assimilate. The older the immigrant, the longer it takes to adjust. The immigrants hope to survive in the alien culture being nourished by the strength of their family bond. Uma Parameswaran concludes all her works by saying that as time passes, the immigrants

are ready to merge with the host society. The hesitation and the fear of complexity slowly vanish and they transform themselves and become an inevitable part of the host society.

The fifth chapter concludes the study with a review of the observations, findings, and recommendations. It also discusses the various techniques used by Uma Parameswaran in order to bring out the immigrants' feelings of nostalgia, alienation and assimilation. She uses techniques like analogy, series of monologues, Indian myths, folktales and beliefs. Her language is direct, simple and conversational with typical Indian setting and more importantly 'India comes alive in her works.' This chapter also recapitulates the various factors responsible for the culmination of different themes in the works of Uma Parameswaran and analyses the effect of them in the lives of Indo Canadians.

As literature mediates between the real and the imaginary, literary texts remain crucial to the formation of diasporic discourse to discover the sites of resistance within the writing. The literature of Canadian writers born on the Indian subcontinent is varied in content and form but common to all of them is a passionate faith in their own voice that is raised to express their Canadian experience. The story of Indians living outside India is of immense curiosity in recent times. People often happen to hear about the troubles faced by other human beings in a strange land. Generally Indian diasporic writers focus on the issues of alienation, displacement, rootlessness and nostalgia for the homeland and tradition in their works.

Literature uses words to create works of art and creative people who have something to say need to find a means of expression. All genres of literature have their standard as they deal with human beings and they come into being as the author observes them and feels the need to express it. In general, writers try to inform, explore, amuse and inspire through their works – poem, novel, short story or play- irrespective of the genres.

Uma Parameswaran, herself an immigrant who has experienced the feelings of dislocation, migration, alienation and rootlessness expresses such things through her writings.

Not all people can be writers. Only a few people excel writing in all genres. As a matured writer, Uma Parameswaran's writings reflect strong Indian ideological roots and Indian values. A writer's life can be traced through her works. Since the writer has contributed to the fields of poetry, drama, novel and short story, the researcher felt that a selection from all these would help her to get a clear picture about the author and her writings, as interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research are gaining ground today. This research work intends to analyze the fragmented identity of an immigrant, his feeling of nostalgia, his struggles between regression and progression, dislocation and then assimilation whereby the immigrant tries to construct multiple identities and develops a hybrid vision which eventually becomes an ongoing process of adaptation. Since much research has not been done on the works of Uma Parameswaran, the researcher has intended to pursue her research on the works of Uma Parameswaran. For a clear and competent analysis of this research work, the researcher has taken concepts from the postcolonial criticism pertinent to issues related to diasporic situation.

Diaspora is a scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which are a new creation along with a fight to survive. Every diasporic movement holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the kernel of the nation's history. Diaspora is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition and thus towards universal brotherhood. Diasporic literature helps people to become citizens of the world.