

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CULTURE INTERACT: A STUDY OF UMA PARAMESWARAN'S SELECT WORKS

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Abstract: An 'immigrant' is one who comes to live in a foreign country or a region. The term immigrant is used collectively for all those who come to live in a common destination - country or region and settle there forever. For example, people who come and settle in Canada from other countries constitute the immigrant population of Canada. Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual and also of the culturally identical group of members having the same cultural identity or upbringing.

Key Words: Immigrant, Cultural Identity, Ethnicity, etc

Cultural identity refers to identification with, or sense of belonging to, a particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. Cultural identity is constructed and maintained through the process of sharing collective knowledge such as traditions, heritage, language, aesthetics, norms and customs...cultural identity is complex and multifaceted...In the globalized world with increasing intercultural encounters, cultural identity is constantly enacted, negotiated, maintained, and challenged through communicative practices. (Hsueh-Hua Chen 1)

Cultural Interaction is a complex process, involving different human beings within different formations. It is an interactive process between two or more partners. This chapter is intended to describe how this process works – as a process of knowledge with its possibilities, contradictions and boundaries. The forms of knowledge are described, the forms of interaction or cultural exchange and the distribution of cultural products, the frames and the perspectives of cultural interaction in a world being transformed by new technologies and possibilities. This chapter shows that cultural interaction provides the basis for a rich future. Its opposite is social conflict, in which culture as a construct is used as an excuse for violence and war and as an instrument for creating enemies. It will also be shown here that these oppositions are not the reality of cultural processes. The reality is the so-called "silk road," the mixed languages and the richness of cultures brought about by the process of cultural exchange.

Diasporic writing has been receiving increasing academic and disciplinary recognition. It has emerged as a distinct literary genre. Diasporic writings, also known as 'expatriate writings', give voice to the traumatic experiences of the immigrants due to the clash of two cultures or the racial discrimination they undergo. Immigration proves a pleasant experience only to a few who succeed in assimilating themselves with new geographical, cultural, social and psychological environment. To most of the diasporic writers, immigration is an unpleasant experience. They often find themselves sandwiched between two cultures. The feelings of nostalgia, a sense of loss and anxiety to reinvent home obsess them, consciously or unconsciously. They voice the anguish of the people, living far away from their native land and being discriminated on the grounds of race, colour or creed.

Dufoix states that: "Diaspora" has become a global word that fits the global world" (108). This statement can equally be applied to the concept of 'identity', which has become a well-known and much-used concept that is no less fashionable than that of 'diaspora'. These two concepts are not only equally popular within academia, they are also intrinsically intertwined and linked. In contrast to diaspora, identity is also widely used. Identity plays a crucial role in conflicts over "cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, and national differences" (Gilroy 106). Furthermore the term identity has been changed in the recent years due to the influence of globalization. The quest for identity is a recurrent theme in modern literature. The term 'identity' and 'identity crisis' is looked at from different perspectives relating to the issues of personal experience and the unhappiness of the immigrants in settling down in other countries. The distinctive formation of identities and their preservation are consequences of survival instincts have become a perennial

problem for the immigrants from time immemorial. The sense of identity is a perennial sustaining creative force for the writers when they happen to be the victims of marginalized societies, groups or individuals.

In the wake of globalization, people find themselves increasingly in haphazard and uncertain situations; identity has thus become a safety-net, an anchor and a mediator between “the often discrepant approaches to understanding self and sociality” (Gilroy 105). Yet, the term ‘cultural identity’ denotes a very complex concept that has lured representatives of various academic disciplines into investigating its depths and pitfalls; among these disciplines can be named sociology, psychology, philosophy and cultural studies, which shows that identity can be approached from various angles and perspectives. Identity can be classified into two types’ individual identity and collective identity.

Collective identity leads people to disintegrate their individual identity in a larger group, be it a nation, an ethnicity, or a community of other sorts. Mayer also maintains that collective identities develop at borders, at boundaries to others; therefore they are historically contingent and situational (5). Further labels given to various sorts of identities are national, political or cultural identities, as well as societal, ethnic, ‘racial’, class or gender identities. Woodward differentiates between ‘global, national, local and personal identities (1). Concerning cultural identity, a connection exists with ethnic and national identity, or rather, that the latter are constituents of cultural identity.

In Diaspora politics, Sheffer provides a list of four different approaches to “ethno-genesis and to ethnic identity.” They are: the primordialist or essentialist, the instrumentalist, the psychological, ethno-symbolic and mythical, and the constructionist view. The constructionist view is the most contemporary approach and “assumes that nations are essentially modern social constructs, and artifacts created by “cultural engineers” and elites who “invent” traditions in order to organize newly enfranchised masses into new status systems and communities” (19)

The agonizing problem of identity crisis is well expressed in Uma Parameswaran’s works. She is one of those modern Indian writers in English focuses on the condition of Indian Immigrants in Canada. All her protagonists suffer from the loss of a sense of identity at one point or the other. The immigrants do not enjoy the life in “Straight lines” and smooth plains and neither can completely detach herself from her past nor do her characters have any certainty in the future. In the quest for identity as an Indo – Canadian writer Uma Parameswaran expresses the culture, mythology, rich traditions of India with sarcasm and irony and tries to bring out that “Life outside India no doubt shapes one’s responses to India” and the responses may vary a lot depending on one’s own personality and values.

In *Identity and Difference*, as well as in *Between Camps*, Gilroy provides an overview of how ‘identity’ is used terminologically. He identifies three main uses, but refers to them not by the same, yet similar terms. Identity can be seen as ‘subjectivity,’ as ‘identification’ and as ‘belongingness’ (314). In *Between Camps*, the terminology Gilroy uses is “identity as subjectivity”, “sameness understood as intersubjectivity” and “social and political solidarity” (108). When understood as subjectivity, identity refers to the ‘self’, an internal, individual identity embodied in a person who is furnished with self-consciousness (108). Woodward defines subjectivity as “our sense of self [...] The positions which take up and identify worth constitute our identities” (39). This last Statement underlines that subjectivity, like any form of identity, cannot be regarded as stable but is constituted by various positions at various points in our lives.

In terms of identification, identify refers to social process that an individual is going through and is a key word in differentiating between “what counts as the same and what as different” (109). Thus ‘intersubjectivity’ means that identities of “selves are formed through relationship with others, through conflict and exclusion. This further

...adds layers of complexity to deliberations about how selves – and their

Identities – are formed through relationships of exteriority, conflict, and exclusion.

Differences can be found within identities as well as between them. The other,

against whose resistance the integrity of an identity is no longer plausibly understood as a unitary entity but appears instead as one fragile moment in dialogic circuits. (109).

As the professor of English at the University of Winnipeg, Uma Parameswaran expresses her own experience in Canada. She admits that there is racism and under employment in Canada. Her struggle to identify herself with the new host country enables her to write from a wider and more exciting angle. In her Canadian experience, immigrants were lost souls but in her transformation to a writer and a resident of the Canada in the process of immigration is something different. In her opinion woman experience Diaspora under 3 conditions- first they grow up in a foreign land with their migrant parents, second by virtue of their homeland, third, they exercise their conscious choice to go to other countries in order to pursue higher education or for lucrative job. Hence, whatever the classification, in real life also, they caught between psychological problems of Diaspora such as dislocation, unbelonging, marginalization and cultural dissonance that are common to men.

In *Rootless but green are the Boulevard Tree* she narrates her own experience as well as the life of an average Indo – Canadian family which migrated to Canada for better prospects. In this play, the Bhaves a Maharastrian family

migrates to Canada, leaving a well settled pattern of life back home. Sharad who was comfortably placed at home as an Atomic Energy Scientist, migrates to Canada.

...to live without tension and yet with dignity, to give our children
good food, a liberal education, a healthy environment where,
because the body doesn't have to scrounge for sustenance, the
spirit can aspire to higher experiences than this sorry world allows. (R 77).

But in Canada, he couldn't get a suitable job and ends up as a real-estate broker and encyclopedia seller, much to the decision of his own son. For all his optimism behind his migration Sharad has to come across many unpleasant situations and has to find out his identity. He visualizes situation as:

It upsets me profoundly to find myself in a crowd. All these alien
Faces staring at or through you. It makes me wonder. Makes me
Asks myself, what am I doing here? Who are these faceless
People among whom my life is oozing away? Each so self-contained.
So complete, looking at me as though I shouldn't be there (R 82)

In his article "Cultural diversity and Cultural Differences," Bhabha presents one of his further contributions to cultural theory, the two notions enable in the article's title itself. Bhabha insists on the on-going constructedness of culture. Similarly Stuart Hall in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" points that cultural practices and representations are always comes from a specific background the discourse of diaspora experience is no exception concerning this positionality. Woomward further states that the subject positions and meaning are produced through representation which can thus be regarded as establishing individual and collective identities (R 14).

Hall then proposes the possibility of regarding cultural identity from two different perspectives. The first perspective presents cultural identity as 'oneness', to use Hall's terminology, signifying that it derives from "one, shared culture, a sort of Collective one true self [...] which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Identity 51). This collective identity is not subject to historical influence or change and thus, it is the representative of essentialist approach to understanding cultural identity. Yet, Hall argues that it must not be underestimated in its impact the rediscovering such "hidden histories" has been of enormous influence for social movements such as feminism or the 'writing back' from the perspective of the colonized (Identity 52).

The second perspective recognizes that, apart from many similarities, cultural identity also lives by difference. Although the history of the Indian Diaspora can in no way be compared to the terrible historical period of slavery and the slave trade, I would argue that this difference is nonetheless a concept also applicable to the Indians living in the Diaspora. They cannot be compared to the Indians 'at home' anymore as a changed environment influences people and always leaves traces. Hall's words are these:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being. It belongs to the future as much to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. [...] But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation [...] Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past. (52)

He further claims that the past will always have an influence on the present, but the relation to it has changed as moving, migrating, has created a rupture. Thus the past is:

...always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position. (53).

In order to understand this fact that identity does not occur in straight line from a fixed point of origin. Hall suggests that identity forms between and under the influences of two axes: "the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture" (Identity 53). Apart from emphasizing the notions of hybridity, positionality, and historical contingency in a discussion of identity, Hall also draws attention to viewing identity as a story. The term 'identity story' is thus the emblematic of the fact that identities are never the same but constantly represent a position that someone taking in specific situation, a specific context.

Every immigrant could experience injustice, inequality, discrimination, prejudices and a threat to cultural identity in the unfamiliar country. Adjusting with the social, economic, political, psychological and environmental

changes is also a challenge. The abrupt change in the lifestyle, culture, status and society causes emotional and psychological problems. Adjusting with the changing scenario of their lives is a challenge. The chief characteristic features of the diasporic writings are the quest for identity, uprooting and re-rooting, insider-outsider syndrome, nostalgia, nagging sense of guilt etc. The diasporic writers turn to their homeland for various reasons. For example, Naipaul who is in a perpetual quest for his roots turns to India for the same. Rushdie visits India to mythologize its history. Mistry visits and re-visits India for a kind of re-vitalization and to re-energize his aching soul. Bharati Mukherjee's childhood memories come to her mind time and again.

In *Rootless but green are the Boulevard Tree*, Vejala, sharad's sister quit her Assistant Professor post in a Canadian University because of the insipid academic scenario and the colour – cum-gender bias prevailing in the University. The younger generation of immigration keenly feels that they have to face lot of challenges in terms of appearance race faith, ritualistic practices, language and political power. They have no hope of assimilating with the Canadian mainstream for the whites don't want to mingle with them. In spite of all these difficulties the immigrant achieves success by losing their identity in the process of assimilation. In due course, the immigrant feels the danger of a sort of pseudo complacency creeping in and creativity getting stilled and the ethnic identity getting erased.

All the same it is necessary to realize the importance of cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls which finally help in the emergence of the new culture. Diasporic literature helps to re-discover the commonality and inclusiveness of India. It helps to strengthen the bonds between the different states of India and of India in relation with the other countries at large. The welfare and wellbeing of the overseas Indians, a sense of security for them and India's greater concern for them is brought out through these writings. The diasporic writings have also contributed in building a novel image of India abroad. All this help in strengthening bonds between various countries and they begin to relate through historical, cultural, social, traditional and economic ties.

The Indian Diaspora refers to the people who migrated from India to other countries in search of employment, better wages and better standards of living. It also refers to their descendants. Indian Diaspora began during the colonial period when the British Empire spread all over the world. The Diaspora could be classified as colonial and post-colonial. In the colonial category, there was first the labourer and then the entrepreneur Diaspora. In the post colonial, the migrants take in education as well as employment opportunities. Most of the Diasporas have been well represented in creative writing. These immigrant writers reflect, on one hand, their attachment to their motherland and on the other hand, their feeling of alienation and rootlessness.

The Indian Diaspora is currently estimated to be over twenty million and practically spread over the entire globe. Residing in distant lands, the Diaspora members have succeeded spectacularly in their chosen professions through dedication and hard work. At the same time, they have retained their emotional, cultural and spiritual links with the country of their origin. The Indian community has shown greater sense of adjustments, adaptability, mobility and accessibility. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffers is genuine and intense; but in recent times it has been seen that this concept has been minimized and made less intense through their social networking and sense of solidarity. The writers of the Indian Diaspora, through their literary contributions, have greatly enriched the English literature. It has become an important part of the ever growing field of Anglophone postcolonial literature. Some of the better-known authors in this field are V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, M.G Vassanji, Shyam Selvadurai, and Kiran Desai. The growing international visibility of these authors has gone hand in hand with the popularity of postcolonial criticism and theory.

As for as Uma Parameswaran is concerned, the immigrant spaces are homogenous they depend on how they adjust and adapts to the new environment and nation. She believes that one should feel part of the Community, one has adopted and try to grow roots there and for this one has to face the trauma of self – transformation. In this play Parameswaran gives expression to a vocabulary of resistance especially to that of younger generation. In this dimension, parents ready to bear the pangs of criticism where as children are frustrated against it Jyoti; the Twenty year old girl says to her brother Jayanth. "I'm sure hope it get into that thick head of yours that we are different And no matter what we do, we are never going to fit in here".(27)

It shows the issue of oppression subjugation, discrimination and also the dilemma of the immigrant families who feel the pangs of dislocation. But the younger generation tries to adopt a compromising attitude as Jayanth comments. "Dad there's no our people and no old country for anyone in the world, Any more, least of all for us. This is our land and here we shall stay".

This shows the mindset of the new generation that they want to establish their identity rather than fall back upon the old memory and nostalgia. They are individuals with their own psychology and biography reaching to situations in their own individual manner. Vithal who is Veejalas son and sharad's nephew unlike others condemns the merging and assimilation and says "They want us out we will be squashed like bugs soon. They've never wanted us and now we are a threat, we have to stay separate from them and stay together within.(54), expressing the fear of the minority. They

overcome this problem as they have developed the quality of adjustment and try to grow roots through self-transformation. It is a gradual absorption where the immigrant has to adopt the organic process of gradual growth to carve space for oneself.

These writers are often pre-occupied with the elements of nostalgia as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. They write in relation with the culture of their homeland and at the same time adopt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. However, looking at the diasporic literature in a broader perspective, it is seen that such literature helps in understanding various cultures and breaking the barriers between different countries. Diasporic or expatriate writing occupies a place of great significance between countries and cultures. Theories are generated and positions defined in order to construct new identities which further negotiate boundaries that relate to different temporary and spatial metaphors.

The Modern Indian Diaspora began during the colonial period when the British Empire had spread its tentacles around the globe and the red stain of imperialism had leaked into diverse land-masses. Indian laborers and then entrepreneurs followed the Union Jack from the Caribbean islands to Fiji and from Canada to South Africa. Thus were established little India's, now inhabited by second and third generation persons of Indian origin who the Indian Government today calls Pravasi Bharatiyas. Among this group are also the diasporics of more recent postcolonial origins.

The diasporic imaginary is torn between the dual and often conflicting ideologies of the homeland and the host land. The vacuum that thus remains makes them pose the inevitable question, "Where do I belong?" In his essay *Imaginary Homelands* Salman Rushdie has addresses the identity crisis of the Indian Diaspora. "Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools" (227). In rootless, Sharad doesn't like to take the public transport, for the alien crowd upsets him. This strange eerie feeling haunts him. The members of Diasporas support each other and keep together in their host countries. People who are no blood relatives of the family are invited and integrated into the diasporic community solely on the basis of shared origins. The members of Diaspora support each other and keep together in their host countries.

The Bhava's open house allowing Arun, Rajen and Dilip bring out their community and ethnic group consciousness. The issue of racism is broached in *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, the novel version of the play, in a scene where Jyoti is at Romona's home, two boys come to collect pledges for the school band and when Romana replies that there is nobody at home, they shout back "palki! Paki house!" (95). Although, Jyoti acts tough, she is deeply disturbed as that was her first encounter with overt racism. It triggered an uncontrollable spasm of fear and shock" (98). 'Paki' is an expression of extreme racist abuse that cannot be ignored, it emphasizes that the person addressed has the status of the 'other', making difference more visible, and practically annihilating the will to integrate into the host society, as this is a proof of hostility towards foreigners, towards diasporans. Sharad is doubtful about the life of the Ontario Poplar they have planted and exclaims that it is an analogy to the meager chance of their family's survival there in the new country.

Savithri too adds that the evergreen tree might survive but questions whether the diasporans spirits would stay alive. But the tree imagery comes again in the last section of the play when Jayant cancels his trip and celebrates life. He brings in an evergreen tree and erects it in the middle of the yard. He then explains that the evergreen tree has no roots and will fall as soon as the snow melts. This planting of rootless but evergreen tree can be regarded as a metaphor for the diasporan's struggle to make a life abroad. The younger ones are set to create the third space of hybridity, not only by mixing mangoes with maples, but creating a new cultivar which has maple leaves but bears mango fruits. Parameswaran presents the first generation settlers being nostalgic of India and the second generation settlers being initially analytic and critical of their Trishanku settlement the first a nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land.

The second is a phase in which one is so busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is when immigrants start taking part in the shaping of Diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethno-cultural issues. The fourth is when they have "arrived" and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. In *Trishanku* the "in-betweenness" is felt in the initial phase of immigrant settlement which later on acculturates to the new socio-cultural lifestyle. Though the diasporic consciousness surfaces in the minds of the immigrant settlers, slowly they try to assimilate to the life of the host country.

The Indian-Diaspora had its beginnings in the 1830s, when sometimes forcibly and at times voluntarily some Indian people were dispersed throughout the British Empire. This Diaspora was sparked off by the official end of slavery, when Indian peasants were transported to the Caribbean and the Fiji islands to fill the gaping holes in the work force on sugar plantations there. Indian labour was also used to construct railways and roads in Africa and to work in the rubber and the tea plantations in Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Robin Cohen calls this the 'labour diaspora' (57). This Diaspora was meant to replace slavery with cheaper labour from the colonies. However, there was a difference

between the indentured labour from the colonies and the black slaves. The indentured labourers could not be bought or sold like the slaves and at the end of their contract period had to be given a free/sponsored passage back home or given an opportunity to be re-indentured with a promise to be set free at the end of their renewed indentures. Though as V.S. Naipaul has noted, very few of the Indians taken to the Caribbean took the passage back home - for most Indians the journey to Trinidad 'had been final' (31). It is possible that after having lost caste by crossing the ocean - Kaala Pani, the Black Water - the mainly Hindu indentured labourers would have been reluctant to return home and live as outcasts in their villages.

Indo-Canadian playwrights are preoccupied with cultural disparities in the spectrum of socio-cultural life. Uma Parameswaran writes in this connection: "Literature can not only reflect persistence and change in society but can also lead society into a better appreciation of its multicultural and ethno-centered fabric" (Interview)

Uma Parameswaran's *Meera: A Dance Drama* is one of the script plays written to celebrate Indian traditions, ceremonies and cultural activities. Uma Parameswaran intends to teach the Canadians about the Indian culture. Hence she wrote the play *Meera: A Dance Drama*. The play is written in 1971 and produced in 1972. It has a very simple story of Meera's life and her longing for Krishna's love. Uma Parameswaran exposes Indian dance and music tradition on Canadian soil so that the aliens come to know about Krishna's life. The use of Krishna-Meera myth enables the author to restore the community and repossess the culture. Uma Parameswaran upholds the cultural dynamism of traditional thought. *Meera: A Dance Drama* is a fictional representation, of an indigenous culture. It displaces the historical discourse and helps to read into the text the mythological, archetypal, metaphysical and religious perception in the native literature. For Uma Parameswaran Lord Krishna assumes significance as cultural symbol.

The author juxtaposes the mortality of human being with the vastness of the unfathomable. The entire fabric of the play is dominated by the author's efforts to re-claim the culture and the inability to revert the past. Uma Parameswaran's experience in Canada is not a happy one. Her feelings about Canada are betrayed. Her dual cultural sensibility is expressed through her dance drama called *Meera: A Dance Drama*.

Indo-Canadian playwrights like Uma Parameswaran keeps going back to India for the fictional material for writing *Meera*. Her turning towards Indian myths and tradition suggests her moving away from Canada to India or her homeland. Being a dance drama, the whole play is a monologue of the legendary character, Meera except in one or two places the demon Kansa has a dialogue with Devaki. It is a very short play divided into five scenes. The play opens with Meera's introduction to audience. She introduces herself as the handmaid of Lord Krishna. She sings songs of Lord Krishna's life on earth. She wants to become one with Krishna. Since the play is a dance drama, with songs of Meera and Devaki.

In fact, the roles of Meera and Devaki are played by the same character. Through her song, Meera exposes her relationship with Lord Krishna. However, the people around her insist her to live a worldly life. However, Meera refuses to listen to the sound of these worldly people because her ears are habituated to listen to Krishna's flute. The author makes Meera to sing a song about her own life. Being a princess, she was wed locked to Prince Bhoj of Chittore. But her husband died early and she turned to Lord Krishna for his love and eternity. The kinsmen of Meera has her for "I have betrayed family honour by leaving the palace for this garden..." (M 38). However, Meera has chosen her own way to live and she decides to "say nothing of them or him for neither their world nor his world in my world" (M 39).

Meera narrates her loneliness and companionship received from Lord Krishna. She feels that it is because of hatred of her kinsmen, she comes close to Lord Krishna who "absorbed the cup of poison meant for me. Great was the suffering till Krishna came, but greater far the fulfillment when I felt my lord's soothing touch upon my burning breast. I can feel it even now - the suffering and the bliss" (M 39). Meera becomes sensual. The sensuality of Meera is highlighted through the playwright's use of sensual music and dance. Meera also sips the wine and resumes dance to forget her agony. She suffers due to her separation from her husband but enjoys bliss because she comes closer to Lord Krishna.

She longs for eternal love, infinite love of Krishna. The playwright introduces the life of Meera and Devaki simultaneously in the play. Meera sings song of Krishna's birth and becomes Devaki who brought forth the Divine child. Devaki has given description of how she is imprisoned by her brother Kamsa. Her song reveals how prophesy makes Kamsa to kill the children of Devaki. Her all seven but one are slain by the tyrant King Kamsa whom "fear and passing time have made more oppressive" (M 41). She is afraid about her eighth pregnancy. When she gives birth to adorable helpless child, voice from above asks Vasudeva to hide the child in the hut of Nanda and bring away the girl child. When Kamsa hears the cry of the child, he tries to kill the child in vain because "the destroyer lives in a village across the river, and he will come here as foretold" (M 42).

The scene changes from Devaki's cell to Meera who sings songs of Krishna and His childhood pranks, etc. Yashoda beholds His divinity for a moment. But the veil of Maya descends on her and separates her from the Eternal

and Infinite. Meera's song also has made it clear that Krishna has killed Kamsa and worked as a counsellor for kings and "that on the field of Kurukshetra where the Pandavas and the Kauravas were arrayed for battle" (M 43). Her song reveals Krishna as an infinite and Eternal who "revealed himself to Arjuna as the total incarnation of Vishnu, preserver of the Universe, come on earth to re-establish justice..." (M 43)

Meera celebrates the doings of Krishna who protects the good and destructs evil doers for the sake of establishing justice. She eagerly wishes to merge in Him and acquire perfectness: "And as I gaze, veil upon veil is sent and I see the face of Truth. I see that Truth is ineffable and can only be expressed in symbols and myths" (M 44). Meera's longing to acquire beauty in the company of Krishna is a symbol of "finite reaching out for the infinite, the atman, soul within, desiring to merge with the Paramatman, the soul above" (M 44).

Meera ultimately experiences the Truth, "As I see the face of truth, I see that this love is our human longing for the divine. But the veil of Maya descends on me once more, and I know nothing but that I love; nor where nor why but only that I love" (M 45). As a result, she becomes Radha who waits for Krishna and his love. Uma Parameswaran has given description of Krishna's life and human being's longing for the divine through the play *Meera: A Dance Drama*. Since the Indian immigrants are cut off from the tradition back home, the play would revive the immigrants' love for the Indian tradition and cultural activities. The play would help her to establish her relationship with India and her culture. Vijay Agnew writes regarding immigrant writers' use of home myths and stories:

I analyses Indian immigrants' quest to find a 'home' in Canada. Their emotional and psychological struggles to feel at 'home' have much to do with the biased representations of India that frequently highlights its poverty and related problems of illiteracy, superstition, gender oppression, and religious conflict. Immigrants tell stories of 'home' to their white Canadian friends hoping to evoke positive images of their culture and heritage and counter balance the negative portrayal of India circulated in the media. Canadians have limited knowledge of India and it is derived primarily from mass media but also, in some cases, from travel, books, friends, and acquaintances. Consequently, there is not one imagined India but many and it is the differences in these imagined worlds that alienate and make immigrants feel that they do not belong here in Canada. Such feelings heighten their nostalgia for their cultures and lost 'home' in India" (208).

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