

NON- ENTITY AND DIASPORIC INFLUENCE IN UMA PARAMESWARAN'S *THE DOOR I SHUT BEHIND ME*

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The term 'diaspora' is a derivative from the Greek word “diaspeiro”, accurately means scattering or dispersion of the populaces from their homeland. Multitudes of people have voyaged from India to innumerable alien lands under 'forced exiles' or 'self-imposed exiles'. The word *diaspora* conveys a sense of displacement and customarily its people have anticipation and a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the "homeland" still exists in any meaningful sense. Uma Parameswaran, an Indo-Canadiandiasporic writer has observed that diaspora upshots in a forfeiture of nostalgia for a single home as people "re-root" in a series of meaningful displacements. Diasporic cultural development often assumes a different course from that of the population in the original place of settlement. 'Diaspora' connotes all exoduses, settlements, expeditions and movements—“voluntary or forcible”—of people and communities “from their homelands into new regions” (68) across the world, both from the Third to the First World and vice-versa, from North to South and East to West. The diasporic experience engenders the ache of uprooting and the unforeseen glitches of re-settling in an alien world e.g. identity crisis, cultural conflicts, racial discrimination, yearning for home and homeland, etc. The present research article efforts to give vent to the pent up feelings of people residing far away from their native land and discriminated on multifarious grounds.

Uma Parameswaran was born in Chennai, India, she was educated at Jabalpur (B.A.), Nagpur (Dip journalism and M.A), Indiana University (M.A creative writing), and Michigan State University (Ph.D). She is one of the Indian Diasporic writers who include immigrants of both the sexes, all ages, from multifarious professions adapting themselves in multicultural Canada. She is married to a mathematician and is blessed with a daughter. Parameswaran, a versatile genius in the incipient field of South Asian Canadian Literature has been vivaciously engaged in bringing Indian culture not only to the Indo-Canadian youth of Winnipeg but even to the multitude at large. The existing tale *The Door I Shut Behind Me* encompasses the premier degree of cultural sensitivity. She deliberately explores the layers of self-doubt and fretfulness that exist in the mind of an immigrant.

Chander, the protagonist from India makes dire endeavours to land in Montreal, Canada, along with Kishen Aggrawal and Harish Bahl who are misled in the prosperity and cynosure of Canada and feels homesick for their native place. Keeping in view the condition of the above characters, Swaraj(2005) comments, 'Diaspora can be functional to expatriate minority

communities whose members shall share several of the following faces they retain: a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland.”

Chander, 25 years old was a refined and a reticent personality by disposition. A Ph. D degree holder from Madras University, Chander was heading for Canada wherein he sat beside a grovelling personality, KishenAgrawal. Agrawal was a wad of presumptions and bigotries, a shallow, egotistic and naive brute to Chander who has been a thorough foil to him. After her arrival in Canada, both developed strong intimacy and befriended each other. But being an introvert, timid and a reticent person by nature, Chanderendured the buzzing of this man. Agrawal was obsessed with a sole feeling that they mutually belonged to the same country and were marching for the similar terminus.

Immigrating to Canada, Agrawal writhed from total nostalgia for his folkand hometown. Rightly speaking, he could not abide by the renowned saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” On the contrary, Chander had no hankering for his hometown; rather he sardonically presents a grimy picture of Indian society. Consequently, Agrawal as a staunch patriot couldn’t help himself govern his deep anguish and started moaning and spluttered, “I would give anything in the world to see one of my own people to hear my own language”(142).

Chander grasped thatAgrawal was indeed perturbed about his linguistic community. He rather pondered on the fact that how could language hold a nation together. Agrawalfrantically huntedfor the Indian names from the telephone directory and seized Shrivastava who was going to Mundhras for an Indian get together. To his utmost excitement, Agrawal grabbed the opportunity to attend the same gathering wherein, he procured betel packets to be served to the other Indian accomplices. Immediately after the supper, Ms Mundhrasheaded them to a huge living room clustered with twenty odd men. Chander being a reserved personality couldn’t mix up with the people around but Agrawal broke the ice by gossiping with everyone.

Chander was really feeling out of the place. All of them spoke in English, even Agrawal, who was missing his linguistic community talked in the same English accent. Chander even felt that people pay no heed to Indian issues like black marketing, corruption and bribery, but they were highly passionate in gossiping about PankajMullick and Saigal’s album. Everyone chatted about their early years. Some reminiscedabout the trams which ran on Madras streets, some anti-British slogans, processions while some reflectedon LalaAmarnath’s century in contradiction to Don Bradman as the paramount occurrence in cricket account.

The Indo-Canadians used to gather on every Saturday to maintain their cultural ethos. They were not actually nostalgic or mesmerized by their native memories, but were having diasporic consciousness, which stands for an affirmative and revelling linking across political borders of people who belong to the identical kinfolk. While residing in a foreign land/ Canada, They desired to be in proximity to their origin by not changing their food habits and dressing.

Being oscillating between the two worlds, Chander felt perplexed and completely shattered and thought that the Indo-Canadians have been neither of Here nor of Away. They never fully acknowledged either of the cultures and are suspended between two backgrounds and doubleexistence. Finally, towards the end of the story, both are sailing in the same boat of heaviness and nostalgia. Suddenly, Chander was captivated by a pale, short statured man of thirty- six, named Harish Bahl, who possessed an artistic bent of mind. But very soon the excitement went into vain when Chander got acquainted that this Indian origin man had wedded a Canadian woman. Chander now loathed the reception of Western culture.

“I don’t expect here to be long and wanted to pick

up some experience and go back home (148)”.

The sense of rootlessness popped up a resilient urge inside Chander to return to his homeland. He felt indicted and qualms if he was abandoning India, when the country desires him the most, if, in a way, he is contributing to the brain-drain. Upon this Harish Bahl pronounced that this had been a habitual cry of all the beginners and immigrants. But very spontaneously and smartly, the nostalgic fever vanishes from Chander and he turns out to be a rational human being.

This age is the age of individualism, and not of
abstract ideologies of patriotism and nation-building (148).

Now, the immigrated land, Canada holds a strong attraction for him. Nearly towards the end, Bahl proclaims

When we leave our country, we shut many doors
behind us though we are not aware of it at that time (149).

Chander impromptu replied to the aforesaid declaration, “There are many doors ahead of us” (149).

Uma Prameswaran’s diasporic reading, *The Door I Shut Behind Me* culminates with a contemporary petition for today that we are not merely restrained to our realm but cogitate the integral world as a solo family. The story portrays an exemplary representation of an immigrant experience, their connection to the homeland as well as their feeling of estrangement and rootlessness.

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