



Diasporic Voices: A Study on Uma Parameswaran's Portrayal of Immigration Milieu in *Sisters at the Well*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the literary representation of the South Asian diasporic life of the people in Canada through the work *Sisters at the Well*. Parameswaran depicts the immigrants navigates between hereditary cultural values and the anxiety of new socio-cultural environment in Canada by interconnecting the deep sense of diasporic, identity, memory and multi-cultural tensions. Moreover, the study highlights the author's nuanced presentation of dislodgment, longing, struggle of immigrant, and the pursuit for belongingness. Parameswaran used postcolonial diasporic study that predicts *Sisters at the Well* connects a fusion of identity that emerges from the unremitting conciliation between "motherland" and "host-land."

Keywords: Diaspora, Displacement, Identity, Immigration and Multiculturalism

INTRODUCTION

Uma Parameswaran is a prolific writer who gave her voice in South Asian Canadian Literature that compiles the livelihood of immigrants trapped between cultures. The work *Sisters at the Well*, is an anthology of interlinked stories that depicts the life experiences of South Asian women struggles with the emotional, cultural and psychological survival of migration. Parameswaran depicts the situation through the everyday connections, domestic conflicts, and cultural discussions that reveals the often-implicit difficulties of the immigrant that shaping diasporic identity. The title of the work 'well' symbolizes the collective histories, nostalgic experiences, untold memories of immigrant community and the sense of emotional which draws the strength of diasporic value. This study explores Parameswaran's thoughts that bind the themes into her sense of portrayal of the immigration milieu, especially female subjectivity and intergenerational negotiations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory centralizes that cultural identity is not rigid but arises through hybridity- the interweaving of colonizer and colonized cultural elements and it is arranged in "Third Space" of conciliation. Uma Parameswaran's *Sisters at the Well*, depicts these ideas that are presented through the play's characters, structure, and imagery. Such characters found Indo-Canadian Literature confers the Indian and Canadian identities, literally presenting a new "cultivar" of culture. For instant, particular character, Jayant, played evergreen rootless symbolizes the experience of immigrant. This pasteurized Parameswaran's dramatic technique taken from Bhabha's concepts: characters of Parameswaran inhabited neither the old nor the new world alone, but a hybrid land where meanings are constantly translated and remade.

Theoretical Framework: Hybridity and the Third Space

Hybridity: Homi Bhabha refers hybridity as the process by which colonized subjects appropriate, mix, and transform elements of both their native culture and the colonizer's culture. This process produces new, in-between identities that challenge essentialist notions of "pure" culture. In *Sisters at the Well*, each character is essentially a cultural hybrid – neither fully Indian nor fully Canadian – reflecting Bhabha's idea that identity is constructed "in the interstices" of cultures.

Third Space: Parameswaran's play embodies this in-between space and her characters do not exist entirely in India or Canada but in a hybrid cultural context. Thus the characters of Parameswaran, seeks to "exist" that is "neither native space nor alien space" but a Third Space of identity construction. Third Space of the cultural encounters, Parameswaran aligns with Bhabha's vision of a troublesome, creative hybridism, rather than any return to a pure foundation. Bhabha presents the "Third Space" as the cultural translation and negotiation occur. It is an space of meanings that disrupts binary oppositions between colonizer/colonized or home/abroad. In this space new cultural forms emerge.

Hybrid Identity in Characters

The older generation embodies nostalgia and cultural memory, while the younger generation leans toward Canadian life. Among the characters, Jayant's actions strongly illustrate the symbolism of hybridity: as he celebrates life by planting an evergreen tree, then observes that it has no roots and will fall without support. Parameswaran's characters demonstrate hybrid identity and negotiation themselves. The play centers the family includes first-generation immigrants like Savitri and Sharad and their children Jayant and Dilip. This becomes a metaphor for diasporic existence, and Jayant explicitly declares that the

“younger ones... create the third space of hybridity” by fusing cultures and imagining a tree with Canadian maple leaves bearing Indian mangoes. In this gesture Jayant bodily blends the symbols of Canada and India into a single image, enacting a hybrid identity in line with Bhabha’s theory.

In Parameswaran’s narrative, each character grapples with this in-betweenness: Savitri remains deeply rooted in Indian tradition while her children adopt aspects of Canadian life. Collectively, their attitudes track the stages of immigration that critics note that nostalgia and fear for the home country of the First Generations, contrasted with the children’s pragmatic adaptation and ultimate forging of a hybrid new life. Similarly, the negotiation in language and practice were found in Parameswaran’s contributions.

Narrative Structure in Third Space

The work *Sisters at the Well*, structure well and reinforces the hybridity. It also composed as a cycle of interlinked voices spanning generations. The repeated voices of the characters gave the impression of a single Canadian family sharing stories, compiling the past and present. This framing itself enacts a Third Space and each poem or voice is neither wholly Indian nor Canadian in isolation, but gains meaning through its place in the larger mosaic. The back-and-forth between homeland and host culture of the work switching between English and references to Indian languages or customs that leads to destabilize any single point of view. The third space emerges not only in symbols but in the text’s very organization: by weaving together disparate voices and traditions, Parameswaran “straddles” cultures so that the narrative itself becomes a site of hybridity. In this point of view, the form of the play reflects Bhabha’s idea that new meanings arise in the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” between cultures.

Cultural Themes and Negotiation

The cultural themes in *Sisters at the Well*, further highlights the hybrid identity. Parameswaran emphasizes nostalgia and memory for India (often referencing legends, values, and the Sanskrit concept of Sanskara), even as her characters live in a “melting pot” of Canada. This nostalgia is depicted strongly that resource for immigrants to redefine themselves rather than a fixed home ideal. At the same time, the play addresses multicultural tensions that the subplot involves government officials suggesting Indians to be labeled simply “South Asians” rather than by specific identities, reflecting outsiders’ insistence on treating diasporans. Such moments reveals the characters’ subsidiary status and the need to eloquent their own blended identity. These themes of belonging and alienation are precisely the terrain of Bhabha’s theory. Parameswaran’s characters literally ask “to which space do we belong?” and answer by creating a new hybrid ground. In other words, Parameswaran’s subjects find themselves in a third cultural space beyond nation or homeland that echoes Bhabha’s conclusion that identity is negotiated in-between, not given. As one critic succinctly puts it, the play’s characters “seek to find space to exist” that is neither wholly their native land nor wholly the alien host. By invoking the figure of Trishanku (the king suspended between earth and heaven) as a metaphor for the immigrant condition, Parameswaran explicitly aligns with the postcolonial notion of liminality. All these elements like ritual, dialogue, and motifs that work together to dramatize cultural negotiation: Indians in Canada learning new ways, questioning old ones, and continuously reshaping their hybrid identities.

Through its multi-generational characters and poetic structure, the play shows uniqueness as a dialogic creation between cultures. Critics of Parameswaran’s work underlines that her characters inhabit “unsure” states and live “caught between worlds”, striving to articulate their own shared third space. In *Sisters at the Well*, the stages of hybridity and the Third Space at work has well concluded that for diasporic subjects, identity is neither borrowed completely from tradition nor surrendered to assimilation,

but negotiated in a hybrid space. Parameswaran's poems and scenes depict immigrants forge an identity in that in-between realm of culture and a literary realization of Bhabha's theory.

SENSE OF IMMIGRATION AND THE DISPLACEMENT

The character's resettlement to Canada is not purely geographical but psychological that marked by nostalgia for home and anxiety over assimilation. Characters frequently revisit memories, rituals, and language to preserve the connection with their origins. This dual sense creates belonging and estrangement that he characters struggle to balance their Indian cultural values with Canadian social norms throughout the stories. Parameswaran depicts identity as a dynamic that constructed through choices, compromises, and moments of cultural conflict. Food, festivals, religious gatherings, and community events serve as sites of altercation against cultural intensity.

MULTICULTURALISM, SOLIDARITY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The author's portrayal of the characters encounter stereotypes, linguistic barriers and racial biases. The stories reveal how immigrant community restructures the familiar cultural spaces through associations, gatherings, and shared traditions. These networks offer solace from racism, cultural misunderstanding, and loneliness. These kind of experiences of the characters shape how they perceive themselves in the host-land and influence their sense of belonging. The backdrop of Canadian multiculturalism, the narratives deviously critique in its limitations.

CONCLUSION

The author's use of perspectives of gender, and multicultural realities foregrounds the toughness of immigrant women and their capacity to build solidarity within the diaspora. Through *Sisters at the Well*, Uma Parameswaran depicts an intimate and layered the portrayal of South Asian immigrant women navigating life in Canada. Her characters embody the complexities of diasporic identity to facilitate by displacement, cultural negotiation, and the creation of hybrid belonging. Thus, the significant contribution to South Asian Canadian literature and a nuanced exploration of the immigrant experience.

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