



# ACCULTURATION: AN ANALYSIS OF UMA PARAMESWARAN'S SELECT WORKS IN IMMIGRATION CONTEXT

L. RAVI SANKAR

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor of English

<sup>1</sup>Thiruvalluvar College, Papanasam Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

*Abstract: In this article an immigration context is discussed and reviewed with reference to Uma Parameswaran's writings. Acculturation is the process of social, psychological, and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture of the society. Individuals of a differing culture try to incorporate themselves into the new more prevalent culture by participating in aspects of the more prevalent culture, such as their traditions, but still hold onto their original cultural values and traditions. The effects of acculturation can be seen at multiple levels in both the devotee of the prevailing culture and those who are assimilating into the culture. At this group level, acculturation often results in changes to culture, religious practices, healthcare, and other social institutions.*

**Index Terms - Acculturation, Psychological, Social, etc.**

Culture is also potentially important because of its interaction with other factors that are themselves an important source of historical persistence.

-Engerman and Sokoloff

At the individual level, the process of acculturation refers to the socialization process by which foreign-born individuals blend the values, customs, norms, cultural attitudes, and behaviors of the overarching host culture. This process has been linked to changes in daily [behaviour](#), as well as numerous changes in [psychological](#) and physical well-being. As [enculturation](#) is used to describe the process of first-culture learning, acculturation can be thought of as second-culture [learning](#). Under normal circumstances that are seen commonly in today's society, the process of acculturation normally occurs over a large span of time throughout a few generations. Physical force can be seen in some instances of acculturation, which can cause it to occur more rapidly, but it is not a main component of the process. More commonly, the process occurs through social pressure or constant exposure to the more prevalent host culture.

The transmission of the meanings and values characteristic of a culture, down through time and generations. Individuals make sense of their lives in relation to supra-individual contexts and situations in which shared experiences and characteristics—a language, a history, a tradition, a country—are recognizable, familiar, and accessible. In the twenty first century, international migration touches the lives of more people than ever before. With more than 160 million people estimated to be living outside their country of birth, almost no country is untouched by international migration or is immune to its effects. With poverty, political repression, human rights abuses, and conflict pushing into more and more people out of their home countries while economic opportunities, political freedom, physical safety, and security pull both highly skilled and unskilled workers into new lands, it is believed that the pace of international migration is unlikely to slow in future. Recorded human history is dotted with ‘ages of migration. Very few countries remained untouched by migration. Nations as varied as Haiti, India and the former Yugoslavia feed international flows.

The buzzword globalization, like a tidal wave, has carried with it many social and economic dynamics that are now defined in terms of globalizing tendencies. International migration is no exception to this. But what exactly globalization has done to migration is a legitimate and important question. For many, international migration has become global, in so far as globalization means greater circulation of goods, people and capital and also greater velocity in world politics. Globalization has transformed the nature of international migration not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. Globalization has triggered greater mobility, and there are qualitative changes in migration dynamics brought forward by the diversity of regions and people now involved in the process of migration. According to critics, two elements within these two broad causes are likely to remain important drivers in the next two decades. The first is political, social and cultural intolerance; at the extreme, gross, group based violations of human rights. The second is the systematic failure of governments to redress issues of cumulative disadvantage: the various forms of economic exclusion and ethno-racial, religious or linguistic discrimination that systematically disadvantage certain segments of a population. Both of these migration drivers are always present, to a greater or lesser extent.

Sarah also talks about three additional causes which require separate mention because they have recently gained in both virulence and importance. The first is outright ethno racial and/or religious conflict in which forcing the targeted group to abandon the contested area is not simply a byproduct of the conflict but a major policy objective. The second involves the deterioration of ecosystems to the point of making life unsustainable- prime instances are endangered water security and extensive degradation in water quality, the contamination of basic

foodstuffs and the consequences of desertification. The third concerns the flight from various forms of natural and manmade disasters.

Globalization has also increased economic disparities between countries. Stalker argues that flows of goods and capital between rich and poor countries will not be large enough to offset the needs for employment in poorer countries. For instance, "...the social disruption caused by economic restructuring is likely to shake more people loose from their communities and encourage them to look abroad for work." (128)

On the 'dark side of globalization', some have argued that globalization contributes to higher trafficking and smuggling of persons across borders with the proliferation of transnational's crime syndicates. (Linard 19) Some theorists and scholars have argued that globalization also reduces migration. Growth in trade can reduce migration through the creation of additional employment and higher growth in labour-sending countries. Increased investments by multinationals in labour-sending countries can create jobs and incomes in the home country reducing emigration pressures. Another possibility opened up by globalization forces is trade in services. "The increased tradability of skill- and knowledge-intensive services opens up new opportunities for high-wage jobs in the migrant-sending countries, and can be expected to induce skilled workers to stay in their home country" (Linard 18). The phenomenal growth in software exports from India is a case in point.

Uma Parameswaran is very pragmatic and practical when she faces the diasporic situation; she is not willing to lionize any particular aspect of the immigrant dilemma, instead she shows ways to survive the angst of identity crisis or racism or sexism, which is both overtly and covertly expressed by the whites towards the so called usurpers of their nation's luxuries. The transitional phase calls for extraneous activities for the immigrants like getting involved in politics or in community work, voluntary social organizations, or in short efforts to become acculturated. It is not smooth sailing as it entails working in a hostile, unfriendly environment where the white majority turns up their nose at the so called cultural inferiority of the coloured. The poet urges the immigrants to overcome this situation through patience and perseverance and by informing the other about our indigenous heritage, culture and social values.

The final phase of immigration is immensely joyful because the immigrant feels settled in the new land grows emotional roots and is willing to call 'it' home'. As Namjoshi has confessed, "the West belongs to me and I to it; this sense of possession becomes a reality." (42) The old landscape brought forth in the poems through memory and desire for imaginary homelands, recedes into the far background and is replaced by the Canadian

backdrop. The poet deftly develops symbols and myths that link the two homelands in an emotionally satisfying way and is able to see Ganga in the Assiniboine and connect the epic Goddess Sita's travel to the Arctic, with the immigrant exodus in the 20th century. When the two cultures meet, as the Ganga and the Assiniboine merge, it is the Indian psyche of the poet merging with the Canadian experience. This is not an assumed or pretentious stand and as Mc Gifford and Kearns, the editors of Shakti's Words confirm, her poems evoke 'a purer aesthetic pleasure' for 'personal truth is joined with the beauty of art' in her lines. In her play Rootless but Green are the Boulevards she transplants the central symbol, from the Indian banana plant which leaves a young one before it dies to the evergreen plants that remain green throughout the year.

The row of evergreen trees planted in the boulevard at Christmas time may be rootless but they are green and beautiful during the short length of their transplanted life. This optimistic vein gets reflected in most of her poems, plays and later in her critical discourses. Her poetic characters defy the image of the 'Other' as victims, marginalized or alienated or discriminated. The collective memory touches every person who is physically, culturally or emotionally displaced. The women characters in her poems are able to adapt more quickly to the new environment and come to terms with the idea of two homes without conflict or ambivalence. They are able to embrace larger communities for they recognize that human beings are the same everywhere and hence their problems are the same too.

Parameswaran has reiterated in her writings that "romanticizing one's homeland has a place in immigrant literature as long as it does not paralyze one's capacity to develop new bonds within one's adopted land. The third space that the immigrant can and has to create; by leaving aside the burden of cultural baggage or becoming excessively westernized; is a space of cultural osmosis, of give and take, where the immigrant and the host will be transformed and enriched. This space is free from the erstwhile unthinking scorn, unfeeling barb, closed fists and closed hearts of the days of alienation. Parameswaran's stance as a diasporic writer marks a slow and steady progress towards a South Asian Canadian female identity. The immigrant inevitably undergoes severe emotional and mind crunching situations during the beginning years of expatriation. Hence, her initial poems become preoccupied with all the questions that diasporic writers face. But the slow awakening of her female identity makes her realize that human beings everywhere are racists in one way or other, and since this is a sociological problem, enlightenment or awakening through education about the plurality of cultures and races that exist in the world is the viable solution.

The immigrants whether they are Icelanders, Hungarians or Japanese, experience the same situations like South Asians. But nostalgia or reviving memories as the only sustenance to overcome the plight will become toxic, preventing the vibrant on flow of life's new experiences. Nostalgia, as Parameswaran has found out, also never pays, for the over romanticized native land is purely imaginary or idealistic. Expatriation tends to highlight sentiments. But the sense of homelessness and alienation are accentuated by many South Asian Indian writers because the subcontinent from which they hail has a long history of literary and cultural tradition which has shown tolerance to numerous new communities and ethnic groups and the different cultures which have sought her shores. So expectations run high and Indo- Canadians feel distressed when faced with aggravating circumstances.

Uma Parameswaran, through her poems, alerts the reader that each poem is a momentary flare of intense emotions or thoughts and it need not always reflect societal reality or the writer's long ranging beliefs. The sense of frustration or a feeling of loss of dignity experienced by the diaspora results from a bitter experience of cultural imperialism that unjustly unrecognized 'others'. Sociological explanations of migration focus on this of cultural and social capital. Cultural capital refers to knowledge of other societies and the opportunities they offer, as well as information about how to actually go about moving and seeking work elsewhere. Clearly, globalization helps make this cultural capital available by beaming images of Western lifestyles into the most remote villages.

Improved literacy and basic education also contribute to the ability to move. Social capital refers to the connections needed to migrate safely and cost-effectively. It is well known that most migrants follow 'beaten paths' and go where their compatriots have already established a bridgehead, making it easier to find work and lodgings, and deal with bureaucratic obstacles. Older migration scholars spoke of 'chain migration,' while in recent years much emphasis has been put on 'migration networks' and the way these develop as links between communities at home and in destination areas. These networks are much facilitated by the improved communications and transport technologies of globalization, and are therefore gaining in strength and salience.

Uma Parameswaran endorses the view that all immigrants should take a flexible stand to their own and their children's Canadian realities. Her poems expose the bluff behind ghettoization proving that most of the time it is self imposed. Globalization, defined as a proliferation of cross-border flows and transnational's networks, has changed the context for migration. New technologies of communication and transport allow frequent and multi-directional flows of people, ideas and cultural symbols. The erosion of nation-state sovereignty and autonomy weakens systems of border control and migrant assimilation. The result is the transformation of the material and

cultural practices associated with migration and community formation, and the blurring of boundaries between different categories of migrants (Castles, Stephen, 2002).

A recent poem “Vigilance” is a moving, taut, elegy that depicts her political ideology in a superbly artistic texture. In 1990, she submitted this poem as a public tribute to women activists and all women who have undergone systemic discrimination inside universities. We... Now have come together to hold hands silenced by missiles from powers that be Take heart, hang in there O my sisters, my loves (Shakti’s Words 83). Though she forthright acknowledges the problem of discrimination, she has a solution, a feasible solution for it too. In a striking poem titled “The Interview” the four interviewers who question the ‘brown’ applicant want to know whether she will be a threat to them, if appointed. She calmly replies that “I am your problem/ But I am your answer too/ For I have been there under the rug / And I really do know/ how it can be cleaned/ without undue hurt to your ego” (Shakti’s Words 82) The flipside of immigration which has been focused on so far should make way for its celebratory aspects too. Minority cultures and values are there by explained and validated in academic circles and the ignorance regarding other geopolitical sites, and heritages are all erased from Canadian minds.

Parameswaran is able to project an impartial view of dislocation and relocation involving the individual’s efforts to forge an identity for herself and her community. She makes her characters plant their heart and feet in the same place, though it is not an easy task as Jayanth a voice in *Trishanku* exclaims, “it is no bed of roses here, mowing the lawn and painting the house and a hundred other menial chores which were done by servants in the luxury of an extended family back home.” (T127) The *Trishanku* state of mind of the early poems gives way to a renewed optimism, a new attitude and an unusual fortitude in her later works. Memory of the homeland is an important tool for the diasporic writer.

Parameswaran dwells upon it in her prize winning story *The Door I Shut behind Me*. The first generation immigrants speak with a heavy accent whereas the second generation acquires the nuances of expressions as quickly as a duck takes to water. The younger generation can thus rise quickly in status in the adopted land by keeping the differences minimal. A character in *Trishanku* openly admits that the young are apprehensive when white friends come visiting for fear that their parents might embarrass them by their lack of linguistic acumen. Young Krish, Vithal and Jayanth are fluent in contemporary jargons and slang expressions. This acquisition of language shows in the changed diction and usage of immigrant literature.

The nuances and overt connotations of the words that the immigrant is exposed to, influence and transform his language. But the poet feels her very substance getting thrown into confusion. And much of the power and

poignancy of her poetic imagination arises from this tension. The whole process is reciprocal too for the immigrant literary imagination is accepted by the white and they expand their borders of language to accommodate the new vocabulary. This cross cultural bridging through language is an essential aspect of diasporic literature. The collective wisdom of Indian joint families has endowed her with a collective consciousness and a propensity of thinking for the group rather than the individual. Sexism is not a bone of contention for her as much as racism. “On the shores of the Irish Sea”, is an epitaph for the Kanishka tragedy victims but it raises questions of racism that has assailed her mind from the days of immigration. The Supreme self gives leisure and pain, grief and comfort. She is scattered among individual selves and this goes on in spite of losses and tragedies. It arouses her humane feelings, melting away all manmade borders. This Supreme Truth enables her to be at home equally in India and Canada. She first came to Canada “in caves of memory/ where there and here come together/ to make us who we be”. (*Sisters at the Well*) The poetic sensibility is able to create a perfect blending of the present reality and the past memories.

Dislocation, ultimately worked out as an advantage for her, it made her delve deep into her own location, her past, and enabled her to connect with the present relocation. Her stance is not merely feministic, it is humanistic. It is the recognition and realization of other races and communities, mutually inclusive which can work for a harmonious world. It is a discourse that emerges from an increasing awareness of the fallibility of accepted norms. The endless talk about class consciousness or colonial and patriarchal oppressions is harmful, she believes, as it often makes out, the erstwhile colonized and especially women, to be a weak and helpless lot, which is the main agenda of the power of domination. She applies the neo-colonialist, post modern feminist literary critique in her work whereby the message is conveyed that women cannot be crushed by the onslaughts of patriarchy. Her initiative and self esteem cannot be deprived from her and this is seen in her later poems where she grapples with the so called problem of dehumanization.

Though adventure dented them in many ways the bruising had built the immigrants as better citizens. Uma Parameswaran’s first short story *The Door I shut Behind Me* introduces her saga of thematically related, intergenerational and intertextual immigrant experience. It reflects the sense of wonder and fear of the immigrant at the new world around himself and nostalgia for the world left behind. Regarding the theme Judith Kearns in her introduction to this story remarks that the “treatment of the theme of Indo Canadian experience in different genres particularly intriguing especially as the writing was interconnected by theme and by recurring characters” (49).

The story is about a young graduate Chander who secures a green card, goes to Canada and is surprised to see the Indian families in a new country.

His mother gives him a copy of the Ramayana and a translation of Bhagvat Gita as parting gifts but he buys a copy of Chandra Sekhar's Radioactive Transfer, though it is not his field of study; nor is it one that one could read during a journey. He is simply driven by an urge to hold that book: Chander blinked the glare away and focused his eyes on the book in his hand. The black of the title, the motley orange - yellow - green of the jacket resolved from their hazy halations into a clear spectrum of colours and forms - The Ramanaya, a new English translation. His mother had given this and Annie Besant's translation of the Bhagavad Gita to him at the airport half-apologetically, half beseechingly, choosing the last hour so that he would not have the heart to refuse. "Keep it on your table," she had whispered . . . . (3) These lines show how Indian families in Canada create "Little Indians" around themselves and try to live in the memories of India of their childhood rather than the India of today.

All the characters often live in a world of nostalgia centered on a sort of homesickness, bearing the pains of uprooting and re-routing, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new unfriendly surroundings. "Indians abroad" seem to be more self conscious than the "Canadians abroad". Both are torn between the old and new world values. Though Chander has a well settled life in Canada, his mind always longs for his motherland. He expresses his views "I'd give anything, anything in the world to see one of my own people, to hear my own language" (7). When immigrants happen to see their natives in the alien place they feel happy. Chander says: "My own people, my own language . . . Could they never be one people unless they had but one language? Was it, after all, only language that could hold a nation together in peacetime?" (7). Whenever there is a social gathering immigrants used to discuss about their native place with fond memories.

Uma Parameswaran's play *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* explores the lives and experiences of Indian immigrants as they struggle with the painful and bewildering task of adjusting in their new land. Her primary interest is to discuss the problems of the immigrants at various levels and their struggle between the pulls of two cultures. This story depicts real life like people in the Indo Canadian community and the events, situations and experiences pictured are common and typical as they occur in various families of the immigrants in Canada.

Several factors related to the recognition and acceptance of the immigrants have been discussed in this play, as the change called for affects the total configuration of memory, history and cultural values and at times the individual immigrant has to work within polarities between the question of belonging and not belonging. In the



play Jayant, Sharad's son, introduces his father who was an atomic energy scientist in India. Jayant believes that instead of migrating to Canada if he had stayed in India, he would have become a Director. Because he was not able to get a good job as he desired, he ends up as a real estate broker. Jayant's voice has contempt for his father as he chooses to migrate. He says bitterly, "Instead he quits the place to be and rots here selling houses, Jesus, a crappy real estate broker, just one step better than an encyclopedia salesman." (76). Though he had a better career in India, the living conditions are better in Canada which even Jayant admits later when he recalls their ancestral house. "Some house that, a sprawling shambles handed down untouched from the time of Peshwas, where you have to walk half a mile to get to the shithouse, Jesus, we haven't lost anything on that count; even he couldn't think so"(77). Like the others in the play, Sharad too faces racial anxiety. He has a lean face and a long neck "which he tends to stick out so that his Adam's apple shows even clearer and he looks even taller than he is" (81).

Sharad's life represents the state of diasporic dilemma as he is like 'Trishanku' a figure from Indian mythology who, with the efforts of the 'rishis' was pushed to heaven but was denied entrance to heaven by the gods. With both the forces working simultaneously in opposite directions, he could not belong to either place and stayed in between two worlds. His plight of not being able to belong anywhere gets further reflected in his as well as his children's behaviour. Savitri, Sharad's wife faces challenges of different nature in the new country. When she comes to know that her daughter has an active sexual life, she reacts vehemently and says "We are supposed to treat you as rational adults even when you behave like beasts" (90).

As a father, Sharad finds it difficult to accept his children's life style. He refuses to admit that his children "can wander into the bushes" (81). These lines show how the first generation immigrants are facing problems due to the behaviour of their children. Jayant, Jyothi's brother is also upset when he realizes that his sister might be sleeping with her boyfriend. He looks at her and "there is something in her eye that draws him up sharply, against the wall of recognition" (77). He is extremely disturbed and wants her to turn down his suspicion, "Unwilling to accept it", he desperately wants her to deny the same by asking her again and again: "You haven't sister? You haven't? (78). Hence youngsters are unable to handle the pressure from home and from friends and if they don't follow their culture they would be alienated. As a result, irritability and unhappiness surfaces in the home.

The author sees "the seeds of sadness in her eyes" (81) to reflect the melancholic state of their unsuccessful attempt to fit in the given environment. On the other hand, the second generation immigrants in this play – Jyothi, Jayant, Krish, Vithal, Priti, Arun, Dilip, Rajan, and Sridhar, who have studied in Canadian schools, speak and dress like other Canadians, have similar hobbies, but still they are seen as aliens. Jayant tells Jyothi: ". . . but you

are never going to be one of the boys. Not that I see why anyone would want to fit into this mould” (76). The second generation Indo -Canadians find it difficult to maintain a balance between what the society expects from them and what is expected of them by their families.

The memory of the homeland remains an important part for the first generation members. They face tough competition and racial discrimination wherever they go in the alien soil. For people of the first generation who have spent most of their life and have settled in Canada in their middle ages, the conflict is not as intense as their roots are still in India. They have their own country to fall back at any time. But, people of the second generation are greatly disappointed, when the whites are not ready to accept them and consider them as equals.

Uma Parameswaran in her article on “Scaling Walls: Linguistic and Cultural Barriers Between Writer and Community” says “All these years we thought the isolation was coming from us, but now that we are trying to merge we know exactly what they feel . . .”(28). Hence, in order to save themselves from the psychological crisis of their identity, the immigrants are compelled to cling to their own tradition and to mix with their own people rather than suffer total rootlessness and alienation from both the cultures. In this play some of the characters especially of the first generation remember their ‘homeland’, old friends, relatives and this brings them to the realization – of being isolated in the new land. A distant vision of the comforts of the ‘homeland’ coupled with the prevalent racism in the new land brings frustration.

Uma Parameswaran’s short play *Dear Deedi: My Sister* highlights the multicultural aspect which is prevalent in Canada and its effects on various immigrants that ravaged the larger immigrant community in Canada. As India is a land of many cultures, Canada too is a multicultural land and the author Uma Parameswaran has done a good job of allowing them to speak for her. Life in the new land places them in an uncomfortable situation. They are overawed by the vastness of the new landscape and baffled by the new aggressive cultural surroundings. In the later stage they slowly transform themselves and become an inevitable part of the host society.

Mariella, a young woman from Nicaragua speaks out for her side “Your broad beach road where the polished tar, Flings mirages that vapour on the speeding cars, Your sands stretched out beside the sea, Where at my feet laps Eternity. . . the blind beggar’s stare, Wreck of thirty ruinous years, When the sheep looked up and were not fed . . .” (64). She says that she is pledged to the land which her love has made their home. It becomes quite obvious that anybody who immigrates to any country should consider the new country as his/her home. Aziza, an older woman from Pakistan expresses her views about the kind of place that she lives in, “What kind of place you’ve brought me to,son? Where the windows are always closed, and the front door is always locked?”

(66). The living condition in the alien place is challenging for the immigrants. Choi Chan, a middle aged man from Hong Kong, Chandri, a woman from Srilanka, Yokio, a woman from Japan, Sekoni, a young man from Nigeria, Wamahu, a young woman from Kenya express that Canada's fields are sown with gold and that their lives should be bright with golden sheaves of corn. Their dreams can come true if there are real understanding, love and give-and-take attitude.

They want to build their temple in Canada. Gulled and Sagal, an old couple from Somalia express their hope by adjusting to the new land: Under a sky bluer than any we've seen, On snow whiter than ever we dreamed, We stand beside the Golden Boy Holding golden sheafs of corn Against a dawn heralding the joy Of years to come. (73) These lines reflect the optimistic feeling of the old couple from Somalia which is based more on their inherent confidence than on concrete facts.

In another situation, Sapna a young woman from India describes the issues one after another. She says that irrespective of the place, anybody is prone to die; death is unavoidable whether one is in one's motherland or in a foreign land. She says that their heart still yearns to touch the waters of the Ganga before it can go in peace to its eternal rest. "Gangajal" she said, "I need Gangajal to wash him" (71). She takes a cup size copper pot to hand over. Her hands tremble as she places it there when one of her dearest friend dies. Death brings people together and they sing: We came together then, all of us, two hundred and more; and in the days that followed there was more love in every home, more compassion, less grievances and gripes as each sought comfort in wedded arms . . . But death, till now a distance stranger, knocked on our door last month, and we had to lay out one of our dearest friends. (71) The play at last has a chorus where all the above-mentioned speakers join together and Sing:

We are New Canadians Come from faraway places, The Alps and the Andes, Essequibo and the Ganges, Our memories, our faces Chiselled by ancient cultures Whose courses had been half run Long ere Cartier's had begun. (72)

Through these lines, the author wants to convey that as time passes by, the immigrants are ready to merge with the host society. The hesitation and the fear of complexity they had in the beginning slowly vanish and thereby they start being a part of the host society. This idea is beautifully explained at the end of the play: "We must build our temple here, here where the Assiniboine flows into the Red. And we shall bring Ganga, as Bhagirata did of old, to our land, our Assiniboine, and here shall be the groves where Uma shall dance with Parameswara" (73). When the immigrants are ready to merge with the host society they can live peacefully and

harmoniously. Though Canada has had an official policy of multiculturalism for many decades, racial discrimination is still a strong undercurrent in the Canadian society.

The process of acculturation is an inevitability that cannot be escaped by an immigrant. Chand.M in his book *Diasporas as Drivers of National Competitiveness in Emerging Economies* remarks:

. . . immigrant groups are not always free to choose how to acculturate as their experience depends to a larger extent on the acculturation policy of the host society. This policy has a large impact on the diasporas feeling of being at ‘home’ and in its motivations towards the home and host countries.

The host country might make certain restrictions and the choices for the immigrants to make. (46)

The transplanted writers explore the immigrant experiences and their works reflect their expatriate sensibility – the experience of alienation, nostalgia and transplantation – they undergo during the process of acculturation and acclimatization. This idea is explained by Uma Parameswaran when she describes the four phases of the immigrant’s life.

First, wonder and fear at the new world around oneself and nostalgia for the world left behind; secondly an overriding impulse to survive in the new world that makes one immerse oneself in one’s profession or family, which often precludes political or social participation in the larger society; thirdly, after one has found job security, a turning towards organizational activity within one’s own ethnocentric community; and finally, an active participation in the larger political and social arena outside one’s own immediate community. Though Uma Parameswaran claims that most immigrants reach the final phase, the question remains whether complete assimilation is possible. A merger into the cultural main stream of the host nation is very difficult for the first generation. The fact remains that the first generation immigrants might acquire a relative adjustment that is ‘acculturation’ but not ‘assimilation.’

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