

Core-XI - Diasporic Writings (18MEN33C) Unit\_IV  
Rootless But Green are the Boulevard Trees – Uma Parameswaran

- **A Brief Introduction to the author**
- Uma Parameswaran is a poet, playwright and a short story writer.
- She was born in Madras, grew up in Japalpur, India.
- She moved to USA to do MA in American Literature at Indiana University.
- She Received Ph.D in English from Michigan State University in 1972.
- Currently she works as a Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg.
- Rootless But Green are the Boulevard Trees(1987),
- Trishanku (1988)
- Sons must die and other plays (1998)
- What was always hers (1999)
- Mangoes on the Maple Tree (2002)
- A Cycle of the Moon: A Novel (2010)
- C.V.Raman: A Biography (2011) are some of her famous literary works.

## Rootless But Green are the Boulevard Trees- Uma Parameswaran.

- **A brief summary of the play**
- It is a three-act play set in Winnipeg in the late seventies. The Indian immigrant Bhave's family are on the brink of coming apart due to a clash of values and ambitions. Sharad father, a former scientist in India turned as a real estate agent in Canada insists strict adherence to the principles of Indian culture and tries to establish his cultural roots in Canada by making his family to follow the same Indian tradition and culture . Savitri ,the mother, Sharad's wife, a typical Indian Hindu wife, works as a teacher in Canada plays a vital role to preserve the relationship intact with all the members of the family and friends. Sharad has two sons and a daughter. The eldest son Jayant is frustrated with his father's principles and unable to come to terms with the current reality partly because of his lack of confidence in himself and lack of courage to face reality. He decides to leave Canada in search of a better profession and life outside the nation, but lack the determination to proceed further. Jayant's sister Jyothi is in love with his Canadian boyfriend Andre. The conflict between them leads to doubts and disappointments. Their cultural background plays a vital role in their perception and the mental anguish suffered by Jyothi reveals the difficulties in acclimatizing the foreign culture. Veejala, Sharad's sister is a frustrated scientist at the university. She decides to leave her husband and children and go back to India in her attempt to realise her dream.

## Summary

- She thinks that her son Vithal and daughter Priti no longer depend on her. Anand, her husband understands her quest for self actualisation. Hence she has taken a decision to go back to India though she is not certain about the consequences and result of her decision.
- This is a shocking news to Sarad, her brother who finds it difficult to digest this act of his sister.
- Though Savithri understands and appreciates Veejeela Moghe's individuality, she remains neutral. She neither supports her decision nor oppose it.
- Savithri knows that there are so many questions the immigrants have in their life especially in the new country. They are aware of the truth that there can be no satisfiable answer for all those questions. They try to keep themselves busy in order to avoid the situations that demands such introspection or contemplations.
- She loves her daughter and pities her for her inability to understand the need to hold on to the cultural roots which may minimise the mental anguish which arise in the process of acclimatization. to certain extent.
- Janyant's friends Arun, Dilip, Rajan and Sridhar, the Indian students pursuing higher studies in Canada give an account of their hopes, desires, disappointments, longing for the Indian food and Indian cultural ambience, their challenges in Canada and their need to be acknowledged and recognised as equal citizens of the nation.
- Vithal an ideal student with active participation in the community activities represent the possibility for better social status and political rights for the immigrants. However, the shattered family atmosphere, distorts him from his noble ideal pursuit. His failure in love affair, his inability to look at changes in a broader perspective shows the dilemma in the minds of youth like Vithal who can't accept and observe the foreign culture at the same time can't come to terms with the native culture.

## Summary

- The play ends with the message that those who live in a foreign countries can be happy and at peace like the Boulevard Trees which remain green as long as it lives irrespective of the time span of its life. Similarly in this age of globalisation talking about establishing cultural roots of one's native country will results in mental anguish. Accepting reality, learning to look at the positive side of everything one can make the life harmonious and pleasant one.
- It is not how long one lives that matters. But how one lives that matters much. Thus the play brings out the importance of acclimatization of the immigrants.

## List of Characters

- The Bhave family
- Sharad, the father
- Savitri, the mother
- Jayant, Jyoti, Krish- their children
- Veejeela Moghe- Sharad's sister
- Anant- Veejeela's husband
- Vithal and Priti- their children
- Arun, Rajan, Dilip and Sridhar, friends of Jayant and Vithal
- Andre- Jyothi's boyfriend
- Laura- Priti's friend

## Setting

- Winnipeg, March-April 1979.
- All scenes take place in Bhave's Home in Fort Richmond, Canada.

# Themes

- Rootlessness
- Acculturation
- Adaptation and amalgamation
- Cultural conflicts and Psychological qualms

# Symbols

- Boulevard Trees
- Maple Trees
- Mango Trees
- Family Pictures, musical instruments etc



## Study Questions

- Give an account of the conflict between Jayant and his father Sharad.
- Sketch the character of Veejeela Moghe
- Explain acculturation and illustrate with an example from the play
- Justify the title “Rootless But Green are the Boulevard Trees”.
- Write an essay on the psychological qualms of the immigrants.
- Comment on the role played by Savitri in keeping the relationship intact despite the difficult situations.

### Scope for further study

- Read John W. Berry's theory on Immigration, Acculturation and adaptation.
- Other works of the author would help you to understand the challenges, problems of immigrants and the possibilities for a change.