CHAPTER  V

CONCLUSION
On the positive side, policy critics have pointed out, despite its serious shortcomings, the Mm policy has generated a legitimate forum for minority ethnic protest. It has given immigrant minorities a recognized basis for making claims on public policy and public funds... [but] with regard to immigrant group demands for political, economic and social equality within Canada, the policy is silent.

A study of the multi-layered term 'Multiculturalism' as reflected in the select texts, Joy Kogawa's Obasan, M.G. Vassanji's No New Land, Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree and Michael Ondaatjee's Running In The Family, was the main thrust of my thesis. The multicultural policy was formulated to accord equality and respectability to all cultural differences other than the English and French, of the natives and those brought in by variegated immigrants. In this sense Canada proves to be veritably a multicultural society.

The reading of the texts reveal that in precept, Multiculturalism is a highly egalitarian policy. However, the select texts show that xenophobia, racial discrimination does exist in the society. The mosaic metaphor then, obviously has two pieces much larger than others. When the 'other' cultures tend to be measured against the dominant, they find themselves placed at the margins of the society which results in the marginalization of the native/immigrants psyche. The only recourse left for such a psyche is to shed off its neurosis into writing. As Kogawa says in her novel, Obasan, "Unless the stone bursts with telling, unless the seed flower's with speech there is in my life no living word... would I come at last to the freeing word?"
('Epigraph', *Obasan*). Therefore, the native immigrant writer feels a compelling need to write and 'write back'.

The findings of Chapter 1 reveal that, on the political front, maintaining ethnicity and cultural difference does not give the minorities much political power. In so far as visible measures have been adopted to safeguard the Multicultural Act such as innumerable conferences, including conferences on curriculum, grants for various ethnic or multicultural projects, and expansions, in the schools both of the use of non-official languages, introduction of Multiculturalism as a topic in the curricular, suggests that it is real but not necessarily ideal.

Obviously accepting plurality does not guarantee socio-legal equality. The sample texts, Kogawa's *Obasan*, Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, Vassanji's *No New Land* and Ondaatjee's *Running In The Family*, prove that the natives and the visible minorities encounter myriad faces of discrimination. Ample amount of data collection, surveys and research give validity to what the writers speak in the text. Kogawa's *Obasan* records political harassment of Japanese-Canadians. The writer has collected all her documents from the Archives which she
interfused into the matrix of Obasan. Taking the position of a Japanese historian, Kogawa recreates the political history of Japanese-Canadians hoping that her writing may serve as a corrective trend.

The stereotyping of "ethnic" races such as Japs, Niggers, Pakis, or the hyphenation of the immigrants help economic and political exploitation. For Beatrice Culleton, the author of In Search of April Raintree, political subjugation is a living, contemporary reality. The novel depicts internalized racism as a key element in the native people's oppression. They have been recognized as a legal entity by the Federal Government only since 1972. According to historical logic, they should have been the people to lead Canada but they were forced to sell their land. Many of them are reduced to live on the Welfare State. Culleton makes it clear, that the destruction of the Métis could be achieved through a manichaen philosophy. To illustrate her argument, she ironically uses the term 'The Native Girls Syndrome' coined by the white man. It reads:

...and you girls are headed in that direction.
It starts out with the fighting, the running away, the lies. Next come the accusations that...
everyone in the world is against you. There are the sullen unco-operative silences, the feeling sorry for yourselves. And when you go on your own, you get pregnant right away or you can't find or keep jobs. So you'll start with alcohol and drugs.

(In Search Of April Raintree, pp.66-67)

The worst form of subjugation comes in the rape of April Raintree, more violent because she is a "squaw". But the problem is, the native does not have many choices awaiting him. Vassanji's No New Land focuses on racial discrimination on the job front. Lack of "Canadian experience" (No New Land, p.44) or "Overqualified" (No New Land, p.48), are words used against Nurdin Lalani, the protagonist of the novel. It is obvious from the reading of the text that hegemony is still sustained. It is still the White power keeping alive the neo-colonialist aims of the former Imperial powers. Neo-colonialism, explains Magdoll, "Maintains] the predominance of the culture values of the former colonial powers."\(^1\) Evelyn Kallen\(^2\) has a curious observation on the multi-cultural policy. According to her, the Bill was passed to achieve a national unity through the cultural
assimilation of all ethnic groups to the dominant model. It was assumed the right of non-English and non-French ethnic groups to express their culture in a matter of the private sphere only. Public institutions would, continue to be predicated on the established model of cultural dualism which implied conformity of ethnicities to the dominant culture.

The immigrants in Canada add to the Canadian economy. At least, they provide the labour force. According to James Stafford, the Canadian Government encourages immigration mainly for three reasons: to counter the long-range, projection of a declining population precipitated by below-replacement fertility, to maintain an adequate dependency ratio in the face of an aging population and to create jobs through the demand for goods generated by the addition of immigrants to the population. While it would be a gross exaggeration to make a sweeping statement, that all immigrants are low-range workers and low placed officials, broadly speaking, the Third World texts reveal economic marginalization. Joy Kogawa writes in Obasan in the form of a letter which reads,

Find Jap Evacuees Best Beet Workers Lethbridge, Alberta, Jan. 22.
Japanese evacuees from British Columbia supplied the labour for 65% of Alberta's sugar beet acreage last year, Phil Baker, of Lethbridge, President of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association, stated today.

"They played an important part in producing our all-time record crop of 363,000 tons of beets in 1945", he added.

Mr. Baker explained Japanese evacuees worked 19,500 acres of beets and German prisoners of war worked 5,000 acres. The labour for the remaining 5,500 acres of Alberta's 30,000 acres of sugar beets was provided by farmers and their families. Some of the heaviest beet yields last year came from farms employing Japanese evacuees.

(Obasan, p.193)

Himani Bannerjee says it better in her poem "in the beginning there was". It reads:

My friend Filomena was talking to me. Can you imagine, she said, they kill more than 3,000
chickens a day? ...And can you imagine the smell, the stench, and these women in rubber boots, hard hats, all covered with blood and her fingers were swollen. She was white as paste and she can't straighten up she can't...

As I listened to her, I looked at this place full of plants, food, shining lights
And bland smiling faces
And thought this light of ours it comes from so much darkness...

Though strictly speaking, culture cannot be separated from politics and economics, for the sake of clarity and because culture is an expansive topic that needs separate treatment, a separate chapter was dedicated to cultural analysis. The policy of multiculturalism was made to embrace all cultural differences. But from the reading of the texts, it is observed, that in the process, it may segregate the natives and the immigrants from the national project. Multiculturalism funds public festivals notably the 'folkorama'; a splendid display of ethnic exotica. Obviously the racial minorities are seen as possessing folk art and culture which amuses and appeals to the
Occidental taste. The funny part of the situation is that the Third World Culture has to be re-discovered and recognized by the Western power. "[The White Men] look upon these figures with the eye of an anatomist, detect them as it were, and re-arrange the parts to suit the shape of the object that they are decorating (CRSA 31:4 November 1994, p.370). Moreover, celebrating folkloric diversities need not necessarily mean encouraging the artistic creativity of minorities. As a result, it creates writers like Rohinton Mistry who give a fossilized picture of the miniscute society of the Parsees in Bombay in novels such as Such a Long Journey and Tales from Ferozshah Baag, the reality of which is far removed from contemporary reality.

This chapter made an analysis, in the first place on the question of culture shock and culture adaptation, that is, what happens to a nature/immigrant when he is uprooted from his cultural anchorage and given an alternative culture. He is torn apart.

Nativization <--- Nature ---> Westernization

Many multicultural texts write on the theme of cross-culture encounter. In her poem 'Tara's mother-in-law' Uma Parmeswaran,
a South Asian poet writes:

What kind of place you've brought me to, son?
Where the windows are always closed.
And the front door is it always locked?
And no rangoli designs on porch steps,
To say, please come in?
...son, son, it give me great joy to see you so well settled, children and wife and all,
Though my hairs do stand on end
When your wife holds hands with men
And you with men's wives.

All the sample texts talk about cross-culture encounter. For example, Vassanji's protagonist jostles between the sexual desire inflamed by an "easy" culture, and memories of his father's puritanical attitude to sexuality. While the peep show excites him, the photograph of his stern father with the fez on his head acts as a reminder of past culture and values. The dualism of world views characterize the typical immigrant psyche. No New Land goes back to the very first time the Lalans set foot in Canada. In Culleton's In Search Of April Raintree, the culture clash is found in the refusal to respect
the Metis tradition. In *Running In The Family* the process of acculturation is seen in the Eurasian behaviour. Ondaatjee has been criticized for not portraying East/West dualism, but confusion itself makes up the post-colonial sensibility.

The chapter also studied the new immigrant identity and the need for cultural representation. The reading of the texts led to the conclusion that the migrating writer caught between two or more separate cultures lives on a borderland existence. His non-belonging, his deep-seated dispossession creates a new kind of identity. However, as Richard Stamelman suggests in his essay, "The strangeness of the other and the otherness of the stranger", the stranger's exiled condition ironically assumes him his freedom. The stranger is the unseizable other, floating away like a cloud. "Through the paradoxical absence and presence of the stranger, his proximity and distance, his difference and heterogeneity and above all the exteriority of his being, he participates ...in a more absolute and transcendental humanity." He refuses to be appropriated.

The native/immigrant writer also feels a need to take a journey back not just because it would provide him nostalgia,
free from the harsh reality, but more because only in so doing he will be able to come back to the present situation more wholly and realistically as does Nurdin Lalani in *No New Land*. Added to it, if the writer does not make an attempt at Cultural Representation, he would find his ethnicity pale into oblivion. Each of the writers represents his culture. As Said Edward puts it,

[The ethnic writers] take for their point of departure the right of formerly un - or misrepresented human groups to speak for and represent themselves in domains defined politically and intellectually, as naturally excluding them, usurping their signifying and representative functions overriding their historical reality.

While Kogawa's *Obasan* tells of the dislocation of Japanese cultural values in the new and hostile land, Culleton's *In Search Of April Raintree*, directly pitties the native values against those of the colonial powers. Vassanji's *No New Land* while making sensitive but humorous comparisons represents his culture but eventually drops off the cultural baggage.
Ondaatjee takes a voyage home to Sri Lanka to collect the reminiscences of his Eurasian culture. While each of the texts deal with its theme in its own distinctive manner, all are highly conscious of the need for cultural representation.

Opposition can be not only thematic, but also structural. Therefore, the fourth Chapter studied how the marginal texts pose a resistance to the mainstream canonical constructs. Most often, postcolonial texts adopt postmodern techniques since both the two are involved in de-centering. They show multiple possibilities against the humanistic and universalistic fixities. However, marginal texts while decentering the centre works within the centrifugal force of the orbit. Therefore, they primarily reinstall the dominant discourse so as to subvert it, the main task of the Third World Writer being to force the notion that difference suggests multiplicity rather than binary opposition and exclusion.

Therefore, such texts, in opposition to the Universal closure, prefer fissures, be they of gender, class, race, ethnicity or sexual preference. They posit the module of a Kaleidoscope. Post-modernism, in particular, questions the
supremacy of the dominant races, the myths and power structures created in the process of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The reading of the texts in focus reveal that they are all involved in re-writing histories using the technique of fictional representations to create imaginative versions of their historical records. Linda Hutcheon calls such a fiction a historiographic metafiction where accuracy of truth is irrelevant because there are multiple truths. Historical metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of historical records. In *Running In the Family*, verification of history is deliberately kept at abeyance and multiple historical possibilities are given because its author stands at the confluence of many histories. The author closes the text with "In Sri Lanka a well-told lie, is worth a thousand facts" (*Running In The Family*, p.206). Kogawa’s *Obasan* is history re-written drawing attention to the real historical experience telling the readers in a fictive manner what happened to the Japanese-Canadians during World War II when in February 1942, the federal cabinet ordered the expulsion of 22,000 Japanese-Canadians. Culleton's *In Search Of April Raintree* while delineating the autobiographies of the two sisters, Cheryl and
April Raintree simultaneously recollects the historical background of the Métis which shaped their lives. Vassanji's No New Land presents the history of diaspora, the landing of African-South Asians of Canada.

The chapter also scrutinized the architecture of a postmodern novel which is many a times a distortion of Universal genres or a blending or blurring of genres. Running In The Family, simultaneously makes use of the mode of an autobiography, while also including poems, documents, historical records, diaries, photographs, portraits, and so on. The writer liberates himself from the conventions which were representations of dominant social and political institutions but specifically the literary codes.

Because a post-colonial text uses the mode of parody; of installing and ironizing, the installation primarily demands of the reader a sound knowledge of the preceding literature which can be called "the parenthood". At the same time it desires a conscious break from its literary antecedents. Therefore, intertextuality forms an important aspect of such writing. Running In The Family, for example, makes use of both the

- 270 -
indigenous writing as well as Western literature. *Obasan* and *In Search Of April Raintree* makes a vivid use of documents.

Postmodern and post-colonial writing also problematizes the narrative communication: the narrator - the text - the reader relationship. In postmodern writing the focus is on to describe the code by which narrator and reader are signified through the narrative. Because the reader is actively involved in decoding the text, reader-response theory is very significant. Postmodernism resists making the author the sole constructor and determiner of the text because a pre-conceived text will definitely not be ideologically free.

In *Running In The Family*, the narrator's position is ambivalent. He is both an insider and an outsider, a foreigner and a prodigal returned.

Furthermore, post-modernism being an alternative discourse, fundamentally problematizes other discourses by questioning the conceptual frameworks of these discourses but neither aiming to destroy not to displace it. It subverts "all givens" using the language of parody, especially since language is a part of cultural practices and the tool for forming ideologies. The
native/immigrant very ironically expresses his non-belonging. The slogans Kogawa uses in Obasan, "Once a Jap Always a Jap" or "The Native Girls; Syndrome" used by Culleton or the word "Pakis" used by Vassanji are meant to make the dominant discourse self-conscious.

The chapter finally concludes by stating because the natives/immigrants live on the borderland, their concept of reality is found to be different from an ordinary understanding of the term. It transcends the mundane reality and enters the domain of the extra-ordinary and the fantastic (the mythic reality). Therefore, their reality is multi-layered. The reality of the Third World Writers is mythical, cyclical and cosmic unlike the monolithic reality of the Western power.

In case of the natives/immigrants who are virtually "outsiders", the classical artistic concept of the totally integrated whole has no reincarnation in a sensory reality that is everywhere fragmented, discontinuous, post-logical, because they keep dangling between their ethnic past and the new world to which they do not belong. At the most, they can give versions of truth. In Running In The Family, the Sri-Lanka that
is presented to us is not a country or a map as a dream vision or a distorted remembrance of things past. Therefore, the narrator enters the magic world of traditions and cultures, defying clear-cut definitions. "Truth", we are told, "disappears with history" (Running In The Family, p.53). However, though all the select texts stand at the margins, not all the select texts adopt the mode of magic realism.

In the Canadian set-up, all the multiple and heterogeneous races express their ethnic particularities on the Canadian mosaic. The contradiction is, while each one is asserting his minority, all are caught up in a national project of Canadian identity and by extension, all the Third World Writers in the process of globalization. At best, it can be said that the task of a Third World Writer is to translate his culture and place it on the global front before it relegates into oblivion. This task is also to enforce the nation that difference suggests multiplicility rather than binary opposition and exclusion.

From the reading of the select texts, the study comes to the conclusion, that despite the policy of multiculturalism, racism, discrimination, political harassment are living issues in
the Canadian society. Canada is a multicultural society within a bilingual framework thereby creating the two dominant races and the many minorities. The experiences of each of the ethnic minorities differ from the other. Yet there is an underlying commonality in their experience by virtue of the fact that they all form margins to the centre. This marginality accounts for the consequent marginalized sensibility reflected by all the select texts at the political, economic, cultural and aesthetic level.

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land*, Beatrice Culleton's *In Search Of April Raintree* and Michael Ondaatje's *Running In the Family* all offer critiques to the egalitarian pretensions of the mosaic metaphor. The reading of the select texts as well as other multicultural texts reveal that the policy, by its heavy emphasis and fundings of ethnic exotica does not guarantee socio-legal rights to the minorities. Coupled with it, it carries a great potential for inter-ethnic strife since the ethnicities have to compete with each other to gain cognizance from the centre.

The writer feels a compelling need to write for varied

- 274 -
reasons: to re-write his political, economic and cultural history, to ask for a redressal of injustice done, to make the dominant class self-conscious, to find cultural anchorage to his alienated psyche, to find adequate cultural representation on the Canadian mosaic, to make other see his difference not as a 'lack', but a cultural variety, to offer resistance to the mainstream, to express his profound vision.

The study concludes by stating that in an age where the focus is on studies pertaining to 'Race, Culture, Difference', culture studies has much relevance. The broad theoretical framework, provided in this work would, I hope, would provide sound understanding for further research.

Culture studies is a universal theme. However, Canada is a fertile ground since it is veritably a multi-cultural society made up of people of different colours and customs. Even more interesting is the fact that each ethnicity is striving hard to maintain its cultural make-up. Therefore, literature being a reflection of life, many ethnic writers of Canada have poured into their texts their individual voices as a result of which Canada has produced multiple multicultural writers.
CHAPTER REFERENCES


6. Richard Stamelman, YFS 82: Post/Colonial Conditions, eds. Lionett and Scharfman (Yale Univ., 1993), p.120.
7. Ibid., p.120.