CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Canada has an extraordinarily heterogeneous population with a wide range of ethnic, linguistic, religious and national identity. The words of Margaret Atwood, “it is an unknown country even for the people who live in it”, assume significance considering its overwhelming size stretching from Pacific to the Atlantic and the Northern Arctic ice fields to the American borders. It is also described as a cornucopia of natural resources. Canada is officially a bilingual country, with French and English, as official languages and it also contains people from diverse ethnic strains: the native population and those descended from immigrants.

People flowed into Canada from different parts of the world. The first nations were the original inhabitants. In the early years of immigration, only Europeans came in large numbers and among them the English and French were the dominant groups. Until the Second World War, Canada saw itself a British country and it was only later French was also accepted as the official language and thus resulting in two streams: Anglophone and Francophone. Canada resembles other settler colonies like U S A, Australia and New Zealand because it was the descendants of Europeans mainly English who had the domination in Canada in the initial stages.
Canada now can claim itself to be one of the few countries in the world that has an active immigrant and refugee policy and programme. John Marlyn in his *Under the Ribs of Death*, opines, “It is meaningless to call one foreigner in this country because we are all foreigners here” (qtd. in Atwood 147). For over a century, Canada has accepted a large number of individuals and families from other countries as immigrants: first from Europe and then from Asia and Africa. Indeed, Canada has one of the highest per capita rates of immigration in the world. As per recent statistics, over 16% of Canadians are foreign born. Immigrants from diverse lands have been expected to integrate into two of the dominant streams, either French or English to acquire citizenship. Earlier, until 1960’s, they were expected to shed their distinctive heritage and assimilate almost entirely to existing cultural norms. It was only in 1970’s that Canadian Government had adopted an innovative and path breaking policy of Multiculturalism rejecting the assimilation model of immigration and it was acclaimed as a unique experiment. The Government of Canada adopted this policy in 1971 under the leadership of Pierre Trudeau, the then Prime Minister and later it was incorporated into the Constitution.

The pattern of “mosaic”, as opposed to the “melting pot” of the American system, ensures a feeling of belonging, fosters community networks and collective group life and elicits genuine and vigorous commitment to the country from the people. Mosaic, therefore, contributes to
the creation of a secular, peaceful and progressive Canada. Will Kymlica, a Canadian political philosopher, who is full of praise for multiculturalism asserts: “In short, Canada is a world leader in three of the most important areas of ethno cultural relations: immigration, indigenous people and accommodation of minority nationalism” (2). He argues that this is not a rejection of integration but a vehicle for adjusting the terms for integration.

The policy had several aims as was explained by Trudeau (qtd. in Wymlicka 5): to support the cultural development of ethno cultural group, to help the members of ethno cultural group overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society and to assist new Canadian in acquiring nationalistic feelings. Canada is the largest in terms of ethnic origins as it has not tried to integrate its immigrants from divergent backgrounds. Canadian Multiculturalism act was passed in 1988 and it was elevated to the status of a fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity. Its primary objective was to “integrate” individuals into society without making any loss to their cultural identity.

As a result of these official policies, Canadian immigration assumed much more liberal face. From 1970’s onwards people from Asia began to immigrate in large numbers and that reached its zenith in the 1990’s, the decade of immigration. Asians had migrated to different countries in search for better standards of living. Canada was no exception but they were not
greeted well in the initial stages. Along with African, Asian immigration was discouraged for racial and other reasons. “Komagatu Maru” was a tragic incident in the history of Asian immigration in which a large number of Sikhs were prohibited entering the country after detaining them for a long time in the ship. Push and pull factors were responsible for large scale migration from the so called developing countries or third world countries. Push factors operate when individuals decide to leave their country of origin because of the worsening economic conditions, including high levels of unemployment and pull factors are in operation when they are attracted to a country because of the opportunities it offers for economic betterment and social mobility. The steady decline in the rate of population, the drop of fertility rate and the consequent demand for skilled labour were other reasons which necessitated the migration.

In early days, the immigrant labour was utilized for the construction of Canadian Pacific Railways and Asians were the major force behind this project. Immigration from Asia–Pacific had a chequered history. Entry of Asians in large numbers was made possible in the latter half of twentieth century. Among them, South Asians constituted a larger group. South Asians not only included individuals from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka but those from Africa, Mauritius, Caribbean islands, Fiji and Europe, who trace their origin to the Indian sub continent. This is a socially constructed term and also a generic term applied to this very diverse group.
On the surface, it is impossible to find common characteristics and shared experiences among South Asians in Canada but a common region of origin and common historical experiences make it possible to consider them as a group. In Canada, South Asians also belong to the socially constructed category of “immigrants”. It is an expression which is frequently used to refer to people who are foreign looking or non-white and most of the non-white immigrants are often regarded as hyphenated Canadians.

The term “immigrant” refers to any one from another country who is legally admitted to live in another country. Majority of the immigrants from the so called “Third World” came to Canada not to do manual work and join the working class but to set up their own enterprises and improve their status and standard of living. Immigration had its contradictions as many have been propelled by need, others by ambition and some others driven by persecution. In Canada, they are called permanent residents or landed immigrants and they can become Canadian citizens provided they fulfill certain residency requirements. While each group of immigrants has its own experience of discrimination and prejudice, people from visible minority backgrounds generally continue to be perceived as immigrant, regardless of their length of stay in Canada.

Two very distinct waves of immigration have been mentioned in connection with South Asian immigration to Canada: the first phase during
the colonial period and the second after independence. The former was initiated in the latter half of nineteenth century by the British who reached to fill the gap created by slavery and that resulted in indentured labour which was again a sort of semi slavery. The second phase of immigration started in the early 1950’s when educated South Asians from erstwhile colonies set out to find fortune in “developed” countries that needed and invited their services. Many descendants of indentured labourers from Caribbean and others came to Canada during this period and they mainly consisted of teachers, editors and even better educated people.

The migrants who happened to reach there came with legacy of their past. Though many tried to get assimilated into the vast stream, many others were not in a position to completely sacrifice their heritage and erase their memories as they were driven by the sense of past which actually directs the present and guides towards future. So severing the roots was suicidal and they had to suffer discriminations of several sorts. They have been victims of covert racism which was prevalent even when cultural pluralism was the manifesto of the national culture.

“Culture” is one of the key words in English language (Williams, *Keywords 3*) and it can be interpreted in manifold ways. Raymond Williams defined it as the whole way of life and he tried to erase the borders between superior and inferior/low and high culture. It, being the opposite of nature
signifies actual unexamined patterns of differentiations of people. Immigrants from the beginning tried for self expression by different means. Literature has become one of the manifestations of immigrants’ self expression. Immigrant communities have to give vent to their anxieties, tensions, discriminations, victimizations and the frustration suffered by them and in the meanwhile they were also held back by their past, the country and culture they have left behind. South Asian Canadian literature assumed significance in the initial stages of its development itself.

South Asian Canadian literature began to be acknowledged as a “major stream” only in 1990’s notwithstanding the fact that it is a literature produced by a minority in Canada. The term embraces much more than the periods of diaspora that brought people directly from India to Canada, but also includes literatures of those descendants of indentured labourers who travelled from India to Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji, Tanzania, South Africa, Malaysia and Singapore and arrived in Canada after absorbing the influences and identities of those countries as well. All these people claim a cultural link that can be traced to India and it can also be deduced that there is a quality of Indianness that informs their sensibility. Thus their literature could even be referred to as Literature of Indian Diaspora in Canada which often embodies immigrant consciousness.
The term “Diaspora” is derived from Greek meaning dispersal, distribution or spreading and it has been applied for many years to refer to the worldwide scattering of Jews. In more recent times, it has been used to refer to a number of ethnic, cultural and racial groups living distant from their traditional homelands: people from former British colonies. Diasporic identities vary from group to group. Unlike the first generation expatriates who continue to consider India as their true home, the place of their nurture and values, the second generation has different sympathies and commitments. As they bear the “burden” of hybrid identities, they found it difficult to adhere to any one of the cultural identities of the past. Cultural Studies theorists contend that identity is not as transparent as we think and sometimes it is manipulated, some other times constructed and defined not by the people but for them by others.

The present project attempts to view Caribbean Canadian writers Cyril Dabydeen and Arnold Itwaru as representative figures of immigrant sensibility in Canada and it also tries to probe how these writers have tried to create an “alternate space” in the whole of Canadian literary arena, which itself was a deviation from the norm. That the centre always restricts the movement of the periphery has been challenged everywhere as decentering has become the order of the day. Till then everything has been done as per the dicta of Eurocentric theories.
Cyril Dabydeen was born in 1945 in Canje, Guyana and he grew up in the house of his maternal grandmother in a sugar plantation with the sense of Indian indenture rooted in his family background. His parents were humble folk. In his early years he taught at a school where he studied as a pupil-teacher. In an essay which appeared in World Literature Today in 1994, “Where Doth the Berbice Run”, Dabydeen provides a glimpse into his ethnic origins: his grandfather, an indentured labourer who had become a “diver” on the Rose Hill Sugar Estate, but he suffered a stroke and was there after incapacitated, accordingly his wife clad in sari and somewhat bejeweled with tiny clusters of gold ornaments, assumed the responsibility of the family, as his parents separated. His grandmother was a staunch Hindu who often tipped three words from the Ramayana, treasured a battered copy of the book. There were no Hindu institutions in Guyana and Muslims had to encounter the same problems. Stimulated by his practical grandmother he became interested in Christianity he says:

But ecumenical I was, my mind kept moments of attending Hindu prayer sessions…and trying to learn Hindu in the Village temple …These moments, nevertheless, were…resonant with incense burning and an air of purity. Chants resounded, the name of God echoing in more than solemn invocations of Ram and Sitha… (qtd. in A. L. Mcleod 190)

He began reading major West Indian poets, British writers and American writers.
His writing career started in the early 1960’s itself and in 1964 he won Guyana’s highest poetry award, Sandbach Parker Gold Medal. He moved to Canada in 1970 and later obtained master’s degree in English and Public administration from Queen’s University. In his early years in Canada he worked in a variety of summer jobs like that of a tree planter in the Canadian forests with natives to pay his way through University. He finished his formal education at Queen's University, Canada where he had obtained his Master's degree in English and Public Administration. Though he tried a hand in several fields for the most part teaching has been his profession. Having taught at Algonquin College and later at the University of Ottawa he has worked as advisor to the Mayor's Race Relations committee. Soon he became a member of several committees of the Government of Canada and a national coordinator of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. As a national coordinator of the Federation of Municipalities he proved his mettle.

From 1984 to 1987, Dabydeen was the Poet Laureate of Ottawa. He has published several volumes of poetry, short stories and novels and also has edited several collections. His contributions to the literary magazines and anthologies were enormous. He also won several literary awards in Canada and also became a juror in several literary award committees.

Arnold Harrichand Itwaru was born in Guyana in 1942 and immigrated to Canada in 1969. Itwaru’s specialization was in sociology and literature.
He had his M.A. from York University, Toronto and his thesis for M.A is a sociological analysis of consciousness and its implications in West Indian prose literature in English during the 1950's and it also deals with the colonial experience in terms of the thematic of the works of six authors of this period. He received his PhD from York University in 1983 and his thesis formed the basis for his work, *The invention of Canada*. He has to his credit three books of poetry and two scholarly books on the subjects of power and mass communication. Besides these, he has also published novels and stories. A visual artist as well, he writes compellingly on a wide variety of subjects. He worked as a school teacher, journalist, artist and professor of sociology. He was also the Director for the Caribbean studies programme at New College, University of Toronto. He is a writer, painter and a critic but a sociologist by training. He has published poems, short stories and long fiction but his radical views were expressed in his critical and cultural writings.

The objectives of the study are:

a. To look at their writings not only from purely literary perspective but from the perspective of cultural studies so as to trace the Caribbean Canadian identities.

b. To find out how far they have been able to successfully make inroads into the cultural and literary scenario.
c. To explore how effective they are in exposing the ills of the system and to examine that the official always differed from the actual lived experiences.

d. To analyze their writings in the light of contemporary cultural theory and to find out how they subvert canons and make their own distinct entry into contemporary literary discourse.

Traditional parameters have to be set aside while dealing with a condition that has been hitherto non-existent. World over, immigration has been a reality and how well the people who migrated were received in other countries has been a topic of discussion. Much worse were the problems they had to face while “locating” themselves in alien environments. The thesis takes off with the assumption that identity is never fixed or static but goes on changing as per the status of a person which ever may be the position. The kind of confusion in creating a space for the immigrants has been often a perennial question which is not properly addressed.

The two writers under study, Cyril Dabydeen and Arnold Harrichand Itwaru, originally belonged to Guyana, the land of six peoples, later came to Canada and settled there. How far they have been able to grapple with the issues of identity, and other cultural concerns, become the locus of the thesis. Both of them have written prolifically and Dabydeen is more prolific between the two. As they have written poems, stories, novels and essays, an attempt
has been made to focus on writings of all varieties to find out how identities are manifested in their writings. Following the dictum of Frederic Jameson that everything has to be historicized it is assumed that literature though marked by it literariness often draws sufficient fuel from the cultural and societal lives around it.

Dabydeen’s whole corpus of writings is chosen for study: poems, stories, long fiction and essays. Among them select works are chosen for detailed study so as to elucidate how he has been trying to posit himself in such a kind of new environment. Poems from his collections like Distances(1977), Coastland: New and Selected poems(1989), Discussing Columbus(1997), Elephants Make Good Stepladders(1982), Stoning the Wind(1996), Imaginary Origins (2004) and Unanimous Night(2009) are taken up for study. Short story is another genre which he has greatly made use of and volumes like Still close to the island (1980) and others provide ample reference points to his thematic concerns. As novels have been described as the “bright book of life” and social documents, study of the ways in which things have been incorporated to get contesting identities in them manifested has been another concern in the project.

Itwaru’s position is all the more significant as he is both a creative writer as well as a critic. His creative faculty has been embellished with his poems, stories and novels where as his critical canon is formulated by
interdisciplinarity. Except in poetry, where most of the time he is engrossed in a very personal kind of probing, Itwaru seems to be direct in his take on social issues. His novels are seemingly poetic as well as political as he has proved that both are not irreconcilable contradictions. Critical writings do not mean only pieces of literary criticism as they include even social, political and racial issues. Explorations of this type have been a net result of the “paradigm shift” that occurred in the realm of epistemology.

Non availability of a few of the primary sources and bitter constraints due to the paucity of secondary materials have been the reasons why attention was paid to the representative pieces with regard to the analysis but at the same time, it was viewed specifically not to lose the original spirit of themes. It was felt imperative that before venturing into such a probe, an introduction to some of the basic concepts that are relevant to any such immigrant discourse has to be given. Of them the issue of identity, migrancy and multiculturalism are the major ones.

**Identity, Migrancy and Multiculturalism**

Identity remains one of the most urgent as well as hotly disputed topics in literary and cultural studies. The question of identity has been vigorously debated in social theory. Namely for two decades the central focus of debate for psycho analytic, poststructuralist and cultural materialist criticism has been on this issue. Identity is a curious term and is often difficult to define. In
essence, the argument is that the old identities that stabilized the social world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject. It is not as transparent as we think and often evasive and is always in a flux and thus it is a production which is never complete but always in process. Nothing is as static and fixed even if it is national identity. Cultural identity in a sense is a matter of “being” as well as becoming. It belongs to the future as well as to the past, according to Stuart Hall and others. It comes from somewhere and has got histories. They are subject to continuous play of history as history and power are the factors that regulate its movements. According to Hall identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 112). So in this context what we have to realize is that identity is not fixed essence at all, lying outside history and culture and also it is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is relative in the sense that it alters as and when changes occur.

Culture is a powerful organizer of people’s lives. How we view ourselves and who we are as individuals cannot be separated from when, where, and how we grew up. Therefore culture is one of the most influential determinants of identity. Culture is embodied in our sense of whom we are and the social practices within which one exists. One’s cultural identity defines who one is. People are typically born into a culture and acquire their
cultural identity through upbringing, education and social interaction, not through voluntary act of affiliation. Cultural equality is also a question which has to be addressed while dealing with multiculturalism. It was even said that much of the moral force and political intensity of multiculturalism resides in the desire of people to retain their own culture. The claim of cultural minorities that they have a right to maintain their culture in an unaltered form has to be honoured to make multiculturalism policy successful. The oft repeated saying and belief that migration inevitably involves alienation is to be overcome with this sort of policy.

Identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live. Identity is a complex and dynamic combination of many factors like which determine sameness and difference. To establish a person’s identity, we ask what his/her name is and what position he/she occupies in his/her community. In psychology, identity is used to refer to self-image (a person’s mental model of him or herself). How the personal self relates to the social environment also is a matter of concern here. According David Theo Goldberg, “Identity is generally concerned in this conceptual framework as a bond…. It is a tie that hold members of the collective together” (12). Bond may sometimes be bondage also. Identity can sustain fascist social movement as readily as emancipatory ones.
Social constructionist theory views identity as formed by a predominantly political choice of certain characteristics. In so doing, it questions the idea that identity is natural given, characterized by a fixed, supposedly objective criteria. Identity is a virtual thing and it is impossible to define it empirically. It involves sameness, fluidity, contingency and negotiated nature. In Sociology and Political Science, identity is defined as the way that individuals label themselves as members of particular groups. An identity not only involves a certain conception of ourselves, but it also provides a certain preliminary articulation of the world as we are not just social objects but social subjects too. Every identity carries a conception of its past and its future. Different identities convey different pasts and future. National identity is of a particular country. But it is not made by mere choice. According to Ross Poole, “to be an African is not a choice, it is a condition...” (67). One is born and placed in one particular country and it is decided by familial and societal factors. Language and culture were not merely aspects of the social environment within which people made their lives, but they were constitutive of their very identity. Thinkers like Herder and Charles Taylor think that human identity functions only in a framework of interpretations. Cultural identity not always takes the form of national identity but assumes the garb of national identity also. Ross Poole further observes that “a nation like all, “imagined communities” is not merely an extended web of relationships between those who share a certain identity: it
also involves a conception of the community to which the members of the nation belong” (69). National identities provide with a place in the world and a perspective often. To certain, this sort of national identity functions as a cementing factor but to certain others things are not so bright because their nations themselves are not all united but exist only as fragments. Identity is defined by difference.

Conventional thinkers assumed that self and identity as one and they thought that self is something autonomous i.e., stable and independent of all external influence. The belief that personhood is the only form of identity which is independent of the forms of social life within which we exist. From Descartes onwards this thinking has been prevalent. The (ego or subject) exists as autonomous source of meaning and agency. David Hume in 18th century challenged this observation that the contents of his consciousness included images (or sense impressions) of everything of which he was thinking (either directly perceiving, or recalling in memory). In the late 19th century Emily Durkheim posed a fundamental challenge to liberal humanism as liberal presupposed that primacy of the individual identity is not primary but a product of economic and social system and thinking individual was a product of the society. For Freud, identity rests on the child’s assimilation of external person. The self is structured through the relationship of the ego, id and superego. Erik Erikson, a descendent of Freudian school of thought, postulated that identity is a process between the identity of an individual and
the identity of a communal culture. It was he who coined the term “Identity crisis” in 1940’s to refer to the person who had lost sense of personal sameness and historical continuity. As such, the individual is separated from the culture that can give coherence to his or her sense of the self. Lacan redefined the concept of the self as problematic with a reinterpretation of Freud. Althusser talked about how social institutions such as the church education, police, family and mass media “interpellate” or hail the subject, again positioning him or her within the ambit of the society. His concepts like Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatus further reveal the relationship between the individual and society in a capitalistic society. Man is reduced to a mere commodity sometimes and has been made a subject at times. Foucault and others argued that the identity of the dominant group in society therefore depends upon its construction of the other. Before globalization there existed local, autonomous, distinct and well-defined, robust and culturally sustaining conversation between geographical place and cultural experience. Identity is not in fact merely some fragile communal psychic attachment, but a considerable dimension of institutionalized social life in modernity.

A host of theories have come out recently about identity and it has been a hotly debated issue ever so the people started moving to different places and destinations. Stuart Hall, one of the founders of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies was instrumental in drafting some of the seminal
concepts related with cultural theory and identity. Stuart Hall’s main
collection to post war thinking has been to demonstrate that questions of
culture…are absolutely deadly political questions. (qtd. in James Procter 2).
In his essay “The future of identity”, Stuart Hall distinguishes three very
different conceptions of identity: those of the (a) Enlightenment object, (b)
sociological subject, and(c) postmodern subject. According to Hall “the
enlightenment subject was based on a conception of human person as a fully
centered, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason,
consciousness and action, whose centre consisted of an inner core that first
emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining
essentially the same- continuous or identical with itself…throughout the
individual’s existence. The essential centre of the self was a person’s
identity.”(“The Future of Identity” 250). Hall is of the opinion that the
sociological subject reflected the growing complexity of the modern world
and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and
self sufficient, but was formed in relation to “significant others,” who
mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols-the culture –of the
worlds he or she inhabited. This view is more or less the same held by leading
sociologists like G.H.Mead and C.H.Cooley. They are of the view that
identity is formed in the “interaction” between self and society. Hall further
explains this, “the subject still has an inner core or essence that is “the real
In the sociological sense, identity bridges the gap between the “inside” and “outside”- between the personal and public worlds. Identity stitches the subject into the structure or it rather sutures using a medical metaphor. The sort of “shifting” of the concept takes place here. According to Hall, “the subject, previously experienced as having unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented, composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities. As a result of structural and institutional change, the fixed concept of identities is breaking. This paved the way for the post modern conception of identity as the subject without any fixed essential or permanent identity. Hall says, “identity here becomes a “moveable feast”: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems that surround us (qtd. in Hall 250). It is historically, not biologically defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities that are not unified around a coherent ‘self’. Within us are contradictory identities. (251). Hall opines that even if we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or “narrative of the self” about ourselves (253).
So the post modern concept is that the fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with at least temporarily. Globalization has also brought in changes in this regard. As people began to move from place and the boundaries began to blur, the subject itself assumes varied meaning in varied situations. Their identities are in constant flux and complex depending upon the complexity and complications in human relations across the world. As change is the unchangeable thing in the world modern societies are societies of constant, rapid and permanent change. Thinkers like Ernesto Laclau use the concept of “dislocation”. A dislocated structure is one whose centre is displaced and not replaced by the other, but by “plurality of power centres’. Modern societies, Laclau argues, have no centre, no single articulating or organizing principle, and do not develop according to the unfolding of a single “cause” or “law’. Society is not, as sociologists often thought, a unified and well-bounded whole, a totality, producing itself through evolutionary change from within itself. It is constantly being “decentred” or dislocated by forced outside itself (qtd. in. Hall 251). Laclau argues that this dislocation produces not only negative results but has got positive features also. It unhinges the stable identities of the past, but also opens up the possibility of new articulations—the forging of new identities, the production of new subjects, and what he
calls the “recomposition of the structure around particular nodal points of articulations” (qtd. in Hall 252).

Post modern theory is based on discontinuity, fragmentation, rupture and dislocation. Culture is a site of an ongoing struggle that can never be guaranteed for one side or the other. In 1950’s Hall played a vital role in the New Left movement and has been one of the leading exponents of Cultural Studies. In 1980’s he has become one of the most vocal and persuasive public intellectuals. Hall rejected Marx’s reductive notion of culture as a passive, secondary, reflection in order to stress its active, primary and constitutive role in society. He was further in league with Althusser’s theory of ‘interpellation’- a concept that describes how ideology works by making us feel how we are free to choose while actually choosing on our behalf. Gramscian theory of hegemony also is of the same cord. He describes the processes of establishing dominance within a culture, not by brute force, by voluntary consent, by leadership rather than rule. His essays on Cultural studies have been significantly relevant. According to Procter, Hall’s works of late 80’s and 90’s need to be read as an attempt to rethink an older notion of identity politics (21). There has been a lot of skepticism about politics committed to singular, homogeneous, unified identities such as the working class or ‘black community’ as they do not fully take into account issues of politics of difference, the politics of self-reflexivity and even the politics of infinite dispersion. Hall’s politics of identity centers on three specific terms,
difference, self reflexivity and contingency. Difference involves recognition of ‘many’ within ‘one’ (rejection of clear cut binary oppositions). Self reflexivity accounts for the foregrounding of the specificity of the position from which we can speak and contingency involves sense of dependency on other events or contexts.

Hall’s concepts of identity are not poststructuralist in the narrow sense of the term as there have been attempts on his part to distance himself from those which sometimes border on nihilistic tendencies. As Post structuralism often moves towards a kind of negativism with the contention that there are always postponements of meanings or formal playfulness. Hall opposes even the deconstructive mode which puts everything under erasure. He has spoken of the “loosening of the moorings”- a metaphor which neatly captures his sense that identities are not firmly anchored or fixed to the spot, but are not entirely free floating either” (Procter 120). His own experience as a Caribbean immigrant to Britain made him think deeply about issues of Diaspora, exile and even identity. His contributions to this field has been immensely approved and acknowledged. His essay “Cultural identity and Diaspora”, appeared in Jonathan Rutherford’s Identity, Community, Culture, Difference has been a path breaking kind of exercise which paved the way for the radical insights into this area. It is a kind of an “epistemological leap”. He opines that “identity is not as transparent and unproblematic as we think” (110).
This contention threw open a Pandora’s box and necessitated further arguments and debates which have been central to our day. He challenged some of the age old theories of the self and identity. Instead of thinking identity as an already accomplished fact, it should be construed as a “production”, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within not outside representation. Of course, the “I” who writes must also be thought of as, itself, “enunciated”.

Stuart Hall has also put forth some vibrant thinking about cultural identity. According to Hall there are two ways of thinking about cultural identity –first in terms of shared culture, a sort of collective “one true self”, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves” which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as “one people” with a stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (110-111). There are many points of similarity and also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute “what we really are” or rather since history has intervened. Cultural Identity, in this sense, is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”. It belongs to the future as much as into the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending people, time, history and culture. Cultural Identities come from somewhere, and have histories (112). It
is almost sure that like everything in this world they also undergo constant transformation.

Stuart Hall says, “Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, it will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity” (251). Issues of power also come into being when we talk about society; knowledge etc. Power and knowledge are interconnected and interrelated. Cultural Identities carry within themselves silences and ruptures caused often by the dominant and hegemonic forces in the society. How to resist these forces and how silences come into if resisted etc. have to be borne in mind when we explore these problems.

These assumptions do not mean that we live in a stateless, rootless kind of existence. But the point that is explicated is, “Cultural identity is not a fixed essence, at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture….It is not universal and transcendental spirit inside… It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute return” (113). The role of history is not at all forgotten. Definitely it has histories and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us and has got its relevance. The assumption is that identity is not something which has been purely built on shifting sands. It is not something so transparent like a child’s
relationship to his mother. But it is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. So to quote Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identities are the points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture” (113).

In his *Minimal selves*, Hall defines subjectivity as “narrative, a story, a history, something constructed, told, spoken and not simply found”. “Every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history... It insists on specificity on conjecture. But it is not necessarily armor plated against other identities. It does lead to fixed, permanent, unalterable oppositions. It is not wholly defined by exclusion”. (qtd in Procter 120). Hall prefers the idea of ‘unities’ in difference. In essays like “Who needs Identity?”, Hall interrogates the traditional notion and he is critical of the notions of an integral, original and unified identity. Identity and its pivotal relationship to a politics of locations have been really debated by scholars such as Hall widely as “identification turns out to be one of the least well understood concepts. Hall’s position augments the idea that “identities are never unified, and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed, across difference often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation”. (4)
Large scale migrations of people from Africa, Asia and Europe have taken place throughout the last two or three centuries due to different economic and political reasons. This has made them adopt imposed shift of territories. Many who reached different places remained there and settled there but some others tried to come back to their home land. Yet the exiles due to unforeseen circumstances and other economic reasons made a sort of an “imaginary return” through artistic endeavours.

Return to roots is in a way coming to terms with “routes”. One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs. This kind of thinking has been peculiarly relevant in the case of immigrants who often find it difficult to locate themselves in certain conditions and this problem is all the more evident in the initial stages of displacement which even results in dislocation of a higher order. Mean while things get changed as people get adjusted and accommodated to environment. But even when there is a kind of longing which gains upper hand in situations when one ceases to “belong” to a society or system one is not sure of placing oneself among the evident variety of behavioral style and patterns.

Amartya Sen on Identity

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winning social philosopher of Indian origin, has extensively discussed and elaborately analyzed the issues of identity in his major and recent books like *The Argumentative Indian*(2005)
and *Identity and Violence* (2006). He has also been consistently hostile to the uniqueness and holiness of this concept. The flexibility and malleability of the concept is desirable as far he is concerned. *Identity and Violence* begins with an epigraph from Oscar Wilde, “Most people are other”. In his preface Sen tells us, “Indeed many of the conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choice less identity” (XV). The very purpose of the book is to sensitize against “miniaturization of the people” which may result in ghettoization and narrow mindedness. It was the compilation of six lectures delivered at Boston University from Nov.2001 to April 2002. At the same time Sen is not against the sense of identity and rootedness which functions in a very positive manner. To him a sense of identity can make an important contribution to the strength and warmth of our relation with others. “A sense of identity can be a source not merely of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence” (1). Divisive identities may give way to competing affiliations. Many past beliefs assume that identities have to crumble in response to questioning and scrutinizing has been misleading to a certain extent. Even traditions can shift within a particular country and culture. His perspective is that a person’s religion shouldn’t be his only identity marker and a person for that matter can be many at once as he simultaneously belongs to a variety of categories. One can be an Asian, an Indian, a Bengali, a Canadian or British, resident, a philosopher, an author, a story writer, a believer in secularism and democracy.
So the recognition that identities are robustly plural assumes significance in modern times. In the meantime one has to bear in mind that the importance of one’s identity needn’t obliterate the importance of others. The diverged loyalties and priorities may compete for precedence always. As Sen puts it, “Identity disregard and singular affiliations are not desirable in a globalized and globalizing world. Affiliations may get changed but not in an altogether drastic manner”(*Identity and Violence* 22). So any real human being belongs to many different groups, through birth, associations and alliances. We are all individually involved in identities of various kinds in disparate contexts. Sen argues that all of us possess multiple identities and choosing an identity at a particular moment is a matter of reasoned choice. Nothing is constituted exclusively with visible frontiers. According to Sen, importance of a particular identity will depend on the social context. He says that while going to a dinner, one’s identity as a vegetarian may be rather more crucial than one’s identity as a linguist, whereas the latter may be particularly important if one considers going to a lecture on linguistic studies (25). Plural identities even within contrasting categories are possible (28). Sen also talks about “contrasting” and “non contrasting” identities. The different groups may belong to the same category, dealing with the same kind of membership or to different categories. In the former case, there is some contrast between different groups within the same category, and thus between different identities with which they are associated. Identities are often chosen
within particular constraints. Certain people acquire identity as and when required. Lord Byron’s assumed identity as a Greek helped him in his artistic pursuits. Sen describes the occasion while Byron had to leave Greece as an emotional one. Sen is of the view that the sense of belonging need not obliterate or overwhelm other associations and affiliations (37). He cites the example of Derek Walcott, the Caribbean poet, who captures the divergent pulls of his historical African background and his loyalty to the English language and the literary culture that goes with it:

Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have accused
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give e?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live? (qtd. in Sen 37)

Walcott cannot simply “discover” what is his true identity; he has to decide what he should do, and how- and to what extent – to make room for the different loyalties in his life. The presence of conflicting pulls makes him ambivalent and the concept ambiguous (37). In the case of a Caribbean this becomes all the more difficult as he has to always place himself on uncertainties. For them displacement has been a crucial issue. What is at stake here is the question of locating oneself. It is all the more difficult in a
world which tries to almost erase the boundaries. Here the problem is not merely the issue of sense of belonging only but larger issues are involved.

**Identity and Nationalism**

Cultural identity is a state of mind and heart and it is not about personal habits but language, food, music, and attitudes. It is a feeling of a group or culture. In the modern world, the national cultures into which we are born are one of the principal sources of cultural identity. When we define ourselves we sometimes say we are Jamaicans, Irish or Indian and of course this is to speak metaphorically as identities are not literally imprinted in our genes. But somehow we think that they are part of our essential natures. Conservative theorists of nation argued that the spirit of nationalism should be in the blood of every citizen or patriot for that matter. They even wanted every citizen to have an umbilical relation with their nation. Any digression from this would even invite punishment of graver sort and it would even brand one as a traitor or anti-national. But theorists like Ernest Gellener, taking a much more liberal position, believed that without a sense of national identification the modern subject would experience a deep sense of subjective loss. But Stuart hall and other likeminded thinkers are of the view that national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation. In the case of English, “Englishness’ also is reckoned into. To quote Hall, “nation is not only a
political entity but something which produces meanings—a system of cultural representation. People are not only legal citizens of a nation: they participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture. (“The Future of Identity” 254).

National cultures are also distinctly modern. The formations of national cultures help in many ways and are there always. But thinkers like Perry Anderson and Homi K. Bhabha argue in a different manner and Anderson even considers nations as imagined communities. Anderson explains why he would describe “nation” as imagined community. A “nation”, he writes: “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). He further elaborates that all communities larger than the primordial villages of face-to-face contact (perhaps even these) are imagined. What is implied that the notion of imagined community comes into play when a group becomes too large for its members to know each other personally. According to Ross the nation is not just a form of consciousness, it is also a form of self consciousness. “As members of the nation recognize each other through the nation, they also recognize themselves. If the nation is an imagined community, it is also a form of identity. As an imagined community each nation exists as an object of consciousness” (12). Imagination plays a vital role here also. It is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. But
Anderson doesn’t fully dismiss the kind of impact the nation has its own people. Bhabha has talked about the peculiar ambivalence that haunts the idea of a nation. According to Bhabha, nations are forms of mythology. He says, “Nations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (Nation and Narration 1).

Modern nation is a matter of similarity. National identity is not simply fixed on geography and land but also on conventions and mores. Ernest Renan said that three things constitute the spiritual principle of the unity of a nation: “the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories... the desire to live together, and the will to perpetuate the heritage that one has received in undivided form” (qtd. in Hall 256). Timothy Brennan reminds us the word nation refers to “both to the modern nation state and to something more ancient and nebulous- the nation- a local community domicile, family, condition of belonging” (45). According to Hall, instead of thinking national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a discursive device that represents difference as unity or identity. The concepts that the modern nations are cultural hybrids gained currency in our times and it is true indeed in the case of many a nation. Ethnicity and race are factors that unite people in a, more or less temporarily and identity and nationalism are also important factors in a discussion like these.
Discussions on issues like togetherness and belongingness gain tutelage and significance especially when scholars and thinkers consider “nations as myths” (Anshuman A Mondel, *Nationalism and Post-colonial Identity*, 7). Anshuman considers “nations as the enchantment of the modern eye” (7). They are at the same time a resource for collective identity and social solidarity. In this connection Ross Poole argues,

Nationalism comes on the scene when the idea that people are constituted as a political community through a shared cultural identity in a political discourse. What crucially differentiates nationalism from other political discourses is the idea that it is the nation which is the ultimate object of political allegiance, and that one’s fundamental political identity derives from nation. The concept of the nation is a hermeneutic one: a nation only exists and through the consciousness of its members. (32)

Reduced to its narrow sense identity is identified with “self” but obviously it has got much more ramifications. For that matter identity itself is a serious affair and a risky one and also if our self is split between a conscious ego and an unconscious “id” whose operations are not apparent to consciousness and our self identity is always threatened by this duplicity. And our identity is possible by the constant policing of our unconscious. Anshuman A.Mondel even thinks that collective identity works through narcissism. Inspired by Lacanian theory of subjectivity, which talks of different phases of a person’s
understanding of himself like imaginary, mirror, symbolic stages etc. (which Saussure discusses a differential relations of signs to each other), the self acquires identity by becoming aware of “difference”. Identity is also constituted by a desire for missing “being”… that is a lost entry into the symbolic order. Quoting the famous sociologist, Anthony Giddens, Anshuman further describes nations as symbolic “trust” mechanisms that manage the risk of “being” in the modern world. (8). The “nation” is therefore an absent present always there but like God ineffable (8). Hence he says that identity formation is made through language and its representation. He is also of the view, unlike many others, that collective identity is a cognate of personal identity. Thus nationhood, must, therefore, be seen as discursive formations “that consolidates its subjects as “nationals”. It is through culture, then, that the figure of the nations emerges to provide a collective identity that resolves the anxieties of personal ones. (9). Hence comes forth the theory that the nation is culturally articulated and rearticulated within institutional frameworks of historical process. Many thinkers and scholars see nation as discursive formations.

Divergent views come out when people think of these issues. To one group nation is primarily a cultural category and to others it is a political category. Ernest Renan finds consent as a common factor behind a nation’s life. Renan says, “A nation’s existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite just as an individual’s existence is a perpetual affirmation of
life” (qtd. in Ross 32). But this project has its contention in looking at nation as cultural communities which exist above and beyond any political organization into a state. Anthony D. Smith argues, “the nation, is therefore a collectivity of meaning”, a bond embedded in history, through common myths, symbols and narratives and other cultural forms, all of which enable “a people” to recognize itself as a community as opposed to others who do not have access to this fund of historical memories (qtd. in Anshuman 16). In this case nationalism is indeed about identity but like all identities it must also be embedded in a culture. This kind of thinking has a prominent prevalence nowadays. Benedict Anderson, Who has initiated a debate like after the publication of his book, understands nationalism as form of cultural politics, imagined both as inherently limited and sovereign. Ernest Gellener considers nations and nationalism as products which are sociologically necessary. Its manifest roles for that matter have to be acknowledged and approved in the Andersonian terms as imagined political communities.

Nations have been extremely important in any discussion of colonialism, specifically because different forms of nationalism were involved in anti colonial struggle and post colonial construction. It is only after the end of colonialism, the postmodern and postcolonial thinkers and writers unraveled the different shades of nationalism. Homi.K.Bhabha, Timothy Brennan and others rejected the well defined and stable identity associated with the national form. It is not advisable to consider that they
rejected national identity entirely, but that they want to keep such identity open. According to Bhabha, “Nations have their own narratives, but very often a dominant or official narrative overpowers all other stories, mainly those of the minority groups” (qtd. in Hubbart 105). More or less the same view is held by Stuart Hall. Hall lists three propositions regarding this:

1. National identities are being eroded as a result of the growth of cultural homogenization and “the global post modern”.

2. National and other “local” or particularistic identities are being strengthened by the resistance to globalization.

3. National identities are declining but new identities of hybridity are taking their place”. (“The Future of Identity” 259)

National identities cannot be erased that easily. They remain strong, especially with respect to such things as legal and citizenship rights, but local, regional, and community identities have become more significant. Global identifications over ride the national ones, sometimes above the level of national culture. Globalization has toppled the indigenous cultures and at the same time tried to keep intact the western culture. The seeds of globalization have been there in the world from time immemorial but it has become a vibrant force in the era of late capitalism. Though in a way globalization tends to blur the boundaries and erases the differences it is applicable mostly to third world cultures and nations. There has been continuous, large scale, legal
and “illegal” migrations to the U.S, Canada and other European countries from many poor countries of Latin America, and the Caribbean basin, as well as substantial numbers from South Asia and the Far East. Most of them have been financial immigrants and they formed ethnic minority enclaves within the nation states of the west and it has led to a “pluralization” of national cultures and national identities.

**Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism maps differences and legitimizes them through government support for things like academic, literary and historical research and also the various ethnic festivals and events held across the nation. But mapping differences can be a positive as well as a negative thing: it can be a way both of celebrating those differences and of resisting assimilation. Multiculturalism entered politics in 1970’s in Canada and the U.S. In Canada multiculturalism acted as a stay against a past oppression, discrimination and racism to the minorities. It seeks to dismantle the danger of any one group asserting its influence and hegemony over another. It offers promise of inclusion without assimilation and of the preservation of group or ethnic identity in the much flaunted trope of the mosaic. Skeptics would even allege that it promoted compartmentalization and alienation and wants people to be seen merely as representatives of their own groups. It operates on the basic premise that multiple identities should be preserved in a state of equilibrium.
Cultural minorities in almost all societies resisted the pressures and dangers of cultural assimilations. Multiculturalism is broadly used to refer to the political claims of all cultural minorities. Cultural minorities sometimes are even different from national minorities. Shortly after the Second World War, Australian Government initiated a programme designed to encourage large scale immigration. Heterogeneous people from diverse nations reached there and they first of all considered multiculturalism as a value. But later after some decades in Australia a kind of deterioration took place in this field and that resulted even in isolating and exterminating people from Asian countries. Later it was adopted as a policy and programme in Canada.

Multiculturalism is derived from the adjective ‘multicultural’ that refers to different curriculum, education and society. Multicultural society is one in which there exists several cultures. How culture is constituted is also an area which has to be discussed in detail. It is constituted by a common language, a shared history, a shared set of religious beliefs and moral values, shared geographical origin. Sense of belonging to a specific group is also a fundamental aspect of it. Multiculturalism, in other words, is a sort of peaceful co-existence of different groups of people within the boundaries of a nation enjoying equal rights and powers. It means different voices and plurality of cultures. It also provides conceptual framework for challenging the cultural hegemony of the dominant groups. It neither wants people to neither integrate nor assimilate. What is required is a perfect blend of diverse
notes but the irony is that in many places this doesn’t take place as principles
remain unfulfilled. Multiculturalism without a transformative political
agenda can be just another form of accommodation to the larger social order.
Theoberg argues keeping in tune with the theories of Homi Bhabha and others
that

Like all myths of nation’s unity, the common culture is a
profoundly conflicted ideological strategy. It is a declaration of
democratic faith in a plural, diverse society and at the same
time, a defense against the real, subversive demands that the
articulation of cultural difference, the empowering of minorities
makes upon democratic pluralism. (54)

Many gain a sense of positive self-esteem from their identity groups,
which furthers a sense of community and belonging. It has been felt that some
of the theories discussed are essential for understanding the peculiar situation
prevailing in Canada and also to understand the ways in which the major
authors Dabydeen and Itwaru have been able to register the voice of the
immigrants and thereby their identities.

As a result of these liberal policies, people came from even the so
called poor countries in Asia and Africa, though Europeans were the preferred
lot. Even many came from the Caribbean countries like Guyana, Trinidad and
Jamaica and some of them settled there. The resultant cultural pluralism,
encouraged by the Government of Canada was actually a boon for the
immigrants. But the scene got shifted with the passing of time as the initial exuberance waned. Many immigrants from Asian and African origins, however learned they are, were described as “drawers of water and hewers of wood”. Racial prejudice made them think so and that resulted in social stratification, which was not at all legally permissible in such a society. The spirit of the policies has not percolated to the mainstream of the society and equality remains a myth to the diverse ethnic groups especially from Asia and Africa and they are supposed to take up “golden mean” by complying with what they have received. It is another sort of colonialism which is of a hidden nature since the immigrants are made to be just “cogs in the wheel”. Most of the Asian and Africans had to undergo real “trials” of prejudice and racial discrimination. Among them, even the elites like teachers, professors and students were also not excluded as getting recognized and represented was really difficult.

Writers belonging to the immigrant groups started voicing their concern as they wanted to be heard. In the initial phase itself they were not able to talk about the immediate concerns like displacement, dislocation, and alienation. Nevertheless, their writings indirectly reflected the problems of longing for home and displacement as they could concentrate only on matters related with their home land. Itwaru is able to convey the peculiar predicament of exiled writers including himself when he says, “to be in exile is considerably more than being in another country. It is to live with myself
knowing my estrangement. It is to know that I do not belong here” (Frank Birbal Singh 202). Meanwhile, they got somewhat settled and visible changes could be seen in their literary works also as they started dealing with issues like identity and cultural pluralism etc. The present project examines some of these issues with special reference to Caribbean Canadian literature represented by Cyril Dabydeen and Arnold Itwaru.

Literatures have always been concerned with questions of identity, and literary works may sketch answers, explicitly or implicitly to those questions. Literature is a medium which offers a range of implicit models of how identity is formed. It is noteworthy that literature has not only made identity a theme but it has played a significant role in the construction of identity of the readers as well. Mapping the terrains of multiculturalism and identities in literary works has always been an interesting affair. What is attempted is an elucidation of the different directions in which these issues have been manifested in Caribbean Canadian literature. The ensuing chapter will discuss how Caribbean Canadian identity is formed and how that resulted in a kind of aesthetics of dislocation.

The dissertation contains five chapters including the introduction. The second chapter entitled “Caribbean Canadian writing as Oppositional Discourse” introduces the history of the land, the major currents in Caribbean literature in general and the Caribbean Canadian literature in particular. Third
chapter is an in depth study of one of the major authors, Cyril Dabydeen based on the select works. It tries to postulate that how far this kind of writing manifests in representing the various identities and also the double displacement the immigrants have to encounter. The following chapter closely analyses the works of Arnold Itwaru, another major author and the culture of resistance that he has put against the mainstream Canadian society which often dwells on contradictions. The fifth chapter attempts to trace the commonalities as well as differences between these writers and how, as individuals and representative writers, they tried carry out their functions as “organic intellectuals”. Cyril Dabydeen’s overture for popularity and acceptance in the mainstream is a move which has symbolic significance but Itwaru all the time talks about “Closed Entrances”.