CHAPTER – III

VOICES FROM WITHIN: SOUTH ASIAN WRITERS IN CANADA
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South Asian Canadian diaspora understandably went into silence for quite a long time. Only during the last two decades or so that silence was turned into words, meanings and a voice. As borders of nations began to be more fluid and post independence era also began to make their appearance; scholars began to study from a fresh perspective. It was perhaps in the 1980s, that the word ‘diaspora’ also became more popular. This is not to say that the diaspora had not been studied earlier. In the past, however, diasporic studies focused primarily on political and economic aspects. Thus, the diaspora was analysed in terms of immigration, immigration policies and controls, as well as in statistical terms – i.e. how many, from where the different level of migration took place in terms of the socio-political context? From the Canadian perspective, it has been pointed out that ethnic identity has been the main focus of research. Canadian studies have also focused on migrant workers, especially as fulfilling a need for cheap labour.

However, the diaspora is not a homogeneous whole, nor a series of concentric circles. Issues concerning the diaspora would include not only the question of identity, but also questions of culture and power, multiculturalism
and transnationalism. At stake is the place of identity and the presence of
difference in the structures of power. As identity is always multiple, it would
be fruitful to examine the levels at which difference is asserted, and the reason
for assertion. Diasporic existence is global at one level, for its transcends
national boundaries. At another, it recreates a local community and a local
identity, which is simultaneously a part of the host country, the home country
and the global community.

Besides, above issues, women writers and women immigrants have
faced many different and challenging issues that males faced in the adopted
country. Therefore, male voice regarding identity, culture and power is not
the same as female voice. Until the 1970’s the mainstream of historical
scholarship chose to focus on only a partial facet of the human past in which
the agents of change were always elite males.

Like all male South Asian Canadian Writers, South Asian women
writers of the Diaspora also feel the difference in Canada, at least at the initial
stages, acutely colour and racial attitude of the mainstream always marginalize
the diaspora women. They have to define both their historical legacies and
their present geographic and social realities. Hence, diaspora is a part of a
process of narrative cultural history in the making of a people, who have
chosen to live in another country far away from the country of their origin. It consists of diverse and complex strands, often problematic but with ever widening implications.

There are different methods of possible transitions within, between and among cultures for the people in the diaspora. The models used for understanding the process of change are assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multiculturalism. These models have been discussed in the previous chapter.

The voice of South Asian Women writers can easily be traced on the basis of these models. The Women writers have used their models in their writings as they themselves have used to adjust as immigrant in their adopted country. For example, Uma Parameswaran is a vocal supporter of multiculturalism, as an effective and active ingredient, in the quest for life in the Diaspora. She merges the past with the present. She makes her voice heard through images and descriptions drawn from her Indian heritage, as well as her Canadian experience. She says about the immigrant experience:

We are new Canadians
Come from many races
Black, white, olive, brown
All alike, for all the many places
High tech, mid tech or no tech are one.

(http://www.coolwomen.org/coolwomen/cwrite.rsb).

Historical writing at end of the 1970s has moved far away from the history of few men to the history of human beings. The rediscovery of the human past in its totality has been envisaged and ensured by the emergence of women’s history, a commitment and an experience shared alike by historians of Canada and the South Asian Countries. In both countries, it emerged as an important field of study as a result of the stimulus provided by the women’s liberation movement, or what is termed as the second wave of feminism of the 1960s and 70s in Canada and the 1970s and 80s in India. Since then women’s history has succeeded in exploring and mapping a vast area of knowledge.

The Eurocentric patriarchal hegemony prevalent in Canada aggravates the condition of the South Asian women in the diaspora. In this category, women suffer not only from a sense of dislocation, alienation and loss of identity but also from their gender. The question of their identity, specially in women’s writings assumes particular significance as they are out to create a space in the great tradition of male writing in a dominant patriarchal world. No wonder, the female reader reading women’s writings bring to the rest what
the two women editors of Shakti's words – Diane Mc Gifford and Judith Kearns – call “a pure aesthetic pleasure” as “she find personal truth joined with the beauty of art” (ix). In other words, the question of reading and interpretation of women’s text are centered on an unwritten text, namely the world of women which offers various possibilities of reading as a woman, focusing on gender sensitive readings, not only female experience in men’s writings, but also on their own where they are the producers of female discourse.

The experiences of migrancy have animated much recent postcolonial literature, criticism and theory. Indeed, the slippage, between the terms 'diaspora', migrant and 'postcolonial have been frequent and are not free from problems. The literature produced by 'diaspora writers' such as Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Michael Ondaatje and many others have proved immensely popular in western literary criticism. Similarly, in the work of academics such as Homi K Bhabha, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, the new possibilities and problems engendered by the experience of migrancy and diaspora life have been readily explored. These possibilities include creating new ways of thinking about individual and communal identities, critiquing established schools of critical thought and rethinking the relationships between literature, history and politics.
Therefore, diasporic writings include some of the problems and challenges of immigrant which are not present in postcolonial writings. In this chapter, the researcher has focused and explored such problems and possibilities with specific attention to the following themes:

(i) Nature as Protagonist and The Impact of Geophysical Condition on human behaviour.

(ii) Living in between: From Roots to Routes

(iii) The Patterns of Isolation and Fear of Survival.

However, Diasporic studies have, by and large, integrated themselves into postcolonial approaches. But as one explores and relates to the different kinds of writing by writers who live away from the lands of their origins, a host of new questions come up, questions which demand attention outside the blanket umbrella of postcolonialism. The term has been marked by difference, a difference of all kind – race, language, nation, culture, history and aesthetics, and has been defined through resistance, subversion and alterity. Power equations have played an important role in it and critic like Homi Bhabha have perceived hybridity to be one of its features. Some of the essays collected in his book, *The Location of Culture*, advocate new, exciting ways
of thinking about identity born from "the great history of language and landscapes of migration and diaspora" (235).

Thus, the duality in terms of identity, language, culture and history that characterizes the work of the immigrants accounts for its distinctiveness. And it is in these terms that immigrant writing needs to be seen.

**NATURE AS PROTAGONIST AND THE IMPACT OF GEOPHYSICAL CONDITION ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR.**

One of the topics that needs to be explored is the role of Nature in Diaspora literature. In literature, Nature is treated in different ways, it can be treated as landscape, separate from society or as backdrop to human presence, or as in the control of humans, or non-existent as so often happens in contemporary writing. In early Canadian literature, Nature is a titanic presence compared to human beings, as Margaret Atwood has shown in her study, *Survival*.

Nature is often a backdrop for human action and interaction. The word "geophysical Imagination" first used by John Moss means the impact of environmental conditions on human life and psyche. As Coral Ann Howells
says in *Where are the Voices Coming from? Canadian Culture and Legacies:*

Canadian writing has always been pervaded by an awareness of the wilderness, those vast areas of dark forests, endless prairies or trackless wastes of snow which are geographical facts and written into the history of Canada’s exploration and settlement. (11)

The impact of the environment on the society is so great that it sets out as major determiner of Canadian identity; John Moss calls it the “geophysical imagination”. Landscapes described in poems, novels or short stories are not only just about nature, they are usually about the poet’s attitude towards the external natural universe. An immigrant to Canada has a different experience from his motherland. He is vexed with identity crisis. His natural hold of the indigenous culture unconsciously interferes with the logical grasp of alien culture. When the immigrant lands up in a place which is neither a paradise nor hell. He feels suspended in a limbo. The dedication to the set traditions and sense of belonging to his motherland comes in opposition with new environment resulting in desolateness and feeling of insecurity. Therefore, his traditional norms are censored and rejudged in the light of his puzzling alien environment. In fact, they are wondering between two worlds, the one dead and other powerless to be born.
The view that there is a close relationship between man and his physical environment was emphasized by the Greek Roman scholars. Herodotus, Aristotle and Eratosthenese attributed the progress of certain nations to their favourable environmental conditions. Strabo and his contemporary Roman geographers attempted to explain the effect of geographical features on the life and levels of progress of peoples. The Arabs, like Al-Masudi, Al-Baruni, Ibn-a-Khadun also attempted to illustrate the relationship between physical environment and cultural characteristics of races. Human geography offer a new conception of the inter relationship between earth and man. Our earth and other relationship between the living beings will give a clear picture of the impact of the environment on human beings. The Environment controls the course of human action. In other words, the belief that variation in human behaviour around the world can be explained by differences in the natural environment.

In Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*, Nature is a backdrop. The novel is written in the Indian socio-political context. Hence nature is not mentioned directly. The Writer has portrayed the environment of Mumbai. The fictional world Mistry creates in *Such a Long Journey* is no Utopia of any kind. It is a picture of the fallen world in which the call of the Holy Word is not heard. Again, it is a world in which all forms of corruption, hypocrisy, ugliness and decay have become the order of the day.
Rohinton Mistry has also mentioned about the polluted environment around the Khodadad building, the Parsi residential complex where the main protagonists of the novel live. The building is protected from the outside world, but at the same time it reduces contact with the Indian reality. Outside the protecting and imprisoning wall lies the squalor of India. The author remarks:

The compound would shrink to less than half its present width, and the black stone wall would loom like a mountain before the ground floor tenants. More a prison than a building, all cooped up like sheep or chickens. With the road noise and nuance so much closer. The flies, the mosquitoes, the horrible stink, with bloody shameless people pissing, squatting alongside the wall. Late at night it became like a wholesale public latrine. (SALJ 19)

The human nature is affected because of the change in environment. The Society which is completely deprived of healthy environment. Mistry’s shock at the sight of stinking human condition and rampant corruption turns him into being a realist, who is obliged to expose the world around him. The winds of change are based on the urbanization and industrialization that every peasant society has experienced in the present century. Once these man made
factors come into the picture, human nature is affected. Due to the development of industries in the city, the pollution and population, both increase and affect the human physical and emotional conditions. Gustad says:

The diesel smell persisted, following him through the compound as he returned home. It reminded him of the day of his accident, nine years ago, when such a smell had been present, also strong and undiminishning, while he lay in the road with his shattered hip, in the path of oncoming cars. He wrinkled his nose and wished the wind would change. (SALT 20)

Rohinton Mistry has used the concept of nature and environment in terms of corruption, pollution and dirt. These environmental factors change the average growth of people and affect directly the development of the society. Therefore, for Rohinton Mistry nature is not climate and mountain but it is environmental conditions of the society. The natural surroundings, the flow of streams, the direction of winds affect creative imagination as well as the sense of identity.

The nauseating dirt, ugliness and pollution in the city, in the bazaar, and at Khodadad building are a microcosm of what happens at the centre. All
men and women and grown ups, cannot tolerate decay, greed, dishonesty, fraud, moral turpitude and deception at the centre. Gustad puts the gravity of the situation metaphorically in the following terms:

Unbearable, I tell you. Does the municipality listen? Yes. Does it do anything? No. For months and years now. Problems wherever you look. Leaking, broken water pipes. Sewer overflowing. Inspectors come and Inspectors go, but the gutters overflow for ever. And police corruption on top of that. They want weekly hafta from people who are using the pavements. Harassment from health inspectors also. They want baksheesh from House of Cages, even though it's properly licensed. Everyone in this area is fed up and running out of patience.

(SALJ 360)

The Canadian imagination is in fact preoccupied with geophysical conditions. Some of the texts are directly concerned with the land. These texts deal with the confrontation between consciousness, shaped by society and the moral or psychological wilderness embodied by the surrounding world. Conditions of the natural setting may provide the language and determine the vision.
M. G. Vassanji’s *No New Land* is about the immigrant population in Toronto, forced to begin a new life in a strange and often unwelcoming land, confronted with obstacles, prejudices and disillusionment. The novel is written in Canadian socio-political context. The novel is an attempt to tell stories of the Asian immigrants to Canada, that are historically absent in the dominant Canadian discourse. *No New Land* presents the tenants of Sixty nine Rosecliffe Park Drive in Don Mills. The land and Nature, both are new and different for Nurdin Lalani and his family. The author begins his novel in the following lines:

> It looks over dense woods which give the valley its many moods and colours, in the distance, from among the trees, rises a lone enigmatic smokestack, its activity sporadic and always surprising, a solitary road drops partway down the valley, turns sharply, abruptly ends. A golf course, which appears mostly deserted on the opposite side, lends its simple geometry to the landscape. (NNL 1)

Due to the different environment and culture, immigrant in Toronto begins a new life in a strange and often unwelcoming land. As the narrator comments:
You try different accents, practice idioms, buy shoes to raise your height. Deodorize yourself silly. On these hopeless treks, how many times you’ve sniffed the air outside a restaurant, wishing – oh, shame of shames – you could afford a hamburger, a hot dog, french fries (NNL 44-45).

*No New Land* narrates the story of the South Asian immigrants to Canada and their encounter with the other white world. A major strand of the narration deals with the predicament and plight of Nurdin Lalani and his family in the new culture and environment. In many ways ethnic minorities have become visible, marginal groups within the Canadian cultural matrix. This visibility stems not from just a projection of difference but rather from a process of identifying the silences.

Uma Parameswaran’s *What was Always Hers* reveals the relationship, especially women – oriented relationships of Indian people in the background of Canada. The diaspora is not often sure of what is in store for them on the adopted new land. Thus, according to her one has to be ready for all kind of consequences.

The title story *What was Always Hers* leads this collection of five stories which all deal in some way with the Indian immigrant experience in
Canada. However in this story, the author has dealt with the impact of agricultural development on environment. Agriculture has transformed the landscape and the application of modern agricultural biotechnology has resulted into considerable environmental changes. Many of these changes are a direct result of manipulating bio-chemical cycles and energy flows, and relates specially to the use of chemical fertilizers and crop protection chemicals. While landscape change is often rapid observable, many of changes have been occurred, and are continuing to occur because of the application of agricultural chemicals, are less easy to pinpoint. For example, Niranjan an activist for agricultural Indians working in the British Columbia fruit belt, marries Veeru, a naïve young woman from India. She learns a great many things about the family, and each detail makes her realize how lucky she is to have entered their family which is now hers. She also brings good luck for Niranjan. The author tells:

And she brought him luck. When he returned to Delhi after the wedding, he found a letter waiting - the University of British Columbia had not only accepted him for graduate study but had said it would give him an assistantship. (WWAH 14)

In the Icicle, Uma Parmeswaran has used Nature as a backdrop for human activity and interaction. The impact of this environment on the
characters is not openly mentioned. Environment undoubtedly influences man, man in turn changes his environment and the interaction is so intricate that it is difficult to know when one influence ceases and the other begins. Any landscapes that appear natural to us are in truth the work of man. The author starts the story with the following lines:

The safety scanner light at the back door went on, filling the yard with light, the neighbour’s cat was the cause. She lazily rubbed herself against cragana bush and walked away. The light shone on an icicle hanging outside the window, and diamonds flashed for a few moments through white cloud of dryer exhaust rising from just below the window. Then the light switched itself off. (WWAH 177)

The author Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost is about the horrible war in his native land. The novel opens with incongruous representations of Sri Lanka. The factual references to the island coexist with the metaphor of Sri Lanka as expression of an internal world that contains geography, history, nature and culture of the land.

Unfolding against the ravishing background of Sri Lanka’s landscape and ancient civilization, Anil’s Ghost is a work of art and a revelatory
journey. The protagonist, Anil Tissera returns to her native, Sri Lanka after fifteen years. She comes back as part of an international human rights fact finding mission, and soon discovers that the killing, secrecy and atrocities are emerging from all sides. Apart from this, she also feels the impact of nature, art and architecture on the Sri Lankan people. The author remarks on Anil’s experiences in Sri Lanka.

Those first days in Colombo it seemed she always found herself alone when the weather broke the touch of rain on her shirt, the smell of dust in the witness. Clouds would suddenly unlock and the city would turn into an intimate village full of people acknowledging the rain and yelling to one another or there would be an uncertain acceptance of the rain in case it was only a brief shower (AG 15)

Anil is glad to be back, the buried senses from childhood alive in her, years before her parents had given a dinner party. They had set up the long table in their parched and dry garden. It was the end of May but drought had gone on and on and still there was no monsoon. Then, towards the end of the meal, the rains began. Anil says, “This was a ceremony of nature that always affected her”. (AG 20)
When we first see Sri Lanka through the sights and senses of Anil – who arrives almost a strange to her native land - the landscape comes alive. In her first trip in a three wheeler taxi, Ondaatje elaborates on Anil’s experience.

The taxi fled away, squeezing itself into every narrow possibility of the dense traffic. She held on to the straps tightly, the rain at her ankles from its open sides. The Bajaj was cooler than an air conditioned car, and she liked the throaty duck like sound of the horn. (AG 14)

Besides, the landscape and Nature, the author has also mentioned about dense forest, mountains and also the wooden ambalama. The ambalama is a wooden structure with no walls and a high ceiling. Travelers or pilgrims used its shade and coolness during the day. The author mentions:

Anil and Sarath and Palipana and the girl had reached and now sat within the square wooden structure of an ambalama, an oil lamp at the centre of it. The old man had gestured towards it and said they could talk there perhaps, even sleep within it this night. (AG 98)
With the above references it is clear that the author reveals the depth of his homeland’s geophysical conditions in terms of nature, forest, mountain and landscape.

Yasmin Ladha’s *Lion’s Grand Daughter and Other Short Stories* draws in the reader in several ways. The author’s Tanzanian background addresses an important aspect and asset of contemporary Canadian Literature in that it expands our horizons to include a geographical landscape that is other than a geographical Canada. Uma Parameswaran says in her essay, *The Landscape of Memory*:

...though the landscape around me is spruce and maple, the landscape of memory is treed with mangoes and banyan and the contribution of South Asian Canadians is that we bring Ganga to the Assiniboine not only for ourselves but for our fellow Canadians. (212)

Stories such as *Aisha and Lion’s Granddaughter* bring East African landscape and lifestyle. In ‘Aisha,’ The author reveals a secret relationship between her grandmother and the milkman. Sometimes the milkman sighs or grandmother will get up to water the roses. Otherwise they sit and watch the sky:

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...they sit and watch the sky turn pink, and heavier and heavier pink, until the sky storms red and the plane leaves make little sways in the falling sunset wind. Evenings are grand mother’s and milkman. But I am scared of evenings. They are secretive and watch with invisible undented eyes. (LGD 26)

In “Lion’s Granddaughter”, Yasmin Ladha talks about Iceland, Dodoma Club and Simba Hill. On this island, there are no vegetables, only fish. Kristjana is from Iceland, so Miss. Rice asks Kristjana to tell the story of Iceland Aisha says:

Now I know what fjords are. But they make me think of milk shakes. It is H. “j” ind fjord. F-i-ord is a spiky river between tall cliffs, but fjord is foam, a slab of foam topping a milkshake. And Kristjana’s story makes me hungry for tomatoes. (LGD 55)

The background of Anita Rau’s Tamarind Mem takes place in India rather than Canada. Badami expresses herself to Burns: “I feel if you have to live in a place, breathe it in get it into your bloodstream. The first novel I wouldn’t have been able to set entirely in Canada, because it would (have meant) writing on the surface”. (30)
In this book nature and landscape have not been directly dealt by the author. Anita Rau aims at exploring the changing relationships within the family or even with the same person, as one grows older and with each changing fortune. The story alternates between the memories of two protagonists, mother and daughter, trying to make sense of their past of living in various railway colonies of India, but with vastly different recollections. It shows how the differences that exist between them are primarily due to different perceptions towards their life. The different perceptions of human beings create different behavioural environment.

Here, Anita Rau Badami is concerned with behavioural environment. Within geography, the term, behavioural environment was brought to prominence by William Kirk who has defined the behavioural environment in the book *Problems of Geography* as:

"a psycho-physical field in which phenomenal facts are arranged into patterns… and acquire values in cultural context. It is the environment in which rational behavioural begins and decision are taken, which may or may not be translated into overt action in the phenomenal environment". (357)
The subjective evaluation of the phenomenal environment which surrounds a human subject, revealing his or her consciousness of it and his or her intentionality towards the objects which constitute it is known as behavioural environment. Such a perception not only conditions attitudes towards everyday life but also underlies the active process of decision making. Thus environmental perception is both a phenomenal experience and a directive for action. Filtered information of this kind may be expressed either in the form of individualized ‘mental maps’ or as strategies for future activity.

However, the author begins her novel with Canadian geophysical conditions. Anita Rau has mentioned about cold, mountain and snow. Kamini remarks regarding this:

I called my mother every Sunday from the silence of my basement apartment, reluctant to tell her how I yearned to get away from this freezing cold city where even the traffic sounds were muffled by snow... So instead I said, Ma there are mountains in the distance, all covered with snow. I can see them gleaning like silver cones in the sunlight when I go outside my apartment. (TM 1)
Like Anita Rau Badami, Nazneen Sadiq has also used behavioural environment in her novel, *Ice Bangles*. Nazneen Sadiq prefers pluralism and multiculturalism. She is well adjusted and belongs to the Canadian society. Yet she is different from others, in that, the past and India are a part of her larger scenario of life. Hers is the vision of a new national culture in Canada. Her novel *Ice Bangles* is written in Canadian background. The novel is told with wit, tenderness and a sharp eye for the absurdities of Canadian life. It breaks through prejudice with unforgettable emotional impact.

Nazneen has also explained the environmental conditions and human nature and behaviour towards her. It is true that her life is changed. However she tries to adjust herself with this changed environment. She says:

As she stepped outside the apartment building the cool nip of October chased both the fall leaves and her half lit images of Dyer’s lane into recesses. The bus pulled towards the stop, and she started to run towards it. Lifting the hem of her sari and stepping up, she realized that the bus was empty and the driver had waited. There was a lingering interest in his eyes as he watched her deposit the fare. She had felt this constantly in her three week’s stay in Toronto. (IB 10)
Every day Naila stands by the bedroom window. The picture is an unchanging one and she is familiar with every curve and shadow of the landscape. She deals with physical environment as she remarks:

It would never change, and yet it drew her each morning, rooting her to the same spot. She was looking for a water buffalo to twitch its way ponderously across the snowy fields, or even a rickety bus garlanded with tinsel and painted with tigers cutting a swath of color through the still and white of Ontario snow. Although she knew it would never happen, she wished for it, fiercely and necklessly. (IB 48)

Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* uses a boy protagonist to narrate the seven eventful years in his life and that of his country leading up to the riots of 1983 and his subsequent immigration. Arjie remarks:

Those, spend the days, the remembered innocence of childhood, are now coloured in the hues of the twilight sky. It is a picnic made even more sentimental by the loss of all that was associated with them. By all of us having to leave Sri Lanka years later because of communal violence and forge a new home for ourselves in Canada. (FB 5)
Funny Boy subtly touches the more traumatic political moments in Srilanka. Funny Boy does not include the landscape of Srilanka or Canada and he has not dealt with nature in the novel. The power of writing of Selvadurai comes from his ability to simply recollect memories. But his memories are based on characters and sociopolitical events. He has not mentioned any geophysical condition in his novel.

Despite these heavy topics Krisantha has called Funny Boy, “which is a tribute to the author’s craft, but particularly if you’re Sri Lankan, the events which are written about are most difficult and painful and many was the time I closed the book to weep” (225).

Thus, Human geography deals with a world as it is and with the world as it might be made to be. Its emphasis is on people: where they are, what they are like, how they interact over space, and what kinds of landscapes of human use they erect upon the natural landscapes they occupy. It encompasses all those interests and topics of geography that are not directly concerned with the physical environment like cartography. Human geography’s content provides integration for all the social sciences, for it gives to those sciences the necessary spatial and systems viewpoint that they otherwise lack. At the same
time, human geography draws on other social sciences in the analysis identified with its sub-fields, such as behavioural, political, economic, or social geography.

**LIVING IN BETWEEN: FROM ROOTS TO ROUTES**

Writers who have moved away from one culture to another are caught between two cultures and are very often engaged either in a process of self recovery through resort to history and memory or in a process of self preservation through an act of transformation. Immigrant writers like Rohinton Mistry, M. G. Vassanji, Michael Ondaatje, Shyam Selvadurai, Uma Parameswaran, Anita Rau Badami, Yamin Ladha and Nazneen Sadiq have also been experienced of uprootedness and dislocation through travel and travelogues. The geographical dislocation raises several questions with respect to the nature of expatriate writing, the writer’s relationship to his culture and his work, the specifics which govern identity and the concept of centering. Though the writer’s individual talent should be rooted in the tradition of particular society and culture, the real strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual’s predicament in terms of alienation, immigration, expatriation, exile, and his quest for identity.

Locating the site has become a narcissistic preoccupations with the postcolonial writer, especially the postcolonial immigrant writer. Exiled by
choice or circumstance, the immigrant finds himself displaced from his roots. He sheds his monolithic national and regional identity and becomes a repository of dualities and multiplicities. His position as an outsider in the country of his adoption leads him to create a distinct geographical and textual, social and psychological space.

South Asian writers in Canada have often been caught in such an experimental ambience. Writers like Rohinton Mistry, Michael Ondaatje, Shyam Selvaduri, M. G. Vassanji have consciously created a space that is rooted in the history and culture of the countries to which they belong. However, some of the South Asian writers in Canada have not mentioned their heritage culture in their texts, they try to create a space in the adopted country. Multiplicity, ambivalence, in authenticity are some of the marked characteristics of the South Asian immigrant writers whose attempt at self definition is to be validated by their geographical, cultural, racial, political contexts.

The oriental writer sets himself up in opposition to the other and tries to centre his experience. He travels on the bandwagon of his heritage but the white Albatross round his neck choking his very expressionistic powers. Thus the cultural space he creates is crisscrossed by a series of dissensions and the
location of his site becomes a transcription or mimicry rather than a translation or a memesis.

A sense of place is one of the imperatives of a writer’s being, an imperative increasingly being dislocated through extra territoriating. Barry Lopez comments in *A Literature of Place*:

I want to talk about geography as a shaping force, not a subject. A specific and particular setting for human experience and endeavour is, indeed central to the work of many nature writers, I would say a sense of place is also critical to the development of a sense of morality and of human identity (7).

The immigrant faces two questions, who am I? And where is here? Immigrant writing occupies a significant position between cultures and countries. It generates theory and defines as it constructs a new identity which negotiates boundaries and relates to different temporal and spatial metaphors. Self is not a constant product rather it is the total experiences of an individual that change from time to time. A writer living abroad live on margins of two societies and the cultural theory is today being created by people who live on the margins. An important question is how does one define the margins. Do the margins expand themselves or does the centre shift?
The latter question 'Where is here' is due to the geographical and historical past of the country. Atwood's remark explicates the above proposition.

Who am I? is a question appropriate in countries where the environment, the 'here' is already well defined, so well defined in fact that it may threaten to overwhelm the individual. In societies where every one and everything has its place, a person may have to struggle to separate himself from his social background, in order to keep from being just a function of the structure. 'Where is here'? Is a different kind of question? It is what a man asks when he finds himself in unknown territory and it implies several other questions. Where is this place in relation to other places? How do I find way around it? (7).

Canada's history is brief, but its geography is very vast. Space, both in the geographical and in the symbolic sense, assumes a powerful force, moulding, changing and recreating the dynamics of the mind of people. On the one hand, the immigrant tries to adjust with the new environment and on the other, he/she tries to create a space in the adopted place. Writers of different
origins are at one in their plea for space for the 'other', whether it is themselves as 'other' or people treated as other in their own land, or whether it is people of other lands regarded as alien because of their difference. It is a plea for social recognition, for making physical space as well as mental room and the room in the field of literature.

Rohinston Mistry is a writer of the Indian Diaspora who now lives and writes from Canada. However, Mistry is also a Parsi Zoroastrian and as a person whose ancestors were forced into exile by the Islamic conquest of Iran, he was in a diaspora even in India.

The Zoroastrians did have such a long journey. This journey began in the twilight years of the Persian Empire when it was under the threat from the Islamic civilization. Between 638 A.D. and 641 A.D. the Persian Empire was repeatedly attacked by the Arabs bearing the standard of their new religion. When Arabs consolidated their holds over their newly conquered territories, Islam became the religion of Persia. However, while the new rulers of Persia imposed their religion on its people, they appropriated their language and culture to them but a tiny minority held out and pushed out further and further from the centre of the empire to its coastal margins and mountain fastness, from where it made its last grandstand against the Arab conquerors.
Fight was now the only way open to the Zoroastrians if they were to save their religious identities. So small bands of these people with urns containing their sacred fires, the symbol of their faith, took the sea route to India in search of refuge. The proximity of India to the southern Iranian ports and centuries old trade ties between the two peoples made it a natural choices of refuge. Borne on the wings of their fires, they made landfall at Diu in Gujarat. In Gujarat, the Iranians came to be called Parsis, probably after the language they spoke – Farsi. In Persian the letters ‘p’ and ‘f’ are interchangeable. The name could also have come from Pars, the Southern Iranian province.

Rohintin Mistry has mentioned his roots in the first epigraph. Through the various characters such as Gustad, Dilnavaz, Billimoria, Tehmul etc, Such a Long Journey tells us more about Parsi Community than a book of sociology possibly could. What is more, Mistry is able to project the emotional life and personal relationships of the Parsis as a valuable part of the wider human experience at the international level by writing about these things from across the world.

The remarkable thing about Such a Long Journey is its absolute Indianness, without any trace of the Canadian experience that the author must
have gone through for fifteen years before the publication of this book. It shows that he converts his Indian experiences in Canada into fiction. Perhaps he fails to appreciate his newly acquired western values and thus he considers India as home rather than Canada. In *Such a Long Journey* the Khodadad building, an apartment house, where Gustad Noble lives along with his neighbours, is a world in itself. For Gustad, home is within the boundary of the building rather than India. Therefore, the concept of 'home' is where the Parsi community lives and shares their emotions. So, home is where emotions are rooted in. Though, Mistry migrated to Canada but his feeling for India is strong.

Renaming the place, city and any heritage building is one of the postcolonial trends. Reading the change of the street names in Mumbai, Dinshawji comments on the notion of displacement:

Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place in Dadasaheb Bhadkhamar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly it’s on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens
to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life, Rubbed out, just like that? Tell me. (SALJ 88)

M. G. Vassanji was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1950 and raised in Tanzania. His family was part of a community of Indians who had emigrated to Africa. In 1980, he moved to Toronto and began his first novel The Gunny Sack. Vassanji has published three more books: No New Land, Uhuru Street and The Book of Secrets. Vassanji’s work deals with Indians living in East Africa. Some members of this immigrant community later undergo a second migration to Europe, Canada or the United States. Vassanji then is concerned with how these migrations affect the lives and identities of his characters, an issue that is personal to him as well.

In No New Land, the central figure of the novel is Nurdin Lalani, a former shoe salesman in Dares Salaam, who is forced by changing political realities to emigrate to Canada with his family. This geographical dislocation has created several problems to Lalani with respect to the culture, nature and work. He is appalled by the lack of recognition, disillusioned by the lack of opportunity and fomented by temptations and repeated failures. Lalani has
migrated to Canada from Dar via London. “Good night Dar, good morning London: that was the catch phrase they had heard over and over again in Cinema advertisement” (NNL, 31). They had to change planes at London and at London airport they were interviewed for visa. The author says regarding this:

First a joint interview- “Why have come?” Do you know anyone here?” “Do you have a permanent address in East Africa?”

Then interviews, with Nurdin and Zera, in separate rooms, the kids on a bench outside. After that, the frightened kids taken to an inner office for a separate interview. Finally, “I am sorry, Sir, you are refused permission to land in the United Kingdom”...this way, Sir, Madam...and onto a departing Air Canada Plane. (NNL, 34).

Finally, Lalani and the family were welcomed by a white man. In Montreal, the immigration official smiled genially at them and said “Welcome to Canada. The episodic structure of the novel provides for the inclusion of a wide range of characters, the scholar Nanji, the ambitious and opportunistic Lawyer Jamal, the widow Shushila and the programmatic Ramesh, the religious Zera, and so forth. Most of the characters live in the high-rises in
Don Mills, where the security of numbers provides the illusion "home" and the shelter from an alien society. All the immigrants from Dar move from one world to other world. Though most of the characters in Sixty nine Rosecliffe Park Drive feel safe and secured but a sense of dislocation is noticed in each character.

Not all South Asian now living in Canada came directly from India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka, many came from India via Africa or the Caribbean, where their ancestors had settled in British Colonies either in the nineteenth century or the early twentieth. After most of these Colonies gained independence from Britain in the 1960s, many of their Indian citizens immigrated to Western countries such as Britain, Canada and the United States. They immigrated for a variety of reasons – economic deprivation, ethnic rivalry, political victimization or sheer physical insecurity. Whatever their reasons, since many of these Indo Caribbean or Indo African immigrants like M.G.Vassanji and Yasmin Ladha were the children of Indians who had migrated from India, they could be regarded as migrating for a second time, becoming thereby doubly displaced from India.

In Funny Boy Arjie is caught between two words: Girls' world and boy's world. However, he does not want to belong to either boys' world or
girls world. The author wants to create a textual space in which fantasies and realities coexist. Contrariness and binary oppositions split the novel as under. Yet sustain its multilayered structure. The narrative is drawn from the perspective of an exile. Therefore, Sri Lanka becomes more than a geographical and metaphorical space, it is a psychological projection of the exile’s view of his culture and is undermined by a negative stream of events.

The literature of the exile becomes a highly vibrant and violent expression of the split self. The literature creates a counter discourse that is at once referential (geographical) and differential. The differential principle of discourse wherein propositions and oppositions are exclusive of one another is redrawn in the exile’s written word. His mimicry or representation is a private imitation and as such controlled by a subjective centre. His romping is rooted in a nostalgia and remembered experience.

Ondaatje’s concern is not only for a geographical space with a new name of Sri Lanka given to it in 1972, but a mythic space, condition of mind. It has passed through the vicissitudes of history to acquire its new identity. It has been in the past, the route for invaders and traders, rumoured in Greece Roma, Arab and China, the abode of Adam and Eve on their fall from the heavens, the seducer of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English.
In *Anil's Ghost* opens, Ondaatje’s protagonist Anil Tissera – a thirty-three years old Sri Lankan forensic who travels under a British passport, has returned to Sri Lanka after fifteen years. Anil finds herself surprisingly happy to be home again, the sudden proximity to the anonymous violence is jarring, and the official unacknowledged war’s moral complexities are greater than she had imagined they would be. The author remarks:

Anil had read documents and news reports, full of tragedy, and she had now lived abroad long enough to interpret Sri Lanka with a long distance gaze. But here it was a more complicated world morally. The streets were still streets, the citizens remained citizens. They shopped, changed jobs, laughed. Yet the darkest Greek tragedies were innocent compared with what was happening here. (AG 11)

For Anil, the concept of Home and geographical dislocation raise several questions regarding her existence and identity in Sri Lanka as well in Canada. Though she is happy to visit Sri Lanka but she dislikes to face the socio-political situation of her native land. The people who have moved away from one culture to another are caught between two cultures and are very
often engaged either in a process of self recovery through resort to history and memory or in a process of self preservation through an act of transformation.

The voice of the South Asian Canadian Women in the Diaspora grapples with many issues connected with immigration, alienation, settlement, racism, chauvinism, politics, feminism etc. Writers like Uma Parameswaran, Anita Rau Badami, Yasmin Ladha and Nazneen Sadiq could speak not only for the South Asian Women in the Diaspora, but they could also very well voice the larger concerns of women in general. In short, they have made the voice of South Asian women in the diaspora audible and significant in relation to the very entity and existence of women in a wider, global perspective. In many respects, it points to the gathering momentum of the South Asian Women in the Diaspora.

South Asian Women Writers in their work reflect an acute awareness of the deeper connotations of immigration and settlement. It is not a question of simple displacement. South Asian Women writers of the diaspora share the feelings of Aritha Van Herk:

Some people would say that it is only a matter of adapting to a new environment, or adjusting to custom, or learning a
language. I maintain that it is much more profound, a displacement so far reaching that it only vanishes after several generations. (156)

Uma Parameswaran has been exposing the chinks in multiculturalism through her poems and critical writings. Without much theorizing, by concrete examples she argues for the just rights and respect for South Asian Women in Canada, and in a wider sense for the legitimate respectable place of women in a male dominated world. In a persuasive way, she tells, the South Asian Women's voice, heard, without compromising her heritage. She is fully aware of the problematic nature of immigration. But at the same time, she adopts a reasonable and realistic stance, so that in her version, the immigrant may not find the adopted land unbearable.

In *What was Always Hers* The stories are delightful and the behaviour of the characters reflect many parts of the South Asian immigrant experience in Canada very realistically. The characters like Niranjan and Veeru hold the in-between position of the migrant. They try to create a space for themselves in Canada. Similarly in "Icicle" and "Darkest before Dawn", the author has created new, dynamic ways of thinking about identity which go beyond older models, such as national identity and the notion of rootedness.
In “Icicle”, Deepa starts thinking of her new identity and position in Canada when Canadian authorities do not consider her Indian degrees for work. The author says regarding this:

I could hear the pride in his voice. I remembered, to, his frustration three years ago when Deepa was looking for work. “It burns me up, Maru,” he said, “to see her working in Henry Armstrong’s Instant Printing. For godsake, I mean, she is a straight A student and they are saying her Delhi degrees don’t count, so she ends up replacing toners in bloody photocopy machines. Sometimes I think I should run for the Legislature and get some action going, really. Pisses me off, all this racism.

(WWAH 181)

The chasm between the ideal and social reality continues to haunt the victims of discrimination still, providing a continuum to the diaspora consciousness, which itself may be a significant source of creativity in case of these writers. In this complicated cultural situation the issue of race class and gender acquire greater significance in terms of the politics of reading.

Uma Parmeswaran prefers pluralism and multiculturism. She is well adjusted belongs to the Canadian society. Yet, she is different from others, in
that, the past and India are a part of her larger scenario of life. Her ambition is nothing less than bringing Ganga to the Assiniboine. Ganga refers to a river of India and Assiniboine also refers to a river (and native people) of Canada. Hers is the vision of a new national culture in Canada.

Homi Bhabha’s *Location of culture* addresses those who live on the margins of different nations, in-between contrary homelands. For Bhabha, living at the border, at the edge, requires a new ‘art of the present’ This depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the border and using it to rethink the dominant ways we represent things like history, identity and community. Borders are important thresholds, full of contradictions and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. They are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier. As Bhabha defines it the beyond is an in-between site of transition:

> The “beyond” is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind the past....We find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (1)
The space of the ‘beyond’ is often described in terms which emphasize this transitory in between sense: such as interstitial or hybrid. The word interstitial means intervening space and hybrid means things composed of incongruous element.

Anita Rau’s Tamarind Mem alternates between the memories of two protagonists mother and daughter – trying to make sense of their past living in various railway colonies of India, but with vastly different recollections.

The uncertainty of identity is one of the central ideas of the novel, it also abounds with stable, nostalgic and romanticized views of life in India. In an interview with Mehfil magazine, the author acknowledges her nostalgia for India:

There’s something about being away from your country of birth that sort of generates all these nostalgic feelings, nostalgic images… Perhaps it’s the perspective, that distance. Sometimes it’s heightened perception. You move away and something that was fairly a normal smell or sound when you were living there suddenly becomes very important and very overwhelming, as you feel obliged to write down.

(http://www.mhfilmag.com:80/nov96/cover.html)
The mobility is immediately recognizable as the mobility within diaspora. The preoccupations of the novel are familiar to all because they are influenced by theories of Diaspora and mobility. As Saroja, the mother explains: “What is one to do with a life like mine, scowled all over the country, little traits here and there, moving, moving all the time and never in one fixed direction”. (TM 155) This kind of geographical dislocation brings a new way of thinking in terms of culture, and identity. By linking, the tropes of uncertainty to mobility, Badami is able to call into question the stability of what is usually considered firm ground: the land itself. The mobile mother daughter narrative comes from the fact that the father and husband works for the railways. The reason the family moves frequently is because of Dadda’s work. Although the mother, the tamarind mem, complains about moving upon her husband’s death she picks up his maps and follows them:

A long time ago, Dadda had pinned a map on my well. It was to stop me crying very time he left on tour. “This is where I will be”, he set drawing a line of red ink on the map. Over the years, the map grew crimson with Dadda’s routes, making out stretches of land that he had helped to capture and tame, setting them firmly on maps and timetables, dots connected by iron and
wood and sweat. Ma had the map now, and she was following the lives of faded link. (TM 51)

Even though Saroja does not initially choose the mobile state of her existence, once Dadda dies she is unable to remain in one place. She uses her railway pass to travel by train. At the conclusion of the novel, she has not reached a final destination. Instead, she is leaving one train for another because she realizes that stability is an illusion. As she says:

Just as my feet settle into the soil, the ground itself starts shifting. It is only when you reach my age that you notice the slight tremors. The nervous shifts the earth makes beneath your fired feet. Or perhaps, Like a Sailor, I still feel the Rocking of trains on firm land. (TM 255)

Thus, the land is not really firm at all. Tamarind Mem illustrates the shifting nature of all things once thought to be stable and fixed. Locations are dislodged by mobility, reality and truth are dislodged by story teller, and all of this is complicit with theories of Diaspora and mobility. For instance, Kamini remembers asking her nanny:
"Is it true, is it real? Everything is true and everything is false. It is the story teller and listener who decides what is what," said Linda Ayah.

I wished that I could summon Linda Ayah up from the past and ask her, "Tell me, was Paul da Costa real or not?" (TM 58)

Yasmin Ladha’s "Be a Doctor" deals with the subject of dislocation and relocation, the story is narrated by a girl who compares her life in Canada, Characterised by shopping in K Mart, with her fond remembrances of picnics in Tanzania. However, this reminiscence is interrupted by harsh memories of the circumstances surrounding the Indian exodus from Tanzania. The subject of the political refuge, and the author's inevitably ambiguous emotions about the country left behind make this story work. What also works for the story are the cleverly piled up details reflecting the essentials of immigrant life:

There is a special on Mazola this Saturday at Food city. Our basement is like a miniature grocery store. They often go down and switch on special bulb that floods the basement and take stoke of the items a fresh: crates of tomatoes, fresh lemons,
toilet rolls, sanitary napkins and garbage bags... Mazola oil...four boxes of Tide, chivas, curtain rod, hooks, ghee...

(LGD 20)

Naila’s concept of home is like Uma Parameswaran’s. Uma Parameswaran says “Home is where your feet are, may your heart be there”. Some never grow past the phase of nostalgia. Romanticizing one’s native land has a place, so long as it does not paralyse one’s capacity to develop new bends within one’s adopted homeland. She says:

Why Canada? She had been asked, and would reply with a young and honest fervour. I would live with him anywhere. There had been no time to think of anything. They had been married for three weeks and then he had left. She had waited out the two months and read the letters postmarked Montreal and then Toronto. (IB 7-8)

Thus, Naila is not bothered about her displacement. For her, home is a place where she can stay with her husband. However, the place of residence changes configurations. Naila is ready to face all sort of challenges because she wants to be with her husband.
Thus, the concept of ‘home’ often performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an idea it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort (although actual experiences of home may well fail to deliver these promises)

To be ‘at home’ is to occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves. But what happens to the idea of ‘home’ for migrants who live far from the lands of their birth? How might their travels impact upon the ways ‘home’ is considered? In Imaginary Homelands Rushdie argues:

The author who is out of country and even out of language may experience a sense of loss in an intensified form. It is made more concrete for him by the physical fact of discontinuity, of his present being in a different place from his past, of his being “elsewhere”. (12)

This disjunction between past and present, between here and there, makes home seem far removed in time and space, available for return only through act of imagination. If imagining home brings fragmentation,
discontinuity and displacement for the migrant, then migrants inevitable become involved in the process of setting up home in a new of land.

**THE PATTERNS OF ISOLATION AND FEAR OF SURVIVAL**

The major characteristics which mark all Canadian writings are the recurrence of the pattern of isolation and fear of survival. Both these characteristics are the geophysical characteristics of the landscape and the historical forces which have been operating in the land. The theme of survival and isolation are not unrelated. They are often mutually inclusive. Both, isolation and survival are due to the displacement from the original country to the adopted country in terms of land, home, environment and culture.

Many Canadian novels show a profound preoccupation with the problems of exile and this is to be expected in a country whose population comprises mostly of immigrants from various countries. John Moss in his book *Patterns of Isolation*, analyses the way in which the theme of isolation operates in Canadian fiction. He discusses the mentality of exile under five heads (1) Garrison exile (2) Frontier exile (3) Immigrant exile (4) Colonial exile (5) Indian lovers. These divisions are based on garrison, frontier and colonial immigrant’s experiences as portrayed in the novels.
In Garrison exile, the man attempts to separate himself from his environment. He cannot stand the un-closed space around him, so he builds borders and constructs a house to establish the structure that he curves and to keep nature out. This endeavor to maintain one’s own societal principals in a strange land is known as the “garrison exile.” An individual creates a “garrison” that is devoted as much to resisting assimilation as to maintaining an external authority. For instance, In Rohinton Mistry’s novel *Such a Long Journey*, Gustad is struggling with his environment, instead of trying to adopt to his environment he creates a garrison which resist to assimilate with his environment, and creates a space for him. He is trying to find out where he is, and so he must create his own sense of what here is. This is when he starts to dig lines in the soil to combat the randomness that he feels in nature. He builds a house and fences, but confusion and uncertainty is growing and he begins to feel that his attempts to keep nature is cut are useless. Like Mistry, Selvadurai has also created a garrison space for Arjie.

In Frontier exile, Moss explains that an individual who is experiencing frontier exile is like a fugitive trying to escape from the prison of his society to search for “either a private alternative or personal redemption” (36). The man is passionately searching for spiritual fulfillment. He is hoping for a divine experience in the wilderness. The frontier exile is noticed in the writings of the
authors like M.G. Vassanji, Yasmin Ladha, Uma Parmeswaran. Their writings reveal the characters are learning to adjust to the unknown instead of becoming overwhelmed by it.

Immigration exile occurs due to the immigration from one country to another country. Migration has been defined differently by different experts. In its most general sense, migration is defined as the relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance. This exile is noticed in Anita Rau Badami’s *Tamarind Mem*, similarly in *Ice Bangles*. Naila’s exile also occurs due to immigration from Pakistan to Canada.

The colonial exile is a man of colonial orientation and his chosen residence is the country which colonised his own history. Indian Lovers exile is self imposed exile based on the love relationship of the native Canadian outside their community. The exile is a universal figure. We are made to feel a sense of exile by our inadequacy an our irrelevance of function in society whose past we cannot alter and whose future is always beyond us.

These conditions of exile, however, are not mutually inclusive, for they always overlap. Exile apart, another dominant theme operates in all the Canadian Writings is the theme of the survival. The politics of survival
becomes the most prominent characteristic in the immigrant writings because of his/her recognition in the new environment which is 'now' his/her own. Thus immigrant suffers from a sense of dislocation, alienation, a feeling of nostalgia and loss of identity. All these factors, together with a variety of experiences in Canada make immigrant a new identity - South Asian Canadian Identity - formulates its grounds and climate recently. In this category, women suffer on yet another count that of their gender. The question of their identity, especially in women's writings assumes particularly significance as they are out to create a "rapture" in the great tradition of male writing. If nature causes isolation, there is another kind of isolation in their life which embitters them that is the one caused by the disintegration of the family. Silence is also associated with isolation. There is always a savage silence around them. Therefore, survival is a big question under this environment.

When looked at closely, Rohinton Mistry is not a political anarchist, nor does he favour the blue print of a new society based on radical change. But the most important thing, politics apart, that the novelist wants to emphasize on the question of life, i.e. the problem of human loneliness in the modern world. Gustad's suffering and struggle with fortitude and humility in life re-echo the classical tragic hero's life and sufferings. The world Gustad is doomed to live in is, like Hamlet's Elsinore, torn by a time which is "out of joint".

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It is in this atmosphere that life has to get going. On the one hand, the journey from Firdausi’s *Shah-Nama* to Tagore’s *Gitanjali* proves to be a long journey in a cold and hostile world. Gustad’s friend, Dinshawji, Bilimoria and Tehmul, have already undertaken such a long journey, on the other hand, it is also a journey from hopelessness to hope.

Mistry also emphasizes the role of chance. In his opinion, life should be treated as a gift from God, and even if it is full to the brim with misery and misfortune, it ought to be relished and lived. It is time that men become ‘confused and discontented’ as they await the uncertain future.

Hope is a powerful anchor for the troubled mind. Man attempts to solve his problems by wishing for miracles to happen, though many times miracles and misfortunes come simultaneously. During the course of the story, Mistry mentions that when people are desperate their prayers seem to go unheard, the future seems to be bleak and there appears to be no alternative, then they resort to exorcism. Coincidentally, it works and at least for the time being things seem to be set right. The novelist writes:

Miracle, magic, mechanical trick, coincidence – does it matter what it is, as long as it helps? Why analyse the strength of the
imagination, the power of suggestion, potency of psychological pressures? Looking too closely is destructive, makes everything disintegrate. As it is, life is difficult enough. Why to simply make it tougher? After all, who is to say what makes a miracle and what makes a coincidence?. (SALJ 342)

Gustad Noble, the central character of the story is a teller in a bank. As an ordinary man, he has to face many trials in life. He is an isolated and frustrated person. His son Sohrab gets admission to IIT, a symbol of pride. Gustad plans to celebrate it on the ninth birthday of Roshan, at which his close friend Dinshawji is to be present. The initial atmosphere of gaiety, humour, songs, jokes and fun contributed by Dinshawji followed by a good dinner comes to an abrupt end when Sohrab turns violent announcing that he is not going to join IIT and is not ready to part with his friends in the college and would pursue with Arts course. Sohrab not only shatters all hopes of Gustad but also makes a surprising turn in the later course of the novel. It is from this point onward that there appears the theme of father-son hostility. Full of frustration when the table turns upside down, Gustad cannot hold his emotion in check. The author remarks:

Throwing away his fortune without reason what have I not done for him, tell me? I even threw myself in front of a car, kicked
him aside, saved his life and got this to suffer all my life (Slapping his hip). But that is what a father is for. And if he cannot show respect at least, I can kick him again. Out of my home, out of my life. (SALJ 61 - 62)

Gustad’s best friend Major Billimoria, one day leaves Khodadad building, where he lives, without a word even to him, which upsets latter. He is already disillusioned with the behaviour of his son and now the disappearance of a close friend makes the matter worse. His daughter’s illness and Dinshawji’s hospitalization make his life horrible. The first great blow in Gustad’s life comes in the form of the death of Dinshawji, despite his prayer for the lives and recovery of both Roshan an Dinshawji at the Mount Mary. At the end he realizes that nothing can be controlled. As the years roll by Gustad Noble modifies his dreams and trims his expectations in life. Experience makes him into a stronger, more enduring man. He firmly resolves to face life stoically and not to be crushed by the force of destiny. This attitude is his greatest triumph in life.

**No New Land** is an important work, one that foregrounds the voices of the margins without apology or rancour. Silence is associated with isolation. There is always a savage silence around them. Vassanji suggests ways to overcome despondency and finds a way to survive in isolation. To
forget Haji Lalani’s, Akber’s and Nurdin’s desolation they need to love. Haji Lalani being slapped for looking intently at a German Woman in Dar, Nurdin’s father whipping Akber for writing a letter to Sushila and years later Nurdin being tempted by Sushila, tell us their desolation and they need to have somebody to love or for company. However, all the character in the novel are not successful in doing so and finally each one suffers.

Haji Lalani, whose religious fanaticism and blind adherence to a discipline installed by the colonizers terrify the children, causing them either to leave home or internalize a sense of guilt. Nurdin, in particular, is tormented by his repressed desires, and his marginalization in Toronto, becomes isolated and learns how to survive in geophysical isolation.

In **Funny Boy**, Anjie is isolated in the Society and even within home. He remarks:

The future spend-the-days were no longer to be enjoyed, no longer to be looked forward to. And then there would be the loneliness. I would be caught between the boys’ and the girls’ worlds, not belonging or wanted in either. (FB 39)
As the youngest, and fond of playing with girls, his fantasies are feminine dreams. The feminine role of the bride he steps into at the beginning of the novel is confirmed in the latter part where he finds himself “a funny boy”. In “Pigs can’t Fly”, Arjie discovers the word “Funny” has a third, non dictionary meaning. He is thus isolated out of the playful world of siblings and cousins, fingered as a faggot.

Arjie has also homosexual relationship with his school mate Shehan. This psychological or physical relationship projects a series of marked differences. He is different from those other than his race. In graduation from “The best School of All’, Arjie pays tribute to his Sinhalese pal and lover’s courage, when he wonders at all the homosexual kids imprisoned in Silence, who had passed through the hallowed walls of his school. Arjie remarks:

I looked at the building again and I wondered how many boys like Shehan had passed through this school, how many Shehans had been its prisoners. I knew there must have been many. They were the ones no one spoke of, the ones past pupils pretended never existed. I gazed at Black Tie’s balcony, now hidden in shadows, I felt bitter at thought that the students he punished were probably the least deserving. They were the ones who had
broken his rules – no blinking, no licking of lips, no long hair a
code that was unfair. (FB 273)

Arjie feels alienated from others because of his homosexual
relationship with Shehan. He looks around at his family and feels that he has
committed a terrible crime against them, against the trust and love they have
given him. He says:

...I had just committed. I wanted to cry out what I had done,
beg to be absolved of my crime, but the deed was already done
and it could not be taken back. Now I understood my father’s
concern, why there had been such worry in his voice whenever
he talked about me. He had been right to try to protect me from
what he feared was inside me, but he had failed what I had done
in the garage had moved me beyond his hand. (FB 262)

In Anil’s Ghost, Ondaatje reveals that Anil is glad to be alone. There
is a scattering of relatives in Colombo, but she has not contacted them to let
them know she is returning. The things she has missed most of all are the fans.
After she has left Sri Lanka at eighteen, her only real connection is the new
sarong and news clippings of Swim meets. The major weakness of the novel is
its failure to bring to life the main character, Anil. The author himself seems to realize this as there is scarcely a mention of her in the last twenty pages. The reader is most able to believe in her when she stabs her fickle lover Cullen in the arm, but is then disappointed that this act of hers is left suspended in the mid-air as it were with no attempt to integrate it into the rest of the story. However, overall the reader can observe that Anil is isolated not only from the family but also from the society and relatives. She has mentioned that she does not have many friends. She has only one friend with whom she can share her emotions in Canada.

Similarly, there is a constant ebb and flow of characters directly involved with the civil war, these characters involved with the civil war, these characters range from murder victims to doctors to anthropologist to forgotten artist. While they remain somewhat distanced from the leader, they do serve Ondaatje’s purpose of examining the inhabitants of this tiny island. However, these characters are not well developed, each one is isolated from the society and the reason of their isolation is due to political situation of the country.

Sarath, an archaeologist who can from the slightest clues reconstruct a vibrant picture of the past and hence who sees the present situation as one of many layers, who understands the pragmatic nuances and moral complexities
of the modern world in its historical context, understands what can and cannot be done, understands the ambitious nature of "truth" and difficult game of survival in modern day Sri Lanka.

Ondaatje’s characters are frustrated and disappointed due to the civil war in Sri Lanka. In other words, the author has revealed his own opinions about his native land through these characters. Due to the civil war, the pattern of isolation and the fear of survival are noticed in all the characters of the novel. For example, Gamini, Sarath’s brother, a dedicated doctor, who had been in love with his brother’s wife, had had an affair with her until her suicide and now he is alone. Ananda, a drunken miner who once had been an artist with the skill and genius needed to paint eyes of Buddha, a ritual performed when a new statue was dedicated and, in a sense, brought to life, a man whose life had become meaningless when his wife was senselessly slaughtered by the terrorists.

In Uma Parameswaran’s *What was Always Hers*, presents veeru’s self knowledge and self realization, both on personal and cultural level. In the title story, Niranjan and Veeru are separated after many years of marriage. Niranjan is married with Jitin but Veeru remains alone with two kids. She is
oppressed by the patriarchal society. She has to agree with the decision of her husband for separation. Niranjan says, “We must file for divorce and it is best we do it soon and get it over with” (WWAH 23). However after separation, she becomes more confident and knows how to survive in the society Veeru feels free from all the problems created by her husband. The author remarks regarding this:

Something in Veeru sighed with relief. Yes, they had to end this stalemate: She had to stop thinking of him as a murderer. Life had to go on, though they had extinguished one life. They, she thought, she had at last arrived at the point when it was not “he” but they, together, had done what had been done. What could not, cannot be undone (WWAH 23).

Male control and power over women in all sphere of life is what constitutes patriarchy and therefore one needs to eliminate it. Women’s oppression is carried out through institutions such as the academy, the Church and the family. These institutions rationalize and justify women’s subordination to men and in most cases women develop a sense of inferiority.
The subjection and oppression are the major themes of women writing. The social structure in India and Pakistan is made up of various hierarchical levels and it is very difficult for women to find space and articulate as she is thrust into various roles from her birth. Women need to develop womanly bonds and overcome acts of violence. They need to work in communities helping each other and display the right form of assertiveness where it is essential.

The major characteristics which mark all Canadian writing are the recurrence of the pattern of isolation and fear of survival. Besides, the isolation caused by immigration, there are other types of isolations which come across in their writings that is caused by environment and the disintegration of the family. Uma Parameswaran has mentioned the isolation due to the disintegration of the family in her short story, “The Icicle” Deepa and Ranjit are forced to stay separately because Deepa has enrolled in Saskatoon University as her Indian degrees are not recognized in Canada. Ranjit says, “I’d love to see her. I said no chance of them coming over same long weekend? It is months since they were here”. (WWAH 181) Therefore, both Deepa and Ranjit are isolated because of silence as well as the disintegration of the family.
The common, everyday explanations for the unemployment and underemployment and other immigrant women are their difficulties with the language and their lack of skills. The presence of South Asian women at the lower end of the occupation also results from the lack of recognition of degrees and experience obtained outside of Canada. Academic and professional qualifications and work experience are routinely devalued.

*Tamarind Mem* contains many aspects similar to the author’s life. The mother, Saroja and the daughter, Kamini, have different views about their past. Each character is a unique personality. The mother Saroja is different from other characters in the novel. She is a lonely and frustrated woman. Saroja’s marriage life is unaffectionate and uncommunicative; She feels as if she lives in an “immense silence” (*TM* 204). Badami shows how past cultural restrictions of that time in India affect women in their personal lives and aspirations. The mother Saroja has the nickname “Tamarind Mem” because of her hostile attitude. The name originates from the sour fruit of the Tamarind tree. Saroja tries to become a perfect wife but is eventually faced with a difficult choice. Kamini vividly remembers her mother’s anger throughout her childhood. However, Badami artfully shows how as an adult, she begins to understand her mother’s unhappiness, because Kamini acknowledges that her father is the root cause for her mother’s unhappiness.
Therefore, Saroja’s nature towards her family and society is very hostile and because of this hostile nature, she is alienated and isolated from the Society. She uses her tamarind sharp tongue to survive in this world.

Saroja has always been very suspicious of the world around her. According to her everybody has a secret to hide a motive to conceal. Kamini remarks on this:

Not a soul could be trusted, especially where Roopa and I were concerned. At the crowded, stale smelling airport in Madras, as we waited for my flight to the North Pole, she hissed a warning, “You be careful who you talk to on the plane. Don’t leave your bags here and there. Such stories I have heard of terrorists and what not planting bombs and drugs and all. Are you listening to me? (TM 151).

Kamini’s isolation is caused by immigration to Canada from India. As the story unfolds, Kamini, who has just recently moved to Canada from India calls her mother from the silence of her basement apartment. The words of the mother, Saroja, reach across the oceans and stir up memories in the daughter’s mind.
Kamini’s isolation is due to geographical dislocation. Since, Canada is a new place for her. When one arrives in new land, one has a sense of wonder and adventure at the sight and feel of a landscape so different from what one has been accustomed to; there is a sense of isolation and fear, and intense nostalgia is a buffer to which many retreat.

In Yasmin Ladha’s *Lion’s Granddaughter and Other Stories*, the narrator is mixed race little girl. She is socially alienated because of her mixed race existence. Given the history of racial segregation between Indians and Africans in east Africa, how probable or believable such a case of racial mixing can be is a ragging question for the readers. To compound the reader’s problems, Ladha portrays this girl as the granddaughter of a wealthy Indian merchant, a social context in which such mixing would seen even more improbable. It is interesting that Ladha actually has the daring to introduce a mixed race protagonist into a conservative wealthy Indian family, and more so, in the segregated social setting of Tanzania.

In *Ice Bangles*, Naila is isolated, caused by immigration to Canada from Pakistan. According to John Moss, “The imminence of geophysical reality in relation to the patterns of isolation evokes a profound response in the
Canadian Imagination". (109) Though Naila feels that she is a part of Canada, yet she faces problems in terms of class, gender and race. As she says:

She knew that settling down meant merging and yet having the confidence of leaving traces if one’s own colour. She had leapt hungrily at Lin’s offer of friendship to see how all this could be done. (IB 60)

When she gets job in Canada, she realizes that her salary is less because primarily she is an immigrant and secondly she is a women worker. The woman is oppressed by the male power. It has been demonstrated that the issues of class and race affect women more than men. South Asian women earned less than immigrant women from Europe. South Asian immigrant women are forced to take up low paid employment to supplement the family income. Immigrant women’s groups have explained this as a result of the greater economic hardship experienced by this women.

Thus, the influence of Diaspora and that of the land of origin on the lives, thoughts and creativity of the writers has been all pervasive. In their personal and professional lives, they have had to make innumerable adjustments in terms of alienation, racism and changing value systems. As
minority writers, they have confronted difficulties to establish their identity as South Asian in the Canadian society. They have raised and discussed, in depth, several questions pertaining to freedom of expression and voice/culture appropriation.

Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities, spaces for growth, resolution of conflicts and a new culture, either composite or plural. This is what these creative writers are in the process of accomplishing in their own way. The possibility of infinite permutations and combinations of adjustments within the diaspora are evidenced by the manner in which they have taken diverse paths to reach the same goal of belonging to the society and country of their choice.