CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF JAPANESE IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

The Japanese came to Canada, much like the Chinese, in search of better opportunities in life and in work. Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry today, are an interesting mix of people of both single Japanese ancestry as well as mixed ancestry. Though they are employed in many professions and have excelled in practically all fields and have also contributed significantly to the growth and development of Canadian life and society, their journey has been an arduous one involving daunting challenges and high risks. Japanese Canadian writing provides a good and insightful understanding of the nuances of Japanese immigrant life in Canada. The focus of this chapter will be to trace the history of the journey of the Japanese people in Canada. An attempt will be made to look into the causes behind their emigration and the life led by the immigrants in Canada. This will facilitate a finer understanding of the works by the authors considered for study and will give a more comprehensive grasp of the Japanese situation in Canada especially from a social and cultural perspective.

The people of Japanese ancestry in Canada trace their roots to Japan a country in the Pacific Ocean, comprising of many islands. Having lived in ‘virtual isolation’ for many centuries, the people of Japan assumed a perception of themselves being ‘racially or ethnically homogeneous’ (Ayukawa and Roy 842). By the 17th century Japan had succeeded in undergoing many positive changes including the adoption and subsequent adaptation of ‘the culture and customs of immigrants from China and
Korea, including Confucian philosophy, the Buddhist religion, fine arts, and such Chinese political institutions as land and tax policies’ (Ayukawa and Roy 842). Japan had also begun to develop her own identity as a powerful nation that could ward off foreign invasions and foreign missionaries. A belief that even nature was assisting them in their endeavours to assert their strength was evident in the formulation of the concept of the ‘kamikaze’ or divine wind which was an outcome of the faith the Japanese had in the typhoons that helped repel foreign invaders. As a nation Japan had actually ventured out to isolate its people from the rest of the world (Ayukawa and Roy 842). Politically also Japan had stabilised herself and the Shogun or Japanese rulers during the Tokugawa or Edo era, (1600-1868) succeeded in establishing a strong centralised government.

Japan strengthened her position further with the establishment of the Meiji rule in 1868 when many measures were taken for the modernisation and westernisation of Japan including economic reforms and industrial development among other things. The Meiji government encouraged the Japanese people to go abroad for education and made arrangements for western teachers to come to Japan. This accelerated the process of westernisation but created other problems. In order to fund these programmes the government altered the mode of taxation which caused great hardship to the peasants. In any case with increase in industrialisation, the peasants’ misery grew manifold and at the same time, small scale industry suffered. With the government’s interest in strengthening Japan militarily, inflation was on the rise. Though the country forged ahead in many ways and even expanded her territories, the ordinary people particularly the peasants suffered pathetically. It is no wonder that the larger number of emigrants from Japan to foreign nations comprised of peasants.
During World War II Japan suffered the loss of many of her colonies and her people suffered as a result of the bombings and widespread inflation. However she made a quick recovery to emerge as a strong and powerful nation. According to the ‘Association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad’, the number of Nikkeis or Japanese living overseas is about 3, 500, 000 in 2014.\textsuperscript{1} Emigration from Japan was first recorded in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century when a few Japanese migrated to the Philippines. Japanese immigration to North America started taking place in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Among the first Japanese to set foot in Canada were a crew of 335 men, who stepped off the Japanese Naval ship ‘Tsukuba’ at Esquimalt near Victoria on 11\textsuperscript{th} June, 1880. The event was reported in the Victoria Daily Colonist and was a landmark event in that it was the first Japanese ship to dock at a port in Canada (Takata 12). More such incidents followed but these were only examples of temporary halts in Canada. Actual settlement took place later. The first Japanese settler is believed to be Manzo Nagano, a stowaway who came to New Westminster B.C. (Takata 3). Since then the number of Japanese settlers has grown steadily and in 2001 the population of Canadians of Japanese ancestry stood above 85,000 which made it the ninth largest non-European ethnic group in the country comprising 0.3% of Canada’s total population.\textsuperscript{2} Japanese migrants all the world over are called Nikkei. ‘Discover Nikkei’, a project of the Japanese American National Museum states:

The term Nikkei has multiple and diverse meanings depending on situations, places, and environments... Native Japanese also use the term Nikkei for the emigrants and their descendants who return to Japan. Many of these Nikkei live in close communities and retain identities separate from the native Japanese. Currently there are 2.6 to 3 million people of Japanese descent living throughout the world. Most live in the Americas, where they have established families and communities and in the process transformed themselves and the societies where they have settled.\textsuperscript{3}
This term to collectively depict the Japanese community abroad is both popular and convenient. The first generation of pre-war Japanese settlers in Canada called the Issei were mostly born in the Meiji era. “The Issei were the product of Meiji Japan. They strongly valued isshoukenmei (hard work with one’s heart and soul), gaman (self-restraint) and ganbari (perseverance)” The second generation or Nisei were mostly born between the years 1910-1935 (Kage 168-169). The third generation or Sansei were born between the years 1935 and 1965 when the Nisei and Issei were advanced in age and were attempting to build up their lives after the trauma of the war years and its aftermath (Kage 172). Subsequently the fourth and fifth generation of Japanese Canadians is called Yonsei and Gosei. The idea is to append a number in the Japanese language to the word ‘sei’ meaning ‘generation’ in Japanese. There is constant reference to them in Japanese Canadian writing. Interestingly the Chinese have the term huaqiao to refer to their overseas counterparts.

Like the Chinese who migrated to Canada before them, the Japanese came primarily in search of work. A number of reasons were responsible for the migration of the Japanese to Canada. They mostly came from fishing and farming villages of the southern islands of Kyushu and Honshu of Japan, driven by financial distress. Many migrated on hearing stories of better lives across the seas. Strict laws of inheritance prevalent in Japan, whereby the eldest son could inherit the largest chunk of the ancestral property leaving little for the other siblings also acted as an incentive to migrate. The daughters were usually married off, while the other sons sought their own destinies, some even opting for marriage to families without male heirs. According to Ayukawa and Roy however, ‘Although there is no correlation between poverty and emigration, some looked for a new start after natural disasters or Meiji policies, such as land filling or the deepening of bays to accommodate ocean going
vessels around Hiroshima, forced them to leave their homes. In other cases, successful earlier emigrants inspired others’ (844). Takata is of the opinion that most of the early emigrants were the ‘sons of struggling farmers, fishermen and labourers, whose prospects for security and contentment in their homeland were dim’ (13). Adachi opines that ‘Like immigrants from Europe... the Japanese came to Canada because they hoped to find the economic opportunity that they could not find at home. They also looked, to some extent for freedom of individual action; youthful as most of them were, emigration opened new windows upon a world no longer bounded and constricted by the horizon of the villages’ (16). A spirit of adventure and desire to explore the world also compelled many to undertake the risky business of leaving home and hearth for strange unknown lands. Many also left the shores of Japan to avoid military conscription which was introduced in 1873. Hawaii, the Americas and Canada were their usual destinations (Takata 13). It was perhaps a combination of all these factors that resulted in the massive exodus of the Japanese people from their native land to foreign countries. It promised not only to be an exciting and risky venture to those who undertook it but held new significance for the country of destination.

The pattern of emigration from Japan was unique and deserves attention. During the Meiji rule in Japan, a good number of Japanese migrated abroad. However as a nation Japan stood apart since it closely monitored the emigration of its citizens to foreign countries in its effort to maintain a good image globally. The government itself took keen and active interest in sending its citizens abroad until it permitted private emigration companies or imingaishas to take over the responsibility of employment in foreign lands. These companies encouraged the Japanese to emigrate to Hawaii, America and also Canada (Ayukawa and Roy 843).
The first Japanese settler in Canada, Manzo Nagano was a stowaway who apparently arrived by a cargo ship to Canada in 1877 (Takata 168). He spent most of his life trying odd jobs including fishing and hotel keeping (Ayukawa and Roy 845). Japanese food, which is now a delicacy in North America, may in fact find its earliest source to Nagano’s hotel keeping skills!

The pattern of the arrival of the Japanese to Canada, unlike the Chinese who came in waves, was intensely concentrated during two specific periods, between 1898-1900 and 1905-1908. The early Japanese society also consisted mainly of single males who lived with other males in “company shacks, bunkhouses and boardrooms near their workplaces, just like their Chinese and South Asian counterparts” (Das Gupta 221). After the women or ‘Fujin’ joined them the Japanese too started building homes. The wives were a great asset as they helped their husbands not only at home but also in the fields and businesses. They ensured that a second generation or the Nisei was born within a relatively short period of time. Katsuji, born of Washiji and Yo Oya in 1889 is believed to be the first Nisei born in Canada. Later along with his brother Jiro he was sent to Japan to pursue his studies. (Takata 21)

As a nation Japan kept a hawk’s eye on the emigration of its citizens and the affairs of its migrants in foreign countries. When the Japanese government perceived that its people were being discriminated against in Canada, it promptly announced in 1895 that it would only issue passports to those Japanese citizens heading for British Columbia provided they had adequate provisions to carry out farming or mercantile ventures. Japanese immigration to Canada stopped for a while and did not resume for a while. Large scale Japanese immigration to Canada was concentrated to two very short periods before World War II, between 1898-1900 and 1905-1908. (Ayukawa and Roy 845). The bombing of Pearl Harbour and attacks on Hong Kong by Japan led
to the adoption of a string of measures by the Canadian government to keep strong vigilance on the Japanese community in Canada. During the terrible atrocities committed on the Japanese community in Canada under the War Measures Act, immigration from Japan was temporarily stopped.

The Issei were usually young and settled in farms in the Fraser Valley in or near Vancouver and Victoria. Some even settled in pulp mill towns along the Pacific coast. The preference to settle along the west coast was inevitable as the Japanese arrived on the west coast from Japan by the sea-route. Japan is believed to have opened a consulate in Vancouver as early as 1889 with a view to assisting Japanese nationals and to help promote trade. There is no record however of the presence of the Japanese in the published Canadian Census of 1891 or in the immigration records of the 1890s. Only anecdotal evidence suggests their presence during this period of time (Ayukawa and Roy 845).

By about the 1890s however, the Japanese had actually built two important ghettos---on Powell Street in Vancouver and the other in the fishing village of Stevenson. Their chief occupations included fishing and boat building. Some were engaged in businesses in their enclaves, like running stores and boarding houses. Some even worked as cooks, miners and labourers on beet root farms. Being essentially fishermen, boat makers and farmers they preferred to settle along the coast and in farmlands where they could utilise their skills and make a living. The background and professional skills of the immigrants affected their choice of trade and settlement location. In fact it is to the credit of the Japanese that they helped transform Canadian society into a viable economic force. It was Japanese labour and enterprise that gave a boost to Canada’s fishing and ship and boat building industry. Japanese sweat and blood helped metamorphose the hard rugged land into fertile
agricultural tracts. They breathed colour and vibrancy to the cold desolate land and helped it become more prosperous and truly multicultural. It is therefore baseless to consider the Japanese reluctant contributors in the development of Canada into a powerful nation. A major accusation against them had been that they sent home the money saved or simply accumulated it for future plans of return. The Japanese were however in reality equal partners in the growth and development of Canada into a strong nation.

Both the Chinese and the Japanese immigrants had a rather troubled relation with the Canadian Federal government right from the beginning. In fact even on the eve of World War II, when the Japanese were living in Canada for over 50 years and most of their population consisted of Canadian born and educated Nisei, they continued to suffer severe discrimination, persecution and in fact, blatant hostility. ‘Fifty years of restrictive and exclusionary laws and practices had kept the Japanese on the margins of the social and political life of society at large. (Kelley and Trebilcock 287-288) Though the Chinese too, faced the brunt of racial discrimination and suffered many indignities, Chinese immigration was not altogether unwelcome, especially during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway from 1880-1885, when cheap labour was sought to carry out dangerous tasks in the process of railroad building. The Japanese were victimised in numerous ways and looked upon with suspicion; their woes climaxing with internment during World War II.

A major cause behind the disturbed relationship between White society and the Japanese was the readiness on the part of the latter to work at wages lower than that acceptable to the Whites or even to the Chinese for that matter. The Chinese as it is were willing to work for wages \(\frac{3}{4}\) to \(\frac{1}{2}\) of the wages paid to the host society.\(^4\) The Japanese were willing to work for even less. The root of the problem therefore was an
economic one. According to an article, ‘Looking back at Exclusion’, based on the Report of the ‘Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration’, “Both Chinese and Japanese labourers displaced host population workers from employment, created economic hardship for these workers and their families and caused displaced workers to leave British Columbia.” This however explains only one aspect of the problem because the Japanese being an enterprising, hard working and industrious race had begun to assert itself in Canadian society which was very much in the throes of racial prejudice and considered the Japanese a threat to the existing economic security of the country. The Japanese were chiefly targeted in the fishing industry which was their main source of livelihood.

Though the host society found ample excuses to hold the Japanese culpable of causing harm to them, it was obvious that the primary reason for resentment against them was racial prejudice. In fact, ‘Racist stereotypes, characterizing Japanese persons as dishonest, unclean, immoral and unable to assimilate acquired considerable currency at this time.’ (Kelley and Trebilcock 143) Discriminations in all spheres of life were evident, social, political, economic, and so on.

The history of the Japanese in Canada has in fact always been one of conflict and strife, with the Japanese making continuous efforts at assimilation and reconciliation and the White Canadians being hostile and even destructive. Like other immigrants the Japanese too were labelled ‘according to the ideology of the nation’ and were referred to as Himanni Bannerji puts it for immigrants—‘visible minorities, immigrants, newcomers, refugees, aliens, illegals, people of color, multicultural communities and so on’ (Bannerji 65). This constant conflict and confrontation not only led to a disturbed and volatile relation between the Japanese and white society but made the life of the Japanese in Canada difficult. The adversities faced
interestingly made the Japanese emerge stronger as they were both talented and meticulous in their work and industry. It also resulted in them taking greater interest in the retention and continuation of their own culture. It ironically prevented the loss of Japanese culture or its dilution in Canadian society. Sadly, when the later generations were born and completely Canadian-ized, much of Japanese tradition and heritage suffered a fading away.

Though the Japanese were growing in number and the Nisei or second generation were Canada born and many University educated and certainly very Canadian by culture, they were still denied voting rights, prevented from practising at the bar or pursuing careers in teaching, law, pharmacy and so on. (Kelley and Trebilcock 144) This deliberate effort was made to confine the community to menial work and keep out of public life and politics. The rise in the number of immigrants alarmed the white community, but it may be remembered that even as early as 1895, the Japanese population in British Columbia where they were chiefly concentrated was never more than an average of 300. It appeared greater as many emigrants used Canada as a passage to reach U.S.A. At times during the fishing season, the number of fishermen rose, but with the decline in the season, the emigrants too left. The discriminatory practises were essentially prejudices against a small powerless community and not really a result of any substantial threat posed by the Japanese.

While the Chinese proved themselves as able miners, equipped with superior methods of excavation, and skilled builders of railroads; the Japanese of Canada slowly but surely through good sustained effort carved a niche for themselves as able ship and boat builders and proficient fishermen. In order to stand up to the blatant hostility of white society and find an identity for themselves, the Japanese immigrants started living in small ghettoes, where they kept alive their traditional way of life. The
Japanese were always fiercely conservative of their customs and rituals and tried to preserve them to the best of their efforts.

They had already begun to establish themselves as able businessmen and in spite of all odds, had built the first Buddhist temple on Powell Street in Vancouver, a Catholic state. The Japanese Consulate had even set up a Japanese language school in 1906. By 1907, several thousand Japanese had entered USA and Canada. Institutions to carry forward Japanese traditions and customs gained momentum and the hitherto lost, frightened immigrant began to establish as well as retain his own distinct identity in foreign land. The social ostracism faced by the Japanese along with the Chinese which included humiliating experiences like being excluded from private clubs and social institutions frequented by the Whites had an adverse effect. It actually led to a greater determination on the part of this small community to find its own place under the sun and create its own comfort zone in the ‘Nihonjinmachi’ or Japanese towns. Like their Asian counterparts, the Chinese, who reinforced their cultural bonds in their Chinatowns, the Japanese too retreated to their ethnic enclaves to find solace among their own folk and renew faith and dignity in themselves. The Canadian environment actually spurred the need to form ethnic retreats for the immigrant to preserve and rediscover his roots in the blatant absence of any signs of acceptability by society. The majority of the Japanese settled in British Columbia followed by Ontario. In fact Manzo Nagano the first Japanese settler in Canada lived for the ‘best part’ of his 46 year stay in Canada in British Columbia (Adachi 9).
### Table Three


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th>Total Japanese population</th>
<th>The provincial/territorial population</th>
<th>As a proportion of the total Japanese population in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thousands</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td><strong>85.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

### Table Four

Age distribution of the Japanese community and overall Canadian population, 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Japanese community</th>
<th>Total Canadian population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 15</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 24</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 64</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population in thousands</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

The experience of the Issei, was pitiable. It was of a people victimised by a society comprising mostly of whites of European heritage who by sheer strength of number tried to subdue and reduce it to a faceless community in awe of a superior white race. The condition of the Nisei was no better though they were born in Canada and only knew Canada as a homeland. Their plight was actually more pathetic since the idea of Japan as a motherland was alien to them and they felt a natural attachment for the Canadian soil. The attempts of society and government to subdue and marginalise them therefore was far more shocking and this critical situation has been frequently explored in Japanese Canadian writing which has looked at Canadian life and politics from a marginalised space.

The atrocities committed against the Japanese were numerous. In 1895, at a time when the Japanese population of British Columbia was fewer than a thousand, the Provincial legislature amended the Provincial Voters Act to exclude those of Japanese descent from the voters’ list. Since it was essential for inclusion in the provincial voters’ list as a prerequisite for voting in federal elections, the Japanese like their Chinese counterparts in British Columbia were denied the federal franchise as well. This had consequences of another kind. The Japanese were instantly disabled from participating in Canadian political life and were barred from entering into many professions like law, pharmacy, teaching and so on. (Kelley and Trebilcock 144)

However apart from the fact that they were denied voting rights, barred from many professions, humiliated in multiple forms and even deprived of their basic means of livelihood with the confiscation of fishing licenses, the Japanese were also subjected to gruesome violence, sometimes sporadic and often well organised, all with a view to drive them out of the country. The idea to completely marginalise the
Japanese stemmed from not only a racist mindset but also from the fear that the Japanese being industrious and dedicated could monopolise many professions. Certainly a kind of xenophobia gripped the predominantly white society that was afraid that the Japanese could deprive them of many lucrative professions. Already they had established their stronghold in the fishing industry and their organisational skills in farming and successfully running businesses was impressive. The innate values of isshoukenmei (hard work with one’s heart and soul), gaman (self-restraint) and ganbari (perseverance) gave them the necessary incentive and strength to carry on despite a million adversities.

In the same year, 1895, the Japanese government decided to take matters into control in its overall concern for the welfare of its citizens abroad as well as in its efforts to project a fitting image abroad. This it did by announcing that it would not issue passports to its citizens bound for British Columbia unless they had sufficient means to pursue a livelihood.

In the summer of 1907, a public rally was held in Vancouver, organised by the Asiatic Exclusion League. A series of furious anti-Asian speeches were delivered, where after an angry mob tore through the Chinese and Japanese districts in Vancouver, terrorising people and destroying property. In protest, the Asian community in Vancouver went on a general strike. After investigation though, Deputy Minister of Labour, Mackenzie King recommended that the Japanese merchants be awarded $9,000 as damages. (Kelley and Trebilcock 145)

The actions against the Japanese were testimony to two things, one that racism was rampant in Canada and secondly that white community was getting increasingly insecure of this small but determined Asian community. Denied entry to many
professions, the Japanese countered the situation by running private businesses and farms. Their ethnic retreats and Japan towns became veritable hubs for the propagation and sustenance of Japanese culture and heritage. The antagonistic attitude of the whites thus produced an ironic backlash. With assimilation and acceptance becoming increasingly difficult, the only option before the minority community was an assertion of an independent identity and a march back to ethnic cultural roots. Uma Parmeswaram writes, ‘it is clear that there has been something in the Canadian reality that perpetuated ghettoization rather than coexistence.’ She quotes Diane McGifford, in the same essay, *Metaphors for Racism*, to highlight her perception, “The alienation of the immigrant and the bitter stings of racism are two of the painful realities shaping the lives and art of South-Asian-Canadians.” The Japanese community in fact encountered this ‘painful’ experience in every turn of their existence in Canada.

In the meanwhile, the Canadian government was seeking its own means to deal with the issue of racial violence and manage with the growing number of Japanese immigrants. Mackenzie King concluded in a report on Oriental labourers in 1907, that the only way to sustain communal harmony was to restrict the importation of contract labour from Japan. (Kellcey and Trebilcock 146)

The Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1894 had ensured that Canada could not prevent the entry of the Japanese into their country hence Prime Minister Laurier dispatched Rodolphe Lemieux to Tokyo to negotiate matters with the Japanese government regarding immigration of Japanese nationals to Canada. This was indeed a difficult task as the Japanese were highly angered by the treatment meted out to their fellow countrymen in Canada and with restrictions placed on entry, freedom to travel and reside in Canada there were chances of violent reactions from the Japanese public. The most Lemieux could therefore achieve was an agreement by Japan to limit
the number of emigration passports to its citizens en route to Canada to a mere 400 a year. It was also agreed that the step would be presented as a voluntary action on the part of Japan while the number itself would remain a confidential one. (Kelley and Trebilcock 146)

The Lemieux agreement only affected the flow of migrants from Japan but could do nothing to stop immigration from Hawaii which accounted for more than 50% of the Japanese who entered and resided in Canada. Fresh measures were now taken by the Canadian government to deal with immigrants from Hawaii. The 1897 Alien Labour Act, the purpose of which was to prohibit the entry of contract labourers was reinvigorated and selectively enforced against contract labourers from Hawaii. (Kelley and Trebilcock 146)

Another act to restrict the entry of the Japanese into Canadian territory was to adopt a string of measures and regulations that would reduce the number of hopeful immigrants at the doorstep of Canada. These measures ensured that the Japanese immigrants underwent far more stringent and rigorous medical examinations than the white immigrants. Moreover those immigrants who did not come directly from the country of their birth or naturalization, or did not have $25 in cash, were prevented entry. Needless to say, the practices worked as the number of immigrants reduced significantly. Within a year, the number of immigrants fell from 7,601 in 1908 to 495, in 1909. (Kelley and Trebilcock 147) Within the next twenty years or so the number of Japanese immigrants remained around 500. Other arrangements were made later.

Since early Japanese society in Canada essentially comprised of male sojourners, who planned to return to Japan after making minor fortunes, the question of marriage was not a very significant one. When harsh living conditions coupled with
low wages made their ambition seem distant, they sought refuge in alcohol and gambling. Few women had accompanied the men and the prospects of marriage and family life seemed nearly impossible. The best alternative before them thus was to give in to the picture bride system of marriage or marriage by proxy. Especially during the period, 1908 to the beginning of World War 1, the practice and system of ‘Picture Brides’ became increasingly popular and widespread. According to this practice, marriages were fixed between a Japanese immigrant and a Japanese woman residing in Japan, by a match maker simply on the basis of photographs provided by the immigrant living abroad. It was a practice, popular among the Japanese and Korean communities where young men who left the shores of their native country for either Hawaii or North America tried to get married through a convenient long distant arrangement. A number of reasons were responsible for the popularity of this unique system. First of all, there were few female immigrants in Canada. The government did not encourage the migration of female immigrants, so the male immigrant had to look east, to find a partner and settle down. Often it was difficult if not impossible for the males to return home to get married because they could not afford it. Also the apprehension of not being able to return again to Canada added as an extra cautionary measure. In Hawaiian plantations, the owners actually desired that the Japanese labourers would settle down in marriage as wives could provide an extra helping hand as also render a sobering effect on their husbands who were as it is given to gambling and drinking as outlets of diversion.

The brides on their part agreed to such arrangements partly to escape poverty, to gain freedom from family obligations or simply out of respect to their parents’ wishes. Their stories ended sometimes in tragedy when the grooms did not meet their expectations or photographs did not match the persons in real life. Also the filth,
squalor and stuffy living conditions of the immigrants repulsed many eager brides. Some even went back to the native country, while many eventually settled down and adjusted to the new way of life.

Though the ‘picture brides’ were recognised by the Japanese government and the ‘nakodo’ or match makers arrangement, whereby the bride was selected and her name entered in the husband’s family registry was considered official in Japan with the bride being eligible for travel to join her husband, nonetheless, such marriages were not recognised in the host country. Mass weddings were therefore held on the brides’ arrival either in the docks itself or in hotels.

The lives of these women tend to reflect the constraints of the Meiji gender ideology that they were taught as girls in Japan. These gendered expectations influenced their immigration to Canada, and shaped their lives once they arrived. Gender ideology was not, however, the only force defining Japanese immigrant women's lives. Both their immigration experiences and their lives in Canada were also shaped by the forces of Canadian racism and by the economic hardship they confronted in both Japan and Canada. At the same time, these women cannot be seen simply as victims of economic inequalities and of gender and racial discrimination. Many challenged accepted gender roles by making active decisions to emigrate, while others struggled, overtly and covertly, against the various constraints of their lives in Canada. (Ayukawa 105)

The Lemieux agreement had fixed a total of 400 males for migration to Canada from Japan. This however did not take into account women and children, as a result of which may women managed to find their way to Canada in the years to follow. In the year 1913, as many as 300 to 400 picture brides entered Canada. They had many amazing experiences and bore much trauma to survive in Canada. The last picture bride to come to Canada it is believed was Asayo Murakami, who came in 1924 and died in 2002, aged 104.  

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Social evils like alcoholism and gambling reduced with the arrival of women and the starting of family life. Women worked at home as well as outside it despite being paid lower than the men. The women not only brought about stability in the lives of the men but later during the war, internment and dispersal, showed unmatched strength and fortitude in binding the family together in the absence of the male members and in braving hostile situations. The strength, fortitude and capabilities displayed by the Japanese women in Canada were exemplary. Though the arrival of the wife proved to be a boon to the Japanese community as a whole in Canada, the wives on their part often agreed to marry and come to Canada to escape domination from in-laws or poverty or merely to submit to the will of parents. Such wives were often disillusioned by life in Canada where they found life to be a replica of that which would have been at home in Japan, only here it was a foreign country. Adachi writes:

The wife was simply an adjunct to the husband’s needs in house and field, a person who would look after his wants and relieve his discomforts much as his mother had always done... Loneliness therefore was the common lot of most of these young wives, especially in their early years in Canada (90-91).

This was not only the lot of the Japanese wives but also the Chinese, who spent many miserable years adjusting to life in the land of opportunity. The initial disappointment and disillusionment that gnawed through life seems to have affected both men and women immigrants who realised soon enough that dream and adventure were fast fading from their lives and instead hard work, marginalisation and even loss of hopes of ever seeing their homeland were the realities of life.

Needless to say, with a spurt in the Japanese population, riots broke out again. The whites objected to the picture bride system saying that it was uncivilized and
perhaps a cloak for prostitution, since it did not involve love or any moral bindings. In reality, they feared that children born out of such marriages could lay claim to land and property and hence actively opposed it. The second generation or Nisei were Canada born and hence privileged to English education and therefore the fear that they could be more outspoken and aggressive than the Issei. In the U.S.A. the government was compelled to stop issuing passports to ‘picture brides’ in 1920.

Between 1908 and the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914, Canada experienced an economic boom which witnessed a great surge of immigration. The massive immigrant community helped Canada’s economy to flourish by supplying labour to both industry and agriculture. When the war first broke out, no one had quite the idea of its tremendous scale, the magnitude of its proportions or its devastating effect on mankind. While war ravaged the world and took a toll on human life, Canada’s economy leaped ahead. Though many Canadians died in the war her Industry received a kind of stimulation almost never seen before. In terms of immigration policies, the years between 1914 and 1930 were a period of flux with immigration being, ‘restrictive and exclusionary’. (Kelley and Trebilcock 165) In fact the years preceding and following the war were characterised by selective admission criteria. During the first 40 odd years of the Confederation, it was the government’s policy to try and populate the west. Immigration was aimed primarily at meeting the needs of the domestic labour market. Keeping the economy in mind, the Canadian government modified and directed its immigration policies. The Immigration Act and regulations was manoeuvred to permit access to those who in the opinion of the government were racially and politically at par with the Canadians. In fact during the war years, immigration was at an all time low. Not only due to restrictions but due to rising costs
in passage, scarcity of transport and the need to serve in the armies of their own countries.

Around 1916, about 200 Issei went to Alberta to join the battalions of the Canadian expeditionary force and were shipped off to Europe to fight on behalf of Canada in W.W.1. The action may be viewed as a continuation of the efforts on the part of the Japanese to assert their loyalty to Canada and project it as their own country. The effort however had little effect on their status in Canada as they continued to be regarded with suspicion and in fact their primary source of livelihood, the fishing business was targeted and the number of licenses issued to non-whites in general and the Japanese in particular were reduced. In the next few years, the number of fishing licenses issued to the Japanese Canadians continued to be reduced. Till about 1892, all the fishermen along the west coast were white. After the arrival of the Japanese, many licenses were issued to them. They were not only skilled fishermen, their boat building abilities came to no small use either. Soon protests started flooding that the river was being over fished. Also accusations were made that the Japanese fishermen were charging fish canneries less than the ‘going rate for fish and were willing to break strikes’. (Kelley and Trebilcock 143-144) No stone was literally left unturned to discredit the Japanese community and drive them to a state of abject misery and helplessness.

In sheer despair, for the first time, the Japanese Canadians united to form a union to protect their interests and secure the future of their children. In 1920, a year after the government started reducing the fishing licenses of the Japanese, Japanese Canadian mill workers formed a union. Such an action was perhaps prompted as much by the injustices meted out to the Japanese which were exceeding limits of endurance, as by the fact that the community too had begun to settle itself to a fairly
stable position with their ethnic enclaves going strong, farming enterprises growing steadily and many Japanese opting for higher education to equip themselves to fit in better to western society. Miss Chitose Uchida is believed to be among the first Japanese Canadians to graduate from a Canadian University. (Ayukawa and Roy 852)

Almost in reaction to the formation of the Japanese Canadian Mill Union, the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed to exclude Asians from immigrating to British Columbia. Under pressure, the Canadian government was forced to amend the Gentleman’s Agreement and in 1928, it was decided that not more than 150 Japanese would be allowed entry to Canada per year. By 1927, several other Japanese unions were formed. The Japanese Labour Union got affiliation with the Trades and Labour congress of Canada. The Maple Ridge Berry Growers Cooperative Exchange was organised by Yasutaro Yamaga, as the first agricultural producers’ cooperative. Several organisations and associations were formed to reflect the growing solidarity among the Japanese in the face of adversity. It was also a pointer to their organisational skills.

The year 1929, constitutes a landmark in the history of the Japanese in Canada. After years of struggle, for the first time, an Issei fisherman named Jun Kisawa, won a court battle against a move to oppose restrictions on Japanese Canadians using motorised fishing boats. In 1931, Japanese Canadians won a victory of sorts when World War 1 Issei survivors were granted franchise. The privilege was not extended to other Japanese Canadians or other Asians. A slow but sure start to the assertion of Japanese presence was beginning. After many years of struggle for the first time perhaps the recognition of the Japanese people as an integral part of Canada was being accepted. This may also be seen as a prelude to the later policy of Multiculturalism adopted by Canada during the 1970s. The mood remained upbeat
with the publication of *The New Canadian*, the first English newspaper published by the Japanese. This happened in the year 1938 and was the only paper permitted publication during the years of uprooting. Though the efforts of the Japanese Canadian Citizens’ League to gain franchise in Ottawa failed and the strict surveillance on the Japanese community continued, no subversive activity could be reported by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The suspicions on the community did not cease and matters did not become smooth or easy for the Japanese, but a very small step had been taken towards a policy of inclusiveness.

The integration of the Japanese Canadian people to mainstream Canadian life was very slow but this minor victory was a major achievement for a community that despite its many talents was repeatedly being marginalised. The Japanese in Canada were to witness many more discriminatory actions and humiliating experiences until their contribution to the creation of the multicultural Canada of today was finally formally acknowledged.

In 1939, Canada entered into war with Germany. The special committee of the war committee recommended that Japanese Canadians could not be allowed to volunteer for the armed services as there was strong public opinion against them. However, between March and August, 1941, compulsory registration of all Japanese Canadians over the age of 16 was carried out by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Things however changed forever on 7th December, 1941 and all efforts of the Japanese to gain acceptance within the Canadian community collapsed when Japan attacked the American Naval base in Pearl Harbour and Canada declared war on Japan. ‘In February 1942 the federal cabinet ordered the expulsion of 22,000 Japanese Canadians residing within one hundred miles of the Pacific Coast’ (Gomer Sunahara
1. The Japanese in Canada were labelled ‘Enemy Aliens’. Under the War Measures Act Order in Council PC 1951, all Japanese nationals and those naturalized after 1922 were required to register with the Registrar of enemy Aliens. A series of stern actions were taken, which included the seizure of fishing boats owned by the Japanese. On 8\textsuperscript{th} of December 1941 The Royal Canadian Navy began impounding on 1,200 vessels which was later explained as a ‘defensive measure’ (Gomer Sunahara 28). It was in fact a traumatic nightmare for the Japanese who had no idea to where they were being led and what was there in store for them. It was only the beginning of worse things to come when they would be completely stripped of their belongings and sent off to work while their families were removed to ghost towns and remote camps.

The closure of Japanese schools and newspapers followed as did cancellation of the Insurance policies of the Japanese. On 16\textsuperscript{th} of December, 1941, PC9760 was passed, whereby all persons of Japanese origin had to register as enemy aliens. Able bodied male, ‘enemy aliens’, aged 18 years and above were coerced to leave the so called ‘protected’ zone and forced to work in road camps in the Rockies.\textsuperscript{9} The deep psychological anguish suffered by male internees and the sudden and unjust fragmentation of the otherwise extremely close knit Japanese family resulted in trauma and helplessness that has been recorded in literature with acute precision by many writers whose families underwent the victimization and cruel oppression of the government’s orders. On 24\textsuperscript{th} of February, 1942, the Minister of Justice was empowered by PC1486 to control the movements of all persons of Japanese origin in the protected area. The privacy of the community was severely hampered. As if the confinement and labels of ‘enemy aliens’ were not insulting enough, the control of movements within the protected area deprived the Japanese of their basic freedom and most fundamental right. Completely at the mercy of the Federal government and its
inhuman policies, the Japanese soon lost all hopes of resuming a life of dignity, when their properties were confiscated and they were instructed to vacate the coast. Under PC 1665, property and belongings of the Japanese were entrusted to the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property as supposed protective measure. To add to their woes, the Director of Soldier Settlement was given authority to purchase or lease farms owned by Japanese Canadians. By PC 5523, as many as 572 farms were bought by him without consulting the rightful owners.¹⁰

The Japanese permitted themselves to be herded away to the camps and faced the merciless onslaught of the government’s orders. Their docile and obedient nature forbade them to offer any kind of resistance or objection. ‘The Japanese were inclined to follow lines of least resistance since their cultural norms emphasized duty and obligation as well as the values of conformity and obedience.’ (Adachi 225) As a result it was not difficult for the government to remove so many thousands of Japanese from their homes to the camps.

With the loss of their boats, farms, property and belonging, the Japanese were stripped of practically everything. Nearly 20,881 persons were uprooted from the coast by the end of October 1942. (Adachi 234) Most were Canada born or naturalized citizens. The few that were native born had been residing in Canada for many decades. This highly ironic situation has been reflected in literature too. The tendency of a white race to support other whites rather than other races born in their own country is explicitly reflected in Kogawa’s novel, *Obasan*, where the fiery protagonist Aunt Emily exclaims- “Why in a time of war with Germany and Japan would our government seize the property and homes of Canadian-born Canadians but not the homes of German-born Germans?” (38) Only a few mental cases and persons who had married outside the Japanese community were spared on the coast by the
Ministry of Justice. ‘Interruption, then, was the magic elixir that converted security risks into bona fide Canadians’ (Adachi 235). The irony of the situation was almost incredible. With Canada-born people being considered enemies and partners or children of mixed marriages being spared the ordeal of evacuation and internment!

The conditions in most camps were pathetic. With unhealthy, unsanitary conditions, the internees had to brave the biting cold. At Hastings Park, many stables and barnyards were used to house the internees. Some camps in the Lillooet area and in Christina Lake were called ‘relocation centres’ and they were used to house middle and upper class Japanese who the government felt would not pose a threat to the security of the nation.

The confiscation of Japanese property and consequential auctioneering may have created a huge loss for the Japanese in Canada as he now had no belonging, no home, no privacy and no real family life. His family was fragmented and he was looked upon with suspicion and contempt. His labour was sought after, but he had no dignity or respectable standing in life.

The whites on the other hand benefitted by this hugely. For one, Japanese property was bought cheaply by them, moreover, Japanese labour was used on a massive scale to build roads, work on farms and in many other areas which helped the process of nation building. One of the greatest beneficiaries of the internment, were the white fishermen, who now could fish in the waters without competition from the Japanese. The boats seized by the police were used by the whites. Being able boat builders, these boats came of great use to those who gained possession of them. In fact it remained the dream of many Japanese fishermen to go back to their boats some day. A wish, that largely remained unfulfilled.
In 1944, Prime Minister King, stated that it was desirable to disperse the Japanese all over Canada. Applications from Japanese Canadians for ‘Voluntary Repatriation’ to Japan was also sought. Those who did not apply had to move east of the Rockies to prove their loyalty to Canada. “Before the advent of multiculturalism, most Canadians thought that the complete assimilation of non-Anglo Canadians to the Anglo Canadian ideal was not only desirable but necessary” (Gomer Sunahara 131). Many families were dispersed to farms to work as labourers, their labour helped in increasing agricultural production but they themselves led miserable lives in harsh conditions. These measures actually had far reaching consequences and were charged by racial and discriminatory motives. The whole idea of repatriation was shocking as the majority of Japanese Canadians considered Canada and not Japan as their home. Returning would actually mean exile. Even the idea of dispersal was unhealthy as it meant preventing the Japanese from resettling in ethnic enclaves that could give them a sense of bonding as well as opportunities of uniting to fight a common enemy. They were instead actively encouraged to embrace western culture at the expense of their own, which would finally lead to a diluted sense of nationality or prevent them from asserting an independent Japanese identity. The sad effect of such actions was that the Japanese could never again live as an ethnic community as they lived hitherto. Indeed much of their cultural heritage was lost. The younger generations had little sympathy for their native culture, preferring the western instead. Worse, they took a very, very long time to be accepted in Canadian society. Balancing between two cultures, in very slow and cautious steps, the Japanese search for home and identity began once again.

The forced dispersal ironically also led to a greater effort on the part of the Japanese in Canada to rediscover their roots and tradition. The Japanese who were believed to be submissive as a race actually asserted their powers of tolerance and
endurance to rebuild their lives and come out stronger to get over the scars of the internment years and the subsequent dispersal. Once again, pitted against hostile laws and insensitive policy makers, the Japanese Canadian started from scratch to rebuild his life. His only asset in most cases was his indomitable spirit and innate sense of discipline and tolerance with which he faced and battled the most adverse situations.

The journey from Japan, undertaken many years ago for food and good life, which turned into a struggle for survival and search for identity, once again with the World War re-enacted itself. On 4 August, 1944 Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, declared in the House of Commons:

It is a fact that no person of Japanese race born in Canada has been charged with any act of sabotage or disloyalty during the war years (Adachi 276).

The statement proved what the Canadian Japanese had been trying to say all along. With the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941 and the hysteria that followed, a ground was created which merely promoted hatred and racism and helped only those who sought to reap benefits for themselves from perverted circumstances. Before the war, both the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had advised the government that the Japanese Canadian did not pose a serious threat to national security. Such reports fell on deaf ears and instead the Japanese were termed as ‘enemy aliens’ and were subjected to inhuman treatment (Harris 140). There was ample evidence therefore that it was racist motivations that led to the harassment and marginalisation of the Japanese who suffered due to no fault but that they were not white and because they posed a threat to Canadian society by their industry and dedication to their professions.
In the meanwhile, in 1945, Atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6, August and 9, August respectively by the U.S.A. On 2, September, 1945, on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, Japan surrendered (Goto-Jones 86). This had a direct effect on the Japanese in Canada. All internment camps except new Denver were ordered to be closed. The War Measures Act, expired in 1946, but the vigil on the Japanese was far from over and the Canadian government used the National Emergency Transitional Powers Act to keep watch over them. On 31, May, deportations to Japan started and the sight of boats carrying exiled Japanese to Japan became a common sight. In December, the same year, the Privy Council upheld a Supreme Court decision that deportations were legal.

Ian Mackenzie, MP from Vancouver who pushed forward the slogan ‘No Japs from the Rockies to the seas’ is said to declared, ‘It is ... my personal intention, as long as I am in public life, that these Japanese shall not come back here.’ (Miki 91-92) Even after it was evident that the Japanese were in no way a source of threat to the government or society, they still continued to be targeted even after the war got over. The internment was a nightmare and there seemed to be no respite even after the war ended. The hopes that the Japanese came with into the ‘Promised Land’ were being crushed by thoughtless political powers and racism which had impregnated deep in the white mind. In her assessment of the Japanese Canadian uprooting during World War II, Anne Gomer Sunahara says that Ian Mackenzie was one of the villains who abused the Japanese Canadians in the war (164). It is ironical that many years later this same country that once witnessed deeply embedded racism, would later be adopting a multicultural policy to accommodate people of many races.

When almost 4,000, Japanese had been repatriated, orders for deportation were cancelled. This happened in January, 1947. In July the same year, the
Citizenship Act extended franchise to Canadians of Chinese and other South Asian origin, but excluded the Japanese Canadians and Aboriginal people. In July, 1947, the Bird Commission was set up to enquire into the losses suffered by the Japanese before and during internment. It was headed by Justice Henry Bird.

Finally in 1949, all restrictions imposed under the infamous War Measures Act were lifted, and the Japanese Canadian was granted both franchise as well as rights of free movement to all parts of Canada. The last of the World War II restrictions were ultimately lifted. The immediate years that followed involved a rebuilding of community life that never really happened. Herculean efforts were put in by the community to reorganize their lives and bring in order and structure. Mason Harris rightly said that the Japanese in Canada began ‘life after the war with nothing’ (140). Once again the Japanese made an effort to start life afresh and settle down and seek acceptance in the very society that had caused them such anguish and trauma. Their industrious nature and innate values once again helped them to find feet. Though widely dispersed they once again came forward to build their Japanese organisations and this time fight for their rights.

In order to gain a complete understanding of the ordeal of the Japanese in Canada, it is imperative to have an idea of the condition of the Japanese in neighbouring America, where too they had come in search of food and work. During the war, the Japanese Americans were interned too, but once the war ended, the government helped them to resettle on the west coast. In Canada, the war time restrictions continued till 31, March, 1949 and this included exclusion from the west coast, restrictions on movement, employment and residence. The period of internment lasted for only two years in America, while in Canada, it stretched to nearly seven years. The number of internees in America was also fewer. The American Japanese
suffered less, as families were not split and the American government made provision for the education of the internees in the camps. In Manzanar, in America, not only schools but fully accredited college level courses were also offered. In Canada, families were split, often schools refused to take in internees, as they were not local tax payers. The internees made their own provisions for education, aided by the church and B.C. Security commission. The cost of internment was borne by the internees in Canada, except for very basic amenities in government camps, whereas in America, the War relocation Authority provided housing, food and even clothing. Japanese Canadians were not accepted in the Armed Forces of Canada until 1945. Japanese Americans were however drafted into the army in order to show loyalty to America. Those who resisted were court-martialled and imprisoned. In both countries, internment could have been avoided, as there was no real evidence of the direct involvement of the Japanese in subversive activities. In Canada, the internment administration was managed by the B.C. Security, while in America, the War Relocation Authority under the army, managed the affairs The American Japanese were nonetheless better off than their Canadian counterparts, this was perhaps because:

The American constitution protected the rights of the American citizens, thus providing a Japanese Americans who were citizens with a potential basis for litigation against the government, while in Canada there was no significant legal obstacle to depriving Japanese Canadian citizens of their rights for an indefinite period (Harris 141).

From the 1950s till date, the Japanese has been rebuilding, reorganizing and restructuring his life. The Bird Commission awarded $1.3 million in claims to 1,434 Japanese Canadians. This however only included losses based on property loss. The other losses suffered as a result of the loss of employment, break in education,
psychological distress due to relocation, segregation of family members or damages caused due to denial of basic civil rights, were not even considered. This task had now to be completed by the Japanese himself— to regain his lost esteem and reinstate himself in Canadian society again. And in doing so, the efforts of the National Association of Japanese Canadians were indeed laudable. Established in 1947, they played a powerful role in the Japanese Canadian struggle for franchise, they also objected to the limited terms of the Bird Commission. They were also instrumental in negotiating the Redress settlement on behalf of the Japanese Canadians.

In 1950, some attempts were made to bring back deported Japanese Canadians from Japan by Order in Council PC 4364. In the next 15 years many changes took place in Canadian policy making and in 1967, the government introduced the Point System for new immigrants. Race was not an issue any more as a criterion for immigration. 50 new immigrants, the ‘Shin Issei’ or new immigrants entered Canada from Japan’s urban middle class. Culturally they were vastly different from the Issei as the latter were mostly rustic, poor and semi-literate. The Shin Issei were modern in outlook, educated and urban. They were quick to adapt to Canadian society, but also attempted to preserve Japanese culture and tradition zealously.

In the year 1977, the Japanese Canadian centennial was celebrated and discussions for redress began in an informal manner. In 1980, the National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association was revamped into the National Association of Japanese Canadians. They started canvassing actively for redress and compensation.

Though several writings on the plight of the Japanese internee appeared, with the publication of Joy Kogawa’s Obasan, the actual horrors of internment became public. Kogawa followed it up by a sequel later and wrote several other books on the
subject of Japanese-Canadian experience. She set off a trend and inspired many other writers to write about their experiences.

The National Association of Japanese Canadians’ Council met at Winnipeg and passed a resolution seeking official acknowledgement and redress for past injustices. They also demanded a review of the War Measures Act in order to ensure that such atrocities were never faced by Canadians ever. In March the same year, the Special Committee on participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society, an all-party parliamentary committee published “Equality Now”. It was their recommendation that the Canadian parliament should officially acknowledge the ill treatment meted out to the Japanese during and after World War II, and also that the government should undertake negotiations to redress those wronged.

In the same vein, the Toronto City Council passed a motion urging the government to re-open negotiations with the National Association of Japanese Canadians and provide justice to the Japanese in Canada. On May 8, 1986, Price Waterhouse Associates assessed the income and property losses of the Japanese Canadians at not less than $443 million in 1986 dollars. This exposed how measly the government’s offer of $ 5 – 6 million was. (Miki, Redress 288)

Matters moved swiftly and in July the following year, the National Association of Japanese Canadians appealed to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to take a personal interest in the matter to resolve the issue of redress. On 17, September, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1987, offering acknowledgment and $1.37 billion in redress to Japanese Americans interned during World War II. A sum of $20,000 was offered to each of the estimated 66,000 survivors and a $50 million fund to educate the American public about the uprooting.
In October 1990, Attorney General Dick Thornburgh put before the Japanese Americans ‘a formal apology signed by President George Bush and the first set of reparation checks to members of the Japanese community who had been interned during World War II. In so doing, he praised the efforts of Japanese Americans for “forcing us to re-examine our history” (Rico and Mano 486).

In October, 1987, the NAJC gathered support from the public and in fact a National coalition was formed comprising of a broad cross-section of individuals, ethnic groups, unions, professional associations and cultural groups. Also rallies came out in open support of redress for the Japanese in Canada. Finally, on 22, September, 1988, Redress was gained. Art Miki of the NAJC and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney signed the terms of agreement. (Miki, Redress 320) It included an acknowledgement, apology and compensation for the injustices suffered by the Japanese Canadians during and after W.W.II. The compensation would be $21,000 per individual. The Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said in the House of Commons on 22, September, 1987:

I know that I speak for members on all sides of the House today in offering to Japanese Canadians the formal and sincere apology of this Parliament for those past injustices against them, against their families and against their heritage and our solemn commitment and undertaking to Canadians of every origin that such violations will never again in this country be countenanced or repeated.11

The census of Canada shows that in 1996, the Japanese Canadian population was 77,130 of whom nearly one-third indicates multiple ethnic backgrounds. The rate of internmarriage too is high, almost 90%. The Japanese Canadian has by now settled quite comfortably into Canadian society, this is proved by both the high rate of inter marriage as well as the fact that many Japanese Canadians have scaled great heights.
in different fields of life. From Ms Chitose Uchida the first Japanese graduate from a Canadian University in 1916, the Japanese Canadian has come a long way. Several famed Canadian writers include Japanese authors like Joy Kogawa, Hiromi Goto, Ken Adachi, Kerri Sakamoto, Terry Watada, Roy Miki and so on. The famed economist, Thomas Kunito Shoyama is also of Japanese ancestry. In the world of art and cinema, Japanese Canadians like Robert Ito, Hiro Kanagawa and Midi Onadera have made their mark. Beverly Joan Oda was the first Japanese Canadian M.P and Cabinet Minister in Canadian History.

With her policy of multiculturalism, the attitude of society is expected to be more accommodating.

However there were no strong multicultural demands on the part of the third world immigrants themselves to force such a policy. The issues raised by them were about racism, legal discrimination involving immigration and family reunification (Bannerji 44).

This is true of the Japanese also who wanted merely to live a life of dignity without constant reminders to their race and colour. Multiculturalism as Himani Bannerji writes therefore was a situation the immigrant did not demand but found himself in. Though several problems continue with regard to employment, gender, generational gap and identity and so on, the Japanese in Canada is in a more advantageous position today than his forefathers.

In 2002 the 125th anniversary of Manzo Nagano the first immigrant from Japan was celebrated with great aplomb. The Japanese Canadian is a part and parcel of Canadian society today. Their history is long, chequered and dotted with strife and conflict. The literature produced by them is reflective of their struggle for survival as well as their assimilation, integration and adaptation to Canadian history and society.
Interestingly literature fills the many gaps left open by history. The Japanese Canadian followed many forms of literary expression from traditional Japanese poetry to fiction and autobiographies. These have helped build up a fairly concise picture of the history of Japanese immigration to Canada. Japanese Canadian writing embraces the travails of settlement along with other issues important to the community today. Their literature serves as much as a voice for their unique situation in Canada as it serves as a platform for the government to allow them to express their frustrations and anguish. Caught between two worlds, only a look into their writings can give a glimpse into their unique world. As Novalis put it, ‘Novels arise out of the shortcomings of history.’ The writings of the Japanese in Canada is testimony to their sufferings and their struggle for existence. A thorough analysis of their works therefore can throw much light on their lives.
ENDNOTES


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid. 51.


10. Ibid.
