Chapter 5

The Indo-Canadian Experience in Literature

Expatriation is a corollary of globalization. The frequency and intensity of movement, integration and settlement in a new country has only multiplied in number as a natural outcome of travel for business, economic and educational reasons. Whether complete assimilation into a new nation is possible is a central question because jettisoning cultural, familial and national ties are complicated issues. The manifold challenges that the Indian diaspora faces is evident through the enormous amount of literature that comes from them. Nevertheless, they are also trying to portray through their creative sensibilities, the truth that transnational movements are a consequence of economic options available for sustenance. Such a shift inevitably is accompanied by fresh intercultural tests. We find that the characters in the novels who straddle between India and Canada do so in order to pursue a means of livelihood for which they are prepared to endure hardships, culture shocks, new governmental policies, vagaries of climate that are radically different from the Indian experience, live far away from their family, relatives and friends—all these for the desire of fulfilling economic needs. So, themes of immigration, economic and educational activities occur in diaspora writing.

This chapter will focus on how the Indian diaspora writers in Canada depict their position through their literary creations. It will also take a look at the kind of experiences the Indo-Canadians generally have in Canada with regards to the idea of multiculturalism and their position as a diasporic community. Apparently, interface between the two nations
is occurring not only politically and economically but also in literature, specifically
diaspora narratives that are creative and imaginative products. Desire to covet wealth is
what drives protagonists to Canada and they are followed by their family, who also, many
times get involved in this endeavour because of economic exigencies. They encounter
the real Canada in their lives as they struggle to extricate themselves from the torment of
nostalgia of home culture.

Literature by the Indian diaspora in Canada is not a new phenomenon. The first novel
from the Indian diasporic community in Canada came from Sadhu Singh Dhami (qtd in
Oberoi 187) who wrote Maluka where the protagonist hails from Punjab and settles in
Toronto. Historically, it was the Punjabis who starting settling in Canada. The story is a
portrayal of the travails and tribulations of migrants from Punjab who attempt to adapt to
the new environment—all because of financial constraints back home. Small land holdings
of farmers, more number of people in the family and desire to make more wealth propelled
several young Punjabi men to cross the oceans. While they were successful in securing
jobs and making money, they also suffered from psychic breakdown. Maluka’s cultural
confusions and emotional trauma of having left home come through evocatively and as a
novel, forms a landmark in painting the picture of Indians in North America; but what is
critical here is the compulsion of travel induced by financial wants. We find that the
situation of the Punjabi society of those times is reflected in fiction. It is historically true
that people who came from India and settled in Canada faced emotional trauma since they
encountered the fact that their worlds had changed. Culturally, from their perspective, they
had implanted themselves into a curious setting but then, monetary constraints compelled
them to undertake the journey. So, we find that economics is a driving force behind movement to Canada.

Once the immigrants settle in the adopted land, they know that they have to imbibe at least some of the aspects of the new country. Their family’s arrival is psychologically satisfying and helps escape loneliness. The presence of more members of the community helps the immigrants a little more. For instance, the Punjabis and Gujaratis are present in a greater number in Canada. Naturally, the feeling of such immigrants who belong to such communities would be that they are living amidst familiar people. Motivation to continue in such surroundings becomes easier. Of course, while the new settlers continue in the adopted land they are also in touch with their Home. Naturally, they exchange knowledge and culture of the new land with their people. This is important in the Indo-Canada bilateral process. How this happens will be a matter of examination in the subsequent segments.

*  

According to Sylvio Tai “An immigrant can act as an intermediary, for information, preferences and networks” (225); implying that an immigrant has the potential to convey new knowledge and experience to people in his country of origin, in the process inspiring them to relocate or activate expansion of economic and trade activities. We find examples of such trends in literary characters that move to Canada for purposes of economic sustenance.
Margaret Walton-Roberts states “transnational entrepreneurs…can become the “new Argonauts” of the global economy and create cross-regional trading relationships based on their cultural familiarity with the source and destination regions” (6). The indication is towards the umbilical cord—the formidable pull from the country of origin. The immigrants neither feel completely a part of the adopted land nor do they find it easy to give up their mother country since it constitutes their essence. This is especially true with the first generation immigrants. The term ‘Argonauts’ was analysed in depth by Anna Lee Saxenian who stated:

The pioneers of these profound transformations in the global economy are the foreign-born, technically skilled entrepreneurs who travel back and forth between Silicon Valley and their home countries. Like the Greeks who sailed with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece, the new Argonauts undertake the risky but economically rewarding project of starting companies far from established centers of skill and technology. (3)

Here Saxenian analyses the trend in the context of the US but this can be applied to the Canadian and Indian situations as well since the idea is essentially generic. The implication is that diaspora is significant in the transporting and application of skills and technology and consequently in the establishment of organizations across the world. Their movements are inevitable since they have family and relatives in their country of origin. Memory of home haunts them so that they are impelled to consider meeting their people and experiencing their own culture at least temporarily. At the same time, it is not possible for them to sever ties with the adopted land since that is where their means of livelihood
exists. One thing that can create a chance for them to visit their country often is establishing centers of work at home. This ensures the maintenance of their connections with their roots. Now, it is this factor that the government can perceive as an invaluable resource. In the process of establishing institutions of work there is transfer of knowledge and technology, a thorough use of marketing skills, investments and returns. The diaspora networks assume importance in this context and the Indo-Canadian community in Canada has been under utilized in this regard.

Travelling and residing in a new country is beset with risks and challenges, economically as well as culturally which means the diaspora has to either be strong or become strong in order to survive and succeed in the adopted land. There is the added encumbrance of learning and understanding a new culture and possibly language at times if it is alien. Adapting to a new environment is an arduous task and often the settler might consider going back or shuttling between the adopted and homelands. There is in a certain sense a precarious ‘sailing on two boats’ and we find that several people are able to accomplish this. They want to ‘give’ to both the countries. It is a question of allegiance and there is a shared one. There is a need for commitment to both the countries because both are close to the heart.

The exposures that the diasporic communities receive help them innovate in their fields. Not only is innovation stirred up, there is also the added advantage of improving trade patterns. In a research study on the relationship between trade and immigration in the context of the US, “Immigrants carry information on trading contacts and element of trust for better trading enforcements with their home country. In addition, immigrants bring
with them knowledge of language, institutions, and culture of their country of origin. All of the above over time may lower the transactions costs involved in trade” (Mundra 66). These ideas are relevant in the context of India and Canada too. Alongside technology-transfer there is a whole set of culture and traditions that move and transplant.

There is the establishment of a deep connection between trade, culture and immigration. These create a pattern that over time construct and increase capital producing schemes. It would be necessary to define who an immigrant is. According to Isajiw:

Immigrants, unlike settlers and colonizers, are those migrants who move into another society and become part of its existing structure. They may enter the society at any of its structural levels depending upon their socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and upon the state of the society’s economy at any given time. Thus some immigrants become part of the majority ethnic group, others, part of the minority groups. (65)

The difference between immigrants, settlers and colonizers is perceptive since an immigrant might feel that though she is a part of Canada she is not on par with the citizens. The term ‘immigrant’ could be demoralizing for some. As per this definition we do find that Indians who enter Canada take up different kinds of jobs depending on their qualification. Also, depending on their numbers in the country they belong to minority and majority. Number does make a difference in terms of their visibility. Their aim is not to ravage the country unlike colonizers; instead theirs is a peaceful objective of earning their livelihood while at the same time they have a desire to retain connections with their homelands.
While immigrants bring their cultures into a new country they also take back home and share the new culture with people in the country of origin. It is like a circle where ‘signs’ of culture keeping moving incessantly. Culture is not stagnant. It flows rapidly and because of the quality of newness there is a sense of curiosity. Since cultural aspects are a matter of selection, what people perceive as interesting will be imitated. We find this trend in the Canadian context where there is a huge Indian population who bring with them memories and facets of their culture and nation and practice them in the new society. In that sense it is an introduction and a contribution. There is definitely a hybridization taking place of cultures and languages—the first generation wants to cling to its roots while the succeeding generations have problems grasping the original culture. Gradually, the new generations find the adopted society more comfortable but they share a tenuous connection with their homelands.

Since, they keep going to India with their parents to meet their kith and kin, the relation with the mother country, fragile though it may be, is preserved. If the economic activity that they are engaged in is business then chances of involving resources and people of both nations are high. It is here that diplomatic relations and governmental policies assume importance. If the regulations are encouraging then the drive to initiate such economic activities are high. Therefore, diasporic communities are critical in Canada-India bilateral relationship. There is the inevitable bringing in of their cultures and religions since forgetting them is an impossible feat and complete assimilation becomes difficult at least for the first generation migrants. They are an important resource and the
more they are researched on and utilized the more the opportunities for a stronger
economic relationship between the two countries.

In the literature of the Indo-Canadian writers, we find the Indian diaspora engaging in
economic activities in Canada and inscribing their unique status as connecting points
between Canada and India. In Indo-Canadian literature the portrayals of characters show
how society works in contemporary scenario. Through references to history, geography,
culture and economics, characters sail through fiction producing a sequence of actions that
seem akin to the manner in which real diaspora behave and act.

* 

It would be relevant to briefly look at the history of the movement of Indians to
Canada. In the context of the first immigrants to Canada from India, between 1904 to 1908,
5000 Indians from Punjab came and settled in British Columbia (qtd in Oberoi 188) and
“Many Indian found jobs in big Canadian companies such as the Canadian Pacific Railway
and the Hudson’s Bay Company as well as in the resource industries. Jobs in lumber
camps, sawmills, cattle farms and fruit orchards were also easily within reach” (Agrawal
and Lovell 147). So, Indians got employed in the numerous economic sectors of Canada
from the beginning of the last century. These jobs as are evident constitute the backbone of
an economy. They are vital in preserving and running the economic health of a country
since their absence can severely strain growth and progress. Availability of jobs in Canada
encouraged further immigration of Indians. Interestingly, immigration has always been a
feature of Canadian settlement. In the year 1972, the minister of citizenship in Ontario
rhetorically expressed:
No other part of the globe, no other country can claim a more culturally diversified society than we have in this province. Ontario has more Canadians of German origin than Bonn, more of Italian origin than Florence, more Canadians of Greek origin than Sparta? That we have in our midst, 54 ethnocultural groups, speaking 72 languages. Just 100 years ago the Canadian identity was moulded in the crucible of nationalism; it is now being tempered by the dynamics of multiculturalism. (qtd in Harney 70)

The rhetoric of multiculturalism emphasizing the evolution of nationalism to multiculturalism clearly indicate that the co-existence of people originating from other nations invariably bring with them virtues of talent and hard work that form components of a good working economy. In the context of Indians, this naturally produces a hopeful platform to improve bilateral association and a huge number of citizens from India have made Canada their dwelling place. It is also exemplary that Canada has a wide variety of ethnic communities and sees this as an enriching process. Nonetheless, there are also challenges originating out of cultural differences that need negotiations at a diplomatic level too. Maintaining peace, which Canada has been successful in achieving, is easier said than done. The aforementioned rhetorical statement can be compared to what Gurcharan Das says in connection with India describing it as a “multinational nation” (151) stating:

In a sense it is what plural Europe would like to be—a united economic and political entity in which its different nationalities and minorities continue to flourish. India’s diversity is the result of historic migrations and wanderings of many peoples and tribes who came here over thousands of years and made it their
home. An anthropologist described the subcontinent of India as ‘a deep net’ into which various races and peoples of Asia drifted over time and were caught. (153)

India has always been seen as a pluralistic society in whose history, one can see the coming and assimilating of several ethnicities. Like Canada, in India too every new community has conflated into the prevalent society; and these periods of settlement have been marked with frictions and adjustments that are only natural when dissimilar cultures confront one another; and again like Canada the history of migration and settlement in India has been a recurring feature. The frictions in the Indian context of course, have been violent as compared to the issues that have cropped up in the Canadian society. According to Stanley Wolpert:

The roots of India's multiculturalism extend back over three thousand years to the first great invasions of South Asia by Indo-Aryan tribes…Those Vedic Aryans, the easternmost wing of an Indo-European dispersion originating in the Caucasus, poured over the Khyber, Bolan, and other passes of the Hindu Kush mountains that now divide Afghanistan from Pakistan. (575)

The new communities inscribed their culture on the Indian terrain. The path of immersion into a new society and culture were strewn with conflict and contest for identity that led to the emergence of contraventions and disputes. These happened sporadically with efforts to quell feuds. Suspending hostilities is never easy and for the progress of the nation, it is imperative to mitigate differences through promotion of tolerance. In this sense, multiculturalism has been a very old phenomenon in Indian history. Today, it is interesting to observe that movement of people from country to country is a global phenomenon and
governments understand the fact that for national economic growth such transnational movements are enormously vital.

Throughout its history, India has always made efforts to assimilate and accommodate cultures not only tolerating the variety but also celebrating them with the result that India today has multiple communities, identities, languages and cultures that co-exist so naturally as if they were normal emanations from the Indian soil. Nonetheless, Indian history depicts how various streams conjoined to form the nation as it exists in its present shape and glory. Jawaharlal Nehru suggested this when he said “Each incursion of foreign elements was a challenge to this culture but it was met successfully by a new synthesis and a process of absorption. This was also a process of rejuvenation and new blooms of culture arose out of it” (53). Optimism resonates from these statements that saw new cultures as a process of enhancement of the existing cultures in India. It has also the strain of welcoming newness and allowing it to be a part Indian culture.

While in India, the process of the various communities coming and settling has been happening gradually and sometimes following violent incidents, in Canada there have been conscious efforts to create a peaceful multicultural environment. The policy of multiculturalism has also been subjected to vehement criticism since it is often perceived as superficial and political and has nothing to do with the actual objective of welfare of the incoming ethnic communities. *No New Land* by M. G. Vassanji presents such state-driven efforts of Canadian multiculturalism through an incident where Nurdin and other immigrants from various nationalities are invited for a party that intends to familiarize new Canadians with the old and the author describes “A hundred or so people must have been
present, of all races it seemed, from every corner of the world, milling around, forming tentative groups, talking of the new experience. The thrill of it all, like the first day at school” (53). The last statement suggests that the whole idea of so many people in a society seems interesting only in the beginning “like the first day at school” (53) and later the undersides start exposing themselves. While a party of this kind seems to be a beginning for the new immigrants to assimilate into a new culture, in the novel there is also an incident of a racist attack where three Canadians physically abuse Esmail calling him “Paki” (96)—a derogatory term used to disparage all Asians in general. Here Esmail is an East African but is huddled into a category and stereotype where generally all Asians are ‘Pakis’. Media and public outrage on the incident elevate him into a position of a celebrity and in a public agitation there is an emcee who “read his own humorous poetry, poking fun at the government and what he called “multivulturalism”” (111). The word “multivulturalism” (111) is used as a pun on multiculturalism to suggest that the concept has problems of implementation and that it seems synthetic when it comes to actual treatment of Asians or other races. The issue is not as easy to deal with as it seems. The attempt is also to expose the hollowness of such government policies since they don’t really work in society unless there is awareness and political will in executing them.

It is a very deep cultural issue that needs greater acceptance. So, evolving policies and accomplishing them effectively are two different things. All the characters in the novel engage in a variety of economic activities showing how Indians have ingrained themselves into the Canadian economic framework. Therefore, protecting their rights should necessarily become a priority since they are not only working for themselves but also for
fuelling the economy. Racist attacks can disenchant immigrants. For instance, racist attacks on Indian students in Australia brought down the percentage of migration of Indian students for higher education there as mentioned in Chapter 3. With media’s constant intervention, and sometimes hyperbolic representation of facts, such incidents can seriously affect transnational movements. In the era of globalization, racism is a bane to any country in general since no nation can claim to be an island or disinterested in the processes of people movements. A perpetuation of stereotypes is one of the dangers in a multicultural society. It is difficult to do away with such typecasting since “Stereotypes are the cognitive components of prejudice—image-labels that we assign to a group of people that show what we believe the group is like and how we think persons in that group will have. Stereotypes are “pictures in our heads”, or images, of a group or statements about a group of people that presume to identify their characteristics” (qtd in Isajiw 144).

Several stereotypes about immigrants abound among people. A few examples are “Black persons in the United States were labeled by prejudiced persons as “Niggers”, the poor East Indians in Canada, as “Pakis”, the Newfoundlanders, as “Newfies”, Jews, as “Kiles”, Chinese as “Chinks”…” (qtd in Isajiw144). Tagging people with names and putting them down makes them all the more nostalgic about home and culture since they begin feeling that security is something that they can have only in their own country. Categorization and disparaging people that can cause resentment among the immigrants and make them consider returning home. Gairdner expresses his shock when providing statistics from Canada on this matter. He says “more than one-sixth of all immigrants who come to Canada return to their native countries within a year, and one-third within twenty
years! So if over twenty years we took in 5 million immigrants, some 1,666,000 went back home” (414-415). In this context, Gairdner’s insinuation is that this is a kind of treachery on the part of immigrants because they had been using Canadian resources all the while. It would be well to consider that the immigrants had also been contributing very hard for themselves and directly for the economy of the country. It is certainly not a one-way process. If incidents of racism can be controlled, it wouldn’t be difficult to retain the immigrants. What they need is a sense of security and political rights so that they wouldn’t have to bother about returning home and out of their own accord continue staying in Canada.

* M. G. Vassanji in his work *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* refers to a mythical story that prevails among the Khoja community in Gujarat, according to which during the medieval period a Muslim spiritual man comes to the region, mingles with the people and sings to them when they are dancing. There is a conflation of his songs with the community’s *garba* music and dance. This produces a new spiritual dance genre called *garbi* which is part of a larger category called *ginans*. This mythical framework runs throughout another work of Vassanji called *The Assassin’s Song*. Symbolically, the *ginan* is a blend of two cultures and religions—the Hindu and the Muslim. The emphasis is on peaceful co-existence. Vassanji uses this powerful cultural and religious myth to suggest the prevalence of multiple cultures as “The existence of such inclusive systems of belief was proof of an essential historical quality of India that of tolerance and flexibility…” (Vassanji xii). Evolution of such novel belief systems indicates that there has been
complete acceptance and assimilation of cultures and it is this synthesis that has been a
distinguishing feature of the Indian society. While in Canada, the encouragement of
multiculturalism is primarily state issued, in India, it has originated either through
spirituality or after periods of violence.

It is true that there was strife, there was bloodshed and there were discomfitures from
time to time; but the Indian constitution evolved policies and regulations to resolve these
issues and make the scenario amicable. The vastness of Indian land and population makes
it difficult at times to maintain peace. Yet, efforts are always on to bring about a balance.
Hence, multiculturalism and pluralism have always been a part of the Indian society. With
this backdrop it would be interesting to question as to how this facet of India is connected
to science and business particularly in relation to the existence of the Indian diasporic
communities in Canada.

Ideas of ‘what’ constitutes India also emerge from time to time in diasporic literary
pieces. For instance, the tremendous manpower available in India, has been referred to
rather casually in Anita Rao Badami’s novel *Tell It To The Trees* (2011) where one of the
characters says about India that:

> I read in one of Papa’s books that there are millions and millions of people there. Maybe Grandfather was tired of all those people. Maybe it didn’t matter to him that he was in a place where hardly anybody else wanted to live unless they had to—like the people in town who came here to mine copper and then to work in the lumber mill”. (Badami 13)
Clearly, there is the reference to the historical truth of people movements and their taking up of work in lumber mills in the 20th century. The tone of the thought is laid-back but it underlines the inspiration behind transnational movements—employment and livelihood that do directly relate to diplomatic relations when their contexts are seen situated in the large picture of bilateral association and economic operations. The connection that Badami makes is interesting where the idea of over population in India gradually shifts to the attractive jobs waiting to be taken up in Canada. The movements may take place under financial compulsion but they happen because they are essential for sustenance. Despite the harsh winters in Canada, the shifting of the Indians to the place underscores the urgency prompted by economics and income. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in India employment was an issue in the past, but after the economic reforms of 1991 by the Narasimha Rao Government and the abolition of the Licence Raj system that restricted entrepreneurs, the situation began to transform and today there are ample opportunities for Indians to apply their skills in a variety of sectors. However, the tremendous vastness of population produces skilled labour that is surplus and exportable. Hence, travelling abroad for work is always a realistic option. The aspect of compulsion many a times occur within India too, where people move from place to place or from rural to urban areas in search of better employment or prospects that are suitable to one’s calibre.

The enormous manpower in India and the incidental lower population in Canada are complementary in this matter. There is a need for the existence of people in a country to run the economy just as there is a need for able diplomats for a government to operate.
Training of manpower resources in specific ways is always a possible option and essential too since a new environment requires adaption. So, we find that in Badami’s work, subtextually, ideas of history, business and economics run alongside emotional outbursts of pain and anguish due to transplantation into an alien land. Historical episodes in the Indo-Canadian context serve as a central backdrop to impart authenticity and a touch of documentation of real life situations in the texts.

Anita Rau Badami’s *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (2006), discusses how and why Indians travel to Canada and what they feel about their home and politics. Two prominent historical episodes stand out when recounting the experiences of the Indo-Canadians in her novel. One is the return of the *Komagata Maru* ship from the shores of Vancouver in the year 1914 when Indians were compelled to return to their homelands. The other is the death of all the passengers flying in Air India-182, on June 23, 1982 flying from Toronto to India. The references to these historical episodes are embroidered within the novel and suggest the struggles of the Indian diaspora in their quest to settle in Canada. Several writers have used these memories as material for their compositions. Surjeet Kalsey, a Punjabi poetess has written a poem titled “Voices of the Dead” that portrays the agony of the painful air crash.

Here, it is interesting that the two incidents that took place in the previous century are referred to by writers even today. One of the earliest writers to make use of this Indo-Canadian historical event was Sharon Pollock whose play *The Komagata Maru Incident* (1936) is based on the returning of the Japanese freighter called the Komagata Maru which carried 376 passengers comprising Hindus and Sikhs. A reference and analysis of this
work is essential to understand how and why this historical episode runs through literature that spans an entire century. In fact, here we find that this work is from the previous century and Badami’s work is a recent one. So, history reappears serving as a reminder of the past. Similarly, the Air-India tragedy of 1985 keeps recurring in works of fiction. In the context of this research study, it would be pertinent to mention that they appear in Badami’s *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* that happens to be a 21st century work.

Bharati Mukherjee who resided in Canada and later went on to settle in America wrote together with her husband Clark Blaise, *The Sorrow and the Terror: The haunting legacy of the Air India tragedy* (1985). Here again, we find that history informs writings rather inveterately.

Referring again to Pollock’s play, after two months of stationing at the Vancouver harbour, only twenty passengers were allowed to land after they proved their residence in Canada. The remaining was compelled to return to their homeland. This play is extremely important since it is a historical representation and carries themes that reflect perceptions of those times. Some of the ideas about immigrants that existed at that time continue to this day. The setting of the play is a brothel with a Master of the Ceremonies – T.S orchestrating on the stage and commenting on the characters. He also happens to be the one who refers to the policies evolved by the Canadian government. Inspector William Hopkinson is a political agent and is a man with mixed origins—his father, a British officer who served in India and his mother, a Punjabi. Hopkinson conceals his identity which is later exposed by Evy. Throughout the play T.S and Hopkinson disparage the Indians by using stereotypes like “Calcutta coolies” (14) or their movements as in the
phrase that suggests that Indians “scuttle like bugs” (16), when Hopkinson’s father ordered the Indian servants. The animal imagery is telling. They are also seen as people who “couldn’t construct a canoe” (19) though Hopkinson gifts exquisite brooch to Evy which is crafted by the Indians underlining their talent. The disrespect that the political agent has towards the Indians is direct and outright. The racist undertone is conspicuous. Here it would be interesting to remember Vassanji’s character of Esmail in No New Land who becomes a victim of racism. The reference to racism in works that belong to different centuries testifies that racist thinking needs policies that can counteract the problem. It also suggests that racist perceptions are hard to obliterate.

Pollock’s play thus dwells on why the ship was ousted from Canada and the justification is provided by Hopkinson and T.S. In the play there is a reference to migrants when Hopkinson says, “I can tell you what it means. British Columbia wants no Calcutta coolies. We’ve Chinamen and Japs running our shops, Greeks running our hotels, Jews running our second-hand stores, and we don’t want Hindus running our mills” (14). It is pertinent that writers invariably allude to the multicultural aspect of the Canadian society. Somehow, it seems inescapable so prominently visible that it naturally seeps into literature. The statement is an interesting reference to the contemporary society in Canada with its multicultural composition and the fact that the economy is run by people belonging to various nationalities. It is also another reference to the undercurrent of racism that runs in the society. The fact that economic activities are carried out by people, though coming from various countries, suggests that the immigrants were contributing to Canada’s growth. So, the business and economic implications of multiculturalism stands out. Instead of
viewing it as meaningful in terms of economic enrichment, the Komagata Maru passengers are portrayed as uncouth, unscientific and irrational by Hopkinson and T.S. Ironically William Hopkinson who is seen talking against the Indians has Indian connections about which he is totally uncomfortable and he is upset when Evy divulges this information. His mother happens to be a Punjabi. Through the play, Pollock essentially suggests that the treatment of the Indians was unjust and the playwright drives the audience to wonder about the injustice meted out to the passengers on the Komagata Maru.

Prof. Hugh Johnston in his book *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru* describes the events and details related to its arrival and departure. The idea suggested through the citation to this historical episode is not that immigration should be encouraged or necessary for Canada but that in the context of globalization transnational movements are inevitable. The time and moment when the Komagata Maru incident took place was no doubt in the remote past when economic and global scenario was different. Nonetheless, we find that in works of art, writers haven’t forgotten the event and refer to it as a painful occurrence in the Indo-Canadian history. It becomes a vantage point for discussion of the conditions that the immigrants live in and how the society that they adopt treats them politically and socially.

Anita Rau Badami makes use of the *Komagata Maru* episode in her novel *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* through the portrayal of Sharanjeet’s father, Harjot Singh who had nurtured a ‘dream’—that of going to Canada and returning wealthy. That doesn’t happen because of the expulsion of the ship from the Canadian shores. Frustrated, he returns only to become plaintive and lead a life of depression imagining that he could have
led a grand lifestyle had he secured the opportunity of landing in Canada. For Harjot Singh, the inspiration to leave India comes from the immense success of Sher Singh who was working and doing exceptionally well in Canada. Canada presented itself as a fantasy land to Indians who were ready to work hard and desirous to amass wealth but were unable to do so on account of lack of employment opportunities at that time in India—agriculture being the primary source of income during those times. Harjot tells his daughter somewhat apologetically “I was almost there, putthar. Like Sher Singh I could have lived in Canada and become rich” (Badami 11). The situation that he finds himself in is one of desperation and eventually failure. The constant comparison between the Indian diaspora in Canada and the disappointment of not getting there is an important theme in the work and in other works of fiction where the country is seen as critical for economic advancement. We find that in literature, like contemporary real life situation, migration is triggered by the apparent success of kith and kin settled there.

It would be pertinent here to refer to Prof. Milton Israel’s study of Indo-Canadians in Ontario. He refers to Mewa Singh from a village called Nathuwal Jadid in Punjab who embarked on the Komagata Maru which was made to return in the year 1914. However, he gets down in Mexico and in course of time makes his way back into Canada and settled in British Columbia as an illegal immigrant. Mewa Singh was attracted to prospects of affluence through gainful employment but had to return from Canada like the other passengers on board³.

³ Prof. Milton Israel’s book In the Further Soil: A Social History of Indo-Canadians in Ontario gives a detailed historical account of the journey of Indian Punjabi men to Canada; their taking up of jobs and eventual settlement.
Harjot Singh is emblematic of the dreams and ambitions that young men of Punjab fostered in order to overcome financial problems. Their search for alternative sources of income directed them to the faraway Canada where they visualized a fertile arena of jobs and money. However, the ousting of Komagata Maru dampened their aspirations and blocked the way to the country for a long time until the Canadian government began changing its rules and regulation.

A look at a few of them reveals that it was quite recently that migration of Asians, and in the context of this study the Indians, were allowed. In 1906, Canada saw the first Immigration Act. In 1962, discriminations relating to race, religion and nationality were abolished. Between 1975 to 1978, Canada allowed the settling of around 9,000 Indians and Chinese

Nevertheless, the pull of economic opportunities drew several Indians to Canada like Harjot Singh and Sher Singh of Badami’s work; and Mewa Singh as referred to in Israel’s research. We find contemporary realities of Indo-Canadians in Anita Rau Badami’s work. The paralleling of a historically true incident with a literary character is critical because it goes onto prove how much diaspora writing absorbs real life imparting credibility and reality to what people go through in their journey in the new land.

In her novel, the character Khushwant Singh, Pa-Ji is a successful businessman who opens a restaurant called ‘The Delhi Junction’ in Vancouver. He is ably supported by his wife Sharanjeet called Bibiji, implying the contribution of women in the running of the economy. Marriage brings Sharanjeet to Canada. Here it would be interesting to refer to
Margaret Walton-Roberts who notes that Punjabi immigration to Canada is characterized by “effective utilization of family marriage migration routes” (qtd in Walton 14). This is true not only of the Punjabi community but also other ethnic communities in the novel. For instance, Leela Bhat, another character in the work also comes to Canada since her husband chooses to work in the country. Family and kinship form networks through which Indians traverse the seas. It is a natural process since the migrants can consider staying in Canada only if they have their families with them. Their separation from their loved ones can result in nostalgia driven by a desire to go back. So, immigration becomes complete and successful only when the working individuals are accompanied by their families. The sociological observation that Margaret Walton makes is reflected in works of fiction.

In *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* the couple, Pa-Ji and Bibiji initially have a grocery store but in course of time, decide to start a restaurant because they presume that that would help them churn in more income since there were plenty of Indians in the city who would naturally turn to a food outlet that served Indian food. Evidently, to be able to recreate India in Canada requires an importing of things from the country of origin. Clearly, there is an exchange of culture and capital. Johan Norberg states “What defenders of global capitalism believe in, first and foremost, man’s capacity for achieving great things by means of the combined force of market exchanges…. Principled advocates of global economic liberty plead for a more open world because that setting unleashes individual creativity as none other can” (21). This sense of creativity and innovation takes place also because there is competition to excel and more important to survive well in perhaps new or future adverse conditions.
One of the arguments that this dissertation takes up is whether migration, trade and economics are related. The couple symbolizes the ambitious tendencies of the Indians who can dream of reaching the skies. There is a strong relationship between immigration and trade and this is evidenced in literature too. Pa-Ji and Sharanjeet make correct assumptions regarding their business and their calculations turn out to be true. They earn a lot of income from their restaurant which also eventually becomes a place for people to get together and interact on issues at Home. The restaurant, therefore, becomes a microcosm India that brings together the nation’s culinary delights, political debates and cultural flavour in a Canadian setting. Political turmoil at Home elicits heated responses from Indians gathering at the restaurant. Besides this, Pa-Ji also makes it a point to initially support all Indians arriving to Canada to earn a living, by providing shelter and food. It is interesting to observe that he supports the newly landed Indians to Canada gradually paving way for their success in their economic pursuits. He is like a godfather mentoring and introducing the new society to them.

It would be relevant to compare what Milton Israel refers to in his book with Pa-Ji of Anita Rau Badami. Israel talks about “Jamiat Singh Gill, ‘Jimmy’ to his Toronto friends, opened a gift shop, the India Trading Company, in 1946, selling imported handicrafts from his Greenwood Avenue home” (Israel xxxvi). Gradually, he starts a small restaurant in 1946 called ‘The India House Restaurant’. In the subsequent years, several other restaurants opened like “the Taj Mahal restaurant, followed by the Rajput, the Mughal and a steady flow of new aditions to the city’s cosmopolitan food offerings” (Israel xxxvii). This can be paralleled with Anita Rau Badami’s character of Pa-Ji. The similarity between
the two is striking—one a factual historical occurrence and the other a fictional character. Both almost behave in the same manner. It is as if Badami replicated the true story with new names and a little fictional novelty. This historical backdrop is critical in comprehending the manner in which Indians were fast trying to establish themselves giving shape to their dreams and ambitions in an alien land. Through the achievement of economic success Pa-Ji develops the confidence to popularize his cultural heritage among his community members.

Economic activities alone cannot offer satisfaction to the immigrants. Psychologically, they need events that can connect them to their home. Creating establishments, institutions or organizations, as a matter of fact cement the immigrant’s loyalties and commitment to the land which offers means of income. This is precisely what happened to the Indo-Canadians who first started trickling into the country. Their opening up of shops and restaurants threw open a wide range of opportunities. Steadily flowing income bolstered their confidence in settling in a foreign land. The arrival of their families, the continuance of their traditions and culture and their conviction that they could comfortably carry on in Canada augmented their desire to permanently settle in the new country. The freedom to practice one’s traditions and customs renders the course of relocating and settling easy.

The new immigration policies further ameliorated their prospects of movement and so the Indian Diaspora in Canada became a visible phenomenon. We find the zest of Jamiat Singh Gill in the character of Khuswant Singh or Pa-Ji in Badami’s novel who become flourishing businessmen. Not only that, he also takes it upon himself to make the new immigrants conscious of the importance of Punjabi history because he sees that as critical
for any human being to be aware of roots and culture since that imbibes pride in human existence. He understands the significance of history and past that enables individuals to develop a sense of Home and belonging. Many a times, he concocts stories and his wife Bibiji knows this and doesn’t approve of it.

Throughout the novel, the Indian political scene and the economic activities of Indians in Canada loom large. The ambitions of the Indians, their talent and genius at being innovative and their desire to intermingle within the Canadian society while at the same time retaining their roots suggests the need for greater efforts to understand each other’s culture for better adaptation. A superficial perspective cannot really help grapple with the issues of multiculturalism. If we look at one of the episodes in the novel, Bibiji and Leela Bhat who hail from North and South India respectively belong to diverse cultures, speak different languages, eat different food and believe in different Gods. Yet they gel rather easily because of their close interactions, communication, discussion of problems related to their children’s education and the general challenges that life presented before them. Mundane as they may seem, the conversations actually facilitate them to understand each other. In the novel, particularly, the manner in which Indians adapt to the multicultural society is notable. They try to innovate in their own ways new channels and methods for minting money like Bibiji who is very ambitious and who revels in imagining and planning ways to earn more money.

Leela Bhat from Bangalore refuses to forget her Indian roots. Her immediate response to the images she receives on her landing in Canada is an almost automatic comparison with the places in India that she is familiar with. For instance, she compares the North
Shore Mountains to the Western Ghats in South India; the river that flowed from the North Shore was her Cauvery (again a famous river in South India); and the smells of the land is similar to the one in Cubbon Park in Bangalore. Trying to see familiar places in an unfamiliar country is also a means of settling in and making efforts to be at ease. It is not merely the physical aspect but also the psychological strain since there is an attempt to superimpose one’s personal experiences onto the unknown. Interestingly, Leela Bhat doesn’t know the name of the North Shore Mountains. So, the ‘namelessness’ for her, becomes a pretext to overlay what she already knows and appreciates. The intertwining is an effort to juxtapose the two countries and try to find one in the other—the Home in the adopted country. We find a similar streak of desire for familiar things in Rohinton Mistry’s short story “Lend Me Your Light” where the protagonist writes to his friend about Little India in Gerrard Street in Toronto where they could “go to all the little restaurants there and gorge ourselves with bhel puri, panipuri, batata-wada, kulfi, as authentic as any in Bombay; then we could browse through the shops selling imported spices and Hindi records…” (189). The familiar becomes almost an obsession since it temporarily transports the individual to home through the process of superimposition in an alien culture.

She tries to implicate her Indian home and ethos in her new residence through the worship of idols, preparation of Indian food and giving it to others like Bibiji and the use of her mother tongue in her conversation. In one context she refers to “uyir” (236), referring to the Indian philosophy of carrying one’s “karma” to the next birth, something that accompanies the soul “from a distant place in the universe” (236). The feeling of Indianness through the conscious following of one’s own cultural philosophy underlines
the effort to maintain one’s identity in a foreign land. Without the freedom to pursue one’s traditions, it would be difficult for any individual to survive in a new place. Leela Bhat tries to:

…cut this New World into the shape she wished it to be, pull at the edges that didn’t match the pattern of her memories and rename it. She would redraw maps and mythologies like the settlers who came before her, those men and women from Europe who had taken a land already…and marked it with their own symbols and meanings, owned it with their naming and words. Like them, she would make this corner of the world her own until it was time to return home. (111)

The eagerness to create one’s own familiar dwelling place and space in the new adopted land is evident from the character’s anxiety. She tries to recreate the home atmosphere by lighting some incense sticks, put up the pictures of gods and worship them. Yet, there are problems to overcome. As Prof. Chelva Kanaganayagam points out that “Space and land are crucial to literature, and in Canada the land hardly allows for utopian dreams” (1). There are efforts to reconstitute Indianess in the Canadian setting and this offers temporary solace from feelings of being alienated. Undoubtedly, the posturing is fake but essential to move on in a new land.

The interest to continue with one’s means of livelihood, the harnessing of ambitions to follow one’s dreams is entwined with the freedom to carry on the memories of Home. These simple events that seem to be a part of the natural scheme of things actually reminds of the multicultural policy in the Canadian society enacted by the government that permits,
in fact, encourages the co-existences of various cultures all at once. The writer of the novel states “Korean, Indian, Sri Lankan, Chinese, Italian, Iranian and Greek grocery stores had sprung up or expanded into mini-supermarkets” (308). In the same novel, there is a reference to Mrs Wu from China who runs a vegetable shop, quite successfully. Her daughter together with the other children in the novel like Jasbeer, Preethi and Arjun study in the same school which implies that the next generation is getting education in a multicultural environment. In addition to the aforementioned nationalities there has been the settling of “Polish veterans, displaced Lithuanians, Slovaks, Croats, Ukrainians, Donau-Schwabs, and other German peoples (who) revivified the ethnic collectivities— often, however, with misunderstanding and conflict between the Left and Right, and the old and the new immigrants” (Harney 9).

In a similar vein, M.G. Vassanji’s *When She Was The Queen* is a book of short stories that portrays the arrival of immigrants from Asia and East Africa to Canada and how they adjust in the new country and earn a living for themselves. Canada happens to be the background and the society reflected is multicultural and it is in such circumstances that the characters play their roles and experience their lives. Rohinton Mistry in his short story “Squatters” says that:

The Multicultural Department is a Canadian invention. It is supposed to ensure that ethnic cultures are able to flourish, so that Canadian society will consist of a mosaic of cultures—that’s their favourite word, mosaic—instead of one uniform mix, like the American melting pot. If you ask me, mosaic and melting pot are both nonsense, and ethnic is a polite way of saying bloody foreigner. (168)
One of the issues in the context of diaspora and multiculturalism is the extent to which they feel secure. Neil Bissoondath in his novel *The Innocence of Age* also portrays the multicultural setting of Toronto. Political representation and political rights are some of the ways of ensuring this since Indians can feel themselves at home. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, members of the Indian diaspora community have had very little political representation and this certainly goes a long way in confirming their status and position as citizens. Rohinton’s ideas attempt to expose the superficiality of the politics of multiculturalism just as Vassanji tries to do the same when he uses the pun “multiculturalism” (111) in *No New Land*. The two writers voice the feelings of the Indian immigrants regarding policies of multiculturalism. Perhaps, at the governmental level there is a greater need to address this issue and rejuvenate it through understanding of how the Indian diaspora sees itself in the Canadian context.

It is certainly not an easy task to ensure peace and security in a society that is a grand confluence in globalization. Citizens of various nationalities mean the coming together of various cultures, new and unfamiliar languages, alien traditions, new expectations and dreams; and new economic and business ideas.

Another very significant aspect in the context of Indo-Canadian literature is that all the characters work very very hard to earn their livelihood. There is perennial anxiety regarding their source of income. Many of them keep changing jobs in the attempt to make more money. William D. Gairdner in his non-fiction *The Trouble With Canada...Still! A Citizen Speaks Out*, empathises with the situation of the migrants and states:
Most of us are very moved by the experiences of immigrants who come to this country and work incredibly hard to advance themselves and their families. Especially when we read of native-born people whining about unemployment, only to discover many of them have either made themselves unemployable or have refused hard physical jobs that immigrants gladly take, or for which we import temporary foreign labour…. (406)

It is true that the immigrants work exceptionally hard to make a living and it is noticeable. Gairdner also severely criticizes the immigration policy which he sees as “deeply flawed” (406) because according to him, initially Canadian government wanted people of similar cultures, that is, primarily European to come to Canada. However, as mentioned in this research study, Europe and Canada have experienced the problem of low birth rate. Population from Europe can move into Canada only if there are people in the former. In the absence of over population, desiring immigrants from the white continent is impractical, though Canada might want to retain whiteness.

Literature has been a medium for expressing concerns, dilemmas, feeling and also a platform to initiate discussions and debates relating to diaspora. The consequence of the interaction and integration of various cultures in a multicultural society is that there is naturally a need for mutual tolerance and respect for the diversity that characterizes it. The experiences of the diaspora provides a picture of their concerns relating to the inhabitation in new country. A look at diaspora fiction is indicative of how literature is enriched through fusion of diverse sensibilities and biculturalism.
The ‘Trishanku’ state of Indo-Canadians

Uma Parameshwaran who is a poet, writer, dramatist and critic uses the term “Trishankus” or “The Nowhere Men” (Parameshwaran 27) to indicate the state of the Indian diaspora. Trishanku was a King in the Indian mythology who desired to ascend the heavens in his mortal body. On account of certain sins that he had committed he was cursed to become an outcast. Trishanku requested Saint Vishwamitra to help him enter the heavens and he agreed. However, the gods from the heavens kicked him out and Saint Vishwamitra wouldn’t allow Trishanku to descend back to earth, so that Trishanku was left suspended in mid-air between heaven and earth (Pattanaik 73).

The same image and character is referred to by Anita Rau Badami in her novel Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? where the character Akka narrates the story and emphasizes that “when somebody is neither here nor there we say that they have attained Trishanku’s heaven, not a very pleasant state of being at all” (Badami 77); but then the author develops this idea optimistically when through the character of Venki, she says “The thing is to understand how to make use of this ability” (84). The suggestion is that the state of sharing two planes of existence is to be seen optimistically instead of perceiving it as a threat to one’s identity and image. Sharing of two worlds can generate new trains of thoughts and ideas that can be unique and profitable. Also, once transplantation takes place it becomes a matter of urgent importance to worry about the present and how to make it meaningful and successful.

In the context of bilateral association between Canada and India, it is this discernment among the Indian diaspora and the Canadians that can produce long standing
relations not only between people but also at the level of diplomacy. Even at the political level what is essential is to deduce the benefits of associating with each other in economically and culturally viable ways. In this framework if the diaspora is made use of, then it throws open a plethora of opportunities since they are the ones who can bridge gaps across culture and tradition. They have the best of both the worlds. They know both the countries. They have connections in both the regions. The advantage of being a part of two nations need not be understood as a drawback. It is like the popular ‘half glass full or half glass empty’. In diplomatic relations there is no option other than ‘half glass full’. It has to be to make international relations a successful reality.

The state of being a ‘Trishanku’ can have two aspects—one is where memories and loss of the past can prove mentally and spiritually draining; second where the position is utilized to unearth or create treasures through complementing each other’s resources. It is the second point of view that deserves a deeper debate in that it can be visualized as a vantage point to study the situations in both India and Canada to overcome the cracks in the relationship creating conduits to flow into each other. While in the real political scenario it is the politicians and diplomats who can scale these heights, at literary and cultural levels it is the writers, organizations and more important, people who can initiate and sustain links. As the history of the Indian diaspora divulges, proposals and enterprises organized by people have been possible which means the process can be amplified; and with today’s digital media, the whole affair is rendered easy. With appropriate harnessing and tapping of new technologies relationships can be constructed creatively.
Trishanku’s predicament is likened to that of the diaspora who have left their homelands behind them and at the same time do not feel at home in the country that they have emigrated to. Their abeyance between two countries and cultures impel them to seek definitions of their identity, the inscription of their space and the free expression of their selves. According to Prof. Milton Israel who was the Resident Director of the Shastri-Indo Canadian Institute, Delhi:

For many Indians, Trishanku represents a journey continuing long after their arrival in Canada—a psychic oscillation between old home and new—apparently assimilated over time but reminded of their distinctiveness and sent back to recover an understanding of who they are. (85)

*No New Land* by M. G. Vassanji is a work of fiction of Indians transplanted in East Africa who eventually migrate to Canada following political changes in Africa where the Ugandan General Idi Aman announces that Asians had to leave the country—“In Amin’s “final solution” the Asians, their citizenships stripped, were expelled – to whatever country that would take them, or else refugee camps; in effect, they became orphans awaiting adoption” (25). The desperate situation of the Indians in Africa and the relief that they see in their entry to Canada underscores the policy of refugee protection of the country that is humanitarian.

M. G. Vassanji’s *The Assassin’s Song* portrays the dilemma of Karsan from Gujarat of India, who is haunted by the memories of his family and native traditions during his stay in British Columbia. Initially, the thrill and glamour of traversing the seas makes him feel that settling abroad is his destiny. The reason for his stay in Canada is his job as an English
Professor and so it is the subtext of economics that underlies his presence in Canada though later he gives up everything and goes back to his home for the pull of tradition and culture are formidable in comparison to the pull of money. His feelings of being out of place and out of context play a role in making him decide to return to India. It is interesting to observe that India’s new infrastructure has generated employment opportunities and so offers fresh possibilities for the returning diaspora. The qualified people constituting them find satisfying opportunities of sustenance. The added advantage of remaining connected and rooted to their soil of origin is tempting enough for their return. In the context of India, according to a research study:

The country intends to establish over 50 academic and research Centres of Excellence by 2012, using a model of regional innovation clusters and creating an ‘Ecosystem of Innovation.’ \(^{11}\) India is building these Centres around leading scientists and entrepreneurs. They in turn are supported by the growing reverse brain drain of a returning diaspora filling research and both senior and middle management roles in all sectors, where India’s education system cannot fill these management positions with qualified locally trained nationals. (Touhey and Martin 8)

The economic boom of India has grabbed not only the attention of other countries but also Indians who have settled there. The reasons for their leaving India are employment and education and these become the very reasons for their return. The pull of culture and soil are too strong to resist. Indo-Canadian literature, in that sense precipitates the Indianess through portrayals of how Indians lead their day-to-day lives in Canada, what
they feel, what they do and how, rather subtly, the political and economic terrains support their subsistence and ambitions.

Writers of the Indian diaspora in Canada tend to portray the cultural contradictions and the vicissitudes of everyday life in their works. The characters that go and live in Canada, take up jobs and form a part of the economic system. They try to adapt to the multicultural environment and by virtue of their nationality, they become contributory towards a multiethnic society. Their memories of the country of origin constantly keep coming up as points of comparisons and nostalgia. In the wake of fresh challenges, the characters desire to go home but occupational and monetary exigencies keep them glued to the new country. Themes of homeland, memories of kith and kin, struggle for livelihood and position of the self as belonging to the oriental world keep Indians in Canada perpetually in dilemma. Pecuniary pursuits become an everyday reality for Indians as they find themselves taking up odd jobs. At times, they are qualified for professional occupations and at times they happen to be entrepreneurs supporting the other members of their community and country and at times they take up occupations that are menial. Nevertheless, economic activities are at the centre of their lives and that is what enlivens their purpose in Canada. So, we find that money is a major concern among the Indian diaspora in Canada. If applied to the concept of bilateral association between the two countries, it would be clear that Indians settled in Canada have grievances and issues in the adopted society. They are ready to work but have to cope with challenges of perhaps dealing with new cultures and sometimes require a little bit of training in terms of adapting to the new work environment.
Historical incidents, myths and traditions are interlaced in the Indo-Canadian works of art and incidentally almost all works allude to the basic economic reasons that propel Indians to take up their sojourn to Canada. The multicultural character of the Canadian society comes alive through the narratives with direct references to people belonging to different nationalities who come to the country. Some take up jobs and some with their entrepreneurial abilities create their own enterprises, in the process generating employment opportunities for many others thus benefitting the economy. The coming of Indians to Canada has a perceptible reason but their continuation in the country is determined by whether they are satisfied with the way things are in the adopted land. This happens through comparisons between life in Canada and the situation back home. According to a research “…it is the judgments of their life situation compared to others or to what it could have been had they remained in their native country that are crucial to determining their own satisfaction with life” (Vohra and Adair 133). Right from cultural and linguistic conduciveness to economic opportunities and political privileges, Indians settled in Canada tend to put side by side situations in both countries. This manner of evaluation is both natural and inevitable because of the urgency to understand if immigration to a new land has been worthwhile and whether continuation would be a good idea.

We find that Indians settled in Canada have engaged not only in economic activities but also in writing as and when they were spurred through personal experiences. We find that the characters in the works compare economic situations at home and abroad. In fact, most characters travel to Canada lured by better employment opportunities. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, in India there is surplus manpower. There is an excess of trained
graduates who are absorbed into the growing economy sectors of India. Despite the innumerable companies and other organizations there is still a large remainder of personnel—some of whom travel abroad, at times leading to permanent settlement. If there is satisfaction in the adopted land, they continue their stay for a long period of time and sometimes forever.

In the beginning it is the individuals who travel, followed by their family, kith and kin implying that their movement away from their homelands has been successful and so they are now ready to share it with their immediate contacts. It is humanly not possible to live away from one’s family and acquaintances since one shares income with them. Sooner or later the individual has to live with his family and stay closer with the near and dear ones.

It is however also true that today, India is producing employment opportunities for its people and the obsession for travelling overseas is slowly declining but then other reasons like education—a foreign degree is seen as essential to move up in the ladder of life. Therefore movement to foreign countries does take place and hence could lead to immigration and permanent settlement.

**Multiculturalism in Business**

Carla Power opines that India is a perfect training ground to become global leaders because it is easy to learn adapting to various cultures. Since India is multiethnic in nature, people imbibe qualities of adjustment and tolerance right from childhood. It is like a practical hands-on-experience at managing people and dealing with the quality of variety
that constitutes culture. The fact that India has been historically a site for such multiple
identities and people are used to such a circumstance actually allows them a chance to
develop a positive attitude towards other people rather naturally. Carla Power cites this as
a strong reason for the tremendous success of businessmen of Indian origin (91). Now, if
we cast a glance at people of Indian origin in Canada and how they have been doing
economically in the adopted society, we find that there is a sizeable number of people who
work in all sectors. How they have been utilized and seen in the Canadian context needs a
deeper analysis.

A report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (2008) states “the Indian Diaspora in
Canada is the largest in the world when measured on a per capita basis. However, to
date, the strength of the diaspora has been viewed largely in numeric terms, as opposed to
a strategic asset” (23). This is an incisive observation because as mentioned in the
preceding chapters, the Indian diaspora in Canada has been viewed in terms of numbers
but not much attention has been paid as regards its capacity to strengthen international
relations. An analysis of India-Canada reports also show a lack of interest in understanding
the role that the Indo-Canadians can play in the diplomatic and economic process. The
mobilization of diaspora is what is lacking in the India-Canada bilateral relationship.
Inspite of obvious resemblances and resources on both sides, for some inexplicable reason,
transactions have been less. This observation can be put as a background to the Indo-
Canadian narratives that describe the motives of the Indian diaspora. Economics is a major
consideration by the characters in these works of art when choosing to move to Canada.
There is a belief that they can secure employment and earn a decent income. Therefore,
immigration is a consequence of economic, occupational and educational considerations. It is a two way process, in the sense, that while immigrants work for a living, they are also a part in the running of the Canadian economy.

According to recent studies, there is a strong connection between immigration and trade and this is critical in strengthening the bilateral process. Since, money is at the centre of such international relations, it is imperative to understand to what extent, trade and migration are interconnected. Winters states “liberalization of labour mobility to the level of 3% of the workforce of OECD countries could result in global welfare gains of up to USD 150 billion a year” (Winters 12). Interestingly, Canada forms a part of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). The monetary dimension involved in immigration and trade can be instrumental in fortifying bilateral trade ties. One stimulates the other. Since, the diasporic communities are familiar with situations in both countries; they understand the nuances of economic activities. Their practical knowledge in the matter is a decisive factor. Here, it would also be very interesting to consider Lewer and Van Den Berg’s research study that states “studies across many disciplines have found that immigrants’ sharing of cultures, languages, tastes, and business connections generates network effects that increase trade between immigrants’ native and adopted countries” (189). Living in a new country invariably kindles new relationships and these connections in the long run can prove encouraging in business transactions. The patterns and networks produce new channels for economic dealings. Since, there is direct people-to-people communication; there is the added dimension of cultural exchange. The connection
between literature, culture and capital apparently trigger trade and so strengthening bilateral ties can further augment economic activities.

Globalization is accompanied by its complexities. Interaction with people hailing from different cultures has its inherent challenges, right from language to traditions to government policies. A successful bilateral relationship, therefore, requires a multidimensional approach. A perfunctory reading up of the cultures of an alien country before actually going there doesn’t make things really easy. The practical issues are different from theoretical perceptions. Preconceived notions may help build confidence but they may not be really applicable when confronted. This could amount to culture ‘shock’ and sometimes dealing with such trauma can be hard. Nevertheless, if people of a country have some familiarity with dealing with others who hail from different cultures, it becomes rather easy for them to accept differences.

In the case of India, people come from diverse cultures and different classes and they come across one another everyday and they learn to adjust to them rather automatically. This serves like a preliminary training for them. In the case of Canada too, presently there is so much of diversity in terms of race and nationality that constant dealing with such multiplicity becomes a matter of easy acclimatization. An article published by the Liberal Party of Canada states “Canadians are the people of the world: by 2020, one-quarter of our population will have been born in another country. Our cities are brimming with courageous immigrants from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, people among the world’s most talented and hard working” (4). It is true that migrants are courageous since they are aware that it wouldn’t be easy for them to learn up
the new character of the new society. They know that there would be an inescapable jostling of their culture with the other cultures. Nonetheless, the ‘mosaic’ quality of Canada constitutes its uniqueness and identity in the world. This becomes apparent to the people of various nationalities who work and contribute to the adopted land. We find frequent references to this multicultural feature of Canada in the writings of Indo-Canadian writers. It appears almost inextricable from a writer’s imagination to exclude this aspect of the Canadian society.

Multiculturalism is critical in the context of economic liberalization and globalization which demand dialogue and discussion to achieve specific goals. In business dealings, experience in multiculturalism is a bonus in that it allows an individual to work rather naturally to garner economic gains. It is however, not an easy job because inspite of all awareness of multicultural issues, the migration of Indians to Canada is beset with challenges as the character of multiplicity in both the nations is different. Racial difference is preponderant in Canada. The picture that emerges is one of contradictions and that is reflected in the diaspora narratives by Indians in Canada that span the multicultural world of Canada and India.

The diaspora is no doubt an untapped resource and the Indo-Canadians can help construct bridges between the two nations. Bringing the two nations together in their works can throw light on what they expect from their unique vantage point because what they feel is critical in assessing the psyche of the Indians settled in Canada. Any negative feeling should be and can be rooted out before they cause a haze of misunderstanding, rupturing further chances of growth in bilateral ties.
Works Cited


http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utoronto/Doc?id=10270127&ppg=8


