Chapter 2

Multiculturalism: The Chinese in America and Canada

The hybrid societies that form the basis of multicultural politics, more often than not, are consequential of extensive immigration. Hence the multicultural condition of the host land is assessed according to the immigration policies it offers the migrants. Regional, ethnic, and religious cultures constitute divergences within countries. Gender differences, individual differences and difference in social class set hurdles to the situation in multicultural societies.

The immigration policy of USA during the colonial period was one that privileged the migrants. It was wrought by the “need for labour to work the virgin lands of the New World” (Cashmore 125). Schemes deliberated to magnetise people to America from Europe and the British Isles included the proviso of subventions for the acquisition of land and tools for new settlers. However, the attitude towards the migrants got tainted later as the American War of Independence endorsed a sense of self-importance in being an ‘American.’ This even influenced the constitution charted in 1787 and made the foreigners ineligible for towering political positions until they fulfilled residential qualifications. The Naturalisation Law of 1790 reserved naturalised citizenship for whites only. As noted by Ronald Takaki in “Reflections on Racial Patterns in America,” the law facilitated white “ethnic immigrants” to be in possession of land in America. However it starved the Native Americans and the Chinese and the Asian migrants considered to be “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” of “the right to own property in California, Washington, Arizona, Oregon, Idaho, Nebraska, Texas, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico,
Minnesota and Missouri” (28). Nathan Glazer observes that in 1818, when the
Irish societies of New York and Philadelphia petitioned Congress for a land
grant in the West on which to establish their dependants, the Congress declined.
Quoting Marcus Hansen he says that the Congress had the fear that if alien
peoples are allowed to concentrate geographically, America would become “a
patchwork of foreign settlements.” (21). The denial is also attributed to the fear
that the Germans and the other nationalities would follow the Irish in making
claims. Thus the American immigration policy during that time and later had
been one that did not offer the migrant any privilege to encourage his coming,
though he was to undergo no special restrictions. Glazer sees the American
attitude to the migrants as one of salutary neglect, for in America:

Any ethnic group could maintain itself, if it so wished, on a

\textit{voluntary} basis. It would not be hampered in maintaining its
distinctive religion, in publishing newspapers or books in its own
language, in establishing its own schools, and, indeed, in
maintaining loyalty to its old country (22).

No records of migrants were kept by the federal officials until 1820.
From 1820 – 60, there was some kind of a regulation of migrant traffic at major
entry ports. Migrants were disqualified on the basis of their medical status,
“trade or craft and religion” (Cashmore 126). With the passage of the Indian
Appropriation Act of 1871, their tribal power in America was trimmed down
and railroad corporations were given admittance to the lands.

The address delivered by Emerson in 1878, which offered reception and
“Opportunity of civil rights, of education, of personal power, and not less of
wealth; doors wide open . . . invitation to every nation, to every race and skin, . . .  hospitality of fair field and equal laws to all” (Glazer 19) became a paltry vision that could not materialise. This was so because the American attitude towards the migrants suffered a sea change with the Naturalisation law. The Americans considered American principles as universal and wanted the migrants also to pursue these. The people in America began to feel threatened with the greater inflow of migrants. They had the trepidation that they were losing their country, “that what they knew of as America was disappearing and becoming something else, and that American culture was going to be radically changed into something they would not recognize” (Glazer 19). In order to avert this, the ideal of ‘melting pot’ was taken on, by which standards, Thomas Jefferson states:

The American nation, was to be a universal nation – not only in the sense that the idea which it pursued was believed to be universal and valid for the whole of mankind, but also in the sense that it was a nation composed of many ethnic strains. Such a nation, held together by liberty and diversity, had to be firmly integrated around the allegiance to the American idea, an idea to which everyone could be assimilated for the very reason that it was a universal idea (qtd. in Glazer 16).

National pride very often contributes to anti-migrant practices. Coercive assimilation was welcomed in America. The settlement of migrants in compact groups was opposed. Instead, their wide allocation among the older settlers for the purpose of quicker amalgamation was encouraged. J.H. St. Jean de
Crevecoeur, a French man by birth who adopted New York citizenship later, defines an American as one:

. . . who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world (233).

The earlier resolve of America to promote assimilation alone is made palpable from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Act barred the “unassimilable” Chinese (Cashmore 126) from entering the nation. This had followed the legislation preventing Chinese workers from acquiring citizenship. Even Native Americans were discriminated. In the 1890s, the ‘new immigrants’ from southern and eastern Europe were considered objectionable. About 15 per cent of migrants were cast off by America by the end of the nineteenth century. The Dillingham Report on the detrimental effects of immigration proved ruinous to the migrants, for, ‘the new immigrants’ were deemed racially substandard to those from northern and Western Europe. People like Slavs and Sicilians suffered on this account. The 1917 Immigration Act which ensued, located restricted zones, commenced literacy test for the migrants and ranked the eligible migrants. In doing so, no limits were imposed on the Western hemisphere. Nevertheless it curtailed southern and eastern European immigration and tolerated no labour from the so-called Asiatic Barred Zone.
This zone included India, Indo-China and other smaller Asian countries. With thrust on opting for those groups considered best apposite to American Society, quota systems were introduced, allowing annual quotas of migrants from specific countries. The imposition of quotas itself is indicative of the fact that America did nothing to advance the cause of the ethnics.

Citizenship was granted to Native Americans in 1924. The same year also witnessed the passage of an Immigration restriction law. Due to these anti-migrant practices, migration began to plummet by the 1930s and the number of people leaving USA began to surpass the number of people entering. However, the Asian Exclusion Repeal Acts passed between 1943 and 1952 “dramatically changed the status of migrants of all Asian origins from “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” to that of “citizen” (Lowe 7). Thus in 1943, Magnuson Act was passed, up to which time the blockades to citizenship for migrants from all parts of Asia continued. The Act had three parts: it retracted the Exclusion Act of 1882, launched a quota for Chinese migrants and made the Chinese eligible for citizenship, negating the 1790 racial bar. The Mc Carran Walter Act of 1952 “tightened restrictions on migrants from the colonies of quota-receiving countries, so that black migrants from the West Indies who had previously entered under the British quota were sharply cut down” (Cashmore 127). It eradicated the 1917 “Asiatic Barred Zone” concept, replacing it with quotas of one hundred persons annually for countries within the Asia-Pacific Triangle. The Supreme Court decision of 1954 barred segregation in the public schools and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited racial discrimination. Nathan Glazer notes:
In the phrase reiterated again and again (sic) in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no distinction was to be made in the right to vote, in the provision of public services, the right to public employment, the right to public education, on the ground of “race, color, religion or national origin” (13).

The Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. The 1965 Hart-Celler Act (Immigration and Nationality Act) abolished the quota system and heaved the ceiling on annual immigration to 2,90,000. It also removed the preferential treatment of the Western countries.

Bigotry that is entrenched cannot be annulled effortlessly and the passage of an immigration law is not a solution to all problems. Lisa Lowe observes:

The final abolition of Asian quotas came with the 1965 Act. As the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990 attest, however, immigration legislation continues to be the site for the resurgence of contradiction between capital and the state, between the “push-pull” of markets and the maintenance of civil rights and is riddled with conflicts as the state attempts to control through law what is also an economically driven phenomenon (20).

The “crisis” of illegal immigration has not been resolved to this date. The topical official immigration policies and the de facto immigration policies voice this incongruity. But with the passage of California’s proposition 187 in 1994, the state even attempts to rebuff schooling and medical care to illegal migrants.
Lowe opines that this is redolent of the “nineteenth century laws barring Chinese from naturalization, education and safe working conditions” (20). She feels that America accomplished immensely from post 1850 migration, but not the migrants. She says:

. . . the life conditions, choices and expressions of Asian Americans have been . . . determined by the US state through . . . immigration laws and policies, through the enfranchisements denied or extended to immigrant individuals and communities, and through the processes of naturalization and citizenship. . . immigration has been a crucial locus through which U.S. interests have recruited and regulated both labor and capital from Asia (7).

The success of the 1998 referendum in California to outlaw state-mandated bilingual education in public schools shows that cultural tolerance has not percolated the whole of America. The attempt to pass the recent immigration bill (2006) which would make being an illegal migrant in the United States a felony, the protests organised against the bill and the senate’s shelving of the immigration bill reveal the attitude of the USA towards its migrants. At present, the American attitude towards its migrants rests on three sets of decisions—“that all may be included in the nation, that they may not establish new nations here [in America], and that they may, nevertheless maintain whatever aspects of a national existence they are inclined to” (Glazer 23). Glazer also speaks of the impact this has on the various ethnic groups, “The combination of first, you may become full citizens; second, you may not establish a national entity; third, you
may establish most of the elements of a national entity voluntarily without hindrance, does not create an easily definable status for the ethnic group” (23).

However, the struggle for recognition on the part of minorities has been fervent since the 1960s. The different ethnic groups refuse to get lost into the melting pot or get themselves merged into the grand stew. Mohit. K. Ray observes:

Different religions and ethnic groups, regionalists and immigrants of different nationalities are all engaged in a search for identity, and insist on a recognition of their independent entity . . . Consequently, society is fragmented and each group mainly addresses its own audience. Every group feels that it is marginalized, and tries to come to the centre (245).

On regressing from political scenario to proceed to literature, it can be seen that the current literary situation of America is such that the legitimacy of the melting pot metaphor has now been lost. Agencies like the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S. aver to have endeavoured to expand the definition of American literature. They claim to do this by endorsing the study of Latino-American, Native American, African American, Asian and Pacific American, and ethnically specific Euro American literary works and the authors occupied in the production of these. They also edify on the specific cultural contexts in which the works are written. Other activities of the society comprise sessions conducted in organisations as the Modern Language Association, College English Association, National Women’s Studies Association, American Literature Association, Popular Culture Association and
the like with the view of broadening the conception of American literature and holding national conferences annually at various localities in America. The journal *Multi Ethnic Literatures of the U.S (MELUS)* published by the society comes up with articles, interviews and reviews that help to project the multi-ethnic status of the American society which gets reflected in the literature shaped by writers of various pedigrees who have settled in the US.

“Canadian society has often been referred to as a ‘salad-bowl’ society, a pluralistic whole in which the various elements, including subcultures are still identifiable” (Friesen 49). This is given emphasis by Anna Galan who quotes the words of John. G. Diefenbaker, the then Prime Minister of the Progressive Conservative Party:

> Canada was not a ‘melting pot’ in which the individuality of each element is destroyed in order to produce a new and totally different element. It is rather a garden into which have been transplanted the hardiest and brightest of flowers from many lands, each retaining in its new environment, the best of qualities for which it was loved and prized in the native land (6).

Canadian society is cogitated to be a mosaic society, a diversified whole. Further, in Canada, it is given as per government policy that “cultural pluralism would be maintained” and understood that “no community can assume dominance and control over others” (Singh 243). The high vision of multiculturalism harboured by Canada is evident from the words of Sir Wilfred Laurier: “I want the marble to remain the marble; the granite to remain the
granite; the oak to remain the oak; and out of all these elements I would build a nation great among the nations of the world” (qtd. in McLeod 23).

The seed for Canada’s biculuralism had been sown right in 1774 itself, when the Quebec Act was passed in England “where the government was wary of the growing unrest in the American colonies” (Staines14). Accordingly as David Staines observes:

…French Canada received distinctive recognition and status within the colony; a policy of assimilation was rejected in favor of separate identities for the two founding peoples of Canada. By bestowing upon French Canadians certain specific rights and privileges, the act ensured that Quebec would retain its special position (14).

Though young as a nation, as it got formed by the unison of the four original provinces of Lower Canada (Quebec), Upper Canada (Ontario), Nova Scotia and New Brunswick only under the British North America Act of 1867, Canada, is seen by David Staines as an old nation in harbouring immigrants (1). The British North America Act also “… reiterated the dual nature of Canada by establishing two official languages and the complete freedom and rights of two religions” (14-15). The confederation is said to have “formed itself on the basis of continued cultural equality” (15). Staines observes that the geographical and psychological regions in Canada provided centres of identity for the Canadians (3).

The ethnic groups that are found in Canada include the Native People whose ancestors migrated across a frozen icepack linking Asia and North
America; Europeans among whom were French colonists, settlers from France and Britain; non-whites consisting of black slaves and thousands of Irish and Chinese labourers imported to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Talking about the influx of various groups and the races fashioned as an upshot of interbreeding, Burnet states:

. . . in the nineteenth century, another distinct ethnic group, the Metis, was to emerge as a result of interbreeding between French and Indians. In the eighteenth century the influx of the British began. . . soon after, some Germans and Dutch came. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the area of recruitment of the Canadian population was extended to all of Europe and parts of Asia, now. . . it includes all of Asia, and Africa and South America as well (18).

Though high tributes have been attributed to the Canadian mosaic, it may be found that Canada had occasionally deviated from the idea of ‘salad-bowl.’ Though “pluralism was a characteristic prior to the advent of European settlement,” “following the Confederation of Canada in 1867, stress was placed on assimilation as a facet of nation building” (McLeod 30). To many English Canadians who came to view themselves as members of the host society, foreigners were a lot who were mediocre and would not assimilate and fit into Canadian Society. There was dread among the English Canadians that the migrants took away jobs from the native-born. The French Canadians also feared that the escalating number of migrants might appropriate the French-English political and social balance to the benefit of non-French speakers. The
early immigration policies offered by Canada to its migrants serve as ample proof of its leaning towards the whites. Though during the 19th century, “the movement of individuals and groups to Canada was largely unrestricted,” (Dirks 864) an Act was passed in 1885, restricting Chinese immigration through the imposition of a head tax. The remark made by Friesen testifies to the unwelcome attitude of Canada towards the Chinese, “Clearly the most significant period of immigration in Canada, at least in terms of numbers, occurred between 1896 and 1914 . . . the truth of the matter is that we were, at best, reluctant hosts to incoming groups” (50). The massive immigration to Canada between 1903 and 1913 and during the First World War resulted in a restrictive “white Canada” immigration policy. The biased nature of the Canadian society at that time is manifest from the Komagata Maru incident in 1914, “when 376 persons on board of the Komagata Maru, a Japanese steamer, had to return after two months of waiting” (Gupta 201).

The attitude of Canada towards its migrants, during this period, as noted by Friesen, was one that insisted on assimilation of the host culture by the migrants and no contemplation was given as to the effect this had on the migrants:

Throughout this period of immigration, anglo-conformity was the predominant ideology, based on the philosophy of the dominant culture. It was expected that newcomers would adopt the values and institutions of anglophone Canadian society. There was virtually no thought given to the possibility that WASPish (sic) values might not be the apex of civilization . . . (50).
A preferential list for “potential immigrants” (Friesen 50) was drawn with Anglo British and Americans at the top. As per Friesen’s testimony, they were followed by central and eastern Europeans and then Jews and Southern Europeans, followed by Mennonites, Hutterites and Doukhobors. Asian hordes (including the Chinese, Japanese, East Indians and Blacks) occupied the bottom of the list. However, the attitude of the nation towards the migrants was in for a change. As Susanna Moodie claimed:

> Be not discouraged, brave emigrant! Let Canada still remain the bright future in your mind, and hasten to convert your present day-dream into reality. The time is not far distant when she shall be the theme of many tongues, and the old nations will speak of her progress with respect and admiration. . . .Her onward progress is certain. There is no *if* in her case. She possesses within her own territory all the elements of future prosperity, and *she must be great!* (qtd. in Staines 7-8)

The hostile stance towards the Chinese continued until the late 1940s. The idea of multiculturalism “came into vogue in the 1960s to counter ‘biculturalism,’ a term popularised by the Royal Commission on BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM” (Burnet 1174). Canada was compelled to consider multiculturalism as “the immigrants belonging to the ‘third force’ demanded equal treatment” (Singh 244). In 1962 Canada’s present universal and non-discriminatory policy was introduced. Pluralism had to be documented owing to the “heavy postwar immigration, the end of Empire, the Black civil rights movement in the United States, the growth of ethnic diversity
in the very centres of English Canadian power, and the increasing French Canadian nationalism” (McLeod 30-31). Consequently, “The immigration laws became more lenient during 1962-67” and in 1962, “the new immigration policy emphasized the education, training and skills of the people” (Gupta 201).

The multicultural policy for Canada was officially announced on 8 October, 1971 by the then Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau. As per the federal government’s policy statement on multiculturalism:

1. The government of Canada will support all of Canada’s cultures and will seek to assist, resources permitting, development of those cultural groups which have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada as well as have a clear need for assistance.

2. The government will assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society.

3. The government will promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity.

4. The government will continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada’s official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society (Singh 244-245).

The Prime Minister had further remarked that “although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other” (McLeod 31). Further, it was stated by Pierre Trudeau that
“Canadian identity will not be undermined by multiculturalism…cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context” (McLeod 31). Canadian multiculturalism means equality of status for all and as stated by Werner et al:

Underlying multiculturalism is a pluralistic notion of equality. Groups have the right to develop their own identities, life-styles, and languages, as well as to preserve their own cultural heritages, on a basis of equality with the British-French tradition. No one group should have cultural superiority. Each ethnic experience is recognized as being equally Canadian and, therefore, a valuable and integral part of the total Canadian experience rather than as a “problem to overcome” (qtd in Wilson 64).

Following the announcement of Canada’s first official policy of multiculturalism in 1971 (Canadian Multiculturalism Policy), which in fact, was the first attempt by any western nation to adopt multiculturalism as an official state policy, during the 1970s, immigration and population policies were officially reviewed. Since 1972, there has been a minister of the state responsible for multiculturalism. Linguistic, ethnocultural and ethno racial pluralism were buttressed. Though the adoption of multicultural policy is seen by some as the result of “the Federal government’s desire to win the immigrant vote” and of the will on the part of the government “to control and direct political demands of immigrants without moving to confer any real power,” these assertions, as Denise Helly opines, are “deficient as similar ends had been
obtained by different means in Europe and the United States” (qtd in Hutchings 165). The objectives of the multicultural policy of Canada, described by Pierre Elliot Trudeau read thus:

> We believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian society. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values. To say we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more official than another. . . The objectives are preserving human rights, developing Canadian identity, strengthening citizenship participation, reinforcing Canadian unity and encouraging cultural diversification . . . (qtd. in Helly 169).

Canada’s multiculturalism policy encourages the migrants to maintain their mother tongue and customs. It accords financial aids and political legitimacy to migrant groups. Canada finances “cultural groups actively interested in community development,” promotes “activities aimed at the maintenance of customs” and encourages “efforts to preserve immigrant native languages (Heritage languages)” (169). Even information concerning customs of migrant groups is diffused through the media and through national organisations and courses in Heritage languages get financed (169). Though a first modification of the policy was effected in 1975 and plans announced by J. Munro, the minister responsible, to “add specific programmes aimed at fighting racial discrimination,” the proposed legislation could not be passed through the government (170). However, with this, Canada’s efforts in promoting
multiculturalism did not come to a halt. Canada’s Immigration Act (1976, proclaimed in 1978) established the fundamental objectives of Canadian immigration policy which includes

. . . family reunion; nondiscrimination; the fulfilment of Canada’s international obligations in relation to REFUGEES; and cooperation between … government, as well as the voluntary sector, in promoting the adaptation of immigrants to Canadian society (Dirks 865).

Further, there are other provisions in the Immigration Act which favours the immigrants, for

The Act also establishes a new and flexible process for the development of immigration policy, … and requires the minister to announce annually in Parliament future immigration levels. Among its many provisions relating to security, the determination of refugee status, immigration regulations and other matters, the Act completely revises and modernizes control and enforcement procedures (Dirks 865).

The Canadian Human Rights Act was passed in 1977 and the Employment Equity Act in 1977. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted in 1982. Besides rooting the respect for the rights of each resident “in a notion of equal protection before the law for all groups, regardless of race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or colour,” the charter also included a clause that “the interpretation of charter cases would have to take into account the multicultural nature of Canadian society” (Helly 170). Canada had also been keen in dealing
with issues concerning race relations and a separate section had been created in the Multiculturalism Board by the minister James Fleming. Even in times of fiscal restraint, greater amount was set aside in the budget to promote multiculturalism. There have been contributions in various fields towards multiculturalism. “The federal cultural agencies such as the National Film Board, the National Museums of Canada, the National Library, the Public Archives, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the Canada Council have also contributed to the implementing of the policy of multiculturalism” (Burnet 21).

At the provincial level also advisory committees or councils on multiculturalism exist, which initiate conferences, publications, ethnocultural directories and multicultural resource lists. These also fund grants for various ethnic and multicultural projects.

The Conservative government which came into power in 1984 changed “the method of recruitment for federal agencies with the aim of facilitating occupational mobility for ethnic groups in the public sector” and reinforced “programmes designed to challenge racism” (Helly 170). The programme “Heritage Cultures and Languages” was launched to bolster artistic production by groups other than English and French. “The action of the ethnic groups as well as all activities aimed at educating the public about equal rights for members of all ethnic groups” was supported by “The Programme for Race Relations and Cross-Cultural Understanding” (171). Besides this, monolithic or multiethnic associations and “organizations which assist with the integration of immigrants and their descendants into the society” are also provided with
assistance (171). The 2001 census listed more than two hundred ethnic groups in Canada and now there is a marked increase in the visible minority population (cited in Statistics Canada). The term Canadian has now been used to denote “anyone who chooses to live in Canada and to accept its values and institutions” (Wilson 74). Thus, apparently, besides the simple acceptance of the fact that “Canada has a number of different ethnic groups represented in its population,” “multicultural” is currently used to imply value and refer to “desirable structures which should exist in society” (Wilson 65). But whether it be Canada or America or any other nation, as Friesen observes, “the establishment of a multicultural policy to promote equity through diversity is itself a commendable act, but even the best laws cannot guarantee their fulfillment on the street” (51).

Jane Hutchings observes:

As a national ideology, the notion of a mosaic neatly fulfills Champlain’s original wishes to found Canada on principles of justice and compassion. As an implemented process, however, it falls short of success. John Porter, in his classic, The Vertical Mosaic, harshly denounced the Canadian mosaic as a highly differentiated, hierarchical structure that forced certain ethnic groups into occupational ghettos. Other critics have claimed that the cultural mosaic has only served to obscure the fact that Canada remains a rigidly class-divided society (77).

Though commonly accepted by Canadians as egalitarian, the Canadian multicultural society is also affected by the “antagonistic interests, tensions and conflicts” stemming from “people’s pursuit of greater economic, political, or
social autonomy and one’s own cultural group’s gains against the will of other cultural groups” (Kaushik 184). A minority group “usually senses the fact that it does not fully participate in the life of the larger society” and minority formation is affected by “cultural contact, conflict and migration” (186). As per these standards the Aboriginal groups (Indian and Eskimo), those of French origin and some migrant groups are minorities in Canada. “There are signals of disturbing level of intolerance towards these visible minorities,” the non-whites and the non-natives in the Canadian society, though when seen from abroad, Canada will look like seventh heaven (Gupta 197).

The problems faced by the migrants in Canada are manifold. The initially depressed status of the newcomer may be due to “language difficulties, job certification problems, culture shock, the absence of primary group support from friends and relatives” (Kaushik 187). Later the situation alters and “some immigrants achieve upward mobility and perhaps are assimilated into the majority group while others retain their entrance status” (187). Further, to make the situation obscure, there is the fact that the ethnic groups bring no total culture to Canada, and whatever is brought to the host topos cannot be retained over a long period without change. Critics like Jean Burnet argue that not much attention is given to the new arrivals in Canada (the migrants) and that “equality among ethnic groups in Canada is by no means easy to interpret” (22).

Comparing the multicultural situations in America and Canada, Nathan Glazer observes:

. . . becoming Canadian did not imply, to the same extent that becoming American did, an abandonment of immigrant ethnic
traits and a becoming something different. And so, the assimilation of ethnic groups in Canada did not proceed as rapidly as that of their ethnic relatives in the United States (21).

Glazer also notes that when America denies formal recognition for any purpose to political entities, thereby showing reluctance in “making political accommodation to groups of different ethnic character,” Canada has provision in its census to record the ethnicity of its population (21). In the American situation, “There was no central public policy organised around the idea that the ethnic groups were a positive good, and therefore should be allowed whatever freedom they needed to maintain themselves. Policymakers never thought of the matter” (22).

To Glazer, the problem with the American situation is that ethnic groups are not given any political recognition or formal status. In America, ethnicity is voluntary in the sense that no one may be required to be part of a group; nor is anyone “impelled not to be part of a group” (23). Thus

Ethnicity in the United States, then is part of the burden of freedom of all modern men who must choose what they are to be. In the United States, one is required neither to put on ethnicity nor to take it off. Certainly this contributes to our confusion and uncertainty in talking about it (23) whereas in Canada, the Multicultural Act itself urges the people to preserve their ethnic heritage.

However, the question of identity often troubles the ethnic, irrespective of the host land in which he lives. The questions of “what is my culture?,” “what
is my heritage?” surface at one time or another in the life of all the migrants in America and Canada. Migrant writers try to articulate such problems faced by the migrants in their works.

The Chinese customs entailed the male members of China to preserve the clan’s lineage and maintain the ancestral graves. Emigration was regarded un-Confucian and a capital crime. In certain decades of the 15th century, the Chinese were forbidden from going abroad. The lack of desire to emigrate has been because “The Chinese simply did not entertain the notion, so prevalent among Western peoples, of finding a new world and separating themselves from the past and from the land of their ancestors” (Hsu 42). Also, as Bernard Wong vouches, “Chinese were brought up to honor their ancestral land, and to root in their native land to perpetuate their ancestry” and their way of life “was considered to be superior to any savage way of life” (195). The Chinese people “did not emigrate nor did they insist that others adopt their way of life” (Hsu 43). However the debility of the great civilisation of China dating from the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644) forced the creation of overseas Chinese. The inroads made by the Manchus also resulted in emigration. Still the decree of 1712 ensured that overseas Chinese who return to China will be beheaded. In 1868 the Burlinghame Treaty between China and the United States was passed which opened the gates for emigration from China, recognising the right of man to change his home and enjoy the advantage of immigration and emigration.

The presence in the United States of the Chinese, according to Bernard Wong occurs before those of many white ethnic groups and “the history of Chinese in America could be traced back to 1781 or even earlier” (193). The
Chinese immigration to the United States falls into different periods: 1785-1882 is the time of free migration when the Chinese were considered as the unwelcome migrants in America but with no legal barriers to immigration; 1882-1943, which is the period of exclusion, and the period thereafter.

However, “significant migration begins with the California Gold rush of 1849” (Daniels 9). The American view of the Chinese prior to the infiltration of Chinese into America and till the Exclusion had been an ambivalent one. The Chinese were extolled as “absolutely trustworthy” and were deemed “deceitful” in the same sentence. The Chinese aroused “much interest and curiosity” in the Americans, notwithstanding the hostile attitude of the new space (Lyman 159). The first permeation of Chinese in California coincided with the slavery controversy and the knowledge of the Americans about “alien genes and germs” and “antisepsis” (Miller15). This, rather than some defect intrinsic in the Chinese, according to some historians, contributed to the fear of the Chinese in the American mind. To them, the American trader’s image of China had not been admirable from the start. The American traders were “contemptuous of the Chinese” and the only established tactics of dealing with the Chinese had been “to knock them down” as “they are only tea and rice” (Miller 18). The Chinese trader found it gruelling to meet the unrealistic expectations of the American. “The peculiar tastes” of China had been another source of antagonism towards the Chinese. Thus

The fact that they had “yellow” complexions and “slanted” eyes, that Chinese men all wore the same style of clothing . . . that they regularly remitted money and the corpses of their dead to China,
that they spoke an “unintelligible” cacophonous language, that they seemed to adopt only a crude “pidgin” English, that they appeared to gamble incessantly and be addicted to opium smoking, . . ., and that they came without their wives or sweethearts—each and everyone of these real and imagined, alleged and exaggerated traits contributed to the belief that the Chinese were a strange, exotic and even a dangerous people (Lyman 162).

Though some American traders treasured personal relationships with the Chinese, this was not the universal perception of the Americans about the Chinese. The admirable traits of the Chinese like their agricultural system and their craftsmanship were not put on pedestal, but the Chinese peculiarities like “dishonesty, xenophobia, vices, cowardice, technological and military backwardness,” “the static condition of the Chinese society” were criticised and Chinese food detested (Miller 27). The wearing of the queue and the “existence of idolatry, gambling”, prostitution, polygamy and infanticide among the Chinese were disparaged. Negative stereotyping had gone to the extent of the conviction that all women in China had bound feet and that women were kept locked up in China by jealous males. Books retaining a sinophobic outlook were preferred, as per archival records, by the diplomats to those having a sinophilic stance. Thus Cathay had been looked upon as a nation of paradoxes even when specific sinophiles insisted that “the Chinese should be judged by their own standards and tastes rather than those of Europe” (48). Considered simultaneously as a “half civilized or semibarbarous nation” (52) and nation
with religious toleration by the diplomats, traders and missionaries of America, the early Chinese arrivals in the United States -- those from the Kwangtung region (Canton) in southern China did not get a convivial reception. The adverse image of the Chinese in the minds of the Americans generated by these sections had been a decisive force in the treatment of the Chinese in America. The actual migration to a perceptible degree occurred in the year 1848. In the year 1849, there had been an influx of Chinese in America, but the number of passengers at any one time had been below hundred. The number slightly swelled by 1852. However, the 1852 resolution by the white miners of Marysville asserted that “no Chinaman was to be thenceforth allowed to hold any mining claim in the neighborhood” (Lyman 164). Western sailing vessels transported the Chinese to America and in a while, the Chinese themselves began to ship Chinese crew from China to America. The Chinese who went to the United States in the early days were sojourners and not immigrants. This posture of the Chinese to pursue a limited goal led to their exclusion in the United States “from the privileges and obligations of other immigrants” (Barth 1). The impression created by the sojourners however “dominated the relationships between Chinese and Americans for decades” (1).

There are many rationales that prompted the migration of Chinese to America. Emigration had mainly been restricted to the regions of Fookien and Kwangtung. One of the goals that stimulated migration was the prospect of “economic betterment” (Daniels 6). The continuing overpopulation of China led to economic difficulties. The upshots of the Taiping rebellion on the lives of the Chinese coupled with famine, plundering and political corruption in nineteenth
century China, and the prospect of hitting upon “the means of supporting the extended family” (Barth 2) were other reasons that triggered emigration. According to Pyau Ling, “The inborn independent idea, the seafaring spirit, the early contact with western nations, the stress of war, . . . the traveling facilities, the social prejudice at home and the attachment to kindred”(135) were factors that prompted the migration of the Cantonese and Fookianese despite the fact that the Chinese are not a migratory people. Certain Chinese were forced to migrate as they had to fend for themselves since the family tradition entitled the eldest son of the family alone to occupy the family house. Floods and droughts in the native land also contributed to the emigration of the Chinese. The opium wars also made the Chinese think of new lands. The choice of America as their destination was induced by the “news about the discovery of easy riches in California” (Barth 2). Due to the mounting demands for labour of all kinds, the foreign agents in Hong Kong and Macao also offered the Chinese travelling facilities. Pyau Ling attests, “Those who could not pay the passage readily received the most cordial assistance from the agents”(137). The class of semi-slaves in China who are denied certain privileges which all others in the native land enjoy, also preferred to stay abroad, lured by the prospect of freedom.

Chinese immigration to America effectively began in 1847. The “credit-ticket” system “enabled an impoverished Chinese to come across the ocean without putting up any cash, find food and lodging in San Francisco, and assistance in going to work in the mines, on the railroads, or in the midwest or east as a strikebreaker”(Lyman 162). Money provided by kinsmen or fellow villagers would be collected by kinsmen in San Francisco, who would meet the
migrant at the point of debarkation and provide him with necessary facilities initially. However the Chinese who entered San Francisco with the hope of viewing the ‘golden hues of the place’ could only get “an equally familiar world of unrewarding work” (Barth 75). They also had to brazen out discriminatory legislation on their arrival. The American laws of 1847, 1849 and 1855 which dealt with the condition of passenger vessels also proved ineffective in precluding the Chinese from entering America. Bernard Wong opines:

As early as 1850, California enacted laws specifically against the Chinese miners. Chinese miners had to pay special head and permit taxes . . . were subject to abuses. Tax collectors ambushed Chinese miners or ransacked their residences to collect taxes. Tax collectors carried knives and guns, which were used frequently on the Chinese for tax collection purposes (196).

In the 1850s, attempts were made to “curb foreign influence in American life” by extending “the period required for naturalization to twenty-one years (from seven)” and making “American birth a prerequisite for holding most elective and appointive offices at all levels of government” (Daniels 32). However these attempts did not attain fruition. The 1850 state tax on foreign miners, aimed at Latin Americans also proved an encumbrance to the Chinese. This tax, was from the beginning, “almost exclusively against the Chinese who paid 50 percent of the total revenues obtained from it during its first four years and 98 percent during its final sixteen years of enforcement”(Lyman 163).

It is estimated that by 1851, there were 25,000 Chinese in California. The statistics a propos early migration shows that “The early Chinese who came
to mainland United States came without families” (Hsu 4). Further “The traditional Chinese pattern was for men searching for a livelihood temporarily to leave their families at home” (4). The kinds of occupation that awaited these sojourners in America comprise those in mining companies and railroad construction crews. The Chinese had arrived in the United States “as contract labourers” or with money borrowed from Chinese American organisations that assumed a supervisory role toward them in the United States. According to Sowell:

The Chinese, although physically smaller than the Americans, were hard workers in agriculture, railroad building, and other taxing physical labor. They also worked cheaply and lived frugally, saving money out of what could be considered a pittance for Americans. Those very virtues, however, made the Chinese feared and hated as competitors by white workers (136).

As the *U.S. News and World Report* asserts, “Moving into cities, where the best occupations were closed to them, large numbers” of Chinese “became laundrymen and cooks” in America “because of the shortage of women in the West” (6). In 1852, owing to the arrival of the Chinese, the American miners feared that their jobs would be lost. The early arrivals from China were mostly concentrated in California, though California had viewed migrants of diverse pedigrees as impediments to its forming “the true American state” (Barth 34-5). The twin aspects on which the reception of the Chinese in California was founded were “the struggle for the realization of the Californian vision” (35) which had been thwarted on the arrival of the migrants, leading to strife and
acculturation, and the demand that “the American tradition of providing a refuge for the suffering humanity be extended to the Chinese” (35). The Chinese were subjected to “violence, expropriation, and murder” (Daniels 34) throughout the mining districts of California. In 1852, a bill was introduced into the California Legislature by Senator George. B. Tingley “to legalize contracts by which Chinese laborers could sell their services for periods of ten years or less at fixed wages,” (Barth 136) but it met with failure. From 1856, mining in California’s Columbia mining district by Asiatics and South-Sea islanders was prohibited by law. The American law of 1862 “forbade the immigration of involuntary contract labor” (Lyman 163). Though the Californians were predisposed in having an exclusively white population, it was the building of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 which represented California’s “true admission into the sisterhood of states” (Barth 45). Nearly 10,000 Chinese were employed in construction gangs, but “almost all were laid off when the road was completed in May 1869” (Daniels 19).

The Democrats were against Oriental immigration to America. By 1871, the anti-Chinese issue became a national problem. In 1870s, San Francisco witnessed a large number of anti-Chinese demonstrations. This agitation resulted in the passage of a statute in California to the effect that “no persons born “in the Empire of China or Japan, or in the islands adjacent [thereto]” should be allowed to land without a bond unless they could convince the State Commissioner of Immigration of their “good character”” (Daniels 38). Ordinances that badgered the Chinese continued. Chinatown alone witnessed the enforcement of the Cubic Air Ordinance which necessitated at least 500 cubic feet of air for each
inhabitant. The Laundry Ordinance imposed licensing fees on the Chinese. The Chinese tendered non-violent resistance to the anti-Chinese reforms by engaging white attorneys to fight the issue legally and opting to be jailed rather than paying fines, thereby causing considerable expense to the municipality. The 1870s again saw the demand for Chinese exclusion and the fear of the Yellow Peril: that is, “the bogus specter of the invasion of the continental United States by an Asian army” (Daniels 39).

Anti-Chinese resolutions were passed in 1870. The rights of Chinese in the United States were deliberated, with Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts arguing in vain, in favour of colour blind statutes in the Fourteenth amendment which would apply equally to all. The 1874 American President Ulysses S. Grant had been supportive of anti-Chinese legislation, but limited his 1875 recommendation of Chinese immigration restriction to the problem of Chinese prostitutes. By 1876, the anti-Chinese sentiment got solidified at the national level. In 1879, the infamous Article XIX of California constitution came into existence with its “vitriolic volley against the Chinese” (Lyman 173). It “forbade the employment of Chinese in any corporation formed in the state, on any state, municipal and county public works, and provided for legislation whereby any city or town might expel its Chinese inhabitants” (174). Riots against the Chinese were also seen in America.

The anti-Chinese mob action in the 1880s even led to the “stoning” of “the Chinese in the streets, cutting off their queues, wrecking their shops and laundries” (Uyematsu 10). Though people like Reverend Otis Gibson and Senator Oliver P. Morton echoed pro-Chinese sentiments, the anti-Chinese
forces comprising of working people, politicians and the newspapers were so piquant that the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882. The anti-Chinese propaganda in a nutshell can be stated thus: “the Chinese worked cheap and smelled bad” (52). The Exclusion Act was the culmination of the 1880 treaty which allowed full control over the immigration and lodging of Chinese labourers but made special allowances to those Chinese heading to America as teachers, students, merchants or sightseers and the Chinese labourers who at the time of the treaty were in the United States.

According to the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the arrival of Chinese labourers to America was considered to endanger the good order of certain territories and hence the Chinese labourers were suspended from entering America. The master of the vessel who illegally brought Chinese to the United States could also be punished by the provisions of this Act. Moreover Chinese were denied citizenship. Chinese diplomats alone were exempted from the provisions of this act.

During the exclusion period, the Chinese confronted social and legal mistreatment. One form of maltreatment of the Chinese took the form of “Cutting off the long pigtail, or queue, worn by the Chinese men,” (Sowell 137) the import of which was serious to these men for they “could not return to China without it under the laws of the Manchu dynasty” (137). Even before exclusion, “Chinese immigrants arriving in San Francisco were ‘escorted’ to China” with “taunts, beatings, brick-bats and hurling of over ripened fruit in an atmosphere of drunken Irish hilarity” (137). With the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act, however, the Chinese became the first among the Asian migrants in America
“ever to be totally excluded” (Daniels 67). To Bernard Wong, the vetoing of many occupations like “lawyer, engineer, doctor, bank director, chauffeur, dentist, pawnbroker, guide, . . ., security guard, embalmer, plumber, horse track employee, veterinarian, architect, CPA, realtor, registered nurse and teacher” caused the Chinese to confine themselves to “work in the Chinese ethnic niches in the various Chinatowns” or as domestic servants, the only forms of occupation that they could find (198).

In 1885, a race riot was perpetrated by the Chinese against the whites, which resulted in the damage of people and property. In 1894, “a law was enacted to prevent the return of Chinese laborers who had gone abroad” (Wong 198). The Chinese entering America crafted for themselves “an invisible Chinese world which controlled the indentured immigrants” (Barth 78). This space occupied by the Chinese came to be called “Chinatown.” The economic and political life of the early Chinese migrants in America was dominated by traditional family and district associations, “the acknowledged unchallenged superiority of the male elders, the subservient position of women in the family, and the acceptance by younger generation of parental control in matters of courtship and male selection” (Weiss 37). The first Chinatown originated “within the first decade of the Chinese presence in San Francisco” (Daniels 18). This and other nineteenth century Chinatowns were “squalid urban slums” (19). Since the “initial Chinese immigrants were almost exclusively male,” (Sowell 136) the migrant working men and petty entrepreneurs who belonged to the “bachelor society that was Chinese America” wanted “recreation that could only be provided within the ethnic community” (Daniels 22). In California, the
Chinatown offered “mutual aid and protection to the Chinese” (Barth 78) besides providing the Chinese with the most popular distractions of gambling and poker. The primary associational focus for most of the migrant Chinese is the family association or clan, that is, “all those who had a common last name and thus a putative common ancestor” (Daniels 24). Clans were communities that “united their inhabitants with bonds of blood loyalty based on descent from a common ancestor” (Lyman 166). Further, they provided “the boundaries of the incest taboo by prohibiting marriage within the same surname group” (166). Clans were part of district associations and these were eventually coordinated by the organisation called “Chung Hua Hui Kuan” (Chinese society), which came into existence in 1850 (Hsu 45). “The hui kuan united all those who spoke a common dialect, hailed from the same district of origin in China or belonged to the same tribal or ethnic group” (Lyman 167). Later in 1901, “the umbrella organization” came to be called the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (Daniels 24). It was prevalently identified as the “Chinese Six Companies.” The existence and functioning of associations of the Chinese were obscured by the “hazy American notions about Chinese society and the newcomers’ deeply rooted loyalty to families and other symbols of a superior culture” (Barth 79). Besides, discriminatory legislations against the Chinese continued to be placed on record even in 1903. The problem of family life for the Chinese, was intensified with the passage of the Act of 1924 which “specifically prohibited the entry of Chinese wives and thus prevented the union of many Chinese families” (198). The imposition of sterner immigration restrictions made the smuggling of the Chinese into the United States a major
activity. The period also witnessed continual geographic changes, corroborating that the Chinese in America of the time were a very dynamic group of people:

Chinese became, like certain other immigrant groups, predominantly not only urban but large-city urban. Unlike most other urban-centered ethnic groups, however, Chinese moved to large cities after having been primarily rural and small town (Daniels 68).

To the Chinese, initially large city meant San Francisco, which they called “dai fou” or “big city” (69). There was not much social interaction between the Chinese and the whites during this period. Intermarriage was infrequent as there were legal restrictions to the marriage of Chinese to whites. These reasons, coupled with the denial of citizenship to the Chinese caused the ‘assimilation’ rate of the Chinese to become exceedingly low. Thus, according to Wong, “external factors, in particular legal and economic factors,” “played a detrimental role in the assimilation of Chinese during this period” (198).

However, the sexual imbalance was slightly eased when the few Chinese women in the United States produced children; yet it remained a serious problem till the Second World War. Though the new generation of America born Chinese children shared with the other migrant children many difficulties with language, by 1930s, the IQs of the Chinese youngsters were at or above the national average. In spite of their difficulties, the Chinese sent remittances to their family in China and since the Chinese Americans mostly were from Toishan region, this place flourished and became prestigious. The repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1943 and the new legislation “permitting limited immigration
from China in 1945 helped ease the sex imbalance and permitted more normal family life to develop among this very family oriented people” (Sowell 143). As Sowell observes:

The bulk of the new Chinese immigration was female, and the female preponderance was concentrated among young people of marriageable years. More than 8,000 Chinese men brought their wives to the United States within a few years. Some of them were reunited after decades of separation – sometimes with mutual shock on seeing each other again (143).

Further it has also been noted by Sowell that

Many men went back to China to get married, often used the traditional services of a matchmaker. Even among Chinese marrying within the United States in this era, a substantial proportion were marrying mates chosen by parents and / or matchmakers, with varying degrees of assent by the parties themselves (143).

However, there was also an augmenting of the general population. “The 1940 – 1950 decade showed an increase of 51.8 per cent in the Chinese population” (Marden and Mayer 363).

The self sufficient nature of the Chinatown community had catered to the requirements of the Chinese in America during these years and the Chinese did not have to take recourse to public assistance even during the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and the Great Depression of the 1930s. However the Chinese had received very little aid and employment opportunities in
comparison to the whites. The appearance of the second generation, however is said to have aggravated certain adjustment problems in some among the first generation, for, intergenerational tensions which are said to be common to the migrant groups began to crop up. Nevertheless, the close knit structure of the family was maintained with compromises on the parts of the parents and children.

After the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1943, the Chinese in the United States underwent a comprehensive transformation in their status, with many Chinese serving in the armed forces. Thus, Bernard Wong evidences that “30 percent of the Chinese in America were in the various branches of the armed forces participating in the war as combat soldiers, staff or support personnel . . . married males were treated the same as single males and were likely to be drafted” (199).

Besides providing the Chinese in America the consolation of combating Japan, against which the ancestral land, China too had been at war, partaking in defence gave the Chinese an opportunity for naturalisation as citizens. The period also witnessed the emergence of Chinese professionals. Realising that the Chinese could be good workers in the manufacturing sectors, the barricades on employment were broken. The Chinese professionals of the time even ventured interracial marriages. The children of the ‘stranded Chinese’--those Chinese in the United States who came to America for education or specific missions and could not return owing to World War II and civil wars in China -- exhibited greater tendency towards assimilation than other foreign born Chinese.
With more and more Chinese enrolling themselves in the armed forces, so as to cope with the want of manpower, the Chinese laundries and the Chinese restaurants fell back on “technological renovation and specialization,” deploying washing and drying machines leading to escalation of profits. Machines were installed in restaurants for chopping and dishwashing. With the increase in female immigration, garment factories began to surface in Chinatowns. Thus the period from 1943 to 1965 proved beneficial rather than detrimental to the Chinese in America and the Chinatowns. The city government even provided assistance in helping Chinatown to develop tourism. The period saw the riddance of various restrictive covenants in San Francisco. It made the Chinese eligible for acquiring property outside Chinatown area. Many of the anti-Chinese legislations were abolished with persuasion from President Franklin Roosevelt. With the younger Chinese obtaining economic security, the Chinese began to move to white neighbourhoods like Richmond and Sunset areas, which could hitherto not be rented or purchased by the Chinese. “Social interaction was facilitated and concomitantly the assimilation rate increased” (Wong 201). The progress of the second generation was enhanced with the G.I. War Bride Act of 1943. Chinese family life was restored with the influx of war brides and with the removal of the ban to citizenship, more than 20,000 Chinese became naturalised citizens of the United States between 1944 and 1960.

The period after 1965 saw the increased participation of the Chinese in the larger society. There was a decline in the importance of Family Associations and the younger generation became “more responsive to the nuances of American life than bonds of family and community” (Weiss 38). The Chinese
youth had a “new-found independence from familial restrictions and increasing adherence to western romantic demands” (38). With the amendment of the immigration law to eliminate nationality quotas, “there was an immediate upsurge of Chinese immigration, principally from the port of Hong Kong,” some of whom were “well-off and had capital and/or family assistance to establish themselves well in the United States” and others being wives and children of men already in the United States (Marden and Meyer 376).

As the 1965 Immigration Act guaranteed the treatment of the Chinese and the non-Chinese alike, Chinese migrants were “no longer barred from bringing along their families” and the migrants also responded by filing their petitions to be naturalised as soon as they were eligible for citizenship (Wong 204). The passage of the Equal Opportunity Act, the Affirmation Action Program and the New Immigration Act of 1965, thus caused the influx of migrants, made the male-female ratio almost equal by 1980 and assimilation effortless for the Chinese. The Chinese made efforts to establish themselves politically in the U.S. and succeeded. Thus, according to Bernard Wong:

In 1986, Major Dianne Feinstein appointed a Chinese architect, Thomas Hsieh, an immigrant from Shanghai, to sit on the Board. In the election of 1986 the Chinese community campaigned to elect a second supervisor, Julie Tang, a lawyer by training and an immigrant from Hong Kong. A third example is S.B. Wu, an immigrant who won the lieutenant governor race in Delaware (205).
Many college educated ‘second-, third- or fourth-generation immigrants’ after their graduation prefer to work for white American establishments and do not want themselves to be associated with Chinatowns. As Wong claims:

They have the same aspiration as other white Americans: better jobs, better housing, better cars, and a better education for their children, better household appliances, and better economic mobility. Even the family system resembles that of the majority white American: a neolocal residence and the nuclear family. Siblings are no longer required to address each other by the traditional kinship terminology. Relationships within the nuclear family focus on the husband and wife bond rather than the father and son bond that exists in the traditional Chinese family (206).

Among the Chinese in America, most of the pro-Kuomintang old settlers from Taiwan who have experienced personal discrimination do not want to renounce their Chinese identity and are skeptical about America. But a majority of the new migrant group, without rebuffing the positive facets of Chinese culture and its concerns about people “aspire to an affluent lifestyle” (208). They are said to be impressed by the relatively open educational policy in America” and have “developed a double identity that allows them to keep the best of the two cultures: American affluence and Chinese humanism” (208). Another group of Chinese lives in Chinatowns as second and third generation Chinese Americans. Archives tend to generalise this category and these America Born Chinese are said to be “dedicated to fight racism,” “seek unreserved acceptance by the larger
society,” “want to do things as other Americans do,” “identify only with America . . ., speak, behave and think like Americans” and hence are totally assimilated (208). Even in the post – 1965 era, a lucrative sojourner group can be found in America.

The presence of Chinese in Canada has been tracked down to 5th century, 993 years before Columbus’ discovery of America (Chao 1). Peter Woolfson dates the presence of Chinese in Canada in the thirteenth century (369).

Chinese migration to Canada roughly falls into four periods: the period of free entry (1858-1884), the period of restricted entry (1885-1923), the period of exclusion (1924-1947) and the period of selective entry (1948 to present). During the first phase of migration, the Chinese who entered Canada were “sojourners,” people who did not apprehend that work in the mines was the monopoly of the whites and that Chinese would be permitted to work only when the white miners had moved on. The people who reached Canada with the Fraser Rush were rural Cantonese and were captives of the firm that imported them. Since history, as seen by Lien Chao, “is not history of but history for,” Canadian history written by the two charter groups in the two official languages has not, at least according to some archives, recognised the contributions made by the early Chinese migrants (5). Hence most of the migrants who moved out to Canada from Guangdong and Fujian could only exchange social poverty and social unrest in the home land for a life of hard labour and racism in the new space. “The gold rush was never fair play for everybody, nor were the frontiers a free world” (Chao 5). Coinages with a racist overtone like “a Chinaman’s chance”
gained currency. These early migrants had to take up other frontier jobs as their chance to make a fortune was very slim. Thus as gold depleted, the early migrants moved into occupations like farming, gardening, domestic service, road construction and railway building. The anti-Chinese outlook that prevailed bolstered the craving of the Chinese to return to China. Racist terms like “yellow bellies,” “chinks” and “monkeys” reverberated all over Canada. “Ethnocentric Anglo-British Columbians,” in the vein of their California counterparts, judged the Chinese as “treacherous and dishonest by nature – even though there was contrary evidence that a Chinese businessman’s word was as ‘good as gold’ ” (Woolfson 370).

The early months of 1861 witnessed the arrival of 2,875 Chinese to Canada. The public construction jobs offered to the Chinese in Canada during the 1860s and 70s include “building the Cariboo Wagon Road in 1863, driving horse teams through the dangerous canyons, stringing telephone wires for Western Union in 1866, digging canals, reclaiming wasteland and establishing the fish canneries and lumber industry” (Chao 6). The Canadian Encyclopedia records that more than 15000 Chinese arrived to work the Canadian Pacific Railway between 1881 and 1885 and became involved in the rough work of a pioneer industrial economy during the next forty years (336). In 1882 the number of Chinese Americans again increased roughly to 8000. Immigration in the 19th century was at times voluntary and at times enforced. Leo Driedger, quoting Wickberg, testifies: “In 1884 the Chinese in Burrard Inlet comprised five merchants, ten store employees, thirty cooks and laundrymen, and one prostitute, as well as sixty sawmill hands” (205). Peter Woolfson observes that
in 1884 there were about 16,000 Chinese in Canada (370). The coolies who worked to construct the British Columbia section of the CPR were paid half as much as white workers, were made to work in the most dangerous quarters sans safety devices, medical attendance and fresh food supply. Many early Chinese migrants could not survive the callous working conditions. Copious deaths were caused by accidents and diseases. Onderdonk had testified to the 1885 Royal Commission that 600 Chinese died in the construction. The estimate of the Royal Commission shows that there were more than 4 Chinese deaths per mile of the railway. However, a community resource centre records the death of 4,000 Chinese workers marking an increase in the number of deaths to 26 Chinese deaths per mile compared to the estimate of the Royal Commission of 4 per mile (cited in Chao 6). The Chinese found their hopes dashed after the completion of the railway, for, they were not invited to the ceremony and were not mentioned in the history of CPR. They also had to face a backlash from the Union workers. Some politicians rather than the government and the employers shouldered the responsibility of sending the workers back to China. The stranded Chinese who did not have victuals, funds or the espousal of their families (whom they had left behind in China) had to take up jobs as lumberjacks, houseboys, miners, restaurant workers, laundrymen and farm labourers in order to sustain themselves. Many people of Chinese ancestry settled in Victoria.

The Federal Government impressed immigration restrictions on the Chinese as soon as the CPR was completed. As Chao discerns, “the 1885 Royal Commission publicly enforced the discriminatory attitude against the pioneering
Chinese” on the ground that the enduring of the physical hardships is an “inadequate lifestyle for Canadian living” (9). Further, racial difference was underscored and the Chinese were judged unassimilable. These anti-Chinese feelings ultimately culminated into anti-Chinese legislations. From 1885, the Chinese had to shell out an ‘entry’ or ‘head’ tax before getting admittance to Canada. The tax was raised to $100.00 by 1900. Thus

The imposition of a head tax of $50 in 1885 acted as the trailblazer to the numerous anti-Chinese legislations that were passed in Canada. The Chinese were the only race singled out for the payment of head tax as per the provisions of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1885 (Singh 10).

With escalating demand from the British Columbia politicians, this was increased to 500 dollars. Susan Munroe observes that the Canadian federal government amassed about $23 million from the Chinese by way of head tax (par 3).

Nevertheless, overlooking the verbal acclaim ascribed to the Chinese would be being blind to half the picture: Dr. J.S. Helmcken and the CPR contractor Onderdonk testified positively on Chinese immigration before the Royal Commission. Onderdonk stated, “Ninety nine per cent of the Chinese here are industrious and steady” (qtd. in Chao 7). Sir Matthew Begbie, Chief Justice of British Columbia considered “industry, economy, sobriety and law-abidingness” as four laudable traits of Chinese and pointed out the inevitability of Chinese in coal mines, salmon canneries, gold mines, gardens, construction of the railway and manufacturings and undertakings (qtd. in Chao 7 – 8). However,
Chao notes that there never had been any social appreciation of them as a group of ground-breaking Canadians or nation builders (8). In the job market also, mostly Chinese were allowed only entrance level jobs. Many whites dreaded that the simple lifestyle and effort of the Chinese were threats to white stability. This induced many Chinese to drift eastwards within Canada and some even returned to China. The vegetable gardens nurtured by the Chinese thrived and by 1886 most of the supply of vegetables in Vancouver came from the Chinese in the Burrard Inlet area. The Chinese also began to settle down in the Pender area by 1886.

The rate of unemployment of the Chinese remained high and the Chinese Benevolent Society came into existence in 1889 in order to cater to the needs of the unemployed Chinese. The society had as its principal concern, the providing of food, hospital care and refuge to the needy. “It became an important protective and mutual-aid society for the Chinese” (Woolfson 36). The society was “incorporated under British Columbia law in 1907, and later opened branches in other parts of Canada” (36). The associations of the Chinese, as observed by Bhagat Singh, “helped the migrants adjust to a new culture and to racial prejudice and discrimination” (11). The association also helped in imparting services to single men living in bachelor houses in Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto and Montreal. Local level associations provided the Chinese with cheap credit on a cooperative basis, thus facilitating social and cultural change and disentangling economic problems. In addition, “the association settled disputes between members and assured legal council (sic) for Chinese who were involved in litigation in the courts” (Singh 11). Peter Woolfson
observes that District Organisations were formed to look after the welfare of those Chinese who came from specific localities of China (371).

The Chinese found the need for the maintenance of Chinese language, before the repeal of the Exclusion Act (Wickberg 337). A Chinese migrant who knew the language could easily get a job in Chinatown. Consequently, since 1889, children of Chinese migrants in Vancouver were sent to Chinese language schools. Instruction was imparted two hours per week to the children so that they may “learn the Chinese language, good manners and Confucian ethics” (Woolfson 371).

The 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese immigration construed that the Asians were “unfit for full citizenship . . . obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state” (Singh 10). Even the first Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A Macdonald positioned himself against the Chinese, exacerbating the Anti-Chinese racism when he stated: “The yellow and white or black and white will not mix, and the antagonism of race is always intensified if one of two peoples has oppressed the other, or regarded it with social scorn” (qtd. in Chao 9). The heightening of prejudice against Chinese and Japanese was on the cards, with them being used as strike breakers at coal mines in British Columbia. In 1907, an economic depression channelled this into a full-blown riot. However, the Canadian requisite for Chinese labour necessitated the presence of Chinese in Canada during the First World War and resulted in the shooting up of the number of Chinese migrants to 4000 per year.

Nevertheless, with the end of the World War, with the soldiers returning to Canada to seek work, there was a further backlash against the Chinese. As the
number of Chinese in Canada swelled and they began to possess farm and land, there was mounting alarm among the mainstream populace. The Chinese were becoming affluent when there was indigence in Canada. “The economic recession in the early 1920s added to the resentment” (Munroe par 5). 1920 also witnessed the debarring of the Chinese from voting in the federal and provincial elections with the passage of the Dominion Election Act which required that all voters in Federal Elections be British subjects. Enormous processing fees precluded the Chinese from transporting even their immediate family members to Canada. This was over and above the shortcomings caused by the imposition of head tax. The era witnessed the establishment of Chinatowns in undesirable sections of the cities. Further, to cash in on the vote bank during the 1921 federal elections, the promise made by William. L. Mackenzie King, as per archival sources, was to restrict Chinese immigration more effectively.

In *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Wickberg testifies that though the Chinatowns which stemmed in the 19th and 20th centuries were originally overcrowded and squalid classical ghettos, they have undergone renovation as the migrants experienced upward mobility and that in Vancouver, “restrictive covenants prevented the Chinese from buying property outside of the Chinatown area until the 1930s” (336).

The Chinese residing in Chinatowns espoused a separationist stance due to their being perceived to be an ‘unassimilable’ race. The fear of Chinese being a threat to the white society added to the stereotyping. Further, the fear of diseases like cholera, leprosy, etc. which most whites held would be spread due to the teeming lifestyle of the Chinese, the introduction of opium, drug trade and
the Chinese obsession with gambling, all went against the Chinese in Canada. These culminated in the passage of the 1923 Bill 45 on June 30, 1925, known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. This Act allowed only diplomats, children born in Canada, students and merchants to enter Canada and “crushed the dreams of Chinese labourers to have their families reunited in Canada” (Chao 10). The Bill came into effect on July 1, 1923. Thus, the Chinese became the single ethnic group Canada has ever excluded explicitly on the basis of race. No more than forty-four Chinese entered Canada during the next twenty-four years and as Chao notes, “returning Chinese Canadians were jailed in the Immigration Detention Building until their previous residence status could be verified” (10). Also

The Chinese Exclusion Act . . . required every Chinese in Canada to register with the Immigration Department, even if born in Canada. The Exclusion Act also deprived Chinese in Canada of an equal opportunity for naturalization and citizenship rights (Chao 10 – 11).

The Chinese in Canada protested the Chinese Exclusion Act by closing their businesses and boycotting Dominion Day celebrations on every July 1st, which became known as “Humiliation Day” by the Chinese – Canadians.

The Chinese Exclusion Act had far reaching consequences for the Chinese. The most devastating impact of the Head Tax and the Exclusion Act was that it resulted in a prolonged interlude of severance of families leading to the establishment of bachelor societies. In certain families, reunion did not occur at all. All these anti-Chinese immigration laws have made the Chinese-Canadian
community of the present day exhibit many characteristics of entry level
migrants despite its history of nearly 150 years in Canada.

Peter Woolfson, commenting on the religion of the Chinese in Canada
notes that before 1947, majority of the Chinese in Canada were oriented towards
Confucianism and were Buddhists or Taoists in religion (371). However,
meditation, which was pivotal to Zen Buddhism was swapped with uphill
struggle and autonomy. Major Chinese festivals celebrated include Lunar New
Year which was “celebrated in Chinatowns with firecrackers and lion and
dragon dancers,” “Bright-Clear,” “a spring time sweeping of graves of
ancestors, and ‘Mid-Autumn,’ a late summer occasion for moon watching”
(Wickberg 337).

The 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act was rescinded only in 1947. Thus the
immigration of families got legitimised in 1947. It has been observed that the
Chinese Exclusion Act was annulled only because it contravened the United
Nations Charter of Human Rights signed at the conclusion of the Second World
War. Chinese Canadians also salvaged the right to vote in federal elections
during the same year and Alexander Curnyow, the first Canadian born Chinese
baby (born in 1861) got his right to cast a vote. However, Canada witnessed a
diminution in the number of the Chinese from 46,500 in 1931 to 32,500 in 1951
as no new migrants had been allowed till 1947 and as some men returned to
China. The image of the Chinese in Canada underwent a change for the better
 provisionally during the Second World War as China allied itself with the West
against Japan. Notwithstanding the denial of citizenship rights, many Chinese-
Canadian men served in the Canadian army.
The wave of new migrants who entered Canada in the 1950s subsequent to the repeal of the Exclusion Act included wives and children of men who had already settled in Canada and hence mitigation in the hitherto overwhelmingly male Chinese communities could be seen. However, anti-Chinese sentiment again burgeoned in the Cold War era and immigration policy still favoured Europeans over Asians.

A larger number of Chinese students sought higher education in Canada in the 1960s. The tolerant stance towards the Chinese got reinforced with the more liberal Immigration Act of 1962. Peter Woolfson notes the presence of new migrants from Hong Kong, who went to Canada with a view to permanent settlement, as the political future of Hong Kong was at jeopardy (372). However, a majority of these new migrants did not believe in any religion, some were either Protestant or Catholic. Though highly educated compared to those in Hong Kong, these migrants found themselves underrepresented in the professional, semiprofessional and business categories and overrepresented in the clerical, sales, skilled and unskilled jobs. As Woolfson further observes, these Chinese migrants from Hong Kong hung on to some traditional values but also exhibited “some assimilation of urban or Canadian ones” (372). The migrants who went to Canada after 1962 differ from the previous migrants who entered Canada in the nineteenth century “with respect to such factors as occupation and motivation for emigration” (Woolfson 373). Vivian Lai contends:

They came from the cosmopolitan, international city of Hong Kong instead of the agrarian villages in Southern China . . . their
life style and attitude . . . were either in a state of flux or had already been changed before coming to Canada. In any case, it could be said that this new group of Chinese immigrants appear to be more ‘at home’ in Canadian society than their nineteenth century precursors (qtd. in Woolfson 373).

However, this did not mean smooth integration for these migrants into the Canadian society, for, from 1960 to 1963, homes and offices in Chinatowns were raided by the RCMP and the Hong Kong police sent by the Canadian government was in the hunt for illegal aliens.

However, the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act proved advantageous to Canada as the Chinese who emigrated since mid 20th century contributed towards the ‘brain gain’ of Canada. Bhagat Singh points out that the modifications in the immigration regulations in 1967 had encouraged “educated, professional and skilled migrants to come to Canada” (12). During 1967 to 1977, many people of Chinese descent in Canada worked in the capacity of
managers, professionals, technicians, clerks, transporters and in skilled occupational fields. The migrants who entered Canada during this period were students or wives, children and other dependants of migrants.

Chinese Indonesians and Chinese Malaysians are evidenced to have entered Canada in the 1960s. The number of migrants from these places increased during the period from 1970 to 1999. Chinese from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea have settled down in Quebec and Chinese from Latin America who entered Canada in the 1980s are concentrated in Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

The immigration law got modified in 1978 and 1985 and endorsed the arrival of fresh entrepreneurs from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Lien Chao observes that the sex ratio among Chinese in Canada reached an equilibrium only in 1981 (11). By 1981, there were about 2,89,000 Chinese in Canada; the number has almost doubled in 1991. Two-thirds of the Chinese in Canada dwell either in Toronto or in Vancouver. The new migrants are better recognised as they reside in metropolitan centres. Further, more than half the Chinese who have migrated to Canada in the past half century are found to have white-collar occupations and dwell in the suburbs of major cities, especially Toronto and Vancouver. The Chinese Canadians of the present day also find representation in politics.

In the wake of these occurrences, the connotations that Chinatowns are associated with, have also altered. Some of the new Chinese arrivals, without any compulsion, reside in places that are less segregated in the total city, nevertheless, contributing in their turn en route the benefit of the existing Chinatowns. Dreidger rightly comments:
While the other ‘bachelor’ Chinese were well-to-do, Chinese newcomers are better off and are also more educated and politically sophisticated, so that they have helped enhance rehabilitation and new growth in business, schools and institutions, many of which have continued to concentrate in Chinatowns in the centre of the city. Thus many declining Chinatowns have found new life and have been developed and expanded (206).

Chinese leaders have intervened and have desisted attempts at clearing Chinatowns under the guise of slum clearance. They persuade city councils of the significance of a colourful Chinatown. Vancouver, towards the end of the 20th century witnessed the “development of housing projects, new parks, Chinese gardens, cultural centres, and schools and institutions” (206). Consequently “the redeveloped Chinatown became an important part of Vancouver’s Chinatown, rather than as a slum as some had often thought of it” (206). The possibility of ‘integration’ is said to have increased and that of ‘segregation’ dwindled with the influx of new Chinese migrants of higher standing. The present day Vancouver’s Chinatown has in it hundreds of stores, shops and business and provides all the services that the Chinese need. It also has movie houses, restaurants, clubs, voluntary organisations, churches, temples and recreational facilities.

Recent trends mark the decline in importance of written Chinese. The spoken form of language ranges from “specific, very local dialects to Hong Kong Cantonese” (Wickberg 337). Practices like ancestral worship are also on
the decline. Chinese newspapers which had been published from Vancouver and Toronto are also in “some danger of being eclipsed by American editions of Hong Kong Chinese papers” (337). But Canada still lures the Chinese.

The attitude of China towards overseas Chinese has been put on record. Overseas Chinese were at first treated by the Chinese as “deserters, creators, rebels and conspirators” and were even beheaded (Khanna 429). But with the western powers regarding the Overseas Chinese as a source of cheap labour, the Chinese government began to take on an increasingly sympathetic and protective attitude towards the Overseas Chinese. The attitude of the Chinese diaspora towards China has also been placed on record. Report says that the espousal of the Overseas Chinese was a key factor in the successful overthrow of the Qing dynasty by Sun Yat Sen in 1911 and that the subsequent KMT – led nationalist government had worked hard to maintain close economic and cultural relations with Overseas Chinese communities. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Nationality Law in China considered any person born of a Chinese father or mother as a Chinese citizen regardless of his place of birth. But the 1980 Nationality Law states, “Any Chinese national who has settled abroad and who has been naturalised there or has acquired foreign nationality of his own will, will automatically lose Chinese nationality” (Khanna 430 – 431).

It has been estimated that the Chinese diaspora amounts to over fifty million and the number of overseas Chinese has been mounting at great speed since the late 1970s. The Overseas Chinese range from multi billionaire businessmen and world class scientists to waiters in Chinese restaurants. Several features can be found to typify the Chinese diaspora and these have been pointed
out by Wang Gungwu and cited by Khanna: “It is enough to say that Chinese migrants are industrious, practise thrift and make sacrifices for their families, value education and social mobility, and organise themselves for effective defence and action” (428). Khanna further quotes Wan Gungwu:

How the Chinese has sustained what they do, however, does reflect their cultural origins and their uniquely structured history. . . . The factors behind each migration were never constant, the contexts were always important. Both could be more decisive than the cultural baggage the Chinese carried with them (428 – 429).

The fact that the Chinese who had migrated to America and other places in the later part of the nineteenth century were largely uneducated, cheap labourers has created in America an unfavourable image of the Chinese. To Huang I-shu, “being displaced by war and natural calamities is a routine affair in Chinese life” and “the Chinese people have long built up an ability to travel and live in despicable conditions, to tolerate physical and mental abuse, to build new homes and take root among strangers” (446). To him, these experiences have helped the Chinese diaspora a great deal in the process of settling in the new land. The Chinese diaspora, out of their aptitude to flourish in the country of their adoption, are found to adapt to their new milieu easily, but they are also found to retain numerous attributes of the Chinese culture even while inhabiting the host topos. They are said by archives to bear a dual loyalty, one to the country of their adoption and another to China. Though cultural and generational quarrels are shown by certain writers as typifying overseas Chinese families, parents, by
and large, are shown as having a tight control over their children and cherishing a hope that they may inherit Chinese language and cultural traditions.

The Chinese diaspora is said to experience a feeling of being marginalised in America. They, according to diaspora theorists, are often nicknamed ‘banana’ because of their yellow skin and white heart. Huang I-shu observes:

In the USA tension is simmering, though still unnoticeable. The whites are probably not very willing to entrust Chinese with leading managerial responsibilities on the one hand, and are liable to suspect Chinese extraterritorial loyalty. On the Chinese side a feeling of being bianyuanren (marginalised people) exists.

Even in the work place, the diaspora Chinese are said to suffer marginalisation. Huang I-shu further comments on the situation: “There is always the complaint of a ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon in the institutions/corporations in which they work. They can see the upper job positions but have no means to reach there” (448). Thus Chinese restaurants in the USA are said to have a proliferation of PhDs and university degree holders among their waiters and waitresses. “Chinese restaurants overseas have become entry points for diaspora Chinese immigrants” and “The ‘Chinatown’ phenomenon of the world is largely because of the popularity of Chinese restaurants” (I-shu 447).

The overseas Chinese in Canada are also said to face analogous dilemmas. Vivienne Poy, in a speech “What it means to be a Chinese-Canadian?,” expresses the doubts felt by the Chinese diaspora in Canada. These
run thus, “Are we ethnic Chinese who just happen to live in Canada? Or are we supposed to be “Canadian” and give up our Chinese heritage? And if we keep our heritage, does that mean that we are not going to be accepted by Canadian Society” (par 2).

The Chinese in Canada also take pride in their Chinese heritage, but a majority of them are ready to take on Canadian customs alongside their ancestral values. Even in the present age of much vaunted multiculturalism, certain archives report that there are people in Canadian Society who harbour a xenophobic attitude.

Attempts have been made by the PRC government to safeguard the interests of the overseas Chinese. But China finds itself in a quandary when racist discrimination is practised by a country with which China is keen to uphold sound state-to-state relations. Diaspora writings by the overseas Chinese attempt to address instances, if any, of racial discrimination practised against them by people of the host land. The overseas Chinese writers now, like all other “Diasporic communities, organizations, and individuals are increasingly vocal and influential, with their countries of origin and settlement” (Newland 3).

Migrant writers often focus their attention on issues like the role of place in shaping the individual’s opinions, and in different ways, they use these concepts to make us understand how an individual feels. They also sometimes present certain central characters that suffer on account of their utopian views of the places which they inhabit. Will Kymlicka feels that multicultural writings had to assess “the justice of claims by ethnic groups for the accommodation of their cultural differences” (112) as critics of multiculturalism argue against
multicultural accommodations which are seen by them as “inherently morally arbitrary and discriminatory” and “creating first and second class citizens” (112). Hence the writings of the multicultural writers who felt it their duty to defend groups’ specific rights, according to Kymlicka, had rested on a common strategy which he expresses thus:

They all claim that while ‘difference-blind’ institutions purport to be neutral amongst different ethnocultural groups, they are in fact implicitly tilted towards the needs, interests and identities of the majority group, and this creates a range of burdens, barriers, stigmatizations and exclusions for members of minority groups (112).

Hence it is the concern of the multicultural writers to make sure that “The adoption of multicultural policies . . . helps to remedy the disadvantages which minorities suffer within difference-blind institutions, and thereby promote fairness”(113). There is, in general, a tendency to consider that multicultural writers have been able to make great strides in affirming justice to the migrants by contributing greatly to the multiculturalism debates.

New historicism avows that texts “are embedded in particular histories” and “histories, in turn are embedded in language, since we only access those histories through the texts which represent them” (Houlahan 806). Hence, the reading of the works in the backdrop of this archive is not professed to be the only or correct reading. Nevertheless, the thesis is only an attempt at understanding the works against the historical details obtained from the sources consulted.