CHAPTER-1

Inhabited originally by Aboriginal peoples, the first permanent European settlements in Canada were established in the early seventeenth century by the French at Port Royal in 1605 and Quebec City in 1608 and by the English in Newfoundland around 1610. The classic aspects of colonialism are in evidence in Canada, namely the settlement of territory, the exploitation of resources and the urge to control the indigenous peoples. Depending on one's perspective, Canada's history can either be seen as the extension of European colonization or as a stage in the decolonization of British Empire. The Aboriginal peoples were the first immigrants to Canada from Siberia. Over the years Canada has been peopled by various races coming from different parts of the world- the English, the French, the Europeans, the Asians and the Africans. Canada today is a multiracial and ethno cultural mosaic, comprised of people with different physical features, religious beliefs, and multilingual aptitudes and a diversity of cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins. Multiculturalism as a way of understanding society emerged in the 1960s in the context of the "Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism." The report of the Commission, published in 1970, does not however present Canada as primarily and essentially multicultural but rather as composed of two dominant cultures, those of the "Anglophone" and "Francophone" societies. Alongside these two dominant cultures and their associated languages, are the variety of subordinate languages and cultures that the various immigrant groups have brought with them (native people still being excluded from them). Canadian society is thus portrayed as an uneasy relationship between biculturalism and multiculturalism. By the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988- Multiculturalism has been elevated to the status of a "fundamental

characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity."And now history of Canada is getting rewritten in the works of its migrant population and the aboriginal peoples. The Anglophones/Francophones traced their antecedents and their experiences to the beginnings of their entry into Canada. Early Canadian literature records the exploration of male protagonists through the wilderness, dark forests and undulating prairie lands, huge Mountains and the trackless wastes of snow. Literature came to serve the purpose of establishing a national identity and a national unity. It was used to define "who we are" and "where we are." Literature became a product of society and portrait of its very nature and mode of operation and existence and its processes. Taken together they constitute a psychological, geographical and sociological portrait of Canada as it was for the Anglophone/Francophone writers. Writers like Sinclair Ross, Philip Grove, J.C. Stead, Ernest Buckler, Rudy Wiebe, Margaret Atwood, Gail Scott, Robert Kroetsch and others were instrumental in channeling Canadian literature into a distinct body of writing that was expressive of new dimensions of experience.

The Canadian social structure remains incomplete if one does not account for the immigrant population in Canada today. Canada has opened its portals to immigrants from all over the world and a sizeable population today comprises of South Asians and Black immigrants. While the Western world, the "invisible" majority, has easily merged with the mainstream culture, the South Asians and Africans the "visible" minority, with their own deeply rooted culture and traditions have untiringly sought to retain their identity. The term "South Asian" includes more that it excludes. It does not imply only immigrants who have directly gone from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh to Canada but also those generations of Caribbean

people and Africans who had originally roots in India. Many South Asians, who have made their journey through Africa and Caribbean, started their lives in Canada after they had left their countries following decolonization in 1960.

The Indian Diaspora in Canada is a 20th century phenomenon. Although it began in the early 1900s, when both India and Canada were colonies of the British empire, it was not part of the 'indenture system' which was in vogue from 1834 to 1920, under which labor emigrants from India were taken to the British colonies of British Guiana, Fiji, Trinidad and Jamaica, the French Colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and the Dutch Colony of Surinam. It began with the employment of the Sikhs in the timber industry to build the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and to work on the farms. Though the number of Indian emigrants entering Canada has been neither absolutely nor relatively phenomenal and there have been ups and downs in the number of Indians accorded the immigrant status by the Canadian economy in the late 1960s and the changes in the Canadian higher educational policy have favored the changes in the Canadian higher educational policy have favored the Indian professionals. In 1996, there were 670,590 people of South Asian origin in Canada and they formed 2.35 percent of the visible minority population which was 3,197,480 or 11.21 percent of the total population.

In Jewish historiography, the source of diaspora experience begins in the sixth century BC with the destruction of the first Temple and Jerusalem. The expulsion of Jews from the city and their subsequent exile to Babylon has become one of the central Jewish cultural and political narratives. Nevertheless, the association of the term 'Diaspora' with loss or exile or some sort of suffering has

meant that the Jewish experience has come to be seen as the prototype diasporic experience. The classical form of Diaspora, then, relates to forced movement, exile and a consequent sense of loss derived from an ability to return. This is also conventionally applied to the mass movement of Africans via slavery to the Americas.

In the relationship between 'home' and 'away' that marks out diasporic understandings, 'away' signifies some sort of loss, and can be generalized into a representative typology or definition of what a diaspora might be. Robin Cohen builds upon the framework developed by William Safran to provide a list of conditions which, when satisfied, allow for the application of the diaspora label. In viewing diaspora as a model of categorization, we find a number of problems. As the following criteria illustrate, there is an inherent bias towards certain types of experience:

1. Dispersal and scattering (from a homeland);
2. Collective trauma (while in the homeland);
3. Cultural flowering (while away);
4. A troubled relationship with the majority (while away)
5. A sense of community transcending national frontiers (home and away); and
6. Promoting a return movement (away to home).

In addition to the above criteria, he further classifies diasporas in terms of a set of core features. There are, accordingly five different forms of diasporic community:

1. Victim (African and Armenian);

2. Labour (Indian);

3. Trade (Chinese and Lebanese);

4. Cultural (Caribbean). (122)

Diaspora is not limited to any particular historical period in that we have examples of Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-colonial diasporas. Cohen's work is a useful starting point because he offers many examples and case studies.

Another framework is offered by Steven Vertovec who approaches the subject of diaspora not so much through the categorization of peoples, but with attention to the ways that multiple meanings of diaspora are generated through ethnographic work. From his work in Trinidad and Britain, Vertovec offers three definitions as types, "1. Diaspora as social form; 2. Diaspora as a type of consciousness; and 3. Diaspora as a mode of cultural production" (277-99).

In contrast, diasporic understanding by focusing on transnational links and emphasizing a multiplicity of belongings and identities, can challenge the fixity of identity invoked by ethnicity. In other words, diasporic groups are just as likely to operate within the bounds of ethnic absolutism as any other group. For example, Black Muslims in the Nation of Islam or Sikh separatists may organize and exist as transnational groups, but they are also engaged in the process of building and maintaining quite rigid boundaries. Ethnicity reinstates the nation-state as the legitimate social sphere in which boundaries are made. In some ways, ethnicity is like the smaller version of the nation, in that the processes described to bind an ethnic group are often similar to those used to describe and bind the nation.

If diaspora implies a relationship between more than one society, one culture, one group of people, then this is a useful starting point for considering how it has created an impact upon politics and economics. There are crudely three social spheres which can be identified:

1. The dispersed group who have some form of collective identity or process of identification;
2. The contexts and nation-states in which these various groups reside; and
3. The nation-states to which an affiliation is maintained, through a series of social, economic and cultural ties.

There is tremendous variety in the nature of connections with a homeland, from a very close engagement to a less materially close relationship to minimal interaction in terms of visiting and material ties. Perhaps more fundamentally, this relationship can become stronger and weaker depending upon changes to the political relationships between the respective countries and access to both material and other forms of cultural contact. The problem that nation-states have with diasporas has to do with the ideal of loyalty. In the modern era, the nation-state is supposed to be the principal body of affiliation for all those who live within its borders. This is the manner in which the nation can then represent the interests of those it claims to represent. Diasporas complicate this easy formulation.

In Contemporary literature, the term, diasporic writing has come to be associated with works produced by globally dispersed minority communities that have common ancestral homelands. Categorizing a body of writing as diasporic raises the question of its relationship to such counter parts as immigrant writing,

exile and expatriate writing. Diasporic writing has affinities with, but stands apart from all. It diverges from immigrant writing in its preoccupation with the attachment to the homeland. Immigrant writing does not ignore this, but focuses more on the current experiences in the adopted home. Exile and Expatriate writing is more immersed in the situation at home and the circumstances that prolong the individual's exile or expatriation than with the émigré's community relationship with the dominant society.

Diaspora writing then is about or by people who are linked by common histories of uprooting and dispersal, common homelands and common cultural heritages but develops different cultural and historical identities depending on the political and cultural peculiarities of the dominant society. And even within a particular region there are likely to be differences between traditionalists and assimilationists.

Then further, there is the Komagata Maru story, buried within the memories of Indian diaspora which traces the line to its roots. In May 1914, the Komagata Maru arrived at Vancouver's harbour, carrying 376 Indian emigrants hoping for Canadian residency. After two months of governmental stalling and legal maneuvering — two hot summer months during which the ship's passengers went without sufficient food and water — Canada turned away 352 of those on board. Here was a moment of national definition and border patrol staged for all the country to see. The ship arrived at the Canadian coast on 21 May after almost two months at sea, and was instructed by Canadian customs officials to drop anchor two hundred yards from shore. Here the ship and its passengers would wait while

Canadian immigration officers kept the ship at bay for two months. Government officials denied the passengers contact with those who wished to support their cause, including members of Vancouver's Sikh community and the lawyer working on behalf of the Indian men aboard. The situation grew desperate. The government agreed to supply the passengers with food and water only on condition of the ship's departure. On 23 July 1914, the passengers' legal recourse frustrated and their funds exhausted, the Komagata Maru sailed for Calcutta. This is the story of 376 people caught between India and Canada, between sea and land, on the brink of World War One, a global threshold moment which keeps on lingering in the psyches of Indo-Canadians.

While borders are important, it can be suggested that this choice of location undermines the rigidity of boundaries and marks the productive potential of border zones that serve as sites of contestation. The space of the margin can be an especially productive place in which to question identity and national politics. Vijay Mishra, in exploring the relationships of diaspora to nation-state, argues that the border is "a space that is always contaminated" (433). This is not to suggest that there are centred and "pure" spaces beyond the margins. Contamination, instead, speaks to the richness and productivity particular to border spaces. The Komagata Maru Incident is staged on multiple border sites: beyond being set on the geographical edge of the nation, this drama investigates the boundaries of theatrical performance, of individual understanding, and of national identity.

Mishra claims that the occupation of the border, the claiming of the hyphenated space, "is that which signifies the vibrant social and cultural spaces

occupied by diasporas in nation-states" (432). Those aboard the Komagata Maru are denied the "vibrant" space of diaspora. Instead, these passengers are restricted to inhabiting only the hyphen: denied entry to Canada, prevented from re-entering India because they have become a threat to the British Empire, these colonial subjects are relegated to the space in-between, which, because it is made to exist in isolation, has been made an unproductive, stagnant, unlivable space. The immigration of Indians to Canada has been a continuous phenomenon. Moreover, unlike the migration of Indian workers to West Asia in the wake of oil boom, with little or no possibility of permanent settlement in many countries there, immigrants in Canada have by and large settled down there though with varying immigrant status.

The historically continuous nature of the Indian diaspora in Canada and the differences in the educational, economic, regional and linguistic and religious, sectarian and caste backgrounds of the immigrants – that is differences carried and often sustained, by the immigrants from India- and the differences sustained or created in their new country of residence, necessarily make the diaspora a heterogeneous one. To this if we add the duration of the immigrants' stay in Canada and the generational differences that naturally set in, this heterogeneous phenomenon becomes even more complex. The first immigrants from India arrived in British Columbia in the 1890s and worked in the lumber and fruit farm industries. As happened to the Chinese who came to build Canada's railways, racist policies almost put an end to immigration in the 1910s, the 1951 census recorded a total of 2,148 East Indians of whom 721 were female. South Asians started entering in

significant numbers only in the 1960s, the 1990 census records 232,000 East Indians of single origin and 45,000 of mixed origin.

Orature, the rich tradition of Aboriginal oral literature in Canada in the form of epics, legends and tales, goes back thousands of years but with the exception of isolated examples like the Mohawak writer Emily Pauline Johnson (1861-1913), there are very few works by Native Canadian writers published before the 1960s. The late 1960s to the mid -1970s saw the publication of crucial works in which Native Canadian writers expressed their unmediated views. *The Unjust Society* by Harold Cardinal (cree) *Half-Breed* by Maria Campbell (metis) and Howard Adams's *Prison of Grass* were some of the notable works of that period. A particular feature of Native Canadian writing is the strength of its women writers. In the 1980s Canada saw the publication of Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree*(1983), Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*(1987) and Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* (1987). Whereas South Asian Canadian writers thus include Rohinton Mistry who left Bombay for Canada, Neil Bissoondath from Trinidad, Arnold Itwaru and Cyril Dabydeen from Guyana to Canada, Rienzi Crusz and Michael Ondaatje from Sri Lanka, M.G.Vassanji and Sam Selvon from West Indies via England to Canada.

The literature of South Asian Canadians "pole- vaulted" into prominence into in the 1980s. While men such as Michael Ondaatje for his novel, *The English Patient*, Rohinton Mistry for his *Such a Long Journey* (1992), and M.G. Vassanji for his *No New Land* (1991), have won prestigious awards, the roster of women writers shows that the strength of the total fabric of South Asian Canadian literature and

criticism lies in the contribution of women. Lakshmi Gill, Suniti Namjoshi, Uma Parameswaran , Himani Bannerji and Bharati Mukherjee published good work through the eighties, Yasmin Ladha, Jamila Ismail, Ramabai Espinet, Nazneen Sadiq, Farida Karodia, Surjeet Kalsey, Tilottama Rajan, Nilambir Ghai and Maya Khankhoje are writers whose voices are now emerging. Among critics the list consists almost exclusively of women- Himanni Bannerji, author of *The Writing of Wall* (1993), Uma Parameswaran who has published numerous critical essays in various journals and Aruna Shrivastava. It has taken a hundred years for South Asian Canadians to find their voice. Next their voices have to be heard.

There is only one literary work in English that records anything about the early years, the novel *Maluka* by S.S. Dhami. Dhami sensitively describes Indo-Canadians' school and work routines in British Columbia in the 1920s, but he does not say much about women's lives. In our on-going feminist search for foremothers, there is much retrieval work to be done, and it needs to be done quickly, for most records are etched only in the memories of the older generation. There is a mythopoeia archetype waiting to be given form—the 1913 saga of Komagata Maru in which a shipload of 376 immigrants from India was quarantined off the coast of Vancouver while the government of General Lord Grey and Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier figured out how best they could get rid of the 'Brown Peril'. The ship was sent back with its load of unwanted immigrants. Added to the absence of any record of oral narratives, there is a paucity of background material. There are two different sets of background material—those connected with the history of the original homeland and those connected with the history of Canada.

The 20th century witnessed the dispersion of people from India across the oceans, to settle in other countries, including the United States of America and Canada. If the first couple of women from India entered USA in 1918, they were allowed into Canada in 1919. Hence, diaspora is a part of a process of narratives cultural history in the making of a people, who have chosen to live in another country far away from the country of their origin. It consists of diverse and complex strands, often problematic but with ever widening implications. There are different methods of possible transitions within, between and among cultures for the people in the diaspora. The models used for understanding the process of change are assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multiculturalism and fusion (La Framboise 395). In the assimilation model, the member of one culture loses his or her original cultural identity by acquiring a new identity in the second culture. On the other hand, the acculturation model implies that the individual, while becoming a competent participant in the majority culture, will always be identified as a member of the minority culture. The individual has a sense of belonging in two cultures without compromising his or her sense of cultural identity and is capable of alternating his/her behavior according to the needs of a situation, in the alternation model.

In contrast, the multicultural model promotes a pluralistic approach and presents the feasibility of cultures maintaining distinct identities. In it, the individual maintains a positive identity as a member of his/her culture of origin while at the same time developing a positive identity by engaging in complex institutional sharing with the larger political entity comprised of other cultural groups. When here

we are about to discuss Multiculturalism, it's appropriate to throw light on 'Melting Pot' theory also which is a relative term.

The "Melting Pot" is a metaphor for a heterogeneous society becoming more homogeneous, the different elements "melting together" into a harmonious whole with a common culture. It is particularly used to describe the assimilation of immigrants to the United States; the melting-together metaphor was in use by the 1780s.

After 1970 the desirability of assimilation and the melting pot model was challenged by proponents of multiculturalism, who assert that cultural differences within society are valuable and should be preserved, proposing the alternative metaphor of the mosaic or salad bowl– different cultures mix, but remain distinct. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the metaphor of a "crucible" or "melting pot" was used to describe the fusion of different nationalities, ethnicities and cultures. It was used together with concepts of the United States as an ideal republic and a "city upon a hill" or new promised land. It was a metaphor for the idealized process of immigration and colonization by which different nationalities, cultures and "races" (a term that could encompass nationality, ethnicity and race) were to blend into a new, virtuous community, and it was connected to utopian visions of the emergence of an American "new man". While "melting" was in common use the exact term "melting pot" came into general usage in 1908, after the premiere of the play *The Melting Pot* by Israel Zangwill.

The concept of Multiculturalism was preceded by the concept of cultural pluralism, which was first developed in the 1910s and 1920s, and became widely

popular during the 1940s. The concept of cultural pluralism first emerged in the 1910s and 1920s among intellectual circles out of the debates in the United States over how to approach issues of immigration and national identity. In the United States, where the term “melting pot” is still commonly used, despite being largely disregarded by modern sociologists as an outdated and diffuse term, the ideas of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism have largely replaced the idea of assimilation. Alternate models where immigrants retain their native cultures such as the “salad bowl or the symphony” are more often used by prominent sociologists to describe how cultures and ethnicities mix in the United States. Nonetheless, the term assimilation is still used to describe the ways in which immigrants and their descendants adapt, such as by increasingly using the national language of the host society as their first language.

Since the 1960s, most of the research in Sociology and History has disregarded the melting pot theory for describing inter-ethnic relations in the United States and other counties. The theory of multiculturalism offers alternative analogies for ethnic interaction including salad bowl theory, or, as it is known in Canada, the cultural mosaic. In the 1990s, political correctness in the U.S. emphasized that each ethnic and national group has the right to maintain and preserve its cultural distinction and integrity, and that one does not need to assimilate or abandon one's heritage in order to blend in or merge into the majority Anglo-American society. However, some scholars have expressed the view that the most accurate explanation for modern-day United States culture and inter-ethnic relations can be found somewhere in a fusion of some of the concepts and ideas contained in the melting pot, assimilation, and anglo-conformity models. Under this theory, it is asserted that

the U.S. has one of the most homogeneous cultures of any nation in the world. This line of thought holds that this American national culture derived most of its traits and characteristics from early colonial settlers from Britain, Ireland, and Germany. When more recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe brought their various cultures to America at the beginning of the 20th century, they changed the American cultural landscape just very slightly, and, for the most part, assimilated into America's pre-existing culture which had its origins in Northwestern Europe.

The decision of whether to support a melting-pot or multicultural approach has developed into an issue of much debate within some countries. For example, the French and British governments and populace are currently debating whether Islamic cultural practices and dress conflict with their attempts to form culturally unified countries.

Multiculturalist View:

Multiculturalists typically support loose immigration controls and programs such as bilingual education and affirmative action, which offer certain privileges to minority or immigrant groups. Multiculturalists claim that assimilation can hurt minority cultures by stripping away their distinctive features. They point to situations where institutions of the dominant culture initiate programs to assimilate or integrate minority cultures.

Although some multiculturalists admit that assimilation may result in a relatively homogeneous society, with a strong sense of nationalism, they warn however, that where minorities are strongly urged to assimilate, there may arise groups which fiercely oppose integration. With assimilation, immigrants lose their

original cultural (and often linguistic) identity and so do their children. Immigrants who fled persecution or a country devastated by war were historically resilient to abandon their heritage once they had settled in a new country.

Multiculturalists note that assimilation, in practice, has often been forced, and has caused immigrants to have severed ties with family abroad. In the United States, the use of languages other than English in a classroom setting has traditionally been discouraged. Decades of this policy may have contributed to the fact—lamented by multiculturalists—that more than 80 percent of Americans speak only English at home. While an estimated 60 million U.S. citizens are of German descent, forming the largest ethnic group of American citizens, barely one million of them reported speaking German in their homes in the 2000 Census.

Assimilationist view:

Whereas multiculturalists tend to view the melting-pot theory as oppressive, assimilationists view it as advantageous to both a government and its people. Some tend to favor controlled levels of immigration—enough to benefit society economically, but not enough to profoundly alter it. Assimilationists tend to be opposed to programs that, in their view, give out special privileges to minorities at the expense of the majority.

Assimilationists tend to believe that their nation has reached its present state of development because it has been able to forge one national identity. They argue that separating citizens by ethnicity or race and providing immigrant groups "special privileges" can harm the very groups they are intended to help. By calling attention to differences between these groups and the majority, the government may foster

resentment towards them by the majority and, in turn, cause the immigrant group to turn inward and shun mainstream culture. Assimilationists suggest that if a society makes a full effort to incorporate immigrants into the mainstream, immigrants will then naturally work to reciprocate the gesture and adopt new customs. Through this process, it is argued, national unity is retained. Assimilationists also argue that the Multiculturalist policy of freer immigration is unworkable in an era in which the supply of immigrants from third world countries seems limitless. With immigrants often coming from multiple points of origin, it may be excessively expensive to meet their needs. From an employment perspective, they note that job markets are often tight to begin with and that expecting large amounts of newcomers to find work each year is unrealistic. Allowing high levels of immigration, it is argued, will inevitably lead to widespread poverty and other forms of disadvantage among immigrants. The melting-pot theory works best, in their view, when the "ingredients" are added in modest increments, so that they can be properly absorbed into the whole.

A compromise between Multiculturalists and Assimilationists:

There also exists a view that attempts to reconcile some of the differences between multiculturalists and assimilationists. Proponents of this view propose that immigrants need not completely abandon their culture and traditions in order to reach the goal that the melting pot theory seeks. This reasoning relies on the assumption that migrants can be persuaded to ultimately consider themselves a citizen of their new nation first and of their nation of birth second. In this way, they may still retain and practice all of their cultural traditions but "when push comes to shove" they will put their host nation's interests first. If this can be accomplished,

immigrants will then avoid hindering the progress; unity and growth that assimilationsts argue are the positive results of the melting pot theory—while simultaneously appeasing some of the multiculturalists.

This compromise view also supports a strong stance on immigration and a primary language in school with the option to study foreign languages. (A consensus on affirmative action does not currently exist.) Proponents of this compromise claim that the difference with this view and that of the assimilationists is that while their view of the melting pot essentially strips immigrants of their culture, the compromise allows immigrants to continue practicing and propagating their cultures from generation to generation and yet sustain and instill a love for their host country first and above all. Whether this kind of delicate balance between host and native countries among immigrants can be achieved remains to be seen. Thus, individuals and families who live at juncture between two cultures can lay claim to belonging to both cultures, yet for reasons of being born into one culture and living in the second, they are marginal people, very different to the norm set by the majority. Marginality leads to the psychological conflicts of a divided self. The story of the diaspora is the different stages in the resolution of this conflict in the lives of individuals, families and generations. With the loss of a sense of security of a known historical past and of a shared geographical space, the need 'to belong' becomes constitutive of the Indian diaspora.

Shauna Singh Baldwin, the author of the well known novel*, What the Body Remembers* was born in Montreal. When asked to define diasporic literature, she expresses her views in her various interviews that those Indians who wrote in

English were known as Indian writers by the North American publishers and academics; then there were the immigrant Indian writers like Nirad C.Chaudhari, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Divakaruni. But the present Indian diasporic writers, like her, fitted neither of the above two categories since they were second generation Canadians/Americans of Indian origin whose worldview and preoccupations were very different from that of the earlier writers. While they wrote on present day Pakistan or about Indian immigrants, it did not express direct experience but was a result of research and imagination. Thus, these women, when they came to Canada and whether they were first- or second-generation writers, brought different dimensions into their perceptions. For Baldwin and others like her, writing on India through fiction was a matter of education and self-exploration. For the communities, living in the new world order, the homeland becomes at once remote due to physical distance and yet accessible, with electronic and satellite communications. In the circumstances, the creative writers are distinct from what they write about and there is "more of imagery than of direct experience, especially when dealing with Indian themes" (Nelson 93).

Anita Rao Badami essentializes this when she says in an interview given to Angela Koszminuk, "I am interested in the shakiness of memory, the elusive nature of the mind". She aims at exploring the changing relationships within the family or even with the same person, as one grows older and with each changing fortune. Her novel, *Tamarind Mem*, is set between India and Calgary, and the story alternates between the memories of two protagonists, mother and daughter, trying to make sense of their past of living in various railway colonies of India, but with vastly different recollections. It shows how the differences that exist between them are

primarily due to the changing culture in the modernizing world. Unlike Baldwin, who was born in Canada and Bharati Mukherjee, who went to Canada in the mid-sixties, Anita Rau Badami followed her husband to Calgary, Canada in 1991 and later shifted to Vancouver. Born in Rourkela, India, in 1961, she had got her degree in literature from Madras University and also a course in journalism in Bombay. She has been hailed as one of the newest writers in the vibrant field of Indian sub continental literature and as a promising new Canadian voice.

The possibilities are as diverse and varied, as there are individuals. There is, or can be, no single rule or combination of rules to guide them. Hence, the opinion of the women writers of the diaspora is invaluable sources of information to understand the complexities of the process. Their efforts at a personal level and their perceptions as seen through their fictional characters in the novels and short stories as well as their essays provide a key to unravel the quest, at least to some extent. The questions are myriad. How far do they identify themselves with the land of adoption?

There are two aspects to this question…first deals with the questioning of positions to be taken vis-a vis the majority culture and establishment of one's credibility as an individual, an Asian woman and a woman writer of Indian origin in a white society. Each one of these is, and could be, a story by itself. Also, in spite of the finality of their dislocation, there is a "perpetual tuning of one's gaze towards the lost homeland….Thus, the notion of Asian American (Canadian) soil becomes deeply problematised. In such cases, only a diasporic perspective can provide

conceptual room needed to accommodate non-conforming cultural orientations" (Wong 8-10).

There are also basic differences between each one of the women writers, in the way that they relate to the country of their origin and to their immigrant status, thus bringing out the diverse, and, at times almost opposite perceptions and experiences of living in the diaspora. In the final analysis, it is all about the creation of one's own cultural space in the adopted homeland.

Uma Parmeswaran is a vocal supporter of multiculturalism, as an effective and active ingredient, in the quest for life in the diaspora. Both Bharati Mukherjee and Uma Parmeswaran came to Canada in the mid-sixties and yet their responses are quite different. Uma writes, "It is an exciting time to be in Canada, where we are shaping a new national culture that will be a composite of many heritage cultures, not the least of which is the aboriginal culture that is experiencing a renaissance" (Parmeswaran 357). In 1967, she joined the Department of English, University of Winnipeg and worked to develop the Women's Studies Programme in the University of Winnipeg. She extensively published her short stories, poems and plays as well as critical essays. She also edits the *SACLIT* (South Asian Canadian Literature) drama, plays by South Asian Canadians. She has delved deep into the question of being "a woman, a South Asian, and a feminist in North America", "a non-white, non-Judaeo Christian, non-male in the academia" and "a Canadian writer born and educated in India". Emphasizing the significance of cultural constructs for South Asians, she refers to the deep divide between western and South Asians feminists generated by these constructs. She blames the neo-imperialist ploy of maintaining cultural

imperialism, of avoiding a dialogue between the two as the reason for this divide. As long as one diverts possible dialogue, lines can be used to define and restrict the other on one's own terms. As an immigrant, she is profoundly Canadian. Being committed to multiculturalism, she has taken sincere efforts to create a cultural space for the South Asians in Canada, through her community activities. She is the founder, producer and host of the weekly television programme, *PALI*, "interviewing South Asian Canadians about their professions and careers; rummaging for slides, post cards and books; and then writing up scripts on the architectural monuments, art, music, crafts, dances and mythologies of India" (Parmeswaran 356).

She was also responsible for organizing Winnipeg's first series of formal Indian dance instruction in 1978. Her aim has been to create a climate not merely of acceptance, but of celebration, of cultural differences and also to bring to note "the contribution of South Asian Canadians that helps us to stand tall" and be proud of their identity, within the overarching Canadian identity. "My truth is to see the glass as half full, which is not to deny that the glass is half empty and in the process to help it to fill. She proceeds to do this in her own wry, humorous style. She posits the picture of India as a "sound of spontaneous laughter", of the "gopurams and temple bells and flowers" and "women topping most graduate classes in most professional colleges" to a bewildered Canadian viewer, who is used to "the existence of Mother Teresa's India", "of pavement dwellers of the cities", 'of superstitions' and of "dowry deaths and feticides" . She acknowledges that given India's diversity, anything one says of India is both true and false, there is no one truth but there are

many truths. She makes, “an informed choice” of the half-filled glass, “though it may seem too rosy-tinted for some others” (Parmeswaran 378).

What is unique and common among all the writers is that their creativity is largely colored by their roots in India, in terms of originality, analogies, reference to myths, and imagery through language. Shauna Singh Baldwin calls it an exploration that educated her, because she lacks direct experience of India. Bharati Mukherjee remarks,“ I suppose that being a Hindu, I mean, this being constantly aware of the existence of many universes, this undermining of biography and individual ego, the cosmology that I and my characters inhabit derives very much from the Puranic tales” (Chen and Goudie 1-13) . During an interview, she said that she had in her kitchen the image of Kaali, the Goddess of Destruction of Evil. “Kaali is what Jasmine was mythologizing herself into when she killed her rapist, Half- Face”. Uma Parmeswaran’s writings abound with the imagery of myths and folklore from India. She blends “modern experience with traditional myths and stories”. Not only does this conflation of sacred and secular bring power and conviction to her work and elucidate her beliefs, but as well, the incision of Hindu myth broadens the literary map of Canada by allowing this mythology to join with Norse, Greek, Roman and of course, Christian” (McGlifford, in Nelson 307). Uma Parmeswaran writes that her “goal is to bring Ganga to the Assiniboine” not only for Indo-Canadians but for all Canadians.

As minority writers, they have confronted difficulties to establish their identity as women and that too, South Asian women of Indian origin, in a white, male-dominated society. In their efforts in surmounting these difficulties, they have

raised and discussed, in depth, several pertinent questions on freedom of expression and voice/culture appropriation. Being intellectuals, they have put to use their direct experience of living in the Diaspora and being women they have done this with great sensitivity, to express through writings the various nuances in the lives of immigrants of all ages, sexes and generations. This is especially invaluable since this gives a direct insight into the lives and feelings of women in the diaspora and the issues that they have to face as immigrants, which would otherwise have gone unrecorded. Almost all issues of relevance like inter-generational/gender conflicts, martial discords and cultural dislocations have been dealt with in their writings.

Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities, spaces for growth, resolution of conflicts and a new culture, either composite or plural. This is what these creative writers of Indian origin, living in Canada or connected with it, are in the process of accomplishing, each in her own way. The possibility of infinite permutations and combinations of adjustments within the diaspora are evidenced by the manner in which they have taken diverse paths to reach the same goal of 'belonging' to the society and country of their choice. Their contribution to the richness and diversity of the culture of the new homeland is undeniable. The figurative interaction between diaspora and these writers, each leading to the growth and understanding of the other, is symbolic of the worldwide phenomenon of the creation of multicultural.

Indo-Canadian diasporic Literature: a Literary Review:

In the galaxy of Indo-Canadian fiction, the writers like Bharati Mukherjee, B.Rajan, Ashish Gupta, Saros Cowasjee, Rohinton Mistry, Michael Ondaatje, Anita

Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin and Uma Parmeswaran have constructed various dimensions of the life and experiences of immigrants settled in Canada.

The best- known writer in the context of this essay is Bharati Mukherjee. She is the author of four novels: *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Holder of the World* (1993); two collections of short stories: *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) and two works of non-fiction, both in collaboration with her husband Clark Blaise: *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977) and *The Sorrow and the Terror* (1987). The authors have painstakingly collected a vast amount of material; the conclusions they draw are that during this period there were clear terrorist conspiracies planned by Sikh separatists working for Khalistan and that Canadian agencies(police and government) did not follow up on leads that could have prevented the bombing. Born in India, Mukherjee studied creative writing at Lowa State University, and then taught at Canadian universities until 1980, when she left for the United States. She is now an American citizen who has rejected Canada in no uncertain terms because of its racism. However her best works have Canadian settings, characters, social realism and commentary. In her novels, she has contemplated the phenomenon of immigration with a positive vision of assimilation. She constructs the world of diasporic sensibility through the plight of educated middle class women. The race and gender issues prepare a fine fabric of complex diasporic psyche. Bharati Mukherjee's approach to life and its problems is deeply rooted in her Indian upbringing. She constructs the plots of her novels with a vision that Indian characters in search of American citizenship retain sufficient Indianness to be exotic but simultaneously they float into American materialism. In her diasporic narratives, Mukherjee focuses

on dislocation, fluid identities, the dilemma of cultural conflicts, awareness of national identity, faith in Indian moral values and personal relationship. With her women-centric approach, she gives a new direction to the creed of diasporic literarure. In one of her interview, she has confessed her own creative impulse, "The kind of women I write about... are those who are adaptable. We've all been raised to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives and that adaptability is working to be women's advantage when we come over as immigrants" (Connel 25).

Bharati Mukherjee portrays her women protagonists as the pillars of national identity and moral consciousness. The national consciousness inherent in the blood generates the psyche of 'guilt' and 'isolation' resulting in chaos and disaster. In context of Bharati Mukherjee with her consciousness of the dilemma of cultural crisis shares the anguish and suffering of "womanhood in the order of patriarchy" (Agarwal 40).

In the galaxy of Indo –Canadian writers B.Rajan has a distinctive reputation. He produced two novels entitled *The Dark Dancer* (1985) and *Too Long in the West* (1961). In these novels, B.Rajan has tried to construct a consciousness that reflects twilight of "the presence of two cultures" of the East and the West. In one of his article entitled "Identity and Nationality", he states, "The presence of two cultures in one's mind forms a wider and therefore safer basis on which too originates the quest for identity can be creative as well as merely confusing. Perhaps one can go further and suggest that the man with mixed allegiances is contemporary Everyman" (Rajan108).

In this confession he defends his own position as “contemporary Everyman” of “mixed allegiances”. B. Rajan was born and bred in India, educated at Cambridge and worked as a professor in three distinctive countries- England, India and Canada and finally settled in Toronto, Canada. In his novels, he presents experiences of cultural conflict with specific emphasis on the mental conflicts of immigrants. *The Dark Dancer* is a narrative account of changes and challenges in the life of V.Krishna, a Cambridge trained scholar. After his return to India, he was fixed for a traditional marriage with Kamala. He joins Government Secretariat in Delhi and co-incidentally meets his old friend Cynthia Brainbird in a club. In absence of Kamala, Kishan develops deep attachment for Cynthia. When Kamala finds the secret of her husband’s relationship, she becomes indifferent to him and leaves his house in silence. Kamala in this separation redefines her identity and dedicates herself to rescue the riot victims in Shantipur. However, unfortunately Kamala herself becomes the victim of the conspiracy of miscreants and meets her unfortunate death. After Kamala’s death Kishan comes in a state of trauma and religiously performs the funeral rites of her deceased wife. Kishan absolutely denies the proposal of remarriage suggested by his parents. In this spiritual reincarnation, Kishan even rejects the love of Cynthia. The cultural ambivalence of *The Dark Dancer* is seen in the form of Kamala and Cynthia. In the transformation and mental growth of Kishan, B.Rajan constructs Indian consciousness that has been in the blood of all diasporans. In contrast of the *The Dark Dancer* the novel *Too Long in the West* is an effective comedy on the absurdities of American and Indian social codes of arranged marriage. Uma Parmeswaran comments, *Too Long in the West* is a hilarious

comedy, a spoof of the absurdities in Indian and American social codes, of arranged marriage and of the foibles and eccentricities of individuals" (Parmeswaran 125).

Nalini, the protagonist has been to Columbia in America for higher studies and returns to India, to face the hardships of her father's village called Mudalur after her long stay in West. Nalini develops her intimacy with Earnest Jones. The Barbar in the neighborhood opposed this relationship. The villagers approach Sambasivan and threaten him to send off his daughter in marriage by the next morning or to face dire consequences. In order to avoid the crisis, a Swaymvara was organized. Nalini was forewarned by Kalyani about the kind of situation she was to face in Indian society. She dictates, "You won't fit in…you'll always be an exile and an alien, a self created foreigner refugee from yourself. You can't belong. You'll live in two world and fall between two stools" (Rajan 55). In this respect, B.Rajan successfully represents the clash of two cultures. As a writer of diasporic sensibility, he expresses his concern for cultural identity, national consciousness and the new dynamics of personal relationship.

Neil Bissoondath is one of several Caribbean writers who felt that they could achieve their literary potential only by leaving their native lands for the metropolitan centres of Europe and North America. Bissoondath has been living in Canada since 1973 and is considered by the literary world as both a Trinidadian and a Canadian writer. Bissoondath's first volume is *Digging up the Mountains* (1986), a collection of short stories. It was shortlisted for the City of Toronto Book Awards. *A Casual Brutality* (1988) was shortlisted for the Trillium Award and the W.H.Smith (Canada) First novel Award.

Bissoondath's fiction to date is almost exclusively concerned with the experience of immigrants, refugees, nomads and wanderers. Bissoondath would appear to agree with his protagonist in *Veins Visible* that "everybody's a refugee, everybody's running from one thing or another" (Bissoondath 222). His narratives seldom if ever are about the excitement of new beginnings or the satisfaction of achievements. His protagonists experience feelings of marginality, of insecurity and homelessness. Bissoondath characteristically tends to avoid providing temporal, spatial, national or racial specificities. His indifference to specificities does encourage his readers to acknowledge the common human bonds. Though many reviewers point to his insightful and sensitive depiction of the dispossessed and displaced, they acknowledge that occasionally he can be cold and detached.

Ashish Gupta who went to Canada from Patna has made a mark in diasporic writings. He tried to record the experiences of immigrants in his two novels *Dying Traditions* (1992), *The Toymaker from Wiesbaden* (1993). The novel *Dying Tra*ditions is a story a family, a story concerning the ups and downs of three generations- Sambhu Narain, his children and his grand children. It is also a narrative account of the nation torn apart by violence and cross cultural encounters. In this novel Ashish Gupta takes into account the significance of the movement of time to construct the reality of the life of immigrants. It "takes into account the personal past, the past of the centuries of tradition and the past of the different cultures and international relationships". *Dying Traditions* is the story of a family, a story concerning three generations covering three generations covering a period of about five years. Krishna's incident occurred in 1971 and the change of government in Bengal in March 1968 and that is also the year of Rahul's escape to America. The

reference to Sambhu Narain's visit to London in 1939, his moving to Bishnupur in 1959 take the story further in time. Malini's death in America two years after her graduation stretches the span of time beyond 1971. Ashish Gupta has tried to establish that Time is also a mental metaphor, static or moving on, depending on the mental metaphor, static or moving on, depending on the mental reaction of the individual. The title of the novel *Dying Traditions* itself is a pointer to time. Traditions are rooted in the past, inherited and passed on by generations through ages and a legacy for posterity. The complex idea of time in *Dying Traditions* is closely linked with the concept of "exile", "dislocation" and "otherness". Sambhu Narain's recollections, Kripal's memories of the participation, happenings of 1971, Krishan's humiliation and in 1968, Rahul's activities and their effect on his life are the historical and political past of nation. Ashish Gupta gives emphasis to time, memory, cultural roots, affinity with religion and cultural traditions. In one of his interviews to Angela Lumbart, Ashish Gupta expresses his own dilemma about the "fragile self-image" as an expatriate writer:

> I feel alienated as a writer; I haven't served my links with India. As the connections grow weaker, the longing grows stronger. Parents of other exodus, that I know, they are certainly more anxious or more worried that their children are becoming less and less Indian. They do not even sense the nostalgia. They don't speak the language any more. They are not interested in Indian classical music. They don't know the Indian legends. I think the chances are that there will be more and more people, who will in the west at last, lose touch with their roots". (212)

In contrast of the confidence of Uma Parmeswaran, in Ashish Gupta's fiction there are the reflections of gloom and despair marked by the strong sense of nostalgia for homeland.

Saros Cowasjee is also an eminent professor of English who has contributed to the tradition of immigrant Literature. He wrote a novel entitled *Goodbye to Elsa* that was published in 1974. It is basically a love story recounting the adventure of its one eyed protagonist called Tristan Elliot, an Anglo Indian by Birth and British by education. He joined Indian Army as an officer on the recommendation of COL. Ross and resigned out of his own choice. He worked for his Ph.D. in the University of Leeds. In his sojourn at Leeds, he underwent harrowing experiences of love and sex with different women Jane, Lydia, Heather Malleson and Elsa Harbour. On the recommendations of his supervisor Dr. Adams, he was given a teaching lob at Erigon in Canada. Soon he developed a burning eye sore in his left eye and being disgusted with it, he left his wife and son behind and made a resolution of suicide. Subsequently he came in contact of the daughter of a grocer. This relationship subsequently converted into serious love affair between them. For her sake, he left the idea of killing himself and she also shifted over to Vancouver for a book keeping job. However after her shift to Vancouver, Marie met her boy friend and changed her mind. With her conversion of mind, Tristan grew revengeful and roasted with the passion of revenge; he killed Marison, the younger sister of Marie. In *Goodbye to Elsa*, protagonist Tristan moves in the shifting modes from Canada to India and to England and back to Canada. Cowasjee now and then reflects on the ways of behavior and conduct of Canadians. Through Tristan he comments on the neutrality of Canadians and how they take the color of their surroundings. He also expresses

his disgust for the Americanization of Canada and pleads to preserve his Canadian identity. In the novels of Cowasjee the idea of identity crisis related with the experiences of immigrants emerges as a significant issue.

Born in Bombay, Rohinton Mistry migrated to Canada in 1975. He went to Canada because his wife had family over there. Mistry with strong pulse of an immigrant writer tried to make representation of the experiences of immigrants in his novels and short stories. He has published a collection of short stories *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1987). His well known novels are *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002). Mistry is a Parsi Zoroastian born and brought up in Bombay. His birth and upbringing in Bombay made him a sensitive writer for witnessing the last sparks of the existence of Parsis in India. Unlike most of the diasporic writers, Mistry is a "Bombay writer"- an insider who has observed way lived the milieu of his fiction. In an interview, Mistry termed his creative process as "imagination ground through the mill of memory." Reconstruction of past through memory is a significant variable in the writings of Rohinton Mistry. S. Ramaswamy appreciates, "Remembering, re-enacting. Re-creating that place, time, people with accuracy, understanding and insight is the vision of Rohinton Mistry" (Ramaswamy 54). *Tales from Firozshah Baag* is a collection of stories presenting the predicament of Parsi community in post independence Bombay. The eleven tales in this collection are like eleven episodes of a well knit plot. Through these stories, Rohinton Mistry presents the world Parsian-Zoroastian festivals, rituals, temples, tower of silence, Parsi calendar, Parsi costumes and Parsi cuisine. Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is set in Indira Gandhi's India more specifically during the time of emergence. It reconstructs the reality of India-the

predatory politics of corruption, tyranny, exploitation and bloodshed. In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry presents a gloomy image of his lost motherland and particularly highlights the atrocities committed on the untouchables. The chamars are forced to spend their lives in blind compliance with the traditions of the caste system and are forced to spend their lives in blind compliance with the traditions of the caste system and are forced to survive with humiliations and forbearance. In *A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry presents the stark reality of social life in the post-colonial India and seems to respond Indian society and culture from the point of the view of an "outsider" with the undertone of alienation and aloofness. Mistry's *Family Matters* is a reconstruction of immigrant experience with the touch of personal and psychic trauma, a sense of loss and nostalgia, despair, dislocation, exile, alienation and the memory of the past. The novel is focused round the aged Parsi, retired professor of English. Through his relationship with his two students Coomy and Jal, Mistry focuses on the complexity of inter-personal relationship in diasporic Literature. It deals with the warmth of human bonds and native customs. It can be read as an ethnocentric text which portrays the Parsi customes and traditions as practiced by Bombay dwellers. Rohinton Mistry highlights the issues that rock the life of Indians. In context of the message of *Family Matters* Daruwalla comments in one of his interviews in *Hindustan Times*, "It is the story of familial love and affection, of personal and political corruption, the religious complexity, the power of memory to keep truth alive, and the ultimate peril of memory denied."

Suniti Namjoshi deals with subjects that open up an even more complicated cross- cultural dialogue. Her first three works of poetry, *Cyclone in Pakistan* (1971), *More poems* (1971) and *The Jackass and the Lady* (1980), were not particularly

interesting but with *Feminist Fables* (1981), she came into her own and went on to publish *The Authentic Lie* (1982), *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares* (1984), *The Conversations of Cow* (1985), *Mothers of Maya Diip and Blue Donkey Fables*. *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares* is a potently feminist tract in which she subverts old myths, rewriting Penelope to represent sanctimonious women who 'punish themselves' reforming Antigone to refrain from burying her brother, "Let the cultures keep what vultures have eaten". The first part is a cathartic movement of a daughter's relationship with her mother, ending with a spectacular prose-poem which begins, 'And in her fortieth year she suddenly gave birth to her own mother. Oh it was immoral. It was frightening and ends with 'And her mother, who had watched these peculiar antics, spoke to her mother. What she said has not been recorded but it made her glad, very glad'. Suniti Namjoshi is a fine poet who wrote some of her best poetry when she lived in Canada. She is a modern Athena tilting at the world bearing her shield and banner that celebrates being a woman, a non-white, a lesbian she now lives in England.

Unlike their male counterparts almost all of the women writers of the South Asian diaspora in Canada are associated with the profession of teaching English. Their writing shows both their indebtedness to the traditional canon and their conscious reaction to it.

Lakshmi Gill and Dorothy Livesay were the first two women to become members of the League of Canadian poets. Lakshmi Gill was born in the Philippines of mixed Filipino and Indian descent and educated at Western Washington University, the University of British Columbia and Mount Allison University. She is

the author of four volumes of poetry: *During Rain I plant chrysanthemums (1966), Mind Walls (1970), First Clearings (1972) and Novena to St.Jude Thaddeus* (1979). She lives in British Columbia, though many of her poems are about eastern Canada where she lived and taught for many years. She is according to the editor of *Shakti's Words and the Geography of Voice*, a fiercely private person. But she has made at least one very significant public statement. In her Introduction to the literary section of an issue of *Asianadian 1981*, she writes, "In January 1980 I discovered that I could no longer read 'White Literature'. I was ashamed and angry that I had spent my entire life immersed in Western philosophies and ideologies." A sense of disillusionment and frustration is common to all groups that are unjustly unrecognized because of cultural imperialism. This is exactly what African Americans have said and what colonials have said about English Literature. Barbara Smith, in her essay "Towards a Black Feminist Crticism" writes, "I think of the thousands and thousands of books, magazines and articles which have been devoted, by this time, to the subject of women's writing and I am filled with rage at the fraction of those pages that mention Black and other women as "Third World Women" (23).

Bannerji is known for her critical essays, *The Writing on the Wall* (1993) and *Unsettling Relations*, *The University as a site of Feminist Struggles* (1991, jointly with four others). The latter volume gives an anecdotal and analytic study of the undervaluing of women in academia. Bannerji recalls that it took her twenty years in Canada to reach the academic position she was in when she left India, namely that of a tenure-track faculty member in a University. An activist, Bannerji does not mince

words. Bannerji's poetry—*A Separate Sky* (1982) and *Doing Time* (1986)—is as hard hitting as her prose.

Surjeet Kalsey, who has published two volumes of poetry, *Speaking to the Winds* (1982) and *Footprints of Silence* (1988), a beautiful poem about an immigrant's feeling for two homelands where the persona compares herself to Prince Siddhartha (the Buddha) who left his palace and family in search of another plane of being. She writes both in Punjabi and in English. As she says in her interview with Jurgen Hesse, "We [she and husband Ajmer Rode] are not struggling to write in English. Especially I am not. Because if it is coming in English that is fine, and people like it that is fine. If they don't we still have something to hold onto." Kalsey is one of the few who are more proficient in their heritage language than in English. Everyone else seems more at home in English than in any other language. One writer who liberally uses her heritage language as part of her English writing is Yasmin Ladha , author of *The Lion's Granddaughter and Other Stories* (1992). Nine of the ten stories in this volume are set in her native Tanzania and different countries. Only the last, "In the Company of Women, "is set in Canada, and shows her great promise as a satirist. Well-versed in the jargon of literary criticism, the narrator says she wants to have nothing to do with the image of the other that Orientalists and the Canadian mainstream would like to propagate.

Like many other immigrant writers, Uma Parmeswaran shows strong thematic interests in the experience of immigrants, particularly South Asian Canada with an emphasis on issues of assimilation and racial position. One of the recurring themes in her work is the problem of rootlessness, the search for identity. She has

used her own experience and observed that there is racism and under employment in Canada. Her work *Trishanku* is a cycle of poems where fifteen different voices give expression to the immigrant experience of the diaspora in Canada. As the title *Trishanku* refers to the myth of a king who lived between heaven and earth, so the people's condition also in the state of in-betweenness. This collection is generally considered to be her major poetic achievement. In this poem she has formulated the four phases of immigrant settlement. The first one is nostalgic for homeland with fear in a strange land, the second one is adjusting to the new environment, the third phase is taking part in ethno cultural issues and the fourth phase is participating in national issues.

Shauna Singh Baldwin, as a Canadian-born Indian Sikh, has a complex cultural identity. This mixed cultural background has given her a richly informed world view that she weaves into her books. A thirst for a deeper understanding of her Indian history, coupled with a long conversation with her grandmother on life during and after the India/Pakistan Partition in 1947 was Shauna's turning point as a writer, elevating her to author status, eloquently addressing the labels of writer versus author in the process. A 60 page memoir written by Shauna's grandmother along with dozens of grandmother/granddaughter conversations became the basis of *What the Body Remembers*. The memoirs and Shauna's rich discussions at her grandmother's New Delhi home examined the oppression of women, particularly when they are seen as breeders rather than as wives.

What the Body Remembers is about two women in a polygamous marriage. Roop is the younger wife married into the family when the first wife is unable to

have children. The story is set in colonial India and to a degree is her grandmother's story. Published in 2000, *What the Body Remembers* won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book for the Canadian/ Caribbean region. She pointed to one of the greatest compliments she has ever received as a writer, from her grandmother, who is represented by the young wife, Roop in *What the Body Remembers*. "My grandmother said to me 'Roop is not me. Is she you? I answered that I didn't remember being that way, to which my grandmother said, and then she must be herself'. "As a writer you live for moments like that, when the character takes on their own life. It was a great compliment", said Shauna in her interview to *Tehelka*, who goes to great lengths to ensure her characters and their environments are portrayed as honestly as possible. Shauna's insistence on accuracy in time, place, social mores and linguistic factors for her characters requires minute attention to detail and a willingness to turn to the experts for feedback, an unusually open and brave act from an author. As a biographical fiction author Shauna Singh researches the real lives of her protagonists. Evidence of Shauna's attention to her character's true voices is seen in her refusal to have glossaries for foreign terms throughout her works.

Anita Rau Badami's novels fashion patterns of diasporic identification rather than identity- around moments of stillness and disruption that generate new forms of communal and individual autonomy. Thus, to discern the particular cultural and political dynamics of diaspora, it is necessary not only to emphasize the dialectical relationship between diasporic and non-diasporic people, but also to distinguish between forced diasporas, flexible transnational diasporas and what I call intra-national diasporas. As my reading of *The Hero's Walk* suggests, the latter term

refers to a form of diasporic identity that is not necessarily bound to transnational border crossings. Instead it thematizes the ways in which the effects of environmental and economic global restructuring, along with the disintegration of received local forms of national and cultural identification, transform the micro spaces of social life. These changes frequently affect both the dislocation of given identities and formation of new personal and political identities.

As the twenty first century begins, we witness a new phase of mass migrations. There are several reasons which caused these moves. Economic inequalities across regions, expanding mobility of capital, people's desire to pursue opportunities that might improve their life chances, political strife, wars, and famine are some of the factors that remain at the heart of the impetus behind these migrations. People who have migrated or still migrating may be labour migrants (documented and undocumented), highly-qualified professionals, entrepreneurs, students, refugees and asylum seekers, or the household members of previous migrants. These recent migrations are creating new displacements, new diasporas. In the context of a proliferation of new border crossings the language of "borders" and of "diaspora" acquires a new currency. First the term 'diaspora'….the word derives from the Greek---dia, 'through', and 'speirein', 'to scatter'. According to the webster's Dictionary in the United States, diaspora refers to a 'dispersion from'. As Avtar Brah also states:

> Hence the word embodies a notion of a centre, a locus, a 'home' from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes images of multiple journeys. The dictionary also highlights the word's association with the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile. Yet to speak of late

> twentieth century diasporas is to take such ancient diasporas as a point of departure rather than necessarily as 'models', or as what Safran (1991) describes as the 'ideal' type. At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'. The question is not simply about who travels but when, how and under what circumstances? (181-182)

He further asks, "What socio-economic, political and cultural conditions mark the trajectories of these journeys?"(182) In other words, it is necessary to analyze what makes one diasporic formation similar to or different from another. But Brah clearly states that if the circumstances of leaving are important so too are those of arrival and settling down. The manner in which a group comes to be 'situated' in and through a wide variety of discourses, economic processes, state policies and institutional practices is critical to its future. This "situatedness" is central to how different groups come to be relationally positioned in a given context. In other words, the concept of diaspora centres on the configurations of power which differentiate diaspora internally as well as situate them in relation to one another. Diaspora, in the sense of distinctive historical experiences are often composite formations made up of many journeys to different parts of the globe, each with its own history, its own particularities. Each such diaspora is an interweaving of multiple travelling; a text of many distinctive and perhaps even disparate narratives. It is the economic, political and cultural specificities linking these components that

the concept of diaspora signifies. This means that these multiple journeys may configure into one journey via a confluence of narratives as it is lived and re-lived, produced, reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory. It is within this confluence of narrativity that 'diasporic community' is differently imagined under different historical circumstances. Like many other eminent diaspora critics Brah too focuses on the 'fluidity' of diasporic identity:

> By this I mean that the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively. All diasporic journeys are composite in another sense too. They are embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example, of gender, race, class, religion, language and generation. As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'. (192-93)

It is important, therefore to be attentive to the nature and type of processes in and through which the collective 'we' is constituted. Where is home? On the one hand, home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, somber grey skies in the middle of the

day….all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. The questions of home, therefore is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of "belonging". As Paul Gilroy (1993) suggests, it is simultaneously about 'roots and routes'. As we noted earlier that diasporas are not synonymous with casual temporary trove. Nor is diasporas emerge out of migrants of collectivities, whether or not members of collectivity travel as individuals, as households or in various other combinations. Diasporas are places of long term, if not permanent, community formations even if some households or members move on elsewhere. The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure. The concept of diaspora signals these processes of multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries. Diasporic identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered' communities. The concept of diaspora specifies a matrix of economic, political and cultural inter-relationships which construct the commonalty between the various components of a dispersed group. The concept of diaspora delineates a field of identifications where 'imagined communities' are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory. As a description of distinct historical experiences diaspora represents a heterogeneous

category differentiated along the lines of class, gender, and so on. The concept of diaspora addresses this internal differentiation as much as much as the one which exists across globally scattered parts of a particular diasporic population. Brah delivers some of the most crucial theoretical observations in the discourse of "home and "diaspora":

> In examining the subtext of 'home' which the concept of diaspora embodies I have analyzed the problematic of the indigene subject position and its precarious relationship to nativist discourses. The concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire. The homing desire however is not the same as the desire for a 'homeland'. Contrary to general belief, not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. Moreover, the multi-placedness of home in the diasporic imaginary does not mean that diasporian subjectivity is 'rootless'. I argue for a distinction between 'feeling at home'and declaring a place as home. Processes of diasporic identity formation are exemplars par excellence of the claim that identity is always plural, and in process. In other words the concept of diaspora refers to multi-locationality within and across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries. (178-210)

Further if we dig deep into some more theorizations about Diaspora we find more similarities in the view points of acclaimed critics about the basic instincts of Diasporas. They mostly agree on the "Jewish Prototype of Diaspora" and "liminality and fluidity of this discourse". Other distinguished critics in the field of Diaspora

Studies, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur negotiate in their book *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader:*

> Diaspora can perhaps be seen as a naming of the other which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile. First used in the *Septuagint,* the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alxandria(circa 3rd century BCE) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine, diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries. Another early historical reference is the Black African diaspora, beginning in the sixteenth century with the slave trade, forcibly exporting West Africans out of their native lands and dispersing them into the "New World"- parts of North America, South America, the Caribbean and elsewhere that slave labor was exploited- through the Middle Passage. These early historical references reveal that diaspora is not always voluntary. The movement of people across the globe in the early modern period resulted in conquests, genocides, and the trade of spices, sugar and slaves. (1-2)

Following the research of M. Bruneau and G. Sheffer, a migration can be defined as a 'diaspora' if three conditions are met: firstly, an ethnic consciousness;

secondly, an active associative life; and thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary.

According to Vertovec, the term ‘diaspora’ is often applied to, “describe practically any population that is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’- that is, which has originated in land other than in which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe” (277).

The Indian Diaspora can be regarded as an international phenomenon, with a presence in more than 100 countries globally. The roots of the contemporary Indian diaspora can be traced to the colonial domination by the British and the exploitation of cheap indentured labor from the Asian subcontinent in different parts of the colonial empire.