CHAPTER-4

Without an understanding and savoring of the history of the Indian diaspora, we can only partially be in a position to listen to the voices of those who live in diaspora, and make sense of their experiences, their struggles and their success in life. To fully talk about the long and complex history of the Indian diaspora is indeed a Herculean task but among some of the very rich and interesting aspects of the diaspora, assimilation and acculturation processes should be discussed at a length. Further, past, present, anticipated and imagined global social trends keep creating new social, political, cultural and economic, demographic and nation-state contexts, in which diasporic Indians of all backgrounds keep charting their own individual life courses as they experience all aspects of the assimilation process-social, psychological, cultural. This has been possible, first perhaps, due to the fact that the Indian diaspora is not a homogeneous group of people. Secondly, because social and cultural structures change, new forms of social self emerge. These processes unfold in the contexts of local, regional, state, national and global political economics and of the welfare and non-welfare oriented policies of their respective nation-states.

With reference to the Canadian experience, Gavaki has been extensively cited by Ratna Ghosh. They appear to argue that “in the first stage, in the wake of dislocation from the native society, the cultural continuity, ethnic identity and tradition are dominant. Immigrants experience initial contact with the new society and their feelings, behavior and relations are ethnic group centered. The second stage is one of contact group accommodation, characterized by experiences of conflicts at all three levels of interaction, (Gavaki, as quoted by Ghosh 146**).** The

third stage Gavaki views as “complete integration” into the host society, turning this individual into a “Canadian”. (as…..). In their own significant way, they have helped to redraw the map of modern Canada. Because the system encourages plurality, multivocality and difference accrued to a visible minority of articulate, confident, energetic and diligent Indians. True, the policy of multiculturalism is based on only four spelt out principles: the development of cultural groups, their full participation in Canadian society, interchange among all cultural groups and helping immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada’s official languages (Sharma 154-64).

F.W. Rudmin pointed out that acculturation theory has been developed in Canada and predominantly tested in traditional immigration countries (e.g., Canada, the United States, and Australia). These countries cannot claim a common imagined ancestry, but rather they share experiences of immigration that subsequent generations of immigrants can use to validate their membership. In addition, as a confederate state and a settler country with a strong ideology of multiculturalism, Canada has a civic understanding of nationhood that incorporates cultural diversity (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 153-79). Acculturation theory proposes a bi dimensional framework of cultural change among immigrants, taking into account their orientation toward both the maintenance of minority culture and social contact with the majority group. The framework outlines four acculturation profiles, namely separation with an emphasis on cultural maintenance and low contact; assimilation with high levels of contact and low cultural maintenance; integration with high scores on both dimensions; and last, marginalization with neither con-tact nor cultural maintenance. Changes in self-definition and identification are considered a salient aspect of the acculturation process, and J.W. Berry argues that, “an ethnic

and cultural identity is related to a preference for separation, a national identity predicts assimilation, a combination of both identities (e.g., as in a hyphenated identity such as Greek-Canadian) predicts integration, and no clear identity predicts marginalization" (30). Thus, integration and hyphenated identities are viewed as being related. However, the relation between acculturation profiles and identities could differ between national contexts. Because of the differences in the meanings of national identities, it is also expected that the measurement structure of acculturation attitudes varies across the countries and continents.

In contrast to the mainstream cross-cultural view of acculturation and identity that emphasizes psychological dispositions, some scholars have re-examined these concepts in terms of flexible social positions. Two central claims can be identified in this literature: first, identities are relational such that people al-ways define themselves in relation to others. As a result of the relational nature of identities, self-definitions refer to what people conceive of themselves, or which category they belong to, intrinsically implying a conception of "others." Minority group members can choose a variety of referents in comparing and defining themselves, but the difference with the majority group is typically important and has implications for self-definitions. But one looks at the Canadian immigrants from India along the spectrum of skilled labor, family dependents, successful writers, aspiring students, trained professionals. In Delhi one sees the wannabes in the waiting line for a Canadian Visa. The line gets longer every day. If oppression and racism were at the end of the journey, would people be jostling for a ride? Equally apparent from the follow-up stories on immigrants, once in Canada, they find appropriate space, employment and personal happiness without disclaiming their Indian origins. In other words, they alter, ever so gently, the emerging map of a

multicultural nation.

The concept of biculturalism has been well documented in the works of Paul Ghuman, Gargi Sodowsky, Ajit Das and Sharon Kemp, John Berry and Mark Thompson and refers to, “the ability of a person to function effectively in more than one culture and also to switch roles back and forth as the situation changes” (Jambunathan 395). Similarly, Thompson believes that biculturalism enables individuals to “navigate two cultural worlds” (248). Geert Hofstede and Harry Triandis both too have expressed this view that bicultural identity formation also involves the amalgamation of individualistic (Canadian) and collectivistic (East Indian) worldviews. There are those second-generation Indo-Canadian individuals for whom ethnicity is situational. Doreen Rosentha lsummarizes her sentiments about situational ethnicity thus:

It seems that second-generation adolescents adopt a variety of strategies in dealing with their dual cultural environment. For some, the primary ethnic group serves as the most potent identification. Others adopt a more assimilatory position or view themselves as members of two cultural worlds, switching identification according to the situation. (178) Second-generation Indo-Canadian individuals experience daily exposure to the collectivistic lifestyle within the home environment, yet they spend the majority of their time immersed in an individualistic society. Consequently, it can be challenging for individuals of two cultures to comfort-ably accommodate the parental, as well as the societal expectations, into one mind-set. Consequently, it can be challenging for individuals of two cultures to comfort-ably accommodate the parental, as well as the societal expectations, into one mind-set.

In the past, theorists of this evolving field, John Berry (1990, 1997), Jean Phinney (1989), and Gargi Sodowsky and Barbara Plake (1992) have discussed the notion of biculturalism in each of their models. Berry (1990, 1997) suggests that an individual identifies with either Assimilation (associating with the dominant culture), Integration (accommodating both cultures), Separation (rejecting the dominant culture), or Marginalization (relating to the culture of origin). Each of these models overlaps with one another and describes potential out-comes of one's quest to acculturate or develop a bicultural/ethnic identity. What is not acknowledged is the possibility of bicultural identity formation as an evolving lifelong process. The dominant culture (Canadian) promotes personal autonomy and independent decision-making, whereas the home environment (East Indian) suggests conformity, family interests before the individual's interests, group decisions, and unconditional respect and obedience towards older family members. Second-generation Indo-Canadians may find it problematic to accommodate both value systems into their lifestyle, which may inevitably lead to conflict and resentment of their home culture, as they simultaneously focus on integrating into the dominant culture.

Intergenerational communication plays an integral role among this population, with respect to the maintenance of tradition. Communication is significant for effective cultural preservation to occur in second-generation Indo-Canadians. Parents need to make it a priority to explain cultural traditions, rituals, and customs to their offspring. As well, there is a need for open dialogue if there is to be any agreed-upon compromise on particular cultural values. Unless this occurs

in the household, parents can expect to encounter difficulties with their offspring. A generation gap or a lack of understanding between the older and younger family members may intensify communication challenges between first and second-generation individuals and preclude parents from openly conversing with their children. The term “cultural gap” is valuable in explaining what occurs when parents and children fail to understand each other’s perspectives and, therefore, experience challenges in their attempt to communicate clearly.

Ken Wilber describes a concept, “transliberal awareness,” which may bridge the “cul-tural gap” between parents and their children (211). This term suggests that parents and children try to understand each other’s subjective side (i.e., cultural values, worldviews, background, socialization practices) in order to engage in meaningful discourse. Subsequently, parents would also like their children to benefit from certain aspects of the dominant culture, namely education, diverse labour market, and professional opportunities which may lead to potential upward social mobility. As well, these types of transitions occur more fluidly when second-generation Indo-Canadians are comfortable asking culture-related questions of their parents, who ideally welcome and listen to these queries. Eventually, this will lead to less con-fusion, fewer future cultural surprises, and perhaps a stronger mutual understand-ing and appreciation of their parents’ culture. Cultural curiosity about one’s origins is deemed a necessary and healthy component of cultural preservation. It is certainly easier to compromise on various cultural values/traditions when positive communication is taking place.

Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? by Anita Rau Badami is driven by the kind of hard-to-resolve issues that reflect all conflicts, past or present. It would be nice to think that one day we might live long enough to put painfully acquired wisdom into action, and that individuals will feel sufficiently confident to think for themselves, but ending up affecting the assimilation/acculturation process of first and second generation Indo- Canadians, in the particular context of Punjabi Sikh diaspora in Canada and that is also explicitly shown that eventually individuals will feel sufficiently confident to think for themselves, much as Bibi-Ji's husband tries to do by building his own identity, "Pa-Ji wouldn't deny he was fond of India, that it was a part of his being----what I am not wishing to do is picture hanging on the wall----it wouldn't do to let it swallow you whole. What I am not wishing to do is interfere in the business of another country. I am Canadian---Rather than adopt a view based on religion and politics in the blank state of a foreign country, Pa-Ji came to understand, you could scribble the truth any way you wanted" (233). By living in a place in the broadcast sense, by separating people from the baggage of their past, he means to form his own unclouded perspective. It is the individual distinctiveness of the various diasporic communities however that stands out and underlines the enormous complexity and variation in experience.

Visible Minorities: In Canada, Statistics Canada groups people from Asia together and labels them as "Visible Minorities". In the United States people from Asia are named Asian Americans in general and include people who have origin in South East Asia (China, Japan, Phillippines, Korea, Vietnam and other cultural groups, including Pacific Islanders) India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, but also people of Indian origin from Caribbean nations, Fiji and East Africa. Most Canadian Punjabis

are a part of the South Asian diaspora, which in itself is a part of the larger Asian diaspora in North America. The situation of the diaspora, the Punjabi diasporic people living outside their countries of birth, like the situation of other diasporic South Asians, may best be understood in the context of the building of the British Empire, Asian migration to North America, the partition of India into two free nations-India and Pakistan in 1947, and globalization and internationalization processes. For example, some have concluded that the South Asian diaspora came into being with the end of slavery in the British Empire.

Today, people of Indian origin are everywhere points out that the creation of this diaspora is a remarkable phenomenon. The resurgence of interest in overseas Indian communities, especially since the 1970s, has perhaps been inspired by the intensification of the great debate over the nature of slavery in the United States, the precarious political positions of Indians in a number of former British Colonies and in the increasing visibility of overseas Indians in the international labor and capital markets. Descendents of Indian indentured migrants constitute an important part of this Indian diaspora. With the globalization, transnationalization and internationalization of all aspects of life, diaspora studies have emerged as vibrant areas of research.

For the Punjabi diaspora living in North America, these day to day concerns acquire specific meanings, For example, most Punjabi elders have been born and have spent the larger part of their early socialization has taken place in other societies and cultures like India. The Punjabi first generation immigrants are aware of this fact. They realize that their behavior patterns, values, likes and dislikes,

expectations and aspirations reflect" Indian values, although to some extent they have acquired "Canadian values because now they live in Canada". But they realize that some of the new values, they have acquired conflict with values held by their relatives and peers still living in India.

Punjabis in Canada: the early British Columbia Experience: In reviewing the early British Columbia history between the period of 1886-1913, many writers have noted two main trends; (1) Increased Immigration and (2) the racial character of the Canadian immigration policy. First, British Columbia, as an outpost of the British Empire, was a magnet for immigrants during the Clifford Sifton Period (1896-1905). Sifton advocated massive agricultural immigration as the key to general Canadian prosperity. In 1901, he said that "….Our desire is to promote the immigration of farmers and farm laborers of any nationality who seemed likely to become successful agriculturalist…" (Timlin 518). Immigrants from Asia, like the Japanese and immigrants from other parts of Europe beside Britain, like Norwegians, came to British Columbia during this period. The first small group of Sikhs came to Canada to attend Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1887. They liked the country and between 1904 and 1908, some 5,000 Sikhs arrived in British Columbia. Most of them found work in the timber mills or in the logging camps. Secondly, during the Sifton period, promoting emigration from Britain was deemed a politically correct move, even though there were relatively few good agriculturalists left in Britain. The main reason was that "English Canadians took it for granted that the government [Canadian] would do everything possible to retain the British character of the country [Canada]" (Knowles 70). Racial discrimination, alienation, bad treatment and other experiences of Punjabi immigrants led them to

develop close ties with the homeland in Punjab and in later years, motivated them to create what many contemporary writers have called a “little Punjab”. Further, during the first half of the twentieth century, the Punjabi immigrants were largely adult men who came to Canada without their wives and children; they came with families only after the Second World War. Studies on the nature of the Punjabi diaspora point to the fact that they came to British Columbia mainly to improve the position of their family in Punjab through acquiring capital. These early Punjabis were sons of land owners in Punjab. The parents wanted their sons to go to Canada, earn money and remit it to them so that they could pay taxes levied upon them by the British government.

In order to keep the British character of Canada and America, attempts were earlier made to stop the flow of Asian immigrants from China and Japan using various means especially through enacting exclusionary laws. For example, in Canada the regulation stipulated that all immigrants must come to Canada directly from their countries without any stop-overseas on the way. Since there was no direct steamships service from India to Canada, this was an ingenious device to completely stop immigration from India. This action by the Canadian government resulted in the infamous incident of “Komagata Maru” in the history of Indian immigration to Canada.

The Ontario Experience: The Sikhs were in British Columbia at the beginning of the twentieth century but their story is different in Ontario. It was only in the mid-1950s that their presence was felt in the province. This was largely due to a liberalization of the immigration laws, which introduced a quota system. By 1965,

the number of Sikhs in Toronto was about four hundred. Many among them were students and professionals who came to Canada from India, East Africa and the United Kingdom. The first 'Gurdwara' was opened at 269, Pape Avenue in Toronto in 1965, on the quincentenary of the birth of Guru Nanak (1469-1539). He was the first Guru of the Sikhs and the founder of the Sikh faith. Gurdwara means, "The door of the guru", where the Sikhs generally worship, Hindus, Muslims and Christians generally worship in temples, mosques and churches, respectively. For some Sikhs this difference in nomenclature is important for their identity. As in other parts of the world, over the years the Sikhs have evolved from being a purely religious group to becoming a vibrant ethnic and cultural group in Toronto. They now have well developed charitable, political and cultural organizations in Toronto. The Sikhs are now represented in all sectors of the Canadian society. G.S. Basran and B.S. Bloria (Xii) divide the discussion and analysis of migration from India to Canada into four time periods: Indian migration from 1900-1908; 1909 to the Second World War; post-war period to 1966, and Indian migration since 1967. Basran and Bloria write, "Indo-Canadian community is now more heterogeneous in regard to income levels, educational achievements, labor force participation and occupational differentiation. In the case of the Sikh community, the Sikhs are predominately a young population and the majority of whom are still foreign born, recent immigrants" (106).

K.E. Nayar identifies five waves of Sikh immigration to Canada, "(1) the early arrivals in the first half of the twentieth century; (2) white-collar professionals who migrated in the 1950s; (3) blue-collar laborers-who immigrated during the 1970s; (4) family members who arrived through sponsorship or arranged marriages

beginning in 1951 and continuing to the present; and (5) immigrants arriving after operation Bluestar in 1984 on the basis of being 'political refugees" (15-16).

Indo- Canadian Diasporic Scholars Kalyani Mehta and Amarjit Singh in their book *Indian Diaspora: Voices of the Diasporic Elders in Five* Countries, recorded their studies of Punjabi diaspora, carried out in Toronto in 2008. The project was conceptualized by a team of professionals and lay workers at the Punjabi Community Health Centre (PCHC) under the general theoretical rubric of building social capital in the Punjabi community. The centre serves the diverse communities in the Greater Toronto area, particularly the Region of Peel. Five hundred elderly Punjabi men ranging from fifty-five to eighty plus years of age completed a questionnaire consisted of forty three items. In order to discuss this complex topic, the research team decided to, at random, initiate conversations with the diasporic seniors at various public places such as bus stops, malls, parks and other social places. Only a few aspects of the voices of Punjabi first generation immigrants which are highly contextual dealing with Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* are cited here since we are dealing with the first and second generation Indo-Canadians' assimilation and acculturation process, tracing all its historical, political, cultural and social connotations.

The letter 'A' represents the team member and 'B' represents the First generation immigrant Punjabi man. These themes appear to contain elements that constitute various stages of their Assimilation Process:

Story 1:

(Discussion in a Bus)

A: Sat Sri Akal (a Punjabi greeting)

B: Oh! I am fine….

A: What do you mean?

B: I am just a stone. The stone can be thrown anywhere, the stone doesn't move from where it has been thrown. Since my arrival in Canada, I have experienced the same feelings.

A: But why are you comparing yourself with a stone like this?

B: My brother, stone can also be converted into an idol for worship but it can also be used as a worthless object. Did you get it?

Analysis: Worthlessness as a form of abuse.

Story 2:

(In a Bus)

A: Sat Sri Akal (How are you?)

B. How could I be? It is four O'clock in the afternoon. I am going to work. When I left for work, I had to have an insulin injection. My mouth is dry. I am also feeling a bit tired. Sardarji, in this country the property (House) is killing me. We have a nice home. But, my family wants to buy another house. Why is there a need to change a house so often? Day and night we have to work. I had thought that when I stay with my son in Canada, I would be able to spend my old age in peace and quiet. But shift work is killing me. My wife also gets tired while working at home.

(Bus stop comes and discussion terminated).

Analysis:-Feeling of exploitation in family

Story 3:

B: (near a Gurdwara- after initial interaction with A).

Every day I go to the Gurdwara (Sikh Temple). I spend the entire day there. In the evening when I came home, I have a few drinks and then I sleep. This has been going on for the last 6 years. My son or daughter-in-law never asked me how I spend my day. Sometimes I feel that if Gurdwaras did not exist, all seniors would have died of hunger.

Analysis: - Dysfunction family relationship as an abuse, loneliness, lack of respect and dysfunctional relationship with elder members of the family. (48-59)

Anita Rau Badami in her novel *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*? presents the idea of immigration, dislocation and assimilation contextualizing it in the predicament of the Sikh community in India and the Sikh Diasora in Canada, all connected through a single chain of events. In the spirit of diasporic fiction, the novel *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* begins with the reflection of memories of Bibi-Ji who left Panjaur at the age of six. As a child, she nourished the dream of the world of opulence. She admits, "Sharanjeet Kaur had been greedy for something much larger than the world she inhabited" (7). Her father inculcated the dream of a fanciful life with all modern amenities beyond the doom of poverty. She was taught by her father, "If they had allowed me to get off the 'Komagata Maru', you and your mother and your sister would now be living like Queens". (11)

But In spite of her persistent nostalgia, Bibi-Ji reconsiders her life in context of her possibilities of assimilation and therefore, she develops her talent of accounting. Further, in order to avoid the anguish of separation from her sister and her own barrenness, she concentrates on her shop. Both Paji and Bibi-Ji retain their uncompromising human sensibility. They have a positive acceptance both of a Canadian nationality and Indian roots. Living in Vancouver, Paji and Bibi-Ji opened Delhi Junction Café and it was another mode of Bibi-Ji's ambition to keep her Indian sensibility alive. Both Anita Rau Badami and Shauna Singh Baldwin have portrayed their female protagonists with an acute female consciousness and that is the reason why in their women characters we get some of the most delicate and complex nuances of diasporic female' psyche rather than in male ones. Regarding the various issues related to their diasporic status, we see their women characters, exerting their agency and acting to assimilate and that too rather constructively. In the year 1951, we see Sharanjeet Kaur, now Bibi-Ji, sitting at the cashier's desk in the interior of East Indian Foods and Groceries, 2034 'Main Street', Vancouver, wondering at the transformation she has undergone-from her days in Panjaur to here at Vancouver. The move from one geographical territory to another, has helped Bibi-Ji to have a clear and objective perspective on what they had in past and what they will achieve if get to understand the culture of their 'host country'.

Adversity and affluence as two sides of the coin of diasporic Indo-Canadian women's lives show a firm nexus here, of their significant roles between native and diasporic spaces, between domestic and national spaces. This has been part of their journey from the time of the creation of villages from plantation campsites, during Post-Colonial times. Many diasporic people despair while some survive but many

others like Bibi- Ji and Paji, turn the personal decisions or historical adversity, whatever is the case, of dislocation into affluence and through their endeavour and agency build bridges between racial/ethnic and national identities and power hierarchies within national and global spaces. Bibi-Ji understands her particular plight where curse and blessing both are hand in hand and she chooses to embrace both in the longer term but it was only a willing assimilation that she opted initially. All personal tragedy came in the later half of her life and that too quite shockingly. Bibi-Ji understands her place and sees that in the comparison to the people who just know and interact with their homelands, being the member of Indo-Canadian community, she has got the privilege to understand and negotiate with more than one culture. She resist 'the feeling of not being wanted, not being accepted' in alien land, which runs into the 'host countries' more or less almost in all the initial attitudes towards diasporas. Anusuya Singh's novel *Behold the Earth Mourns's* lines express the same sentiment, too aptly. A strong signature in the South-African-Indian Diaspora, Singh said through her protagonist Yagesvari that she did not see herself as a whole person and felt, " as if she moved around in an unreality an existence of day to day- a feeling of not being wanted, not being accepted. Since my arrival my life has been untenable and difficult" (Anusuya Singh 144).

Since actual life sometimes seems in flux, in many ways unknown, unseen at some point of time, all diasporic groups whether, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Italians, appear same in their host countries, facing more or less same attitudes and same issues. As Bibi-Ji also says, "In this country, we all are in the same 'Boat', the 'Minority Boat'. But women like Bibi-Ji through their agency, goes beyond this 'hostility' and creates a' space' for them in the 'host country'. She speaks the

language of 'goras', does business with them as well as appreciates them for their positive attributes of character like courage, inquisitive tendencies and dedication along with nurturing her love and affiliation for her 'homeland' also, creating a space for her in host country.

As in Patrilineal societies after marriage women experience all types of dislocation- geographical, social, cultural, and psychological from parental to marital homes. Coping with both joys and traumas of new situations they constantly work on their capabilities of creating as well as sustaining new social relationship, often within potentially inhospitable and discriminatory environments. We see the same agency in Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel *What the Body Remembers*, when she portrays Roop in all her female subjectivity. Stunningly beautiful, Roop is a free spirit child who hates all sorts of restrictions. But it's right from her childhood that she, along with her sister Madni is being brought up and conditioned keeping in light woman's typical roles and responsibilities. Roop shows how women's discursive abilities significantly contribute to the shaping of social processes among migrant groups too. Though she never migrated from India but with the Partition Tragedy, she lost her 'home' and had to get uprooted. But from Pari Darvaza to Lahore, Roop just keeps on 'Adjusting and Assimilating' and we see her balancing 'two worlds' and all the while carrying the sweet memories of her 'Lost Home', in heart.

Now if we turn towards Uma Parmeswaran's *The Mangoes on the Maple Tree,* we get a new insight into this whole process of immigration, dislocation, alienation and ultimately the assimilation and acculturation process. If *Can You*

Hear the Nightbird Call? deals with the assimilation process of Sikh Diaspora in Canada, *The Mangoes on the Maple Tree* has a cosmopolitan setting.

The Bhave family- Sharad, Savitri and their children Jyoti, Jayant and Krish have moved to Winnipeg, leaving behind a comfortable life with servants and as regards Sharad, a professional career as a nuclear scientist. His sister, Veejala, has been living with her husband Anant Moghe and their children Vithal and Priti longer in Canada than Sharad and his family have. The story takes place within three weeks in 1997, 'during the great flood' and is related by several of the protagonists, although the focus lies on Jyoti. The narrative starts with a trope which is also central to Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, that of travel, which is just another word for voyage. In Mangoes on the Maple Tree, this issue is discussed by means of Jayant's plan of going on an extended road trip with his friends. The Bhaves' would never admit aloud that they were proud Jayant was taking to the road with Brendan, Jim and Bob, as this would be contrary to the typical values of diasporans, that is, keeping to their family and sticking to their roots, which Cohen would call a "strong ethnic group consciousness"(6). Eventually, however being held up by the flood and one after the other young men cancelling, Jayant also decides to stay at home, with his family, to do something useful. Via the intended route of taking to the road, he finds back to his roots, to strain Gilroy's terminology once more, which is revealed towards the falling of the flood, the closing of the novel, having a relationship and knowing about his aunt's plans to leave her family in order to move back to India, Jayant decides to stay at home. "He thought. I'll stay. If there's a Christly chance for me to do something for someone, I'd gladly stay here to the end of time. Jeesus, how dispensable we are. I'd stay put if that stupid parakeet of yours needed me to clean

its cage every day. How much more readily would I say for you" (157). This indicates that while in the first place, the reason for him to stay might be his girlfriend; he is even more determined to do so in order to look after his nine year old cousin Priti. Thus, while there is a palpable distancing from India, which will be discussed later in more detail, the second generation still feels connected to the homeland. Both Jyoti and Jayant incorporate this contradiction, though in different forms. Jyoti's connection to her brother, I would argue, stands for her close connection to her ancestry; her relationship with Pierre, on the other hand, is representative of her rebellion, her distancing of her heritage. In Jayant's case, the journey he is about to embark on and the eventual abandoning of the trip reveals both tendencies. Before leaving, Jyoti and Krish tell Jayant that he is going to be missed:

> I am going to miss you Bhau." He stopped himself short, realizing he had used a forbidden word. Back in Pune, he and all their cousins of his age had called all older brothers and cousins Bhau as was the custom, but Jayant had shed his Indianisms fast and he had dinned it out of the others with his derisive taunts. "Oh shit, do you have to call everyone Auntie or Brother or Uncle? And if you must go for all these crappy familiarities, say Auntie Vee, not Vee Auntie, for chrissake. (6)

This scene reveals how very much Jayant tries to fit into Canadian society, assimilating and adopting Canadian way of talking while shaking off any language that would connect him to India or identify him as Indian. It is only him who had forbidden his younger brother to continue to refer to him as 'Bhau'. Hearing

Jayant's harsh answer, however, he and Jyoti get into a fight about their status as foreigners and their background, still revealing Jayant's determination to shed his Indian heritage, to leave that part of his identity behind as he leaves his home."I am glad you're pitching out", Jyoti said coldly:

> And I sure hope it gets into that thick skull of yours that we're different, and no matter what we do, we are never going to fit in here. Take to the road; get high sleep around, but still and all …." "Fuck off, sis, you'll see." "All these expletives, all the in –jargon, you can swear all you want, but you are never going to be one of the boys. Not that I see why anyone would want to be…….……. (8-9)

Thus as this fight discloses, Jyoti is aware of their difference, their otherness, to which they are doomed as diasporans asif " fixed by a dye". Due to this awareness I would argue, she defends their father, their ancestry, their heritage. She knows that their Indian heritage and its contrast to their contemporary Canadian lives will always remain a source of their identity, as identity is always constructed through difference .(Stuart Hall on identity). Although one's origins and cultural upbringing might not be determine one's identity, as this is something constantly changing, transforming, due to the positions we take up at a certain moment, they have an influence nevertheless. Especially if one can easily be detected as an 'other', due to skin colour. Furthermore, this quotation underlines Jayant's dissatisfaction, Jayant, who "remembered every detail of the proud family history that had been passed on to him through bedtime stories" (85), reproaches his father for having taken the possibility from him to engage with "his inheritance (85)". By these memories and thoughts he illustrates his position in- between two cultures. While, on the one hand,

striving to ‘shed his Indianisms’, he also has a strong ethnic group consciousness. Yet, his cousin Vithal reproaches Jayant for complaining about his parents, the fact that they have left India although they had a good life there,and for Jayant’s plans of running away (90). The next minute, however, he apologises to Jayant, revealing that he has troubles because his mother is going to leave them (92), and agrees that getting away for a while is a good idea. “As you say, we’re all too goddam alike. We look alike, we speak alike, we think and feel like each other. The whole lot of us, it’s like being in a god dam house of mirrors” (91).

To return to Jayant’s planned road trip, Jyoti complains that by announcing his plans Jayant “had stolen her hour”, Jyoti complains. Jyoti’s relationship with Pierre is another prominent matter in Uma Parmeswaran’s novel. They had decided that “they would have a July wedding and move to Edmonton” (4). She has not yet told her parents about this relationship, as she knows that her father, after having lived in Canada for years, would still be disappointed about her “marrying Pierre and not someone of ‘their own kind”(4). This is suggestive of the parental generation’s unvoiced expectation of a refraining from inter-marriage and thus indicative of a certain diaspora consciousness and maintaining boundaries to the host society. Furthermore, it is clear from the beginning that Jyoti is not happy with Pierre, she is only telling herself so. A first instance where this becomes evident is when she reflects about her brother leaving the family for a year, her brother that she is very close to, they are an “extension” of each other (87). Thus, it is seen that Jyoti feels abandoned and unprotected in her relationship to Pierre, lacking her confidant.

I would argue that Pierre, Jyoti's white Canadian boyfriend, that her father likes because he has black hair and eyes like them (19), which are a disguise for him representing British rule in India and by extension, Canadian society. The reason for this assumption being that Jyoti, at one point, complains that Pierre has taken "so many decisions for them with such rapidity" (59), not involving her in the process. Furthermore, she constantly has to chant "Pierre, Pierre, Pierre,[…] the way it might a mantra that would resolve all her problems. But Pierre was also a problem" (11) in order to remind herself that it is him who she is engaged to, him who she is going to marry and spend the rest of her life with, yet the reader soon learns that it is in fact not Pierre but Sridhar, one of her brother's Indian friends, to whom her heart belongs to, thus revealing her continued affiliation to her home country. Therefore, I suggest that while there might be "no weepy sentimentality" about India,(Iyer), it does nonetheless have a very high standing for the Bhaves and the Moghes, who continue to relate to it inspite of living in Canada.

Jyoti cannot imagine being married at the age of twenty one, especially not to Pierre who represents suppression by colonial rule and underlines this by taking decisions for Jyoti. "The point was that she felt torn and she shouldn't" (41). The question now arises as to why she feels torn. The simple answer would be that she feels torn between two men-Pierre and Sridhar. The more complex answer would be that she feels torn between affiliations, countries, customs, families, traditions, life styles, which in a nutshell , comes down to life choices. Her relationship to Pierre as well as her affection for and attraction to Sridhar are representative of the two cultures she knows, two diverging influences on her identity formation; feeling drawn to both of them represents her in between position. This in-betweenness is

illustrated when Jyoti admits that she is "stressed out because she's seeing this guy that is, Pierre and feels kind of guilty that she likes some things he doesn't (45). Jyoti also has self-doubts, much awareness of her suspension in-between two cultures, the creative potential of which she is yet unable to grasp. This reveals itself when she is talking to her aunt Veejala. "May be I am nothing. Just a blank wall of mirror may be. Each one sees himself, but not me. I am nothing in myself […]" (128). This phrasing, which reminds me of Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, illustrates that Jyoti is still struggling with the identity-positions that are engendered in her being a diasporan, in her hybridity. Jyoti's attempt at resolving her dilemma lies in asking her aunt to come to India with her, as she has not been back in her home country even once since she lives in Canada. Her aunt declines, revealing that a trip to India would not solve any of Jyoti's problems, which are also largely due to her relationship with Pierre and the dichotomy between us/them, and which also reveals that identity, as Bauman has claimed, should nowadays rather be understood in terms of identification. Jyoti's resolution:

> They had never talked about [Pierre's] past but that did not mean she had not thought about it from time to time. But no. it was not important, nothing counted except the present and the future. Quite aimlessly but by habit she wandered into the Anthro section. Was it habit or was it because of some subconscious desire, knowing she had run into Sridhar's arms a couple of times in that section during the last year? […] [S]he saw a black-haired head at a farther carrel. Reflexively, she moved forward to see if it was anyone she knew, why did she do that with every black-haired person, why does it

always have to be we-they? Sridhar had said. Why do you identify yourself with all brown faces?" (133)

Apart from Jyoti's and Jayant's perspectives, however the reader is also presented with several other characters and their views, as "[i]twas always an open house at the Bhaves, as all their friends often said" (15). The Bhave's open house is very popular with the young generation, showing their sense of community and ethnic group consciousness, the fact that their background is important to them. Jayant and his friends come there regularly, to cook Indian food (58) - all characters seem to enjoy Indian food more than Canadian food, at least it is discussed and emphasized much more than Canadian food. Regarding Canadian food, Savitri tries to find products that fulfill Indian expectations (79) and thus adheres to her culture of origin. They also passionately discuss issues dealing with the clashing cultures of India and Canada as well as the division among the Indians themselves. Among these young men are Jayant's cousin Vithal, their friend Sridhar, who is in love with Jyoti and Danesh- a newcomer to their community, who still lives according to Indian ways, greeting Jayant's mother "with joined palms, 'Namste, Mrs. Bhave, it is so nice of you to have me over" (59). Yet, it is he who believes they have to assimilate into Canadian culture to be accepted, to make an effort. The young crowd talking about interracial dating and the guys wondering why so many Indian girls date whites, Danesh hesitantly suggests integrating, 'But you should make every effort to merge, since you are here to stay, Jayant. I mean this is your country, you have to try to assimilate, don't you think? The Canadians would appreciate that" (63). On top of that, Jyoti suggests that "for dating local style, we have to change some time or another, you know, and come into step with the world around us" (62),

which bearing in mind that she defended her father before for migrating while still clinging to India, illustrates that she is very much aware of both sides of the coin of identification. In connection with Danesh's remark, this triggers a heated discussion of Canadian multiculturalism and an emotional speech about being 'othered':

> They-white Canadians-don't want us to assimilate. They want us out. We'll be squashed like bugs soon". […] "All these years they led us to believe the isolation was coming from us, that we were communal, parochial, closed within our cultural exclusiveness ,etc.etc.,but now that we are trying to merge , their real feelings are coming out. They've never wanted us and now we've become a real threat. […] we have to stay separate from them and stay together, and we've got to show them we have as much right to be here as all those pissed-off whites who've bullied their way into this country these three hundred years. We've got to stay apart, stay together. That's the only way. (63)

Vithal's outburst illustrates what diaspora of all generations have to deal with. It is an expression of hostility towards foreigners on behalf of the host society, which abates any, will to assimilate. Vithal's solution lies in 'staying apart' from white Canadians and 'stay together' in the diasporic community. The only way seems to lie in keeping up a boundary to the host society. They go on about "a zoo called Folklorama where everyone visits everyone else's cage"(63), indicating that they feel alien, misunderstood and treated hostile by the host-society as well as conveying a sense of being exposed as well as being bounded, like animals in a zoo. They make a point of community, of support and keeping together, like an ethnic enclave, within Canadian society. And yet, Jayant retorts that the Indian community

in Canada is as diverse as the Indians in the home country, which he claims to be only, “a political entity that came together as a nation after a zillion years because the British made it so” (65). Someone else insists on nationhood being the product of “five thousand years of culture” (65). Yet, Jayant becomes impatient, claiming that the present is all that is important to him, that he does not feel any sense of belonging when faced with Indians who are “mucking up all of Heathrow with their stinking masalas and turbans”(65). Vithal provides a very accurate and telling conclusion of this discussion about political, cultural and ethnic issues, claiming that “Jayant is himself a prime example of what he is trying to say, that our worst enemies are our own people” (65). This whole discussion is exemplary of the novel’s concern, “ a negotiation between different cultural values” as well as the “difference that exist within the diasporic community.” While all of these scenes and remarks centre upon the Bhaves’ ‘open house’, I would like to pick up that topic once more. People who are no blood relatives of the family are invited and integrated into the diasporic community solely on the basis of shared origins. One of these characters is Danesh who has been mentioned before. Another example is Mrs. Khanna, who visits the Bhaves only because “their families had been neighbors in Delhi at one time” (43). “it was just as Sridhar said; one felt obliged to be courteous and helpful the moment one saw anyone who looked like they may be from India”(43). This underlines the clustering of immigrants, their mutual support due to shared origins. Finally, one more time another comment should be made on the flood that runs through the novel. While I have argued that Pierre can be regarded as floating by Jyoti on this flood, I also see another possibility of interpreting this flood. I would suggest that, read in connection with the young men’s discussion

cited above, itcould also be regarded as a metaphor for the immigrants' feeling of being unwanted in Canadian society. This view is supported by the following quotation where Jyoti complains about nothing else happing anymore, thus indicating a feeling of being bound within boundaries, Savitri says: "How can you get tired of the flood coverage, Jyoti?.. 'There's so much happening, so many human interest stories" (154). And human interest stories are the gist of the matter, the centre that all of these discussions and analyses and theorizations revolve around. That 'human interest stories' are the central issue of the novel is also revealed by Savitri talking to her daughter about generational relationships:

> As for knowing about one's parents, we don't reach out with facts but with feelings. My grandparents, who brought me up, I can now see they were so different from each other.…'… Savitri…placed both her hands on her daughter's head; then, holding the girl's face between her hands bent down to kiss her on the forehead, combining the ancient rite of blessing with the universal gesture of love. (152)

The Parent generation's experiences:

Sharad, missing his home country, not yet being able to make the connection between ancient rites and universal gestures, claims that 'everything is overdone here' (19), in connection with his following lecture on 'trust and responsibility and good moral backgrounds' (19), this illustrates his contempt of Canadian ways and his diasporic consciousness, never forgetting his own background and the values he had been taught there, which to be sure clash with the liberalism of Canadian, or in general, Western, culture. Furthermore, this scene is told in connection with Savitri's discovery that Jyoti has had sex with Pierre, something both she and especially

Sharad disapprove of, indicating the morals of their generation and thus again the clash of cultures and generations. The divergence in the immigrant generation's attitude toward India is revealed in a discussion between brother and sister, Sharad and Veejala, defending 'back home' and integrate and making a new life, respectively. This is revealed in a scene which starts with Veejala wanting to comfort her daughter Priti because she does not know much about India but wants to go there and ends in an argument with her brother Sharad:

> Canada is home to you, and one can have only one home at any given time. So let's not get confused as to what's what. […]" Sharad, in a voice that took on a deeper timbre because he was so serious, said, "I think children should know about their heritage. It gives them something to fall back upon". Veeejala cut in, "If there's a crutch handy you, and by that I mean all of us, can bet your last dollar you'll jolly well learn how to move around on your own two feet. And all that baggage from the old country is just a crutch. All that weight on your backs. We have to strike roots here, I know that, you know that, but we sure have a devil of a time doing it. But let's not mess up anything for the kids, okay?" "The past is important. One must have a sense of identity, of pride." "Sure, sure, but we overdo it, Sharad; only those who can't cope with the present tend to live the past; romanticizing the past is an escape route at best, and it can be toxic." (36)

The last sentence reminds us of the warning of a number of critics that, living abroad creates a tendency to romanticize the home country, the life back there, forgetting what was not so good about it and thus might have prompted moving

away in the first place, without taking into account the present situation there. Furthermore, this passage reveals the spilt alliances that the first generation has to the country of origin. Sharad insists on maintaining its culture and traditions, clinging to memories of the past as a source of identity. While the past is in fact part of one's identity, being given a first sense of self by family and the traditions passed on from generation to generation, the past is nevertheless only one component, as identity is in constant flux and reworking. This is a point that Veejala indirectly makes, suggesting that the past is part of one's baggage; comparing it to a crutch makes it seem like a medical condition that 'can be toxic', therefore rendering impossible the task of integrating into the host society. However, one could also argue that Veejala leaves because of being tired of carrying around that crutch of the past, the memory of and longing for the homeland, and of trying to get rooted in Canada.

Sharad's sister Veejala provides a point of divergence between both the parent and the young generation. She is described as a "strikingly good-looking woman, elegantly dressed in an expensive skirt-suit"(33), which reveals her high status in Canadian society, being a university professor, and representing the family's most pronounced integration into Canadian society and its way of living. And yet it is she who is the stumbling block, she who decides to leave her family and go back to India. Veejala's decision of leaving her family and her home in Canada does not only affect her children and husband, also her brother Sharad who is deeply bothered, angry and worried. This is shown by his thoughts: "why did they choose this god-forsaken eternal winter of a hole except so they could foster a sense of family even though so far from home? Just to be near her so they'd have each

other to turn to in times of need" (107). This reveals Sharad's true reason for leaving India, he wanted to be near his sister who he had always felt closest to all his siblings, as she has always asked him for advice. But now, he is completely perplexed, unable to understand Veejala's decision. For Sharad, family is of utter importance in his world. Hence, this incident reveals that not only the second generation but also the first has its troubles with adjusting to a life in a diasporic situation. Leaving or being left, when one does not have many family members, relatives or friends to fall back upon I would argue, must be difficult for both parties.

In addition to leaving her family, Veejala also quits her job as a professor of astronomy at the university, which causes some uproar in the media and of course also in her family. When asked in an interview for a newspaper article whether she expected the conditions to be better in India and whether she felt discriminated against due to being a woman, Veejala had answered that "she would feel better wasting her life in her native country than in these backwoods"(109) and that "it could be [she was] the wrong color as well"(110), respectively. These statements are suggestive of her reasons for leaving Canada; she feels drawn back to her home country after having lived half her life in Canada, in the diaspora and with a diaspora –consciousness, which never allowed her to forget about her origins. Saying that she might be 'the wrong color as well 'points towards a process of othering, reminding the diasporan of his or her status as foreigner, alerting to the space in-between two cultures which is home for the diasporan. And yet, as Uma Parmeswaran has mentioned in Trishanku, one of her earlier works, "the in-betweenness" of an immigrant …is a space of possibilities" (Parmeswaran). This leads to Savitri's reflection about her sister-in-law's leaving: "Veejala, who had

lived almost as long outside India as in India, who in appearance, dress accent, food habits, outlook and every variable one could think of, was at home in the western world, was returning to India, whereas they would continue here, with their old ways, old values, old everything. But why not? India had moved on, would move on …" (112). I would argue that, keeping Uma Parameswaran's statement in mind, both options bear the promise of change. As circumstances change, also options, positions change, identity is in formation. Veejala is very much aware of both sides of the coin, on the one hand, leaving her husband entails leaving a part of herself behind, like leaving India once did, while on the other hand this might enable her to escape the fast-moving Western world. Talking about her decision to Savitri, Veejala says "already I feel as though I have left half myself behind…'… …maybe it is my last desperate attempt to do something worthwhile, instead of being tied down to a bloodless rat-race" (117).

Learning to live in a new country where cultural assumptions and tendencies vary vastly from their earlier experiences, life styles, second generation immigrants grow up in different countries and sometimes feel more at ease in the host country but their relationship too seems quite ambivalent. Often third/fourth generation young men and women do not find old personal ties to kin and community very relevant and prefer to form new friendship ties which become more important as we see in the case of Jayant here. They want to marry people of diverse affinities, irrespective of caste, color and nationality as Jyoti wants to but they too differ from person to person in their attitudes towards the same issues. On the other hand first generation parents tend to create-often through force or emotional persuasion- a 'home culture' for their children in the host country. Being and belonging spread out

in such paradoxical situations and parents children attach, in an ‘unarticulated and unspoken manner’.

The issue or racism is also broached in the novel, in a scene where Jyoti is at Romona’s house-a friend of Priti’s, who Jyoti intend to pick up. Two boys ring the bell, “collecting pledges for the school band” (95). But Romona, whose parents are out, replies that nobody was at home. “Nobodys home, “the boy mimicked to his companion. “What you see ain’t people, them’s ghosts”, and both laughed wickedly as they turned away. Jyoti closed the storm door and was about to shut the inner door when she heard the boy shout, “paki! Paki! Paki house!” …“Did he say Paki?” Romona nodded again. Jyoti opened the door and walked out in her socks. One of the boys had just thrown a ball of muddy snow at the front window. The other was about to follow, but saw Jyoti come out, and so pretended to clean his gloves with the snow. Jyoti caught the boy by his coat collar and dragged him into the house. “Did you say something?” she asked (95).

Although Jyoti acts tough, she is “deeply disturbed as this …was her first encounter with overt racism” (98). Nothing prepared her for what she feels after this incident, neither Vithal’s stories nor the discussions of racism in university courses, the word Paki triggering in Jyoti an “uncontrollable spasm of fear an shock”(98). Paki is an expression of extremely racist abuse that cannot be ignored; it emphasizes that the person addressed has the status of the ‘other’ making difference more visible, and practically annihilating the will to integrate into the host society, as this is a proof of hostility towards foreigners, towards diaspora. In general, parents are partial to their ethnic cultural heritage and are very desirous of preserving and

transmitting it to the next generation. They do face conflict with their children in this endeavor and are ready with children in this endeavor harmony in intergenerational relations. Most of the first- generation parents have immigrated to North America to improve their economic status. Parents tend to be demanding of their children in terms of educational achievement. This they insist on for both sons and daughters, perhaps more so for sons. There is a general tendency among them to consider their own cultural values as superior to that of the dominant culture of the North American society. They look down upon the unbridled individualism of the west and privilege familiar values of their own ethnic culture. They expect their children to cherish those values of their own ethnic culture also. Respect for age and experience is expected of the young people. The other important set of expectations is the area of dating and mate selection. Since arranged marriage is the dominant system traditionally followed by this ethnic group, there is a strong tendency to favor this system. This preference is justified on the basis of "parents know best" because of age and experience. In addition, this system is considered preferable particularly in the case of daughters. Since virginity before marriage is considered important, and since family honor is tied to the daughters' impeccable moral conduct, parents consider it their duty to protect their daughters.

Parents are rather uncompromising regarding the above mentioned core values but are relatively more accommodating with regard to dress, food habits as well as language spoken at home. They are also ready to give more freedom of movement and career choice, particularly for boys. But, with regard to girls, the tendency is to be more controlling and protective. Parents do want to help their children assimilate into the larger society. The general opinion of the first-generation

immigrants is that their culture is devalued in the larger society. The general reaction is to maintain social distance from the dominant groups and improve ethnic group cohesion and actively search for positive strands within the ethnic cultural history. The objective is to create social contexts for the perpetuation of ethic cultural values within a sometime hostile and often intolerant dominant socio-cultural milieu.

Questions related to acculturation are central to the study of identity among minor-ity group members .There are only a few studies that are available indicate that the concerns and preoccupations of two generations are not always the same and there is at last some degree of conflict with parents. The findings suggest that the second generation is proud of their ethnic culture but does not like the practice of sexual double standards followed by the parents. This opinion is particularly prevalent among young women. In general, the young adults do not view the dominant culture as having a corrupting influence on them. It appears that getting parental approval and being accepted by peer groups are equally important for these young people. A few other studies on the second subsequent generation of other ethnic groups in strategies used to adept to Canadian society by the young people of these ethnic groups are useful. One form of response is for the young adults to totally identify with their own ethnic culture thereby distancing themselves from all other groups in larger society.

Another would be an experience of marginalization and alienation in cases where the young adults have distanced themselves from their ethnic group values while identifying themselves with the dominant culture but are not accepted by the dominant groups due to racist attitudes identify a third way. In this context, the

young adults start a new sub- culture of their own by selectively adopting values and behavior patterns from their ethnic groups as well as the larger society. This is done by espousing liberal democratic values of equal opportunity for all and by casting aspersions on non-white people for their assumed biological and cultural deficiencies. Therefore we would discuss here how these people negotiate forces and organize their lives. Privileging voices that have been marginalized is necessary to explode negative stereotypes prevalent in daily life, and question the common sense knowledge of accepting the legitimacy of hegemonic power structures and routine social inequalities.

Without exception these young men and women maintain that there is racism in the larger society and sexism within their ethnic communities. Many of them have experienced racism first hand, and all of them, such as a close friend or a member of their families. Racism often takes the form of name calling such as, Paki, Nigger, Chink etc. and being excluded from group activities. The first generation non-white immigrants who immigrated as adults have had to experience racism in their daily lives. But, the convictions they had developed in their formative years about their sense of self worth have been helpful in dealing with these challenges. But, the children of these immigrants who are raised in Canada have to spend their formative years in the Canadian social context. Ethnic families even when they do their best to assure their children of their intrinsic self worth, it is not quite enough. Children have to spend a considerable part of their daily life in schools and among their peers. The realization that he/she is different and is devalued for that reason hurts especially when there is not much the child can do to change the situation.

The problem of racism is faced differently by immigrants of different generations. The first generation, because they have immigrated to the country by their own choice, may feel obligated to accept the consequences even though with difficulty. On the other hand the second generation is relatively more impatient because for them Canada is home. Therefore, they tend to be less tolerant of discriminatory behavior. There are more options for daughters. Being Indo-Canadian is different because you always have to be better than average. It is a minority issue. Their parents, who immigrated primarily in search of better opportunities, put a high premium on a scholastic/economic success. Only when people become sensitive and respectful towards each other and accept all cultures as equally valid instead of judging all people and their cultures using mainstream as standard, nothing is going to change. Some of them yearn to become just Canadian and like to do away with hyphenated status. This, a few of them argue, is possible. Several such alternatives are suggested. One such suggestion is to ignore the mainstream evaluation of themselves and their culture and learn to be proud of their heritage. This strategy will work if we try to educate the mainstream by raising their awareness. This requires perseverance and showing by example. As India occupies its rightful place in the community of nations, this struggle becomes less and less onerous.

The other strategy is to confront people and force them to explain themselves. Such confrontation without fear would draw support from well-meaning people thus raising the awareness. If this is done consistently by more and more people, the bullying will have to stop. One young man insisted that it is the way he has confronted racist remarks and many of his white friends have supported him. His

argument is that as long as you are on the defensive people will treat you as an outsider and do not accept that you are entitled to the same rights and privileges as white people. If you project yourself as a person with full entitlements and would not budge from that stance, they will have to give in. His position, like thousands of other young second generation immigrants, is that he is as much as a Canadian because he has no other home. This is where he has grown up and this is where he is going to live. He will not tolerate being treated as a second class citizen.

The third alternative suggested, is that the government has to become more aggressive in enforcing anti-racist policies. For example, political parties like the Canadian Alliance should not be allowed to maintain a stance that is racist. If they persist on doing it such parties should be outlawed. There should be more discussion in the media regarding these issues and the government should undertake aggressive policies. There should be more public education regarding racism, the school curriculum should be more inclusive of history and cultures of marginalized groups. People of color should not be shunted to the side and not allowed to participate in all aspects of Canadian life including making policies and determining directions of social life. A few of them think that the community perhaps brings it upon themselves by insisting on adhering to the ethnic culture. These young people are of the opinion that ethnic cultural values should be in the privacy of home and outside we should just adhere to mainstream values and not make a big issue regarding our differences. Their reasoning behind such a stance is that we chose to immigrate to this country and let us just play by its rules. This position is taken by those who, in general, tend to disapprove of the restrictions imposed on them by their families and the community. Some of them are particularly irritated by parental insistence that the

children live their lives exactly as they did in India when they were growing up. They consider it unrealistic to expect that the children who are raised in Canada have the same outlook towards life as their parents who were raised in an entirely different environment. Some of them argue that the parents mean well but their fear of losing their culture makes them behave the way they do. But many of them see no reason to fear. Hindu culture has much to offer-values of caring and sharing, respect for elders, hard work, moral integrity, music, art, literature. Therefore, the parents should feel secure and let the children organize their life the way they see fit. It is important that parents trust the judgment of their children. Some of these young people think that parents can help their children integrate into Canadian social milieu if they actively participate in Canadian social life and try to mainstream their own cultural values. The overwhelming concern among these young people is to be accepted as legitimate members of Canadian society with all the rights and duties that it entails. They also would like to please their parents and many of them try very hard to negotiate between their aspirations and the parental expectations. Most of them are of the opinion that they do not have a feeling that they belong in the Canadian social milieu. Under such circumstances, they are trying to do the best they can to organize their lives. Obviously, the strategies adopted differ among these people.

Uma Parameswaran is one such diasporic writer, who at times offers a reactionary agenda for the woman who is caught between the requirements of modern life in an alien soil and the traditional concept of Indian womanhood. Born in Chennai, raised in Nagpur and Jabalpur in India, Uma Parmeswaran moved to United States in 1963 for higher studies and settled in Winnipeg in 1966. Though

teaching is her career, she is actively involved in Writer's Guild and various women's organizations especially Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba. She has spent much time working on women's issues. She invariably attempts to capture the South- Asian Canadian experience in her works. In fact, in her Introduction to Canadian experience in her works. In fact, in her Introduction *to Sons Must Die and other Plays*, she confesses that she tries to use real life situation that 'could and did happen in average Indo- Canadian families' (12)

The Sweet smell of Mother's Milk Wet-Bodice was published on 24 June 2001, in Toronto at "Women with an Understanding", a fund-raiser for the Emily Stow Shelter for Women. It is a novella which narrates the story of Namita Negill, the sponsored wife of an immigrant who suffers an unhappy abusive relationship. Tricked into signing a divorce petition, she is left in an alien land, rudderless. Despite various setbacks, how she survives, forms the fulcrum of this work. Uma Parmeswaran does not make it a tale of tears or a sob story of suffering but a narrative of struggle, survival and emergence with a strong feminist agenda. Namita and her older sister Asha lived with their parents happily in Jaipur near 'Peacock Garden' owned by the rich Seth Govind Das. His garden with its peacocks and Krishna statues was the favorite haunt of the children. Once when Namita evinced a desire to possess the exquisitely chiseled life- size Krishna about twelve inches high which Namita dressed, fed and kept on her table, pretending to be his Meera.

A shadow of sorrow marred the happy phase of their life when her mother died, after Asha attained puberty. Their father got married again and brought home a stepmother Bina Maa who was only eight years senior to Asha. Debunking the

stereotype of a cruel stepmother, Bina Ma befriended the stepdaughters that they played and quarreled together. But Bina Maa was a mother too. She was a spirited woman with a ready laugh that she had all of them including Papaji under her thumb. Soon two brothers- Akhil and Nikhil were born, making it a big family. When Asha turned eighteen, they arranged her mariage with an engineer, the eldest son of seth Pratap, who hailed from an old Jaipur family. Bina-ma preserved all these years, the frst wife's jewellery, intending to give the girls equal share. But the avaricious groom's family demanded the entire jewellery as dowry for Asha. Bina – ma convinced the reluctant husband and the marriage took place. The only saving grace was, Asha's in-laws were good people that they treated her with love. When Namita gt her B.A. degree, Papa ji embarked on a search for his second son-in law. An alliance was suggested for a boy named Tarun Negill who was earning a princely salary of rupees 45,000 a month in Winnipeg, Canada. There were long distance telephone conversations and long distance engagement for which the young man's uncle and aunt became as proxy. Papa ji was so happy, for they were 'such descent people'..... 'they wanted nothing' (42). Everybody considered Namita very lucky. This time, Bina-ma was out of her depth for; she did not know how to handle people who lived in long distance. When the wedding was over, the blissful bride went to Winnipeg with all dreams of happy marital life. Tarun lives in a joint family with his parents, elder brother Bhaiyan and his wife Menka. The first two weeks were heavenly for Namita, for Tarun was very attentive and loving. Then, one day he told her that his parents were disappointed over her as she had not brought any dowry. He blamed his relatives for asking his parents about the dahej and filling them with dissatisfaction. He also said that Namita's parents took their words at face value and

did not understand the ‘between-the =lines’ message, which implied they wanted dowry. Though this news worried her a little bit, she brushed it aside thinking that at least her husband was supportive. Unaware of the undercurrents brewing in the family, to get rid of her through divorce, she was ecstatically happy. She was so naive and innocent that she had no thought of Tarun’s complicity in this diabolic game. One morning, when Tarun was not there, an envelope containing a petition for Divorce was delivered to Namita, signaling an end to her happy dreams. Not knowing what to do, Namita sat on her bed crying. Her ruthless father-in law dragged away the sympathetic mother-in law. Menka, pretending to be helpful gave her a sheet of paper with the phone numbers of various agencies who would help her when she is thrown out. In fact, she triumphantly made Namita pack her clothes, offering to keep safely Namita’s parrot green reception saree which was Tarun’s favorite color. When Tarun told Namita on the day of wedding how coincidental it was that she had chosen his favorite color, she took it as a good omen and thought that they would be in ‘synch’ forever. Now the furious Namita clawed at Menka and snatched the sari back. Menka’s innuendo, “You keep your saris and I’ll keep your husband....” (26), plunged Namita into unbridled grief. For the last four months, Menka had been needling Namita with subtle and not so subtle hints about Tarun’s interest in good looking women. She had openly questioned Namita, “Who would want a featherless crow when one could have a cute koel?”(26). Menka who was proud of her looks considered Namita plain and constantly reminded her of that. Namita at that time could not figure out just what Menka had implied, “The words were always double-edged; they implied that it was well known around town that Tarun was a flirt, or that Menka and Tarun had a relationship that was special, that

she came first at all times and would for all time, and that she, Menka was the only woman in Tarun's life" (26).

All these days, Namita had been giving excuses for her husband. She thought that he was being free with his sister –in law, for she had come a whole year earlier than Namita. Moreover Tarun could not openly show his affection for Namita, as he was pressurized by his family. She thought that Tarun would be all right, once he got out of their clutches and his flirtation with Menka also would pass. As it was only a matter of time, Namita thought that she would patiently wait. But now, the ugly reality loomed large, threatening her marriage and her future. When her father-in-law and brother-in-law compelled her to ring up the Salvation Army Crisis Line, she cried and refused. But they changed their tactics and threatened her that they would lodge a complaint to the police that she was an illegal immigrant and an intruder so that she would be deported. Moreover they refused to give her passport and certificates, if she disobeyed them. They conveniently forgot tomention her jewellery, which they had appropriated soon after the wedding. Even in her helplessness, Namita realized that she had to be in Winnipeg, till Tarun came back from wherever he was. When finally she agreed to call the Crisis Line, a counsellor called Krista attended it. From the garbled story, full of sobs and pauses, Krista understood that the caller was a new immigrant woman and was in a trouble. When she asked for the address, Namita was made to say that she would meet Krista at the Circle Store in the corner of Leila and McPhillips. Namita's father-in law had cleverly blocked the call, when Krista tried to trace the call. Krista knew at once that they were shifty people who knew how to break the rules with impunity. Namita was left in the care of Krista, who kept her company and took her wherever she went.

Hermetically sealed off from the outside world and protected from the predatory male, Indian women lived like anonymous molecules for centuries; hence they were unworldly, naive and innocent. Namita too was cast in the mould of docility and passivity. Fed on the myth of inferiority of women and tamed to be a self-abnegating wife, Namita too unquestiongly believed Tarun and was waiting for him to contact her.

To the shocked, grief-stricken Namita, Krista's talk was soothing, though she didn't always understand Krista's unfamiliar Canadian accent, in spite of her convent English. Moreover Krista's genuine laughter in contrast to Menka's "artificial laugh. [her] snicker, [her] ego-filled smirk"(14), appealed to Namita. One day, in a playground when Krista vanished for a while, Namita panicked. Only when Krista came back, Namita was relieved. As days went by, her hope about Tarun started waning and her dependency on Krista grew stronger. Whenever Namita cried, Krista used to hug her and console her. Her bosom was soft and her hands were gentle. It made Namita think of the times she nestled into Bina-ma whose blouse was always wet with milk and its smell of sour-sweetness. The smell of milk symbolizes a point of connection with her mother across cultural and geographical distance from her country. She values those memoris as a way to make sense for her present.

Namita was a typical Asian woman who felt ashamed to own that she had ever been in a shelter or on welfare. Krista having hailed from the west could not understand the inner psyche of the deserted women who refused to admit reality. She thought, "If these women would just realize, they did not have to feel ashamed

because their partners were devils own double-dyed jerks" (32). She knew that action would become impossible when one stayed locked in self-pity or shame. Shayna, another counsellor from the immigrant Women's Association of Mannitoba tried to get Namita legal Aid lawyer, to go through her divorce papers. Still Namita hoped that it was all a mistake and Tarun would come back. She thought, "All would be well. He would clear up all this terrible nightmare" (35). On Canada Day, when Tarun rang up, Namita was happy and relieved and she truly thought, "The world was a safe place, just as it had been in the days of Bhagavan Rama" (35). Tarun pretented to rectify the mistake of his parents. Meanwhile, he cunningly plotted with the help of the lawyer and got an affidavit to say that he shared an apartment with a friend from 4th February to 30th Junethat was the time of Namita's stay n the house. Moreover he had circulated stories that Namita cheated on him even before landing there. But all the while he maintained his good name with Namita. He was coached by his lawyer meticulously not to rouse any suspicion:

> Remember the main story- your parents are the bad guys. You have to persuade her if she would play along for a while, and not contest the divorce, you can get back together soon. If she contests it, she will never see you again. Get it-promise her everything-tell her, she must play along and let the divorce go through and all will be well. (46)

With implicit faith in Tarun, Namita refused to accept the lawyer's help, contest the petition and ask for spousal support. Brought up in social conservatism in a restrictive enclosed space and anchored in rigid cultural practices, Namita obeyed Tarun. Having seen many cases before, Krista warned her to be careful with Tarun. But foolishly Namita said, "He is not like that"(49), thinking to herself, "these

people would never know how strongly rooted her culture was, how different Tarun was from people here"(49). The next day, Krista informed her that they had arranged to transfer her to another shelter run by the Salvation Army. Krista explained to her that she would get a bus pass anf get freedom of movement. But Namita refused to budge from the place, till Tarun contacted her. When Tarun phoned the next morning, the excited Namita wanted permission from Krista to go with him. Krista explained to her that such centers were there to help desperate women who were left in the lurch in an alien land, "We are a safe house, not a prison," Krista said, "We can't hold you here, if you want to go".

Though Tarun often came and met her, he never took her home. Meanwhile Namita was transferred from the All-Women Facility to the Salvation Army Residence. It was a traumatic experience for her to see the disabled, drunk and the drugged. One day, when she received the papers from the court saying that divorce had been granted, she was shocked. Moreover there was no provision for spousal support. Namita had thirty days to appeal. Though Namita was afflicted with a sense of betrayal, her natural tenacity came to the fore under duress that she turned to Shayna for sane advice. With a lawyer's help, finally Namita filed for support. Having weathered the storm within, the frightened woman ceased to look backward. Generating self-confidence from within, she decided to take up a residence of her own, though she had started mixing with others there. One day she went to the temple, Tarun had never taken her to a temple before. The observance of ethnic festivals and visits to temple are important features of one's socialization and a way to celebrate community link. It was infact a substitute for the large extended family. Namita felt thatshe was home at last. A woman invited Namita to join the Preeti Bhoj, another one

introduced her to others. It was a pleasurable change for Namita. When Tarun came to know, Namita had approached a lawyer, he was angry. But he decided to change his tactics in order to make her believe. He started visiting her regularly to make her think that the divorce was his parents' idea. He flattered her and took her bed. Despite herself her body responded. He sensed it and felt triumphant. His crafty move kept the relationship smooth till she realized his true colors.

One day when Namita went to Durga Mata's temple, Tarun was present there. But he pretended not to know her. Namita was disappointed. To her great consternation, the women at the temple started talking about Tarun's unfortunate marriage to a girl who was mentally unsound and how he came out of it with great difficulty. Namita was shocked to hear the false story circulated by Tarun and his family. When the gossipmongers went on talking about Tarun's flirtatious nature, Namita left the place in disgust.

She stayed with Janet to decide her future course of action. She unburdened her heart to salvage her battered psyche. Her autoimmune response to his infidelity was her firm determination to reject him. As expected, Tarun came begging. He gave her a lot of excuses and explanations. He confessed that he did not know what the devil had got into him, and he must have been out of his mind. But blinkers had fallen from her eyes. She knew him to be a cheat who betrayed her trust and abused her love. She stood her ground and did not even admit him inside the house. She had decided not to be a man's shadow any longer. Moreover she wanted to protect herself from further humiliation.

The Hindu woman internalizes the ideals of wifehood personified by Sita. This was the ideal of feminity held up to her all these years. Beauvoir said, “Woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave, the two sexes have never shared the world of equality and even today woman is heavily handicapped” (352). But Namita decided to break away from her husband due to his infidelity and duplicity. Her coping mechanism made her turn to stepmother Bina-ma for strength. When she rang up and heard Bina-ma’s voice, she thought she might cry, but she did not. In fact she picked up courage from Bina-ma’s affectionate voice. Her soothing voice strengthened Namita’s resolve to survive on her own and not to run away from problems, like a coward. Bina-ma’s voice cutting across the mils, acted as a morale-booster to Namita. She decided not to be emotional but to be rational. She saw no point in revealing her miserable plight and making them worry. Namita was surprised when Bina-ma asked her whether she received the Krishna statue sent to her Winnipeg address by Seth Govind Sahib. Feeling that this icon would bolster her courage, she decided to get it. Her mother-in law being powerless would be of no help to her. She should have asked Tarun if there were any letters for her, but now it was too late for that. It felt good “to beat the shit out of him”...she savored the phrase she had picked up at the shelter from one of the young woman- but that was over and done with. Now there was no other option. She had to go in prison and retrieve her Krishna. When she rang the bell, her father-in-law opened the door and belligerently said, “What are you doing here?”(76). She slipped under his elbow to enter the house. He grabbed her by her parka and tried to push her out. She looked around the living room to see whether Kanhaiya was there. When the statue was not there, she thought, it would be in Menka’s room. So, she ran up the stair, right into

Menka who had come out of her room and stood there staring at her. Downstairs her mother-in law was trying to hold her husband so that he would not catch her. Namita boldly elbowed Menka out of her way and walked into Menka's room. As she suspected, her Krishna statue was there, on the stereo stand. Hugging it to her bosom, she walked out. As she left, she shouted, "What a vindictive old man! I just want to take what is mine and get out of his hell-hole" (70). With her head held high, she walked towards a new start.

A married woman who immigrated to Canada with her husband seemed doomed by her husband's desertion. But she carved out a territory for herself, overcoming the state of hopelessness. Namita's journey from the state of pristine innocence to higher state of maturity was depicted in stages to make it realistic. Uma Parameswaran shows Namita's sense of shock, feeling of loneliness, twinge of pain, fear of solitude and her slow conquest of the overwhelming hopelessness. The memory of her home, mother and motherland endowed her with power, though she was without a house in an alien land. When she found herself alone and without the support system, temple provided emotional and psychic sustenance. She found extended kinship network in white women who helped her to recover her equilibrium. In the religious icon Krishna, she found a refuge, as Krishna in Hindu mythology is a symbol of hope for desperate and deserted women. Above all, her bitter experience was the chrysalis that transformed this subdued, emotional wreck into a strong woman affirming her individuality and establishing control over her life. Namita is a typical representative of the educated middle class Indian women who are victimized. But Uma Parameswaran wants her to become an archetype of a suffering woman who emerges strongly as a woman of will power. Hence the

misery, injustice, and wretchedness in Namita's life, which should arouse genuine and legitimate anger, is glossed over by celebrating her survival, her spirit of freedom and self-respect. The form 'novella' imposes intensity and concentration on the problem taken up for analysis. Th problem of a deserted wife on account of dowry is not new in the Indian scenario. But, here it is set in a distant locale. The distancing allows for a clear and critical assessment of the situation which raises issues related to NRI weddings. It is not just a critique of patriarchy, though it reflects over the power imbalance and challenges it. Though the accusing finger points towards the diabolic husband and authoritative father-in law, the blame does not lie at the door of patriarchy alone. Namita is victimized by members of her own sex-her sister-in law who has vested interest in Namita's husband and the voiceless mother-in law who is invariably a mute witness. There are other factors which are equally to be blamed- the cultural devaluation of women, the institution of arranged marriage in India with its system of dowry and the Indian social set-up with its craze for things foreign, including bridegrooms.

Diasporas are described by Robin Cohen as "Communities of people living together in one country who "acknowledged that "the old country"- a notion of buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore-always has some claim on their loyalty and emotion"(qtd. Mcleod 207). It is impossible for a diasporic community to escape from the histories of their native country. But the treatments of these histories differ from one writer to another. Shauna Singh Baldwin, an Indo Canadian writer, belongs to the Sikh community. She calls herself a second generation diasporic writer, whose perceptions are definitely different from first generation diasporic writers like Rushdie, or Nirad.C.Chaudhuri. For Baldwin, writing on India

through fiction was a matter of education and self-exploration. She says, “If you had predicted that i, a second generation Canadian, living in Milwaukee would write a book about Sikh women in a polygamous marriage, I would have said ‘Me’? But this novel (*What the Body Remembers*) chose its writer” (qtd verma 188-89). The process of self-exploration takes place through the story of partition from the view point of Sikh characters, imagining them from the far off shores of Canada.

While commenting on the role of diasporic writers she says that the term diasporic or ‘desi’ writer allows participation in the adopted land’s world also and that too without disturbing any dimension. Thereby she identifies herself with both the home and host countries. Diasporic memory and history function as major narrative strategies in any genre with an ethnographic discourse. Baldwin’s narrative strategies lead to not only an Indo Canadian view but more specifically a Sikh Canadian view. The narrative therefore becomes more ethnographic in content. Religion, language and tradition pertaining to Sikh community are extensively included.

The heroines placed in Colonial societies are tradition bound. But viewing native women from a foreign land brings in the concepts of tradition and transformation. Baldwin;’s views generate from a transformed set up of multicultural society like Canada which share great affinities with other women writers like Anita Rau Badami and Uma Parmeswaran. In the process of self exploration these writers definitely identify their ‘selves’ with their community to which they belong. They question female subjectivity in their community without

disowning themselves from the community. Therefore a negotiation takes place between tradition and transformation as the author realize that both are inseparable. .

The diasporic memory of these women writers vibrate through the native women's bodies during a crucial historical turning point. Thus diasporic memory is fused with history. The memory also highlights customs, traditions ranging from rituals, ceremonies, cuisine, clothing and jewelry apart from religion which is already mentioned. Politics of the native leaders, important political events and Imperial domination blends into the narrative discourse.

We realize here that voice is not something that someone gives to others. It is something to be engaged and critically understood. Voice is often problematic, yet it is central to any sense of personal action and power, that is agency. While a great deal has been written on voice as critical pedagogical category, no attempt is made here to review the literature on this category. However, it suffices to mention that the exercise of listening to the voices of the diasporic Indians, and to all the fellow citizens of their 'homeland' who are interested in their well being, enables us to realize what forms of knowledge and cultures those groups bring in the form of cultural and social capital. It is important to know what sorts of cultural and social capital get reproduced and produced when different voices are engaged in real life situations. Once the diasporic women writers come to realize fully that their "voices" are liberating, they can build on that freedom. They can feel more confident in solving real and perceived problems pertaining to their daily lives in their own specific ways.