

## **Chapter I**

### **CANADA: A VERTICAL MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC**

*Diversity is the word . . . America is woven into many strands; I  
would recognize them and let it so remain. (Ralph Ellison)*

Canada is a country with many civilizations and cultures and a beneficiary of not only civilizations of different peoples of the world who migrated to Canada but also of the cultural legacy that each of them brought to Canada. The legacy laid the foundation on which Canada built its own culture. Canadians do not form a compact, homogenous people. They are rather a collection of diverse national and cultural groups. Canada is an example of a country populated by immigrants - the result of which is a heterogeneous and culturally pluralistic society. In the strictly legal sense, there was no such thing as a Canadian citizen until the Canadian Citizenship Act came into force on January 1, 1947. The most important feature of Canada's population is its diversity. Diversity in language and culture, region and status are interwoven into a complex pattern, one which has become known popularly as a "mosaic" (Berry & Kalin).

Victoria Hayward was the first writer to use the term 'mosaic' for Canada. She was captivated by the Canadian prairies, which prompted her to apply 'mosaic' for Canadian society. After her encounter with the prairies, she wrote in her *Romantic Canada*: "The New Canadians, representing many lands and widely separated sections of Old Europe, have contributed to the Prairie Provinces a variety...It is indeed a mosaic of vast dimensions and great breadth, essayed of the Prairie" (qtd. in Fleras and Elliott 64). Kate Foster was the first writer to use the mosaic metaphor in the context of a discussion of Canadian Immigration policy and nation building. She wrote in her *Our Canadian Mosaic* of the Mosaic's "capacity to endure, a quality essential in nation-building" (qtd. in J. F. Day 151). The mosaic imagery is an expression of the ideal of Canadian multiculturalism. A mosaic in fact is an arrangement of individual chips with distinctive shapes, colours, and textures. Every chip of the chip gets equal prominence in the mosaic. Thus a mosaic displays notions of equality, plurality, beauty and unity in diversity.

Canada is a multicultural country. There are peoples of many cultures in Canada. But the dominant cultures are two; major languages are also two; religious sects with larger followings are two too. The British and the French are the two major cultural, linguistic and religious groups. The Constitutional Act of 1791 divided Canada along linguistic and religious lines. Upper Canada (now Ontario) was English and Protestant. Lower Canada (now Quebec) was French and Catholic. Though there are other cultural, religious and linguistic groups in Canada, they are in minority. Presently in Canada the British and the French constitute 34%

and 26% respectively of the total population of Canada. Other groups in Canada comprise the Germans (4%), the Italians (3%), the Ukrainians (2%), the American Indians/Inuit (1.5%) and the rest include the Chinese, the Dutch, the South Asians, the Jews, the Blacks/Caribbeans, the Poles, the Portuguese, the Greeks, the Yugoslavs, the Hungarians, the Filipinos, the Spaniards, the Czechoslovaks, the Vietnamese, the Finnish, and the Japanese.

Canada's first people arrived in North America from Asia about 40,000 years ago. Aboriginal people speaking different Algonkian languages were spread across North America. Others speaking Iroquoian languages lived in the region of St. Lawrence River. Inuit people who came from Asia lived in the north of the pacific slope. John Cabot was the first European to reach the Canadian Coast in 1497. In 1534 Jacques Cartier claimed the shores of the St. Lawrence River for the Crown of France. The French established the first European settlement in 1605 in Canada and founded Quebec in 1608. Mattieu da Costa was the first black to set foot on Canadian soil. He arrived in 1605 with the French force of Pierre de Gua des Monts; da Costa helped the French found Port Royal in Nova Scotia. Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze write in their *Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience* that da Costa was a free nation-builder. From da Costa's membership in "The Order of Good Cheer (Canada's first social club) and his job as a translator between French fur traders and Micmac Indians", Alexander and Glaze conclude that he was not a slave (38). It was in 1668 that the English entered Canada and in 1670 Hudson's Bay Company was formed.

Thereafter traders and missionaries from Europe reached Canada and their arrival strengthened the European culture in Canada.



Canada owes its distinctive multicultural character to a long fostered tolerance of cultural diversity. Though Canada had an unofficial multicultural policy, it became official only when the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism recommended a policy of multiculturalism in 1971. Lester B. Pearson (1897-1972) (Prime Minister 1963- 68) appointed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. The commission's task was to find out the Canadian National Psyche. The mission of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was to recommend steps to be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races: the British and the French. The policy of Bilingualism and Biculturalism was aimed at bringing the British and French together to promote cultural harmony and to share the governance of the country. The Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism published the document in six volumes after a study conducted during 1967-70. It was in 1971 that Prime Minister Trudeau announced the policy of Multiculturalism based on Book IV of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, entitled *The Cultural Contribution of the other Ethnic Groups*. Complimentary to Bilingualism was the Multiculturalism policy of 1971 – “ a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (Mitges 17). In October 1971, Trudeau proclaimed in the House of Commons the federal policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. He asserted that “although there

are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other" (Mitges 22). Trudeau felt 'cultural freedom' of Canadians would advance Canadian unity by breaking down 'discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies' (IRPP 189). However <sup>the</sup> Trudeau government underscored the symbolic importance of the policy of multiculturalism and hence ~~it~~ incorporated it in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Minor cultural groups were inclined towards the majority community. As a result other communities of non-French and non-British joined the majority Anglophones for all practical purposes. Therefore it was felt that equal emphasis on both major languages and cultures would help bridge the widening cultural and linguistic gap in Canada. In fact Bilingualism and Biculturalism was established with a view to helping the Francophone community. The commission observed in 1969 that the Francophone community could not attract immigrants. The other development that took place as a result of the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was the Official Languages Act of 1969 that recognized Canada's bilingualism and proclaimed English and French as Canada's two official languages. However no bill was passed in the parliament; a policy statement was pronounced in the House of Commons and agreed to by all parties. Some ethnic groups objected to the policy of Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. In ~~the~~ western Canada, the Commission encountered strong opposition from Ukrainian Canadians, for whom the Commission's vision of "two founding nations" suggested a second-class citizenship. They felt that the policy of Bilingualism and Biculturalism is not

sufficient to accommodate several cultural and ethnic groups in Canada. It was hard for Ukrainian Canadians to accept the Royal Commission's recommendations because "they (Ukrainian Canadians) considered themselves co-founders of western settlement" (IRPP 171). Andre Laurendeau, Chairman Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-70) who wanted to make both the British and the French responsible in ~~the~~ governance and create an atmosphere of cultural harmony felt that there was an apparent fear among ethnic groups because the Commission recommended Biculturalism: "Having been built by very diverse ethnic groups, these provinces have had delicate problems to resolve. They have succeeded in finding a certain balance and fear that biculturalism will put this balance in danger" (qtd. in Guy Roche 171).

Under the Trudeau government the policy of multiculturalism remained a sideline of the activities of the Secretary of State as Trudeau's first tenure as the Prime Minister (1968 -1979) was faced with violent separatist demands for Quebec's independence. But during his second tenure (1980- 84) as the Prime Minister, Quebec voted in 1980 to remain part of the Federation. Thus English and French came to be recognized as official languages. This proclamation ushered in a new era in Canadian cultural policy. According to Breton "multiculturalism within a bilingual context is a formula that attempts to incorporate the goals of different ethnic groups" (53). The policy of multiculturalism has to address both majority and minority cultures as integral components of social harmony. However in a democracy it is not right to exhort only the minority culture to tolerate the majority culture. Such a tendency of multiculturalism will only "translate racial,

ethnic and sexual difference as cultural diversity, inequality as multiplicity" (Bennet 6).

Pierre Trudeau felt that a policy of multiculturalism would help an individual keep his/her identity in a diverse set up which will forge the national unity. In 1978 he said:

National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help to create the initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all. (Burnet 11).

Trudeau wanted the promotion of multiculturalism to lead to increased confidence in one's identity, which in turn should lead to respect for the identity of others. However <sup>the</sup> Trudeau government underscored the symbolic importance of multiculturalism policy by incorporating it in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Though under <sup>the</sup> Trudeau government the policy remained a sideline of the activities of the Secretary of State, <sup>the</sup> Mulroney administration adopted a multiculturalism act and in 1993 the Department of Canadian Heritage was incorporated into multiculturalism. The objectives of the Multiculturalism policy of 1971 were to assist cultural groups to overcome barriers to full participation, to facilitate cultural interchange and help them in official language training. Initially the focus of the policy was cultural retention patterns of immigration and group

organization. But later matters related to social integration, harmonious race relations, support for Heritage Languages and Political involvement were given importance. Recently issues of economic contribution and economic equality were also given importance. The ideal of Multiculturalism addresses not only the ethnic groups in Canada, but also all Canadians.

A Ministry of Multiculturalism was created in 1973 to monitor multicultural initiatives in the maintenance of language and culture. In the same year the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was established for better coordination between the government and ethnic organizations. In 1983 the Council was renamed the Canadian Ethnocultural Council with a hope to improve its advisory, research and monitoring capacities. The Council coordinates 37 national ethnic organizations representing over 100 groups and works as a catalyst for promoting multiculturalism through education, conferences, research and publication (Fleras and Elliott 74). In 1985, the Macdonald commission underlying the change projected English Canada as multicultural. *Multiculturalism: Building of the Canadian Mosaic*, the report of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism under the Chairmanship of Gus Mitges, observed,

The metropolitan centres of Anglophone Canada are home to a diverse population of many cultural backgrounds and countries of origin. ... In little more than two decades the concept of French – speaking Quebecois has expanded to encompass a multicultural population, including immigrants from Haiti and refugees from Vietnam. (18)



It is unfortunate to observe that while bilingualism was implemented through legislation, multiculturalism was announced only by means of a policy statement in the House of Commons and agreed to by all parties. It was not until June 1984 that a bill on Multiculturalism (Bill C- 48) was introduced. But it died on the order paper soon after as reported by Gus Mitges (17). In her *Making a Difference* Smaro Kamboureli states that it was in 1988 that the Act for the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism in Canada was legislated and Bill C-93 was passed. Bill C-93 declared:

‘whereas ... English and French are the official languages of Canada’, it proposes ‘to recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society’ and promises ‘to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage’. (Kamboureli 10-11)

However a significant step in the direction of Canada’s intention to recognize the diversity was taken in 1977 when the Canadian Human Rights Act was passed by the Parliament. This Act did not permit discrimination based on race, age, sex, marital or family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which pardon has been granted (Mitges 17). This Act was intended to provide equal rights and opportunities to all citizens of Canada and also a commission was established to administer the Act and redress the offended. In 1982 the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was incorporated in the constitution and thus the rights and freedoms were made unalterable. The Charter is over all legislation. The Charter also included minority language rights. In section 27, it says, “This Charter shall

be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians”(Mitges 18). The administration of Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister 1984-1993) established a short- lived Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship in 1988. In 1990 the government announced the formation of the Canadian Multicultural Advisory Committee to assist in the implementation of the Multiculturalism Act through public education and community programs (Fleras and Elliott 74).

In 1993 the Department of Canadian Heritage was incorporated into multiculturalism functions that included assistance and encouragement to minority groups to retain their ethnic heritage. The following are the Federal Government’s policies designed to assist minority groups:

- (1) Assistance to all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada.
- (2) Assistance to individuals to overcome barriers which stand in the way of full participation in Canadian society.
- (3) Encouragement of inter-group ‘encounters’ and ‘interchanges’ to promote national unity.
- (4) Assistance to immigrants to learn one of Canada’s official languages. (IRPP 189)

In the Canadian context multiculturalism means that there is not one superior ethnic group; it means that each group has a right to its existence and a right to a

position of equality as a participant in the development of Canada. It also means that various ethno-groups are encouraged to retain their languages. <sup>The</sup> Canadian government renders active support for the maintenance of distinctive traits of other cultures including their languages. Every ethnic culture gets its value within the Canadian context. The main goal of the federal policy is to encourage the retention of characteristic cultural features by ethnic groups. Burnet says that perhaps multiculturalism is just another way of saying "love your neighbour as yourself" (16). McLeod also emphasizes the fact that multiculturalism is a policy of sharing: it is a means by which we can live together and learn from one another.

The government of Canada wants to promote multiculturalism through as many ways as possible. Education is seen as the promising field that can foster multiculturalism. "One mission of education is to help men see foreigners not as abstractions but as concrete beings with their own reasons, sufferings, and joys, and to discern a common humanity among the various nations" (Ashworth). If children are taught to respect the diverse cultures in any country, they will grow with a feeling that their culture is important and respectable as that of others. There is an attempt in Canada by the Federal government to create an atmosphere of tolerance among different groups of ethnic diversity and to encourage major communities to accept multiculturalism as a social fact.

African Caribbean Canadian women writers like Claire Harris, Nourbese Philip and Dionne Brand claim that there is another side to the coin of Canadian multiculturalism. They project several instances and experiences from their encounters and from those of others to prove that all that glitters under the

multicultural sky of Canada is not gold. In her *Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have roots: Speaking of Racism* Dionne Brand writes about the treatment that the native Indians received. Though <sup>she</sup> Federal Canadian government vouches by its policy of multiculturalism that people of different cultures will be looked after and their interests and rights will be respected, <sup>i</sup>It is not surprising to note that the practice is often to the contrary. Native Indians are definitely the original inhabitants of Canada and hence they are the real owners of Canada. It is really surprising to note that the government officials had to forcefully remove a Native Indian family from the plot of land they possessed. The grand child of a Native Indian who had a legal title to a small reserve narrates the ill treatment they received in the hands of Canadian officials. The Native Indians had no status: "We didn't have status in Canada" (Brand & Bhaggyadatta 20). The land was taken over by the government and they were ordered to move. When they refused, they were forced out. "We refused to move, and so they came in with an army of trucks. A lot of people don't believe that this happened in Canada. They loaded us in, and moved us away. They put a lock on the truck and we were hauled away like cattle" (Brand & Bhaggyadatta 20).

The policy of multiculturalism proclaims that it helps people of different cultures preserve their native culture in Canada, at the same time it also encourages them to amalgamate with the majority community. There are also promises of better opportunities of education and employment to the members of minority communities. The same narrator speaks about the intentions of the whites: "These white people had different interests at heart, so we lost a lot of the

traditional ways...The traditional ways have literally been driven out" (Brand & Bhaggiyadatta 21). If the objectives of the policy of multiculturalism are to help ethnic groups find suitable education and useful development of skills by getting them admitted to institutions of training, we are in for big surprises. One of the narrators of Dionne Brand approached the Department of Indian Affairs for help. When the white Canadian in charge of the department learnt that she had no status, but was married to a 'status man', he said,

Oh yeah, that's the guy I shipped out in a box when he kicked the bucket in Winnipeg...I hear the bastard died because he was stabbed in the back. He was drunk and fighting with someone. You're much better off without him now, aren't you?" But she insisted that she did not care for what he was talking about and she wanted to talk about getting into school. He quipped, "Why do you want to go to school for? Why don't you just be a waitress? (Brand & Bhaggiyadatta 22)

When she insisted on going to school and not taking up a job, the officer made her listen to a lot of allegations and accusations against native Indians. When the reserve was taken she thought the government would help her with education. But she ended up getting no help from the Department of Indian Affairs which in fact should have been motivating, encouraging and assisting the natives to educate themselves and find jobs suitable to them and not to be humiliated by the officials of the department insisting that the natives and other ethnic groups are good only for certain jobs which the whites can not do.

## THE VERTICAL MOSAIC

The concept of “vertical mosaic” to explain the multicultural state of Canada was introduced by John Porter in his book, *The Vertical Mosaic: An analysis of social class and power in Canada*. He wrote, “segregation in social structure, to which the concept of the mosaic or multiculturalism must ultimately lead, can become an important aspect of social control by the charter group” (73-74). <sup>The</sup> History of Canadian multiculturalism is not very simple. According to Smaro Kamboureli Canadian history is a narrative. ‘It is a narrative that has many beginnings, a narrative that unravels in many directions’ (11). If Canadian history is an amalgamation of narratives of different peoples, its multiculturalism is a synthesis of many cultures. In the Introduction to her *Frontiers: Essays and writings on racism and culture* Nourbese Philip explains “culture” in the following manner: “By culture I include all its expressions, including language, religion, and education - the many ways in which a people organizes its life and living that distinguish it from any other” (13).

Ideally <sup>the</sup> Canadian mosaic is not horizontal. Canada’s multiculturalism is not horizontal as in a mosaic where “tiles are aligned in a unified and coherent pattern whose overall image is one of unity and coherence. The overall effect transcends the individual tiles, although all continue to retain their integrity and distinctiveness” (Fleras and Elliott 65). But the Canadian mosaic places different groups vertically reserving the top position for Europeans and the lowest for Blacks and Natives. Nourbese Philip writes, “Black people of African heritage

will be found at the bottom of the multicultural pool. And below them will probably be found Natives” (*Frontiers* 184).

Canada was a land of many cultures and languages before the arrival of Europeans. Seventy cultural groups and speakers of at least 65 languages are identified in Canada (Porter 1969). Statistics Canada shows that 28% of Canadians have descended from more than one ethnic group. There is an immense gap between the multicultural paradigm, and the actuality of a migrant citizen's life in Canada. Canada is a nation space that contains different races, ethnic groups and the native people. Hence Canada needs a system of governance that will recognize its multifaceted nature. However the reality is as stated by Nourbese Philip Canada was “shaped and fashioned by belief system that put white Europeans at the top of society and Native and African people at the bottom” (*Frontiers* 182). The Canadian government ideally wanted to showcase ‘Canadian mosaic’ to the world to prove its tolerance towards different races and ethnic groups in Canada. But the reality turned out to be different. But by pushing the Blacks and other ethnic groups to the bottom of the ladder, the mosaic is forced to stand vertical and to lose its ‘mosaicness’. When the mosaic is horizontal, chips of different hues and colours will appear without the prominence of one over the other. But in the Canadian situation the chips in the mosaic are stuck deliberately on one above the other. John Porter succeeds in capturing the multicultural scenario of Canada in his metaphor of the ‘vertical mosaic’. The concept of ‘the vertical mosaic’ that John Porter refers <sup>to</sup> is able to project the reality of the hierarchy of human race based on class and ethnicity in Canada.

Eurocentric hierarchy is the game Europeans have been playing to project their superiority. Philip's encounter with Livingstone-I-presume in *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* reveals the Anglo Saxon superiority over other Europeans. When the protagonist informs Livingstone-I-presume that the Portuguese were in Africa before him, Livingstone-I-presume replies that the Portuguese are "Half-castes – not Europeans!" (66). To Livingstone's claim that he discovered Victoria Falls, the protagonist reminds Livingstone-I-presume that the Africans knew these falls and had named it as "Mo-si-a-tun-ya - Mosioatunya or The Smoke That Thunders" (68). It is the Euro power and culture that manipulates the fact. This is the Eurocentric style of placing Europeans on top of others. Similarly the glory for discovering the North Pole has gone to Admiral Peary, not Matthew Henson or the Canadian aboriginals who were part of the expedition. Similarly Sir Edmund Hillary is recognized as the first person to reach the summit of Mount Everest, on May 29, 1953. However, Sherpa guide Tenzing Norkay was actually the first. "Eurocentric media create world-wide images favourable to its culture and diminish the roles of achievers from non-European cultures" (Alexander and Glaze 101). In her article "The Dark Side of the Nation: Politics of Multiculturalism, and the state of "Canada"" Himani Bannerji highlights the hidden meaning of multiculturalism. She argues that the policy of multiculturalism projected by the majority community as part of a tradition in which "Europeans continue the same solidarity of ruling and repression, blended with competitive manipulations, that they practiced from the dawn of their conquests and State formations" (107).



Multiculturalism is a policy of the Federal Government of Canada. In 1970 the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism offered for general consideration 'The cultural contribution of the other Ethnic Groups' and in 1971 Trudeau acknowledged that contribution in the form of a policy statement about Canada's multicultural identity. As a result Bill C-93 came into force: "Act for the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism in Canada". It is intended to enforce recognition and promotion of cultural and racial diversity that is meant to result in a mutually enriching meeting of cultures. Canadian Multiculturalism Act (3.1) wants to promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledge the freedom of all members of Canadian Society. It also encourages the ethnic groups to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. With the recommendation of Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism,

it (multiculturalism) became enshrined in formal policy and, briefly, in the creation of a Ministry of State for Multiculturalism. Although multiculturalism never quite took hold fully in Canada (mainly because it was overtaken by other developments, ... (John Meisel "Defining the Canadian Identity" in *As I Recall* 155)

The policy of multiculturalism became necessary in the wake of objections raised by Ukrainian-Canadians to the demand of a bilingual policy by French-Canadians. Therefore the Canadian government was forced to state its recognition for cultural and linguistic rights for ethnic minorities. However the multicultural policy of the Canadian government fails to make any attempts to

contain racial problems. In her *Rivers have Sources; Trees Have Roots*, Brand and Bhaggiyadatta write that a policy of cultural or ideological pluralism was articulated in the policy objectives of the Canadian government. But racism was not addressed anywhere.

Nowhere was racism implicitly or explicitly addressed. It appeared that racism either did not exist in Canada or that it was simply a matter of differences in culture and lack of information about other cultures. Furthermore, the policy implied that 'promoting creative encounters and interchange would assist in erasing racism and, still further, that "cultural barriers" rather than racism had to be overcome. (19)

However the policy of multiculturalism failed to usher in the desired results. On the contrary it further widened the chasm that existed between the whites and non-whites. Many non-white writers have expressed their experiences and encounters clearly and loudly. Brand & Bhaggiyadatta state the reason for the introduction of multiculturalism in Canada. According to them the idea was to deny equal status to the French: "... the multiculturalism policy was organized in part to take the steam out of French – Canadian demands for a bilingual policy" (19).

Nourbese Philip also voices her apprehensions about the policy of multiculturalism in her essay 'Why Multiculturalism Can't End Racism'. Philip very diligently reveals the hidden agenda of the Federal Government of Canada when she writes, "At its basic multiculturalism describes a configuration of power

at the centre of which are the cultures recognized by the constitution of Canada - the French and the English - and around which circumnavigate the lesser satellite cultures" (*Frontiers* 181).

Claire Harris in her "Mirror, Mirror on the wall" in *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays from the first International Conference* writes that the policy of multiculturalism creates an illusion in people. It shows that the Canadian government is helping ethnic minorities through its policy of multiculturalism. But in reality this does not happen in Canada.

[. . .] the national policy of multiculturalism creates the illusion that every effort at cultural integration is being made. In fact it is merely a smoke screen, money thrown at a problem that requires education. What it does do, very effectively, is to brand the views of "others" and their work as "exotic". No challenge to the self-concept of the larger society need be taken seriously. The society is relieved of the responsibility to decode the signs and patterns of 20 percent of its people; relieved too of the responsibility to measure these expressions and the reality they illustrate against the cherished myths of the dominant group. (Cudjoe 307)

Brand and Bhaggiyadatta visualize vividly the intentions of Canadian government's policies: 'While immigration policy serves to control the influx of non-whites to Canada, multicultural policy serves to organize and contain those living here (19) There are instances and historical facts when Canada refused entry of legal immigrants to Canada. In 1906 the Dominion parliament

introduced an immigration Act intended to control the influx of Asian immigrants to Canada. Brand describes the Komogata Maru incident of 1914 as 'an infamous event in the history of Canadian immigration: "a ship carrying South Asian Immigrants to British Columbia was refused entry into Canada despite fulfilling immigration requirements is an example of barriers placed on non-white immigration to this Country" (Brand & Bhaggiyadatta 4). It is only an example of discriminatory practices that belong to the history of Canada's multicultural mosaic. In her article "Black, Women, Righter and the Anguish of English" in *Feminist Spaces: Cultural Readings from India and Canada* (Malashri Lal ed.) citing the conversation between the dormouse and Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Coomi Vevaina brings out the hidden meaning of Canadian Multicultural policy: "Though Canada smilingly tells the world about her 'happy multicultural family like Carroll's dormouse, she (Canada) tells her indigenous peoples and all immigrants, particularly those of colour, 'You've no right to grow here'" (28).

According to Smaro Kamboureli such discriminatory practices reveal, "the cohesiveness of Canadian identity has always been imaginary" (*Making a Difference*<sup>11</sup>). The question of Canadian identity is amorphous. If all Canadians are not considered equal, there cannot be a Canadian identity and hence the ideal of Canadian unity will result in an ideal of disunity. In her article "National Posts: Theorizing Canadian Postcolonialism" Cynthia Sugars writes, " By an 'ideal of disunity' I refer to the ways Canada's multicultural and multi-regional components are sometimes seem to map a fragmented, yet nevertheless coherent

and harmonious, Canadian 'identity'. This symbolic constitution of pan-Canadianness is inherently self-contradictory for while Canada is affirmed in terms of its endlessly divisible pluralism, it is recouped as a nation defined by an unspecified sense of cohesion and cultural identity. This indeed is the paradox of Canadian nation-state" (16). Multiculturalism does not exhort a pluralistic Canadian identity incorporating major and minor communities. It signifies an ideal disunity and a divisible plurality because all Canadians have not embraced it with the same enthusiasm. In the "Introduction" to *Deconstructing a Nation*, Vic Satzewich writes,

if multiculturalism is under attack from some for being too successful in promoting cultural pluralism, it is ironic that it has also come under attack by others for not promoting enough pluralism. That is, the traditional critique of multiculturalism has been that it promoted only symbolic, ethnicity, or those aspects of non-Anglo ethnic cultures which did not threaten the Anglo-Saxon dominated status quo! (15)

Multiculturalism is a public policy, a government policy and it is not necessarily the view of society. Society might succeed in assigning different spaces to different ethnic and cultural groups. Multiculturalism that operates in society is different from that which is visualized in the government policy. The government policy is affected by class and economic power. Many writers have expressed their displeasure over the policy of multiculturalism. In response to the report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, in his article "Bilingualism and Myths of culture", sociologist John Porter (1969) expressed his

concern “they would bring us together through bilingualism, keep us apart through culture” (116).

Minority groups in Canada may not very easily assimilate themselves into majority community, but sometimes the minority groups themselves do not treat other minority groups sympathetically. Nourbese Philip discusses the manner in which one ethnic group looks at another, “What we have in Canada, therefore, are the manifestations of racial and ethnic prejudices between many of the so called multicultural groups, because racism is not restricted only to relations between white and Black people” (*Frontiers* 183)

The policy of multiculturalism does not help promote equality of races in Canada. Berry and Kalim report after their research that although overt racism was low, race was shown to be an important dimension for categorizing people. According to them racially different groups appeared at the bottom of the perceived ethnic group hierarchy. The policy of multiculturalism did not help diffuse racial discrimination of children. Ashworth reports a case of a schoolgirl in Canada, who complained, “The teacher never puts her arm around us Turkish kids”. Brand and Bhaggiyadatta write that the Europeans do not behave with the black children in their play, on a bus or in a subway just as they do with their own children. Similarly for the European children, the children of colour are “‘niger’, ‘Paki’ or ‘Chink;’” (52). It is not surprising that the members of the majority community get away with name-calling and teasing the black children. The experience of the black children in Canada forces them to understand that the children of colour “can not win this cruel game” of name-calling and teasing and

hence they try to “avoid these humiliations” (Brand & Bhaggiyadatta 52). Subsequently the black children learn that the white society not only ignores them but also does not care to appreciate their presence in Canada though their parents have lived there for many years even for more number of years than those of the European parents. Brand and Bhaggiyadatta report the heart rending experience of a black child who was sorry that European parents do not care to teach their children that it is not bad to be black and the blacks can also excel in education as well as games and sports in school:

I can remember a time in grade six, when I was the only Black person on the hockey team. After the game, they'd come up to me and say, “Hey you're pretty good for a nigger.” They'd use ‘nigger’ like it was my name. That really got me mad. It was like Black people aren't supposed to be good at anything!

Their parents don't teach them that other people have names too. It makes you feel really low, that it was bad to be Black, as if I should have been white. (Brand & Bhaggiyadatta 56)

In a conversation with Daniel Coleman, University of Alberta, (1994) “Writing Dislocation: Transculturalism, Gender, Immigrant Families”, Ven Begamudré narrates his experience of having <sup>been</sup> turned down by white people for accommodation which he took as part of the normal course in Canada. But he was shocked when Ukrainians who were not considered white about two generations back, turned him down for accommodation. He emphasizes the fact

that the worst landlords he ever had were a black and a Jew. This is the result of the “vertical mosaic” of multiculturalism promoted by the majority community who have placed themselves on top of the ladder and have left the “Others” in a descending order with the blacks at the bottom of the ladder.

The injustice and insult a person is meted out at individual level cannot be corrected by a government policy. According to Begamudré a change of heart and conversion of mind could only transform human beings to accept everyone as fellow beings. Therefore he suggests ‘transculturalism’ which according to him can only ensure a process of change and of evolution necessary among different cultures that will help Canadians to be humane and not to compartmentalize them into Indo-Canadians or Ukrainian-Canadians. Multiculturalism, by helping people to keep their separate culture fosters divisions among cultures. Begamudré says that multiculturalism segregates people in ghettos, but transculturalism is a cross over between these cultures. It is necessary for one to change oneself in a new environment, adopt oneself to new surroundings. It is also necessary for the majority community to change its attitude and accept a minority group as one among them.

Neil Bissoondath, a Trinidadian settled in Canada feels that multiculturalism has its own limitations and he confesses that multiculturalism has not succeeded in bringing different cultural and ethnic groups in Canada together. Therefore such a policy is not necessary in Canada because the policy of multiculturalism does not integrate the majority and minority communities. In his article, ‘I am Canadian’ published in Saturday Night, Canada’s Magazine, Neil Bissoondath writes,



Because we have failed to establish the limits of diversity, because we have so blithely accepted the mentality of division, we find ourselves lost in a confusion of values. Multiculturalism has made us fearful defining acceptable boundaries; it has caused us to confuse the establishment of circumscription with lack of respect. And so we find ourselves in danger of accepting, in its name, a slide into ethical chaos.

Bissoondath adds that multiculturalism without limits serves the interests of no one. Therefore he exhorts the minority ethnic groups not to gather under the banner of different groups. He feels that such groupings will only widen the gap between the majority community and the minority ethnic groups. One of the failings of multiculturalism is that it told people, 'you don't have to change. You can be the way you were there, and you will be quite happy... you can either change or you can keep going with it. In a sense that may be betraying your original culture, but the problem is that there's no point staying Indian in Canada if you are not living in India. But there's no point in assimilating and becoming completely Canadian, because you'll never become completely Canadian'.

According to Neil Bissoondath Canada has extended multiculturalism to absurd lengths and therefore he asks, "Why do we need a federal programme to tell us who we are?" He argues for a new generation of unhyphenated Canadians. As one grew up in the West Indies he narrates his experience both in his native land and in Canada by stating that in the West Indies people live in houses, neighbours invited, children sleep where they fall asleep. In Toronto or Vancouver a house is not surrounded by a yard ... neighbours in apartment are

unknown and uncommunicative and there is a lack of consideration for the right of others.

Though Bissoondath recommends integration of different ethnic groups with the major communities in Canada, he does not realize that a one sided policy like multiculturalism will not succeed in bringing the groups in Canada together. Clare Harris, Nourbese Philip and Dionne Brand have given many incidents and instances to prove that the majority community in Canada is in no way prepared to consider the minority ethnic groups equal. He himself has realized that the majority community is a closed community and others are not invited and a sleeping child may not be welcome to spend the night in a host's house. The manner in which he advocates the amalgamation of different races has irked Nourbese Philip because he wants to keep himself aloof from other ethnic groups. Philip calls Bissoondath a product of colonialism and racism because he is critical of immigrants who gather together in groups. Philip raises her objection to Bissoondath's view that is sounded by his character Dr. Raj Ramsingh in *A Casual Brutality*, "the best and most effective way of making it in the society is to put as much distance between himself and other-immigrants". According to Philip, Bissoondath has a colonized mind. She further states that like his uncle V. S. Naipaul, Bissoondath is schooled and trained to despise all that has produced him except what the colonizer considers valuable. They can express the racist sentiments of the colonizer without appearing to implicate the latter. Bissoondath wants to belong to Canada. But his character Raj Ramsingh of *A Casual Brutality* is ironically inimical to his native land. Raj Ramsingh hates his own native land

and migrates to Canada in search of a better life. He hates his native country because there is nothing worth valuable, lovable or preservable. He says that he had not come to Toronto to find Casaquemada, the country of his origin as in his novel. Bissoondath makes his protagonist ~~to~~ dismiss his Hindu culture as merely superstitious. Bissoondath's publishers Macmillan quoted <sup>the</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* that commented on Bissoondath's first book *Digging Up Mountains* a collection of short stories "An accomplished first collection". According to Nourbese Philip, TLS also wrote in the comment if Neil Bissoondath could learn to control his racism, he might someday become a good writer. This was conveniently left out by the publishers (*Frontiers* 199).

Claire Harris writes that she is identified as a feminist poet, a black poet, or an immigrant poet. According to her all these labels are used to exclude her from the mainstream. Someone drew her attention in the first "International Conference of Caribbean Writers" to the fact that she (Harris) "had eastern publishers, had reasonably been widely reviewed, had won an international award, and was involved in many areas of the literary scene in Calgary" (Cudjoe 306). Though she has lived in Canada for so many years she is considered an outsider. Majority community does not take into consideration the achievements of the ethnic writers. Multiculturalism is a policy that is expected to bring all communities including ethnic groups under one umbrella. However, Canada groups ethnic cultures into <sup>a</sup> multicultural network and categorizes the British and the French as 'super cultures'. Therefore the policy of multiculturalism gains dubious overtones.

The success of the policy will depend upon not how it is implemented, but how it is practised.

If cultural and racial integration is the essence of multiculturalism, there is a mixed bag of fears, doubts and apprehensions, which emerge. Some Canadians feel threatened by the tolerance advocated by multiculturalism because it threatens the history and argues against the development of a cohesive Canadian identity, which they think, should be the goal of the nation. It is the very notion of tolerance, they object to for tolerance alone does not promise that those who have traditionally been constructed as 'others' will be allowed to function as individual subjects. Multiculturalism is also criticized for a 'policy of containment', a policy which, by legislating "otherness", attempts to preserve the long standing racial and ethnic hierarchies in Canada. According to Philip multiculturalism destroys the very native culture of the ethnic and native people. It was ~~the~~ capitalism that destroyed the culture of African and the Native Indians. Philip writes about the devastating effects of capitalism on African and Native Indian culture very critically:

The intent of the onslaught against Africans was two-pronged: to achieve a cheap unwaged source of labour and to destroy their cultural life. [ . . . ] an African work force that had no cultural base or resource to rely on would be a more pliable, less rebellious one. David Livingstone understood this when he reasoned that he first had to destroy the customs and mores of continental Africans *before* he could bring commerce and religion. (*Frontiers* 13-14)

Bill C-93 promises to 'preserve' and 'enhance' the cultural heritage of Canadians other than Anglo-Saxons and French. This promotes stereotypes of their cultures and advocates a kind of 'ethnocentrism'. This could prevent their integration into mainstream society. Multiculturalism is also seen as essentializing race and ethnicity, racial and ethnic difference.

The main objective of the policy of multiculturalism is to respect human beings irrespective of their creed, colour, or culture. However as Amy Gutmann writes in the 'Introduction' to Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism* that it is difficult to find a democratic society which does not marginalize its minorities: " Yet it is hard to find a democratic or democratizing society these days that is not the site of some significant controversy over whether and how its public institutions should better recognize the identities of cultural and disadvantaged minorities" (3). Gutmann further emphasizes the need of liberal democratic states to treat their minorities regardless of their race, religion, or ethnicity. Highly democratic societies like America and Canada are guilty of marginalizing ethnic groups. Liberal democratic states have their responsibility 'to help disadvantaged groups preserve their culture against intrusions by majoritarian or "mass" cultures' (5).

Human equality and political neutrality are the universalistic principles accepted by those who respect human rights. In his comment on Taylor's *Multiculturalism*, Michael Walzer argues for 'a neutral state that takes no responsibility for anyone's cultural survival' (102). There will be no major or minor communities in a neutral state. The risk of multiculturalism lies in the policy that wants to preserve some minority cultures. But the neutral state that Walzer tries to promote may only be

an ideal state because the idea of neutrality will not find favour with the major community. This leads us to the fact that the policy of multiculturalism cannot promote equality and neutrality. According to Nourbese Philip multiculturalism in Canada pretends to be what it is not by keeping silent about the burning problems of race and colour in Canada. Multiculturalism appears to promote equality, but in reality it seldom happens. This point is made clear by Nourbese Philip in her essay "Why Multiculturalism Can't End Racism" "The mechanism of multiculturalism is therefore, based on a presumption of equality, a presumption which is not necessarily borne out in reality" (*Frontiers* 181).

Robert Maynard Hutchins writes in his *The Higher Learning in America* that in fact it is painful to note even the centres of higher education promoting marginalization of minority cultures (66). Amy Gutmann writes in the Introduction to Taylor's *Multiculturalism*, "Education implies teaching. Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same. Hence education should everywhere be the same" (16). Further Gutmann quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson. In his essay *The "American Scholar"* Emerson writes, "Books are the best of things, well used... They are for nothing but to inspire" (17). Gutmann in the 'Introduction' writes about the public controversy over multiculturalism that has hit the campuses of American colleges and universities. Gutmann quotes *Wall Street Journal* which highlighted the controversy that raged over Stanford University's core curriculum: "The intellectual heritage of the West goes on trial at Stanford University today". The controversy was over the inclusion of works of some non-European cultures and works by women, African-

Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans along with classics in the course called “Culture, Ideas, and Values” (13). The group called *essentialists* was not in favour of inclusion of other cultures in the course. The essentialists argued “to dilute the core with new works for the sake of including previously unheard voices would be to forsake the values of Western civilization for the standardlessness of relativism, the tyranny of social sciences, lightweight trendiness, and a host of related intellectual and political evils”. The other group called *deconstructionists* argued that “to preserve the core by excluding contributions to civilization by women, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native American as if the classical canon were sacred, unchanging, and unchangeable would be to denigrate the identities of members of these previously excluded groups and to close off Western civilization from the influences of unorthodox and challenging ideas for the sake of perpetuating sexism, racism, Eurocentrism, closed-mindedness, the Truth (with a capital “T” ), and a host of related intellectual and political evils (13-14). In fact *deconstructionists* fail to promote liberal democratic education ‘when they deny the desirability of shared intellectual standards, which scholars and students of diverse cultural backgrounds might use to evaluate our common education (18). Gutmann concludes that a multicultural curriculum in universities and other educational institutions does not find favour either with *essentialists* or *deconstructionists*. Class and colour should not come in the way of scholarship. Access to scholarship is one’s right to the intellectual property. Scholarship cannot deny the right of a scholar to read or research writers and writings of his/her choice. As Emerson argues books are the best of things that are intended to inspire readers.

But what happens in Canada is contrary to the basic tenets of scholarship. Dionne Brand writes in her *No Burden to Carry* that in Canada scholarship means only the study of the works of English and French writers.

Canadian scholarship overall has been preoccupied with English and French concerns, to the exclusion of Canadian peoples of non-European origin. This at best is xenophobic; it is also racist. Black life is treated as static and finite, against which “Canadian” life, read “white,” is ongoing and changing, the recording of the latter taking precedence and importance, the former footnoted. (11-12)

Any democratic system that believes in equal rights to human beings has to follow a policy of liberalism. Liberalism will demand that any liberal setup will keep its doors open to members and treat them neutrally. Taylor in his essay *Politics of Recognition* writes that liberalism does not necessarily guarantee neutrality. Therefore he writes ‘though all societies are becoming multicultural, they are becoming porous at the same time’. According to Taylor ‘Porousness’ means that they ‘are open to multinational migration; more of their members live the life of diaspora, whose centre is elsewhere’. The majority community always tries to impose its culture on the migrant races. Hence Taylor states that multiculturalism is the imposition of some cultures on others (62- 3). The official imposition of multiculturalism does not in any way help the OTHERS to be accepted by the majority community. Though Canada is one of the first nations in the world to embrace Human Rights, there is no honest attempt by the majority community to respect the rights of minority communities. When members of ethnic races and



native people are denied the right to express themselves in speech and writing, one begins to doubt the authenticity of the policy of multiculturalism and the ideals of Human Rights.

In a democracy everyone has the right to express in speech or writing. A writer has the right to publish and it is against natural justice and principles of Human Rights to deny some groups the resources for promoting writing and publishing. In his essay 'Politics of Recognition' Charles Taylor refers to Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave in the discussion of politics of equal dignity: 'We can flourish only to the extent that we are recognized' (50).

Dionne Brand writes in her *No Burden to Carry* that it is a fact that most of the publication is supported from government funding that comes from public money of the taxpayer and Blacks also pay taxes. Therefore it is unjust to refuse the funding of the publishing of minority writers in Canada. Similarly the funding of Arts is also not based on merit. Nourbese Philip calls the kind of attitude of the funding agencies towards ethnic groups "Multicultural Whitewash" (*Frontiers* 110). Philip records the experience of a Black Blues Musician who approached Ontario Arts Council (OAC) for funds:

I went to see them (OAC) last year about an album- production money- they told me they only funded the Symphony. This year I went to them about multicultural women's festival in Toronto featuring music, dance and theatre. They told me they were expecting a special grant from multiculturalism. (*Frontiers* 112)

Nourbese Philip writes that generally there were more whites on advisory panels than the ethnic groups. Many Black artists, whom Nourbese Philip interviewed, were sceptical about the panel's ability to judge their art in the right spirit. They are reluctant to apply because they do not believe their application would be considered fairly. Philip supports this argument saying that if the Black artists use an idiom or a dialect alien to the members of the panel, they may not be able to assess them according to their merit. Philip narrates instances in which a Black artist's application to the Canada Council was returned unopened. In another case the application was rejected saying the work was "folk" and lacked "professionalism".

Often the works of Black artists are labelled "folk" or "multicultural". Thus the OAC gets a chance to refuse funding from its resources. When the writer raised the issue of funding Black artists, funding agencies would draw her attention to multiculturalism and would suggest that they are not part of the dominant culture. (*Frontiers* 116)

Funding agencies claimed that they supported the 'development of ethno-cultural artistic expression'. The department was also interested in the art that promoted the message of integration into Canadian society; multiculturalism is therefore interpreted as a stepping stone to greater integration (*Frontiers* 126). This is what makes Nourbese Philip call multiculturalism 'whitewash'. Funding agencies like Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council and Metro Council Affairs claim to work on merit, but

it is very clear that within these organizations, there is no value placed on having their entire organization, including staff, panels and juries, reflect the racial and ethnic diversity that exists in the population, as well as in the various arts groups and among individual artists in Ontario (*Frontiers* 128)

Nourbese Philip while talking about writer-in-residence programmes in universities in Ontario writes that Austin Clarke was the only Black writer to hold such a position. Four public libraries in Toronto have writer in residence programmes; but no Black writers or writers of colour were given this honour (*Frontiers* 118). When multiculturalism proclaims recognition of every ethnic community, there is no reason for marginalizing the Blacks and denying them positions and honours they deserve.

Multicultural societies and communities that stand for the freedom and equality of all people have to recognize every human being as an individual. There cannot be a dual citizenship in multicultural states. Canada as a multicultural nation has to respect the identity of every Canadian citizen. A multicultural state cannot have citizens who are more equal than others. While discussing Canadian identity, Kombourelis writes

I believe that within this complex, cultural differences and politics there still remains the fundamental question of what constitutes Canadian identity. But in 1990s this question has been reconfigured, and, I think, irrevocably so. For we can no longer afford to think of Canadian identity in singular

terms. Its imaginary cohesiveness has already collapsed upon itself. Nor can we afford to cavalierly dismiss the current interest in cultural differences as a mere fad, or an obsession. The recognition of cultural differences in the 1990s marks yet another beginning in Canadian multicultural history, the beginning of an attempt to understand how distinct identities can converge and dialogue with each other within Canada, how boundaries of difference must be repositioned-not in relation to new and productive alignments. (*Making a Difference*12)

Amy Gutmann in the "Introduction" to Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism* also makes a similar plea:

Multicultural societies and communities that stand for the freedom and equality of all people rest upon mutual respect for reasonable intellectual, political, and cultural differences. Mutual respect requires a widespread willingness and ability to articulate our disagreements, to defend them before the people with whom we disagree, to discern the difference between respectable and disrespectable disagreement, and to be open to changing our own minds when faced with well-reasoned criticism. The moral promise of multiculturalism depends on the exercise of these deliberate virtues. (24)

In conclusion of this chapter it is important to consider the responsibilities of the State and society. Often prescriptions of the State are not implemented by Canadian authority and society. Hence what is needed is a policy that will

encourage ethnic minorities to collaborate and cooperate with the majority community. Education has a major role to play here. It has to motivate people to understand and respect every culture and every human being in the world. Claire Harris in an interview with Janice Williams in *Sounding Differences: Conversations with seventeen Canadian Writers* speaks,

We live in this global village, this multicultural nation'; one of the things that would make life better is if we could at least try to understand each other's cultures ... view each other as one views equals. (118)

The policy of multiculturalism when not understood and practised in the right perspective, can lead to hatred and cruelty in society. The Federal government of Canada promoted the policy of multiculturalism to preserve ethnic cultures. In that case it would have been right to name the policy as 'ethnoculturalism' rather than 'multiculturalism' because the policy of multiculturalism does not include majority cultures. But the race conscious majority society forced the policy of multiculturalism upon the ethnic groups and left them to fend for themselves. Therefore the ethnic minorities especially the blacks in Canada are compelled to dissent<sup>from</sup> the racist policies and practices. The discussion in the next chapter is on the evil of racism that has battered human nature and disfigured the very multicultural mosaic of Canada.

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