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# Building Bridges: The Role of the Indian Diaspora in Canada Literature Review

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DRAFT – For Discussion purposed only

## Introduction

In Toronto, 2006, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, indicated in *Expert Forum on Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora* the significant role of diaspora communities in the intellectual, scientific, political, economic and cultural richness of the countries in which they settle:

[W]orld leaders gathered at the 2005 World Summit at the United Nations reaffirmed the three interlinked pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, development and human rights. They adopted an ambitious reform agenda to strengthen the United Nations in implementing its goals. World leaders also accepted the principle of the Responsibility to Protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. By upholding our commitment to this principle we can address some of the key drivers that force communities to emigrate. Furthermore, in September, at the beginning of its 61st Session, the General Assembly held the first High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. The High-level Dialogue noted that diaspora have a positive impact on economic development in both their country of origin and in their new homes. This sentiment was shared by governments, the private sector and civil society. (p. 5)

Even earlier, in March 2001, in a consideration of the diasporic impact, Canadian Immigration Minister, Elinor Caplan, when announcing her trip to India, asserted that “This visit will reinforce the importance that Canada places on its people-to-people links with India” (CIC, 2001).

Along with China, India, as one of the world’s fastest expanding economies with annual growth rates ranging from seven-to-nine percent, has great potential to participate in the expansion of economic relationships worldwide, including Canada. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC,) in a report (March 2007) criticized Canada’s unfocused efforts to develop economic relationships with India, and made recommendations for expansion. That such development has not yet met its potential is curious, given that, according to Walton-Roberts:

The rising global influence of various Asian economies since the 1960s has resulted in immigration patterns that have profoundly influenced Canada’s largest urban centres and reoriented aspects of the nation’s political, economic and cultural focus towards Asia (Hiebert 1994, 1999). (Walton-Roberts, 2003, p. 236)

Nancy Hughes Anthony, the president of the CCC, said “we have a lot of catching up to do just to get on India’s radar screen. It’s never too late, but obviously the longer you stay on the outside, the steeper the climb.” Certainly, Indo-Canadians can play a significant role in forging economic links as well as fostering public diplomacy between Canada and India. The advocates of internationalism in Diaspora studies argue that diaspora communities allow for a rise in prosperity, business skills and networks and a willingness to collaborate with the home country. Thus Indo-Canadian communities should play a vital role in Canada-India economic relationships. The final report (2006) of the *National Diaspora Strategies: India, China and Canada* workshop addresses the roles of Indian diaspora:

[T]here are over 20 million Indian people in the Diaspora across 110 countries, and they play five significant roles as investor, customer, supplier, ambassador, and philanthropist. The Indian Diaspora has experienced a considerable growth of capital formation, and major investment in the future can be in social infrastructure, business expansions, new venture funds, and diversify portfolio investment. The India Diaspora could be an attractive market segment for Indian exports. (p. 4)

The notion of diaspora members as consumers may be somewhat cynical, but there is much more to be considered of value in the diasporic communities. Consumption aside, the socio/intellectual and more globally political members of diasporic communities collectively forming networks can enrich the lives of non-diasporic communities:

...interspersed among those most committed nationals, in patterns not always equally transparent, are a growing number of people of more varying experiences and connections. Some of them may wish to redefine the nation; .... Others again are in the nation but not of it. They may be the real cosmopolitans, or they are people whose nations are actually elsewhere.... Or they may indeed owe a stronger allegiance to some other kind of imagined international community ... There may be divided commitments, ambiguities, and conflicting resonances as well (Hannerz, 1996, p. 90).

This means the immigration process does not terminate in permanent settlement, integration, and citizenship in the host country any more. The “development of communications, facilitated international travel, liberal host country policies, and changes in the structure of international finance and politics” (Abd-El-Aziz, et al, 2005, p. 2) have helped diasporas to be able to simultaneously integrate into the host country and to maintain their links with their country of origin as well as with the members of the same ethnic groups dispersed around the world. In this sense, diasporas can be an influential force within Canada and in various parts of the world and can act as “cultural brokers,” “communication highways,” “politicians,” and “transnational citizens” besides being “economic investors” (Abd-El-Aziz, et al, 2005). Diasporas as “cultural brokers” with the knowledge of their home country can help Canada to improve its internal and international affairs, as “former Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, wisely took a number of Sikh cabinet members with him on his visit to India” (Abd-El-Aziz, et al, 2005, p. 7). By the use of internet and communication technology, members of diaspora communicate within and across groups behind national borders and transcend those governmental states that restrict freedom of speech, expression, and communication. They participate in international protests, human rights movements, and carve more democratic spaces. Diasporas in Canada “exert tremendous effort to raise awareness about issues and injustices in their source countries” (p. 11) as well as lobbying Canadian government.

As Hannerz suggests, diasporas are becoming a kind of social development and “a group of people who are equally at home in their own societies, in other societies, or in what some have called ‘global society’ or a ‘world polity’” (Tarrow, 2003, p. 2). Obviously, the essentials of a politic by which Canada imagines itself, the multicultural politic, is much in accordance with this new conception of diaspora as a “global society” or a “world polity.” Such a conception helps Canada as an immigrant-base country to expand its international relationships:

With the wealth of knowledge, resources, and expertise that is present within these communities, Diaspora groups are well poised to assist Canada to steer towards a careful, reasoned, democratic and secular future. With meaningful participation of Diaspora we can develop foreign policies that

spare the world from what future historians may call the “Century of Terror.” (Abd-El-Aziz, et al, 2005, p. 12)

### **Diaspora: Definitions and Approaches**

The term *Diaspora* literally means “scattering” or “dispersion.” Derived from Greek word *dia* (over, through) and *speiro* (to sow, to scatter) (Cohen, 1997; Bhat and Sahoo, 2003), the word “Diaspora” was originally used to refer to the dispersion of the Jews to the lands outside Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. Since the late twentieth century, the notion of diaspora has been used to describe any ethnic population who resides in the countries other than their own historical homelands. In its references to the diasporic experiences of Jews, Armenians or Africans, diaspora conveys a negative connotation due to its association with “forced displacement, victimisation, alienation, loss.” In this sense, it is accompanied with a “dream of return” (Vertovec, 1997, p. 228). In broader usage, it describes displaced people who maintain or revive their connection with their country of origin and includes a range of groups “such as political refugees, alien residents, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic and racial minorities, and overseas communications” (Shuval, 2000, p. 41).

The term diaspora has been approached in various ways. Cohen (1997) proposes a typology in which he classifies diasporas as: victim diasporas, labor and imperial diasporas, trade diasporas, cultural diasporas, and global-deterritorialized diasporas. Not suggesting a perfect match between a particular ethnic group and a specific type of diaspora, Cohen identifies the Jewish, Palestinian, Irish, African and Armenian diasporas as victim diasporas. He represents the British as an imperial diaspora and the Indian as a labor diaspora. Chinese and Lebanese are classified as trade diasporas. Caribbeans in his typology are characterized as a cultural diaspora. Cohen suggests the following features for diasporas and discusses how each type of diasporas demonstrates some of these aspects:

- 1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically;
- 2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- 3) a collective memory and myth about homeland;
- 4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home;
- 5) a return movement;
- 6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time;
- 7) a troubled relationship with host societies;
- 8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; and
- 9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries. (p. 180)

Discussing the current usages of the term, Vertovec (1997), in his essay, *Three Meanings of “Diaspora,”* sums up three meanings for diaspora. He writes:

Within a variety of academic disciplines, recent writing on the subject conveys at least three discernible meanings of the concept “diaspora.” These meanings refer to what we might call “diaspora” *as social form*, “diaspora” *as type of consciousness*, and “diaspora” *as mode of cultural production*. (p. 228)

Vertovec believes that the first meaning (diaspora as a social construction) is the most common in the literature. According to several, if not most theorists, there is a dense web of affiliation between Diaspora and their country of origin. Diaspora communities in the host country usually reconstruct the class, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, and language that they belonged to in their homeland. Hence, Diaspora as *a social form* is based on a diaspora’s continued ties, imaginary or actual<sup>1</sup>, with a homeland despite separation from that homeland. Vertovec contends that diaspora as *social form* is characterised by a relationship “between (a) globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic groups, (b) the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside, and (c) the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forebears came” (p. 235). Diaspora as *a type of consciousness* focuses on:

... describing a variety of experience, a state of mind and a sense of identity. ... It is constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and positively by identification with an historical heritage (such as “Indian civilization”) or contemporary world cultural or political forces (such as “Islam”). (p. 235)

Diaspora as *mode of cultural production* contextualizes diasporic communities in globalism and transnationalism. There are other models for conceptualizing diaspora, but most attend to the social nature of diaspora.

Some Diaspora definitions put an emphasis more on the traumatic exile from historical dispersal throughout the other lands. In this manner, Chaliand and Rageau (1991) consider four characteristic for diaspora: forced dispersion, retention of a collective historical and cultural memory of dispersion, the will to transmit a heritage, and the ability of the group to survive over time (cited in Shuval, 2000).

Some scholars conceive of diaspora as an identified group characterized by specific social relationships despite their dispersal. Sheffer (1986), for instance, defines modern Diasporas as “ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands” (p. 3 ). Similarly, Skeldon (2003) holds that dispersed people are those who preserve their distinct identities from those of the countries of settlement:

Implicit in the concept of communities-in-exile is the assumption that peoples are not assimilated into the societies of destination: they retain their distinct identities ready for the day when they can return home. (p. 52)

Safran (1991) refers diaspora to the

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a fear of the present leads diasporas to mystify the past (Berger, 1972, p.11) in a way that produces a construction of “imaginary homelands.” Currently, the development of rapid/electronic communications serves to reify such connections with the homeland; hence such constructions become more accurate than imaginary.

...expatriate minority communities, dispersed from an original “centre” to at least two “peripheral” places. They maintain a memory or myth about their original homeland; they believe they are not, and perhaps cannot, be fully accepted by their host country; and they see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return and a place to maintain or restore. (p. 83)

Diasporas’ collective identities are defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland.

Studies with such approaches explore issues of emigration, processes of settlement, persistence of culture, the extent of assimilation or adaptation, socio-economic and political participation in the country of residence, etc. They often focus on the social/cultural interactions of a diasporic community with their hosts and other communities in host country. Diasporas’ cultural practices and productions from this point of view are acts of nostalgia and are attempts to “maintain an imaginary connection to a lost homeland” (Alessandrini, 2001, p. 16). Diasporas preserve these connections by creating associations and organizations such as ethnic affinity groups, alumni associations, religious organizations, professional associations, charitable organizations, development NGOs, investment groups, affiliates of political parties, humanitarian relief organizations, schools and clubs for the preservation of culture, virtual networks, and federations of associations, etc.

As noted above, some researchers define diaspora as a mode of cultural construction and cultural awareness. Wald and Williams define “Diaspora consciousness” as a term “signifying the cognitive investment of members of a diaspora community in promoting homeland interests in their host nation” (p. 2). Scholars such as Clifford (1994), Cohen (1996), Gilroy (1987) and Hall (1990) focus on the diasporic individuals’ awareness of being simultaneously “home away from home” or “here and there.” They argue that such an awareness of connection and attachment simultaneously to host country and homeland enables diasporas to identify themselves with both. Clifford (1994) argues that the connections of diasporas with their homeland and the other members of diaspora in various geographies help diasporas to create a home away from the homeland and to break the hegemony of the majority society. Diaspora consciousness involves the idea of dwelling *here* in the country of residence and a connection *there* in the homeland. Hence, diasporas construct their cultural identities in a dialogue between “there” and “here,” past and future, between heritage and politics.

Because of radical developments in technology and communications over the last decade, new approaches have emerged in the study of diasporic communities. Diaspora from this point of view is defined as a phenomenon of globalization. It is used to refer to socio-economic and political networks of ethnic groups of people which internationally connect diasporas to their homeland as well as to other members of the same ethnic groups living elsewhere. These networks also provide the possibility of participation in production and reproduction of a kind of transnational culture (Appadurai, 1990, 1996). “The impulse that informs this participation is not one of deferral to a distant homeland, or a mediation among multiple localities, circumstances or conditions, but rather is syncretic in its synthesis of the cultures in circulation” (Koppedrayar, 2005, p. 100).

This holistic sense of diaspora has been described by Tololian (1991) as “the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (p. 5). Transnationalism defines diasporas “through their daily life activities and social, economic and political relations create social fields that cross national boundaries” (Basch, et al., 1994, p. 27). Transnationalism allows researchers to not only focus on

the statistical existence of immigration flows, but to study them as social networks and as functions of process. Researchers with a transnational approach place diaspora in its broad geographical and historical context. They do not see immigration flow as a linear movement but a fragmentary process of connection. Following such interpretations of diaspora, and situating it in a global context, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990, 1996), highlights the relation between nation-states. He studies diasporas as circulating populations who struggle to re-territorialize their identities in the context of global modernity.

The transnational nature of diaspora has attracted much attention. Newland and Patrick (2004) write that:

For many countries, the Diasporas are a major source of foreign direct investment (FDI), market development (including outsourcing of production), technology transfer, philanthropy, tourism, political contributions, and more intangible flows of knowledge, new attitudes, and cultural influence. (p. 2)

These countries attempt to construct a climate that encourages emigrants to continue to contribute socially and economically to their home countries, or to politically and economically bridge their country of settlement with their homelands. For this reason, diaspora is now a new policy interest. However, as Newland and Patrick (2004) point out, the lack of adequate information and hard data about transnational influences of this conception of diaspora is a serious challenge to policy development.

Among researchers looking at diaspora from the transnational perspective, some examine Diaspora influences on peace, democracy and development at a global level (e.g. Wapner, 1995; Smith, Chatfield & Pagnucco, 1997; Alger, 1997) while others explore the impact of transnational linkages on the diasporas' everyday relations and interactions (e.g. Mountz & Wright, 1996; Mitchell, 1997; Wong, 2000; Nolin Hanlon, 2001; Owusu, 1998).

### **Indian Diaspora: Definition and Status**

The High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora<sup>2</sup>, under the Chairmanship of Dr. L. M. Singhvi, M.P. defines diaspora as “communities of migrants living or settled permanently in other countries, aware of its origins and identity and maintaining varying degrees of linkages with mother country” (2001). In the report of this committee, Indian Diaspora refers to “the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India. It also refers to their descendants”. The committee estimated the number of Indian Diaspora at 20 million people dispersed in more than 110 countries<sup>3</sup> all over the world:

The Diaspora is currently estimated to number over twenty million composed of “NRIs” (Indian citizens not residing in India) and “PIOs” (Persons of Indian Origin who have acquired the citizenship of some other country). The Diaspora covers practically every part of the world. It numbers more than a million

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<sup>2</sup> The “High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora” is a committee established by the Government of India to facilitate the links of NRIs and PIOs with India. Considering the significant role of Indian Diaspora in strengthening ties between India and those countries where they reside as well as their contribution to India's development, the committee works to facilitate the interaction of PIOs and NRIs with India and their participation in India's economic development.

<sup>3</sup> The report of the Singhvi Committee indicates that Canada is one of those twenty-three countries.

each in eleven countries, while as many as twenty-two countries have concentrations of at least a hundred thousand ethnic Indians.

The origins of the Indian diaspora stem from the suppression of India by the British Empire in the nineteenth century. Indians were taken away as indentured labor to the British colonies such as British Guiana, Fiji, Trinidad and Jamaica, to the French colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and the Dutch colony of Surinam (Tinker, 1993). After World War II, like other modern dispersal communities, Indians provided both labor and professional help with the reconstruction of war-torn Europe. The first waves of Indian emigration to developed countries were mostly labour flow from rural regions in India to these European countries. However, during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian emigrants began residing in the UK, USA, Australia and Canada as these sites turned to immigration for supplies of well educated and professionally trained Indians from urban middle class families; these were early instances of “migration of talent” or “brain drain.” In more recent years, as Bhat, Narayan and Sahoo in *Indian Diaspora: A Brief Overview* indicate, the new wave of Indian emigration is the migration of software engineers to western countries, the US in particular. Bhat, Narayan and Sahoo call this group of Indians the “cream of India,” people who “trained in her premiere educational institutions such as IITs, IIMs and Universities [and] are highly mobile and keep very close contact with India in terms of socio-economic interests.”

### **India’s Policies and Practices toward its Diaspora**

Diaspora for many countries, including India, is seen as a source of economic development. Hence, it is reasonable for a Diaspora’s country of origin to attempt to court its nationals and their descendants who live abroad. Examining the role of Diaspora in the reduction of poverty in their home countries, Newland and Patrick (2004) study how China, India, the Philippines, Mexico, Eritrea and Taiwan court their Diaspora. They illustrate 6 contrasting patterns. In the case of China, India and Taiwan, Newland and Patrick note that the interest in Diaspora is more business oriented, and that these countries seek Diaspora contributions to national development more than their assistance in poverty reduction. They state that:

Taiwan has pursued a “brain trust” model, focused on attracting human capital from the Diaspora. China has long worked to attract direct investment and open trade opportunities through overseas Chinese communities. India’s recently launched Diaspora policy is multi-pronged, pursuing direct investment, portfolio investment, technology transfer, market opening and out-sourcing opportunities. (pp. iv-v)

Over the last decade, the Indian government has set strategies to pursue investment, trade and technology transfer through the Indian Diaspora. The huge sale of bonds guaranteed by the State Bank of India and available only for Indians living abroad is one of the examples of courting Diasporic investment, or in this case, compensation funds. In fact, the “Resurgent India Bonds” was an action to finance compensation for the economic impact of nuclear tests in 1998. Sengupta (1998) in his article in New York Times, titled *India Taps into Its Diaspora* writes:

The Indian Government has been trying for several years to raise foreign investment from its expatriates – Non-Resident Indians, they are called, or less flatteringly in India, Never-Returning Indians. The latest effort, however, is its most ambitious. As Western aid begins to shrink in the aftermath of New Delhi's recent nuclear escapades, the Resurgent India Bonds, as they have been dubbed, represent an effort by India's Hindu nationalist Government to compensate by turning to the expatriates among whom it has long enjoyed considerable support.

The Indian government bombarded immigrants with advertisements (such as “You don't need to be a financial wizard, you need to be an Indian”) in their local media, and launched a marketing campaign in US and Europe which attempted to encourage nonresident Indians to purchase bonds. They sold £2.3 billion just over two weeks; a great success. “The experience was repeated in 2000 with another bond issue, the India Millennium Deposits, which raised over £3 billion” (Newland and Patrick, 2004, p. 5).

Moreover, the Indian government established a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora in 2000 to analyze the status of Indian diaspora in the world and their potential for India's development. This committee's report was released in 2001, with recommendation for new policy to create “a more conducive environment in India to leverage these invaluable human resources” (Singhvi, et al. 2001). Singhvi's report recommends the Indian government create an environment and specific systems to attract Diaspora investment:

[The Diaspora's] receptiveness to Indian concerns will depend greatly on the quality of their interaction with the country of their origin and the sensitivity to their concerns displayed in India. It is essential for India to create the necessary structures to facilitate this interaction. (Singhvi, et al, Executive Summary, p. xxi)

Dual citizenship for persons of Indian origin, simplification of investment in India from abroad, formation of a government body to liaison between India and its Diaspora are some of the reforms made by the Indian government in response to the Singhvi report. Regarding the efforts made by the Indian government to attract the Indian Diaspora, Newland and Patrick (2004) writes:

India's Ministry of External Affairs now has a “Non-Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin” Division. The Investment Information Centre (IIC) is a free “single-window” agency for advice on nearly all issues associated with investing in India. It works with Indians, foreign investors and NRIs and is considered the “nodal agency” for promoting investment in India by NRIs. It provides “all necessary services” for NRIs in setting up their investments, including explaining government policies and procedures, available incentives, necessary data for project selection, and assists in obtaining government approval. It also provides an information service available to all potential investors on the state of various industries in India and profile of industrial projects soliciting investment. (p. 6)

## The Indian Diaspora in Canada

### *The Pioneers*

The early Indo-Canadian community was mostly composed of young Sikh<sup>4</sup> men from Punjab, who came to British Columbia with the hope of finding the better economic opportunities (Johnston, 1984; Sampat-Mehta, 1984; Walton-Roberts, 2003; Bhat & Sahoo, 2003). Canada became first known to East Indians in 1897. Stopping in Canada en route in their journey home from Britain to India, a Sikh regiment of the British Indian Army participated in a parade to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in London. This regiment visited British Columbia (Tatla, 1999; Kurian, 1993) and subsequently recommended North America to the other Sikhs who were seeking employment opportunities abroad.

The number of East Indians in Canada by 1903 was only three hundred (Tatla, 1999). However, between 1904 and 1908, this number increased to 5185 (5158 men and 15 women and 12 children)<sup>5</sup> (Chadney, 1984; Johnston, 1988). The arrival of East Indian immigrants in 1904 coincided with Canada's need for manual labour due to an intermission in Chinese immigration. The Canadian government had raised the head-tax on Chinese immigrants to \$500.00 and needed Indian immigrants to take their place (Johnston, 1984). Jobs in big Canadian companies such as Canadian Pacific Railway and the Hudson Bay Company as well as in the resource industries were guaranteed for East Indians. They were able to find jobs in lumber camps, in saw mills, on cattle farms, and in fruit orchards (Nayar, 2004).

Although the first immigrants had been assured they would not confront discrimination (since they were British subjects, and Canada was a part of the British Empire)<sup>6</sup>, Sikhs faced widespread racism by local white Canadians who attacked them as threats to their jobs. Chandrasekhar (1986) notes that Sikhs were easy targets of the anti-oriental feeling and anti-color prejudice:

Being highly visible—beards, brown complexion, colorful turbans and all—and unable to communicate in English, they were easy victims of economic exploitation by their fellow white workers. At that time white labor was not organized into unions able to demand that the Asians not be hired, particularly at below white wage levels, and so the white laborers rioted and demanded that these “Hindus” be deported. (p. 19)

At the beginning, India, like Canada, was a British colony, Indians did not need visa to travel to Canada. With increasing the number of immigrants, white Canadians felt that “the growing number of

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<sup>4</sup> Most of these Sikhs belonged to the farming *Jat* caste. “The *Jats* are a landowning caste or tribe whose origins probably go back to a pastoral group that first appeared in Punjab between the seventh and ninth centuries. Within Punjab, they are distinct, not only from trading, artisan, and menial castes, but from other landowning castes. In 1911 they made up about one-fifth of the Punjab population and were divided by religion. In eastern Punjab *Jats* were Hindus, in the west (or what is now Pakistan) they were Muslims, and in the central districts they were Sikh” (Johnston, 1984, p. 4)

<sup>5</sup> The Indian immigrants to Canada in the first place were composed of single male Sikhs. Even the establishment of a point system of immigration favoured male immigrants. In this regard, D'Costa (1993) writes: “there are more males than females in the South Asian population while the reverse is the case for the total population of Canada. The sex ratios are 102.8 and 97.4 respectively” (p. 189).

<sup>6</sup> In 1858, Queen Victoria proclaimed that the people of India could enjoy “equal privileges with white people without discrimination of color, creed or race.” throughout the British Empire.

Indians would take over their jobs in factories, mills and lumberyards. Hence, anti-Asian riots started against the Chinese and Japanese, and soon included Indians in the unwanted Asian ethnic groups. Fear of labor competition was followed by racial antagonism and demand for exclusionary laws. In British Columbia, attempts were made to pass stringent laws discouraging the immigration of Indians to Canada (Sibia, 2007). However, “British Columbia could not regulate immigration through legislation; the British North American Act had placed that responsibility on Ottawa” (Mangalam, 1986, p. 48). Ottawa preferred to act vigilantly because Indians were British subjects and “keeping them out would be to deny a fundamental right within the imperial realm, namely freedom of movement within the British Empire” (Mangalam, 1986, p. 48). On the other hand, the news of more discrimination in the British realm had unpleasant political consequences for the British government when nationalistic protest movements were in operation in India.

In response to the 1907 anti-Asian sentiments in Vancouver, the Canadian government began to establish barriers against Asian immigration. In 1907, Indians were disenfranchised despite of being British subjects. A bill was passed by the Canadian government to deprive Indians who were not born of Anglo-Saxon parents from their right to vote in future general elections. In 1908, the Canadian government established more new rules to restrict Indian immigration. The new rules were:

- 1) prospective immigrants must have traveled on a through ticket purchased before leaving the country of their birth or citizenship and journeying continuously; 2) they must have in their possession \$200 each; 3) they were subject to medical and sanitary examination upon arrival; and 4) their landing in Canada was subject to favourable labour conditions prevailing at the time in Canada. (Mangalam, 1986, p. 49)

All these restrictive measures, as well as denial of voting rights for all Indians, restrictions against running for public office, exclusion from service on jury duty, accounting, pharmaceutical, or legal work, and the other discriminatory conditions indicate the exclusionary position of Canada at that time. Due to such socio/economic pressures and the restrictive immigration policies, most of the Sikh immigrants decided to return to India. The few who stayed in Canada were not allowed to have their families in Canada until 1919. Quotas established by the Canadian government limited the number of East Indian immigrants. Between 1909 and 1913, nearly a million and half immigrants entered Canada, among whom only 101 were from East India: 93 men, 6 women and 12 children (Chadney, 1984). In fact, the Canadian immigration implementation of a “continuous journey” rule made immigration to Canada by East Indians almost impossible. The “continuous journey” required every ship to arrive in Canada directly from its home port, but a ship from India, due to distance, was compelled to stop at a foreign port to refuel. In 1913, 39 Indians traveling with S.S. Panama Maru were not allowed to land in Vancouver. Indian immigrants appealed their case and Gordon Hunter, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled in their favour and let them enter Canada (Mangalam, 1986). In 1914, the Japanese ship, Komagata Maru with 376 Punjabies under the leadership of Gurdit Singh was chartered from Hong Kong in an attempt to get around the “continuous journey” restriction. After a non-stop voyage the Komagata Maru arrived in May to “the Burrard Inlet—a narrow arm of the sea between the mountains and the city of Vancouver” (Chandrasekhar, 1986, p. 20). Only 22 of these passengers were permitted to land and the rest of the 376 passengers, from Punjab but all British subjects, were repelled from settling in Vancouver and after five months living on the ship were returned to India (Johnson, 1979). During the

immigration officers' examinations, food "ran short on the ship, but the immigration officers were not prepared to supply provisions, saying that it was the responsibility of Gurdit Singh, who had chartered the ship and sold ticket" (Mangalam, 1986, p. 52). It was this incident that made prominent the exclusion laws in Canada, which were designed to keep out immigrants of Asian origin (Sibia, 2001). Chandrasekhar (1986) writes about this incident:

The Sikh passengers appealed to the Canadian people and the government for justice and sent cables to the King, the Viceroy and Indian political leaders in India and England. Only Annie Besant, the British feminist leader of many causes, who was later to become the President of the Theosophical Society in India and sometime later President of the Indian National Congress and to settle in Madras, took up the cause in the British press, but to no avail. (p. 20)

The response of Sir Richard McBride, the head of the provincial administration of British Columbia, was very hostile. In his statement, he aggressively asserted that: "To admit Orientals in large numbers would mean, in the end, of extinction of the white people and we have always in mind the necessity of keeping this a white man's country" (The Times (London), May 23, 1914, cited in Chandrasekhar, 1986, p. 20). Sikhs permanently residing in Vancouver took the case to court. But the court ruled that the new Orders-in-Council barred law courts from passing judgments on decisions of the Immigration Department. In September, the ship returned to Calcutta.

As a consequence of the restrictive immigration policies for Asians, between 1914 and 1918, only one East Indian man entered Canada (Chadney, 1984). These restrictive policies deterred women more than men from entering the country (Doman, 1984). Between 1921 and 1923 only 11 women and nine children came to Canada from India (Sheel, 2005). After 1918, a few East Indians were allowed to come to Canada and the number remained quite low from 1919 to 1945 (only 675 Indians) (Singh, 2002). From 1947 to 1957, fewer than 100 people a year from India were allowed to immigrate to Canada. After 1950, with changes in Canada's immigration law, East Indian immigration to Canada increased. In 1957, the number of immigrants from India increased to 300 people a year. During this period, immigration to Canada was easier for those Indians who had a sponsor in Canada. Since the earlier East Indian immigrants were Sikh, the sponsorship system "worked in favour of Sikh immigrants" (Nayar, 2004, p. 17). The sponsorship system resulted in an increase in the population of a community of immigrants who came from a region in Punjab known as Doaba (Johnston, 1988a). The effect of this tight regional migration can be viewed even in the composition of the population of East Indo-Canadian today.

In 1947, Indians were allowed to vote "after an intense struggle for elementary political and property rights" (Sheel, 2005, p. 339). Singhvi (2001) in his report writes:

Nothing demonstrated how the destinies of the Diaspora and India were bound together, as the fact that Indo-Canadians won the right to vote soon after the same time India won its Independence from colonial rule. Thus Indian Independence awakened the pride of the Indo-Canadian community, which gave an unprecedented welcome to the first Indian High Commissioner Shri H.S. Malik. Nehru strongly advocated its cause during his visit to Canada.

Although the Canadian immigration policy became more liberal at this time allowing Indian citizens to vote and to study in the universities and colleges (Jayaram, 2003), the most major changes in immigration policy occurred in 1962. The Canadian government was in need of educated professionals (Wood, 1978) for economic development and began to initiate more changes in immigration policy. Indicating the racialized nature of Canadian immigration policy, some scholars (i.e. Bannerji, 1996; Bolaria and Li, 1985; Das Gupta, 1995; Thobani, 2000) argue that in the early twentieth century, Canadian immigration policy favored white people immigrating from Northern and Western Europe. Hence, the policy was racially biased (Helweg, 1986) and operated as a policy of exclusion of non-European migrants. With the reformulation of immigration policy and the removal of discriminatory laws based on race and nationality in 1967, Indian immigrants “were assessed on a point system relating to education and training, occupational skill, and employment opportunities or arrangements. The new point system was closely related to the needs of the Canadian economy and placed a premium upon professional and technical skills” (Tinker, 1977, p. 192). As a result, a new group of East Indians came to Canada who was more educated. In contrast with the pioneers who were “dominantly of the skilled or unskilled labour class” (Jayaram, 2003, p. 31) and mostly “illiterate, and few spoke English” (Johnston, 1984, p. 6), the group who entered Canada based on its “point system” were well versed in English and were educated professionals.

With the liberalization of Canadian immigration regulations between 1962 and 1967, the population ratios and patterns in terms of sex and ethnicity became more balanced. The new reclassification of the categories for entry included the skilled class and the family class, which allowed more women and children as well as more ethnically diverse groups, enter Canada:

Prior to 1962, most of the immigrants from India were men mainly from the Punjab region, but thereafter the influx was more balanced between men and women. Besides the Sikhs from Punjab, Hindus from Gujarat, Bombay and Delhi, Christians from Kerala and Parsis from Bombay too immigrated to Canada. (Bhat & Sahoo, 2003)

Bhargava and Seethapathy (2004) note that despite the elimination of explicit bias on racial origin in immigration policy in 1960, Indo-Canadian “challenges of racial tension, language and cultural issues, incidents of unemployment, lack of preparedness of the host society in Canada, and inability of the then small Indian immigrant community to their needs” (p. 2) continued during the 60s and 70s. With the ascension of racial attacks, in the late 1970s, the Indo-Canadian community pressed, through political/human rights activities, for the development of public policy. Submission of a report entitled *Equal Opportunity and Public Policy: the Role of the South Asian Community in the Canadian Mosaic* was one of these efforts, presenting “a road map for all sectors of Canadian society for giving better protection of Human Rights and creating harmonious race relations” (Bhargava and Seethapathy, 2004, p. 2). Such efforts alongside the official announcement of the policy of Multiculturalism in 1971 resulted in bringing public attention to issues of racial discrimination, access and equity and opening up more room for respecting cultural/racial diversity.

Though the number of immigrants entering Canada has had ups and downs, “there has been a continuous, if not also steady, flow of Indian emigrants into Canada” (Jayaram, 2003, p. 26). By

1991, the East Indo-Canadian community became one of the most significant proportions of the total immigrant populations in Canada.

### *The current state of the Indian Diaspora in Canada*

In 1967, with the replacement of a point system for immigration quotas based on ethnicity, Indian immigrant population began to increase. According to Statistics Canada, since the late 1990's, approximately 25,000-30,000 Indians arrive each year, making East-Indians the second highest group immigrating to Canada after Chinese immigrants.

The 2001 Census of Statistics Canada<sup>7</sup> estimates the number of people who identified themselves as being of East-Indian origin<sup>8</sup> at 713,330. The majority of the Indo-Canadian population is comprised of new immigrants from India, or second and third generation East-Indian Canadians. However, there are groups of Indians who have moved from other countries such as Uganda<sup>9</sup> African nations (Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and South Africa), and the Caribbean (Guyana, Trinidad, Tobago, Suriname).

Half of the East Indian population in Canada is Punjabi. The other Indian ethnic communities are Gujaratis, Tamils (Indian as opposed to Sri Lankan), Keralites, Bengalis, Sindhis and others. Due to such cultural and ethnic diversity, East Indo-Canadians speak various languages. The most widely spoken language is Punjabi. The second broadly spoken language is Tamil. Urdu is mostly the language of Muslims who come from North India. Hindi is mainly spoken by Indo-Canadians from North India. Gujarati is also spoken by people from Gujarat. Bengali is the language of people from the state of West Bengal.

East Indo-Canadians are very diverse in terms of religious backgrounds. Sikhs, at 33.5% are the largest group among Indo-Canadians, while this group comprises only 2% of the population in India. In India, Hindus, at 80%, are the greater population. However, they comprise only 27% of the Indo-Canadian population. Muslims and Christians respectively are 17.5% and 16.5% of East-Indian population in Canada.

Indo-Canadians represent a diversity in culture, as well as diversity in religion and language. Groups with differing ethnic and religious backgrounds have divergent cultural practices. For Indo-Canadians, marriage is an important cultural element. Maintenance of traditional Indian values prevents the practice of dating, as is common among the other Canadians. As in India, arranged marriages are more prevalent among Indo-Canadians. Parents arrange marriages with their specific caste/ethnic community. Interracial marriage is not very common among East Indo-Canadian communities compared to the other immigrant groups.

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<sup>7</sup> See the table of Population by selected ethnic origins, by province and territory (2001 Census) at <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/demo26a.htm>

<sup>8</sup> The term "Indian" is used by Statistic Canada to refer to the Aboriginal Canadians, while the term "East Indian" is used to describe people of Indian origin. Statistics Canada defines "Place of Origin" as the country in which a person, born outside Canada, last resided before immigrating to Canada. Continuing to apply "Indian" to the Aboriginal Canadians cause much confusion.

<sup>9</sup> In the 1970's, Idi Amin forced 50,000 Indian-Ugandans out of the Uganda. The Indian government did not permit these people to return to India, so, they immigrated to the UK and Canada.

Most East-Indians prefer to reside in larger urban centers like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Indians in Toronto are from Punjab, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. In terms of settling in Canada, the majority of immigrants of South Asian-origin (over 80%) are concentrated in Ontario or British Columbia.

The ethnic and religious population patterns of Indo-Canadians indicate how immigration policies impact the formation of diasporic communities. A brief review of the history of Indian migration to Canada illustrates how Canadian immigration policies over the time have designed the pattern of Indian communities in Canada. Until 1961, Canadian immigration policy was radically in favor of white European origins: 95.9% of Canada's annual acceptance at that time was of people from the UK, Europe and the US. By developing a points system in 1967, the source of Canada's immigrants dramatically changed and the flow of immigration turned to Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Caribbean. Due to the restrictive immigration policies and anti-Asian sentiment in the early twentieth century, the population of Indian in Canada was limited. When immigration rules softened, and limited family immigration through the sponsorship program were allowed, the population slowly developed its composition as it is today. The sponsorship system produced a dominantly Punjab class in East Indo-Canadian communities, who have since taken leading roles in politics and professions. Johnston (1988a) explains that this ascendancy is derived from a specific region within Punjab, known as Doaba. Thousands of Doaba's young men emigrated due to the transformation of Doaba's agricultural economy under colonialism (Kessinger, 1974). In the 1970's, approximately 70 percent of Indian immigrants in Canada were from Punjab (Wood, 1978). In the early 1990's, the same figure has been reported (Paynter, 1995). The majority of this population is Sikh. But this dominance occurs alongside a wide variety of East Indo-Canadians' regional, ethnic, caste, religious, linguistic, economic and educational backgrounds, and ultimately constitutes a diaspora of considerable heterogeneity (Jayaram, 2003; Lele, 2003; Pandit, 2003). Nonetheless, the attitude of considering non-Sikh or non-Punjabi-origin Indian immigrants as "not apna," (not "our own") has led "to an insular vision of the Indian immigrant community on the parts of both Canadian Sikhs and the 'mainstream'" (Kurl, 2000 cited in Walton-Roberts, 2003, p. 238). Punjabis, the first Indians to immigrate to Canada, retained their dress style and hence, they are easily distinguishable from the other East Indians. According to Judge (1994) there are two levels of ethnic consciousness among Punjabis: the sharing of a common status of an immigrant community with other South Asians, and the exhibition of distinct behaviour patterns from others.

East Indian diasporas in Canada have persisted in the maintenance of their cultural identity. Bhat & Sahoo (2003) assert that:

Despite the distance, the age-old traditions such as rituals, customs, festivals, religion, cultural expressions and performing arts have remained central to the life and identity of Indian immigrants in Canada. They also exhibit a strong desire to pass on these values and culture to the next generation to make them appreciate their own cultural roots.

Among East Indian immigrants family interests have priority to personal interests. Filial relationships and family harmony are the most important component of their culture (Dhruvarajan, 1993; Gibson, 1988; Kurian, 1986; Stopes- Roe & Cochrane, 1989; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). There are also

a gender division of labour and gender roles among Indo-Canadian (Dhruvarajan, 1993) with the supremacy of males and female subordination (Kwak and Berry, 2001).

### **The Indian Diaspora in Canada and the US: Differences and Challenges**

Indo-Canadians are among the largest and most important diaspora in Canada. However, they do not have the influence of their American East Indian counterparts. "Many have observed the lack of mainstream participation by Indo-Canadians" (Ray, 1994, p. x) as well as generational conflicts due to a strict devotion to the preservation of their culture and traditions:

Parents have great expectations for their children to be economically successful. This requires them to embrace the mainstream Canadian culture. However, at home children are often expected to embrace Indian cultural values. Basically, there is a conflict between the mainstream western Canadian culture of the school or workplace and the Indian culture of the home. (Maharaj, 2003, p. 59)

Maharaj concludes that Indians are economically successful in Canada. However, they experience "serious psycho-social problems, which are in part related to cultural conflicts" (p. 62).

As noted above, the majority of Indian immigrants in Canada are Sikhs. Although early Indian immigrants to North America were largely all Sikh peasants from Punjab, there is a distinct difference of position between Canada and the United States. The Sikh population profiles in the US diverged rapidly because Sikhs in the US frequently married local Mexican American women (Leonard, 1993), unlike those in Canada who neither married women of European descent nor could bring wives with them from India. Yet Sikhs now constitute the majority of the East Indian population in Canada, while in the US, Hindus are now the most numerous. Leonard (2002) argues that the East-Indian Muslim communities in both Canada and the US are becoming increasingly important. Considering that Sikhs in India are a minority population, these Indo-Canadians' lack of a strong link with their ancestral homeland is justifiable. Unlike Indo-Canadians, Indians in the US are dominantly Hindus and have "a highly variant relationship with India. One link is the remittances that they sometimes send home" (Maharaj, p. 60).

According to the US 1990 Census, Indians had the highest median household income, family income, and per capita income of any immigrant community. The major populations of Indian in the US are professionals. Hence, such privileged socioeconomic status gives them "the power of diaspora" (Leonard, 2000, p. 23). Comparing the first seven countries in terms of the number of Indian Diaspora, Nair (2004) argues that United States, with the lowest population of Indian Diaspora in its total population in 2001 (i.e. 0.59%), has the highest share of India's total trade in 2000-2001 (i.e. 12.96%). Canada, with a share of 2.74% of the Indian Diaspora population has only 1.11% share of India's total trade. He writes:

The two highest values in terms of the relative importance of total trade go to USA and the UK, which also have the first and third positions in the table in terms of per capita income. This only goes on to lend further credence to the usually accepted view in international trade theory of the higher degree of complementarity between the more developed than between the less developed countries. Canada provides an interesting case in the table. It has the second highest value in terms of per capita income

among the countries considered in the table, the value in this regard being higher than that of the U.K. But it occupies the second position from below in regard to the relative importance in terms of the share in India's total trade with the world. This is actually so despite the fact that Canada is better off than the other two countries of the western and developed world - U.S.A and U.K. in terms of the relative importance of the Indian Diaspora in their respective populations. It is true that facts of history and geography have stood in the way of stronger economic ties between India and Canada. But to the extent that the relative importance of the Indian Diaspora can overcome these obstacles, the evidence appears to be that there is considerable potential to improve matters. (p. 4)

What are the historical and geographical elements acting on Canada/India relations? After presenting a history of Canadian-Indian relations, beginning with a shared British Commonwealth experience in 1950s and then declining because of the Indo-China Control Commission and Suze, and finally reaching its nadir due to India's explosion of a nuclear device "believed to have been conducted with Canadian materials (p. 838), Rubinoff (2002), in *Canada's Re-Engagement with India*, notes that Canada/India relationship has never recovered. However, he argues, this relationship came to a new low phase:

... relations reached a new low after the 1998 nuclear tests because of the human-security agenda of then-Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, which promoted global nonproliferation rather than Canada's bilateral interests with India. His policies had adverse consequences for political, economic, and cultural linkages, as the Canadian government's retrenchment of diplomatic contacts resulted in diminished trade and an attack on the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute by Indian diplomats who were insensitive to Canada's tradition of academic freedom. (p. 838)

Unlike Rubinoff, Tremblay (2003) does not merely focus on the Canada/India relationship in her analysis; instead she considers India's international position as well. She writes:

It is generally assumed within Canadian (and some Indian) circles that Canada and India should have a potentially promising relationship, given the commonalities of the two countries: a colonial history, a strong commitment to fundamental democratic values, federalism and multiculturalism, parliamentary institutions and broader international agenda of international peace and security. (p. 2)

She believes that it could be sufficient base for two countries relationship in the 1950s and 1960s, not in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Canada still seeks its relations with India in the common values framework, while India, not defining itself as an aid-seeking country, demands an equal relationship. This demand can be seen clearly in the case of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. Shastri, founded in 1968, has, over the past 30 years, been responsible for cultural and academic ties between India and Canada. Although the institute "was originally funded from Canadian foreign assistance grants" (Rubinoff, 2002, p. 852) in collaboration with the Indian government, the Indian government has refused to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Institute until it recognizes and equal partnership between India and Canada in all its governing structures" (Tremblay, 2003, p. 3).

Nair (2004) argues that there are historical and geographical elements preventing the strengthening of trade relations between India and Canada. Despite the prominent East Indian Diasporas' presence in Canada, economic relations have not formed between India and Canada in comparison with India's

relations with countries like the UK and the US, particularly after economical liberalization in India. He states that:

It is thus clear that the present state of India-Canada economic relations is a shining example of unrealised potential particularly in view of the relative importance of the Indian Diaspora in Canada's population. As pointed out by many including Sahni (2003), the Indian Diaspora has indeed a big role to play to see that this unrealised potential is realised to the full. (pp. 10-11)

Nair believes that the obstacles for the stronger trade relations between India and Canada are:

- 1) "India was almost a closed economy and whatever trade and investment were allowed into India were highly selective and mostly channelised through the mechanism of centralised planning"
- 2) "in view of this and of the fact that Canada has the US—a big and very developed economy- next door, the question of India and Canada developing strong economic ties simply did not arise" (p. 4).

However, he notes that changes in India's economic policy which have replaced previous economic centralized policy with economic liberalization, have opened ways for governmental and nongovernmental attempts in Canada to promote economic relations between Canada and India through Indo-Canadians. However, some argue that Indo-Canadians cannot be as successful compared to their counterparts in the US and the UK in establishing these ties. They refer to the maintenance of cultural diversity among Indo-Canadians due to Canada's commitment to multiculturalism as the obstacle and as opposed to the policy of assimilation practiced by the United States and the United Kingdom.

Although Canada and the United States are both nations of immigrants, they have not had the same policy toward them. The United States emphasis on the building of a nation of individual rights practices is a policy favoring the unity of the nation, while Canada's legitimatization of a mosaic based on ethnicity, especially with the perseverance of French culture and language, pursues multiculturalism. The policy of multiculturalism advocates the preservation of diversity among the members of a society. Conversely, American assimilation, known as the policy of the "melting pot," holds that all nations and races with different backgrounds and religions should abandon their identities in order to adopt the American way. Canada's relatively recent policies, designed to serve a more global, or at least multicultural ethos, foster a more significant adherence by diasporas to the various cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions of their native regions than does the American model, which fosters (and requires) a greater degree of assimilation. But such adherence to the mother culture often makes the Indian community's connection to other Canadian communities problematic. Maharaj asserts that "There are concerns about the ways in which Indians relate to other Canadian communities as well with India" (p. 62).

Canadian multiculturalism has generally been viewed as a positive, but recently, controversies have arisen. In this regard, Gregg (2006) writes:

Canada has long considered itself immune to violence rooted in ethnic divisions. By enshrining multiculturalism in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and by promoting policies of inclusion, the argument goes, our country has created a peaceable kingdom and a model for how to manage

diversity. Will Kymlicka, a Queen's University professor of philosophy and one of Canada's foremost authorities on multiculturalism, states that while the "actual practices of accommodation in Canada are not unique, Canada is unusual in the extent to which it has built these practices into its symbols and narratives of nationhood."

But, Gregg does not believe that the celebration of diversity is a reality in Canadian society. He refers to the study conducted in his polling and market-research firm in 2005 and states:

... the Strategic Counsel, suggests that Canadians are far from sanguine about the country's increasing diversity. Fewer than half of those surveyed believe that Canada is currently accepting "the right amount" of immigrants, and among the remainder the overwhelming view is that we are accepting "too many" rather than "too few." Forty percent also express the view that immigrants from some countries "make a bigger and better contribution to Canada than others." The breakdown is disturbing: almost 80 percent claim that European immigrants make a positive contribution, the number falling to 59 percent for Asians, 45 percent for East Indians, and plummeting to 33 percent for those from the Caribbean.

Such a pro-white tendency has a history in Canada. The extent to which this is so has brought some researchers to attack multiculturalism:

Within Indian communities and in the larger society, "Multiculturalism" is attacked as ghettoizing and applauded as a guarantee of opportunity and a level playing field. The term "ethnic" is both rejected as demeaning and embraced as a reflection of Canadian society's easy awareness and acceptance of its multi-ethnicity and pluralism. Whatever the result of that debate, there is reason to be optimistic about the future." (Israel, 1994, p. 154)

Ubale (1992), on the other hand, is not very optimistic. In *Politics of Exclusion*, he criticizes race relations and multiculturalism and their negative impacts on visible minorities, and believes that Canada needs "workable policy alternatives:"

Canadian policies are crisis-oriented and short-range. Instead of developing our multicultural and multilingual strength to penetrate the international market, Canada is embroiled in inter-communal and intra-communal tensions as a result of two factors: multiculturalism has been ill defined and misunderstood, and it has been politicized to the point of fostering ethnic ghettos. (p. 336)

Abd-El-Aziz, et al (2005), like Ubale, believe that understanding of multiculturalism is a key point, but suggest that multiculturalism still has many advantages to explore:

... what has not sufficiently addressed is the significance of Canada's multi-ethnic make up on the country's foreign and domestic policies. There is a gap in research and discussion regarding the impact of Canada's multi-ethnic make-up and its multicultural consciousness on its national definition and on its conduct of international relations. (p. 3)

Abd-El-Aziz, et al (2005) contend that Canada is well aware of the advantage of a diverse society. National policies of Canada "designed to respect multiple identities have preserved Diaspora groups, who maintain significant knowledge about the culture, language, and traditions of their source countries; knowledge that is invaluable in today's globalized world" (p. 2). According to them,

substituting the transnational theory of diaspora for the dominant traditional settler theory assists to adequately access and apply multicultural policy and to influence international politics:

Diaspora groups are able to generate information about their country of origin that surpasses anything that could be “discovered” through second-hand research. Their familiarity with customs, language, tradition, and a host of unwritten rules has the potential to make a sizable difference in Canada’s efforts at international development. With the inside knowledge provided by Diaspora groups, development projects can be created to address real needs and implemented in a way that is effective and that strengthens global connections and solidarity. (p. 5)

For Israel (1994), in the case of Indo-Canadians, the story is a little different than that posed by Abd-El-Aziz, et al. Israel notes that Canadian society has a desire to reorder and simplify the complexity and diversity of Indo-Canadian communities. This desire is “reflected in the term ‘South Asian’ or in aging stereotypes handed down in the Eurocentric traditions of our education system” (Israel, 1994, p. xxvi). According to Israel, the Indo-Canadian community is complex and diverse due to India’s legacy of migration. Indian historical identity has been informed by this legacy. He writes:

India was a “host” society long before her people began to migrate in large numbers to other lands. Waves of peoples came to settle, conquer or seek refuge in India, bringing their cultures and their memories. India received and absorbed them into an increasingly pluralistic society, which appears to have an endless capacity for multicultural adaptation. (p. xxv)

Such a variety of ethnics, religions, languages, etc. has made the culture of this country an extraordinarily synthetic culture. Indians have “learned to live with difference, developing strategies, norms and institutions which allowed them to live together with a range of groups while retaining their own ethnocultural identity” (Israel, 1994, p. xxvi). Indian diasporas have inherited this very complex legacy and culture and taken it with them to the host countries. Israel continues:

The shift from Europe to Asia as the largest single source of immigrants to fill Canada’s demographic targets has introduced a new and difficult challenge. Race difference has proved to be a significant constraint on easy acceptance and integration. Canadian pride in the liberality of this society has been tested, and although the test has not been failed, in many areas it has barely been passed. But rejection or unease with the outsider is not a one-way street. This external barrier has been strengthened by one generated from within the Indian community, defensive not only in response to perceived bias and racist threat, but also support of traditions and values and the comfort of familiar space and company. (p. xxvi)

Generally, as Soroka, Johnston, and Banting (2007) suggest, two policy agendas in Western democracies can be identified. The first agenda focuses on diversity, that is, the cultural differences are respected, and minorities are encouraged to express their own cultures and to “construct new and more inclusive forms of citizenship” (p. 561). Conversely, the emphasis of the second agenda is on social integration and cohesion. It attempts to integrate immigrants “into the economic and social mainstream to sustain a sense of mutual commitment or solidarity in times of need and to build a common national identity” (p. 561).

In the US and Europe, there are serious concerns about the threat of multiculturalism and diversity to national unity. Soroka, Johnston, and Banting (2007) argue that the “worry is that an emphasis on multiculturalism and respect for diversity has unintentionally created space for radical religious and political movements intent on attacking the liberal-democratic order” (p. 563). Critics of multiculturalism present it as “an exercise in post-modern identity politics that fragments the nation-building project” (Ley, 2007, p. 7). In Canada, the story is different. There is a considerable political consensus on multiculturalism. However, “Canada faces its own crises of integration” (p. 563). Despite the view that the integration of newcomers to Canada is a success, and the corollary belief that we need to continue focusing on the celebration of difference and minority rights, scholars such as Gregg (2006) and Bennett-Jones (2005) argue that Canadian national unity is increasingly threatened by the policy of multiculturalism. Gregg notes that “As is the case in England, France, and other advanced liberal democracies, national unity in Canada is threatened by the growing atomization of our society along ethnic lines” (p. 4).

There is obviously a great deal to learn at this point about the potential for increased diasporic presence in the Canadian economy, foreign policy and democratic practices, its blocks, its under-explored avenues, the reasons for US diasporic success in relation to Canada, and how such activity will foster a more global Canada. It may be that the current view of “success” is, itself, something to explore. The idea of “success” within the question of Indian diaspora in North America rests on fairly immediate economic values. Economically, it seems that US assimilationist policies produce greater financial opportunities, but which come at the cost of identity and cultural legacy. The mosaic approach may not, at this point, appear to result in immediate economic gains, but our increasingly global culture may effect greater opportunities precisely *because* of Canada’s willingness to facilitate and maintain cultural, as well as economic links. If networking and making links between countries of origin and their members in Canada who have been encouraged to maintain, develop, and celebrate those aspects of their lives in the diaspora continues, we may discover that the benefit lies in realization a slower but ultimately enhanced long term return on the investment in social capital.

### **The Studies on Indian Diaspora**

The East Indian diaspora in Canada has been studied in various ways. A review of the literature reveals that there are diverse ways of thinking about this population. Some studies work on historical approaches to the Indian diaspora, while others focus on the structures of diasporic communities, and yet others emphasize the agency of immigrants. Some studies focus on the social adjustment of immigrants in Canada. They explore cultural persistence as well as the dynamics of family change, religion, language, ethnicity and culture. The studies approaching East Indian diaspora as social form investigate immigrants’ ethnic identity, generational difference, the level of prosperity and education in their communities, their background and relations with the authorities in their countries of origin, the level of their integration or adherence to the home culture in Canada (see Dhruvarajan, 1995; Kurian, 1987; Ramcharan, 1983; Srivastava, 1983). For instance, Spink (1999) explores the question of ethnic identity in second generation Indo-Canadian students, and its relationships to matters of religion, gender, marriage, multiculturalism and educational experience. Examining participants’ perceptions to Canadian culture, she argues that the level of the integration of students’

parents into Canadian culture plays a significant role in the students' integration. Her study indicates that female students have higher levels of integration than male students.

Vertovec argues that

Practically all of the general works concerning South Asian communities (including specifically religious groups) outside of South Asia concentrate, in one way or another, on "diaspora" as social form, particularly by way of the kinds of *social relationships* noted above. Therefore it is neither possible nor necessary to recapitulate this large body of information... . (p. 232)

The more recent studies also tend to examine the role of East Indian diasporic communities in the contemporary context of globalization. These trace the conceptions of such theorists as Rudolph and Piscatori (1997) who argue that the global system has been facing a period of "transnational religion and fading states." Along with globalization and the surge in power of multinational corporations, nations are losing their sovereignty; instead, ethno-religious groups and related movements take on a more significant role in the new "transnational civil society" of world politics (p. 255). Research with a focus on transnationalism argues that technological development has resulted in an exponential increase in social networks among members of East Indian communities dispersed around the world, and within their motherland. Walton-Roberts (2003) describes this phenomenon:

India-Canada immigration patterns are overwhelmingly shaped by social linkages that are transnational in nature, since communities, families and individuals maintain and reinforce connectivity between sending and receiving regions through a variety of processes. (p. 236)

She asserts that a transnationalist approach develops our understanding of diverse flows of immigration to Canada. It helps us to contextualize the phenomenon and examine multiple aspects of diaspora.

Highlighting the transnational nature of diaspora makes East Indian immigrants the center of attention for scholars interested in multidisciplinary research with a policy orientation. One of the significant components of these studies is the impact of East Indian Diaspora on the economic ties between Canada and India. These studies approach diaspora as a matter of "human capital" and focus on individual bearers of economic capital. They hold that networks of Indo-Canadian communities mutually benefit both communities in India as well as Canada. Indeed, Indian diaspora's social, political and cultural impact has not received the scholarly and political attention in the degree to which economic capital has. (Abd-El-Aziz, et al, 2005).

Bhat and Sahoo (2003) address diasporic mutual benefit in their essay, *Diaspora to Transnational Networks: The Case of Indians in Canada*. In this paper, they examine the emergence of transnational networks among the two most important East Indian diasporic communities, i.e. Punjabis and Gujaratis. They argue that:

The Punjabis and the Gujaratis in Canada are in the threshold of forming "transnational communities" through their socio-economic, political and religious networks. Language, regional culture and religion offer the ideological base for their identities and bondage for fusion at the global level. The networks formed by the dispersed members of Punjabis and Gujaratis transcend the boundaries of the national

states wherein they are currently situated but fall within the legislated norms of inter-national relations. (p. 162)

Patel and Rutten (2000) study family networks of Gujaratis dispersed among several countries. In this regard, Helweg writes: "Family business, founded on the absolute confidence that unifies members of the same family, particularly among the Sikhs, sometimes assumes global dimensions."

In sum, Jayaram's (2003) identification of themes and issues in the study of the Indian diaspora in Canada can guide our approach these studies:

- 1) Demography of Indian emigration to Canada
- 2) Cause of and conditions for migration to Canada
- 3) The background of Indian immigrants
- 4) The process of emigration
- 5) Changing composition of Canadian population
- 6) Dynamics of the Canadian society
- 7) Social organization of the diasporic community
- 8) Cultural dynamics of Indians in Canada
- 9) The question of identity
- 10) The struggle for power
- 11) Orientation of the Indians in Canada to the ancestral land
- 12) Orientation of the ancestral land to the diasporic Indians

Jayaram believes that raising these issues will result in an understanding of "the multicultural experience—both from the points of view of Canada and that of the diasporic Indians there" (p. 29).

## Conclusion

The history of Indian immigration to Canada begins with an active exclusion of Indian migrants. This exclusion becomes more obvious in the 1908 continuous passage Order-in-Council (Dutton, 1989; Walton Roberts, 1998). Restrictive immigration laws against non-white Asians were in place until the middle of the twentieth century. The immigration Act of 1953 reinforced the constraints for migration of Asians. In May 1914, the Komagata Maru incident drew attention to this discriminatory law, and attempts to challenge this law began to occur. In 1967, with the elimination of discrimination based on race, religion or national origin, a point system based on various qualifications began to work. From then on, as Bagley (1984) holds, immigrants to Canada have been selected based on of their professions and the needs of economy:

Canadian ethnic policies work because the population has been highly selected in terms of commitment to the social relation required by capitalism ... immigrants (including ethnic minorities) have been specially selected for their combination of professional experience, education, youth, linguistic ability, and their willingness to fit in with a social structure based on individuality and individual enterprise. (p. 2-3)

The Indians' immigration to Canada has always been a *continuous* phenomenon. In this regard, Jayaram (2003) writes:

Unlike the migration of Indian workers to West Asia in the wake of the "oil boom," with little or no possibility of permanent settlement in many countries there, immigrants in Canada have by and large settled down there though with varying immigrant status. (p. 27)

Indo-Canadian community is fairly diverse in terms of their ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, despite this heterogeneity, the Indian diaspora in Canada has many commonalities across its sub-ethnic groups (Maharaj, 2003). For instance, they all indicate the value of family, the preservation of sharply defined family roles, and a priority of family interests (Jain, 1993). They also share common traditions of decoration, cooking, clothing, etc.

Indo-Canadians provide an important node in a global network of Indian diasporas. They have social and economic links with their home country as well as Canada. This attribute demonstrates the significant role that Indio-Canadian can play at political, social, cultural and economic level nationally and internationally.

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