POLYPHONY

The Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario

South Asians in Ontario

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Cover: *Keralite Catholic youth in Toronto, Ontario participating in an ecumenical program, 1987, Lord Krishna's flute playing.*

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Introduction

Milton Israel

South Asia.

In the conclusion to his collection of short stories, *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, the Indo-Canadian writer, Rohinton Mistry, describes the response of Indian parents to the published work of an expatriate son now living in Toronto. One story was particularly appreciated because it dealt largely with Canada and brought them closer to their son's daily life. The father was certain that such stories would be popular because readers in Canada would be interested in an immigrant's perspective. He was concerned, however, that his son might change and become so like other Canadians that he would write like them and "lose the important difference."[1]

Migration tends to turn 'nationals' into 'ethnics,' or entrench ethnic identity in a situation of greater contrast with mainstream society. It draws attention to the difference. A sense of being at home in the centre of a majority culture, whether national or regional, gives way to life on the margin as a minority immigrant and thus, to the need for a deliberate effort to re-establish order in their world. The process of becoming comfortable in their new Canadian home involves South Asian immigrants in a dialogue with their hosts: a complex mix of "founding peoples" and older immigrant communities. They are invited to acculturate on their own terms in keeping with an ideal of multiculturalism, but the distinctions between "mosaic" and "melting pot" disappears in the daily encounter with a new society. Both external pressures and the desire to accommodate produce the inevitable changes experienced by earlier generations of immigrants. There remains, however, no consensus as to which aspects of their culture might be discarded and which must be defended even in this new exotic environment. Though the general public is also involved, this debate takes place primarily among South Asians, particularly in individual families. There is no question that acculturation need not destroy ethnic identity. And for the South Asian, there is an additional assumption that ethnic identity could not be eliminated even if its elimination were desirable. Still, it is apparent to many that the distinctiveness of their culture in North America requires an extraordinary effort to preserve the important difference for future generations.

There is no South Asian community. The description of the approximately 400,000 people who have immigrated to Canada from this region as "Canadians of South Asian origin" or "South Asians" provides a

geographical and broad cultural and historical point of reference; for these are peoples who have shared much and continue to do so. But their ethnic and national identities have developed out of a range of rich and vital cultural contexts that define those who live in the states of the region: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives; and those who have migrated throughout the world. Many have not come directly from South Asia to Canada. They, or their parents or grandparents, settled first in East and South Africa, Fiji, the West Indies, Guyana, and Britain—moving on in response to political upheaval or racial and ethnic violence, as well as to the continuing search for a better life. These people often have no personal experience of India or Pakistan and are meeting large numbers of South Asians from the region for the first time in Canada.

This large and diverse collectivity defines itself in its parts; its range of national origin, languages, religions, cuisines, and popular culture are reflected in clubs, societies, heritage language programs, mosques, temples, and university chairs together declare an extraordinary richness and variety of experience and identity. When these communities and their individual members confront the challenges of adapting to Canadian life, each one does so from a distinctive viewpoint. The ethnic boundaries that define them are internally idiosyncratic, although the external characteristics that identify them as "ethnics"—colour, dress, food, and social norms—may be similar to all South Asians.

South Asian settlement in Canada began in conflict and controversy with the migration of ten men to British Columbia in 1903. The news of opportunities for work and better pay was carried back to India in optimistic letters, stimulating a chain migration that brought the Indian population of British Columbia beyond five thousand by 1908.[2] Most of these pioneers were Sikhs from Punjab, and they laid the foundations of organized community life in 1907 with the establishment of the Khalsa Diwan Society and the Hindustan Association, both in Vancouver.

In the same year, however, a flow of discriminatory legislation was initiated by the British Columbia government that would virtually eliminate further migration from the Indian subcontinent by the end of the decade. Political disenfranchisement, the requirement for a minimum personal capital, and the demand for a "continuous journey"[3] from their place of birth became the weapons for Canadians who sought to defend their country from an "Asian peril." Wives and children were allowed into Canada in 1919, but the losses of population through migration to the United States and those returning home reduced the 1908 total by half. There was little change until after World War II. The small British Columbia group of South Asians developed its community life isolated from the continuing renewal of further immigration from India and from the interest of most of the rest of the Canadian population.

In 1951, opportunities for South Asians to emigrate to Canada were re-opened by the establishment of a quota system that allowed an annual entry of 150 Indians, 100 Pakistanis, and 50 Sinhalese. The quotas were increased in 1957. For most of the 1950s, the majority of new immigrants were Sikhs, generally relatives of earlier settlers. But by the end of the decade an increasing number of professionals and educated immigrants began to arrive, and those who filled the quotas were more representative of the various South Asian groups. Punjabis, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Tamils, and Sinhalese, as well as Sikhs began to arrive; and they no longer headed for British Columbia. The majority settled in Ontario, especially in Toronto. By 1961 there were over 1,000 new pioneers[4] from South Asia. The numbers remained small until the 1960s, when racial restrictions were largely removed. Over 60,000 South Asians arrived in the period 1962-71. By the beginning of the next decade, Ontario, with 30,920 of a Canadian total of 67,925, had the largest population, and there were South Asians in every province of the country.

Sikhs on a "continuous journey," passengers on board the Komagata Maru, *1914. Photo courtesy National Archives of Canada C38613.*

During the 1970s an increasing number of South Asian immigrants came from countries outside the region. Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 brought more than 6,000 Indians, mostly Ismailis but also Hindu and Sunni-Muslim Gujaratis, to Canada, and initiated what became a chain migration of their relatives and friends. After 1968 British immigration restrictions served to direct other South Asians from East and South Africa to Canada; and racial and ethnic conflicts in Fiji, Guyana, Sri Lanka, and Punjab added to the numbers.

The continuing rise in the size of the

South Asian population has brought new complexity to these communities. This complexity intensifies the difficulty of adjusting to Canadian society. Factional struggles among old and new immigrant groups in the Sikh community in British Columbia divide the more traditional from the more assimilated. Across the country hundreds of organizations have been established which have produced an array of leaders from individual communities both at the provincial and national level. However, these organizations do not necessarily represent large sections of their apparent constituencies. There is a sense among some that the stage has been reached for the community to use its human and financial resources in mainstream politics; and in recent election campaigns this view has been reciprocated by the active solicitation of support, especially among Sikhs. However, there are not as yet any South Asian politicians widely recognized as leaders either of individual communities or of the group as a whole.

This edition of *Polyphony* is different from previous issues devoted to a single ethno-culture. It is both a celebration of the richness and variety of distinctive community life among Ontarians of South Asian origin and also a description of their efforts to maintain and adapt their cultures in the generous but demanding Canadian environment. The brief essays included here, written mostly by members of these communities, generally present personal experiences and viewpoints rather than historical analysis. An effort has been made to include material from a broad range of communities, although some groups are not represented. This issue attempts only to raise questions and to set an agenda for future work.

Approximately half of Canada's South Asian population lives in Ontario, the majority concentrated in Metropolitan Toronto. It is a relatively young group with a median age of 23.7, as compared to the Canadian median of 31.6. The overwhelming majority speak English, and more than 20 per cent of the population over the age of 15 hold university degrees. The occupational composition does not differ significantly from the total population, nor does the income distribution.[5]

South Asians live in every part of Toronto and in smaller cities and towns throughout the province. There is no apparent tendency to settle in ethnic enclaves. While there is a concentration of South Asian businesses, restaurants, and food stores in a three-block stretch of Gerrard Street in Toronto, few South Asians live there. The owners of saree and spice shops travel to their homes in the suburbs everyday, as do most of their customers. Similarly, the temples, mosques, gurdwaras, and social clubs are supported by memberships spread throughout the city.

South Asians work in a range of professions and occupations and appear to have no significant problems in achieving satisfaction and success in the mainstream economic life of the province. Their social lives, however, appear to concentrate on particular community relationships, often within ethnocultural institutions. This relatively easy accommodation of different public and private lives is not unique to their Canadian situation. In large cities throughout the South Asian region, a similar compromise has been achieved.

The old images and stereotypes of "benighted India" are confronted in these personal descriptions of individual Indians faced with the demands of an alien society and the task of making themselves at home. In this context, easy generalizations regarding the traditional and unchanging nature of South Asian society, in contrast to a modern and progressive Canada, must be questioned. Immigrants from the region bring not only their source culture, but also their experience of dynamic change. It is often the conflicts and opportunities rising from these changes that create the desire to emigrate.

Most of the contributors to this issue participated in a series of workshops organized by the University of Toronto's Centre for

South Asian Studies in the summer of 1989. Issues were discussed by members of Toronto's South Asian communities and academics from the University of Toronto and York University under three general headings: religion and ritual in practice, transfer of culture, and the process of adaptation and assimilation. The twenty-five participants represented a range of professions and work experience, age groups, length of time in Canada, and traditional and assimilated perspectives. In our ten hours of group discussions, and many more in individual conversations, theories and intellectual musings confronted actual experience and individual viewpoints. The result was enlightening and enlivening for everyone. The Imam of the Jammi Mosque in Toronto noted with concern the large portion of his time devoted to arbitrating family disputes concerning intercommunal and inter-religious marriages. A young Ismaili described his tightly knit community with its hierarachy of institutions that govern religious and social life, rising from the local *jammat* in Toronto to the Aga Khan's offices in France.

The Parsees, although a small community in Ontario, have a fire temple in Toronto, and despite their apparent ease with the Canadian host society are sustaining their religious beliefs and rituals with a great deal of enthusiasm. In Canada's first Hindu temple built in the traditional Hindu style, the Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill, worship is offered to the major gods, Vishnu and Ganesh, by a priest brought from India. But other gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon are given a place, perhaps, in the view of one participant, reflecting a decline in traditional Hindu sectarianism in Canada. A commitment has been made to give a place of honour here for Lord Mahavir, revered by the Jains. To accommodate the customs of business and professional life in Ontario, organized community prayers take place on Sundays; both the day, and the community setting, a novelty of diaspora life. In Guelph a small congregation of Hindus from many parts of India regularly worships with rituals and practices reflecting the dominant Punjabi influence in Ontario. In contrast, a Keralan priest described the ten separate Kerala Christian groups now established in Toronto, transferred from 'home' and carefully replicated by their immigrant communicants.

The continuing impact of events in the motherland on immigrants in Ontario was made explicit by a young Sikh who described the revitalization of commitment to Sikh identity after the 1984 attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The result has been increased emphasis on wearing the five symbols of the Sikh faith and the subsequent controversy here in regard to the turban and kirpan. Similarly, continuing ethnic struggle in Sri Lanka affects relations between Tamils and Sinhalese in Toronto. This experience is not unique to the South Asian immigrant phenomenon, but such conflicts have been understood and accepted more readily in Canada when they originated in Europe.

While building their mosques, churches, temples, gurdwaras, and Buddhist Viharas, many participants noted their concern about second-generation South-Asian Canadians and probable changes in their attitudes toward religion. There was a consensus, however, that the racial and cultural distinctiveness of South Asians in Canada will ensure a continuing place in their community for religion and religious institutions. While it was noted that South Asian professionals in Ontario increasingly socialized with their Canadian colleagues, businessmen appeared to rely more on kinship and village-town friendships. It was agreed that South Asians generally did not appear to give a high priority to relations with members of their host society.

For the participants in these workshops, resistance to assimilation primarily meant cohesiveness and a common set of aspirations to be pursued within the South Asian communities in Toronto and in encounters with the larger society. All considered themselves to be the heirs of ancient and great traditions that should, in significant measure, be

preserved in this new setting. The proliferation of South Asian organizations, more than a hundred in Toronto, reveals the desire to maintain regional, kinship, language, and religious association.

Though the arrival of large numbers of South Asians in Ontario is a relatively recent phenomenon, it is not too early to begin to study its history, the context in which culture is transferred, and the process of adaptation and assimilation that South Asians experience as individuals and as an identifiable group. Some work has already been done, but the Ontario experience remains largely impressionistic, a complex puzzle, with the pieces still in their box. The founding generation of British Columbia pioneers has passed away, leaving a legacy and artifacts but many questions unasked and impressions and experiences unrecorded. In Ontario we have an opportunity to save and record. Much of the first generation is still here. The transitional households and community organizations are still struggling with immigrant problems. And Ontario society generally is still catching up with the new reality and challenges of multiculturalism made explicit as much by the quarter of a million South Asians now living here as by any other group.

Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Ontario. Duncan McLaren photograph, courtesy Lillian Petroff.

The essays that follow deal with a range of other issues related to the transfer and retention of culture: conflicts between the generations; the entry of women into the labour force; the plight of old people; the availability of traditional dance, theatre, and music; language maintenance; and the development of a South Asian communications network through radio, television, and newspapers. The essays reveal both defensiveness and enlightened accommodation on the part of the South Asian communities. For Canadian society generally, the activities of those communities provide an opportunity for anyone willing to listen to learn at home what most of us never learned about South Asia at a distance. The exchange is an essential element in the development of Canadian society in the future.

Milton Israel is a Professor of History in the University of Toronto and Chair of the Board of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

NOTES

1. Rohinton Mistry, *Tales from Firosha Baag* (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 248.

2. The historical review which follows is based on the work of Norman Buchignani, Doreen M. Indra, and Ram Srivastava, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985); and Robindra N. Kanungo, ed., *South Asians in the Canadian Mosaic* (Montreal: Kala Bharati, 1984).

3. The first Indian immigrants started the final leg of their journey from Hong Kong. A "continuous journey" from India was not available to potential immigrants.

4. Buchignani's phrase.

5. The demographic information is drawn from the 1986 *Census of Canada* data included in R. D'Costa, "Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Population of South Asian Origins in Canada," in M. Israel and N.K. Wagle, *Ethnicity, Identity and Migration: The South Asian Context*, in press.

The major elements of Bangladeshi culture are consciously retained by the first generation of immigrants from Bangladesh, according to the author who writes about the evolution of Bangladeshi corporate activity in Ontario through his own experience as an immigrant. He analyses the intra-generational tensions and other societal problems confronting Bangladeshi families in Ontario.

After the Last Journey: Some Reflections on Bangladeshi Community Life in Ontario

Aminur Rahim

The nation of Bangladesh in South Asia.

As a Bangladeshi I would like to describe the complexity of our cultural experience as an immigrant community in Ontario. I am aware that no single Bangladeshi can articulate what most Bangladeshis feel, and like the experience of other immigrants, ours has been a varied one. Nevertheless we do represent a community whose identity is rooted in a common origin.

Like the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants, I came to Canada in early 1970 as a permanent resident in the family category. On my arrival I was greeted by my brother Dr. Mohammad Badruddoja at Toronto International Airport. He had travelled all the way from Mason City, Iowa, to meet me, and it was he who helped me find a niche in London, Ontario. The Bangladeshi community in London at that time was small. Everyone knew one another. They treated me like one of the family. As the basis of this sociability, Bangladeshis had a strong sense of belonging to the culture of Bangladesh. Their mannerisms, customs, and method of social interaction were distinctly Bangladeshi and made little sense to an outsider. They had all retained some essential identity of their native land, and for them nothing seemed stable and permanent in Canada. It appeared that the demands of the Canadian way of life were imposed on them, and contradictions were apparent in every aspect of their lives. They looked forward and backward but without living in the past. Rather, I believe, they found pleasure and security in their traditions, which were remarkably self-contained.

My arrival in Toronto in late 1973 came at a time when Bangladesh had become a sovereign state and Bengalees of East Bengal, formerly of East Pakistan, had emerged as a

distinct community in Toronto.[1] They began to rally around their newly formed Bangladesh Association to affirm both its distinctiveness and their own. My relationship with Bangladeshis in Canada also convinced me that whether Bangladeshis are in London or Toronto, all of them are immigrants whose language, religion, social values, and even food and dress are distinctly more Bangladeshi than Canadian. They are hard-working and never hesitate to take jobs that fall below their education and ability. They are nationalistic, share a common language and culture, and are fiercely family-oriented with a patriarchal leaning.

A thin line has divided us into two groups: the territorial group and the psychocultural group.[2] The territorial group is known for its intense loyalty to Bangladesh as its only home. Its dedication and enthusiasm for the cause of Bangladesh are manifested by the level of participation in community activities such as the observance of Victory Day, Martyr Day, and other national celebrations. Most of the cultural and social activities of the territorial group, known as the Bangladesh Association, are intended to strengthen ethnic solidarity, norms, and values through cultural and religious events. The group also collects money to meet the material needs of Bangladesh in emergencies.

In contrast, the psychological group rarely participates in community socio-cultural activities, though psychologically and culturally it identifies itself as Bangladeshi.

As Bangladeshis, we do not live in our own enclave, nor do we have our own mosque where we can congregate. One may wonder how we keep our unique perspective in an alien environment. Perhaps we have created for ourselves a self-contained world, a world that is juxtaposed between Bangladesh and Canada. But at the same time, we feel insecure, and everything around us seems unstable and impermanent; we wade through the crowded world without attachment or belonging. Fears haunt us: "Are we losing our identity as Bangladeshis? Are we losing the traditional essence of family that we consider to be so sacred?" We raise our guard against social practices that are considered alien to our culture. We constantly ask ourselves, "Who are we and where are we heading?" It is a clear indication that either we, the Bangladeshis, have not been accepted by mainstream society as equal partners, or we are psychologically remote from our adopted country. Acceptance seems to us hopelessly out of reach. Bangladeshis are symbols of a conflicting world of hopes and fears. Outwardly, they show unbounded enthusiasm for work, consumption, and *adda* (idle conversation), but inwardly many are alienated from the society where they live and work. One wonders what holds them together and keeps them going in a place where they are conspicuous for their colour and accent. Their resolution to survive as expatriated people derives from their families and women. For Bangladeshis, the family is synonymous with cohesion and unity. It is in the family that they find solace in their days of agony and pleasure. For them, life without a family is inconceivable, and thus, children play a vital role.

Bangladeshi family life in Ontario.

Given the primacy of the family in our culture, Bangladeshis are apprehensive about some problems that are increasingly prevalent in Canadian society, such as drug addiction

and teenage pregnancies. Knowing that Bangladeshi families are not living in an insular world, they are apt to look for an alternative culture to combat a utilitarian ideology among the new generation of Bangladeshis. Perhaps for this reason they are increasingly turning towards religion and thus, are becoming more religious in their adopted country than they were in Bangladesh.

In other words, the locus of culture is the family, and the Bangladeshi family tends to take the prime responsibility for maintaining its culture. So far Bangladeshis have maintained their cultural identity by speaking *Bangla* (Bengali) at home, teaching their children to read holy scriptures, giving exposure to Bengali culture, socializing with other Bangladeshi families, marrying within the community, or bringing their spouses from Bangladesh. But, however practical all these activities may be, the family has its limitation in diffusing Bangladeshi culture among the second generation. If we understand culture as a code of communication, culture must be presented by one generation to the succeeding generation in a dynamic form.

Community members and leaders are aware of the acculturation process in Canada; for example, a typical Bangladeshi family is bilingual and bicultural. But a split is taking place between parents born in Bangladesh and their children born or raised in Canada. Children are becoming acculturated at an increasingly accelerated pace, and can hardly speak *Bangla*. They are hopelessly out of touch with Bangladesh, and the images of Bangladesh they glean from the mass media are one dimensional. Undoubtedly, this non-traditional upbringing has created dissent within the traditional family structure. Parents are accused of unfairness toward their children, particularly to the girls, who are kept under tight constraints. One of the nagging issues in the traditional family circle is arranged marriages. Bangladeshi girls are rebelling against this tradition.

Under these circumstances, the Bangladesh Association has begun to reach out to the Bangladeshi community in Toronto and its surrounding areas, and as a result, the locus for cultural maintenance has shifted from the family to the Association. It is now responsible for diffusing and revitalizing Bangladeshi culture. However, the history of the Bangladesh Association is rooted in politics rather than in culture. The Association

Musical interlude, Bangladeshi community gathering at home.

came into being in the wake of the civil war with Pakistan in 1971. The objectives of the Association in the political crisis were to mobilize the opinions of Bangladeshis and Canadians against the atrocities committed by the occupying army in Bangladesh and to put pressure on the international community so that it might restrain Pakistan from unleashing its terror in Bangladesh and, instead, give its people the right of self-determination. Only after the formation of the independent state of Bangladesh, did the Association become a cultural organization.

It is apparent that both the family and the Bangladesh Association are holding a mirror up to all Bangladeshis in which to observe their norms and values, and their hopes and fears in their adopted country. We are living in an age of social and cultural transition. We know, like all other South Asians, that neither the family nor any association can effectively counter the acculturation process in Canada. We are a marginal people that lives on the threshold of two societies but is at home in neither. But there is hope. As Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "A culture must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you know the true nature of its vitality." A culture expresses in essence the inner quality of a community, and as a code of communications must be presented by one generation to the succeeding generation in a way that validates its essential elements for the future as well as the past. Only time will tell whether the second generation of Bangladeshi Canadians will reject their source culture or whether they will adapt it to suit the conditions of their new home.

Aminur Rahim holds a Ph.D. from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is a freelance writer concentrating in ethnic studies.

NOTES

1. Bangladesh became an independent state in 1971 after the partition of East and West Pakistan.

2. For this concept, I have relied on Eui-Young Yu, "Korean American Communities and Their Institutions: An Overview." In *Korean Culture*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Winter 1988), p. 34.

The author highlights the distinctive characteristics of the Goan Christians of Ontario. The ability of the Goans to come to terms with Western norms is extraordinary but understandable, for they were exposed to Portuguese rule from 1510 to 1961. The author believes that the full integration of Goans into Canadian society is inevitable.

Goans: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Armando Rodrigues

The Indian state of Goa, on the country's west coast.

Goa is situated on the western coast of India, south of Bombay. The area covered by the state of Goa is small, approximately 5,180 square kilometres. But the history and culture of the Goans is distinct from those of the rest of India. The Goans, particularly the Christians, are a product of a unique culture, for they have inherited a legacy from the Portuguese, who colonized Goa from 1510 to 1961. It was not merely a colonial contact, but a process of acculturation of Western civilization that has moulded the Goan personality. Goans are comfortable with Western values, which they have internalized without giving up their Eastern deportment.

Goa's rich cultural history from the second century AD to the advent of Portuguese rule in 1510 cannot be examined here. It will be sufficient to note that Goa was, from ancient times, a thriving place of commerce and international trade and was ruled by a succession of Hindu and Muslim dynastic rulers. Goa was then full of temples and mosques. In the initial period of Portuguese rule, however, the temples and mosques were razed, churches were built in their place, and there was a mass conversion of the local population to Christianity. Many fundamental changes were introduced. The new converts had to adopt the dress, customs, food, and names of the Portuguese. In addition, the Portuguese did not observe a colour bar but encouraged intermarriage to facilitate integration with their culture. In 1761, Goans, regardless of their religion, were legally declared equal to Portuguese-born Goans.

The old village schools were replaced by parish schools giving religious training and teaching the Portuguese language; and higher

education in Portuguese was available at the seminaries. Many Goan priests, doctors, and administrators received their education at these institutions run by the Portuguese in Goa. The first printing press in India was set up in Goa in September 1556, and the first Jesuit college was established in 1574.

Perhaps because of their particular historical experience, Goans have been willing to seek opportunities for a better life in the West and have been able to make themselves at home in new environments, however distant. They have also recognized for some time that English was the language that would earn them their bread and butter and so have engaged in its study. Many Goans were recruited by the British to serve their empire in such places as Karachi, Bombay, and East Africa, and scores arrived at those destinations of their own volition. Through social and sporting contacts with the British or Portuguese in their colonies the Goans were further acculturated to life in the West.

In 1961 the Indian government forced Portugal to surrender its colony in Goa, and as a result, many Christian Goans left their country. Emigration was stimulated further by a heightened sense of their minority status and concern about their economic prospects in both India and Pakistan. The pressures to leave Goa were paralleled by emigration opportunities to Canada. Here, as in Australia, England, and the United States, Goan assimilation was facilitated by their knowledge of English, their Christian religion, and their history of accommodation with Western culture.

Approximately fifteen to twenty thousand Goans emigrated to Canada; the overwhelming majority were white-collar workers, and the women were no less well-educated than the men. Even blue-collar workers generally had a decent education. Goans are to be found in all professions, with many teaching English to those for whom it is a mother tongue. Many discovered that the qualifications and experience required for immigration purposes were not necessarily recognized in Canada for employment purposes, and they upgraded themselves with single-minded determination. Broadly speaking, the younger generation are surpassing their parents in academic achievements and in showing a healthy inclination for the professions. Goan young people are willing to engage in pursuits their parents may have perceived as being out of reach or reserved for a select few.

Unlike the situation in some societies, there has been no great disparity in education between Goan men and women. This has meant that they share an intellectual perspective and social equality. Even though many women have overtaken their husbands in education today, there is no evidence that the stability of the family has been upset.

Goan women make a valuable contribution in the workforce and exude greater self-confidence than some of their sisters from the East. They work beside their husbands to supplement the family income, even though the mortgage may be the most compelling reason. There is nothing to suggest that this arrangement has had a detrimental effect on the upbringing of children.

In the course of their migrations, Goans have added to their foreign-language inventory. As well as speaking English or Portuguese, they became comfortable with Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, or Swahili. However, these acquisitions seem to be at the expense of their mother tongue, Konkani and today, to most of us in Canada, Konkani is akin to a foreign language. If some of us can read Konkani in the Roman script, today the reversion in Goa to the Devnagiri script, derived from Sanskrit, has alienated us. With the passage of time, prolonged disuse, total non-use by the younger generation and, above all, its irreversible replacement as the language that earns us our living, Konkani is perhaps the first component of our culture to be lost.

Goans came to Canada steeped in Christianity and are model exponents of that

faith. The multitudes may have missed it, but it was a singular honour when the Pope mentioned the Goan community in his blessing in Toronto. Goans are in demand as indefatigable lay workers in all spheres of parish work, but there is clearly a change in the younger generation. Our children are by no means irreligious, but there is some evidence of a waning of their fervour. Religion is regarded by some as something they were born into and not something they have consciously chosen. The good example of their parents and a well-intentioned upbringing may not be sufficient to keep the bricks and mortar of this edifice together. In this society, it is not uncommon to emulate one's peers, and the environment is not very conducive to the perpetuation of an inherited religion. Whether a record of fervent religiosity will endure intact, and for how long, is a matter of conjecture.

Goans are a gregarious people who enjoy camaraderie and the good life. After having satisfied the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, they gravitate towards social gatherings in homogeneous groups. Wherever they have lived, it has taken only a handful of Goans to start a club for social, sporting, or literary purposes and this process has repeated itself in Toronto.

In Toronto before 1970 there were a few amorphous Goan groups whose interests were religious, social, or sporting. All were essentially loosely knit and were formed by immigrants who had not been in the country long. On the sports scene, field hockey was the common factor that brought some Goans together, but they were playing for different teams. In 1969 it occurred to most of them that if they played as one team they could be the best in Ontario and maybe even in Canada. Roque Barreto, who was a prominent referee at the time, provided the impetus and kept the spark alive.

Perhaps because of the weather, only six out of a possible thirty people attended the first meeting on 8 February 1970: Roque Barreto, Aloysius Vaz, Willy Monteiro, Tony Fernandes, Tony D'Souza, and the writer. Barreto, Vaz, and Monteiro were elected as office holders. Other than discussing the formation of a hockey team, the six pioneers deliberated on the allied matter of a coherent body under whose banner they could play. A general meeting called for 5 April 1970, was attended by twenty-three people, who unanimously endorsed the idea of a club. The hockey team was to play under its auspices.

The club (the Goan Overseas Association) has gone from strength to strength and, including spouses and children, caters to five thousand people today. It remains very active in a range of fields and is now the largest Goan club in North America. Its young adults' group has added a wholesome new dimension to its activities.

The International Goan Convention in 1988, spearheaded by Zulema De Souza and conducted in Toronto under the aegis of the club, was a huge success. It certainly enhanced the sense of pride and identity of the community. The International Goan Youth Convention successfully held in Goa in December 1990 was a spin-off from the Toronto convention.

In sports, our youths have followed in the footsteps of their elders, and have demonstrated their prowess by representing Ontario and Canada in field hockey. Nor have the performing arts been neglected. They, more than most, keep an important facet of our culture alive. The community boasts an active amateur group called the Goan Theatrical Group which every year presents a concert with a full-scale play in Konkani, and performs traditional Goan dances. Its performances at the New Delhi Caravans in Toronto have received enviable reviews. A relatively new group called Goans on Stage uses English as its medium. Its presentation of the *King and I* last year was highly acclaimed.

Although Catholics in Goa did not officially believe in the Hindu caste system, vestiges continued to linger on in at least a subterranean sense. Over the last decade or so, the lines of caste distinction have started to blur among Goans in Canada. The younger generation, with their broader perspective on life, see themselves as members of a classless society.

If the extended family was relevant in Goa, it is conspicuous by its absence here. Newlyweds find their own home and do not live in the groom's parents' or bride's parents' residence. Even aging Goan grandparents are showing a decided preference for senior citizens' homes. Goan customs based on an extended family network are now being replaced by the nuclear family norms of Canada and the West.

A realist will acknowledge that the ethnic purity of the Goans is unlikely to endure beyond the next generation or two. Their relatively small numbers will likely lead to the submerging of their original identity. Marriage within one's group often gives way to marriage outside the group. For better or worse, the trend has already begun.

All in all, Goans are a vibrant community. The eastern tug of the past no longer competes with the western pull of the present and the future. For many, nostalgia for the ancestral homeland appears to be waning. Their destiny is now inextricably linked to their new homeland.

Armando Rodrigues is a supervisor for Revenue Canada.

In the complex mix of communities that make up the South Asian diaspora in Ontario, the unique historical and cultural experience of Indo-Caribbeans separates them as a particularly distinct group. Bruce Ally describes the changes in situation and experience of recent immigrants from Guyana.

Indo-Caribbean Life in Guyana and Toronto: A Comparative Survey

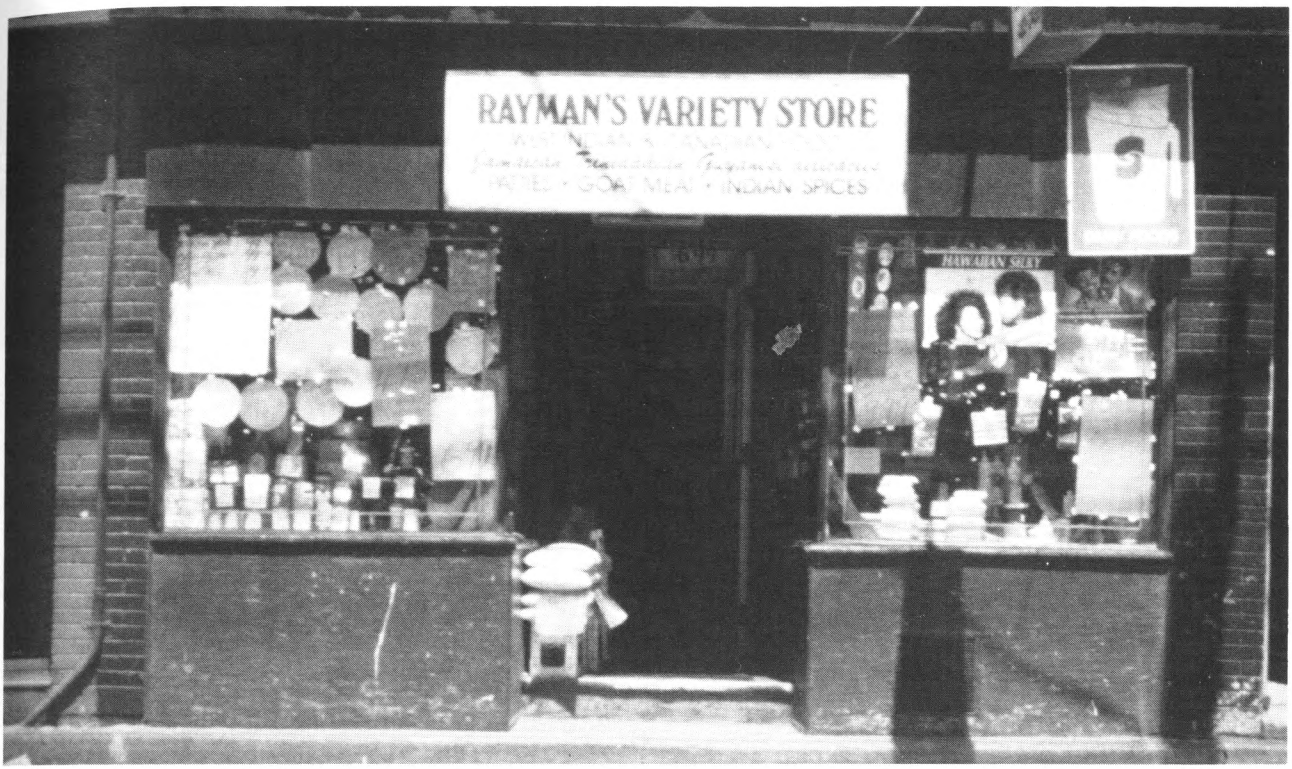
Bruce Ally

Beginning in 1838 more than 600,000 Indians migrated to the Caribbean, including approximately 238,000 to British Guyana. They went as indentured labourers, an alternative work force for the sugar plantations after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Though their time in the West Indies was meant to be limited by the contract, Indians who had completed their obligation were allowed to commute their return passages into cash. Many were granted an allotment of land that they could cultivate in addition to their estate work.

With time, distinctive Indo-Caribbean communities were established—especially in Trinidad and British Guyana, where the populations were large enough to form a separate identity and community. In Trinidad, Indians eventually constituted about 45 per cent of the population, and in British Guyana they were the majority.

The Indian family in Guyana is a very close-knit band of extended lineage, which includes two, three, and often four generations living in close proximity. Elders are still valued highly. Their knowledge is seen as relevant to current situations since culturally the way of life has changed very little through the generations. Very often older family members who are no longer gainfully employed are responsible for looking after pre-schoolers. This reinforces the transfer of values and norms, as most personality theorists agree that the significant personality developments occur before the age of eight. Since parents pass their beliefs on to their children and subsequently to their grandchildren, family values have remained constant, and the possibility of family and personality conflicts have been significantly lessened. It is also quite common for adults to continue in the family business or farm and to seek to pass it on to yet another generation.

The general tendency of Indian families and the Indo-Guyanese community generally is to maintain a distinctive and separate identity clearly derived from their attachment to Indian culture. It was entrenched, however, by the determination of the British planters to keep their Indian workers on their estates and prevent them from acquiring an education and mainstream occupations. Nonetheless, by the 1920s, Indians began entering the learned professions, especially law and medicine, in substantial numbers, and the trend toward increasing participation in leadership roles in mainstream society continued until the mid-sixties. The situation began to change when the Indian-dominated People's Progressive Party lost control of the



A Caribbean Flavour in Ontario.

government to the People's National Congress, associated with the Afro-Guyanese. Although there was no absolute ethnic split between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese in regard to these two parties, increasingly violent confrontation entrenched the ethnic division. An increase in racial discrimination and reduced opportunities in the future also caused increasing numbers of Indo-Guyanese to consider emigrating.

The situation in Guyana coincided with the removal of discriminatory immigration regulations in Canada, and in 1967 a flow of Indo-Guyanese immigrants began to arrive, most of them settling in Ontario. They were mostly educated or skilled, but their initial encounter with Canadian racial discrimination and their frustration with the lack of recognition of their trades and professional credentials tempered their sense of arrival at a safe haven. In addition, they had to adapt to a new social situation and to re-establish family and community life in this new and exotic country.

In contrast to the spacious kinship arrangements of their lives in Guyana, most immigrant families tend to begin their lives in Toronto in apartment-style dwellings. These are obviously not suitable for an extended family, and often grandparents are not available for preschoolers. Old-age and retirement homes, which were quite alien institutions in Guyana and the West Indies, have become the norm for families living here. An important effect of this change is the loss of multi-generational participation in the intimate relationship on which the transfer of culture largely depends. This challenge to the family ethos is the first step in the loss of the extended family core in the diaspora.

In Guyana, an extended family either shares one dwelling, or parts of the same family live in very close proximity to each other. Consequently, when one person or subfamily, such as a recently married couple was having difficulty the rest of the family would join together, closing ranks by confronting the issues without supporting either party and forcing the couple to resolve the conflict and resume living together. This process often proved beneficial since it forced each party to deal with his or her own view

of the roles and relationship in a situation that virtually required accommodation. The family did not usually attempt to foster the argument; even if they did, they were still intent on achieving a resolution and seeking a reconciliation as the only solution.

For those living in a transplanted extended family in the less spacious and less leisurely Toronto environment, traditional pressures in support of relationships may become part of the problem. As mentioned earlier, the majority of West Indian immigrants live in apartments, at least initially; and in the cramped confines of a two- or three-bedroom apartment, mother, father, occasionally grandparents and one or two children can lose their sense of private space and experience a continuous invasion of their privacy. These living conditions, if not guaranteed to create conflict, certainly will generate greater argumentativeness and a tendency to maintain hostilities and will reduce the possibility of reconciliation. Guyanese, like Canadians, are no less prone to the disease of divorce. In fact, for the reasons previously mentioned, and for other reasons to be discussed later, the Guyanese divorce rate in Toronto is statistically higher than the Canadian average.

In the villages and towns of their homeland, religion was a major stabilizing influence, which determined customary experiences; marking the year's calendar with cohesive community events. In every village, the Hindu, Muslim, or Christian shared with family and friends a temple, mosque, or church that was as much their own as their home. The congregations of these institutions were a further extended family, providing added support in difficult times as well as the opportunity to share in the celebrations of life. By virtue of their relatively small size, congregation members become a necessary and integral part of the every-day functioning, maintenance, and in fact, the very life of their churches. The result was a sense of cohesion and the confidence that people were able to depend on each other. Consequently, as in the case of the couple experiencing marital difficulties, they were faced with additional pressure from their religious peer group and elders to restore their relationship or be socially ostracized.

In Guyana proximity to church is also instrumental in the development of a sense of religious identity. Classes in religious instruction were held at times convenient to those in need (that is, children) and were combined with recreational activities, thus creating the easy and familiar environment that made religious practice normal, natural, desirable, and even fun. This also served to bind the children together, fostering a group dynamic that propagated religious attitudes as the accepted norm and ostracized non-participants. Thus children became very familiar with the dictates of their religion and actively and willingly met their parents' expectations.

In contrast, in Ontario society, few temples and mosques exist, and those that do are not conveniently near centres of Indo-Caribbean population. For example, the Rhodes Avenue mosque is in a Pakistani neighbourhood, and the Tablique Jamat is in a Greek district. Muslims and Hindus from every country of the world participate in the activities of their mosques and temples; and in many cases can afford to choose their location. But West Indians are unable, for the most part, to claim this honour.

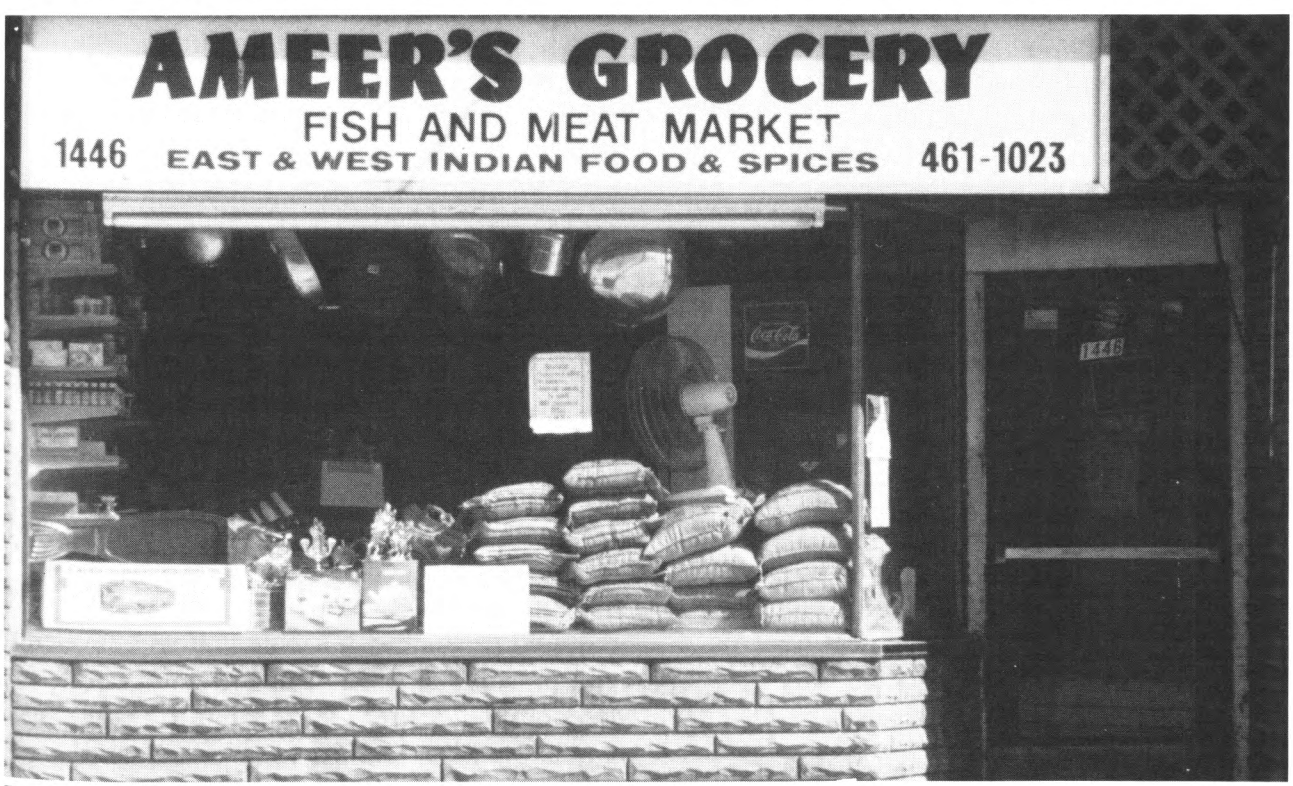
The cosmopolitan diaspora in Ontario has provided a unique reunion of Indians whose ancestors migrated from the subcontinent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with those who have immigrated directly from India during the last thirty years. While they all share a common source culture, distance and generations of living in another society have produced inevitable differences. Language—the most vulnerable legacy—is often lost. In Toronto, prayers and sermons are often in Indian languages not understood by Indo-Caribbeans. This also serves to alienate them from their organized religious practices, as well as leading to the formation

of cliques of people who speak the same language.

In Guyana Indo-Guyanese students generally achieved high academic standards. It was common to have acquired at least four to six "0 levels," which is equivalent to Grade 13 in Ontario; and more than half of the young people proceeded to obtain education over and above this. In fact, a surprisingly high proportion attended universities, such as the University of Guyana or the University of Cuba, and large numbers attended universities or received training in England and North America, acquiring qualifications in many fields ranging from medicine, law, and accounting to naturopathy, dance, and butchering, among others.

In Canada, on the other hand, a land having abundantly more educational facilities, there has been a significant decline in the number of Indo-Guyanese graduates. The lack of financial resources, the inability to attract support from an "old boys' network," the discomfort and unease produced by the need to identify with alien heroes and an alien history have reduced the enthusiasm for education. In any case, because of the traditional commitment to higher education and continuing parental pressure, the percentage of students from the Indo-Guyanese Canadian community that attends university has remained high, compared with the Canadian average.

Although racial tension and pessimism regarding future opportunities stimulated a flow of Indo-Guyanese emigration, jobs in Guyana remain reasonably abundant for newly-returned qualified professionals. They find gainful employment either in private practice or in groups of their peers older than they who often knew them before they graduated. For those without university degrees, the main options were business, clerical, technical positions, and apprenticeships with room for advancement in line with their qualifications that would provide enough income to support them and their families. There were many opportunities for finding such employment since one always had a friend, relative, or in-law who either had or knew of a suitable position. Others managed to create lucrative businesses that ranged from



The intermingling of East and West Indian as transposed to Ontario.

rice, animal, or sugar cane farms, to extensive lumber mills, haberdashery, dry-goods stores, large furniture emporiums, and textile mills. In fact, the Indian population's businesses had grown to the point that they played a significant role in determining the country's economic development and progress.

In Ontario, on the other hand, Indo-Caribbeans are often underemployed and underpaid and have great difficulty in obtaining upper middle-management positions in the private sector. In the public sector, they are under-represented in numbers. In addition, there are numerous doctors who have worked not only in the Caribbean but also in England and Scotland and have completed postgraduate work. In Ontario, however, they are banned from practice unless they are able to obtain an internship, which are heavily competed for and few in number. Similarly, lawyers who have defended hundreds of cases are unable to practise unless they return to university and requalify. It is exceedingly difficult for a successful forty-five-year-old lawyer highly qualified in at least two countries, with a family to support, to consider returning to school to complete education he already possesses. It is even more frustrating for him, having burned his bridges by immigrating, to consider working as a clerk or security guard; yet many are forced to do just that because they lack Canadian experience.

In Guyana, the Indian migrants became such a significant force that they managed to be the founders of the first trade union. The Manpower Association was founded in 1953 to champion the cause of the sugar workers. It also worked toward furthering the rights of the bauxite workers. The Indo-Guyanese were also fortunate to have the first Indian prime minister in Dr. Cheddi Jagan, who not only won the elections against vigorous opposition but also spearheaded the movement towards independence—a move that could only be achieved by the active participation of the Indo-Guyanese people.

In Toronto, Indo-Caribbean natives have not achieved as much in the political realm. However, it must be remembered that they are still relative newcomers, the bulk of whom only began arriving in the last twenty to twenty-five years. Nevertheless, the loss of political participation and influence is perceived as severely debilitating to many.

The Guyanese of Indian descent who uprooted their lives and transplanted themselves in the West Indies as migrant labourers, losing their roots but certainly not their culture or their courage, became in a mere hundred years a political and economic force to be reckoned with and developed a social system that maintained individuals as part of the collective whole. The second migration to Canada has reproduced the old challenges, the old struggles, and the necessity to re-establish themselves in a new and alien society.

In the last twenty-five years there has been a rapid increase in the Indian population of Caribbean extraction in Toronto. Initially, when they arrived, they were fairly well treated because they occupied the menial jobs that no one else wanted. However, as they were given the opportunity to perform tasks at higher levels, in competition with their Canadian counterparts, they have faced new challenges. Despite the incredible odds, the Indo-Caribbean family has thrived, and there are members of the community who have sought office in federal elections. There are members who are professors, doctors are becoming recertified, and many lawyers are now available. As our community has continued to grow, we have once again stretched our boundaries to surpass our psychological mindsets and have once again realized that we are our own most valuable resource, and that we exist not only to support our community, but also to regenerate our support systems to provide whatever is required to achieve our potential as a unified group. This recognition should grant us the freedom we desire; the freedom to realize that any and all issues affecting our community are ones which we have the opportunity to

choose and resolve. As soon as we recognize this, we will no longer empower others to control our destiny.

The challenge before us is to integrate our renewed Indian identity into the mainstream of Canadian multicultural life.

Bruce Ally is a consulting psychotherapist practising in Toronto.

VIVAAHA SAMSKAARA

of

Anita and Gautam

Sunday,
November Nineteenth,
Nineteen Hundred
and
Eighty-nine

शुभ-विवाह

Conducted by
Vishwanath Kulkarni
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"A prosperous marriage," an invitation to attend a wedding ceremony. In the Ontario new-world setting the names of the bride and groom appear without those of their families.

This enquiry, conducted through in-depth interviews with active members of the Maharashtrian community in Metropolitan Toronto, reveals how the first generation immigrants of that region retain, for themselves and for their children, Maharashtrian cultural ethos through language training, ritual, religious practices, and social activities.

On Being a Maharashtrian in Toronto

N.K. Wagle

The state of Maharashtra, India.

The state of Maharashtra is located in the western region of India; its state capital is Bombay, and it has a population of over sixty-three million. The language of Maharashtra is Marathi. Maharashtra lies on the frontier of north and south, the Aryan and Dravidian cultural divide of the Indian subcontinent, on the frontier of two cultures. Although Marathi is a branch of the Indo-Aryan language family, the Maharashtrian kinship organization is essentially southern. Dress habits though, are neither northern nor southern. Until recently, for instance, women wore nine-yard sarees in the southern fashion. Maharashtrian food is a blend of northern and southern styles of cooking. Ask any Maharashtrian to define his subregional heritage in terms of north and south, and he will say it is Maharashtrian; he is unable to place himself in either of the above two categories. Perhaps, the ability to move in two cultures has made Maharashtrians more adaptable.

In Bombay, where I grew up, Marathi was the language I learned at school and spoke in the neighbourhood. I consciously acquired a Maharashtrian identity in Bombay, although I spoke Konkani at home, a language that is spoken south of Bombay along the coast and that has its cultural centres in Goa. In the present enquiry I have sought to find out for myself in what manner, if at all, I am consciously or subconsciously acting out my Maharashtrian heritage in a cosmopolitan city like Toronto. Such an enquiry has limitations. The first-generation immigrants to Canada from the Indian subcontinent who settled in Ontario and who call themselves Maharashtrians and claim Marathi as their first language are relatively

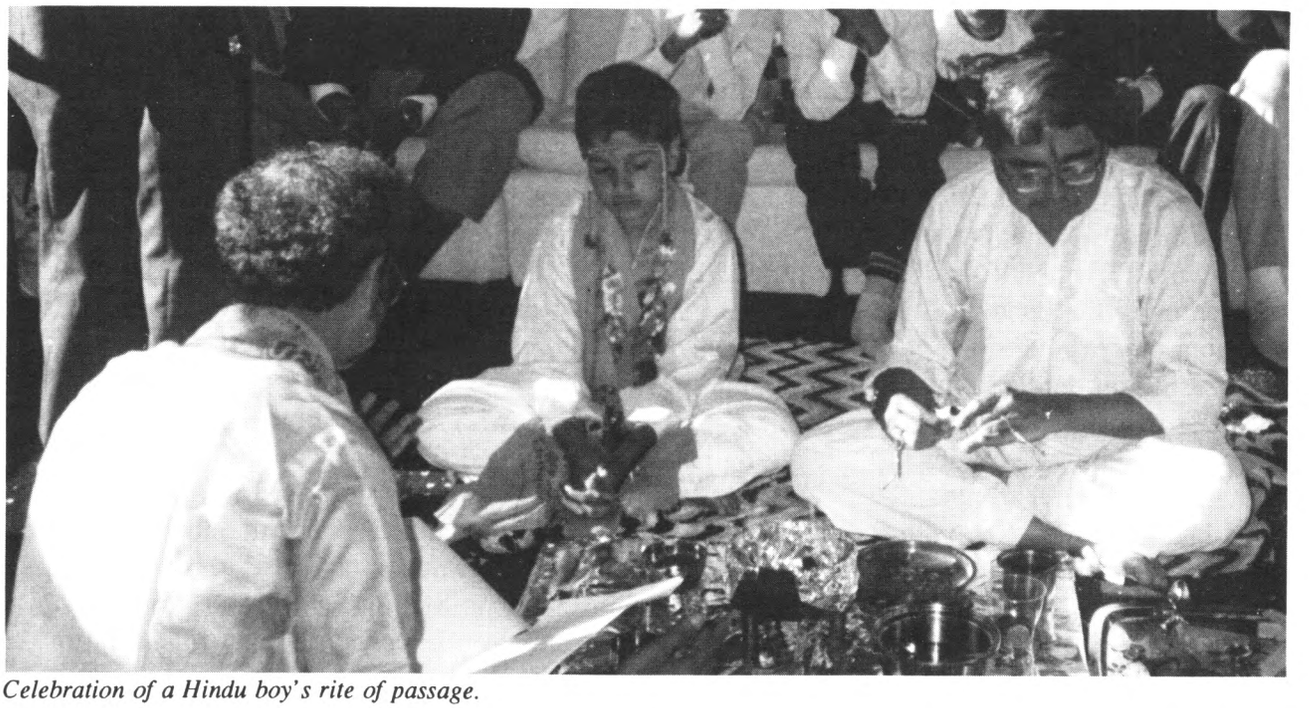
few as compared to the immigrants from Punjab and Gujarat. Like the other Indian immigrants, Maharashtrians are from various levels of education, caste, and class backgrounds. But those living in Toronto are mostly professionals. How do the Maharashtrians reconcile their class and caste origin with their new-found Maharashtrian brotherhood in Toronto? There are in addition, other dimensions of the Maharashtrian identity, which I thought did not exist before, but which emerged out of the interviews I conducted with the Maharashtrians in Toronto.

I had a conversation with Ram Mulgund, who is a senior actuary in a Canadian insurance corporation, about the issue of being a Maharashtrian in Toronto. Ram, who claims bridge playing as his hobby, belongs to an active group of twenty-five to thirty Maharashtrians in Toronto who regularly play duplicate bridge, a highly competitive version of that game. The group also indulges in regular bridge competitions with the Detroit Maharashtra Association. Ram occasionally spends his after-dinner time managing an investment club comprising about twenty Maharashtrians. Some of the communication among the club members, I am told, is carried on through electronic computer mail. His wife, a philosophy major and a computer specialist, works for Bell Canada.

Ram is the current president of Brihan Maharashtra Mandal (BMM) of North America, which has chapters in the United States and Canada. Highly successful and well-attended meetings have been held in New York, Chicago, and Toronto. The most recent, held in Detroit in 1989, attracted about two thousand delegates from all over North America. Three more conferences are already scheduled to be held in Los Angeles in 1991, Washington D.C in 1993, and Houston in 1995. A directory listing three thousand Maharashtrians, a newsletter, and a literary journal inform the members about themselves and Maharashtra-related events taking place in North America. Ram talks about the "networking" of the members due to their shared love of Marathi literature and theatre. Maharashtra excels in theatre arts, and Maharashtrian writers and their experimental theatre are known throughout India. If, in the process, young Maharashtrians get to know each other, the better it is for all concerned. The success of the conferences in this regard is reflected in the half dozen marriages that have resulted from contacts made at each of these meetings. Most of all the BMM is imbued with a pragmatic concept of brotherhood that unites and offers a helping hand to the other diaspora Maharashtrians in North America. Ram tells me about his son, who is at Princeton and who recently had an interview at Stanford. He was received by a chapter member of the Brihan Maharashtra Mandal at the airport and given accommodation for two days without cost, and more important, was treated as a family member. Maharashtrian professionals and businessmen from North America, India, and Europe use this network to their advantage. Indeed, it has become the basis for a Maharashtra lobby in the United States and Canada. Senior bureaucrats, government ministers, and bankers visiting from Maharashtra are eager to get acquainted with the BMM. Ram attributes the success of this pan-North American group to the active role played by Maharashtrian women, who he feels are the guiding spirits behind all of their activities. There is truth in his statement.

The Toronto Marathi Bhashik Mandal, the main cultural organization of the Maharashtrians in Toronto, which was established in 1970, has been managed and run mostly by women for the last twenty years. I asked Ram why this is so, and he noted the unusually high level of education found among Maharashtrian women. I am reminded somehow of the Rani of Jhansi, the famous Maharashtrian woman who took to the field against the British army during the great rebellion of 1857.

Ram Mulgund is the originator, organizer, and founder of Marathi language teaching in



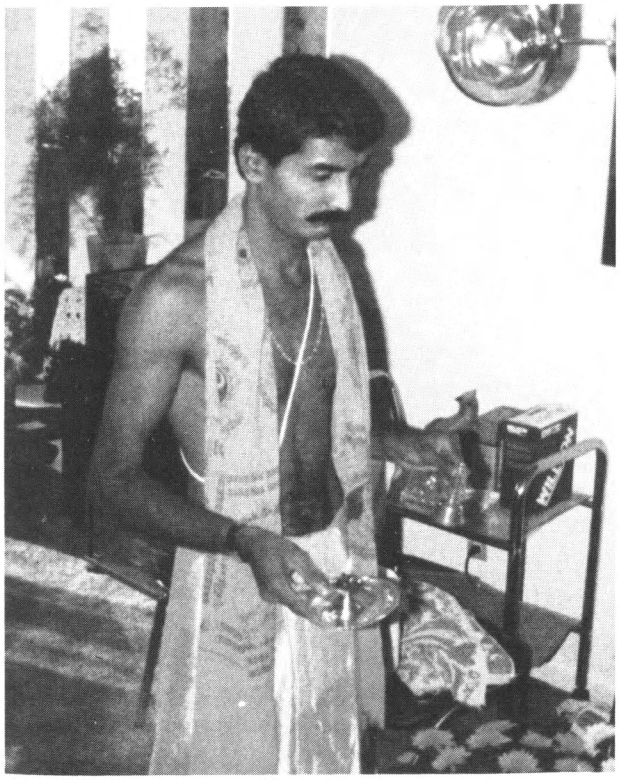
Celebration of a Hindu boy's rite of passage.

Toronto. In order to start the language program, the Marathi Bhashik Mandal, ("Marathi-speakers' association") of Toronto conducted a telephone survey of Maharashtrians living in Metropolitan Toronto to identify, area by area, the locations and the number of Marathi children. The Mandal also sought the support of parents who were interested in teaching Marathi to the young ones. The response was good. Starting in 1974, more than fifteen volunteers were enrolled to teach the students, who were divided into classes of five. The program was essentially two to three hours of Sunday teaching. Since there were no teaching aids for teaching elementary Marathi through English medium, some of the graded Marathi texts from India known as Balabharati were introduced into the classes. The children were taught to speak and write elementary Marathi. From 1978 to 1989, the program was supported by a federal grant that allowed the teaching facilities to be located in one place. Marathi language is now taught under the North York Heritage Language Programme. However, Ram, who has himself taught Marathi intermittently for seven years, pointed out that enrolment in Marathi classes was dropping owing to the relatively small and scattered number of children of Marathi-speaking immigrants from Maharashtra in Toronto. Ram admires the success of Punjabi and Gujarati language program in Toronto, which he feels is largely due to the sizeable immigrant population in Toronto emanating from Punjab and Gujarat.

"Have you ever seen a dumb Marathi kid?" was the retort of a Marathi teenager in Toronto when he was exhorted by his parents to do more than his share of homework. There was a smile of satisfaction on Ram's face when he told me this story. He suggested their community tradition of parental involvement with children's academic study accounted for the success of Marathi students. I replied that this attitude is found generally among all immigrants, who want their children to make good in their chosen homeland. I also reminded Ram that most of the Maharashtrian professionals living in Ontario belong to the upper castes and classes of Maharashtra: the Marathas, Brahmins, Kayasthas, and others. Ram added that this might well be so, but that the scope for success is greater here than in India, where there is simply more competition. He is

convinced that Maharashtrians in Toronto will continue to give priority to their children's education. But he expressed his concern that despite continuing parental effort to inculcate a Maharashtrian identity in their children, they will not be able to retain it. He feels the children cannot relate to the cultural ethos of Maharashtra because of their physical absence from that region. Their occasional trips back home with their mothers are not enough. Ram does not regret this trend but regards it as inevitable when children are brought up in Ontario.

Talking in general about his relationships with Canadians other than those of Indian origin, Ram was candid enough to admit that he is more absorbed with his own Maharashtrian community and, socially speaking, has not much time left for others. He says that he did not find it difficult to achieve professional success, given his training, experience, and competence. Survival, he noted, required avoidance of conflict at the personal level. Ram circumvented any discussion on the integration and adaptation of Maharashtrian immigrants in Toronto. Does this indicate, I asked myself, an attitude of resignation on his part? It is hard to believe that a high achiever like Ram would simply remain indifferent to the mores of Canadian society. I would venture to state that he has made peace with Canadian society. He feels comfortable in Toronto with the ballast of his transplanted Maharashtrian culture.



A Hindu youth engages in worship.

My next meeting was with Vishvanath Kulkarni, a Maharashtrian brahmin priest. He had told me that his wife's understanding of religious norms was as good as his, perhaps a notch better, and that she would be part of our discussions. She assisted him in his priestly functions and was a great repository of the stories from the *Puranas*, which are Sanskrit writings of the sixth to the sixteenth centuries giving a legendary account of ancient times. In order to facilitate the performance of the sacramental rites and make them more comprehensible, she had translated Marathi Hindu liturgical hymns and manuals into Hindi and Gujarati for patrons who know Gujarati and Hindi. I was to confirm her expertise in these fields later.

On our short journey to their home, Vishvanath told me about his recent brush with death. He and his wife were in a car accident while on their way to a patron to perform the sacramental rituals for a patron. Their car was badly damaged and they were lucky to be alive. Despite the accident, Vishvanath performed the rituals for his patron. When he returned home, he began his *puja* (worship) to his god and was lost in it for nearly four hours. He recalls that in his meditation he experienced total peace, forgetting his physical pain and his worries about insurance claims and police reports. Vishvanath practises what he preaches.

Vishvanath possesses enough knowledge of *shastric* rituals (rituals codified in the sacred books of the Hindus) and *mantras* (sacred chants and incantations) to perform all the essential Hindu rituals such as birth, *upanayana* (initiation rites for boys), *vivaha* (marriage), and death rites. Recently, he

Microcosm of a Hindu temple; household worship of gods and goddesses, including those enclosed in photographs.

brought some water from the Ganges back to Toronto. The water is poured into the mouth of the dead person to sanctify his soul. Vishvanath performs the *puja* (sacramental and liturgical worship) to the gods Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, and Ganesh and the goddess Gauri, and is a specialist in Satyanarayan puja. He is, of course, in great demand for performing *vastu* puja, the ritual blessing of a house that is about to be occupied by a new owner. He gives religious discourses on Hindu theology and he is a leader at the *bhajan* and *kirtan* sessions (community prayer where the hymns are sung). He is the man for all Maharashtrian seasons in Toronto. His intonation of the Sanskrit mantras is lucid and clear, even when judged by the highest professional standards of India. He has an Ontario government license as a Hindu "priest" to certify marriages and deaths, and he does not compromise his standards. There are no quick weddings and death rituals for him, although even in India the actual wedding rituals are now hurried through. Vishvanath will have none of that. He is a stickler for performing the rituals prescribed in the shastras. When asked to name the sacramental ritual from which he receives the most satisfaction, he replies, "Officiating at the death rites." He says he is always touched by that event. It makes him think about life and death and the *karma* and *dharma* (duties and obligations) of a person. He considers it a duty to console the dead person's relatives and to explain to them the Hindu notion of the ultimate destiny of a human being on his or her journey to the next world, only to be born again.

The Hindu notion of perfect behaviour, *purusartha*, is central to the religious and cultural life of his Maharashtrian and Gujarati patrons. Although most of them are not aware of the concept of *purusartha* in a concrete manner, purusarthas are the ideals that a Hindu could achieve by concentrating on three goals: *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*. Loosely interpreted, these aims strive for a balance and harmony in the material, physical, and spiritual spheres of life. The three aims ultimately lead one to *moksha*, the Hindu concept of *nirvana*, the total release from this cycle of existence.

The central concept in the Hindu sacraments is the idea of purification. The sacraments are called *samskaras* and there are sixteen performed during a Hindu's life. In fact, Hindu sacraments are progressive acts of purification, as stated by Harita, one of the medieval Hindu commentators.

Maharashtrians, like their Hindu counterparts from other regions of India, must perform their samskaras, and these periodical acts of purification prepare them to lead their lives according to the purusarthas. It is apparent that adherence to the purity concept through the performance of the samskaras among Maharashtrians has an important place in building morale to face the external world. Maharashtrians in Toronto, like other Hindus, need Vishvanath's help in building up that strength. It became obvious to me that the sacramental rituals have a therapeutic effect on the community. Vishvanath rationalizes these rituals as *sanskriti* (value and culture).

Vishvanath works as a senior property assessor for the Ontario government. His interest in the priesthood began in Toronto in 1969, when he arrived as a new immigrant from India. In Maharashtra he was not a priest, but he knew *shastric* liturgy and rituals well enough to officiate at the rituals. In Toronto he began his priestly work by officiating at his friends' houses. By word of mouth his services were quickly recognized, and the demand has never abated. As he voluntarily undertook his new responsibility, he began a serious study of the priest's craft from books available in Toronto and frequent visits to India. His wife Uma is an invaluable resource and partner.

Vishvanath talks about *sraddha* (faith) in the Hindu rituals on the part of the *yajman* (patron) and the *seva* (dedicated commitment) on his part to his chosen vocation. It annoys him that people should ask him about his fees. Underlying the traditional concept of *daksina*, the money which one gives to the ritual specialists after the performance of a *puja*, the sacraments of birth, death, and marriage, is the "gift" given to a ritually superior person in return for which a patron is blessed. Since both Uma and Vishvanath have gainful employment, their services are essentially voluntary. Any gifts he accepts, he

A Hindu priest explains the meaning of wedding rites to a bride and groom.

gives to charity after deducting his costs. It is indeed an extraordinary commitment on his part to serve the basic ritual needs of this Maharashtrian and non-Maharashtrian constituency in such a manner.

Uma and Vishvanath see themselves as rejuvenators and transmitters of the religion and culture of Maharashtrians in Toronto. Vishvanath more than once asserted that he is not merely repeating the mantras for the sake of repeating them: no blind ritualism for him. He says that he always explains the essential meaning of the mantras to his patrons during the performance of the rites. He does not see his function as that of an ordinary brahmin priest who merely instructs the patron to perform ritual actions correctly, and who recites the benedictory mantras. Vishvanath is both a *pandit*, the expositor of the tradition, and a priest, who meticulously gives access to his patron to the world of gods.

Vishvanath is not a typical brahmin with his pride and his obsession with superior ritual status whom we hear and read about in countless books of scholarship and fiction. Through him the traditional rituals and symbols typical of Maharashtra are preserved. I don't think he is aware of his role in this context. But does it matter? According to Vishvanath, he is merely doing what needs to be done for a patron's quest to lead the correct life guided by the precepts of Hindu dharma.

Uma and Vishvanath converse fluently in Marathi (which is their first language), Gujarati, and Hindi. Their Gujarati is as good as their Marathi, and they have a number of Gujarati patrons. Their *bhajan* and *satsang* (congregational singing groups) are drawn from all the communities of India. They are godparents to two Sikh boys in Toronto. Ecumenical in his beliefs, Vishvanath talks about "one god who is worshipped by different names in different religions." He seems to regret and is puzzled by the acts of religious fanaticism of some in Canada and in India.

"How about the interest of the second generation Maharashtrian children in Toronto?" I asked him. "Do these children empathize with the sacramental rites held so dearly by their parents?" Both Uma and Vishvanath seem optimistic on this score. They admit, however, that it is difficult to explain the rudiments of Hindu religion and ritual to young children. Vishvanath observes that they become conscious of their religious identities through their school environment. As school children, they get acquainted with the Bible and other Christian religious literature. Often they have to explain Hindu beliefs to other children in their neighbourhoods or schools. Put on the defensive, they want to learn about their Hindu traditions. Vishvanath with his expertise acts as a voice of authority and lends support to the parents. Whenever his services are requested for the sacraments involving the puja and other rituals, he tries to explain the meaning of the acts to the children. Vishvanath is nearer to the pulse of the second-generation Maharashtrian community through direct contacts with them and through their parents. Being a household priest has its advantages. Both Uma and Vishvanath see themselves as torch bearers of Hindu *sanskriti*, culture and value in the broad sense of the term, which they deem it their duty to pass on to those children in Toronto. I was impressed by their determination. As "true" Maharashtrian brahmins they see themselves as sustainers and propagators of Hindu tradition.

Having interviewed these three Maharashtrians, I again began to ponder my own identity as a Maharashtrian. For all practical purposes Marathi was my first language in India. And language and culture cannot be separated easily. Professionally, over the last two decades I have been interested in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Maharashtrian social and legal history. This has resulted in my writing and editing books on Maharashtra. Although I have kept myself aloof from Maharashtrian community activities in Toronto, I have been

instrumental in organizing international and pan-American academic conferences on Maharashtra in Toronto.

In our imperceptible Maharashtrian ways, Ram, Uma, Vishvanath, and I have done our part to preserve, sustain, and transmit the Maharasthra *dharma*, the code of Maharashtra, in Toronto.

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This study concerns a selection of the Sri Lankan immigrant community that arrived in Canada before the recent influx of Tamil refugees from that country. It attempts to measure the success of their adaptation from the point of view of community members.

Self-Perceived Success of Adjustment by Sri Lankan Immigrants in Metropolitan Toronto: A Preliminary Report

Caryl Abrahams and Lisa Steven

The island nation of Sri Lanka in South Asia.

This brief report is both preliminary and selective. The sample used in the survey was largely limited to Sinhalese and Burghers, people of mixed European and indigenous Sri Lankan descent. Much of this immigration occurred before the major influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, the result of the civil war in that country, which still continues. This new group of Sri Lankan refugees is quite different from the earlier, largely English-speaking group of educated immigrants with which this study is concerned. The refugees are overwhelmingly Tamil, and many can only speak the Tamil language. In addition, their education has often been disrupted by the instability in Sri Lanka, and they generally do not come from the more privileged middle and upper classes in that country. All of the countries of the South Asian region are, like Canada, multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. We are concerned here with a small group that represents only a portion of Sri Lankan society both in their home country and in their new home in Canada.

It is apparent that relatively little research has been conducted on Sri Lankan immigrants in Canada and the factors that facilitate their successful adjustment. Most of the literature concerns the South Asian community in general and the factors that inhibit its adjustment. This report presents the results of an exploratory, qualitative study of the self-perceived success of the adjustment by Sri Lankan immigrants to Metropolitan Toronto and seeks to provide some basic data to fill the gaps in the existing literature.[1]

For statistical purposes, information regarding the Sri Lankan Canadian population is usually combined with the data on the

South Asian population. This produces a homogenization of the diverse ethnic groups from South Asia. The present exploratory study is important because it contributes to our understanding of the diversity of South Asian immigrants and examines relatively unexplored aspects of Sri Lankan immigration. By identifying the factors that contribute to the successful adjustment of Sri Lankan immigrants, their adaptation experience will be understood better and means may be suggested to improve immigration services in Canada.

A review of the available literature helped to identify areas that need further study. For instance, by gaining a better understanding of the Sri Lankan ethnic group in Canada, reasons for immigration, the immigration process, and factors influencing adaptation, we can identify, for further exploration, qualitative factors that may promote successful adjustment.

The causes of Sri Lankan emigration identified in the literature include changes in political party dominance, intermittent political instability, high unemployment, poverty, and lack of career opportunities.

According to S. McDaniel, Canada's immigration policy "has been and continues to be defined in terms of 'what immigrants can do for Canada.' Canada's immigration policy in the past has been pegged rather directly to Canada's economic goals" (McDaniel, 1986: 101). The Canadian government used the Sri Lankan English newspapers to encourage young people to settle in Canada (McAteer, 1978). Canada was portrayed as a "land of opportunity" that welcomed the increasing number of under-employed or unemployed but educated Sri Lankan youth (Ontario, 1981). This situation created a brain drain, to Canada, of educated and skilled people with a good command of the English language.

George Kurian (1982) reports that South Asian immigrants have less difficulty adjusting to life in Canada if they are well educated. The Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation (1981) observes that Sri Lankans integrate well into Canadian life because many of them are highly educated and skilled people with a good command of English. Their knowledge of English results from the British colonial system in Ceylon and from the use of English as the language of education and business in Sri Lanka and, until 1966, as the official language of the country (Carey, 1976). Many English-speaking Burghers immigrated to Canada when Sinhalese became the official language. The combination of language and education has enabled them to upgrade their education in Canada and in turn, has facilitated their adaptation.

The current exploratory study was undertaken to obtain qualitative data on the self-perceived adjustment of Sri Lankan immigrants in Metropolitan Toronto. After completing the literature review, research students from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto developed an interview guide to assist in gathering these data. Open-ended interviews were used. No suggestions regarding answers were given or implied. The guide was pre-tested and alterations were made before a final version was prepared.

The guide consists of three major sections. The first asks for personal and demographic data, such as the age, sex, marital status, and education of the respondents. The second section deals with the preparation for, and process of immigration and attempts to ascertain how the decision was made to immigrate to Canada and what preparations were made for immigration. The final section of the interview guide was designed to obtain qualitative data on the success of adjustment of Sri Lankan immigrants in Metropolitan Toronto. Respondents were asked to describe what influenced their adaptation, and researchers sought to avoid North American preconceptions and culturally biased criteria regarding adjustment.

The initial sample consisted of thirty-three

families from the Canada Sri Lanka Association of Metropolitan Toronto who volunteered to participate. Potential respondents were contacted in advance by a director of the association and told of the nature of the study. The self-selection of the sample limited the range of respondents. Participants were assigned randomly to interviewers, each family was telephoned by an interviewer who arranged a meeting. Interviews were conducted in English in the home of the respondents.

The data presented here represent the responses of thirty-seven persons, eighteen women and nineteen men, all born in Sri Lanka. The respondents ranged in age from 30 to 70; the average was 44. All but one respondent were married. Seventy-four percent of the sample were Canadian citizens, the rest having kept their landed immigrant status. All respondents had been in Canada at least three years. Although twenty-one individuals (56 per cent) have Sinhalese as their mother tongue, thirteen (35 per cent) gave English. Only 8 per cent of the sample reported Tamil as their mother tongue.

Only one person reported less than secondary education, and 24 per cent had completed post-secondary, postgraduate, or professional education. Thirty-three persons had completed the greater part of their education in Sri Lanka, although twenty-five respondents from the sample had some form of Canadian upgrading or additional post-secondary work since arriving here. Eighty-seven per cent of the sample reported that they had relatives in Sri Lanka. The majority of respondents visited Sri Lanka every four or five years and only 13 per cent had never returned since immigrating to Canada.

In the discussion of immigration, several factors emerged as significant. Only one person had visited Canada before emigrating. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents reported that their first overseas living experience occurred in Canada, although 32 per cent had previously made at least one visit to another country.

The presence of a monk at a Sri Lankan gathering adds significance to the event.

When describing the immigration process, twenty-one respondents (56.8 per cent) reported that they came to Canada with other family members. For 54 per cent of the sample, the decision to emigrate was made for them by family members. Of the sixteen respondents who decided independently to emigrate to Canada, eleven were men while only five were women. Their reasons for immigrating to Canada included: family re-unification (51.3 per cent), educational or employment opportunities (10.8 per cent), and the political situation in Sri Lanka (10.8 per cent). Twenty-two respondents had Sri Lankan friends in Canada before emigrating; thirty-five people did not. When asked about financial support available for immigrating, twenty-eight respondents said that relatives in Canada had helped financially or helped with housing, and eight people reported that they had help from friends.

In response to the question "What are the most important things contributing to your adjustment in Canada?" the following

variables were identified: personal factors, 78 per cent (twenty-nine respondents), such as knowledge of English and personal motivation; cultural factors, 57 per cent (twenty-one respondents), such as having a cultural background similar to that of Canadians and a commitment to Canada; economic, occupational, and educational opportunities in Canada, 52 per cent (eighteen respondents); family, 46 per cent (seventeen respondents); and Sri Lankan friends, 38 per cent (ten respondents). In the discussion of adjustment factors, the importance of families was consistent with the reasons given for immigrating. Issues of a personal nature like education, language, or Western orientation, were consistent with factors previously identified with successful adjustment in the literature already discussed.

Of the thirty-seven respondents, thirty-four (91.9 per cent) commented that changes in their family occurred after immigrating to Canada. Specifically, seven respondents described an improvement in the economic situation of the family, while three noted a deterioration. Fifty-four per cent reported family changes relating to women. For instance, eight respondents remarked that women were now working for wages, and another eight said that men were having to participate in household chores. Family changes related to children were reported by 59.5 per cent of the sample. For example, twelve respondents reported that their children were more independent since immigrating to Canada.

A change in personal lives since immigrating to Canada was reported by 86.5 per cent (thirty-two respondents). Fourteen people reported personal changes in relation to the household, five reported less reliance on neighbours, and six people reported having less time.

Participation in leisure activities was an additional topic explored. Eighty-two per cent of the respondents felt that, in general, Sri Lankan Canadians were active in leisure pursuits, although only 67 per cent said that they, personally, were active. They identified leisure activities as sports, dances, musical events, religious activities, cultural activities, and so forth.

This reporting is preliminary and includes only the data from the first round of interviews. Additional interviews now underway will expand the data base to include a somewhat wider variety of respondents as well as double the sample size. It is hoped that more specific data regarding self-identified factors influencing adjustment by Sri Lankan immigrants will be forthcoming when the data are complete. The research should be completed by the end of 1991.

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NOTES

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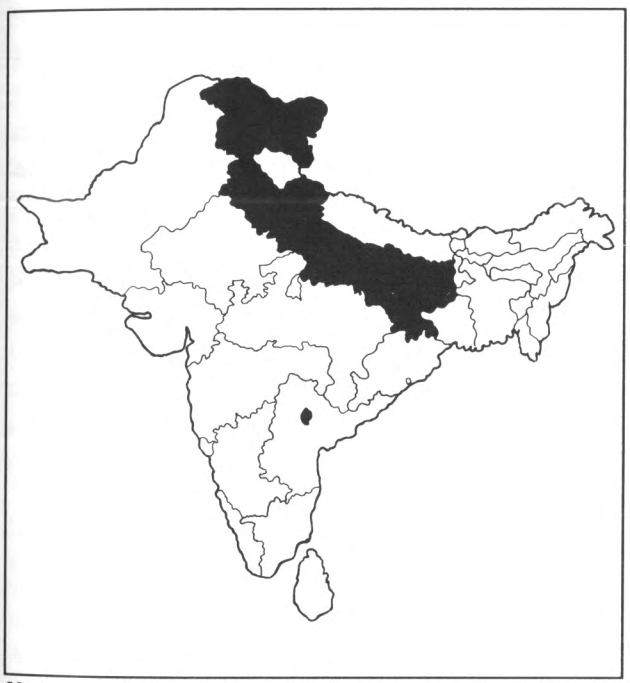
Urdu is spoken and read by millions of people in Pakistan and North India, and its poetry attracts an audience that stretches into Bombay and the former state of Hyderabad in South India. This essay describes the transfer of this literary form to Ontario and the creative results of this voyage.

Urdu in Canada

M.H.K. Qureshi



Urdu-speaking regions of South Asia.

Urdu is a relatively young language, for oral and literary tradition is approximately 250 years old. Its roots developed during the Moghul period of Indian history, beginning in the early sixteenth century and lasting until the establishment of British power in the subcontinent in the late eighteenth century. In the parts of India under the control of the Mughul Empire, Persian was the official language, as well as the language of business, commerce, the arts, and culture. Urdu began to develop in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries along with a range of popular regional languages. Though Persian was a significant source of its vocabulary, its grammatical structure is almost totally Indo-Aryan, and it has also been influenced by a number of North Indian indigenous languages. Urdu, therefore, derives from both the Persian and Sanskrit traditions, and as a result, its literature, especially its poetry, has been influenced by the cultural traditions of both Hindus and Moslems. The *ghazal*, an Urdu verse form, is widely popular among a diverse multicultural population in the subcontinent.

Most Urdu-speaking people in Canada come from the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent; they began coming here in the early 1960s. This emigration was a flight of young, educated, and ambitious people from the harsh, unsettled socio-political atmosphere and worsening economic conditions that were prevalent during the early 1950s. Those were hard times. Unemployment was widespread, and it was very difficult to attain a good and prosperous life. Consequently, almost everyone wanted to go to the "West," the land of opportunities. With optimism and surging enthusiasm, these people made their way to

Canada and the United States, where they found a free society and abundant economic opportunities. Unfortunately, with settlement came the realization that they had made their home in a country where they were strangers and were treated accordingly. Promises of equal opportunity, justice, and human dignity often turned out to be empty words since many Canadians did not accept them on equal terms. The result was the creation of a socio-psychological barrier. With different social norms, traditions, and beliefs, these new immigrants saw themselves being isolated from the mainstream and felt threatened. The host society remained largely indifferent to their plight and at times, outright hostile. It gave the impression that they were unwelcome guests. Engulfed in the inhospitable environment, both physical and cultural, they sought to find their own ways to make themselves at home. The Canadian climate depressed them, and Canadian institutions made them feel ill at ease. They were the victims of discrimination in the work place and lacking political influence, they suffered. Initial unhappy experiences did not deter them from adjusting to a new society. They were determined to succeed and over the years were able to carve out a niche in the Canadian mosaic and finally to overcome loneliness and desolation.

Although there were enormous material benefits available in Canada and a good number of the immigrants were doing very well, collectively they feared that they would lose in other important parts of life. As the disenchantment set in, they began to miss their culture, customs, and traditions. There was a general consensus that they should not barter their souls for material gains. Fruits of technological achievements may be very sweet, but they should not be the reason to sacrifice a way of life. Therefore, a range of South Asian community groups started concentrating on matters that would help them retain their distinct identity in Canada.

Urdu-speaking people are devoted to their cultural and traditional mode of life. Their Indian and Pakistani background, a colourful mosaic by itself, ties them to an ancient and much-loved tradition. They are generally conservative and are easily scandalized if any member of their community does something contrary to the established norms. Any wayward behaviour will expose a person to the disapproval of the community.

In the late 1970s some like-minded people gathered to form the Urdu Society of Canada in order to promote the literary, cultural, and secular aspirations of Urdu-speaking people. The society was duly incorporated and registered with the Province of Ontario. For a small fee, membership was available to anyone interested in Urdu. Regular monthly meetings were held at different locations. In these meetings, literary articles, poetry, and other papers were read and these readings were followed by lively discussions. Gradually, as the audience became mature, serious scholarly papers were also presented. Very soon this society became well known all over the Urdu world. With concerted efforts, the First Canadian Conference on Urdu was organized in 1982. The theme of the conference was "modern Urdu poetry." Scholars, poets, and writers came from all over the world to participate. The three-day conference culminated in a *mushaira*, a poetry-reading session, in which the most famous Urdu poets of the contemporary world read their poetry. The entire Urdu community thronged to listen to them. They were magical moments charged with electrifying joy. It was difficult to believe that it was happening in Canada.

Visiting dignitaries who came to Canada for the first time were very impressed. The interest and enthusiasm of Urdu-speaking Canadians surprised them, and Canada became a new and instant friend. The local Urdu press printed pictures of these visiting luminaries and took them around to show off the beautiful Canadian landscape. Fall colours were at their best. It produced an atmosphere of a carnival. In this venture, the Canadian government, the Province of Ontario, the

University of Toronto, and various libraries cooperated with the Society by either giving financial grants or lending their facilities for meeting purposes. Before the conference these visitors knew Canada only by name, but after it they were able to take back beautiful memories of pleasant moments and new Canadian friendships. They also felt satisfied with the performance of their compatriots. The event generated tremendous good will for Canada in the Urdu-speaking world.

Urdu literature, known for its richness and urbane sophistication, has developed a tradition of lyricism even when the poems are lighting fires and spreading rebellion. In the late 1930s the Progressive Movement championed the cause of the downtrodden, rebelled against cumbersome traditions and, by and large, followed the Marxist view of history and economics. The newness of the message, the creative use of the language, the use of metaphors, and a forceful presentation had a strong impact, especially on the young generation. Many of those progressive poets attended the Toronto conference. Some of their poems were well-known and extremely popular with the audience. Local Canadian Urdu poets were also eager to read their own poems. They imitated the style but for them, the reference point was Canada. Through their poetry, some of them expessed sorrow:

How pleasant is life and how satisfied is my being,
But, passions have turned into dust.
The other cried,
Look, where you have come -
Away from the world
Of moonlights and cool seasons,
Where hamlets are lighted by the rays of the sun.
And the air laden with fragrance of harvested fields
Kiss your body
To assure its presence.

And yet another one complained:

Life, O life
Why you take me from place to place
Why this insistence?

Munibur Rahman[1]

But these feelings were expressed at the early stages of the settlement process. Later on, matters relating to life in Canada became hot issues for local literary pundits. The early responses now appear to be somewhat emotional and myopic. At the regular monthly meetings of the Society, one can see how the problems of the Third World are discussed and how Canadian issues, whether relating to environment, housing, interest rates, acid rain, or the indiscriminate shooting of women in Montreal, become a matter of concern to Urdu-speaking men and women.

The Urdu Society of Canada has continued to progress and has held two more conferences and arranged many other poetry readings. Almost any name worth mentioning in the Urdu literary world has been invited to Canada. Literary journals in India and Pakistan have published Canadian Urdu poets, fiction writers, and literary critics. The Society has provided a forum for discussing Canada and how it affects the lives of immigrants. But most important, it has provided a regular opportunity for introspective analysis and objective viewing of the members' collective approach to problems and situations. When we were new to the land, we looked at Canadians from our miseries - actual or apparent. But now we look at things as Canadians. The perspective has changed. We have found a synthesis between our own identity and our new environment. One of the most respected poets, a Lenin Peace Prize winner and one of the founders of the Progressive Movement, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, confirmed in an interview with the *Toronto South Asian Review*[2] that there was an extreme difference between the subjects touched by visiting poets and local poets.

There is no need here to go into the history of modern Urdu literature and how it evolved into its present form. It should suffice to say that the Urdu literature now being produced in North America does not differ appreciably in diction and style from that of India and Pakistan but does bear its own

stamp in the themes with which it deals. *An Anthology of Modern Urdu Poetry* bears testimony to this fact. Under the auspices of the Urdu Society of Canada, this writer has selected and translated into English all the major poets from India and Pakistan together with some Canadian Urdu poets. The Urdu Society has always encouraged such ventures, and its members have cooperated with other literary organizations in publishing literary works, in part to promote better understanding among different cultural heritages.

Canadian Urdu literature:

Every moment, I go further away from the world of my desires.
Would some one tell me God, what is this imprisonment of a place?
How long will I get stuck in the enigma of East & West,
For how long this veil of race, colour and creed will blind the hearts?

The following lines depict the internal turmoil of an isolated soul planted in a strange country.

M.H.K. Qureshi, right, in conversation with Urdu poet Ali Sardar Jafri, photo courtesy of Sudha & Abdullah Khandwani.

People of Urdu ethnicity are now well integrated into the mainstream of modern Canadian life. Their children are flourishing in schools and universities, in business and commerce, and by and large are well adjusted. They do not make or live in ghettos, they participate in the social and political life of Canada, and yet they try to preserve their heritage. The new conditions of life have often taken their toll and have created pressures that have torn apart the traditional fabric of their cultural-religious way of living. These problems continue to be reflected in

I
Amidst a huge crowd
Ashamed of my wounded ego,
Carrying it on my arms
Am quite ready
To be crushed
Between the millstones of mountain and highway.
One poet says,
My body burns in a hell
My blood cries out -
I've demolished
the barrier
of my soul.

Nuzhat Siddiqui

Today, the Urdu-speaking community has identified itself with Canada. In Urdu literary tradition, a new horizon is about to appear on the western edge of the globe. Whether it will shine or not depends on the Urdu education of the coming generations.

The first of the poems below was written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the late doyen of Urdu poets. The other four are Canadian contributions to the genre.

Speak

Speak! your lips are free
Speak,
Your tongue,
Slender body;
All are still yours.
Look! in the smith's shop,
Fierce flames; red irons;
Lock springs open,
Chain links break.
Speak, even the brief time left for the body and tongue
Is abundant.
Speak, truth still lives;
Speak - say whatever is to be said.

North America

After coming here it occurred to me
That life is difficult and its paths arduous

Granted, socially it is pleasant and good for the physical well being
But my passions have gone to dust.

On every step one suspects the shining light
As the moon-faced ones glitter their bare bodies.

Here, everyone carries his own measure
And creates a garden of his own spell.

But I feel alone, in this colourful world
I can't appreciate the music of its lifestyle.

I have sincerely prayed to God
To preserve the conscience in my passions.

Here the soul is nourished by pleasure and glitter
Our "ways" of life have gone astray

In the dazzle of this blackened civilization
People have mortgaged their lives to pleasures.

To whom can I show the pain of my heart
Who would understand my troubles

Alas, when I think of my country, it bothers me
That there also the lamps of oppression glow.

Afzal Imam
Toronto

Pierre Elliot Trudeau

This we knew that you will not forever shine
On the Canadian firmament like the sun.

But, O, the spring of our garden, you will depart so soon
This we did not realize.

Canadian life is now quiet without you
That glamour is gone from this cold environs.

You were a grace to the house of worship; life of the tavern
Your doorsteps were the shrine for the pilgrims.

The house of politics reverberated with your presence
The Canadian winters draw their warmth from you.

You were the only beacon of determination in the city of
opportunism

The rolling waves in this land of standing shores.

You have given a new constitution to the nation
Otherwise it lacked the direction to its destiny.

The United Nations talks about you
The world is convinced of your wisdom and foresight.

The melody you struck on the lyre of peace
Will one day resonate as a song of peace.

The breeze says, "they will not go waste
Your efforts, day and night, for world peace."

Now, let us see, what they do; the people who inherited your mantle
We pray, life may not become difficult for us poor.

You were a hope for those who lost their heart in the terraces
of Canada
Where will they find a sympathizer and friend like you.

But Sheikh, I recall a couplet of poet Zafar
There's no use wailing and crying.

As this garden will remain as it is now
All its inhabitants will fly away singing their song.

Dr. Noor A. Sheikh
Kitchener

The Pain of Non-Communication

Darkness, descending through my blood
Floats over my heart
Like poisonous blue smoke.
Desires, like bare trees, with no pangs of growth
Bow their heads in shame
In the bazaar of non-fulfilment.
Eyes don't see
Ears don't hear
The tongue has lost its taste.
And touch sparks no sensation.
The whole body has turned into a heap of sand.
The fear of what will come shatters the nerves—
When that frail bond will be broken
Under strains of pressures
When objectives of life
Will go down
As useless pursuits
And faith turns skeptic
And meaning lose its sense
Like the leaves of autumn
Broken and scattered by heavy winds.
Then, all those ways of communication
Will be filled
With mangled corpses of thoughts.

Nuzhat Siddiqui

This Is Life

The breeze falls away.
In the Yukon
On the sunlit wall
Hangs a picture of flowers,
Fresh, red, bright;
But above,
Snow still covers the mountain crests.
In front of me,
A girl smiles,

Front cover of The Panjab (Urdu)*: monthly literary news magazine, Toronto, MHSO Collection*

Whispering into the phone
Sheepishly looks around
What a quandary! What a charm!
Here, my imagination blossom flowers,
And there, everything frozen.
This is our life.

Shaheen

M.H.K. Qureshi is an officer of the Department of Government Services, Government of Ontario.

NOTES

1. All of the poems reproduced here are translated from the Urdu by M.H.K. Qureshi in his *An Anthology of Modern Urdu Poetry* (Toronto: Urdu Society of Canada, 1988).

2. *Toronto South Asian Review*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Fall 1982/Winter 1983), p. 5.

This essay describes the establishment of a Sri Lankan newspaper in Toronto. The ethnic divisions that have led to civil war in Sri Lanka have made a significant impact on such enterprises in Canada. While the founders of the news seek to attract a broad-based Sri Lankan readership, the large community of recent Tamil Sri Lankan refugees is more likely to read one of the six Tamil papers now published in Toronto.

The *Lanka News*

Percy Seneviratne

In April 1989, Canada/Sri Lanka Publications Inc. launched the *Lanka News*, the first English-language newspaper to serve the Sri Lankan community in North America. My brother and I had been newspapermen in Singapore, and our shared experience as copywriter and journalist led us naturally to try to use these talents in our new home. We brought other credentials as well. Our grandparents had migrated from Sri Lanka to Singapore early in the century, and we were born into a multiracial and multicultural world that was a fact of our daily lives. Our idea of nationality reflected Singapore's successful accommodation of many peoples. A savant of the Indian freedom struggle has described the kind of nation that was built there and that, despite current troubles, is still being built in many of the states of South Asia.

> A nation is not made by common blood, a common tongue or a common religion; these are only important helps and powerful conveniences. But wherever communities of men, not bound by family ties, are united in one sentiment, as aspiration to defend a common inheritance from their ancestors or assure a common future for their posterity, there a nation is already in existence.

For me as a representative of a new immigrant generation for my family, this definition of a nation has a special meaning, and it forms the foundation of the paper's mandate. Through the pages of the *Lanka News* we seek to reinforce the connection that the shared heritage which we and our parents and their parents have carried with us to our new homes, and to facilitate the accommodation of this legacy in a newly shared Canadian identity which will be our children's future.

The catalyst for the initiation of this enterprise was a dance organized by the Canada Sri Lanka Association. There was energy, enthusiasm, and harmony in that get-together, but the community lacked direction. Aside from the dances, cricket matches, and a series of bulletins circulated to members of the Association, there were no activities or programs that brought Sri Lankans together in creative encounters. There was no attempt to address serious issues: removing the residue of mistrust between the Sinhalese and the Tamils; equipping and steeling the new immigrants for the challenges of their adopted country;

helping them to blend with other members of a multiracial Canada. Worse still, the mushrooming of Sri Lankan associations and clubs only created compartments—which fragmented a community that desperately needed a single voice because of its small size.

It was in this context that I sought to make some contribution, and as a journalist my vision was restricted to one answer: publishing. Other ethnic groups had their own publications, and the major newspapers were insular in their coverage and largely indifferent to matters outside North America unless some crisis arose in some other part of the world. It seemed to us that the community that argument was outweighed by one observation: anything given free is assumed to have no value. We were convinced that a free paper would not command respect, no matter how deep our commitment to the community. We began with meagre funds and sought assistance from government and granting agencies. But our failure to secure any form of support forced us to slash production costs.

At that stage, the technical work had to be performed outside our editorial office; and as Canada was still new to us, we had to grope around for production people whose charges were appropriate to our budget. Anyone accustomed to typesetting and paste-up charges in Singapore would find the

Masthead of the Lanka News.

would welcome a newspaper that provided them with news of the old country, of their developing society in Canada, and of cricket, a sport that Sri Lankans play with great passion and panache.

One of the difficult decisions we had to make was whether our paper should be distributed free of charge. That would certainly have its advantages: spontaneous acceptance, less pressure on our circulation operations, and appeal to potential advertisers whose primary concern, after all, was maximum exposure for their products. But Canadian costs exorbitant. With the advertising revenue not matching our expenses, it was quickly obvious that the boat had too many leaks for two brothers with limited financial resources. With a mixture of innovation and improvisation we have survived the initial crisis. Our home-made light box—crudely fashioned with light provided by an Indonesian lamp—and other implements belonged to a primitive printing shop. But the redeeming feature in our editorial room is our desktop publishing software that is uncomplicated, fast, and

versatile. It performs all the functions of newspaper production except printing and it has enabled us to produce the paper on a much lower budget.

In creating a masthead for the paper, we sought to blend a Sri Lankan element with a Canadian identity. But the pensive Lion of Sri Lanka seemed incompatible with the maple leaf, and our new national identity had to be given priority. It took us some time to develop a symbol that was both professionally attractive and a good reflection of our mandate. After an initial attempt to do the job ourselves, we hired a professional artist and the result is a masthead that has been well received and one under which we are proud to serve the community.

The main policy question which concerned us as we prepared the first edition of the paper was whether to include politics in its contents. We felt particularly qualified to deal with this issue, as our Singapore experience had enabled us to view the community friction in Sri Lanka with minds that were objectively neutral and unemotional. But we feared that political features about the situation in Sri Lanka would nourish the distrust and suspicion that existed within the community. Moreover, the Sinhalese names we bore were enough to fuel accusations of sinister intentions, so we decided to stay clear of politics or issues that would entangle us in controversy. We had launched the paper with the intention of getting all factions of the community to share a common experience, a common dream or vision. In the process we also wanted to remove the hurt and the bitterness. We wanted other Canadians to be proud of the community.

The continuing turmoil in Sri Lanka, however, demanded the attention of an honest journalist. I travelled to Colombo in early April 1989, just before the publication of our first issue. It included an eye-witness account of a troubled society involved in a violent and destructive struggle. The narrative was objective, and coverage of this issue—so important to the community settled in Canada—remains part of our regular news stories. Within our community, the *Lanka News* seeks to offer leadership in a dialogue we must have among ourselves. Since the ethnic struggles that divide Tamils and Sinhalese in our motherland have their reflection in our new Canadian home, we need to come together in order to come to terms with our Canadian life as a community.

A landmark for us in this regard was our coverage of the elevation of Tamil to compulsory status in Sri Lankan schools. Set in reverse print - that is, white letters on a black background - for emphasis, the front-page headline celebrated the change: Sinhala and Tamil to be compulsory, a major step towards integration of Sri Lanka's battling Sinhalese and Tamil communities.

In our editorial titled "Towards True Integration," we described the compulsory and equal treatment of Sinhala and Tamil in schools, with English as the link language, as possibly "the most acceptable solution to the cancerous confrontation in Sri Lanka." Though some might argue that the new legislation only addressed a language issue when the country was being torn apart in civil war, there is nothing more fundamental for national identity than language. A seed had been planted in the schools, the place where the next generation of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Burghers might grow to care for each other and to share a common emotional experience and a common dream, with no barbed-wire barrier or bomb between them.

In Singapore, language policy has had a unifying influence by giving Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil equal status, and English a dominant place in education. The dangers and the goal as described by Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, have significance for Sri Lanka. They have, as well, meaning for all of us who have brought a new language and culture for inclusion in Canada's mosaic.

If in the four different languages of

> instruction, we teach our children four different standards of right and wrong, four different ideal patterns of behaviour, then we will produce four different groups of people and there will be no integrated, coherent society. What is in the balance is the very foundation of our society. For if we are not to perish in chaos caused by antagonisms and prejudices between watertight cultural and linguistic compartments, then you have to educate the right responses amongst our young people in school.

Any paper needs to build a loyal clientelle in order to survive. For an "ethnic" paper, there is the additional requirement to identify with the community and be recognized as its voice. One moment stands out: a move by a section of the community to persuade the Canada Sri Lanka Association to manage a non-profit housing project. In responding to their call we drew attention to the plight of families earning $10,000-$12,000 annually who can only afford to pay $300-$400 a month for housing, far short of the average monthly rent of $800. We also pointed out that the federal and provincial governments were eager to provide funds to groups who wanted to manage such projects.

Our editorial noted that other communities and church groups were already involved in over fifty non-profit housing schemes.

> The Sri Lankan community should not shirk this duty to the Canadian society. Because housing can be equated to the possession of a basic stake in society. Because these projects can help break the bondage of misery. And, because Sri Lankans would then be acknowledged as a compassionate community—a community that cares deeply for other human beings.

Our stand in the non-profit housing issue gave us a new visibility, causing many to take us more seriously. The rapport with our readers was now distinctly livelier. And with the new policy suddenly exposing the sterility of earlier efforts, we realized that our reluctance to speak out frankly about life in Sri Lanka had been unwise.

We were certainly in our element when plans took shape for the historic United Way charity cricket match between the West Indies and the Rest of the World at the SkyDome in November 1990. Our match preview was a sellout outside the SkyDome on the morning of the event. Besides a pictorial centre spread which featured the magnificent SkyDome, with the fielding positions superimposed on it, we gave our readers—this time, a large percentage of them were watching a match for the first time in their lives—an insight into its excitement, with this editorial:

> Facing the intimidating charge of Marshall (the West Indian bowler who is the fastest in the world)—and the hard, glossy red ball travelling at over 90 mph—can be a shattering experience. Just as disconcerting is the delivery that swings, swerves or dips; tempting but inimical; every ball like every other, yet somehow unlike, the destroyer lurking amidst any of those deliveries.
>
> Then there are the batsmen, employing their bats like rods of correction, chastising the bowlers by forcing their deliveries to leave scorching trails as they speed towards the boundary—a sight that will, no doubt, enthrall saucer-eyed spectators.
>
> And what of the fielders who are seemingly detached and diffident? On the contrary, they wait in ambush, eyes intent, bodies poised to swoop in for the scudding ball or, with adhesive fingers ready to pluck a slashed sizzler, if they are in the slips a mere yard or two from the flashing blade.

Just when we believed there were no more minefields to traverse, the latest flare-up in the North and the East of Sri Lanka between the Tigers and the government has plunged the country into another conflict. This time, we fear the worst in the island's history. For this time, it is a real war. There can be no doubt that these troubles "at home" will continue to affect the views and relationships of Sri Lankans in Canada.

But we will remain unaffected and unemotional, reporting the facts in a detached manner. Equally important, there won't be any strident personal tone—because we are committed to the whole community. And the community here will continue to build its new life and find a place for its mix of identities, loyalties, and concerns, stimulated by the extraordinary opportunities provided in this wonderful country. We Sri Lankans intend to make a contribution and not merely be a footnote in the fascinating story of multiculturalism in Canada. The *Lanka News* intends to play its part.

Percy Seneviratne is the editor of the Lanka News.

The Asian Television Network is an important communications link among the South Asian communities of Ontario, and between them and Ontarians generally. Its founder has also established an important new link that connects Toronto with an international South Asian communications network. It is a business, a kinship connection, and a contribution to the development of multicultural understanding in Ontario.

Building The Asian Television Network

Shan Chandrasekar

My father, K. Subrahmanyam, gave up a law career to become a film maker, and in 1936, he became the first South Indian to make a motion picture with sound. Over the next twenty years he became a major figure in the Indian film industry, producing some three hundred feature films as well as short films and documentaries. He achieved enormous success but had his share of failures as well, and our very large family experienced both great affluence and extreme deprivation. We learned to appreciate whatever we acquired and to cope with adversity.

Like so many others who lived through and participated in this dynamic period of social reform and freedom struggle in India, my father sacrificed an easy life for the challenge of leadership. He made one of the first anti-caste films, attracting controversy and criticism even within our family. His subsequent work dealing with the remarriage of widows and child marriage entrenched his reputation as a rebel and an enemy of traditional social values. His film *Tyaga Boomi* (Land of Sacrifice) was a contribution to the nationalist movement and was banned by the British government. He was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and this was reflected in his film *Gita Gandhi*, which was also banned. The negatives were seized and he was kept for a time under house arrest; for almost eight months he was not allowed to make films.

Although much of this happened before I was born, my father's achievements and the film business dominated my childhood years. After independence in 1947, he worked with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and was one of the first to lead an Indian film delegation to the United States. It was there that he met Walt Disney and took animation back to India. He founded one of the major Indian film studios, Madras United Artists Corporation, later to be called Gemini. The two boys with bugles in the emblem of the company were my brothers.

In the last period of his career he moved away from commercial films to concentrate on children's films, and documentaries, and educational films. He became chairman of the International Film and Television Council in Geneva and was honorary chairman when he passed away in 1971. We were therefore exposed, not only to film-making techniques through my father's example, but to the idea of service and social purpose.

I was nine years old when my brothers and I experimented with leftover film from Russian Imo cameras. We all looked toward my father as a model, but my mother was not at all keen on any of us getting into the film

industry. She was determined that each of us would move into a different profession. I was to be an engineer. In our family, such parental guidance was not easily rejected. I was sent to college, and although I was not fond of the work or the career prospect, I took a degree in mathematics. Postgraduate studies in electrical engineering followed, but this had only lasted three and a half months when a break occurred in our traditional family determination in such career decisions. My eldest brother, who had become a lawyer, quit law and joined my father in producing documentary films. My second brother who was a chartered accountant, also quit his profession and joined my father. My third brother had gone to Columbia University and was pursuing a Ph.D. in communications.

I was determined to leave engineering but reluctant to follow my two brothers into film making. My family agreed that I should pursue a career that would satisfy my own interests, and I chose social work. I completed a master's degree in India and met a Canadian professor who encouraged me to continue my studies in Canada. I applied for admission to American and Canadian universities and in 1967 went to Montreal as part of the staff of the Indian pavilion at Expo '67. When McGill University accepted me, I decided to stay. I was given credit for my Indian training and finished the two-year degree in nine months. I was also permitted to write my thesis at McGill's Instructional Communication Centre. This allowed me to bring together the two streams of film making and service, which was the legacy I had received from my father. My thesis topic was instructional television.

After graduation, I worked for the John Howard Society as a parole officer and social worker and continued my studies by commuting to Buffalo to take courses in communications at the State University of New York. Subsequently I joined the postgraduate program at Marshall McLuhan's Centre for Culture and Technology in the University of Toronto. I held a number of positions during these years, first with Big Brothers and then the Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Children's Aid, where I was in charge of the foster care division. Since I was neither a Catholic nor a Christian, I was very honoured by the appointment—one of the many multicultural experiences that have enlivened my life.

There remained, however, the desire for a more active involvement in communications. I was convinced that if we used social work, community service, and a knowledge of media and show business—put them all together—we would have the right commodity, something to which the general community would respond. I felt that good news, if promoted properly with an aura of show business, could be sold. Since I had been trained in television, it became the obvious outlet and the core of my professional goals. It was clear I could not move into Canadian programming overnight, but there was a vacuum to be filled and a constituency not well served: the multicultural aspect of mass media.

The freedom of the media in North America had impressed me from my first day in Canada. I watched talk shows in which presidents and prime ministers were criticized and satirized. It was fascinating but a bit alarming too to someone who was brought up to be respectful of our leaders. I began building bridges in my mind between the Indian perspective I had brought with me to this new home and the mainstream media in Canada that attracted my attention and in which I hoped to build a career. It was at that time that I met Ted Rogers.

In 1971, together with a group of friends—all Indians, bachelors, and professionals in various fields—we formed a music group. I had been part of such a group in India, where we generally sang Western music—the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Judy Collins. But in Canada we sang Indian music. We cut some records and eventually launched a television show. It was purely a hobby for all of us, but it was to

become for me the beginning of a new career. The show was put together in black and white at the Light Studio in downtown Toronto. There was no colour there at the time. When colour become available on Scarborough Cable, we went there to do one show in colour. Ours was one of the first serious, ongoing Indian television programs in North America.

The show became very popular and we gave it more and more of our time. Everything was totally self-financed; there were no government grants, no support from other companies and no advertising revenue. We began to broker time at City TV and in 1975 became the first Asian program produced as a series for a North American television station. It was a great success.

involved in Italian television, I provided the Indian component of a group representing the Portuguese, Jewish, German, Macedonian, and Greek communities. We decided to float an application for the world's first multicultural television station. We were rejected by the CRTC and had to go back many times before receiving its approval.

In 1979 we launched Channel 47. It was no longer necessary to broker programming time elsewhere: we had our own station. It was not easy. We were a group of visionaries with inadequate financing. We were also inexperienced businessmen and there was little confidence in the market for this unknown and multicultural product. Conventional national advertisers paid little attention to us. We had moved ahead of our

ATN ASIAN TELEVISION NETWORK INC.

Although we were scheduled during "dark time" rather than prime time, the audience was there. I showed movies at midnight on Tuesday nights. Indian movies are very long and they would usually run until three o'clock in the morning. We apparently created a serious social problem in the community. On Wednesdays many people had difficulty getting up in the morning. At City TV, Moses Znaimer took a gamble with us: he was amused by this new and exotic enterprise but he was also proud of what we accomplished at that time.

From this beginning we grew with the population and also collaborated with others who were involved in television programming for their own communities. Under the leadership of Danny Iannuzzi, who had been

abilities to deliver on our promises to ourselves and others, but hard work, long hours, and sacrifices by a lot of people turned things around. Rogers, who saw some potential in our efforts, provided basic operational funding. Today, the station is fully self-sufficient and although there is still much to be done, there is optimism that we will achieve our goal to become a major competitive participant in the market within the next three to five years.

As the Indian population grew and changed, we responded with new programming. Beginning with songs and dances, we went through various phases—feature films, serials, dramas, and then discussions and reporting of issues. We are becoming a Canadian program. We carry

views from India and the countries of South Asia, but we are also increasingly concerned with the question of how regional events affect us in our Canadian lives. We now discuss Canadian issues, such as Meech Lake, on our show. We have also responded to the growing multilingual reality of the South Asian community in Canada by launching programs in Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, and in the near future, Tamil. Our main program attempts to deal with broad-based South Asian issues and to involve the general Canadian community as well. We have a mandate to enhance the knowledge of South Asian people and culture among all Canadians.

We need to describe the positive contribution being made by our community and the outstanding people who have become leaders in many fields. We want people to know that our community did not come here only to receive benefits. We are making a contribution as well, and we are also here to share in all aspects and responsibilities of Canadian life.

We have used our facilities to promote charity fund-raising. The South Asian community made a large contribution to the United Way by bringing the popular Indian playback singer Lata Mangeshkar to Toronto. She sang at Maple Leaf Gardens, and $350,000 was raised. Similarly the Indian-organized cricket match at the SkyDome last year was a community-wide effort in which we played our part.

We are also beginning to give attention to a range of issues and social problems confronting our community: parent-child conflict, changing teenage values, family violence, linguistic and cultural retention. In addition we have dealt with the growth pattern in the community and future immigration trends. Family re-unification is a priority in official immigration policy. At the local community level, this policy has complex effects on existing families. We are looking at the issue of parents being sponsored by their adult children who have already established themselves in Canada.

We have a large viewer base, but a diverse one. In addition to people who have migrated to Canada directly from South Asia, others are part of a second or third migration and come from East and South Africa, the West Indies, Guyana, Surinam, Fiji, and Britain. We also attract viewers among other communities. Greeks and Macedonians watch our show; they like the music. Our program also benefits from a good time slot when many other stations are running evangelical programs that have a different audience.

There is now substantial and continuous involvement of the community in our activities. Our show is important to them. They view it with a sense of pride. It took some time before it was recognized that we were both a commercial and a community operation, and that it was necessary to produce a professional product and attract advertising revenue. It is often assumed because we are a part of multicultural television, that we are subsidized by the government, but in fact, we operate like any other business. We—the program and the community—have grown and developed together, and our expectations of each other have become complementary.

In 1975 most of our advertising came from corner grocery shops and businesses generally characterized as ethnic. But mainstream advertisers now recognize the large potential in the non-English and non-French communities. We now have a combination of advertising dollars from both sources. We have also invested a lot of time in upgrading the quality of so-called ethnic advertising and marketing. We always knew what was good-quality programming, but we did not have the funds to produce it. We are still short of development capital, but we are getting closer to our goal. The main lesson I have learned—especially working with Rogers Cable—is the need for professionalism in quality. We have to be very good to attract an audience outside our traditional viewing constituency, and we need to do this if we are

to grow and play the larger role we have envisioned for ourselves.

The invention of remote control has provided a great opportunity. Many of those viewers who traditionally watched only CBC or CTV now sit in their chairs and flip through the channels. Some will pause at one of our programs and will stay with us. We are confident that if we deliver quality, we will attract that larger audience. We do some of our shows in English and others in a bilingual format: English and Hindi, English and Punjabi, English and Gujarati. Many of our films and dramas, and occasionally our news programs, are subtitled. Most are done at the source, but we have done some in our own studio. The English language was the link that facilitated my journey to Canada; it remains the link that allows multicultural broadcasting to be shared among new and old Canadians.

We have established a company, the Asian Television Network, to produce and operate in this field. The name expresses a vision that still remains in the future: we seek to build a Canada-wide service. At this time, however, only Toronto has multicultural commercial television. In the rest of the country, such programming appears on cable television. We do try to collaborate as much as possible. We have a small show on British Columbia TV, produced there but partly prepared in Toronto. We experimented with the development of a relationship with Cathay International Television, also in British Columbia, but this did not work out, although we did learn a lot from the Chinese activities there. They have twelve thousand subscribers and therefore, a very substantial income. We watched also the birth and growth of Tele-Latino across Canada, as well as China-Vision. There is an extraordinary amount of activity going on in this field. We have collaborated with other multicultural media across Canada—newspapers and radio as well as television, in a variety of ways. We are doing some cable TV shows on local stations and exchange programs with larger centres. In addition, we are participating in the Vista Television network with the result that our programs now have a national audience and market. We have provided technical assistance to a range of communities, not only South Asian, in the production of religious programs for Vista. We use our own studio as well as our remote crews who go out to film events for future broadcast.

In 1977 we joined with others to get a licence from the CTRC for the establishment of Channel 47 because we could not obtain adequate studio time for our own productions. Our success brought us a fine Toronto broadcast facility, but because it has had to serve twenty-four international communities, the problem of shortage of studio time re-emerged very quickly. To provide some additional space for Asian programming, I established a small studio on John Street in Thornhill. It was just a simple two-camera-shoot facility, however, and we quickly outgrew it. There was, in addition, the problem of establishing a high-quality standard. Much of the ethnic programming was technically weak, having been produced with home video equipment. My dream was to establish a large studio with state-of-the-art technology that would compete in quality, if not quantity, with the product of the mainstream industry. And with Jaya, my wife and my partner, the dream has come true. She has shared in the personal financial sacrifices required to make this investment. She has been willing to risk a secure life in order to respond to this challenge. And she has been primarily responsible for the quality and sensitivity of all our productions. While I am the part of the team more often seen on camera; she is behind me and the whole operation, ensuring good technical and production standards.

In 1990 Jaya and I opened our new studios in Newmarket. We are still relatively small, but there is production space to meet current needs and room to grow. We have, as well, installed the latest technology. We can produce an excellent product, and this has

attracted the respect of colleagues in the large networks. Our two main programs, *Asian Horizons* and *Sounds of the East* have approximately 1.2 million viewers. We believe in multiculturalism and have surely benefited from the generosity of spirit that has informed this policy. In the long term, however, multiculturalism must grow into a new and broad-based Canadian culture. We seek to play a role in achieving this goal by producing South Asian programs for mainstream television, by making multicultural programs part of the ordinary activity of the entertainment and information industry. In doing so, we intend to compete with CBC and CTV for attention and audiences. It is just a question of time.

Shan Chandrasekar is the President of the Asian Television Network.

As a teacher and performer, Menaka Thakkar has established in Toronto a creative centre for cultural creativity and exchanges between India and Ontario. Through her commitment and achievements we have become a part of the dynamic life of Indian classical dance as it develops in India and diaspora countries around the world.

Portrait of an Indian Dancer in Canada: Menaka Thakkar

Rasesh Thakkar

This essay is admittedly semiautobiographical, and it hangs together with the companion piece which follows on the film and photography of Sudha and Abdullah Khandwani. Both Menaka and Sudha are my sisters (some would insist that I am their brother!), and Abdullah is my brother-in-law. I have been involved, in varying degrees, in the cultural enterprise of the entire family as both a participating artist and a helper in its management and organization. However, the centrality has always been theirs; I have remained mostly backstage or the sidestage and away from the cameras. I therefore hope to combine the intimacy of experiences and thought processes with a certain useful distance to yield a clearer perspective.

The present piece deals with Menaka, the younger sister, and her multifaceted work in the transfer of culture through dance. She has been internationally recognized, through media notices and honours and awards from governments and art centres, as an outstanding performer, choreographer, and teacher in the classical traditions of three of India's seven major dance styles—Bharatnatyam, Odissi, and Kuchipudi.

Menaka came to Ontario in 1972. Since then, she has made her home for nine months of every year in Toronto, and for the remaining three months in Madras, Bombay, and Delhi. While in India she concentrates on studying, performing, researching, and choreographing new dances and dance-dramas. For the nine months in Ontario, she continues these activities and in addition, involves herself intensely in the teaching of dance in various places—in her own dance school called Nrityakala, which she founded in Toronto in 1975; occasionally, in the Department of Dance at York University; more regularly in other Canadian cities such as Winnipeg and Regina since 1980 (and Thunder Bay and St. John's, Newfoundland, in the past) where the community-run dance schools hire her as the principal teacher to teach intensively in fixed two-week periods, leaving the follow-up practice sessions to local teachers; and finally in the intensive summer courses in her own school in Toronto, where her students, past and present, gather for a period of six weeks. She is also invited regularly as a week-long artist-in-residence by school boards in Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver. In addition, she gives frequent lecture-demonstrations, master classes, workshops, and guest lectures at universities, art centres, and schools of ballet and modern dance. Even her own public performances have been an educational

Portrait of the dancer, Menaka Thakkar

experience, as many in her audiences have remarked. I have often acted as narrator or the master of ceremonies at her solo performances. Sometimes, before performing a dance that uses stylized mime, she demonstrates the language of hand gestures and facial expressions.

The transfer of dance culture which results from her work is significant and many-sided. It is a transfer from one generation to another, from one socio-cultural setting to a very different cultural milieu, and often from the context of distant ages and ancient sensibilities into our modern times, for the repertoire that is taught and performed has accumulated over centuries. Also, it must be noted that what is transferred in this process is not merely the movements, techniques, and aesthetics of dance. Inevitably, far more is transferred because these forms in general, and the expressional dance compositions in particular, are strong containers of culture in the larger sense, which includes customs, attitudes, social and individual values, myth and religion, philosophy, and world view. When Menaka performs or teaches the dance numbers expressing the celebrated twelfth-century poem "Geet Govind," the whole of Krishna mythology comes alive with all its philosophical overtones, religious beliefs, human relationships, aesthetic sensibilities, and details of daily living.

The transfer of culture that takes place through Menaka's work is not confined to the immigrant Indian community. Among her large number of students, there are many whose origins are distinctly non-Indian. Also, she has a two-way relationship with the mainstream of the host society. Menaka has had a significant influence upon the general dance community in Ontario and throughout Canada, and in turn, she has been open to the important influences coming from them to the point of working with Canadian choreographers like Grant Strate and Dana Lubke. She has shared the stage with ballet and modern dancers, and performed in important Canadian dance festivals and conferences, including the annual "Dance in Canada". Joan Phillips recently dedicated her award-winning choreography to Menaka for her help and

inspiration. As one dance critic, writing in the *Toronto Star* a few years ago, remarked, "the dance scene in Toronto has never been the same since Menaka made her home here."

Such acceptance and admiration given to an individual artist affects the whole immigrant group, which participates vicariously in the celebration of its culture. Often torn between their desire to live their own inherited cultural life and their anxiety about its acceptability in the host society, the young and the old of the Indian immigrant community suddenly discovered a cultural hero who seemed to rescue them from their dilemma. They have become far more eager to receive their culture and even propagate it with a sense of pride and confidence.

The transfer of culture is a very complex phenomenon that is subject to a number of forces. There are three principal actors in this whole drama, whose internal motivations and external circumstances interact with one another: (1) First, there is the immigrant community, including its youth, adults, and organizations. These are largely the recipients of the cultural transfer. (2) Secondly, there is the host society, including the government, the media, the mainstream art world, and the general public (sometimes other ethnic groups too). Some of these are also recipients, although more often their involvement in the drama comes through their attitudes and policies, which help or hinder the transfer of culture. (3) Finally there is the performer-teacher-cultural activist, such as Menaka, through whom the culture is transmitted. In addition there is the fourth actor, somewhat behind the scenes, who exercises a strong, although subtle, influence on the whole process. That is the mother country, India in our case. A fully articulated analytical model on these lines is developed elsewhere. (See Thakkar, 1991.)

All of us in the family slowly realized the complexity of this process as we journeyed along the meandering path mapped out by the relationships among these various actors, Menaka being at the centre of it all. But it also began to dawn upon us that large parts of this drama were all too familiar, for they had been played out in India by a previous generation of dancers and dance teachers, and we were largely replaying them in seemingly different circumstances. Modern India's experience in reviving and reconstructing ancient dance traditions has been a process of cultural transfer that has had amazing similarities with our own experience in the immigrant milieu of Ontario. There too, the revivalist movement took place at a time of overwhelming contact with the West through the British, which often produced the same conflicting attitudes towards the absorption of new influences: a desire to prove to the British the greatness of our heritage, a somewhat painful anxiety to win their acceptance, a need to reform the style of dance presentations to achieve effective communication and acceptance. All this took place in the midst of frustratingly ambivalent attitudes of Indian society towards its own dance, dancers, and regional cultural identities. Some of these themes were played out in the 1930s and 1940s when the British Raj still prevailed; the central figures in the revivalist movement were those cultural heroes, such as Rukmini Devi Arundale, Uday

The transfer of culture through the artist's work.

Shankar, and Rama Gopal, who constantly mediated between the ancient and the modern as between the Indian and the Western cultural traditions. Even in the 1950s and 1960s, when Sudha and then Menaka blossomed into dancers and choreographers, the age of discovery, revival, and reconstruction was not over; if anything, it had become more vibrant and broad-based, and the issues and debates had assumed greater sharpness. It was a heady period and both sisters were in the midst of it. Bharatnatyam of South India, which was revived in the 1930s, was now being transferred to other regions all over the country. Thus it was that Menaka, a Gujarati girl from Bombay, received rigorous training from five distinguished teachers of Bharatnatyam and rose to such eminence that the dance critic of the prestigious *Times of India* wrote, "It is in the *nritta* (pure dance) exposition that Menaka ranks in a class by herself." It was also during this period that Charles Fabri, the well-known Indian art historian of Hungarian origin, wrote eloquently about the beauty of an ancient dance style that had survived fragmentarily in the eastern state of Orissa. Soon, imaginative choreographers like Kelucharan Mohapatra began reconstructing it. Menaka went to Cuttak to study with him and soon emerged as one of the leading performers of Odissi. She was given the Singar Mani Award for her excellence in Bharatnatyam in 1968 and in Odissi in 1970.

When Menaka came to Canada in 1972, it was supposed to be for a short visit; by a quirk of fate her stay became longer and, eventually, permanent. She then started performing. Her very first appearance was highly acclaimed in the press, and soon a series of performances followed. The response of the Canadian dance community was bewilderingly ecstatic. William Littler, writing in the *Toronto Star* of the performance, where she had shared the stage with ballet and modern dancers, said, "To be blunt about it, Menaka Thakkar virtually danced every one else off the stage." Rhonda Ryman, reviewing her solo performance in *Dance Review* wrote, "Then with a burst of applause the image was shattered and we looked on a tiny, remarkably vigorous woman, who for the three hours had captured the fantasies and imagination of a surrendered audience."

We all were naturally elated. However, we slowly began to realize that beyond all the applause and the appreciation of her dancing, only a small section of Canadian society seemed truly aware of the place of this art in the larger dance culture of Canada. For most of them it was "cute" and "interesting" but "ethnic" and "exotic". That was their response to the idea of multiculturalism. Unfortunately, a significant part of the Indian diaspora too, not being quite familiar with its own heritage, took a similar view. For many of them, the proper response to the policy of multiculturalism was to preserve these arts because they were arts; but their ultimate meaningfulness, in their vision, lay within the narrow limits of our community for celebrating social events or for showing them off at multicultural festivals with other "ethnic" groups. It was, at times, painful to see some of our best visiting artists being presented by community organizations in ill-equipped high school auditoriums with poor stage lighting, and with no publicity or reviews in the mainstream media. Initially we tried to argue our point of view when requested to give Menaka's performance. After a while we gave up arguing, having earned a few epithets such as "fussy," "arrogant," or "uncooperative," we started ourselves renting high-profile professional theatres, such as the Premier Dance Theatre or the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts. We would then do all the necessary work (a good deal of which often fell to Menaka!) to present her performance as a regular theatre event in the cultural life of the city as a whole. When enthusiastic reviews and other stories and interviews about Menaka began to appear in the city press, most members of the Indian community felt proud and happy.

Many of them would attend her performances too, constituting about 50 per cent of the audience. Later on, some community organizers saw the point so that Menaka and her students began to perform for them in a more professional setting.

Our own presentations of Menaka were, necessarily, far fewer than the bookings she was getting from universities, art centres, art festivals, and conferences. At the annual conferences of "Dance in Canada," whether held in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, or Vancouver, Odissi and Bharatnatyam became as much a part of the Canadian dance scene as ballet, modern, or contemporary dance. At the international dance conference on "Dance and the Child" held in Sweden in 1982, Canada was represented by Menaka and her students. To the delight and disbelief of the international audience they performed Bharatnatyam as Canada's contribution to the conference. The long standing ovation they received still burns brightly in Menaka's memory. That was a moment of Indo-Canadian pride, a visible manifestation of the transfer of culture.

Several awards and grants came to her from governmental agencies in both Canada and India, such as the Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Fairly regularly, she started inviting her musicians and gurus from India to accompany her on North American performing tours. The gurus would also teach in her Toronto school for a few weeks, giving her Canadian students a kind of exposure to the authentic traditions that is not easily available to the dance students, even in India. Her musicians would play for the debut of her Canadian students, whom Menaka would present in the centuries-old tradition of *arangetram* when temple dancers were dedicated to serve God through dance and music. In fact one such *arangetram* was actually performed in the large open space of a recently constructed temple in Toronto. Her students thus absorb a good deal of Indian culture besides the techniques and aesthetics of dance. Menaka often takes her advanced students to India to perform in cities like Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, and Bangalore. When they are received enthusiastically by the press and audiences, they acquire self-confidence and a much needed assurance that their training is in no sense a diluted version of the authentic art. They feel that

A scene from the dance Seeta Swayamvara *"Sita's choice of husband."*

they are part of the Indian dance scene in general and will not be ignored or labelled as coming from some distant outlying pocket of Indian culture.

During this period Menaka's own choreography acquired a new depth and range. I wrote basic scripts for most of her dance dramas and also co-directed the experimental production based upon Tagore's "Karna-Kunti." In "Seeta Swayamvara," which was based upon the Indian epic *Ramayana*, Menaka's dance style was the traditional Bharatnatyam, but the familiar theme was interpreted from the usually ignored point of view of the heroine, Seeta. The theme of "The Wise Monkey and Foolish Crocodile" came from the ancient Indian tale from the *Panchatantra*, but her choreography was based more freely upon a variety of dance movements. In this production she used her own students along with students of ballet, modern, and Chinese dance. In "Blue Saturn" she worked with the Canadian choreographer Grant Strate. In her production based upon Tagore's "Bhanusigher Padavali" she employed traditional Odissi, whereas in the recently choreographed "Shakti" she has again gone back to traditional Bharatnatyam. One of her early experimental productions, which she put together in 1975, was based upon the famous twelfth century poem "Geet Govind." Here her dance interpretations of a set of individual poems chosen from the long narrative work were held together by background narration in English. This, in turn, was integrated with music and the projection of slides of Kangra paintings on the theme of the poem. Menaka presented the two-hour drama as her solo performance, playing all the roles as they occurred. This was received very enthusiastically by the press and the public in Europe and North America. Later in 1985 we produced Tagore's "Karna-Kunti," a drama. To the background narration of the poetic dialogue in English between Karna and Kunti and supported by suitable instrumental music and lighting, Menaka provided dance interpretation, freely using the expressional vocabulary of both Odissi and Bharatnatyam. Besides performing this production in several Indian and Canadian cities, she presented it at the third International Dance Conference in Hong Kong.

I once asked Menaka about the most satisfying moments of her work in Canada. She said, "Three years ago I was invited as artist-in-residence by the Vancouver School Board. In one of the schools, where I was to give a dance demonstration, the principal told me of two East Indian boys who were so ashamed to call themselves East Indian that they represented themselves as Mexican and displayed great distaste for anything Indian. When I went to their class the two boys were nervous and uptight and would not look at me but kept their eyes to the floor. As I began to dance they slowly began to look sideways to see how the others were reacting. When they saw that the other boys were thoroughly enjoying my dance and feeling thrilled, the two felt relaxed and slowly began to look up. They came out of their sense of shame when they saw that their Indianness could be a source of wonder and pride. At the end, they came smiling to me and said that they would go to India to see the whole country. That evening I got a call from the mother of one of the boys, who thanked me, wondering all the while how it was that I was able to change her son's mind. Last year I met the two boys once again in Vancouver when they told me that they did go to India with their parents and thoroughly enjoyed the visit. This, to me, was the greatest success of my dance career."

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Sudha and Abdullah Khandwani are part of the extraordinary Thakkar family of Toronto, which has made the transfer of Indian culture to Canada a creative mission and a successful enterprise. Using multimedia techniques, Sudha and Abdullah have discovered and rediscovered important elements of popular and classical culture in India and have used their expertise to make the essence of South Asian diaspora culture available to all of us in Ontario.

The Films and Photography of Sudha and Abdullah Khandwani

Rasesh Thakkar

This essay is linked with the preceding one on Menaka Thakkar. In that essay we briefly met Sudha Thakkar, but not Abdullah, although in a more detailed account of Menaka's activities he too would have figured.

Since we already met Sudha in her dancing phase in the India of the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in the other account, it is best to go back to that beginning. Even though her joint work with Abdullah has been in the medium of film and photography, the origins of their interest can be traced back to their earlier pursuits. When they met in the early 1960s, Abdullah was a painter and a photographer and Sudha's fields were dancing and dramatics. When she started learning dance in the mid-forties, South India's dance style known as Bharatnatyam was very new to Bombay, and Sudha was one of the very few girls to pursue it seriously at that time. It was a vibrant period of revival and propagation of ancient dance, a process she helped as a founding member of the Dancers' Guild of Bombay. Her love for dramatics was perhaps rooted in our father's early aspiration to be a playwright. Later, when she became Director of Dancing and Dramatics at the National College of the University of Bombay, she combined her two loves and produced many dance-dramas. In the process she also experimented with adapting the South Indian dance style to the North Indian musical system. This was the phase of her involvement in classical dance, stage acting, and college teaching. In addition, she founded her dance institution called Kalanidhi to give rigorous training in Bharatnatyam.

Then suddenly, the direction changed. She teamed up with Maharastra's well-known poet, Vasant Bapat, to produce a three-hour show on the regional culture of Maharastra. The intimate experience with the folk culture of one region awakened her interest in the folk culture of other regions as well. She was ready to take the plunge into that area. It was then that she met Abdullah, who was equally ready to move away from his one-man shows of paintings and focus his lenses on the unfamiliar sites of India. For the next eight years they travelled through small towns, villages, tribal areas, and to places where they had to walk the last few miles, loaded with cameras, portable tape recorders, and a few cooking utensils. They would stay there for days in the midst of people, documenting their dances, music, folktales, arts and crafts, their ways of life, rituals, and festivals. They also went to historical sites, monuments, temples, and places of pilgrimage; they

A scene from Toronto's Little India.
Photograph by Dr. David Coleman, Robert F. Harney Collection, MHSO.

photographed princes and their palaces, wild life preserves, new art expressions, and the exuberance of youth. They came back with more than fifty thousand colour negatives and twenty thousand black and white, reels of tape recordings, some super 8 film footage, and several art objects.

Out of all this treasure came several exhibits which were shown in the major cities of India, where they were as much an eye opener to an average urbanite as they had been to Sudha and Abdullah themselves. Soon commissions came from the state governments of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and the central government in New Delhi to prepare specific exhibits and sets of slides with written information. However, after all the high praise and ministerial hand shakes were over and after a couple of commercial deals fell through, what remained was a pile of debt and an unfulfilled longing to make documentary films on the subjects of their interest.

This is where Canada and I came into the picture, for I had just accepted a teaching position in economics at York University in Toronto, where an ambitious film program was being developed. Also, Canada seemed to hold a promise of wiping out that debt if only their exhibits could be brought here. So in 1971 Sudha joined the Film Programme at York University, and a year later, Abdullah came with most of their negatives, unedited film footage, and tape recordings. It was a time when we had started talking about multiculturalism in this country. Naturally the first multicultural step that they took was to effect a union in marriage of Hindu Sudha and Muslim Abdullah. In fact they married three times in a short span of two months—first according to the civil requirements at the City Hall, then according to the Muslim religious ceremony, and finally according to the Hindu rites, as if to tell all of us that widely differing religious cultures could be bound intimately without having to lose their identities. The bliss that followed was not to make them forget their mission. Fortunately for them, there was an imaginative producer at the CBC TV network,

Rina Kravagna, who, on seeing the samples of their work commissioned them to make seven short films using their film footage, still pictures, and recordings. Thus came the seven enticing titles: *Flute Players*, *Art of Tie-Dye*, *Streets of Bombay*, *Kids*, *Two Houses*, *Fishermen*, and *Wedding*.

At about the same time the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, whose mandate was to promote Indian studies in Canada, held a six-week summer program, "Introduction to India" and commissioned Sudha and Abdullah to produce a photographic exhibit consisting of ninety huge pictures entitled "India: Life and Art." The whole Thakkar family, including Abdullah, was involved in the summer program. Sudha and Menaka gave workshops and lectures, and Menaka gave a solo performance; Abdullah did the darkroom work in our basement; I wrote the text to accompany the exhibit and generally made myself useful by driving them around, for no one else in the family, conveniently enough, had learned to drive. The exhibit was a great success; it travelled to various university campuses and was finally bought by the University of Toronto.

Now Sudha and Abdullah were ready to expand and move into new techniques, tools, and themes. They first experimented with multimedia audio-visual shows. The first to emerge out of their work was "India: Life and Art"—the same theme that they had developed in their previous exhibit, but this time presented as a forty-five minute show using eight hundred colour slides projected on three screens through five projectors in pre-programmed sequences and integrated with background music and narration. This was an instant success, and they showed it on innumerable occasions, social events, and community celebrations and in schools, universities, churches, and public libraries. A new incarnation of this show, much improved and expanded and with an added emphasis on the current Indian art scene, appeared in 1987 under the title "Three Faces of Indian Art." This, too, has aroused the same intensity of interest and enthusiasm and is still making the rounds of all those places and events. In another multimedia show that they produced in the mid-seventies was entitled "Bharatiya Nari" (Indian woman), Sudha and Abdullah, teaming up with Rina Singha, used not only three screen projections of slides and 16 mm film footage but also live performances of music and dance, all integrated with background music and narration. The production was funded by a grant from the Ontario Arts Council.

Until the late 1970s the main theme of their work was still India. They had worked with Canadian artists, and filmmakers, the National Film Board, and the CBC, but Canada, and Ontario in particular, were merely physical frames into which they were transplanting Indian images. Now, perhaps, the time had come when the images and life flowing within this physical mould were beginning to stir them creatively.

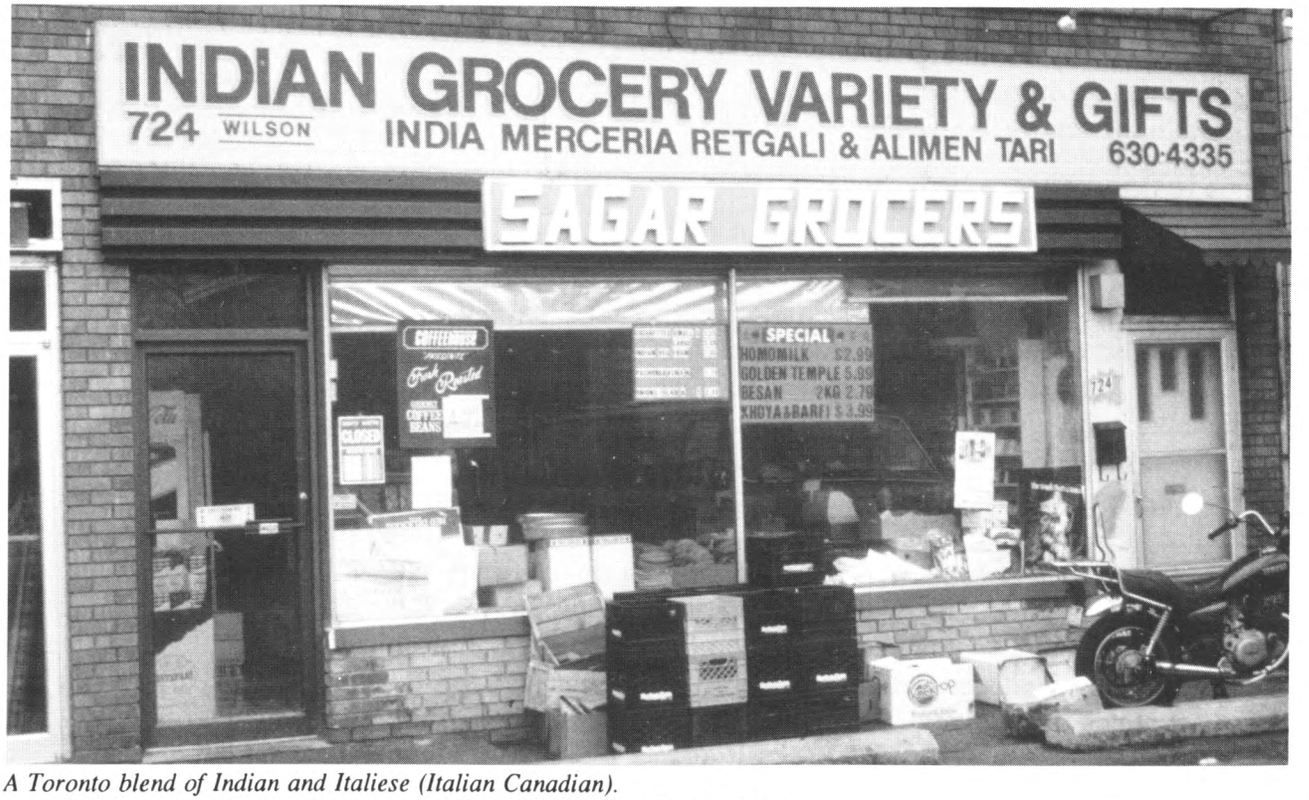
Both Sudha and Abdullah had, of late, come into contact with a large number of immigrant groups from a variety of Muslim countries around the world. Though bound by a common religion, these groups had widely differing languages, customs, cultures, history, and conceptions of their Muslim identity. Spread across nearly four generations and ranging over a whole spectrum, with "liberals" at one end and the "fundamentalists" at the other, the Muslim community seemed to be intensely occupied in a self-inquiry as to the proper balance between their Islamic heritage and the demands of modern times in a multicultural country. Impressed by the vibrancy of this community, Sudha and Abdullah first produced a photographic exhibit called "Glimpses of Muslims in Canada." They then decided to make a documentary film about the fascinating history of the first mosque of Canada, which the Arab Muslims had built in Edmonton in 1938. Now in 1982 they were building a second mosque in the city. It was at this time that Sudha decided to initiate me into film making, which I had been eager to

attempt for some time. I was to do research and write the script; Sudha would direct and produce, and Abdullah, besides jointly producing it would be the cinematographer, along with Bob Lang.

Under the title "A Tale of Two Mosques" the central theme of the search for identity was developed. The vastly different physical and functional structures of the two mosques were taken to symbolize two different minds of the Muslims and their changing views of what it was to be a Muslim in modern, multicultural Canada. The film was to bring out, against the portrayal of the history of the community, all its changing aspirations, inner tensions, socio-cultural diversity, and inter-generational conflicts. But we were also determined to correct a few misconceptions about the Muslims and Islam which generally

beamed through the windows and slowly traversed the large, unadorned, empty space within the prayer hall, I gradually awoke to the inner strength, serenity, and even lyricism of this faith. I kept on saying to myself how ironic it was that I was born and raised in a country with one hundred million Muslims but did not develop a genuine interest in their religion and culture until I came ten thousand miles to this alien land!

The film was very well received except by a few Muslims who were angry for one reason or the other. This was indeed expected. The CBC bought it and aired it several times. The Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation and the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Secretary of State had already put their financial faith in us by giving us initial grants. In addition, about twenty thousand dollars of



A Toronto blend of Indian and Italiese (Italian Canadian).
Photograph by Dr. David Coleman, Robert F. Harney Collection, MHSO.

are lodged in popular imagination. In order to develop the script properly I knew that I would have to gain an insider's understanding and combine it with an outsider's objectivity. As I read the Koran, prayed in the mosque with the devout, sat in silence until the sun

our own money was involved in it. Again the universities, school boards, libraries, and church groups bought it. The film was shown in India and a few other countries. I developed an enormous enthusiasm for this art form and decided to take more formal

training in it. This resulted in my taking courses on script writing in the Film

Sudha's involvement in classical dance has been reincarnated. Earlier, in 1985, she