

## CANADIAN MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE AND MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper is an outcome of my interdisciplinary approach to Canadian multicultural literature and its inner voice of managing cultural diversity. It showcases how cultural diversity is fictionalized in the creative writing of Canadian multicultural writers. It demonstrates how Canadian multicultural literature envisions a deep cultural diversity in the Canadian society. It reveals how Canadian multicultural literature is a canonization of cultural diversity. It opens the horizons of intercultural understanding leading to a worldview of cosmopolitanism. It looks at the world through a multicultural prism. It shows how multicultural literature can be a great educator reflecting global thinking. It explores how Canadian multicultural writers promote bonding, bridging and linking – the very ideals of cultural diversity.*

**KEYWORDS:** Multicultural literature, multicultural consciousness, cultural diversity, transculturalism, multicultural education, social cohesion

### INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism is far better handled by writers of fiction than writers of laws. {Whereas} the administrator tries to push hundreds of thousands of people into a single category, the imaginative writer, the novelist, does the opposite, seeing how one individual can contain a hundred cultures.

— **Pico Iyer**

The term multiculturalism is used to designate a specific social and cultural school of thought. It adopts the policy of cultural amalgamation. The concept of multiculturalism has emerged from the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. It has come to limelight during the period of colonization. The new Canadian multicultural society has been born out of the imperial policies of developed nations and the radical changes in the means of transport and development of international trade etc. The concept of multiculturalism has influenced all human life in the globe through its process of acculturation. It has blossomed into a global movement with the support of civil rights movements and the feminist movement. Thus, multiculturalism has developed as a strong reaction against the glorification of Eurocentric culture. The terminology of multiculturalism has been defined and redefined by many scholars in disciplines such as sociology, history, political science, immigrant studies, cultural studies, and literary criticism. They contribute many significant discourses to multiculturalism. The term ‘multiculturalism’ has been popularly used in the phrases like multicultural education, multicultural

literature, multicultural curriculum and multicultural society. Multicultural and Multiculturalism are the terms frequently used to connote the ethnic diversity.

Multiculturalism has come into existence with the large-scale immigration into the west, especially Canada. It has emerged as a cultural and intellectual discourse. It has served as a solution to the societies whose population has become increasingly multiethnic through immigration. There are several advantages of multiculturalism: firstly, it offers a homogeneous texture to a heterogeneous society; secondly, it encourages immigration; thirdly, it promotes tolerance towards immigrants; fourthly, it develops an understanding of diverse cultures and lastly, it enriches cultures and promotes unity in diversity. It develops cultural sensitivity and promotes human interactions. It is a system of beliefs that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in a society. It acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences. It empowers all within the society by respecting the diversity. It advocates equal status to all religious groups irrespective of their differences. In other words, it is like a 'bowl of salad'. It defends the cultural rights of every group as well as the individual. It bridges the gap among all cultures and develops understanding. As Bikhu Parekh says:

It is neither a political doctrine nor a philosophical issue but actually a perspective on a way of viewing human life. Increasing cultural diversity focuses on the promotion of rights for different religions and cultural groups. The rights for cultural groups form basis for multiculturalism. (Parekh 2000, 59)

It is evident from the definition that multiculturalism is a system to promote better human relations. It is nothing but promoting a deep cultural diversity - valuing the beliefs and value system of all human beings irrespective of class, religion, race and gender.

In 1971, Canada has become the first country in the world to introduce a Multiculturalism Policy.

As a part of the federal multicultural program to promote the Canadian diversity, the Canadian federal government has launched A Multicultural Television (MTV) channel in Toronto, and many diversity programs regularly appear on the Public Access Network across the country. The multicultural program has also supported the publication of books in the area of multiculturalism and the production of ethnic films. It has also introduced a number of ethnic languages into regular secondary school teaching programs in several Canadian provinces. It has introduced Multicultural Educational Policy in 1971 to provide multicultural education as a means of promoting cultural diversity. As part of the federal multicultural program to promote the Canadian diversity, the education system in Canada is trying to implement the multicultural curriculum to address the ideals of multiculturalism by providing multicultural education to the students. It has introduced multicultural literature as a teaching tool in the classroom curriculum to nurture the ideology of multiculturalism. Multicultural literature encompasses deep cultural diversity. Thus, there is cultural and academic diversity in schools and colleges. One of the purposes of multicultural education is to "foster tolerance of the varying backgrounds and beliefs of others sharing this planet" (Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* 2003, 177).

The theme of cultural diversity has attracted the critical attention of a wide range of critics and scholars specialized in the area of multiculturalism across the globe in the world of sociology. But they have not read and interpreted multicultural literature from the multicultural literary perspective. There has not been any research carried out on "Canadian multicultural literature and managing cultural diversity." As

a result, there has not been any full-length book coming forth on this theme. Hence this study attains prominence and relevance in the present context. The study investigates how Canadian multicultural literature has its own vibrant power to illuminate cultural diversity. It plays a vital role in promoting intercultural relations and a worldview of 'global village'- cosmopolitanism. It gives a clarion call for the destruction of the cultural and racial segregation – the division of “apartheid-like walls around the ghettos of ethnic and cultural communities” (Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* 2003, 176) which are the barriers to the very spirit of multiculturalism. The present paper is an outcome of my research project, “Canadian Multicultural Literature and Managing Cultural Diversity”. The research project has been carried out as a result of Canadian Studies Faculty Enrichment Fellowship Award 2010 – 2011 under the aegis of the programme of Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Canada, International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS) keeping in view of the changing trends in Canadian Studies and the world over.

### **The Objectives of this Paper**

1. To enable the students to increase knowledge and understanding of the multicultural mosaic of Canada and the pluralistic vision of Canadian multicultural literature.
2. To improve the knowledge of multicultural values with regard to Cultural Diversity, Women's Rights, Environment and Survival
3. To become aware of the Canadian Diversity as represented by fiction writers.
4. To understand how Canadian multicultural literature forms the foundation for multicultural education
5. To promote cosmopolitan ways of thinking among the student and research community

### **Activity in Pursuit of Objectives**

The course design titled “Canadian Literature and Managing Cultural Diversity” is the outcome of my sustained and dedicated research pursued under the dynamic affiliation of Professor Chelva Kanaganayagam during the time of my visit from 6<sup>th</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010 at the University of Toronto. I feel the fellowship award conferred by the government of Canada has been the great privilege for me. Hopefully, the commissioned assignment has altered the life cycle of my scholarly research and teaching by virtue of my visit to the renowned Robart's Library, University of Toronto, E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, John M. Kelly Library of St. Michael's College of University of Toronto. I have enriched my mindscape by wide reading of 50 valuable volumes of books and various reputed journals related to my project.

### **Theoretical background**

#### **Cultural Diversity**

The aim of multiculturalism is to provide multicultural education which develops the ability to celebrate with the other in a manner that transcends all barriers and brings about a cultural unity in diversity. Multiculturalism is a reflection of the global thinking that all humanity is one family. It safeguards the interests of all groups. It pleads for multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual society providing same status to all its components. It is considered a late twentieth century literary, pedagogic, socio-political

global movement. It is a cultural ideology that regards all cultures worthy. As a movement multiculturalism has deeply influenced literature, art, media, education, and social and legal policy. The concept of multiculturalism has emerged as a revolutionary and global social ideology in recent years. It addresses the issues like the sense of belongingness, sense of identity, sense of status and recognition, sense of a need to recognize and maintain difference with others. It gives the immigrant groups an access to preserve their own traditions, customs regarding food, dress, language, religion, and association with others to reinforce the multicultural image of Canadian society. It becomes a means of preservation of all cultures. It also serves as a vehicle to promote more racial equality and racial harmony in Canadian society. It is a solution to racial discrimination and racism. It mirrors the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society. It opposes the policy of bilingualism and biculturalism. It voices cultural diversity which naturally leads to the diversity of vision, practice, beliefs, and values.

Multiculturalism is a philosophy - a way of life, living together by appreciating the cultural life of others. It holds inter-ethnic, inter-racial harmony, and respect for cultural difference. Roger Martuz defines multiculturalism as “a social ideology predicated on the belief that no system of values is innately superior to any other” (Martuz 1992, 361). In other words, multiculturalism connotes a multicultural mosaic of the Canadian society. Canada is “a multiethnic nation with a variety of ethnic, racial, religious, and political identities. Some societies have more diverse populations than others; Canada is among the most polyethnic” (Driedger 1996, 2). In a multicultural society like Canada, all human beings share a common nature, a common condition of existence, life experiences and predicament and so on. It is an accepted belief that human beings are culturally embedded. All human beings have equal capability to cultivate different cultures. However, they conceptualize and respond to the diversity in quite different ways, giving rise to diverse cultures. Canadian diversity is a product of a dialectical interplay between the universal and the particular. Cultures do not exist in vacuum. They are embedded by the universally shared features of human existence. In the multicultural society, people have equality of difference. They are guided by the principle - equality of treatment. Managing cultural diversity is based on social development and harmony in a pluralistic, multicultural Canadian society. The immigrants have transformed Canada not only into a country with a promise of multiculturalism but also a country with a worldview of cosmopolitanism. Thus, multiculturalism brings about opportunities as well as challenges to the immigrants.

The basic premise of multiculturalism is cultural diversity which forms the theoretical framework of Canadian Multicultural Literature. According to Gilles Paquet, the term ‘diversity’ is “opaque and ideologically loaded, and has been used as a convenient label to connote very different realities and to underpin quite different programmes of action” (Paquet 2008, 1). The word ‘diversity’ has been used to refer to the outcome of the migration and immigration of the population of different cultural groups in the world. It connotes intercultural relations. Bikhu Parekh uses the term to refer to “culturally derived differences” (Parekh 2000, 3). Peter S. Li, Professor of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan defines “cultural diversity” as “the social construction of racial differences” (Li, Research and Statistics Division 2000, 1). The term “cultural diversity” refers to the visible growth of the non-white population, other than the aboriginal people in Canadian society. The term “diversity” has been popularized with a rising public awareness towards differences of people based on superficial distinctions such as skin colour and other features. Canada's demographic composition is ethnically heterogeneous. In the sense, its citizens have come from many countries of origin and cultural backgrounds. The immigration has altered the

cultural mix of Canadians and diversified cultural life and increased diversity in Canadian society since the late 1960s. The large-scale immigration has enriched multiculturalism in Canada. The philosophy of multiculturalism has strengthened deep cultural diversity. As Bikhu Parekh says: "Multiculturalism is not about difference and identity *per se* but about those that are embedded in and sustained by culture; that is, a body of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of people understand themselves and the world and organize their individual and collective lives.... Multiculturalism is about cultural diversity or culturally embedded differences" (Parekh 2000, 2-3). The thought of cultural diversity is reinforced with the ideology of human rights and multicultural activism. Diversity is 'a fact of life' in Canada. The cultural diversity in Canada raises its voice against ethnicity- "the classification of human beings by race, religion, language, cultural traditions and other traits held in common"( Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* 2003, 91). It opposes the form of cultural apartheid - the racial vision of life. It emphasizes the human rights of the social groups promoting the vision of cosmopolitanism. The objective of multiculturalism in Canada is building the cultural mosaic of diversity and tolerance.

## Culture

Multiculturalism in Canada is regarded as an ideology of cultural pluralism. The basic premise of multiculturalism is culture. Culture is the very breath of life in a multicultural society like Canada. Culture is the heart and soul of the individuals formed by culture. Cultures that make up the multicultural mosaic of diversity and tolerance seem to have generated the philosophy of multiculturalism. Culture is "a form of social capital, an empowering sociality, an enabling resource that helps members of a group to proceed with effective cognition and learning, and to act well in concert....an *assemblage* of more or less complementary component parts, which are self-subsistent, and may be detached and plugged into different assemblages "(Paquet 2008, 162). Broadly speaking, "Culture" is nothing but a way of life of a group of people living together. Neil Bissoondath defines culture as a "living, breathing, multi-faceted entity in constant evolution" (Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* 2003, 75). Culture is the blueprint of social life. It guides our actions, thoughts, and feelings. It expresses our attitudes, thoughts, expectation, goals, and values. The relation between culture and literature is reciprocal.

## LITERATURE

Literature as a form of culture is the mirror of our socio-cultural life. It presents a realistic portrait of human life and problems. It is a record of humanity by summarizing the cultural attributes and power structures of a society. Therefore, multicultural literature is the treasure of all the cultural perspectives of a society including its beliefs, principles, customs, knowledge, values, and practices. Commenting on the interrelationship between literature, culture and society Edward Said says:

Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent; it has regularly seemed otherwise to me, and certainly my study of orientalism has convinced me that society and culture can only be understood and studied together. (Said 1994, 27)



Multicultural literature is the embodiment of social, cultural and universal values. It influences human life in different ways. A multicultural literary work holds a number of cultural themes. As Terry Eagleton says:

Literary work itself comes to be seen as a mysterious organic unity, in contrast to the fragmented individualism of the capitalist marketplace: it is 'spontaneous' rather than rationally calculated, creative rather than mechanical. (Eagleton 1996, 17)

In this sense, multicultural literary work is a systematic study of socio-cultural relations, racial differences, religious beliefs, class conflicts and gender biases. Thus, Canadian multicultural literature is a scientific study of cultural life which holds a mirror to society. It offers a right perspective to understand Canadian multicultural literary work. Reading world literature particularly, Canadian multicultural literature gives us the opportunity to "expand our literary and cultural horizons far beyond the boundaries of our own culture" (Damrosch 2009, 46).

### **Canadian Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is the national policy--the mission of Canadian Government which was launched in the 1970s. It has developed as a result of globalism and pluralism in Canada. It is a reflection of Canada's sociological situation. Thus, Canada consists of a community of communities. The Canadian multicultural policy enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 forges a national identity. As Smaro Kamboureli says: "the discourse of multiculturalism serves as a culmination for the ideological construction of Canada" (Kamboureli 1994, 1053). According to the multicultural policy of Canada, the variety of Canada's cultures can exist without any need for assimilation. Thus, multiculturalism moves from "assimilation to normative pluralism in Canada" (Winter 2001, 177) giving rise to deep cultural diversity. Canada's National Charter could be symbolized by the central metaphor called "the Mosaic". Canada's identity has been grounded in the unity of its diversity. In other words, Canadian national identity is heterogeneous.

The climate of multiculturalism has stimulated various literary voices. It has enabled the ethnic writers to "gain a more secure emotional base from which to reinterpret and re-evaluate their past" (Fujimoto 1996, 326). The official multicultural policy of Canada has not only accepted and encouraged the immigrant literature but also promoted the publications and distribution of immigrant literature. As Janice Kulyk Keefer says: "In a pre-multicultural Canada, no immigrant artist writing of a non-Anglo-Celtic country of origin could hope to publish her works and have it received in any significant way... This 'significant something' was the advent and development of multiculturalism" (Keefer 1998, 103-4). The multicultural policy of Canada has offered funding to the immigrant authors to undertake full-time research and writing to address their issues. Thus, multiculturalism has fostered "the production of a literature that is unique in its diversity of subject matters and different modes of articulation" (Genetsch 2007, 9).

### **Canadian Multicultural Literature**

The aim of Canadian multicultural literature is to promote the deep cultural diversity breaking down borders. It changes our view of ourselves. It plays a significant role in the development of understanding across cultures. It is the only source that facilitates the process of acculturation. It reflects the contemporary life and secularism under the influence of multiculturalism. Canada as a multicultural country holds a collage of different cultures and generates an eclectic model of contemporary multicultural consciousness that gives birth to the new vibrant multicultural literature. The Canadian multicultural literature not only situates the commonalities among the people but also focuses on the differences. It projects multicultural consciousness that can bridge the differences among the diverse social groups. Multicultural literature gives voice to the voiceless. As McElroy-Johnson puts it:

Some people are so used to hearing their own voices that they hardly hear anything else while others have been silenced or unheard for so long that they either never learned to speak or have forgotten how.” (McElroy-Johnson 1993, 85)

Multiculturalism offers a voice to such silent majority. It has a capacity to sustain the cultural equality. Canadian multicultural literature has the ability to empower the immigrants who are not in a position to assert their identity. It has the power not only to educate and influence the people but also creates empathy and encourages critical thinking. It encompasses cultural diversity. It represents cultures that are marginalized. It poses a challenge to the mainstream white culture. It forms the basis for multicultural education which provides equal opportunities for all children to learn regardless of ethnicity, culture, race or gender. Commenting on the potentiality of multicultural literature Beverley Naidoo says:

Literature has the tremendous quality of allowing us to engage imaginatively in the lives of others. It enables us to move beyond ourselves and our own experiences. If we allow ourselves to respond to it fully, it can be a great educator.... literature springs from outside our own boundaries can be a life-line. (Naidoo 1992, 16)

Canadian multicultural literature has the potential to accelerate development of a child's mental growth and education. It teaches children to learn about values, culture, and life. It affects our self-perceptions, social-constructs of reality and values. It concentrates on the non-dominant social and cultural groups who are excluded and marginalized on account of colour. It focuses on cultures and specific races that are most alienated from the main culture. It aims at protecting and preserving minority cultures on par with dominant cultures.

The Canadian multicultural writers who believe in multiculturalism emphasize the values of tolerance and pluralism in their literary expressions. Thus, ‘cultural diversity’ manifested in Canadian multicultural literature is the outcome of moral obligation of the writer which also benefits the Canadian society at large. Canadian literary multiculturalism reflects an immigrant writer’s right to freedom of expression of his self-image by virtue of narrating his stories. The mental landscapes of the Canadian immigrant writers have “two poles: *there* and *here*....*there* and *here* are interlocked: the work is continually shaping and being shaped by the need to view *here* as possibility” (Sullivan 1988, 26). The immigrant writers deal with ‘here’, i.e. Canada and ‘there,’ i.e. the countries of their origin. Thus, their narratives are concerned with “here” and “there”. Thus, Canada contains the global writers within its borders. Cultural diversity, the voice of multiculturalism with its multidimensional concerns has deeply

influenced many immigrant writers across the globe. The diversity of cultures has given rise to the emergence of varied kinds of literature like Native Canadian Literature, South Asian Canadian Literature, African Caribbean Canadian Literature etc., in addition to the mainstream Canadian Literature.

The mainstream Canadian Literature has also projected a multicultural view of life and its problems. Thus, Canadian English literature has stepped into the phase of multiculturalism with the radical shift of attention of fiction writers from national to transnational themes of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has become a permanent literary tendency of Canadian English literature with the development of Canadian multicultural literary tradition. Commenting on the Canadian multicultural literary history W. J. Keith points out in his thought-provoking book *Canadian Literature in English* Vol. II:

The Canadian writers who came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, though as varied as their immediate predecessors, are linked by a common energy, confidence, and sophistication. This is, I believe, indisputable, even if cultural historians comparing this fiction with the work produced at the same time in Britain and, especially, in the United States discern what might be regarded as a typically Canadian cautiousness . . . . most contemporary Canadian writers have found an abundance of promising material to be presented within technically complex but none the less traditional modes. This is a paradoxical result of the late development of the country's fictional potential. Some novelists, like the poets, have discovered a neglected past: Rudy Wiebe has written epic-like novels about the Indian and Metis rebellions of the nineteenth century, while Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro, among others, reconstruct the more recent past of their own childhoods. Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro, among others, reconstruct the more recent past of their own childhoods. Similarly, Margaret Atwood has found a new way of exploring the brittle, oppressive, and emotionally deadening world of North American urban life by viewing it from an off-center Canadian perspective, while Austin Clarke is in a position to exploit unique creative opportunities in fiction based on the uneasy multicultural and interracial complexity of contemporary Toronto. (Keith 2006, 62)

Thus, Canadian multicultural literature is based on more realistic events. The theme of multicultural literature centers around the issues related to race, class, and gender. It presents a mosaic of the rich and varied cultures. It showcases the deep cultural diversity--managing unity in diversity of Canada. The deep cultural diversity presented in Canadian multicultural literature gives a call for mutual love and respect to all people. The writer/dramatist/poet who nurtures the multicultural ideology is evolving and carves a definite space for him/her in Canadian multicultural literature. Thus, multiculturalism becomes 'eyeglasses' for the Canadian multicultural writers to break down the borders and boundaries of people by analyzing and projecting the problems of the immigrants.

### **Canadian Multicultural writers**

Canada is known to be a pluralistic society in linguistic, cultural and religious terms due to large-scale immigration. How do people sustain social development and harmony in a multicultural country like Canada where the immigrants encounter the challenges of citizenship, identity, and nation?



Multiculturalism with its vibrant vision of globalism and pluralism has profoundly inspired many an intellectual, especially writers to make a positive contribution to the society. They have addressed the grievances of immigrants such as citizenship, identity, and nation in their writings. Thus, Canadian multicultural literature is the vehicle to promote cultural diversity among the mindscapes of the members of different social groups. Multicultural intellectuals, writers, novelists and dramatists such as Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, George Ryga, Rudy Wiebe, Uma Parameswaran, Gabrielle Roy, M. G. Vassanji, Neil Bissoondath, Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Lee Maracle and Thomas King and a host of others have disseminated the message of cultural “diversity without divisiveness” (Voyer 2003, 31) through their literary and scholarly expressions: “the notion of point of view, vision and particularly creative vision or imagination-- the eye of imagination” (Arlettaz 1996, 1). The Canadian multicultural writers open the horizons of intercultural understanding and lead to a worldview of cosmopolitanism. They envision the cosmopolitan world through a multicultural prism. They explore social justice in their creative writings and project a multicultural vision. They advocate transculturalism - social multiculturalism in their writings.

Margaret Laurence is Canada's celebrated multicultural fiction writer. Like her predecessors, Laurence is also inspired by the movement of cosmopolitanism. Laurence is read and interpreted as a cosmopolitan novelist. She has all the characteristic features of cosmopolitanism such as an attitude of open-mindedness and impartiality. She is not biased by particular loyalties or cultural prejudice. She is fond of traveling. She feels at home "everywhere". She is "nowhere a stranger". As a cosmopolitan, Laurence opposes slavery and colonial exploitation. She defends the emancipation of women and pleads for justice, equality, and liberty for all. She identifies herself as a cosmopolitan in one or more of these senses.

During the literary renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s, Laurence has become a good mother to a whole generation of cosmopolitan writers like Sara Jeannette Duncan. With the writing of her collection of essays entitled *Heart of a Stranger* (1976) and her great Manawaka novel *The Diviners* (1977) Laurence has come to the limelight as the mother figure of multicultural literature. By writing those creative and groundbreaking texts Laurence has laid a foundation for the multicultural education in Canada. In her preface to *Heart of a Stranger* Laurence comments on the challenges immigrants encounter in Canada: “trying to understand people of another culture- their concepts, their customs, their life-views” (Laurence HS 1976, vii). For Margaret Laurence, the conception of creative writing is a poetics of estrangement. She describes the immigrant writer as a “perpetual traveller” (Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, 1976, Vii) and of writing as a journey. Laurence has a much broader outlook of the cosmopolitan world of multiculturalism. She believes in transculturalism - the universal brotherhood and sisterhood. Laurence says:

We are citizens not only of our own country but of the world. I believe with all my heart that we must do all our own work with all devotion and we must also struggle in the causes of peace and social justice...Cultivate in your own work and your lives the art of patience, and come to terms with your inevitable human limitations, while striving to extend the boundaries of your understanding and compassion. Learn from those older than you are; learn from your contemporaries; never cease to learn from children. Try to know in your heart's core the reality of others. In times of adversity, know that you are not alone. Know that in the eternal schemes of things you are small but you are also unique and irreplaceable, as are all humans everywhere. Know that your commitment is above all to life itself. Your own life and work and loves will

someday come to an end, but life and work and love go on, in your inheritors. The struggle for peace and social justice will go on, provided that caring humans still live. It is up to you now, to do all you can in your own chosen work, and also, at this perilous time in human history, to do all you can ensure that life itself will go on. You are among my inheritors. I give you my deepest blessings, my hope and my faith. (Convocation Address May 27, 1986)

It is evident from the convocation address that Laurence is a great cosmopolitan and committed to multiculturalism to nurture humanity –the human bonding, and bridging of the society -- the essence of the cosmopolitan world.

Travel plays a significant role in Laurence's literary life to broaden her perspective on multiculturalism and women and widens her feminist literary vision. Thus, travel becomes a metaphor for Laurence to have an insight into women's freedom and autonomy. Travel is a great source of inspiration to the creativity of Laurence. Patricia Morley aptly says: "journeying and stranger hood have played an intimate part in Laurence's life, it has been given to her to see their meaning in human experience and to penetrate (in her phrase) "the pain and interconnectedness of mankind" (Morley 1991, 7). We need to understand the value of Laurence's fiction as the embodiment of women's studies/ gender studies and its relevance to the contemporary society. The five Manawaka stories set in Canada in Laurence's fictional town of Manawaka have to be read together. The cycle of Manwaka fiction is like a veritable picture gallery of the vital women and their grievances. In other words, Manawaka fiction is a complex picture of the women's experiences of gender discrimination and gender oppression. It is the finest flower of gender studies in the twentieth century. The greatness of Laurence's talent and genius and scholarship is that she has moulded the Manitoba, the town of her childhood and adolescence into a metaphor of women's studies. Morley says:

Laurence has turned the Manitoba town of her youth into a metaphor of universal human experience. The epic quality of her fiction and her ability to give symbolic form to social or collective life has earned for Laurence a justified comparison with Tolsty, while her literary vision of the two- way flow of time places her among philosophical novelists like Proust. Laurence's art builds upon the fiction of Canadian writers such as Sinclair Ross and greatly advances that tradition. (Morley 1991, 8)

By writing Manawaka fiction Laurence gives voice to what she has called Canada's cultural being, roots, and myths. *The Diviners* (1974) the last novel of the five-volume Manawaka series is written against older traditions proposing an alternative conception of "paradise". *The Diviners* is a comprehensive, regional piece of fiction that ultimately has universal concerns. The Manawaka novel presents an era and a way of life in the cosmopolitan society. It deals with the self's problematic relationship to her community. Laurence shows, in her novel, how self (individual) and community are ultimately inseparable. Thus, Laurence's vision of multiculturalism is global -- the manifold of ethnic cultures of Native Canadian prairie: the Anglo-Scots, the Ukrainians and the French-Indian Metis which is evident in all her Canadian-set works, especially *The Diviners* and *Heart of a Stranger*. Thus, Laurence's multicultural fiction is an exploration of the ethnicity. Laurence's act of divining in the novel *The Diviners* involves're-memembering' the outcasts, the half-breeds, and the Metis as citizens of the earth (world) and interpreting the "private and fictional worlds" and a world within which the private,

communal and historical combine to form a multicultural, cosmopolitan society. The protagonist, Morag in *The Diviners* is the spokesperson of Laurence's conception of multiculturalism. As a diviner, Morag divines the lives and cultures of the outcasts, the half-breeds, and the Metis. As a cosmopolitan diviner, Laurence in her novel *The Diviners* argues for universal brotherhood among all immigrants regardless of their nation, race, and culture. What the novel hopes for most is managing cultural diversity and multicultural melange. Laurence's concept of transculturalism opens the horizons of interculturality leading to the cosmopolitan world of ideology. She forces us to envision the cosmopolitan world through a multicultural prism. Thus, multicultural literature is an exploration of the "unknown territory and of a cognitive process into knowledge and understanding" (Rao 1995, 17) of the globe.

The basic premise of cultural diversity presented by Margaret Laurence in her Manawaka fiction is survival conceptualised by Atwood in her critical significant work: *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972). Margaret Atwood is the internationally known English-Canadian writer whose work: *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* forms the bulk of multiculturalism. The book *Survival* plays a prominent role in placing Canadian multiculturalism in an international context. As Charlotte Beyer puts it:

With *Survival*, Atwood was among the first to discuss the problems of constructing a post-colonial Canadian identity and looked at literary representations of the colonial culture and its self-denigrating attitudes. By suggesting strategies for resisting and changing a situation of cultural stagnation, Atwood put the question of cultural and national identity as survival strategy onto the agenda. (Beyer 1995, 98)

Atwood's *Survival* is understood as a multicultural conscious-raising book that promotes a regional understanding of a situated national sense of self. The book seems to urge the immigrants: "To be a creative non-victim" (*Survival* 38-39). It focuses on survival theory. Atwood's model of the basic victim positions depicted in *Survival* shows the immigrants the ways of struggle and the means of survival in a multicultural society. Atwood says:

A preoccupation with one's survival is necessarily also a preoccupation with the obstacles to that survival. In earlier writers these obstacles are external –the land, the climate, and so forth. In later writers the obstacles tend to become both harder to identify and more internal; they are no longer obstacles to physical survival but obstacles to what we may call spiritual survival, to life as anything more than a minimally human being.....when life becomes a threat to life, you have a moderately vicious circle. If a man feels he can survive only by amputating himself, turning himself into a cripple or a eunuch, what price survival? (Atwood, *Survival* 1972, 33)

Atwood has emerged as a prominent figure in the multiculturalism movement in Canada with the publication of her path-breaking book, *Survival*. The book addresses the problems of culture, identity and nation as part of multiculturalism. Atwood's earlier colonial fiction is concerned with the problems of Canadian identity. Whereas, her post-colonial fiction explores the post-colonial cultural politics. It emphasizes the nature of culture and identity in a multicultural society.

Like Margaret Atwood, the champion of multiculturalism, George Ryga, the renowned revolutionary dramatist of Canada addresses the issues of immigration and cultural diversity in his lectures and plays.

He is the great humanitarian and the critic of multiculturalism: “a very real and remarkable human being, who happened to have the word “writer” attached to his name” (Kujundzic 1992, 10). Born in Athabasca, the son of poor Ukrainian immigrant parents, Ryga has witnessed the grievances of the oppressed immigrants with great empathy. He is remembered by many as a playwright who has depicted the sorrows of Natives. He has a great moral responsibility as a playwright to expose the problems of Natives such as unemployment, racism, poverty, alcoholism, prostitution, violence and death. In his address on multiculturalism, Ryga points out how the Canadian government has allowed a large number of immigrants into Canada during the waves of immigration for their labour capabilities in railway and mining departments for low-cost labour. The government which fosters immigration have neglected the abuses. In his address on multiculturalism, Ryga says:

An exploration of the cultural fabric of this country cannot ignore these facts. No more than it can ignore the agonies of separation from early homelands or the aborted expectations which stimulated the finest in a few, deepening political understanding in many, and criminal recklessness in those who could not adjust. (Ryga 1992, 212)

As a progressive dramatist Ryga has offered unforgettable visions of cultural diversity. He has been a major catalyst for debating issues related to multiculturalism in the 1970's. Ryga's concept of multiculturalism is obvious in his "Address to Curriculum Conference on Multiculturalism"(1992). Ryga says:

A discussion of multiculturalism in Canada is something one approaches carefully and with one eye on the exit door, partly because it can become a dangerous discussion at worst and an uncomfortable one at best. For such a discussion has to puncture some national myths, which in recent years have acquired a halo of federal government recognition. Multiculturalism has become institutionalised-respectable, in a narrow, middle-class definition. (Ryga 1992, 210)

According to Ryga, the term multiculturalism is an anachronism. The Anglo-Saxon based culture established in Canada is so dominant that it has not tolerated the very idea of cultural diversity. The Anglo-Saxon culture is a threat to the managing cultural diversity. Ryga questions thus:

Why are there so few towns and streets named after other than Anglo-Saxon personalities? Why are so many schools, for example, named after a princess or a queen in England who wouldn't know or care they existed? (Ryga 1992, 215)

Ryga emphasizes the need for multilingualism in promoting cultural diversity. He envisages that the government needs to provide the immigrants with racism-free atmosphere. He says: "Certainly the first step in absorbing each other's experience begins in masticating and digesting each other's food. But where is the history of the human experience? Where is the courage of our educators in acknowledging that we have never been and are not at this moment free of racism? " (Ryga 1992, 214). He is of the view that cultural diversity will survive only when the waves of racism are disappear.

In this context, Ryga's celebrated play, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* is worth reading from the viewpoint of cultural diversity. In this play, Ryga demonstrates how the Natives, the so-called outcasts have deviated from the mainstream embittered by unemployment, racist reflection, and poverty. Ryga has attained a

degree of national fame with the publication of *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* in 1967. This influential play is regarded as the first distinctively English-Canadian play. It addresses a Canadian social problem - the social degradation of Native peoples. Incidentally, it is the story of Rita Joe, a young Shuswap woman who has left the reserve for the city in search of work, but finds instead that she has embarked on “an odyssey through hell” (in the words of playwright George Ryga) culminating in her rape and murder. She is the poorest of the poor – as so many Aboriginal people in Canada. Ryga explains in the program notes for the play’s 1969 how *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* throws open “the protective shutters of our civilization” and exposes to view the desperate circumstances of a “forgotten people ... Canadian Indians” (Ryga 1969, 7). The play is an indictment of victimization of the Natives. It presents a detailed portrait of an inhumane and destructive social process at work in the life of an aboriginal woman, Rita Joe. It dramatizes the dehumanization of the “Indian” as the other. Commenting on Rita Joe as the representative of all “Indians” the Magistrate in the play says:

You have a mind ... you have a heart. The cities are open to you to come and go as you wish, yet you gravitate to the slums and skid rows and the shanty town fringes. You become a whore, drunkard, user of narcotics ... At best, dying of illness or malnutrition ... At worst, kicked or beaten to death by some angry white scum who finds in you something lower than himself to pound his frustrations out on! What’s to be done? You Indians seem to be incapable of taking action to help yourselves. Someone must care for you. ... Who? For how long? ( Ryga, Rita Joe 1967, 118)

The Magistrate represents the anti-Aboriginal racial bias of the justice system. The final judgment exposes the unacknowledged racism of the “justice” system. The play is a cry for social justice for Aboriginal peoples. It is a documentary on the struggle of Natives for Canadian identity and human rights. By writing this play Ryga heals the wounds of bonding-one of the principles of cultural diversity between Canadians and First Nations people. The prominent Native writer, Le Maracle says that the play remains hauntingly “true and tremendous healing for all of us, Canadians and first nations people alike” (Maracle 2008, 11). The play addresses the issue of cultural diversity.

As a critic of Canadian society Ryga plays an important role in the ongoing construction of Canada’s multicultural mosaic. He addresses multicultural harmony in his plays. He believes that multicultural education and multicultural literature cherish the feelings of immigrants.

Like Ryga, Uma Parameswaran also addresses cultural diversity and tolerance –the issue of multiculturalism in her lectures and poetry. In her talk (during her visit to India on December 1992) on “Voice Appropriation and Cultural Misappropriation: New Facets in Canada’s Multiculturalism” Uma Parameswaran, the well known South Asian immigrant writer throws light on the two burning issues of cultural misappropriation and misrepresentation facing in Canada’s multiculturalism. According to Parameswaran, the First Nations of Canada, who are also known as Natives or Aboriginals, have a strong feeling that their aboriginal cultures have been misrepresented and distorted by the whites for 500 years. Canada, the so-called multicultural country has to be committed itself to maintaining cultural diversity and thus, nurturing all cultures equitably in accordance with the spirit of the policy of Multiculturalism Act. The true spirit of multicultural ideology is that the government should not draw the line between the insider and the outsider. Parameswaran raises her voice against cultural “misappropriation”. She points out how minority ethnic cultures are distorted by the whites. It is a threat



to managing cultural diversity. She points out the intolerance prevalent in the multicultural politics. She reveals the deep-seated sense of social injustice meted out to the natives.

As a creative immigrant writer and a perceptive multicultural critic, Parameswaran has a great sense of respect for multiculturalism. Her work especially, *Trishanku* deals with the intersection of multicultures. The cultural diversity-- the encounter of different cultures forms the subject of *Trishanku*. *Trishanku* is a sequence of poems covering twenty years spoken by various voices. The poem has a cry for water of the Ganges which moves the hearts of multicultural Indo-Canadian readers. It has a broad appeal so as to move the readers of all cultural backgrounds. *Trishanku* envisages cultural diversity:

Begin with the world that is  
Though the worlds that were  
And worlds that will be  
Clamour and hammer to enter.  
Begin with one,  
Anyone, but make him truly him  
And thereby you, and your people  
And thereby us (*Trishanku*, Invocation 1998)

Thus, *Trishanku* is an insightful glimpse of multiculturalism and also a masterful contribution to multicultural literature. In her play, *Sita's Promise*, Parameswaran presents the intersection of different cultures and the adaption of ancient traditions to life in the new and unfamiliar circumstances. The theme of the play is the promise of multiculturalism based on Sita's response to the native children who dance for her and ask her to stay with them: "I, through my people, shall surely come again and shall. . . sing our songs with all the children of the different lands who make this their home." The poem addresses deep cultural diversity. Thus, multicultural literature opens up cross-cultural research.

Like George Ryga and Uma Parameswaran, Rudy Wiebe deals with the issue of cultural diversity in his fiction. Rudy Wiebe, the son of Russian immigrant parents is one of the most inspiring multicultural intellectuals and creative writers. As a multicultural creative writer, Rudy Wiebe is committed to the ideology of multiculturalism - "a great mediator between worlds, between eras, between cultures" (Tiessen, *Rudy Wiebe: A Tribute* 2002, 19). He is the visionary voice of cultural diversity. He appropriates the voices of suppression of aboriginals, Mennonite, the First Nations people in his multicultural fiction. He documents a historical era of aboriginals with full proof, showing honest and reflective research. He has been able to probe and explain the Mennonite world of the natives. His fiction: *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) and *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977) presents Rudy Wiebe as the harbinger of multiculturalism. His novels are like living beings always interested in cultures. He has heard the voices of immigrants unheard by others. His fiction voices the voiceless underdogs like Mennonites and Aborigines. His fiction illuminates moral perceptions, social values and spiritual insights of the immigrants that throb with the ethnic passion and the racial empathy. He is the visionary voice of multiculturalism. His novel is a medium for a culture that transcends skin colour, or gender or ethnicity. Rudy has the power of:

seeing with someone else's eyes, clearly ...,  
understanding an alien perspective with the novelist's holy  
... objectivity. (Maurice Mierau, *Rudy Wiebe: A Tribute* 2002, 10)

As a great humanitarian, Rudy addresses the grievances of Canadian Natives with empathy in his fiction. He feels their pain and articulates their voice through his fictional world. In his fiction, Rudy narrates the stories of immigrants, Englishmen, women, and First Nations people. He points out in his stories how whites have a mad desire for the wealth and the land. In his stories, Rudy also conveys a message that we are all human. The stories survive with the voices of multiculturalism. Rudy's voice is that of a prophet, witness, and critic of the multicultural society. Commenting on Rudy Wiebe, Bob Kroetsch rightly says:

He is the artist of fable and time.  
He dares to colour his hands blue.  
He is the artist of sorrow and sun.  
He dares to colour the prairie green. (Tiessen, *Rudy Wiebe: A Tribute* 2002, 27)

His fiction is a mirror of multicultural society. Being a humanist and catholic in his views, Wiebe has a greater responsibility to the community and the culture of the country. His fiction teaches us about Canada and Canadian multicultural society.

Like Rudy Wiebe, Gabrielle Roy stresses the importance of cultural diversity in her fiction. Hailing from the French-speaking prairie province, Quebec, the centre of French Canadian heritage and culture Gabrielle Roy is one of Quebec's premier multicultural creative writers who is very sensitive to the problems of human rights of French Canadians. Roy has drawn a realistic portrait of the lives and culture of people in Saint-Henri, a working-class neighbourhood of Montreal in her maiden novel *The Tin Flute* (1947). The internationally acclaimed novel has enlightened many Quebecers to take a hard look at themselves. In fact, it has laid the foundation for Quebec's Revolution of the 1960's. Roy's fiction instils a worldview of multiculturalism. *The Tin Flute* is the result of Roy's committed work as a freelance reporter and a journalist advocating cultural diversity. As a multicultural writer, Roy insists that the various ethnic groups that make up Canada must unite corresponding to the spirit of cultural diversity. She says that Anglophone and Francophone Canada could manage to "find a way of working together and completing one another, it's quite marvellous what we could do together, quite marvellous" (Cameron 1973, 134). The plight of slum dwellers in *The Tin Flute* has universalized the treatment of human misery. The novel has attracted international readership because of its universal appeal to multiculturalism. It is the first Canadian multicultural consciousness-raising novel to win the great French Literary award.

The Native Literature also plays a prominent role in enriching the philosophy of cultural diversity. It addresses the issues like the sense of belongingness, sense of identity, sense of status and recognition related to multiculturalism. It reinforces the multicultural image of Canadian society. The first "Festival of North American Native Writers" launched at the University of Oklahoma in July 1992 has brought together over two hundred Native storytellers, poets, prose fiction writers, dramatists, performers, scholars, and critics to celebrate the flowering of Native literature and their cultural diversity. The festival entitled "Returning the Gift" is a thanksgiving for the gift of literacy, creativity and diversity. The Native Canadian Literature flourishes with the advent of Canadian Natives' right to citizenship in

multiculturalism. The Native writers are the rich inheritors of a vibrant Native culture. They begin to articulate their multicultural voice against the marginalization of Natives as the second class citizens. Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society* (1969), Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973), Howard Adam's *Prison of Grass* (1975), Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* (1975) and *I Am Woman* (1988), Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* (1984), Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985), Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* (1987), Joan Crate's *Breathing Water* (1990) address the social condition of Metis and Indian people and their grievances of culture, language and tradition in Canada. The University Professor Thomas King, a Cherokee-Greek-German from California has gained international acclaim as the most successful Native promoter and writer of First Nations Literature in Canada with the publication of his committed fictional work: *Medicine River* (1990), *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993). The Native writing has enabled the natives' co-existence in mutual respect and love with all their cultural relations. Commenting on the multicultural perspective of the Native writers Daniel David Moses, the prominent playwright says:

... I think the ideas presented by Native people are particularly important. I think Native people have a sense of a larger responsibility to the planet, whether we come at it just from the idea that Native traditions honour the environment as a mother, or whether we come at it from the idea that we're looked at as people who should have those ideas and therefore we're allowed to have them. (Moses 1992, xii)

Thus, the Native Canadian literature which is regarded as "the Voice of the Mother" (Lutz 1995, 86) advocates cultural diversity, the global idea of multiculturalism. The First Nations writers in Canada express "the Voice of the Mother" in their writings. They stress the importance of women as "carriers of cultures and bearers of life" (Lutz 1995, 86) Beatrice Culleton has fictionalized Metis-autobiography in *In Search of April Raintree*. Jeannette Armstrong, the Okanagan teacher, and the activist writer has portrayed the Native Okanagan nation's culture, tribal identity in *Slash* (1986), the first First Nations novel in Canada. Undoubtedly, a perceptive reading of the novel illuminates "the Voice of the Mother" in the minds of readers. Owing to its universal appeal *Slash* has become a standard text for courses in Native Literature in Canada. In her novel, Armstrong addresses the issue of global survival- the ideology of multiculturalism -"the empowerment of people through love and compassion, and spirituality" (Armstrong 1990, 18).

Like other multicultural creative writers M.G. Vassanji highlights the issues of cultural diversity and racism in his fiction. His fiction addresses the cultural apartheid of racial segregation. Born in Kenya, brought up in Tanzania M.G. Vassanji, the prominent immigrant writer has produced notable multicultural consciousness - raising fiction: *The Gunny Sack* (1989), *No New Land* (1991), *The Book of Secrets* (1994), *Amriika* (1999), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), and *The Assassin's Song* (2007). In his novel, *No New Land* Vassanji demonstrates how the multicultural policy of Canada has failed to address the problem of racism. According to Vassanji, Canada is "no new Land" in acting out its racist prejudices. The novel *No New Land* shows how the immigrants encounter the problem of identity in Canada. The novel raises its voice against the racial discrimination experienced by the immigrants. They are two instances of racism in *No New Land*. We notice the first instance of racism when the protagonist Esmail is initially subjected to racial discrimination and eventually beaten up in a Toronto subway station. Due to the problem of racism Esmail begins to paint indigenous masks. He outlines his artistic theme of ethnic difference and racial violence. Thus, the novel shows how racial

violence triggers in indigenous art and Esmail emerges as an artist. The protagonist Nurdin also encounters a more subtle form of racism inherent in Canadian society. For him, Canada cannot appear as new land. Vassanji demonstrates in his novel how Canada's multicultural policy of cultural unity in cultural diversity may also give scope for social gulfs. It emphasizes the value of hybridity and cultural exchange. The narrator in *No New Land* 1997 says:

We are but creatures of our origins, and however stalwartly we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new worlds, the ghosts from our pasts stand not far behind and are not easily shaken off. (Vassanji, NNL 1997, 9)

The novel shows how Canadian multicultural society acts out racist prejudices. Multiculturalism will be cherished only when the menace of racism is rooted out. Thus, Vassanji subscribes to the principle of cultural diversity.

Like Vassanji, Neil Bissoondath addresses the issues of cultural diversity and racism in his fiction. Born in a multicultural society of Trinidad Neil Bissoondath, the eminent South Asian Canadian Writer from Caribbean has penned remarkable multicultural fiction: *Digging Up the Mountains* (1985), *A Casual Brutality* (1988), *The Innocence of Age* (1992), *The Worlds Within Her* (1999) and *Doing the Heart Good* (2002). He has also authored *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (1994), the groundbreaking book on Canadian multicultural policy. It is a pamphlet --- ideological protest of Bissoondath against Canadian official multiculturalism which he believes is superficial. The cult that has grown up around the official multiculturalism is racism. Bissoondath says:

I am still being judged on the colour of my skin and not simply as a human being with strengths and weaknesses. I am still, even with the best of my intentions, being viewed racially—and that is offensive to me. (Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* 1992, 85)

Bissoondath upholds the struggle against racism which is a barrier to the ideology of multiculturalism. The celebrated stories, *Digging Up the Mountains* is a dazzling collection of stories. It presents people of different ethnic backgrounds. It shows how the immigrants face the problems of displacement, oppression, racism, and migration. It depicts the plight of uprooted immigrants. It shows how the immigrants try to overcome the problems of the sense of dislocation, subjugation, and resettlement. It reveals how the immigrants are trapped in the rootlessness of modern life in Canada confronting the sense of fear, uncertainty, insecurity, isolation, cultural dislocation and adaptation. The maiden novel, *A Casual Brutality* has won international acclaim for Bissoondath. The novel presents the clash between two cultures. It demonstrates how globalization makes cultures unauthentic and sterile. The novel shows how there are a lack of tolerance and a lack of commitment to multiculturalism. It points out multicultural society, race and the family. It reveals segregationist character of the Canadian society. It deconstructs collective cultural differences while arguing a case in favour of the difference between cultures of individuals. It reveals how multicultural societies of Canada and Casaquemeda that enforce violence and violation of human rights. In other words, the novel exposes the casual brutalities of racism in a multicultural society. It upholds the moral implications of a normative concept of culture-civilization and refinement. It demonstrates how dialogue and interaction, communication and consensus can save the project of multiculturalism for running Canadian multicultural society.

Bissoondath's second novel *The Innocence of Age* is the best multicultural consciousness-raising novel to date. It is concerned with multiculturalism and its problems. Bissoondath claims to be a Canadian multicultural fiction writer rather than an immigrant writer. Martin Genetsch says: "The fact that Bissoondath writes about multiculturalism from such a position can be understood as a reflection of his insight into the possibility, perhaps necessity, of switching ethnicities in a diaspora situation. Considering himself a Canadian rather than an immigrant, Bissoondath refuses to let his writing be restricted by stereotypes" (Genetsch 2007, 70). *The Innocence of Age* deals with multiculturalism in an allegorical way. Bissoondath takes recourse to the motif of the house to project his conception of cultural diversity in the novel. Houses abound in the novel. He uses the metaphors of the housing to drive home his viewpoint about the way people live together in a multicultural society. Bissoondath's third novel, *The Worlds Within Her* reveals the discourses of difference in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, and age. In this novel, Bissoondath is preoccupied with the nation, race and the family. The family in the novel is interpreted as a community with the sense of belonging. The novel shows the ability to live and practise transculturalism.

Bissoondath's fiction pleads for transculturalism - a two-way process of cultural exchange that advocates unity in diversity. It envisages how various immigrant groups learn the cultural identity from each other without totally losing their unique distinctiveness. Thus, multiculturalism is a rich blend of ethnic groups coming together on the basis of a common set of values. In an interview with Araminta Wordsworth, Bissoondath upholds the prominent role of multicultural literature:

writing about multiculturalism resembles writing about a beautiful mansion, a glittering place- a place of music and joy, and people in the living room sipping champagne. That's all very wonderful, but what interests me as a novelist is the foundation of the house, what's happening down there. And if there are termites eating at it, that attracts me. (Bissoondath 1992, 8)

Bissoondath makes it clear that what binds a multicultural society together is humanity and what drives it apart is the parasitic nature of racism. In other words, Bissoondath demonstrates how the centripetal as well as centrifugal forces at work in Canadian multicultural society. Bissoondath believes that it is the need of the hour to rethink and reform Canada's multicultural policy corresponding to the interests and aspirations of the various immigrants who are marginalized as the 'Other'.

## CONCLUSION

Canadian multicultural literature enriches our understanding of the plurality of Canadian identities. The multicultural writers have canonized managing cultural diversity in their fiction. The multicultural fiction challenges racism that runs through the Canadian society in many subtle ways. It underscores a claim for hybridity. It aims at bridging the differences in the context of an intercultural hermeneutics. Multicultural literature will be of great use for a society like Canada to expand its varied store of cultural knowledge and practices. In this regard, multicultural literature can function as a powerful medium to mediate between several culturally distinct traditions. It also offers insight into other cultures. Multicultural literature promotes the cultural harmony - "the sharing and understanding between cultures that is crucial, not simply the promotion of diversity for its own sake" (Padolsky 1991, 114). In other words, multicultural literature is a documentation of the dynamics of multicultural mosaic.



Multiculturalism in literature fosters “intercultural learning and paving the ground for intercultural understanding” (Genetsch 2007, 10). The characteristic features of Managing Cultural Diversity are:

- Bonding
- Bridging
- Linking

In order to promote bonding, bridging and linking ---the very ideals of Managing Cultural Diversity multicultural fiction writers nurture “the sense of sociability” (Tepperman 2010, 1) among the people of various social groups through their fictional world. This sense of sociability promoted by multicultural literature empowers the immigrants to overcome the forces pulling them apart. Managing Cultural Diversity can be fulfilled only when the immigrants drive away divisiveness from their mindscapes. In short, multicultural literature pleads for social cohesion and deep cultural diversity. The multicultural literature is a means of celebration of diversity to promote cultural awareness among various people. Owing to the growing importance of cultural diversity, multicultural literature has come into prominence. We should provide multicultural education to the younger generation in order to develop a worldview of the global community. In this context, the writers ought to play the vital role as the ‘cultural ambassadors’ to bridge the gap between different social strata through their fictional world.

Canadian multicultural literature with its distinct pluralistic vision has a greater role to achieve unity in diversity among divergent ethnic groups irrespective of their origin such as race, nation, gender, and identity. Managing cultural diversity presented in multicultural literature drives home the message that: “Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve” (Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* 2002, 10). The Multicultural writers should inspire the younger generations with the vision of hope and optimism. I hope Multicultural literature seems to offer “promises of a peaceful and productive life: visions of the varied peoples of this cosmopolitan” (Bissoondath 2002, 10) world. All people need to work together to create a new unity in the cosmopolitan world. I would like to conclude my discussion with the observation made by Pico Iyer, one of the most revered travel writers: “multiculturalism is far better handled by writers of fiction than writers of laws” (Iyer 2002, 80).

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