CHAPTER III. HINDU PERSONA IN DOUBLE EXILE

Memory of India plays a vital role in shaping the sensibility of Indo-Caribbean writers in Canada. These immigrant writers carry a legacy of double memory. Their immediate association with the past in the Caribbean islands does not render to them happy memories that they would relish with contentment. Indo-Caribbeans lived through pain of betrayal and uprootedness. It resulted in their exile in Canada. Since the parental home in the Caribbeans was too weak to safeguard their interests and aspirations they looked to their ancestral home in India with renewed hope. But the home in India was too remote for them to be associated with so easily. They, however, longed to belong to it, if not physically, at least metaphorically. Therefore, they seek true association with India as she resides in the memory of twice-exiled Indo-Caribbeans in Canada. Their steadfast faith in the religious, socio-cultural traditions of India enabled them to survive the two-fold antagonism in the Caribbean islands. It worked as a cementing force to bind the Indian community. It also helped them to carve out a distinct and assertive space as an institution by itself in the socio-cultural and political arena of an alien land. Now in Canada when they once again confront the similar risks and crises they recall the lessons of the past and thus put the memory of India to work. Their experiences in the Caribbean served them as a testimony of their power of resistance.

There have been almost over four decades since the first migration of the Indo-Caribbean occurred in Canada. As seen earlier, these Indo-Caribbeans are now mostly elites, intellectuals and affluent. They are confident to assert their space in the multicultural Canada. Being professionals of high excellence, they are aware that they can never be liabilities to the host

country. They are also aware that by virtue of their education, earning and meaningful preference for a place of settlement in Canada, as T. John Samuel views (7), they can claim an edge over their counterparts. This confidence helps them to attain a status of a visible minority in Canada.

In order to approach the past, one requires a medium. Memory provides the medium. We write histories. We write biographies. We enrich our museums and archives with articles and antiques of monumental value after excavating the earth at several sites. Why do we do all these? Because we ever want to discover the past. Man is ever gripped in his own past like M. G. Vassanji's Nurdin, the hero of the novel, *No New Land,* that "cannot cut himself off the past", says Indira Bhatt quoting Vassanji in her discussion of the novel. Unlike the Missionary who says seeking "to remove one's past" in the interest of becoming a new man or the modern world, "laughing at the past", Vassanji views that past had been exercised, the past tries "to fix you from a distance" "to give new meaning to the existential – exiled life of the immigrant in the country of the white" (55, 56). Sudha Pandya views another dimension of past in her study of Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* It is a writer's role. She refers to Vassanji's remark evaluating a writer's role, "as a preserver of the collective tradition, a folk tradition and myth maker. He gives himself a history; he recreates the past, which exists only in memory... In many instances this reclamation of the past is the first serious act of writing" (84).

To take up the cases of Persaud and Itwaru, for instance, it may be observed that although both of them are of Indian origin and live in North America, they undertake writing on different dimensions. Itwaru is interested in exploring social, economical and political facets of an immigrant's life. He views them in relation to an immigrant's place in the Canadian multicultural milieu. He wants to generate alertness among immigrants so that they safeguard their cultural positions and identities in the Western environment. His task sounds like that of an educationist

or a reformist to champion the noble cause of human welfare through instruction and delight. Itwaru's novel, *Shanti* earmarks an immigrant's responses and reactions to the exiled conditions through Shanti, a girl of an indentured labourer who cries and questions the western education imposed on immigrants. It works as an imperial weapon of control. His second work, *Critiques of Power* (1986) elaborates on this point with allegation that language imposed on immigrants is an instrument to control them and it exerts bondage over them. Language operates as a potent medium for western rulers, the British, the American and the European, to work out their projects of power against the Third World countries. Itwaru doubts that neo-Imperial forces seem to be working inherently on social, economic and even cultural fronts. Itwaru thus works out a theoretical base for the life experiences he had lived through in the Caribbean Islands and Canada. Itwaru's another work, *The Invention of Canada,* is a collection of case studies of immigrants belonging to various cultural origins and longing to be accepted in Canada. These case studies highlight their predicament in Canada. When an immigrant migrates to Canada he views it as a success- dream. For his love of Canada he despises his home culture and in turn cuts himself off from it. However, Canada denies him acceptance. Thus he faces the dilemma of the mythical Trishanku who is dangling between the two worlds.

Sasenarine Persaud, however, attempts to solve his dilemma when he adopts a different approach as he proclaims him a Hindu-Indian in exile. His is more of an introvert kind. His narrative operates beyond the physical realms to reach the mental, psychological and spiritual levels. He seeks to give expression to his sensibility as a Hindu person who has to write. In his writings he traces the development of a Hindu sensibility. Sasenarine Persaud perceives the evolution in the following metaphorical stages that he seeks to illustrate in his works:

1). Sowing seeds: a child imbibes the mother culture in the form of "samskaras" through cultural heritage as first lessons of life. It is an unconscious act. Persaud's first novel, *Dear Death* records this stage through childhood memory.

2). Germination under controlled conditions: a child is exposed to an open society. The strength of his samskaras is tested at this stage. Through rigorous testing in his young age, he acquires understanding of the world through suffering dilemma and struggling to derive meaning from his confusion. It is an ordeal. He struggles through illusion and delusion about the world. Persaud's second novel, *The Ghost of a Bellow's Man* delineates the second stage with a young man's struggles and heated reactions to the social and political developments around him. At the end, he emerges as a man of confidence.

3). Building a Viewpoint: with maturity and ability to think he is capable of assuming a position. He forms his views, thinks independently and decides. Alertness and awareness emerge in him to guide him to decide and act. Persaud's stories in the collection, *Canada Geese and Apple Chatney* delineate this stage of the evolution.

4). Decisive Action: as one acts he gets to know his acts. The action comprises a choice of the right and a withdrawal from the wrong. Knowledge enables him to choose and decide. It springs in him greater awareness about the direction to move into. With it his sensibility gives out reactions and responses to the reality he faces. The poetry in *Damarera Telepathy* deals with this stage.

5). The Inner Knowledge: as he learns to introspect he knows his self, its strengths and weaknesses. It is a stage of purgation and purification and cleansing to release the inner energy from its weaknesses. The inner energy activates in him to rise high. The poetry of the *Wintering Kundalini* deals with this stage.

6). Concentration on the soul: as the inner energy is released the soul becomes free to soar high in the psychosphere. From a height it witnesses the world in order to know it better. In this position one hears the music of the soul. Unlike the music of the world it has reverse direction to end with the "aalaap". The alaap helps one's concentration on the goal. The poetry of *A Surf of Sparrow's Songs* evokes the music of the soul that leads one to concentration on a particular form that is a manifestation of the formless.

7). Waiting for realization: the formless is Cosmic Being or the Truth or the Reality. It is where realisation lies. Constant efforts with knowledge spring a person's fountain of love. Love leads him to faith. Eagerness for union with Reality grows in him. With it he waits for the moment of realisation. His efforts acquire meaning. He focuses all his efforts on the inner being, 'self'. The poetry of *The Hungry Sailor* evokes this experience.

8). Realisation, the Yogic Realism: one knows his self as a part of the Self, a spark of Eternity, a facet of the Truth or Reality. The knowledge or realization leads him to have merger between his consciousness and the Cosmic Consciousness. It corresponds to the Samadhi stage in yoga with yogic perception of the world. This perception is what Persaud terms as Yogic Realism. The poetry of *A Writer Like You* deals with this stage.

It may be noted that Persaud's writing reflects a singular voice that runs in to several stages spilling over many books. The theme of evolution of the Hindu sensibility runs through it like a single thread binding different stages like beads in a rosary. As a result, his works can be read as an integral whole.

Persaud writes from his memory of double origins that lurks constantly at the back of his mind. The memory of his past in Guyana provides contextual framework to the narrative with socio-political contexts, while that of the ancestral culture of India provides a conceptual base

with cultural and aesthetic concepts. Therefore, his works need to be reviewed keeping in mind the twin axis interwoven with memory inferring and intersecting with each other.

Persaud's novel *Dear Death* (1986) forms the first segment of the narrative. The title is suggestive. It suggests that one has to know death and to develop familiarity with death. Rather, he has to love death. This is the first lesson that a Hindu person receives in life. He has to be free from the fear of death or any other kind. '*Abhayam*' (fearlessness) is the basic virtue envisaged in the Hindu thinking on life. The *Gita* counts it as the prime virtue when it enumerates human virtues in the sixteenth canto, '*Abhayam satvasanshuddhi…*' (XVI, I. 4). One has to cultivate it to overcome all fears in life. Finally, he has to overcome the fear of death. The victory over death is called salvation. It remains the goal of a good moral life. Every Hindu person aspires to achieve salvation when he leads his life with four approaches like "Dharma", performance of duty or obligation to society and world; "Artha", earning livelihood for sustenance; "Kaama", to perform sex in order to continue a family line with virtuous children; and "Moksha", to liberate eventually from worldly passions and attachment in order to know self. The first approach is ethical. The second is economical. The third is socio-cultural. The fourth is mystical and spiritual. Thus, these four approaches encompass all relevant facets of human life. A Hindu boy is made aware of these four approaches through samskaras imparted through tradition and conventions in a family and diaspora. He forms familiarity with death through normal exposure to incidents deaths in a family and the community around. Such an exposure shapes his first learning of death. The novel, therefore, explores this theme narrating how a Hindu child is exposed to death. It rather narrates his acquaintance with death.

Anantanand Rambachan, who too is a Trinidadian Hindu in double exile, begins his discussion on "Hinduism" with a dialogue on death between Nachiketa and Yama, God of Death. It is Nachiketa's encounter with death. In view of the dialogue, Rambachan makes several remarks: "The significance of life cannot be contemplated if one is unmindful of death"; "Death does not reveal its secrets to one who does not seek with patience and persistence"; "In the case of Nachiketa, however, Death teaches the way to eternal peace (sashvati shanti) and unending happiness"; and "Instructed by Death, Nachiketa became free from death (vimrityuh) in this life itself"(67-68). Nachiketa's story is derived from the ancient Sanskrit text, *Katha Upanishada* to point at the essence of the Hindu way of living. Persaud seems to adopt it as the framework for the novel.

The novel opens with a preface of a curious kind. Unconventional enough, Persaud calls it the Prologue. Normally a novel does not have a prologue. But the narrator needs it to begin the discourse on death. He erects the discourse on the philosophy of the *Gita, "Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihay...navani dehi"* (*Gita,* II 22) that says, "He was to believe that this soul never died...just as the body wore new clothes, so the soul inhibited new bodies from time to time" (5). He claims that the theory of the soul and reincarnation are originally the Hindu concepts, "And this came from the holiest book on the earth – at least for Hindus... in which the concept of the soul and reincarnation are constantly reiterated" (5).

Persaud says that the Hinduism allows to an individual freedom to question and to express doubts. Even the God Superior in the *Gita,* for example, takes pains to explain the concepts, elaborates them with due illustrations and clears doubts. It is thus discursive in spirit. The Hindu thinking comes down in the tradition of a dialogue form or in discursive mode. The *Gita* poses the best illustration with an elaborate dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna. The

dialogue takes place in a freer and friendly climate. Persaud reflects on freedom of mind that it allows, "Why should he believe unquestioningly in any scriptures, any book written by another man? Yet if he has spoken to God, how could he prove it?" (6). Towards the end, the Prologue takes up an issue of relating memory to previous life. Memory operates over births and deaths to bring down the basic concepts of life, as in the scriptures called *Smritis*. Persaud uses the Prologue to touch upon the basic issues of life at the outset of his narrative. It helps him to build up the climate and mood of the discourse that he proposes to work out in it. It is like a preparatory work for the reader to enter into the discourse.

Persaud's narrative is not a simple story. It dives deep into Dalip's early childhood memory. Persaud says that the memory came to him in "a flash as in the flash of a camera-click" (7). To narrate, the narrator retrieves facts from his memory. Further to narrate, he assumes Dalip's sensitivity. The result is that the reader gets a feel that the narrator and Dalip are no different persons and yet they remain different by way of the third person narrative mode. This is a concept of detached involvement that builds up the narrative. There is an advantage of this dual position. On the one hand, a reader gets the first hand witness account of Dalip's childhood as recorded in his memory with all innocence and naiveté. On the other, he gets a neutral reading of Dalip's thought processes.

The theme of the novel is how a Hindu child encounters death in life. He seems to take the mythical Nachiketa position to know it as the reality of life. Dalip, a child born in a Hindu family belongs to a community of indentured Indian labourers in the British Guyana. Dalip parents belong to working middle class. Dalip is a favoured child by the mother. Hence, he faces childlike twin rivalry, from his elder brother Roy and the younger one Romesh. The opening incident reflects on it. Dalip takes pride for his marvellous mother and to be in her company, "It

was wonderful walking with her, holding her hand" (11); "the most beautiful woman and that she was the whitest woman in the world, that she was whiter than the white woman...He felt proud and held his mother's finger. She was *his* mother" (11). Persaud draws the mother-image also to carry the connotation of his motherland, Mother India. It consolidates his identity in an alien world. He derives strength to survive all the invasions, cultural or political, in the Western world. Ramabai Espinet remarks on Persaud's delineation of the mother, "Newer writers such as Arnold Itwaru and Sasenarine Persaud show more awareness of female characterization" (48). In this relationship, the child is at the receiving end.

The mother acts as a protector and a guide with whom a child feels secured and comfortable. Such childhood impressions remain everlasting in the child's memory. The mother also plays another role of an educator. She pampers Dalip's curiosity. Under his mother's tender care and comfort, he watches the things around curiously and tries to crystallise them in his sensibility. His curiosity is the origin of the narrative. It causes a bond of mutual trust and affection between them.

The mother is a factor to bind the family intact. She plays a role model of a Hindu housewife. She is a living spirit of religion in the family in the sense that she is a conscious performer and practitioner of the Hindu religion and culture and is ever eager to safeguard it. In moments of crisis, she even resorts to religion. Thus, she plays a triple role of a mother, a housewife and a Hindu woman. She acts as potent medium to transmit the Hindu samskaras into a child. Hinduism views "sanskaras" as contribution significantly to the shaping of man's personality and the mindset. Dalip's mother's role may be viewed in this light as vital and valuable. Yet she does not restrict her to traditional role models. She plays non-traditional roles to shoulder the family's financial requirements as a workingwoman. Her personality is a unique

blend of faith and action with spirited approach to life. She turns out to be a dynamic person at parties and social gathering spreading her charm around. Dalip takes pride for his mother's personality too. In this way, Persaud's first novel deals with facts related a child's psychology particularly in his relationship with his mother.

Dalip remains a silent witness and a "tagged along" participant in childhood games. He imitates them without understanding just to get the thrill (13). He is also unaware of his exceptional good qualities (15). His meeting with his relatives at his mother's father's place allows interactions with them. Here the child is an unconscious witness and a learner with innocence and naivete. His grandfather was an indentured immigrant from India. He brought with him the Hindu religion, the Ramayana, bhajans and everything about the Hindu culture. He adheres to the Hindu way of living, while his own elder son rebels and follows the Christianity. The grandfather holds generous attitude to him, "During his stays with his grandfather he never heard him say anything bad about Christianity, or Islam for that matter...Dalip could not understand it," (23). This incident serves Dalip an exposure to conflicting spirit of two religions, the Hinduism and the Christianity and a typical Hindu way of responding to it.

In the course of upbringing, a Hindu child is introduced to death slowly and gradually. Dalip encounters three deaths in his family, one following the other. First, his aunt Coreen dies of cancer. Second, his mother commits a suicide. Third, his elder brother dies a painful death. Through these deaths fear creeps into Dalip. At the first death, fear creeps silently into his psyche unconsciously. He senses death, "started to hear", "learnt", "also gathered", "noticed", "sensed", etc. The mother's death acts deeply on his psyche. She takes poison and commits a suicide. It occurs as untimely and shock to shatter his psyche. Here also he happens to be an unconscious participant and the death receives a different perception from him for reasons like his close

affiliation to his mother and heavy psychological dependence and fascination for her. Besides, no prior intimation of the event and lastly but most importantly his being instrumental unaware of the serious outcome work as potent factors to affect his psyche. The death still remains a mystery to him. All these reasons beyond his intelligence add to his pain and shock. At its slight mention suppressed feeling of loss would flow out in tears to make him "speechless" (63). In this condition, Dalip's experiences nightmares too, "as though his mother wanted limes" (73). It is stiffening to him. He also dreams that he speaks to his mother about the black fowl. Things become more serious when his father and uncles find him flying up in the air and knocking the roof. His elders bring nightmares to end with the power of religion perhaps (75).

A few other deaths in the family go unnoticed. But Roy's death lays deep impact on Dalip's psyche, because of his close affinity with him. Roy played a real guardian and source of inspiration to him (85). Secondly he knows that Roy is dying (95). It gives him fear with doubt, "just a small nagging doubt"(96-7). Dalip seems to suffer the Pandava, Sahdev's dilemma in the *Mahabharata*. Helplessly he has to witness Roy's death grabbing him bit by bit and Roy conveys it to him telepathically. His knowledge of death intensifies his pain and fear of death. He seeks an escape in a girl's company.

Dalip's education too increases his sensitivity to death through capacity of observation and introspection, "It had started in literature classes...that most of good writers, apart from the quality of their writing, had the ability to notice everything. They saw when they looked" (99). Reference to death in D. H. Lawrence's novel, *Sons and Lovers* increases his suffering and he reacts, "Damn his literature at school" (112-3).

The *Bhagavad Gita*'s discourse on death fascinates him. Krishna tells Arjuna that he should not fear death, as it is inevitable. The soul never dies it is immortal. Krishna further tells

that wise men seek to stay above pleasure and pain. Contradictions do not affect them in any way. Such persons are eligible for the immortality. Although Dalip finds this state impossible to attain, it fascinates him to try at least. He resolves to practice it. His experience of four deaths in the family, more particularly of Roy's death brings to him insight into human life. Gradually he overcomes the torture and the suffering. In this, Jennet's support works positively, "That hand had finally led him to pieces of his soul he had lost till then, though he had not realised it at the time" (118). He begins to understand himself. He thinks that so far he was gripped by death. His living, love and fun all were governed with the fear of death. But since death is inevitable he determines to overcome the fear. He remembers Gandhi who embraced his death fearlessly. His last words, "Hay Ram" show his eligibility to be a wise man and a realized soul of the *Gita*'s concept. Dalip thinks of other great souls too like Sant Valmiki, Sant Tulsidas, Sant Meera who had attained realization, he rather "felt the presence of their souls strongly now" (118). Dalip also thinks of The Books, the Hindu Scriptures that preach about goals of human life and distinguish between "the quest of the flesh" and "the quest of the spirit" (118). Thus, the inspiration of India's spiritualism works positively on him psyche.

Dalip chooses to undertake the quest of the spirit and determines not to be sidetracked with the quest for the flesh, i.e., worldly passions and temptations. He thinks that if one gets into the quest of the flesh he never gets out of the cycle of births and death, the cycle of reincarnation, "No, Realisation was better than reincarnation- to become part of the great soul- the Parmatma- was better than the cycle of rebirths". He determines to try (119). Dalip, thus, relates the prologue with the epilogue, the beginning with the summation. It projects his introspection. Dalip's evolution has the real beginning now, though it is in a crude stage. The process so far indicates three stages: a). A child's innocence and naiveté: he registers the reality with sensitivity

without really understanding it. b). An adolescent child's sensitive observation of things and happenings to help building his understanding. His mind registers them and carries the effect unconsciously in the form of dreams. c). A grown-up boy's 'seeing' of things as they happen around him. He becomes a witness to the reality. With keen observation he cultivates sensitivity. He suffers because of his awareness and knowledge. His attachment becomes the cause of his suffering. It robs him of the peace of mind. When the suffering grows unbearable, he seeks to escape it. d). Someone's (Jennet's) touch and support restore to him peace and wisdom. He develops a new understanding of death. e). A grown up boy seeks inspiration from his cultural heritage and makes his choice of path.

The process sounds more like a Yogic process. The phase of evolution that the novel delineates seems to correspond to the first two limbs of the *astangyoga*, namely *yama* and *niyama* that Patanjali prescribes in his *Yoga Sutram*. The despair and frustration that Dalip suffers seem to correspond with Arjuna's 'Vishadayoga' as delineated in the first canto of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but with a difference. Dalip's 'vishadayoga' occurs on a personal ground. It is then extended to acquire a wider relevance of a public concern in the second novel, *The Ghost of Bellow's Man*.

The narrative of evolution runs into Persaud's second novel *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* (1992). The person changes from Dalip to Raj, but the sensibility to carry the impact of the 'samskaras' persists with greater intensity. Raj is a young man of awareness, energy, eagerness and anxiety. He is a man of determined action who continues in him Dalip's sensitivity and awareness. The marked difference between the two is their ventures in private sphere and public spheres respectively. Raj holds revolutionary spirit to protest against the authority of Western

power blocks. Raj's alertness poses threat to their projects of control. His awareness of reality adds to his sensitivity. This marks an advanced stage in his evolution.

Raj is concerned with his cultural identity and to safeguard it from the western influences ever pouncing to enslave his mind and eradicate his cultural self. Raj registers an open protest against a multi-layered authority of the Western power projects that operates against the interest of the Hindu presence. The first form or layer of authority is the Christianity God whom the Christianity propagates as the Supreme Authority in the world. The second form or layer is the President of the United States of America who operates over all non-white subjects in the Caribbean lands through various systems enforced through the information technology at the American Library. The chapter entitled, "My Brother's Library" narrates Raj's protest to this two forms of authority. The third form or layer is the Afrosphoric Burnham government in Guyana that undermines the Indian presence in all respects. The fourth form or layer is that of publishers in the West whose cool indifference to non-White young and budding poets and writers operate to dry up their fervour and energy, as the chapter four entitled, "Dead Poet" narrates. The fifth is the behavioural and societal norms imposed by the western culture on all other cultures as a mark of sophistication and decency. The sixth form of authority lies within the Indian community that is vested with the temple committee and its leaders to regulate the affairs at a Hindu temple. The community leaders operate as mere agents of western power projects for personal gains and political mileage. They turn out to be mere 'doublespeak' with hypocrisy in behaviour.

A few instances from the text convey the intensity of Raj resistance. First is his annoyance with the Christian God, "You can, can't you? You lie! You damn God... Forgive me. There never was God"; "God –nonsense- I mean goodness. God is just short for goodness. Don't you see? God shortened turns in to O. Nothing. Just nothing. Like myself. Like myself, god is

Nothing" (11). Raj conveys his annoyance through questioning, derogatory words and more specifically through humiliating replacement of 'God' with 'god'. It may sound a crude response from a young person of immaturity.

A serious task that Raj looks forward to fulfilling is writing about the Hindu culture and religion. Raj aspires to become a poet. As an active member of the Hindu Society, Raj tries hard to build up awareness and energy among Hindu youth against degeneration creeping slowly into community. He considers protest as his sacred duty. Accordingly, he with his fellow activists protests against the Temple Committee for allowing a chair in a Hindu temple. They perceive it as interference of Western authority and culture into the affairs and purity of the Hindu culture. They fear seduction of a Hindu mind by it. The protest goes with display of placards bearing the slogans, "NO CHAIRS! NO CHAIRS IN THE TEMPLE!" and "CHAIRS NOW! SEX NEXT!" (16). 'A chair in the Temple' becomes a big issue of debate to cause disintegration in the Hindu community with heated conflicts and verbal combats. It also involves picketing marriages of mixed breed, "Part Hindu, Part Christian" calling it "This half tradition, half-innovation"(16). Raj calls it mere falsehood and deception of the West that is highly objectionable.

Raj draws mythological reference of the Hanuman-Ravana Katha in the *Ramayana* to explain the issue of 'chairs in the temple'. He comments about the incident, "Who looked foolish when Hanuman mimicked Ravana on his high throne? A tall tale/tail!" (16). A play on the words 'tale/tail' implies Raj's protests against the presence of chairs in the temple, like Hanuman challenged Ravana's authority with his 'tail', he does it with his 'tale', a story. Raj's tale implies Hanuman's strength and power (16). It also implies that as a writer, Raj has to tell his own story and by it to invent his own form of expression. Raj's story operates in his mind.

Raj has no patience with the systems in the Caribbean land. About the systems, the educational system and the political system he reacts, "Everything is decaying- the building, the system- he was fed up" (28). Further he comments on the political system, "Since the British left, since the independence, there had been fall in moral standard encouraged by the government of 'Fox' Burton" (28). Like other Indians in Guyana, he is deeply hurt by the betrayal of the Africans who once remained their partners and co-sufferers under the British regime. He has grown so skeptic that he even detest the word 'comrade' used by the Africans. He looks down upon them as "immortal lots" (29). He equally holds the education imparted through African as immoral and responsible to push him into racialist thinking, "God, how his bitterness betrayed him into this kind of racialist thinking, this coloured thinking implanted by community and education. Damn the voices of his education" (29). Raj seems to echo Arnold Itwaru's concern on the issue of education as Western weapon of control. He blames it for breeding vices into his thinking, "and fraud of fraud, they called them Knowledge Sharing Institute" (36). Raj also objects to the government's disregard of the Indian presence. He reacts to the miserable condition of the ferry transport across the Damarara River, from Georgetown to Vreeden-Hoop that mostly Indian teachers and students use. The government neglects it with racial rivalry.

Raj is critical of Indians too. He blames Dr. Cheddi Jaggan for his half-hearted attempts for the Ramrajya, an ideal state of Rama's vision. He unhesitatingly criticises another Indian, Harold Jaisingh who was a party to the KSI racket to earn advantage of the situation (37). Yet issues relating to Hindu religion and culture invite the prime attention in his story. As an activist of the Youth Arm of the Dharma Sabha, Raj displays sense of alertness, awareness and deep concern for Hinduism. He enacts responsibility to encourage more young Hindus to go to temples and offer prayers regularly. Taking it as his pious duty, he performs it with utmost

sincerity. He is a conscious Hindu worker to set a good example in the prevalent time (44). His picketing against placing chairs in the temple and his protest against eminent Hindus like Balchandra Badhase and his Temple Committee puts him in a lead role. He admits Balchandra's contribution to Hinduism, but discovery of his being as "even a double agent" with a 'doublespeak' and seductive acts shocks him (59-60). At times Raj feels like exposing him. Another person to disappoint him is Uncle Dalip who despite being supportive and encouraging to Hindu youths seeks to prevent their protests with his indecisiveness and ineffective presence. Raj's encounter with Uncle Dalip forms a crucial part of the narration. The present hero, Raj meets the past hero, Dalip and that gives a discourse a reflection on one's attitude in a given situation. In crisis, sober attitude turns out to be cowardice, and determination is strength. For a similar reason he criticises Dr. Cheddi Jagan.

'Resistance' acquires prominence in Raj's life, as it remains a prominent concern for all Indo-Caribbean immigrants too. He determines to fight out deadness all around him, deadness of the White with their power craziness, deadness of the African with their role of power brokers and racist thinking and deadness within the leadership of his own Hindu community from whom he perceives a greater threat like Gandhi felt once (*Hind Swaraj*, 1938). Raj introspects on the condition of threat within and without the community and in this respect his perception acquires objectivity.

Raj confronts despair when he learns about young intellectuals' slavish surrender to Balchandra, "to get the people to admire him, to idolise him", and "to the simpler country folks Balchandra was God incarnate" (61). Raj is more pained at his isolation by his companions when he suffers humiliation. Raj decides to retreat, "That was that, he thought, feeling foolish and defeated"(65). Raj's setbacks in the public arena lead him to apprehend him in the context.

He denies adjectives used for him such as 'a good man', 'a noble man', and 'a religious man', "Because I help the Hindu society- I'm a good man? And who says I'm religious? I help to keep my-our- culture alive. That doesn't make me religious or good" (86). Raj's choice is clear. When he decides to resist the defense of the culture gets the priority. Other aspects like religiosity, morality, ethics, personal character; social integrity, etc. receive subordinate attention or as mere entailing concerns. Hence, Raj is not bothered whether people call him immoral or rebellious. He justifies his flirting acts with such dimension. Raj seems to be disillusioned about him, what he is and what he should be. The words seem to lose their meaning and fail to inspire people for culture building or nation building.

Raj's introspection continues on personal ground too. He fancies him to be a leader and a great activist. He views his protest as, "HISTORY BURST! ... if not quite HISTORY, history's tiny bubble had burst" (98-9). Raj hopes that his action would set a new precedence by which a private quarrel within a community would assume a dimension of a public protest. He rather views his action as first bold step of Hindu youth to make a history of it. This revelation arouse in him thrill and romance. But his introspection on his nature reveals to him that he is too weak and hasty to control his mood and, as a result, most of his decisions turn out as thoughtless (100). He perceives against his weaknesses Gopal as a man of ideals with strength of mind and patience to control his moods. He poses a superior image of a leader. It diffuses his fancy about him. He confesses his fascination and appreciation for Gopal, "boyish good looks and boyish innocence" with Krishna's replica in him (102)

Raj's creative urge can fill the vacuum of his mind. He views, "Writing was like a tree. It was seed first, which had to germinate, be a seedling, then grow into a plant, then a tree" (102). He regrets that the publishers rejected his seedling poems and stories and a novel. He is

impatient to be published and also to work on his third novel. Writing seems to be his compulsion. He wants to write about Hindus in his country, i.e. the Caribbean lands. He views writing as protest against all miss-writings about Hindus, by western writers or by writers of Indian origin like V. S. Naipaul and others. He views that the prevailing writing on India is half-cooked products that projects Hinduism as commodity for Western Christian audience, or as mere laughing stock. He questions the validity of Naipaul's reading of the Hinduism as lacking faithful and truthful reading of the ages-old heritage. He wonders how an Indian can ignore his own heritage for the lust of earning recognition in the West. He believes firmly, "Hinduism was an experience, a continuous living experience and one lifetime was inadequate to comment on it" (103).

Raj views his third novel to be factual about Hinduism in the contemporary Guyana. He would not allow any guesswork or fabrication. He wants to write on the ideal set by Singer, Malamud, Bellow and other Jews writers. They wrote with success about their own culture in order to give a voice to their culture in the white western world. The title of the present novel, 'The Ghost of Bellow's Man' implies his aspiration to write on the Saul Bellow model, but with difference. The difference is the colour problem. The issue of colour influences Persaud's self-concept to reduce him to become a ghost, 'a ghost of Bellow's man' that carries just a shadow of the Jewish writers. Unseen, unheard and invisible in the western world of actions, Raj views him a ghost-figure, "to feel like a ghost, someone without real existence, condemned to follow a repetitive cycle of meaningless daily actions" (155). Yet he thinks that ghosts may have a meaningful role to play with uncomfortable presences, "consciences reminding the world of its misdeeds and cruelties until some act of justice allowed their troubled spirits to rest in peace" (155). Ghosts may work like 'the whistling thorns', to apply Suwanda Sagunasiri's metaphor

defining the Indo-Caribbean presence in the Canadian milieu (Preface). Raj thinks that he would play a similar role, "May be as a writer he would always be like a ghost, rattling the chains, trying to get the attention of a heedless world" (156).

Raj's understanding of the outer world causes disgust in him. Therefore, he turns to the inner world and writes about it. But he lacks commitment to the inner world and writing. He understands that knowledge of truth is a prerequisite for writing and he gets it through introspection. He also knows that his introspection is interrupted by complexes of two kinds: first, his fancy about him and his obsession for a woman/girl, "Weren't they an abuse of his position as a teacher, an abuse of power?" (154). He faces a condition, "I write with a heavy heart and a shaky pen" (139). He needs a companion to inspire confidence in him. Gopal, Persu and Roop help him regain his confidence, "When I saw him (Persu) coming in I felt my confidence returning" (140), and Roop asks, "Aren't you a writer? Why not use your pen?" (153) and reminds him his earlier words on the power of pen with illustrations of Tagore and Gandhi. Roop's words act magic on Raj. He determines to write in order to tell the truth. This is the epilogue of the evolution of Raj's sensibility that seems to operate on the R. K. Narayan's 'Raju, the guide' model, "Draughts call for rain".

The day of Raj's realization is by coincidence Sunday. By convention it is a day of retreat. Raj decides to retreat from the world and go introvert, "time to reflect, renew, rededicate" (156). Kiskadees' call to Krishna coloured clouds is suggestive to hope of rain, "A rejuvenating and colourless rain" (156), a shower of love and affection to rejuvenate the human existence in the world of strong binary oppositions. The diary form carries a sense of introspection. It carries an overtones of Raj's despair that turns into understanding. It is his recovery from the 'vishadayoga' that occurs in stages like: 1). He is suffering agonies of betrayal, deprivation and

humiliating discrimination in the conditions of exile in the Caribbean land. 2). His resistance turns futile causing in him disgust and despair. 3). His introspection leads him to analyze weaknesses. This is the purgation of his mind. 4). His resolution to write with yogi-like detached attachment.

When we compare Raj's 'vishadayoga' with Dalip's (in *Dear Death*) it may be said that Dalip's 'vishadayoga' occurs on a personal level and Raj's 'vishadayoga' occurs on a public level. It is a kind of continuation that works purgation or purification of mind in both the cases at different levels. At the end of the first phase, Dalip is purged of his personal attachments that cause fear of death in him. He eventually learns to love death, 'dear death'. Similarly, at the end of the second phase, Raj is purged of his illusion about himself and the world. He gets clear vision leading him to action, his 'karmayoga'. The process seems to occur on Alice Masak French's model of writing autobiography, 'suffering, healing, revelation and understanding' (33).

Persaud informs in his essay, "Extending the Indian Tradition: Indian Literature, Music, Culture and Writers of Indian Origin Born in the West Indies" that Indian music helps him to structure this novel. Raj, the hero takes lessons in sitar at the Indian Cultural Centre. The use of the Indian classical music as a major determinant of the structure of the novel is deliberate. He explains the rhythm of the novel in view of the Indian music. The raag, like most Indian classical art consists of three rhythms or taals; Vilambit lay (slow rhythm), Madhya lay (medium rhythm) and Drut lay (fast rhythm). In usual singing, the slow rhythm marks the beginning, the medium rhythm marks the middle or the main part of singing and the fast rhythm marks the climax that is usually the shortest rhythm. The novel too has three parts corresponding to the three taals or movements of raag. However, there is only one difference. The movement of the raag is reversed. The book opens in a fast rhythm and with the shortest duration. The narration in the

first part is in the first person in a stream-of- consciousness mode. In the part two, the narration is in the third person in a quasi-stream-of-consciousness mode. Its pace and rhythm is medium or Madhya. The third part marks the movement in slow rhythm or Vilambit laya (20).

Persuad explains further, "The deliberate reversal of the raag sequence is also based on Indian aesthetics of yogic time and space, a yogic infinity of time and space in the cosmos and the different planes of existence even after a somewhat nirvana or moksha" (20). Following the reversal, the alaap appears in the epilogue, at the end. Usually, the alaap opens a song. Here it is at the close of the novel. This gives a suggestion that since the alaap is supposed to bring evocation of the start, it implies a writer's movement toward another composition/novel. He explains, "The alaap is basically an improvisation on the melody of a raag in which the singer of a song, an Indian virtuoso, in his quest for pure sound or music utters no words, no sentences just syllables, sounds and music from his throat". Citing Coomarswamy on the point, he says, "It reflects an emotion and an experience which are wide and deeper and older than any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation" (20). The two views on the alaap, Persaud's and Coomarswamy's, give two perspectives on art, improvisation into mature emotional status and experience on the part of a writer. Juxtaposing the alaap with the yogic world-view, one may find that the two are qualitatively identical concepts holding identical spirit. With this view, the rhythm reversal in Persaud's novel brings us to the point that he looks forward to working on the yogic world-view in his writing. In the yogic world-view, "there is no beginning and no end, just cycles to and from pure consciousness!"(20). It is again the mathematical Zero, 'O' evoked through music. It corresponds to yogic search for self and Self.

Persaud says that besides the Indian music there are other clues that speak of Indian aesthetics at work in his writing. One of them is meditation. To explain this, he cites instances

from his novel, *The Ghost of Bellow's Man.* Raj, the hero protagonist, meditates on the novel and composes it, even while he indulges in resistance through protests and picketing. His contemplation about writing a novel is like " a soul searching to catch a soul- in a Hindu way, an Indian way" (*The Ghost,* 32). He applies the oldest aesthetic principle of Hinduism, "Yoga as art" (21). Persaud explains that his earlier novel, *Dear Death* too carries out this concept. In the prologue, Dalip seeks to justify reincarnation as the essence of reality. Reincarnation works on the principle of memory that calls for meditation on the past, present and future. Meditation trains the consciousness to retrieve what is recorded in its memory store. Memory of India operates in Dalip's consciousness. Memory of Lord Krishna and his preaching to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* frames his mind set. It helps him to justify the theory of reincarnation against the Christian thinking. "This is the essence of yoga", says he, "Dalip theorizes in the prologue and then sets out on an act of meditation, an act of memory retrieval" (21). Dalip's meditation and his memory retrieval structure the body of the novel. The experience of life-deaths of the dear-ones evokes in him thinking, "Each life and death is about a school of yoga and so necessarily has to stand independently" (21).

A writer's search for form corresponds with his quest for self. The first part of the novel, *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* is written in the form of prose-poetry. It is narrated in the first person in a mode of stream-of-consciousness with the quest motif. Part two has a couple of verse-poems in the third person narration in a quasi-stream-of-conscious mode. The third part switches back to a first person narrative and the form is that of diary entries. Besides, the reversal of rhythms, Dhrut (fast), Madhya (medium) and Vilambit (slow) entails the quest motif in a yogic way, explains Persaud (20).

Frank Birbalsingh comments on Persaud's two novels *Dear Death* and *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* in his reviews "The Write Immigrant". He throws light on certain salient points of narrative technique. He calls the novels as "studiously devoted to the Indo-Caribbean community in Guyana" and thus "show less overt interest in the theme of Canadianization". But he finds problem with the writer's obsessions and deep preoccupations with Hindu religious and social issues, particularly in *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* (216). He notes that it makes the narrative "self-regarding" with monotonous opinions and preoccupations. "Consequently," he says, "the narrator's point of view emerges as unquestioned, Olympian, irrefutable". It limits the interest of the audience at large and makes the novel "less accessible to readers who are non-Guyanese or non-Hindus or both". He finds problem with this autocracy of the point-of view for two reasons, one, the significance of the central issue of the introduction of chairs into the temple is unexplained and two, the narrative expects from a reader "implicit assumption of Hindu universalism". As a result, it fails to evoke the sense of violence and desecration that the issue evidently causes to some Hindus. A reader fails to get its feel and loses interest unless he or she shares "the unquestioned" commitment to its reading. Birbalsingh views it as failure of technique and not of treatment of religious issue. As illustrations, he mentions R. K. Narayan, Graham Greene and V. S. Naipaul and remarks on Naipaul's dealing with Hindu themes in his *A House for Mr. Biswas*, "But such is the intricate subtlety and extraordinary skill of Naipaul's writing that without resorting to any obvious indelicacy like using the word "shit" he is able to convey humour, irony, tragedy and comedy all at once, and absolutely without any pseudomystification or jiggery-pockery" (217).

About the first novel, *Dear Death* he reviews the similar poverty of narrative interest. Quoting from Florence Ramdin's review on the novel he comments that "the same indulgent,

authorial assertiveness" converts Persaud's two narratives into "virtual monologues on the arcane mysteries and apparently inviolable truths of his idiosyncratic brand of Hindu belief" (218). Birbalsingh, however, credits Persaud for evidences of self-examination in narrator's reflections on his writing career, "Such confessional incertitude is winning", but again he finds its effect getting diluted with excessive references to Saul Bellow's novels including *Henderson the Rain King* and R. K. Narayan's Raju, the corrupt tourist guide in India in his novel, *The Guide*. The "excessive name-dropping" that Persaud's narrative involves "invites suspicion of parasitism which has a canceling effect on the merits of this book". He finds no connections between Persaud's book and Saul Bellow's perceptive, compassionate and humane study fragile and attenuated consciousness of the people in the second half of the twentieth century, or Narayan's loving celebration of enduring Hindu values. He concludes saying, "Despite these strictures... the novel shows a sign of improved technique over *Dear Death*". He counts vividness and occasional lyricism with excellent control over Croele idioms and expressions as "wonderful resource, which, like Dabydeen, he mysteriously underuses". On Persaud's point of view he remarks, "Perhaps he too is becoming victim to the writer-as-immigrant syndrome in Canada" (218-219).

Frank Birbalsingh expresses his unhappiness at Persaud's dismissive references to Naipaul in *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* (217). In may be noted that the two novels fall in the initial phase of Persaud's narrative that naturally reflects immaturity of reading and viewing on Persaud's part under unavoidable multiple impacts. Persaud too makes frank and honest confessions about it at the end of the novel *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* and his recent essays on Martin Carter and V. S. Naipaul. The stories in the collection, *Canada Geese and Apple Chatney* may seem to be continuing with similar responses. At a later stage, he did seek to correct his

reading with utmost sincerity. Frank Birbalsingh's remarks, however, ignore Persaud's references to Hindu myths and ancient Indian yogic texts. In this thesis, a serious attempt has been made to appreciate these myths with reference to the Hindu texts, which adds meaning to these novels.

Following the yogic narrative mode as discussed earlier in this thesis, Persaud's narrative passes through different stages of human consciousness. The narrative of *Dear Death* (1986) floats in the unconscious state in which one knows the world unconsciously, without actually understanding it. That of *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* (1989) indicates a stage of the conscious learning through Raj's perceptive participation in the world. The conscious mood seems to continue in his collection of stories, *Canada Geese and Apple Chatney* (1998).

Canada Geese and Apple Chatney (1998) has stories in two parts. The first part contains the stories titled, "The Dog", "My Girl, This Indianness", "Is There No Laughter in the Snow?", "When Men Speak This Way" and "Dookie". The second part has the stories like, "S.T. Writerji", "These Ghost of Ghosts", "Canada Geese and Apple Chatney", "Heads" and "Arriving". The stories are personal in character with autobiographical references in abundance. The narrator dwells mostly on his personal experiences and struggles in Guyana and Canada to discover a link to the ancestral culture through penetration. He chooses a retreat from the world around him, yet participates in it without ceasing to be its part. This is his 'selective involvement' with the world.

"The Dog" is the opening story of the book. It opens with the narrator's efforts to trace back to his family history in India up to his great grand father's time of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The stories told by his *Aja*, grandfather build up in him a sense of pride of being born in

the line of Kashmiri brahmins of India with hallmarks of fanaticism, purity and cleanliness. He is also proud of his grandmother's beauty, "the fairest of the fair- whiter than milk, black hair, green eyes. There was nobody more tender than she- and more beautiful" (3). Similar fascination is reflected in Dalip's pride for his mother (*Dear Death*, 11). He also takes pride for his great grandfather's knowledge of the *Tantra*, the fifth *Veda* and his purest of the pure stain-free body. The narrator also feels pride for his ancestors' adhering to pure vegetarian even in his a military career and among atrocities of the British. The feeling of pride works to intensify the narrator's feeling of deprivation of the right to belonging to his motherland, "Mother India, The sacred, pure Bhaarat" (4). It works to assert his Indianness. This builds the spirit that he wants to explore in his stories.

The family story line at the opening of the story carries a loaded line, "My great grandfather was a Kashmiri Brahmin. So my Aja said". Persaud explains in the essay, "I Hear A Voice, Is It Mine? Yogic Realism & Writing the Short Story" that it indicates a different dimension of one's pride in his ancestry. Being a Brahmin is the issue that at its face value that invites a reader's sharing of the narrator's pride. But it also hints at the narrator's mocking put-me-down attitude demeaning others as a *sudra*, an untouchable. But the fragment, "So my Aja said" brings about a 'U' turn and the narrator seems to be mocking at his Aja, or the story-teller mocking at the narrator as to how one after crossing the ocean, *the Kala pani* can remain a Brahmin. This sparks off once again a debate on the issue, "Who is a Brahmin?" In this context, he refers to a Upanishadic story of a Brahmin who pelts a dog with a stone. Brahmin here stands for a voice and the story gives an ironic perception on 'voice' in the west (536)..

The narrator in this story is in Canada after a long journey long from India to British Guiana to independent Guiana to Canada. He says in his article, "Viewpoint For this Love of our

Lives: Writers on Writing", "some things take longer to change, perhaps never change" (9). In view of his immigrant experience it may be understood that despite long journey after departure from his motherland things do not change. It may be his Hindu samskaras and Brahminical obsession and fanaticism about cleanliness and purity. He confesses that it remains with him steadfast and at time surfaces in a curious way (4). It surfaced once in Canada when he confronted an arrogant Canadian customer appeared at the bank with her small dog and put it on the desk of his working. He got annoyed undermining the threat to his career. He could not agree with the manager on western norm of excessive love for animal pets, dogs or cats and equally nor could he agree with the excessive care paid to valued customers even if they behaved indecently. It was a cultural shock to him in Canada, "When I first came to Canada I was shocked at the way Canadians carried their dogs, treated them as they were their gods- while often dismissing other humans. I couldn't get over my shock and amazement" (4).

In order to draw logic on treatment of animal pets, he draws stories of two dogs in his family in Guyana, Brownie and Shiva. His intention is to present an Indian view on dog. The story reveals certain human and super human traits that the narrator perceives in two dogs, Brownie and Shiva that stayed in his family one after another. About Brownie the story depicts the dog as being treated like a human member in a family with intimacy of boys' calls, "a poetry of sound", as the narrator calls it, with intonation of voice and pitch to fill the Indian area; a faithful companion, " as intelligent as us most humans"; a guard or a protector, "Dogs, of course, were pets but not pets first. Dogs were guards first, protectors"; self- disciplined never to dwell inside a house with the keeper, nor enters the house of a human, "That would be unclean and unhygienic"; with kind of freedom. More surprisingly he possessed brahminical trait of preference for vegetarian food, "He had, it turned out, a certain Brahminical distaste for meat

eating". The narrator perceives such a character in him "his Indianness"(6-9). The perception is imposed on the story to make it "imagined India" because the author has never visited India.

Brownie's Indianness coincides with the narrator's Indianness to generate intimacy between the two. He too perceives in him superhuman traits as if some extraordinary *yogi* or brahmin "who had done some terrible deeds to be reborn as our Brownie to be cleansed of his bad karma" (11). Instances like Brownie's waiting for the "prasad", his going to the mandir with the mother and the children, his quiet waiting at the mandir steps during the puja reflect Brownie's religious temperament. It deepens the intimacy still further. Brownie's curious and mysterious behaviour prior to his mother's death and following it at the cremation makes Brownie special as if an eldest son in the family. Clara Joseph in her book review raises a point about the dog's behaviour. She says that his acts of receiving a prasad and his going round the father's pyre sound "highly sac religious, unbrahminic" (134). She, however, misquotes 'the mother's pyre' as 'the father's pyre'. But Brownie's depiction may carry high sentimentality, as the narrator was just a Hindu Indian boy of eight or ten. Likewise, Brownie's sudden death in his absence affects high sentimentality on his mind. However, on knowing about his father's sensible treatment to the departed dog he gets some solace.

The second dog, named Shiva is again more special to the narrator for superhuman traits in him. He takes him as the pride of the Indian culture. Clara Joseph objects to the naming of the dog. She finds "Shiva as tantamount to a Catholic priest's naming her cat 'The Blessed Virgin Mary'" (134). He also perceives divine traits in the dog and the name serves to one's perception of physical objects as windows to the eternity. It is typically Indian. Further, the narrator finds Shiva as Brownie's second coming, his reincarnation, "Indeed, whenever I looked in to his eyes I saw Brownie" (19). He perceives Hindu samskaras to continue in him through reincarnation.

Shiva's foreknowledge of death and his mysterious behaviour project him in an image of a yogi. He comments on Shiva's retreating to the forest, "I thought of him somehow as a yogi, having completed his duty, heading back into the forest to continue his meditations" (23). This kind of perception bears an imprint of the Upanishadic vision of a dog. It sounds unreal with far-fetched imagination, as is the name of the god Shiva is given to a dog and brahminical and yogilike traits are superimposed in it. In the contemporary India, no one names a dog after a god's name and no such perception is held about a dog. Thus, it becomes Persaud's idealised perception of "Indianness". Under the impact of spiritualism of India, it is his "imagined India". The name of the first dog, Brownie likewise suggests impact of the Caribbean Creole culture.

It may be said a small event in Canada sparks off Persaud's contemplation on Indian aesthetics and spiritualism. The story delineates his contemplation that turns out to be his comment on what he finds in Canada by putting it against the mythical Indian counterpart. It is a story of a Canadian dog is viewed against that of a West Indian dog, Brownie and an Indian dog, Shiva. In the essay, "I Hear A Voice, Is It Mine? Yogic Realism & Writing the Short Story" that the story projects three images of dogs to present his critical reading of man's attitudes to pets: western materialistic and pleasure seeking attitude in the first instance, a good companion and a protector to one in insecure and unsafe conditions of exile in the second instance and religious and spiritual perception in the third instance, "this man of a dog", "this great yogi of a dog", "this dog of a dog" (535). Further, the three dogs pose three cultural viewpoints, Canadian, Croele and Indian to present a writer's perception on the subject of writing through a comparative view A dog stands for a subject of writing that is imposed in the Canadian instance, that is derived out of demand of the situation in the Caribbean instance and that is explored to elevate to the level of

spiritualism in the Indian instance. Through a comparative projection, Persaud seems to work out his choice of the subject of writing. It is Indianness with all choices.

The second story, "My Girl, This Indianness", again explores the issues of Indianness. It opens a discourse on roots and one's identity through his ancestral culture. The narrator seeks to convey that sense of pride that emerges in a person only when he is sure of his roots. He acquires his identity from his ancestral culture. It gives him sense of belonging. This is the foundation on which his personality is erected with specific behavioural pattern and mindset. It consolidates his confidence and pride with feeling of surety and security.

Parsaud views two positions, an Indian and a westerner by placing them against each other through the characters of Gopal and Debbie. Gopal Singh is an Indian settled in British Guyana. He teaches English literature at a high school. Debbie is a new teacher appointed to teach French at school. She is a smart and young woman of European descent of Brazilian Portuguese. Her charm and elegance fascinates Gopal. She too gets fascinated with Gopal's openness. Their affinity turns into love relations and they decide to marry despite their diverse cultural belongings.

Gopal aspires to live as a champion of his Hindu culture in British Guyana. He says that the enthusiasm for Hinduism builds pressure on him. Gopal feels that Hinduism is constantly under the risk of attacks and damage. The spirit of Hinduism boils in him to exert pressure from within (32). Debbie's beauty fascinates him because he finds Indian connections in it. It carries the aesthetic sense of Hindu temple sculpture and iconography in various art books at the library. Beholding her he feels as if "I was reentering my Hindu world intellectually" (31-2). On the other hand, Debbie is proud of her belonging to Brazilian Portuguese culture that she received through her father. Gopal respects her sentiments and encourages her ventures into her own

culture. Because he knows that intercultural relations are based on a mutual respect to cultural heritages. Yet he is alert that his love should not distract him from his culture and compel him to succumb to the pressure of conversion of religion or culture. Gopal does not approve of such a view of friendship or a love relation to cost of one's cultural identity through demands of conversion.

Gopal confronts dilemma on a question of marrying Debbie. It sparks off a debate raising number of questions related to cross cultural relations: "Will they with their diverse cultures live separately, or would one be required to compromise? Who would compromise the faith?" Also, "how are they going to bring up their children, as Hindus, as Roman Catholic, as neither?" (37) Guided by western feminism Debbie expects that Gopal should change, "Why don't men ever change?" (37). Citing incidents of inter-race marriages from the history Gopal argues that a Hindu boy has to sacrifice, "they convert him, change his name" and questions, "Is that fair?" (37) He alleges American and European peoples for being aggressive in acts of conversion. Gopal's political preoccupations arouse fear and suspicion in him about the Burnham government's threatening role to the Indian community and so he favours Jagan and his party. Gopal's obsessive position may be viewed as his defense of the Indian ancestry. Gopal's political preoccupations also make him suspicious about his marriage with Debbie, "marriages across racial, cultural and religious lines don't work" (38). Here the question of identity commingles with its political connotations. Debbie, however, reminds him of his earlier words on power and purity of love, "love was casteless, colourless, you remember- Yoga?" (38). She uses Gopal's philosophical convictions to soften his sternness. Yet he takes a firm stand, "Dharma- one has to do what he has to do- overrides everything, even personal feelings" (38).

It comes to Debbie's knowledge that her father is no real father to her and her real father was an Indian. It causes deep shock to her to shatter her pride and faith to disintegrate her identity. She loses all her surety and confidence that she lived with. She feels alienated and frustrated. She falls back to her roots in the Indian culture. Through her story, Persaud seems to convey that one assumes identity and confidence only when he or she is sure of the roots. The father forms a link to the roots in the ancestral culture through tradition that assigns a person belonging and identity. Thus, story introduces issues of cultural identity, conversion and belonging in view of Indianness.

Most of Persaud's stories deal with the aspect of "speaking" in the story, "When Men Speak This Way". The story unfolds a new perspective on story telling calling it a yogi-like act. The narrator Anand is a junior clerk of the Guyanese Shipping Corporation. He confronts two worlds on a working day. The first hour in the morning is the heavenly hour in which he finds a serene touch of Indian spiritualism. The remaining seven hours of the day gives him a feel of the hell - "Heaven came to earth for one hour and hell reigned in the following seven" (52) with mundane reality of usual working at the Caribbean shipyard. The latter is a real world in the Caribbean and the former is a Meta real world of India. He finds a clear distinction between them like the Heaven and the Hell. He spends the first morning hour overlooking on the Demerara River from his office window. The impact of the hour stretches his imagination to have a feel of spiritualism.

> Every morning, once there was no mist or rain on the river, I looked for the two tall palm trees, indistinct but recognisable as palms, which stood over all other trees like the two eyes of god close over the *lila*, the play and sport of his creation, the two eyes of god

which could open at any moment. It was as though I did not want to miss this opening with its laser gaze". (55)

He draws the analogy further. "But if the palms were the eyes, the river was god himself, full, calm, soft as Shiva meditating on Kailash". The sound of the river reminds him of the discourse of Arjuna and Krishna on the battlefield of the Mahabahrata. The ferocity of the river is bitter and sweet simultaneously to evoke to him an image of Shiva coming down from the mount Kailash with fire in his eyes, power, grace, poetry in his feet- the Nataraja dancing his eternal and unmatched dance of love, destruction and creation (55). In the serenity of the hour, he receives glimpses the great ancient persons like Krishna, Arjuna, Shiva, Buddha, Mahavira, Tulsi. The spirituality lived and preached by them fascinates him. Such mystical experience inspires in him poetry. He hopes his poems would be as good as those of Tulsidas, a great mystic poet of India.

Persaud conducts a discourse on the art of telling or talking in view of the two persons Anand meets. One is Mr. Singh, a senior employee of the shipping corporation and the other is Dr. Philip Shiv Kumar, his family physician and friend. Both of them are remarkable for their art of story telling, Mr. Singh with his fascinating attention to details and vividness and Dr. Kumar with lucidity of his story telling. Mr. Singh reminds him of great sages of the ancient India. Dr. Philip Kumar was, he says, " such a smooth and rivetting talker and I liked to listen to him - the eloquence and poetry in his speech in a standard English..." (58). The narrator says that his stories had no clear theme or no clear moral. They were fascinating because "the telling made the stories, the telling was the essence of the stories- stories without beginning and end, stories in which the stories themselves were plot, theme and moral" (58). In his essay, "I hear a Voice, Is It Mine?", he values telling of stories in reference to his life in the Caribbean and Canada, "replete

with stories" (531). Stories remained integral to life and the telling turned out to be a cathartic experience, "stories some of which had to be told because the telling was a catharsis" (532). About the two story tellers, Mr. Singh and Dr. Kumar he says that they are "two character who in their lives mirror two kinds of writing, two kinds of yoga. One, Singh, represents a rigidity and fixed form, whereas Dr. Philip Shiv Kumar...mirrors a fluidity more associated with Karma Yoga" (533).

Dr Kumar's story telling recalls to him Krishna, Mahavira Swami, or Gauttam Buddha, "I felt at times he looked like Krishna must have looked, calmly delivering the *Bhagavata Gita* to Arjuna before the great Battle, or like Mahavira or the Buddha under the Pipal Tree" (58). In the doctor's calling softly "Next", he finds the Creator's invitation to join him in his telling of the knowledge. His telling may lead one to yogic revelations. Anand also finds his father's image in him. He feels intimacy with him. Both of them feel the company valuable mutually as they erect links to the worlds of their longing, "He was my link to a world I had heard and read so much of" (59). Thus, in Dr. Philip Shiv Kumar the narrator finds a companion of real quality. In his company he gains confidence to talk, "Now my memories float up to my tongue" (60). He can also see the difference between the two discourses: Singh's discourse imparts the world-wise *niti* knowledge and Dr. Philip Shiv Kumar's discourse delivers the vision of the *Vedanta* through the *Panchatantra*-like stories, beginningless and endless.

Now when Anand finds confidence to talk he finds no audience, "there is no audience" (60). Again this reflects the reality in the west that a writer confronts. It is a condition of aphasia that intersects his motive to invent a storyteller in him. But it does not frustrate him. He looks at the earliest phases of the Sanskrit literature, when the *Vedas* and the *Upanishadas* were written, or the beginning of the Sanskrit texts, there were no takers, no listeners. Yet the knowledge

flowed past generations and survived. It is found that Persaud determines to overcome the perils of the reality that are temporary and pay attention to something eternal, that is knowledge. This is the jnanyoga of the *Gita*, says he (60). He seems to indicate his choice on clearer grounds and his memory of India helps him in it.

"Dookie", the last story in the first part of the book sounds like a summation of the narrator's argument on Indian values. It is a story of Gopal and Shaira, a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl, a teacher and a student who marry each other lead a married life in the western environment. The story is told with the girl's reflections on Gopal whose nickname is 'Dookie'. The story projects a reading a woman's mind. It opens with Dookie's disagreement with Soyinka, a Caribbean-Canadian writer of African descent, who once said, "I can't enter the mind and body of a woman" (61). Dookie's references to transmigration of the soul and recalling residues of such existence with extraordinary power of mind further project an Indian view on literary endeavour that seeks to go beyond the real world to explore the trans-real or Meta real world, the world of eternity. Dookie believes that such an element attributes aesthetic value and a sense of permanence to the Indian literary tradition. Dookie's idealism raises pertinent issues referring to the eternity, Hindi films, etc. His arguments arouse curiosity among young students including Shaira. For instance, he views Hindi films as "our living links with an India which was still our mental home" (62). Clara Joseph, however, finds problem with this film business and says that the India shown in films is no real India but "a romanticized and heroic nation" (135). Dookie's perceives films to serve to Indians in exile a self-defensive strategy to survive.

The story addresses a basic question of conversion that is introduced in the earlier story, "My Girl, This Indianness". But the difference is marked with the shift in the point of view. The former story gives the boy's point of view, while the present story gives the girl's point of view.

By doing it, Persaud seeks to strike a balance in his argument. Gopal objects to cultural conversion in case of inter-racial marital relations, whereas Dookie objects first to conversion of religion in case of inter-religion marital relation and then to cultural conversion under the western impact. In both the cases, he suspects the demand for conversion as conspiracy of the counterpart against Hindus in exile through emotional black mailing. Reacting to Shaira's parents' demand to undergo the Nikka and adopt of the Islam Dookie tells Shaira, "I love you... I am not asking you to become Hindu" (69). He shouts at the girl's father, "No-don't try to convert me!" (69). Ignoring her parents' will, Shaira marries Dookie. She says about her married life, "Life had become full because of Dookie and there was always something new" (69).

Dookie supports Shaira's initiation into the Hinduism at her will. He applies a logic, "An ancestral memory- an ancient instinct. Perhaps every Indian Muslim is a Hindu at heart-or what we call a Hindu". He relates the point to the history, "Before the coming of the Turks to India, before Buddhism or Jainism even, all Indians belonged to what has come to be known as Hinduism today" (74). He laments on a painful history of wholesale conversion of Hindus committed by the Muslim invaders and also condemns the decadent caste system to help the conversion. Shaira supports Dookie as her little return for his love, "I felt at first that it was a small price for all he gave me" (74). She joins Dookie to visit his parents in the Diwali and also supports his political protests. Ultimately, she accepts an enforced migration to Canada for the sake of security.

In Canada Dookie undergoes a dilemma of an immigrant to confront disintegration of his cultural values. Shaira's mind is seduced with notions of freedom of thought and accomplishment of career under the impact of feminism infused by aunt Madhu. Contrary to her earlier supportive role, she indulges in arrogant argument with Dookie. Her arrogance pains

Dookie. He persuades her with a citing from the Vedic literature and Hindu thinking, "Hinduism has at its base one Vedic concept that all forms of manifest energy is an embodiment of the female principle, the Shakti. The only male principle is 'god' or the all powerful, pure cosmic consciousness" (81). He tells how Mira, a Hindu saint resisted male domination in religion. But Shaira takes Dookie's persuasion otherwise to take a skeptic view on their relationship. Dookie faces a setback, "a hopeless situation" like Zeppi, the protagonist of Sam Selvon's story, "Zeppi's Machine" who finds that his obeah is losing power and control over his people in the village, "His moment of glory was gone, there was nothing he could do or say" (21-29). It causes a split in their marriage. The split widens as Shaira's delusion and arrogance overpowers her love and pride for Dookie. Frank Birbalsingh remarks in his essay, "New Voices of Indo-Caribbean Canadian Fiction" that Persaud's fiction records "the impact of contemporary feminism on the lives of Caribbean immigrants whose attitude to marriage and sexual relations are shaped by older, more feudalistic conventions". He refers to female narrators, particularly Shaira who takes women's studies courses at the university and demands Dookie to share the household to comment, "This suggests that marriage breakdown and divorce become part and parcel of the experience of immigration, and there are several instances of this in Persaud's stories" (143)

The split brings about a subtle change in Dookie. He plunges him in writing as if "His muse had taken possession of him" (91). Shaira notices the change in Dookie. He persuades her, "You know, the soul is genderless, colourless, the body is merely a manifestation of a particular mind-soul lost in desires and misdeeds. A tightrope of accrued karma and the desire, sometimes strong, sometimes weak, to burn out that karma, pay back those we are indebted to- even in such an ego-extension thing as fiction or 'art'" (91-2), and art is about deleting his self, "I a no-I"

(92). But all these wise talks make no sense to her. In disgust, he declares throwing all his manuscripts, "I need to start over. It wasn't going well. Writers do that all the time" (92). He tells Shaira, "I can't wait and our marriage has become the testing-ground for your feminism!" (92), and finally confesses, "I'm tired of fighting, life's too short for fighting (92).

Dookie's despair seems to be a repetition of Raj's despair at the close of the novel, *The Ghost of Bellow's Man* (1992) when he finds his resistance worthless and decides to change over to contemplation. When Raj's resistance occurs on public level, Dookie's occurs on private level. In both the cases one feels insecurity, like Ramgoolam of Neil Bisoondath's story, "Insecurity", as "being left behind", "he knew that his insecurity... was now within him. It was as if his legs had suddenly gone hollow, two shells of utter fragility"(36). Dookie feels being alienated in his own home.

The stories in the second part depict two characters, Raj and Anand Sharma. They represent the dilemma of an immigrant writer through his two diverse and conflicting personalities. One is Raj who stays steadfast to his cultural roots, while the other is Anand Sharma who cares more for success in the west with an ambivalent view on the situation. The story, "S. T. Writerji" introduces Anand Sharma with a curious name, S. T. Writerji. The narrator explains the genetics of the name. It is a unique blend of east or India and west. Anand Sharma informs that he got the name form his parents out of their fascination for Christian connotation and English fashion, "What a euphemism for hope and triumph, they thought!" The name, 'Soon Tomorrow' that is shortened to "S.T." connotes to hope and optimism. Ironically, Anand relates it to him as a synonym for "a perpetual loser". Like the Indian caste names, he adds a name, 'writer' in view of his occupation of writing and to make it sound respectful like "Gandhiji - Gandhi-ji" adds 'ji' to make it 'S. T. Writerji' in total. Anand explains that the name "Writer"

signifies his karma, profession that came to him not as choice but just unconsciously following the theory of karma of his previous birth., "and I realized that I must be a writer. You may say that it was bound to happen, the karma of my name" (97-98).

Anand represents one facet of a writer in exile who lives a split personality of a "Trishanku" with indecisiveness whether to respect his ancestry or to go with the charm of the western norm of success. He writes under the western charm. Anand's aspirations for success get a catalyst when Chaibhai publishes his novel and his collection of stories, *Canada Geese and Apple Chatney*, "I became a writer of sorts" (100). But it soon fades away when he finds that his published books pile up in the basement of the Cobra Press and never reach the market or readers. He wonders, "Was I glad for the recognition!" (100). He reads Chaibhai's business mind, "a heart of silver, a soul of gold, a voice of pure sugar-cane juice when he explained the difficulties of small press publishing from long distance from California" (101). A writer suffers aphasia for writing "off the road" and American publishers would deny him right to speak to his audience.

Raj stands for another facet of a writer in exile with a clear preference for the Indian aesthetic and literary tradition to guide his literary endeavours. The western charm does not affect his faith in Indian literary heritage. He believes that to write about his culture is his karma, or rather 'dharma'. He has to serve his ancestry through writing. He is proud to be Indian and declares so. He gets a sense of fulfillment when he practices the Indian aesthetic and literary traditions in his writing. His faith in the Indian literary tradition provides him role models to help and inspire his writing. Thus, the story evokes through depiction of conflicting interests of human self dramatic or discursive interest on the issue of writing in the west. Also as Persaud

points out in his essay, "I Hear My Voice, Is It Mine?" "it was about Yogic Realism... writing nothing new, just continuing in an ancient Indian literary tradition," (530).

Persaud believes that the voices of the British education cause a split in an immigrant's personality. His self is split into two distinct selves, each holding contradictory viewpoints to give out dual voice, dual aspiration and dual vision. The story, "Heads" deals with this issue interestingly by an encounter between the two selves in Anand Sharma and Raj. Anand visits Raj and presents him his most recent book of stories titled, *Canada Geese and Apple Chatney*. Persaud adopts the title of his real book to Anand Sharma's book. It indicates an autobiographical connection to what he is telling and that too with a bit of confession on his part for Anand Sharma's stand. The encounter indicates ideological contradictions in Persaud's self through a long dialogue (page 127 to 132). Anand Sharma opens the dialogue: "I am intrigued by your usage of Indian aesthetics in your work and it is there in all our works, even in Selvon's and Naipaul's - consciously or unconsciously". He further confesses, "But I think, unlike you, I am working a bit more in the European tradition in my usage of plot and characterization, and language". Raj, instead of contradicting Anand's stand, remarks: "Which is also another part of the Indian tradition". He explains:

> Whatever European literary tradition has to give us -plot, characterization, details; etc.- has long been given to us many many years ago in the *Mahabharata*, the Indian epic. There is literary style or technique that it described as present as modern or recent or novel that remained untouched by the poets of Indian epics. Indian aesthetics is in fact the mother of all literary styles and techniques.

Raj expresses his concern:

> but because we are not familiar with our literary traditions we feel these things are from the European literary tradition". He questions: "Where did the European get it from?" He strongly feels: "We need to take the time off to consciously learn about ourselves. To hope that we will learn about ourselves through our writing or art is not enough. This places art above self and soul" (129-130).

The story "Heads" carries reference to an Indian legend of changing heads, "The Transposed Heads" in which Shiva replaced Ganesha's cut head with an elephant's head. Persaud, however, mentions Thomas Mann's book *The Transposed Heads* as the source of the story ("I hear a Voice, Is It Mine?" 539). The story, however, is originally an ancient Sanskrit story of a girl and her two lovers, one Brahmin and another kshatriya. Both fight for love and cut each other's heads. The girls cries and pray to the goddess to bring them back to life. The goddess blesses her and asks her to put cut their respective heads on their bodies. But out of confusion and with tearfilled eyes, she is unable to do it correctly. As a result, a brahmin boy gets a kshatriya head and a kshatriya boy gets a Brahmin head. They eventually bear the traits according to their heads or minds that impose the basic samskaras on the bodies and behave accordingly. It results in transposition of samskaras or minds that conveys that samskaras determine a person's personality. Based on this theme, there is a comedy play written in the Sanskrit literature called *Bhagavadajjukiyam* by a playwright called Bodhayan. It is one of the few comedies written in Sanskrit. Recently, Girish Karnad too has written a play in English titled, "Hayavadana" on this theme.

The theme of transposition of mind or heads is significant to Persaud to reflect on writers of Indian origin in exile. It explains the transposition of his mind under the impact of the western success dream. He says that the story inspired a western scientist to evolve the whole concept of

grafting and transplanting, artificial insemination and so on (131). Raj asks Anand how he came upon writing. Anand informs that his training in British literature and his reading of Shakespeare and Dickens "hooked" him to the idea of writing, "I wanted to be a god!" (132) Anand's is an immigrant's case who denies his Indian association in the name of his success-dream in the west. Raj's story of transposed heads explains an irony of writers in exile with double loyalty, to the roots and to the success, with ambivalence typical of an immigrant. Against it, Raj enacts a strong gesture of the Indian pride by reviving his links with Indian traditions literature and aesthetics. Raj's strong gestures embody Persaud's resistance to writers in exile like Anand Sharma who negate their roots and self in the blindness of success in the west. Persaud shares Arnold Itwaru's concern of cultural conversion in his *The Invention of Canada* (1990) that leads immigrants in Canada to splitting and negation of self.

The last story, "Arriving" echoes concerns of seductive impact of the British education on young immigrants' minds. Anand Sharma remembers that when he met with an accident in Guyana and was bedridden and his father looked after him during the ailment. His love and care touched his heart with mixed feeling of guilt and repentance, as he neglected his father for long under the impact of his British education. The father signifies the home culture, the Indian ancestry and his neglect of his culture is motivated by his British education that shaped his success dream. He repents for it and strongly feels the need to return to the father, the ancestry. He tried to say it often but he couldn't articulate it, "that I was returning to that continuity of consciousness and thought he had offered but which I had rejected in my obsession with the cynicism of the voices of my other education, the voices of the west". This is his 'arriving', his return and it was for him, " a leap forward for me into ancestral and preancestral consciousness and forms" (140). Anand's return to his father thus signifies his return to his culture that he

neglected in his obsession of the British education. His repentance signifies his arriving or homecoming. It is his returning to roots.

Anand meets Kelly Weithe, a tourist from South Africa and shares his views on 'The voices of our British education'. To his surprise she also nods in agreement. (144). Their agreement marks the meeting of two aliens on the world sharing the pain of being victims of British colonization. It brings them closure to feel familiar and comfortable. The meeting hints at universality of an immigrant's victimsation, physical or psychological. He reiterates Itwaru's concern, that his novel *Shanti* (1990) and book, *Critiques of Power* (1989) voice, that is of negative impact of the British education on an immigrants' minds to act as bondage.

The stories in the collection focus on the transformation of Anand's mind. It is brought about by introspective mode in the first part and discursive mode in the second part. The end result is one's arriving or returning to one's ancestral culture in order to write. Raj is a role model for it. This phase of experience may be viewed as purgation or cleansing to bring about purification of mind from passion, personal attachments and expectations. Since Persaud views writing as corresponding to yoga, the Raj - Anand dichotomy may be interpreted in yogic terms. Raj may correspond to the Prana or the bio-energy flowing into the Ida Nadi to generate sentimental, philosophical and imaginative reflections on the world. Anand may correspond to the Prana or the bio-energy that flows into the Pingala Nadi to generate reflections of rationality and reasoning. Purgation occurs for both to cleanse them of earthly elements like passion or attachment in Raj's case and dry logic or reason in Anand's case. Consequently, the mind becomes quiet like a yogi and acquires strength and confidence to decide and speak. In order to write, one has to have clear vision and distinct voice.

Frank Birbalsingh remarks about Persaud's stories in his essay, "New Voices of Indo-Caribbean Canadian Fiction", "Persaud's volume of stories confirm his arrival as one of the leading new voices in Indo-Caribbean Canadian fiction" (142). That a writer has to become a yogi and write with detached involvement and certainly with freedom of mind is the message that Persaud's stories convey. They, thus, mark "a leap" forward in the process of evolution of the Hindu persona in double exile.

The chapter three thus signifies Persaud's two novel and short stories to reflect upon the conditions of dilemma and trauma and the processes of purgation and cleansing of his consciousness. The process shows that he overcomes his weakness of falling victim to influences, external as well as internal, that disrupt his thinking. His mind undergoes changes and thus transforms to acquire more confidence to take a position of independent thinking. As a result, the mind becomes steady to decide the further course of action. What signifies is the freedom of mind. The fourth chapter shall, therefore, open new avenues of poetic way to Yogic Realism that Persaud prefers to take. His poetry books shall delineate his preference to convince the reader with its logic.