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The Executive Summary of the Ph.D. Thesis

**Revisiting Gendered Narratives of Dislocation in
Contemporary Indo-Canadian Women's Fiction**

**In conformity with the requirements to fulfil
the criteria for the award of
The Degree of the Doctor of Philosophy
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Submitted by
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Research Methodology

Contemporary Indo-Canadian women's fiction occupies a significant space within the broader landscape of diasporic literature, offering nuanced explorations of identity, memory, cultural continuity, and belonging. This study, titled *Revisiting Gendered Narratives of Dislocation in Contemporary Indo-Canadian Women's Fiction*, delves into the works of Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran to examine the intricate interplay between gender and dislocation. These narratives foreground the experiences of women who navigate the complexities of displacement, hybridity, and identity negotiation within the context of migration and settlement in Canada.

Dislocation in these literary works transcends mere geographical migration. It manifests through internal struggles, cultural ruptures, generational conflicts, and the often-fragmented reconstitution of the self. The selected texts articulate how the process of moving between spaces—both literal and symbolic—challenges conventional gender roles and offers new modes of self-understanding and empowerment.

By adopting a literary-critical approach rooted in postcolonial feminist theory and narrative analysis, this study engages in close readings of six novels: *Tamarind Mem* (1996) and *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (2006) by Anita Rau Badami; *The Tiger Claw* (2004) and *The Selector of Souls* (2012) by Shauna Singh Baldwin; and *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* (1998) and *Maru and the Maple Leaf* (2011) by Uma Parameswaran. The aim is to foreground how gendered dislocation is expressed, reimagined, and resisted in these works, and

how literary narrative functions as both a mirror and medium for articulating women's experiences within diasporic contexts.

These writers, rooted in the Indo-Canadian cultural milieu, produce fiction that is deeply reflective of identity transformations, intergenerational tensions, and the weight of cultural memory. The study pays particular attention to the representation of women's bodies, voices, and agency as they navigate the emotional and cultural consequences of migration. Literature, in this sense, becomes a space where alternative histories and gendered subjectivities are negotiated.

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the rationale, scope, and direction of the study. It also outlines the research questions, objectives, hypotheses, methodology, theoretical framework, chapter structure, and relevance of the research in contemporary academic and social contexts.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this research emerges from a discernible gap in existing scholarship on Indo-Canadian literature, where gendered experiences of dislocation have not been sufficiently examined within a consolidated framework. While several studies address diasporic consciousness or cultural identity in broad terms, fewer offer an in-depth analysis of how dislocation interacts with gendered subjectivity, particularly within literary representations by women writers of Indo-Canadian origin.

This research seeks to address the following key concerns:

1. **Marginalisation of the Indo-Canadian Female Voice:** The Indo-Canadian female voice remains marginal in the mainstream canon of diaspora studies, necessitating focused critical attention.
2. **Multifaceted Nature of Dislocation:** The chosen texts foreground dislocation as a lived, gendered, and multifaceted condition that cannot be reduced to migration alone.
3. **Global Movement and Cultural Negotiation:** In an era of increased global movement and cultural negotiation, the narratives provide a necessary lens to understand how women reconstruct their sense of self within and across national boundaries.
4. **Interplay of Memory and Identity:** The narratives explore how memory, nostalgia, and intergenerational conflict shape gendered identities in diasporic contexts.
5. **Resistance and Agency:** The texts examine how female characters resist, reconfigure, or conform to traditional gender expectations in the context of displacement.

Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to the fields of feminist literary studies, diaspora criticism, and postcolonial literature. It also endeavours to recover narratives that offer critical interventions in how displacement, gender, and identity are interwoven in the lived realities of Indo-Canadian women, as represented in fiction.

Research Objectives

This doctoral research, grounded in close literary analysis, intends to explore the multifaceted intersection of gender and dislocation as portrayed in contemporary Indo-Canadian women's fiction. The primary aim is to uncover how narrative, characterisation, and cultural tension within diasporic texts coalesce to produce a distinct gendered voice, negotiating the challenges of displacement and identity. Within the context of literary criticism and gender studies, the following objectives are established to guide the research:

1. To examine the ways in which female protagonists in selected Indo-Canadian literary texts experience, internalise, and respond to dislocation. The focus is on uncovering how dislocation acts not only as a geographical shift but also as a cultural and psychological rupture.
2. To investigate the literary representation of memory, home, and nostalgia within gendered diasporic narratives. These motifs are essential to understanding the subjective construction of belonging in the diasporic psyche, especially among women.
3. To analyse how the selected texts utilise literary devices and structures to frame dislocation as both trauma and transformation. This includes examining metaphors, narrative voice, and structural disruptions.
4. To explore the influence of patriarchal norms—both from the homeland and the host society—on the dislocated female subject. This objective connects feminist literary theory with postcolonial critical frameworks.

5. To understand the role of familial, communal, and cultural expectations in shaping women's identities in the diaspora. The study will assess how traditional roles are either reinforced or resisted within these texts.
6. To chart the symbolic and psychological trajectories of women negotiating their fragmented identities across temporal and spatial boundaries. This refers particularly to transgenerational dislocation and the intergenerational transmission of trauma or resilience.
7. To critically investigate the transformation of gender roles through the process of migration and cultural negotiation. Emphasis will be placed on the dynamic reconstitution of the 'self' within the context of Canadian multiculturalism.
8. To assess how language and silence operate as tools of empowerment or suppression in the selected texts. Linguistic choices and narrative gaps will be interrogated for their ideological and symbolic significance.
9. To determine the literary significance of Indo-Canadian women's fiction within the broader canon of diasporic and postcolonial literature. This objective connects the selected texts to international literary trends and critical frameworks.
10. To identify and highlight the potential of diasporic women's narratives in fostering cultural empathy, feminist consciousness, and inclusive pedagogy. The role of literature as a socio-political and educational tool will be addressed regarding policy contexts such as NEP 2020.

These objectives form the foundation for the ensuing research chapters, where each literary work will be analysed with direct reference to the above aims, situating gender as the central axis through which the experience of dislocation is interpreted and articulated.

Research Questions

Arising from the research objectives, the following ten research questions are formulated to direct the enquiry into gendered dislocation as represented in Indo-Canadian women's fiction:

1. In what ways do the selected novels depict dislocation as a gendered experience distinct from generic migration narratives?

This question interrogates the specificity of female dislocation and its emotional, cultural, and symbolic dimensions.

2. How do the protagonists in these texts reconcile their inherited traditions with the demands of a multicultural host society?

This enquiry considers the clash of values and how it shapes gender roles.

3. What role do memory, nostalgia, and transgenerational longing play in the identity formation of the dislocated woman?

The question seeks to illuminate the psychological imprints of cultural loss and generational continuity.

4. How is the notion of 'home' redefined in the context of cultural displacement, particularly from a woman's perspective?

This expands the definition of home from the physical to the emotional and metaphorical.

5. In what ways do the authors subvert or reinforce patriarchal frameworks through their representation of dislocated women?

This evaluates the feminist potential of the selected literary texts.

6. How do language, silence, and voice function within the narratives to negotiate identity, resistance, or assimilation?

Narrative style, dialogues, and linguistic patterns are central to this investigation.

7. What are the emotional and cultural consequences of dislocation on intergenerational female relationships within diasporic families?

The study explores the mother-daughter dynamic, sibling relations, and mentorship across generational lines.

8. How do these literary texts depict the psychological tensions between agency and conformity in dislocated female characters?

This examines the inner conflict, coping strategies, and moments of liberation.

9. To what extent do Indo-Canadian women's texts provide alternative models of identity and empowerment that transcend binary cultural frameworks?

The question concerns hybridity, cultural negotiation, and new imaginaries.

10. How might the literary exploration of dislocation contribute to contemporary discourse on gender, migration, and national identity within Canada and globally?

This links literary representation to real-world discursive and policy concerns, particularly in education and social cohesion.

Each research question is addressed thematically and textually in subsequent chapters, using evidence drawn from narrative techniques, character development, and thematic progression within each work.

Research Hypotheses

This research is anchored in a close literary engagement with Indo-Canadian women's fiction that addresses the gendered dimensions of dislocation. The following hypotheses serve as guiding propositions that this study seeks to explore and test through interpretative and thematic literary analysis. These hypotheses are not predictive in the scientific sense but are grounded in the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial feminism, diaspora studies, and narrative theory, offering a focused lens through which each selected text is critically evaluated.

1. Gendered experiences of dislocation in contemporary Indo-Canadian women's fiction reveal distinct patterns of identity negotiation not found in male-authored diasporic literature.

This hypothesis builds upon feminist literary criticism and anticipates that female-authored texts embed a differentiated sense of emotional, cultural, and generational dislocation.

2. The intersection of patriarchy, displacement, and cultural conflict serves as a central motif in the literary portrayal of Indo-Canadian female protagonists.

This anticipates the recurrence of narrative patterns where traditional gender roles are challenged or reaffirmed within diasporic spaces.

3. Nostalgia and memory in these texts are gendered constructs that act as both anchors and constraints for dislocated women. This hypothesis tests the function of personal and communal memory in the characterisation and development of diasporic female subjectivities.

4. The representation of 'home' in the selected novels functions more as a psychological and metaphorical space than a geographical one.

This recognises that the dislocated female protagonist often reconstructs the idea of home based on emotional memory and cultural fragments.

5. Language and silence serve as literary devices that symbolically represent the empowerment or suppression of diasporic female identities.

This hypothesis aims to explore narrative style, dialogue, and silence as reflections of resistance, compliance, or transformation.

6. Dislocation narratives in the selected texts involve a transformative journey that redefines female agency and autonomy.

The hypothesis supports the view that diasporic dislocation is not solely traumatic but potentially empowering when refracted through a gendered lens.

7. The mother-daughter relationship in Indo-Canadian diasporic fiction often becomes a symbolic site of cultural negotiation, intergenerational trauma, and identity formation.

This posits that familial ties are central to how gender and dislocation are represented, remembered, and contested.

8. Diasporic women writers employ hybrid narrative structures to mirror the fragmented, fluid nature of diasporic female identity.

This suggests that textual form itself becomes a metaphor for the experience of cultural multiplicity and fractured belonging.

9. The selected texts destabilise static binaries of tradition and modernity, home and host, through complex female characters who exist in liminal cultural spaces.

This aligns with postcolonial readings of hybridity and transnationalism.

10. Literary representations of Indo-Canadian dislocated women provide valuable insights into broader sociocultural discourses on gender equity, multiculturalism, and inclusive identity in postcolonial contexts.

This final hypothesis grounds the literary inquiry in real-world significance and educational applicability, particularly in alignment with NEP 2020's emphasis on diversity and equity in the humanities.

These hypotheses will be examined and substantiated through detailed textual analysis in the subsequent chapters, each focusing on the literary contributions of Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran.

Research Methodology

The methodological framework of this study has been carefully designed to facilitate a deep, multi-layered exploration of gendered narratives of dislocation within contemporary Indo-Canadian women's fiction. Given the literary and cultural scope of the topic, a qualitative, interpretive research methodology has been adopted, aligned with the paradigms of postcolonial literary studies, feminist theory, and cultural analysis. This approach enables the study to focus not only on thematic content but also on the stylistic, symbolic, and narrative strategies through which dislocation and gender are articulated in the selected texts.

Qualitative Literary Methodology

This research is fundamentally qualitative in nature. It is rooted in close textual reading and interpretive analysis, privileging depth of understanding over numerical measurement. The qualitative framework facilitates an in-depth engagement with the narrative voices, structural devices, and intertextual strategies employed by the authors. The textual analysis does not seek to generalise across all Indo-Canadian literature but rather to generate a nuanced understanding of gendered dislocation as represented in a focused corpus of primary texts.

The qualitative mode is particularly suitable for literary research, as it permits attention to detail, symbolic nuance, and narrative complexity. It is through this method that the study examines how Indo-Canadian women writers shape, complicate, or subvert dominant discourses of identity, migration, and gender.

Thematic and Comparative Analysis

A thematic analysis will be employed to extract and examine recurring motifs, character trajectories, and narrative conflicts across the selected texts. Themes such as exile, belonging, hybridity, silence, resilience, cultural memory, and familial obligation will be identified and analysed. This process entails reading each text multiple times with the aim of discerning both surface-level and latent themes.

The study will also draw on comparative literary analysis to examine how different authors approach similar themes, or how comparable characters react to shared circumstances in dissimilar ways. For example, the tension between maternal expectation and individual aspiration in *Tamarind Mem* can be placed alongside similar tensions in *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* to explore how authorial voice and cultural background influence narrative representation.

Textual Selection Criteria

The selection of primary texts was based on four essential criteria:

1. The text must be authored by a woman of Indian origin residing in Canada.
2. It must belong to the genre of contemporary fiction published post-1990.
3. It must address themes of gender, migration, and dislocation in a substantive way.
4. It must be recognised in literary and academic circles for its thematic and stylistic merit.

The final selection includes:

- *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and *Tamarind Mem* by Anita Rau Badami
- *The Tiger Claw* and *The Selector of Souls* by Shauna Singh Baldwin
- *Maru and the Maple Leaf* and *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* by Uma Parameswaran

Each text will be studied in its own dedicated chapter, wherein a close literary analysis will foreground the gendered experience of dislocation as depicted through characterisation, plot development, narrative voice, and metaphorical language.

Theoretical Integration

The research methodology integrates literary analysis with theoretical framing drawn from postcolonial feminism, diaspora studies, and intersectionality. These theories guide the interpretive lens through which the texts are read. Postcolonial feminist theory is particularly important in revealing how dislocation is both a gendered and cultural phenomenon. Diaspora studies provide the language and structure for examining hybridity, nostalgia, and spatial belonging. Intersectionality enables the study to analyse how gender, class, ethnicity, and migration status intersect in the construction of the protagonists' identities.

This theoretical integration is not confined to a separate section but is embedded throughout the analysis in each chapter, ensuring that interpretation and theory remain intimately connected.

Intertextual Reading Strategy

The methodology also makes use of intertextual reading. The study acknowledges that the texts do not exist in isolation but are in dialogue with a broader literary and socio-political tradition. Intertextual references—both implicit and explicit—to Hindu mythology, Indian classical narratives, colonial histories, and feminist resistance literature are examined where relevant. For example, *The Tiger Claw* draws upon historical resistance narratives and colonial legal systems, while *The Selector of Souls* references socio-religious constructs of female morality.

This intertextual approach enriches the analysis and opens pathways to understanding how literature serves as a site of resistance and reimagination for dislocated women.

Reflexivity and Research Ethics

Given the qualitative and interpretive nature of the study, reflexivity plays an important role. The positionality of the researcher—vis-à-vis gender, cultural affiliation, and academic training—is acknowledged as influencing the interpretative process. However, the study maintains scholarly objectivity through rigorous textual evidence, critical theory, and careful citation.

All sources used are properly acknowledged through MLA 9th edition style. The research does not involve human subjects and thus falls outside the domain of empirical ethical approvals. However, ethical integrity is maintained through respect for the literary texts, their contexts, and the cultural specificity of the communities they represent.

Data Collection and Analysis Tools

Primary data is gathered from the six literary texts chosen. Secondary data is drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and theoretical treatises, particularly those focusing on postcolonial theory, diaspora studies, gender studies, and Indo-Canadian literature. Key sources include:

- Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
 - Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders*
 - Stuart Hall's writings on cultural identity and diaspora
 - Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity
 - Elleke Boehmer's postcolonial literary frameworks
- The data analysis is conducted through:
- Close reading of textual passages
 - Thematic mapping of recurring motifs and metaphors
 - Identification of narrative techniques such as flashback, dual timelines, and multiple narrators
 - Contextualisation of plot structures within postcolonial and diasporic historical frameworks

Alignment with Research Objectives

Each step of the methodology is aligned with the research objectives and questions previously outlined. For example, the study's objective of analysing how women characters redefine home and belonging in diasporic settings is directly supported by close readings of texts like *The Selector of Souls* and

Mangoes on the Maple Tree, where spatial dislocation corresponds to psychological fragmentation.

The methodology provides the necessary scaffold for drawing critical insights into how literature can both reflect and reconfigure the complex experiences of women caught in the web of migration, memory, and cultural change.

Key Findings

Key Findings

The analysis undertaken across this study has yielded an intricate and layered understanding of gendered dislocation in the diasporic fiction of Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran. While each author engages with distinct historical and cultural coordinates, a thematic convergence emerges in their representation of women navigating fractured identities, familial expectations, and the burdens of memory. This section synthesises these crosscurrents, identifying recurring motifs of trauma, silence, resistance, domesticity, and narrative agency that traverse the textual landscape. The intertextual dialogue between their works forms a composite picture of diasporic womanhood, one that challenges hegemonic paradigms of migration as linear progress or triumphant assimilation.

A recurrent thematic axis is the interplay between memory and trauma as structuring forces in diasporic subjectivity. In *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*, Badami maps historical trauma onto familial memory, tracing how the Partition, the Komagata Maru incident, and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots ripple across generations of Indo-Canadian women. Similarly, Baldwin's *The Tiger Claw* and *The Selector of Souls* explore the embodied reverberations of war, caste violence, and reproductive injustice. Parameswaran's novels, though set in relatively stable domestic settings, invoke trauma more subtly, through intergenerational silence, cultural dissonance, and the unspoken grief of exile.

Across all authors, trauma is not merely an event but a structure of feeling, to borrow Raymond Williams' term, shaping the emotional and ethical contours of diasporic life (Williams 132).

Closely related is the motif of silence as both symptom and strategy. Baldwin, in particular, foregrounds the politics of silence in *The Tiger Claw*, where Noor Inayat Khan's refusal to divulge information under Nazi torture becomes a profound ethical act. Badami's characters often inhabit silences passed down as inheritance, between mother and daughter in *Tamarind Mem*, or between historical truth and national forgetting in *Nightbird*. Parameswaran's domestic narratives, such as *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, are punctuated by silences that signify both intergenerational gaps and emotional restraint. These silences, however, are not passive voids. Rather, they emerge as spaces of potentiality, what Michel de Certeau calls "tactics" by which the marginalised negotiate survival within dominant systems (de Certeau 37). This recoding of silence as resistance unsettles the binary between voice and voicelessness and enriches the theoretical terrain of diasporic feminist inquiry.

The concept of resistance, particularly in its quiet, domestic, or spiritually inflected forms, is a further thematic thread uniting these authors. Baldwin's characters most explicitly embody political resistance, whether through espionage, reproductive autonomy, or caste defiance. Yet resistance also materialises in less conspicuous forms: the grandmother's healing in *The Selector of Souls*, the adolescent daughter's subtle critique in Parameswaran's *Maru and the Maple Leaf*, or the culinary rituals in Badami's fiction that assert cultural identity amid erasure. These acts affirm the feminist insight that "the personal is political," as initially formulated by Carol Hanisch and later

developed by intersectional feminists such as bell hooks and Chandra Mohanty. The domestic realm, often dismissed as apolitical, becomes a crucible of ideological negotiation and cultural persistence.

Equally significant is the centrality of space, particularly the home, as a contested site. For Badami's characters, home is a diasporic longing shadowed by violence. In *Nightbird*, the home becomes a microcosm of national crisis; in *Tamarind Mem*, it is a site of intergenerational fracture. Baldwin reimagines sacred and domestic spaces through her protagonists' spiritual journeys, offering a reconfiguration of home as metaphysical grounding rather than territorial fixity. Parameswaran's fiction, most explicitly invested in the materiality of the house, frames it as a cultural archive where every object, wall, and custom carries diasporic memory. In doing so, she echoes the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, who contend that space is not inert but actively produced through social relations (Lefebvre 80; Massey 155). Across all three authors, the home is simultaneously sanctuary and prison, a paradox that reflects the gendered ambivalence of domesticity.

Language – spoken, unspoken, remembered, or lost – also emerges as a vital medium through which diasporic identity is constructed and challenged. Badami's exploration of linguistic alienation in *Tamarind Mem* and *Nightbird* illustrates how the loss or retention of mother tongues becomes a metaphor for cultural continuity or rupture. Baldwin employs multilingual references, Sufi metaphors, and religious texts to affirm the polyphonic nature of diasporic experience. Parameswaran, too, layers English with Tamil and Hindi expressions, reinforcing the hybrid linguistic realities of her characters. These textual strategies align with Bakhtinian theories of heteroglossia, which

emphasise the plurality of voices in literary discourse (Bakhtin 272). Language, then, is not merely a tool of communication but a terrain of identity negotiation, epistemic tension, and affective resonance.

Intergenerational dynamics are another crucial lens through which these authors examine the gendered diasporic condition. The mother-daughter relationship, in particular, functions as a palimpsest upon which histories of migration, adaptation, and cultural memory are inscribed. In *Tamarind Mem*, the gulf between Kamini and her mother, Saroja, encapsulates not just a familial disjunction but a broader clash between inherited tradition and diasporic reinvention. Baldwin's Noor inherits a legacy of Sufi mysticism but must reinterpret it in the crucible of wartime France. Parameswaran's adolescent daughters, such as in *Maru and the Maple Leaf*, become cultural interlocutors, navigating the expectations of both home and host cultures. These intergenerational exchanges – fraught yet generative – highlight the role of gendered memory in shaping diasporic subjectivity.

Moreover, across all authors, narrative form itself becomes a site of epistemological resistance. Baldwin disrupts linear historiography through temporal fragmentation and intertextual layering. Badami employs dual narratives and retrospective frames to mirror the act of remembering as non-linear and affectively charged. Parameswaran's ostensibly conventional narratives are subversive in their refusal to monumentalise trauma or exoticise culture; instead, they dwell in the rhythms of everyday life. These narrative strategies not only enrich the aesthetic texture of the texts but also challenge the epistemic hegemony of masculinist and colonial historiographies.

Finally, the selected authors collectively engage with a politics of care and relationality that recasts diaspora not as atomised exile but as a network of ethical interdependence. Whether through Damini's healing, Anu's maternal decisions, Kamini's retrospective empathy, or Noor's sacrificial silence, the protagonists enact what Tronto and Held have described as "ethics of care", a framework grounded in responsiveness, contextual morality, and affective labour (Tronto 135; Held 87). This orientation stands in contrast to the neoliberal valorisation of individual agency and asserts a feminist ethics rooted in vulnerability, compassion, and community.

In sum, the crosscurrents that animate the works of Badami, Baldwin, and Parameswaran generate a rich thematic and formal matrix for understanding the complexities of gendered dislocation. Their narratives foreground that diasporic womanhood is not a monolith, but a spectrum of experiences shaped by history, caste, class, religion, and generation. The convergence of trauma, silence, resistance, memory, and care across their works not only unsettles dominant migration narratives but also constructs an alternative cartography, one in which feminist agency is narrated through the intimate vocabularies of home, body, voice, and spirit.

Towards a Feminist Cartography of Dislocation

The study of gendered dislocation in Indo-Canadian women's fiction, as articulated through the works of Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran, necessitates a reconsideration of dominant diasporic theoretical frameworks. Traditional cartographies of diaspora – predominantly shaped by masculine narratives of adventure, loss, and assimilation – have

historically marginalised the emotional, relational, and embodied dimensions of displacement. In contrast, the narratives examined in this thesis foreground the quotidian, the domestic, the intimate, and the sacred. These narrative terrains, while often overlooked in grand narratives of migration, offer a feminist recalibration of diasporic experience. This section articulates the theoretical implications of the findings and proposes an alternative cartography, one that accounts for the spatial, cultural, affective, and symbolic dislocations that women protagonists navigate.

Reframing Diaspora through Gendered Experience

Conventional diaspora theory, particularly that derived from Safran, Cohen, and Clifford, tends to privilege the idea of a collective homeland, voluntary or forced exile, and the preservation of cultural memory (Clifford 304). However, as critics such as Avtar Brah and Robin Cohen have pointed out, these frameworks are often insufficient in capturing the differentiated experiences of women in diaspora, whose dislocations are not only geographic but also domestic, linguistic, and corporeal. In the selected texts, diaspora is not simply a condition of spatial displacement but a continuous negotiation of fragmented identities across home and host cultures.

A feminist cartography of dislocation must, therefore, account for what Brah terms the "diaspora space", a space inhabited not only by those who migrate but also by those who are constructed as the native, the settler, or the other (Brah 181). In Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* this space is marked by the intergenerational trauma of Partition and the Sikh pogroms of 1984. In Baldwin's *The Selector of Souls*, it manifests through the embodied casteed

experience and spiritual resistance. In Parameswaran's *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, the diaspora space is mediated through intergenerational silences and the domestic rituals of cultural reproduction. Each text complicates the idea of the homeland as a stable referent, instead presenting it as a site of longing, myth, and ideological contestation.

Diasporic Subjectivity as Gendered and Interrelation

The protagonists in the selected works often occupy what Bhabha terms the "in-between spaces" of cultural hybridity (Bhabha 56). However, these are not neutral sites of innovation or resistance; they are fraught, gendered, and contingent. The hybrid identities of characters such as Noor in *The Tiger Claw* and Anu in *The Selector of Souls* are not celebrated unproblematically. Instead, they are presented as fractured, ethically burdened, and marked by epistemological uncertainty. This rethinking of hybridity allows for a nuanced understanding of diasporic subjectivity as a process shaped by gender, trauma, class, caste, and religion.

Moreover, the feminist cartography proposed here is not founded on the individualistic model of liberal subjectivity but on what Nel Noddings calls an "ethic of care" (Noddings 25). This ethic emerges in the relational choices of the characters: Ishita's public mourning in *The Widow and the Nation*, Damini's healing practices in *The Selector of Souls*, and Kamal's silent endurance in *Tamarind Mem*. These acts of care are not ancillary to the narrative but constitute the very form of feminist resistance. Such a reorientation suggests that the dislocated self is not merely traumatised but also capable of ethical reconstruction through connection, ritual, and memory.

The Sacred as a Feminist Space of Rewriting

Another critical insight concerns the role of the sacred in reconfiguring dislocation. Diasporic theory has often neglected the metaphysical dimensions of migration, focusing instead on political, economic, and cultural frameworks. However, as this study demonstrates, spirituality, particularly Hindu, Sufi, and syncretic Indian traditions, plays a significant role in narrating feminine dislocation. In Baldwin's fiction, Sufi concepts such as *fanaa* and divine love inform Noor's resistance. In Parameswaran, puja rooms, gods' calendars, and temple visits frame the domestic as a site of spiritual resilience. In Badami, memory and mourning are structured through religious rituals that mark temporal shifts and psychic transformations.

The sacred, then, is not antithetical to feminist agency but foundational to it. This intersection of spirituality and gendered resistance invites a theoretical expansion of feminist diaspora studies beyond secular liberal paradigms. Writers like Uma Narayan and Meena Alexander have already pointed to the need for considering indigenous and spiritual epistemologies as sites of feminist articulation (Narayan 58; Alexander 31). The selected texts validate this proposition by showing how the sacred becomes a site of mourning, survival, and reclamation in diasporic women's lives.

Temporality, Memory, and the Ethics of Narrative

The theoretical implications of temporality also merit emphasis. Diasporic literature often engages with the politics of memory, but in these texts, memory is not nostalgic but interventional. It is a mode of ethical witnessing, as

evidenced in Badami's use of oral history and epistolary forms, and Baldwin's use of confessional and testimonial structures. These forms resist linear time, suggesting instead a "temporal palimpsest" where past and present co-exist in affective simultaneity (Hirsch 107).

This non-linear temporality is crucial in representing trauma, which cannot always be articulated within conventional realist modes. As Cathy Caruth notes, trauma "demands a mode of representation that resists resolution" (Caruth 8). The fragmented structures of *Tamarind Mem*, *The Tiger Claw*, and *The Selector of Souls* refuse narrative closure, thereby aligning form with content. Such formal strategies challenge Western literary paradigms and propose an alternative aesthetic grounded in interruption, silence, and cyclical return.

Towards a Polyphonic Feminist Diaspora Theory

In synthesising these insights, the study advocates a shift from monologic to polyphonic models of diasporic theorising. A feminist cartography of dislocation must be intersectional, context-sensitive, and open-ended. It must resist flattening the diasporic woman into a singular identity, be it victim, warrior, or bridge figure, and instead foreground her multiplicity, ambiguity, and relationality.

By engaging with multiple axes of identity, gender, caste, class, religion, age, the selected novels offer a more inclusive theorisation of diaspora. Their narrative strategies enact what Mikhail Bakhtin terms "heteroglossia", a coexistence of multiple voices and worldviews within a single text (Bakhtin 272). This polyphonic quality does not dilute the politics of resistance; rather,

it enriches it by acknowledging the impossibility of a singular truth in dislocated lives.

In conclusion, the theoretical implications of this study extend beyond Indo-Canadian literature. They call for a broader, deeper engagement with feminist diaspora theory, one that takes seriously the affective, spiritual, and everyday registers of dislocation. The cartography proposed here is not a definitive map but a shifting constellation, an invitation to continue tracing, narrating, and

Conclusion

The present study has sought to demonstrate that diasporic women's fiction, particularly in the context of Indo-Canadian literary production, is not merely a site for storytelling but a repository of cultural, historical, and ethical knowledge. In bringing together the works of Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran, this thesis has revealed how gendered experiences of dislocation are not incidental to the diasporic condition but constitutive of its very fabric. The narratives analysed offer more than plots of migration, settlement, and adaptation; they are deliberate acts of remembrance, contestation, and resistance. They foreground the intimate geographies of exile, not through grand nationalist themes, but through domestic spaces, maternal silences, ritual objects, intergenerational tensions, and the body itself as both archive and witness.

These texts function as what Marianne Hirsch terms *postmemory* narratives, wherein the transmission of trauma, belonging, and loss occurs through affective and embodied inheritance rather than direct experience (Hirsch 5). In this sense, diasporic women's fiction becomes a form of cultural archive, not in the bureaucratic sense of documentation, but as a living, breathing constellation of stories, emotions, and ethical negotiations. Such an archive does not seek the fixity of historical truth but privileges ambiguity, multiplicity, and ethical engagement with the silences of the past.

Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and *Tamarind Mem* illustrate how memory, both fractured and inherited, shapes diasporic belonging through grief,

yearning, and contested family ties. Baldwin's *The Tiger Claw* and *The Selector of Souls* present resistance not as spectacle but as ethical praxis, framed by the sacred and the sacrificial. Parameswaran's *Maru and the Maple Leaf* and *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* evoke dislocation through the texture of everyday life, food, language, domestic labour, and unspoken generational pain. Across these authors, one encounters a shared narrative ethic: that to tell a woman's story in diaspora is not merely to represent her as displaced but to affirm her epistemological agency.

Importantly, the study also contends that these works are forms of *ethical testimony*. They demand more than academic interpretation; they call for moral listening. As Gayatri Spivak warns, the task is not only "Can the subaltern speak?" but "Can the dominant hear without appropriating?" (Spivak 104). The protagonists in these novels often speak from margins, of caste, race, age, and gender, but their testimonies destabilise dominant discourses and compel the reader to rethink power, resistance, and voice.

Moreover, this thesis has argued that diasporic women's fiction does not merely add to the archive, it critiques and reshapes it. Through non-linear temporalities, polyphonic voices, and intertextual invocations of the sacred, these narratives reject the epistemic authority of colonial and patriarchal histories. Instead, they offer what Saidiya Hartman calls "critical fabulation", a reimagining of the past that honours its absences and contradictions (Hartman 11). In this way, diasporic women writers become both historians and philosophers, crafting stories that are emotionally precise, politically resonant, and spiritually unsettling.

The ethical force of these works lies in their ability to reframe suffering not as spectacle but as lived consequence, and to transform private memory into collective critique. In their representation of gendered trauma, diasporic longing, and spiritual survival, these novels serve as both mirrors and interventions, mirrors that reflect the internal landscapes of diaspora, and interventions that disrupt the dominant cartographies of nation, community, and womanhood.

This final reflection affirms that Indo-Canadian women's fiction must not be seen as a peripheral genre but as central to the study of global literature, feminist ethics, and postcolonial epistemology. It provides alternative ways of knowing the world, not through conquest or linear progress but through resilience, ritual, and relationality. These stories challenge readers not only to observe but to bear witness, to hold space for the unspeakable and to value the quiet acts of survival as profound forms of resistance.

In conclusion, this thesis proposes that the diasporic woman writer is not merely a chronicler of exile but a cartographer of fractured worlds. Through memory, metaphor, and moral inquiry, she maps the terrain of dislocation, not as loss alone, but as potential for ethical becoming.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Research

The present doctoral study, *Revisiting Gendered Narratives of Dislocation in Contemporary Indo-Canadian Women's Fiction*, has opened a rich and complex field of enquiry into the intersections of gender, migration, memory, and identity. By closely analysing the works of Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran, the research has demonstrated that dislocation is not merely a physical condition but a deeply gendered, psychological, and cultural experience. It has also shown how Indo-Canadian women's fiction reconfigures traditional notions of home, belonging, and identity through narrative experimentation and feminist resistance.

At the same time, as with any scholarly endeavour, this study remains part of a larger, ongoing intellectual conversation. It does not claim finality but rather invites further exploration. The following suggestions and recommendations aim to extend the scope of this research, deepen its theoretical engagement, and open new pathways for future scholars working in the fields of diaspora studies, feminist literary criticism, and transnational cultural studies.

Expansion of the Literary Corpus

One of the most immediate directions for further research lies in expanding the primary corpus beyond the three selected authors. While Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Uma Parameswaran represent central voices in Indo-Canadian women's writing, they are not the only contributors to this field. Future studies may include writers such as Anar Ali, Padma Viswanathan,

Anubha Mehta, or emerging contemporary authors who explore similar themes of migration, identity, and gender.

Such an expanded corpus would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of Indo-Canadian women's fiction and would help identify new narrative patterns, thematic variations, and stylistic innovations. It would also enable scholars to examine how different socio-cultural backgrounds, religious identities, and generational positions influence the representation of dislocation.

Comparative Diasporic Frameworks

The present study is situated within the Indo-Canadian context, but its conceptual insights can be fruitfully extended through comparative diasporic analysis. Future research may compare Indo-Canadian women's fiction with:

- Indo-Caribbean literature
- British-Asian women's writing
- South African Indian diaspora narratives
- American South Asian immigrant fiction

Such comparative work would highlight both shared experiences and cultural specificities. It would reveal how colonial histories, migration policies, and host cultures shape gendered dislocation differently across regions. This would also contribute to a more global and transnational understanding of diaspora, moving beyond region-specific interpretations.

Inclusion of Multilingual and Regional Texts

A significant limitation of the current study is its focus on English-language texts. Future research should include multilingual and regional writings within the diaspora, particularly texts that incorporate Punjabi, Hindi, Tamil, or Gujarati alongside English.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping identity, memory, and belonging. Studying multilingual texts would allow scholars to examine how code-switching, translation, and linguistic hybridity function as narrative strategies in diasporic literature. It would also deepen our understanding of how language becomes a site of both cultural preservation and transformation.

Integration of Non-Fictional Narratives

While this thesis focuses on fictional representations, future research could incorporate autobiographies, memoirs, oral histories, and life-writing by Indo-Canadian women. These non-fictional narratives provide direct insight into lived experiences of migration and dislocation.

A combined approach, bringing together literary analysis and empirical narratives, would create a more holistic understanding of diasporic identity. It would also allow scholars to compare fictional imagination with real-life testimony, thereby enriching both literary and sociological perspectives.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

The study has primarily employed literary-critical methods. However, the complexity of diaspora and gender calls for interdisciplinary engagement. Future research may draw upon:

- Sociology (migration studies, family structures)
- Anthropology (cultural practices, rituals)
- Psychology (trauma, identity formation)
- Political science (immigration policies, multiculturalism)

Such interdisciplinary approaches would provide a more layered understanding of gendered dislocation. They would also situate literary texts within broader socio-political and cultural contexts, thereby enhancing their interpretative depth.

Exploration of Visual and Digital Media

In the contemporary era, diasporic experiences are increasingly represented through visual and digital media such as films, web series, documentaries, and social media platforms. Future research may examine how Indo-Canadian women's narratives are adapted into or reflected through these mediums.

For instance, cinematic representations of migration and gender often reframe literary themes in visual terms. Studying such adaptations would reveal how narrative techniques, characterisation, and thematic concerns evolve across different media. It would also highlight the role of visual storytelling in shaping public perceptions of diaspora and gender.

Queer and Non-Binary Perspectives

The present study focuses primarily on heteronormative female identities. Future research must engage with queer, lesbian, transgender, and non-binary perspectives within the diaspora.

Gendered dislocation is experienced differently by individuals whose identities challenge traditional norms. Exploring queer diasporic narratives would expand the conceptual framework of gender and provide a more inclusive understanding of identity. It would also align literary studies with contemporary debates on gender diversity and intersectionality.

Psychoanalytic and Trauma-Based Readings

Although this study touches upon memory and trauma, a more detailed psychoanalytic approach could yield deeper insights. Future researchers may employ Freudian, Lacanian, or trauma theory frameworks to examine:

- Repressed memories of homeland
- Intergenerational trauma
- Psychological fragmentation
- The role of nostalgia

Such an approach would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the emotional and unconscious dimensions of dislocation. It would also highlight how literary narratives encode psychological experiences through symbolism and narrative structure.

Ecofeminist and Environmental Perspectives

Another emerging area for further research is the intersection of gender, displacement, and environment. Diasporic narratives often contain rich descriptions of landscapes, seasons, and ecological memory.

An ecofeminist approach could explore how environmental displacement parallels cultural and emotional dislocation. It could also examine how women characters relate to nature as a source of memory, identity, and healing. This perspective would add a new dimension to the study of diasporic literature.

Reader Reception and Cultural Impact

The current study focuses on textual analysis rather than reader response. Future research could investigate how different audiences interpret Indo-Canadian women's fiction.

This may involve:

- Surveys and interviews with readers
- Analysis of book reviews and online discussions
- Study of diaspora reading communities

Such research would shift the focus from author and text to reader engagement, providing insight into the social and cultural impact of these narratives.

Pedagogical Applications

One of the most significant recommendations concerns the integration of Indo-Canadian women's fiction into academic curricula. Future research could explore how these texts are taught in universities and schools, and how they contribute to:

- Gender sensitivity
- Cultural awareness

- Critical thinking
- Global literary understanding

This aligns with the objectives of NEP 2020, which emphasises inclusive and interdisciplinary education. Scholars may also develop teaching modules, course designs, and pedagogical strategies based on these texts.

Digital Humanities and Archival Research

With the growth of digital humanities, future researchers can use digital tools to analyse diasporic literature. This may include:

- Text mining and thematic mapping
- Digital archives of diaspora narratives
- Online databases of Indo-Canadian writing

Such approaches would not only modernise literary research but also make it more accessible and collaborative.

Policy and Societal Implications

Future research can also connect literary analysis with policy studies. The insights from Indo-Canadian women's fiction can inform discussions on:

- Immigration and integration policies
- Gender equity in diaspora communities
- Cultural representation and inclusivity

By bridging literature and policy, scholars can demonstrate the practical relevance of literary studies in addressing contemporary social challenges.

Re-examination of Theoretical Frameworks

The present study relies on postcolonial feminism, diaspora theory, and intersectionality. Future research may expand this theoretical base by incorporating:

- Posthumanism
- Digital identity theory
- Global feminism
- Decolonial studies

Such theoretical diversification would allow for fresh interpretations and more dynamic engagement with the texts.

Longitudinal and Generational Studies

Finally, future scholars may conduct longitudinal studies examining how diasporic identities evolve across generations.

First-generation migrants, second-generation children, and third-generation diasporic subjects often experience identity differently. Analysing these generational shifts would provide deeper insight into the continuity and transformation of cultural memory and gender roles.

Conclusion

The present thesis has laid a strong foundation for understanding gendered narratives of dislocation in Indo-Canadian women's fiction. It has demonstrated that literature serves as a powerful medium for articulating the complexities of migration, identity, and gender.

However, the field remains vast and dynamic. The suggestions outlined above indicate that there is considerable scope for further research, across disciplines, geographies, languages, and theoretical frameworks. Future scholars are encouraged to build upon this study, not only to expand academic knowledge but also to contribute to broader conversations about gender, culture, and belonging in an increasingly interconnected world.

In this sense, Indo-Canadian women's fiction is not merely a literary category; it is a living archive of human experience, one that continues to evolve, challenge, and inspire scholarly inquiry.

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