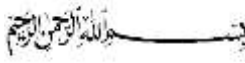


An interesting account of days spent in Canada by the author who had been visiting numerous countries in his younger days and composed his travelogue in his national language Urdu. The present account is of course in English but outcome of his experiences at the ripe age of 80.



# **From Kanata to Canada - A Brief Introduction to Canada**

**By Syed Altaf Hussain Shah**



## Foreword

Our soft-spoken, kind-hearted and ever smiling fellow Islamian, Syed Altaf Hussain Shah, is one of those rare individuals, who has still kept his curiosity intact. During a short visit of a few months he has produced a concise but interesting and informative account of Canada. It is much more than a simple travelogue. He enriches his account of the places he visited and the events he attended with interesting background and other related information.

As he nicely explains at the outset of his book, the name Canada gradually evolved from Kanata, which means village in the language of the indigenous people that the French colonizers encountered somewhere near the present-day Quebec City. Evidently, they referred to a small indigenous settlement at that place as Kanata, the same way we still refer to Peshawar simply as "Xaar" (Khaar/shaar), or the City. I wish I knew this fact in October 2021 when I visited Quebec City to enjoy its beautiful autumn foliage.

I share his admiration for places like the Niagara Falls and the Agha Khan and the Royal Ontario museums that I also visited, some more than once. I didn't visit some of the other places in the Greater Toronto area that equally impressed him, in spite of my regular summer visits to Canada from 2015 till 2021. One other place that I hope he will visit during his next trip would be the Banff National Park in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. This is one of the most scenic places on earth, where I camped for a month back in 1968 while attending a physics

summer school. At that time, I also explored the nearby Lake Louise and the Jasper National Park.

My first impression of Canada as I crossed the North Dakota - Saskatchewan Border was its vastness and emptiness. It was already dusk and I could see faint lights in the distance, but those lights seemed to keep receding as I drove towards them. Finally, I drove into the then small town of Regina for the night's rest before driving on to Banff through Calgary the following day. There was hardly any traffic or settlements on the vast stretch of East-West Canadian highway except a small town called Moose Jaw and what seemed like potash mining operations. After the summer school I drove to Vancouver where I camped for a few days in its famous Stanley Park in the shadows of huge Indian totem poles. I then drove South to San Francisco through Seattle and Eugene. After dinner in its famed China Town I drove east, through Salt Lake City Utah and Fort Collins, Colorado, to Urbana-Champaign, the University town south of Chicago, from where I had started more than a month earlier. In Fort Collins I briefly met my former teacher Mohammad Ali Khattak, who was then studying there.

As Altaf Shah rightly writes, Canada is one of the few countries in the world that actively encourages diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance as a state policy. Although earlier migrants with European background were given preference, now there is little evidence of it. During my 1968 visit the only non-white I met was a fellow Pakistani physicist married to a Kashmiri lady. A teacher in one of the Atlantic provinces, he, like me, had come to attend the summer school. Even in Vancouver, with a large Asian

population since before WWII, I don't recall meeting many non-whites. Now of course you see people from all over the world with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in every town and especially in major urban centers such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Some of these major cities have their own ethnic enclaves displaying the cuisine, fashion and culture of their homelands.

Canada is one of the most citizen friendly countries in the world as Altaf Shah writes. Besides the children allowance to encourage and help couples to raise children, quality school education and health care are state responsibilities. I am not aware of any private educational institutions other than the missionary and some Islamic schools, nor of any private hospitals other than the missionary ones. Every significant town has a central library and several conveniently located well stocked branch libraries. Besides providing reading spaces and interesting books on diverse topics that can be borrowed, these libraries also have toys for children and various board games for adults. They also arrange events to encourage healthy hobbies. In London, Ontario, a town of about half a million, where I used to spend most of my time, in addition to the Central Library there are a dozen or more branch libraries. The central library also has a rich collection of books in several Asian and European languages including Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Persian, Urdu and Arabic. Affordable and conveniently accessible public transport, with discounted fares for senior citizens, platforms for wheelchairs that can be raised and lowered and racks for bicycles, is another facility provided to citizens in all towns. The State also provides subsidized housing and free dental and some other specialized

treatments, that are otherwise not covered by health schemes, to deserving senior citizens. Availability of these services and facilities help citizens live a life free of anxieties.

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# **Chapter One**

## **From Kanata to Canada**

It was the year 1535 AD that a French team of explorers led by Jacques Cartier was on the lookout for new territories in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, following the discoveries made earlier by the British. The British team was led by an Italian immigrant to England, a navigator John Cabot in 1497 who had claimed Newfoundland for the King of England. The French took help of two aboriginal youths. The later while referring to the village Stadacona, the site of the present City of Quebec called it “Kanata”. The word simply meant in their language “a village or a settlement”. The French started calling the whole of the North Western Territory by this name. The British subsequently pronounced it “Canada”. That’s how this geographically large mass of land lying towards the north of the present-day United States of America started to be known as such in the absence of another good name. Three more centuries passed before these territories developed into a formal federal state in 1867 and still another century before it adopted its own national anthem and a distinct flag with a “red maple leaf” adorning its face. Maple trees of various varieties grow in abundance in Canada so much so that Maple has become the country’s national tree.





Flag with a maple leaf as a distinguishing feature  
represents the state of Canada

### **Nature's Generosity**

Canada, a beautiful and peaceful multicultural land, has many unique and distinguishing features to its credit. It has 37 National Parks and 10 National Park Reserves (managed like a national park but subject to one or more Indigenous land claim). These parks protect 336, 343 square kilometres of Canada's lands. Some of these parks are larger in size than some of the countries of the world. Again its fresh water resources are more than any other land on this globe. These two features together play a significant role in maintaining the environment and ecology of the planet Earth at a desirable level. Besides, Canada has been blessed with a long coast line, longer than any other country (243,042 km/ 152,100 miles) along with the shores of 52, 455 Canadian islands. The marine life that exists there is distinct by the extensive number of species living in its waters. Again, Canada has more lakes than found in the rest of the world combined, as many as two million; 563 of these are larger than 100 square kilometers. It is also home to 55,000 different

species of insects. This distinguishing honour board has endless other features.

The French and the British first established their separate settlements, namely the New France and New Britain respectively, during the sixteenth century. The two then started fighting for many years for the exclusive possession of the newly discovered territories. That was the case in the past but Canada today is a united, strong and homogeneous country. As per its constitution, the country is divided into **ten Provinces and three Territories**. All the provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan) stretch on the map from East to West (from Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific) along the southern border with United States. The Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon, which have more autonomy than provinces and cover most of the northern and Arctic regions but are very low in population, lie towards the north along the Arctic Ocean.

The French and the English are Canada's **two national languages**. Since 1931 Canadians have set up a **united army** but in the absence of a common enemy, their forces are wont to participate in expeditions against enemies of other people. First, they did so as part of the British Commonwealth and later on as allies of their mighty neighbour, the

United States. Canadian troops were sent to show their guts in WWII, then in Korean Peninsula, the Persian Gulf (first in Kuwait and then in Iraq) and the latest in Afghanistan, as part of UN forces or along with their NATO partners.

## **Population and Economy**

Canada is the second largest country after Russia as far as its land mass is concerned. It has a total area of 9, 984, 670 square kilometers but has got no more than 38, 929, 902 inhabitants (in 2023) and is thus sparsely populated. It has kept its doors open to all races from across the globe. According to 2019 census half of its population was born abroad. Canada is a land of rich natural resources like “numerous blue-black lakes, majestic Western mountains, rolling central plains and forested eastern valleys”. Initially the **Fur Trade** drove European nations to Canada. It started in 1600 and continued for more than 250 years. It built relationship between Europeans and the Indigenous people, established the famous companies like the Hudson Bay (HBC) and North West Company (NWC). Obviously, the crazy rush for this trade led to intense rivalry amongst the various European nations besides termination of much of the indigenous population and denuding its mighty forests from the furry animals. But the fur trade played a singular role in the development of Canada and of course financing the missionary activities of different denominations in this part of the world.

Simultaneously, the gold rushes in the nineteenth century opened large territories to resource exploitation and settlement by white people as well as turning Canada into a rich economy in the years to come.

Currently the economy of Canada is a highly developed mixed economy, the world's ninth-largest economy with a total GDP of \$ 2. 14 trillion. It is one of the world's largest trading nations, with a highly globalized economy and per capita GDP of \$ 58,400. Canada's exports totalled over \$637 billion, while its imported goods were worth over \$631 billion, of which approximately \$391 billion originated from the United States. In 2018, Canada had a trade deficit in goods of \$22 billion and a trade deficit in services of \$25 billion. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the eleventh-largest stock exchange in the world by market capitalization, listing over 1,500 companies with a combined market capitalization of over US\$3 trillion. (Source: US News and World Report).

The country is sparsely populated, with most of its residents living within 125 miles of its border with the United States. Its expansive wilderness to the north plays a large role in Canadian identity, and its reputation of welcoming immigrants.

## **Chapter Two**

### **My First Visit to Canada**

It was in 1989 while visiting United States for participation in an international postal conference at Washington that I and my friend Arshad Malik planned to visit Canada at the end of the meeting. We intended to see the world-famous Niagara Falls in particular. We even got our visas from the Canadian Embassy in Islamabad for this purpose. Unfortunately, due to the inclement weather at the end of the Washington Congress, we had to change our plans and instead flew straight to Japan on our way back home. The interesting return journey via the Far East is another story which has been described in detail in my earlier Urdu book “Hadees-e-Namabar” (The Story of a Postman). The plans to visit Niagara Falls, nevertheless, remained unfulfilled at that time.

Now at the ripe age of 80, I had an opportunity once again to visit Canada and appreciate the fascinating feat of nature that it is and enjoy everything that it has been endowed with. Unfortunately, my younger and enthusiastic friend Arshad is no more in this world. May kind Allah bless his soul! The present opportunity owes its occurrence to the presence of my son Naveed Altaf and his loving family now living in Toronto, the largest city in Canada. In fact, 40 % of all Canadians prefer to live in this area and within one hundred miles of the American border.

I along with my life partner arrived on December 11, 2022 at Toronto Pearson Airport. It was a direct, non-stop 14 hours PIA flight with bare minimum conveniences on board, following a route from the old to the new world across the North Pole. We found Naveed waiting at the exit lounge along with warm long coats, heavy snow shoes and umbrellas in his car to our great consolation. The chilly weather during the on-going snow fall outside the airport was presenting a real challenge to the new comers in their advanced years of age but whose hearts were imbibed with the parental love for their progeny. Naveed's kids Hanbal (11) and Hania (7) were happy to see us at their house but our challenge was now to synchronise our ears to their Canadian accent.

### **The Irresistible Trip to Niagara**

Niagara is a border town of the province of Ontario, just an hour drive from their place, "Milton" – a quiet suburb of the Greater Toronto. So, it was a couple of days later that this family of new Canadians drove us to this world-famous place, perhaps the most popular tourist destination in this country.

The twin water falls are situated on the Niagara River, connecting Lake Erie and the Ontario Lake on the Canadian side, of course also visible from across the border. Although the waterfalls here have no claim to be the highest or the largest in the world, it is here that water spills over the fall in a greater

quantity than anywhere else. The two Niagara towns are connected through a small bridge known as “Rainbow Bridge” between the United States and Canada. There is a steady flow of traffic seen passing from one side to the other. But one has to come to the Canadian side to fully appreciate the grandeur of the site. One can always go up in the Sky-wheel provided on the spot to see the surrounding panorama.

For serious tourists the following attractions are available:

- a. Niagara City Cruise and Whirlpool Aero Car.
- b. Stroll through the Botanical Gardens.
- c. Wild Play Zip- line to the falls.
- d. Skyline Tower for a 360-degree view.
- e. Magic show, Whirlpool jet boats, Nightmares Fear Factory and Niagara Free Fall and so on. There are in fact, so many things to do for fun and adventure.

But most of these activities are possible in summer and during the tourist season. Our visit was of course during a wintry season with occasional rain and snow fall. When I pointed this to Naveed on the way to Niagara, he replied with a cheeky smile “You’ll see hordes of visitors from around the world even in this season”. “How come if there are abundant snow falls?” His reply was.” Why not? The tourists love any adventure especially if the sight-seeing is totally free of cost”. Here during these

months even, the parking is at half its actual cost. No doubt we, both young and old at the party enjoyed the visit to our full heart content.

Our visit to Niagara History Museum on another occasion was also useful. The museum holds regular painting exhibitions in its gallery on the ground floor. It provides an opportunity to the visitors to meet and talk to the artist of the month whose work is on display. This time the theme was "Black History and Meeting of the Hands in cooperation". The young artist whose beautiful paintings we saw and appreciated was from Jamaica. We had an interesting question and answer session with him. This museum provides a lot of information about the 1912 War between Canadian and US forces, the patriotism of the local population, especially those belonging to the First Nations who were fearful of the slavery which was still practised in US at that time. Thousands of black people left USA and their shackles of slavery, following clandestine routes to Canadian soil in pursuit of freedom. Most of them escaped through Niagara border. Britain had earlier abolished slavery by law and the First Nations felt more secure under the British held territories in Canada. Samples of uniforms worn by the belligerent troops were also on display. Young Hanbal put on one of these matching his size.

We read the following eulogy in praise of Niagara somewhere written by the nineteenth century



famous English writer. Believe me our feelings about our visit to this fascinating place were in no way much different:

“Niagara was once stamped upon my heart, an image of beauty, to remain there, changeless and indelible, until its pulses cease to beat, forever”.

(Charles Dickens, 1842)



My grandson is in the antique uniform with a rifle in hand.



View from Sky Wheel



Overhead glance can be had while riding on the Sky wheel



Our curious little group at Niagara Falls

## **Chapter Three**

### **Life in Milton**

Downtown Toronto is a busy and large commercial centre with thousands of sky scrapers adorning its skyline where the maddening crowds cut across the roads down below the surface level as all these tall buildings are inter-connected at the invisible underground-level. An inter-city railway-line meanders through the streets providing an easy mode of transportation to the milling crowds. One can hardly look towards the higher floors of the buildings without losing one's headgear. The CN Tower standing in the middle of a conglomeration of buildings is the hall mark of the city. The existences of numerous headquarters of the well-known international banks here speak volumes about the bulging economy of the country. But the clever city planners have done well to build up smaller towns all around Toronto to reduce pressure on the metropolis and give relief and fresh air to the denizens.

In fact, Greater Toronto Area (GTA) consists of five municipalities viz; Halton, Peel, York, Toronto and Durham lying along the shores of Lake Ontario. Mississauga, Oakville, Milton, Whitby, Pickering, Brampton, Halton and North York are some of the places included in these regions. Milton in Halton

municipality is comparatively, a smaller, sleepy suburb or at least to me it looked as such.

Hanbal and Hania attend the local school (named after the Canada born P. L. Robertson, inventor of square screwdriver), functioning in a nearby neighbouring street while their parents have their jobs elsewhere. Roquiyah goes for her job in Downtown Toronto by local train and Naveed drives his car to office in Mississauga. These trips are, however, undergone only once or twice a week in the wake of the ongoing Covid 19 Protocol. They both work from home on other weekdays and have set up their offices on the house premises.

Except for such activities there is little life in action especially during snowfall in winter. A stray human with a dog or a puppy can be seen on the well laid down street sidewalks. Unlike the other countries in the Commonwealth, here the driver's seat is on the left who in turn drives on the right side of the road. Sometimes, I volunteer to accompany the little kids to school in the morning or on the return journey in the afternoon to stretch my legs. The children, I am told are asked to play in the open on school premises during the interval unless the temperature falls below minus 20 Celsius. It is meant to keep them in good shape. Even otherwise, in Canada the children are the ones given top most attention as far as health issues are concerned. Education here up to twelfth grade is free. The little angels are not even

burdened with heavy school bags as they are given their books at school. They are not even given much home work. Some parents for their own satisfaction take them to private tuition centres known as Kumon, a Japanese system which allows children to develop self-learning skills and new concepts through daily practice and mastery of the given material, once or twice a week. That helps in increasing students' confidence, improve concentration, and help better study skills.

Muslim community in this area is quite conspicuous. Some families take their kids to special evening schools for elementary religious education, again once a week. Learning the recital of the Quran is mostly arranged at home, usually through online classes.

Toronto in general is known for its variety of neighbourhoods and with no dearth of international cuisines. Milton too is full with immigrants from all nationalities including families from the South- Asian sub-continent. Even the local female councillor, living in street next to ours is from Pakistan. I also found that Hanbal's class teacher was from Islamabad (Pakistan). His play-mates in the neighbourhood are a good mix – Indians, Arabs, Africans and Spaniards and so on. It is never difficult to find a sub-continental restaurant to order for any food of our choice and taste a typical Pakistani cuisine from "Lahori Tikka House", "Karachi Karahi"

or “Afghan Kabab Restaurant”. Besides, there is no dearth of neighbourly hospitality amongst the Pakistani community which keeps you linked up to traditions back home. During the very first week we had to visit Whitby, another suburb of Toronto for a sumptuous dinner hosted by Adil Hassan, a long-time colleague of mine at Islamabad who also happened to be my class-mate at Alliance Francaises in younger days. He knows several languages, French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Persian besides his Urdu and Punjabi. He still earns with the help of his linguistic skills.



With Adil Hasan at his residence in Whitby

This was followed by family get-togethers at Milton. First with a family from Lahore – Nida and Amir Sheikh are both software engineers. The second was at Rehan Bhahi’s house, who is a banker from Karachi. The following week we were visited by Rafiq Khan Marwat, a veteran from Pakistan Air Force and a dear friend from my native village along with his wife. We were able not only to renew our old

relations, updating our information about our families but also indulged in interesting discussion concerning current political situation back home.

The setup of various chains of stores, well-stocked libraries, gyms and play grounds which we were visiting almost on a daily basis, along with existence of a network of excellent roads and transport network makes life easier for the residents. One enjoys a visit to a grocery, full of fruit, condiments and vegetables in dozens of varieties of all hue and colour as well as size forthcoming from countries as different as United State and Guatemala, Peru and Pakistan, India, Turkey or Uzbekistan, thanks to international globalisation. Likewise, it is always a treat to choose an electronic gadget, instrument or equipment from a long line of available choices coming from China, Japan, Germany or Korea. There is an array of stitched dresses of all sizes and textile fabrics on display from everywhere on globe: Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh or Indonesia or a dairy product coming from Denmark, Australia, Mexico or Netherlands.

The welfare – related measures of the federal and the local governments here in Canada are much ahead of many other modern states. It includes child benefit, employment insurance, leave benefits, pension and housing, student aid, family care, maternity and parental aid, disabilities and after death care of the family and so on. That gives an

edge to Canada over all the rest of the international community in this field.

Below: Toronto on Lake Ontario



## **Chapter Four**

### **Downtown Toronto**

Downtown Toronto is the main central business district of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It is approximately 16.6 square kilometres in area, bounded by Bloor Street to the northeast and Dupont Street to the northwest, Lake Ontario to the south, the Don Valley to the east, and Bathurst Street to the west. It is also the home of the municipal government of Toronto and the Government of the province of Ontario.

The area is made up of Canada's largest concentration of skyscrapers and businesses that



form Toronto's skyline. It has the third most skyscrapers in North America exceeding 200 metres (656 ft.) in height, behind Midtown Manhattan in New York City and the Chicago Loop.

Downtown Toronto is home to three public universities, OCAD University, Toronto Metropolitan University, and the University of Toronto. Established in 1827, the University of Toronto is the oldest university in the province of Ontario. In addition, downtown Toronto also hosts one college, George Brown College.

Four different public school boards provide primary and secondary education for the City of Toronto, as well as the downtown area. Two Toronto-based school boards provide instruction in the English language, the secular Toronto District School Board, and the separate Toronto Catholic District School Board. The other two Toronto-based school boards, the secular Conseil scolaire Viamonde, and the separate Conseil scolaire catholique Mon Avenir provide instruction in the French language.



A picture taken in front of the local government building



Children playing ice hockey, surrounded by grown up on-lookers, in downtown Toronto

We were off and on visiting the neighbouring district, Mississauga for different errands. In fact, Toronto Pearson Airport is in Mississauga.



Glimpses of a  
Mississauga Mall

## **Lake Ontario**

Any description of Toronto without mentioning Lake Ontario seems to be incomplete. Toronto is the largest Town set up on the shores of this famous lake on the Canadian side of the border. The lake is one of the five largest ones of North America, 14<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. Canada's Ontario province bounds it on the north, west and southwest. On its southern and eastern side is the U.S. state of New York. The border line between the two neighbouring countries spans the centre of the lake which covers a total area of 18,960 square kilometers. It is said that it provides drinking water to 9 million people. It

never completely freezes because it is so deep but it did freeze 5 times in history, the last time in 1934. In Canada they say that the lake wasn't named for the province of that name but the province was named for the lake. Its water flows into St. Lawrence River before it flows into Atlantic Ocean. Remember Niagara Falls pours its water into Lake Ontario. Lake Ontario means "lake of shining waters" but in the Huron language "Ontari'io" means "great Lake". There are 100 beaches on this lake and a chain of 15 islands known as Ontario islands. There used to be 150 species of fish here and the most common fish was the American Eel. Lake Ontario is the smallest of all the Great Lakes in surface area (18,960 square kilometers / 7,340 square miles), but its waters run deep.

Here are some interesting facts about this lake:

Lake Ontario holds about four times the water volume (1,640 cubic kilometers / 393 cubic miles) as Lake Erie, although it is similar in width and length.

It ranks fourth among the Great Lakes in maximum depth (244 meters / 802 feet), but its average depth (86 meters / 283 feet) is second only to Lake Superior.

Its maximum length is 311 kilometers (193 miles) and its maximum width is 85 kilometers (53 miles).

We had a short excursion on its shores in Mississauga one fine afternoon in winter and then visited the Coronation Park on its banks in Oakville in spring. The distant landmark skyscrapers of the downtown Toronto were clearly visible from both sites. There are 33 such parks which are frequented by the visitors. Another Conservation Reserve Park with chairlifts, fascinating falls and Ski resort in the area is Kelso Lake. We also visited Kelso and enjoyed there a ride on a canoe which we pedalled ourselves with the help of the oars provided on the spot.



Boating on Lake Kelso in Halton region with Chairlift facility to enjoy



Lake Ontario

## **A Visit to CN Tower**

We made up our minds a number of times to climb this iconic tower of Toronto. We were looking for a clear day so that we could easily pursue the panorama from the top of this 116 storey skyscraper and appreciate its surroundings to our heart content. By the way, this tower has named its roof top revolving eatery as Restaurant 360 degrees. One can observe with the naked eye Toronto metropolis with its tallest buildings, especially the financial hub in the immediate neighbourhood on the one side.





The breath taking view

of the fascinating Lake Area with its fifteen star sprinkled islands is on the other side. The continuous landing activity of the incoming flights on the airport strip of the islands is visible as a bonus. Apparently these luxury planes bring in curious tourists besides the ferrying boats seen on the water surface of this largest fresh water lake. I was sorry for my grandkids whose pleasant company we were missing on this occasion. Earlier Hanbal told me that he already had a virtual tour of the CN Tower. He preferred to play at home with his playmates as they all were on a holiday from their school that day. Little did the innocent souls realize that “Seeing is believing”. No amount of virtual visits can compensate for the actual feel of physical sight-seeing.

Naveed drove us to Milton railway station, parked his car there and like all professional tourists, we then boarded the intercity three-decked train popularly called “Go Train”. Passing through half a dozen railway stops, picking and dropping passengers, the train took us to “Union Stop” at the downtown Toronto. Naveed following the guidance of the Google map on his phone led us towards the iconic tower on foot. The Tower is surrounded by countless skyscrapers, including the impressive 72 floored First Canadian Place, on one side. This building was once an unrivalled highest business landmark in Toronto. It also houses the headquarters of the Oldest of the six largest Canadian Banks (Bank of Montreal or BMO, founded in 1817). We walked through the fastidiously marked pathway and easily reached our destination.

CN Tower, also known as Canadian National, was built on land belonging to Canadian Railways which before its privatisation in 1975 invested a part of its accumulated profits in this work of art and passed on its ownership to Canadian National Company, the custodian of national land assets. It is in the vicinity of two other worth visiting sites: Ripley’s Aquarium and the famous Roger’s Stadium. After the usual security checks, we were welcomed to one of the nine elevators which took us up to the restaurant at 114<sup>th</sup> floor within a couple of minutes. Every one present was busy in taking pictures with different scenarios of the surrounding background. Standing



at 553 m (1,815 feet), it is the tallest free standing structure in the western hemisphere and the most popular attraction for all ages. In terms of floor count it is a 147 storey building if we include the antenna spire 96.1 m (315 feet).

Since 2011 there is an option of purchasing tickets for **Edge Walk**, the world's highest full circle hands-free walk on a 5 feet ledge encircling the top of the CN Tower's main pod. Visitors walk around the pod while attached to an overhead rail by a secured harness. At our age, we were not brave enough to venture into such a naïve adventure. So we ordered for a cup of hot coffee and started enjoying the marvellous panorama around us.

This iconic tower was classified as one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World by the American Society of Engineers in 1995. It took 40 months to complete with a cost of \$ 63 million and was inaugurated in June 1976. The Tower weighs 117,910 metric tons or the equivalent of 16,844 large male elephants. We chose to undertake our return journey to Milton from Toronto by the city double decker bus, and found it equally comfortable.

Here we learnt that the new immigrants can pay free visits to some of the worth-seeing sites during the first year of their acquisition of Canadian citizenship. So Naveed and his family were enjoying that facility. We were, of course, paying the full ticket available for the seniors.



CN Tower and Edge Walk adventure

## **Chapter Four**

### **A Visit to Pickering**

In the immediate east of Toronto lies one of its oldest built suburbs Pickering in Durham Region of the province of Ontario. While going there to our good old friend Rafiq Marwat's house in response to an invitation from him, we saw sign boards inscribed with words like White Road, Whiteville and White Only. That made me a little curious. So I checked up for the origin of Pickering City. Here it is what I found on the Wikipedia: "Beginning in the 1770, the area was settled by primarily ethnic British colonists. An increase in population occurred after the American Revolutionary War, when the Crown resettled and encouraged new immigration. Many of the smaller rural communities have been preserved and function as provincially significant historic sites and Museums. The city also includes the development of Durham Live, a multi – billion- dollar casino complex".

Pickering was primarily set up as a township in 1811, then made into a town in 1974 and later upgraded to the status of a city in 2000 with its own Mayor and a Governing Body. With a total area of 90 square miles it houses a population of 100,000. Its cultural fame is, however, evident from the fact that many of the Canadian and Hollywood movies have been filmed here. These include Hollywood production

“Hawkeye and the Last of the Mohicans” (1957), “The Black Stallion (1979), television show “Paradise Falls” and “the Dead Zone”. The comedy “The Ref” (in 1994), family adventure film “Salt Water Moose”(1995), the 1998 comedy / action film “The Big Hit”, the 2003 two part mini- series “ Lives of Saints”. Pickering Museum Village has been used as a setting in films like “Road to Avonlea, Little Men, Anne Green Gables and Lantern Hill” and so on. By the way, a UN 2021 Report shows the growing role of creative art activities (by the musicians, singers, artists, performers} in ten top international cities and Toronto has been counted at number 5 in this field.

Pickering is also known for its beaches on Lake Ontario, its castle, The Casino, its well-stocked zoo and well maintained museum. We also found the city dwellers equally excelling in hospitality traits. The house wives are second to none in the art of cooking and preparing culinary delights. We had a wonderful time with the hosts that day. The Marwats are residing in this vicinity for the last twenty years but they keep regular contacts with the folk back home that they visit almost every year to share their joys and sorrows. Their grown up children have, however, fully integrated themselves in the social life of their parents’ adopted homeland.



Historic Pickering Town Hall

### **The Little Canada**

Canada is a vast country and one cannot manage to explore the whole of it in one's lifetime what to say of during a short visit. So it was a consoling news for us to know about the "Little Canada "gallery in Toronto. I had some experience of such an idea during my visit to numerous countries in my working life. For example, I remember visiting a park in Istanbul where they were displaying miniature models of landmark buildings, monuments, mausoleums and other worth seeing places in Turkiya. That was fantastic but it was in a totally open area where a curious adventurer could breathe fresh air, stretch his legs by wandering around the scenic view of the beautiful park. But here in Toronto they have set up the gallery in an extremely busy metropolitan area located at the crossing of the Dundas Street and the world's longest alley the

Yonge Street. It is intended to cover as many cities as possible and a workshop has been set up at the premises to work on their miniature models. So far on display are the Little Niagara, Little North, Little Prairies, Little Rockies, Little West Coast, Petite Quebec, Little Ottawa, and Golden Horseshoe besides Little Toronto. At least one new area is added every year. The Petite Montreal is coming up soon whereas Little East Coast and other areas are future projects.

“Little Canada is a celebration of all things Canada. It’s a unique journey of discovery through the sights and sounds of our great country in miniature scale”, it is claimed, “A unique Toronto attraction that will unleash your childlike sense of wonder, discovery, and curiosity”. One has to agree to the claim made after undertaking this journey of discovery which is amazing and exciting. The craftsmanship is at its best. Full advantage of the digital technology has been taken. After watching the flawless flow of traffic, rivers and the running of trains in the miniature world you cannot term it a farce show. It is the true copy of the real world in action. The guests are duly provided with appropriate facilities of entertainment as well as food and drinks to make the visit an unforgettable one. A few pictures taken by us illustrate that the miniature models do look like exact replica of the original sites.



Fairmont Le Château Frontenac Quebec City



CN Tower Toronto



Alongside the various miniature scenes, a model of the famous 3-decked Toronto Bus can also be seen)



## **Tim Horton**

I am a Coffee lover and one finds a Tim Horton coffee franchise at every nook and corner of Toronto in particular and anywhere in Canada in general. "Tim Horton" is reflective of Canada, claims the Wikipedia. But who was Tim Horton, not initially a businessman. Born in 1930 in Ontario, Miles Gilbert Tim "Horton" played professional Ice Hockey for Maple Leaf, New York Rangers, Pittsburgh and Buffalo Sabres in 24 seasons and by sheer hard work made for himself a permanent place in the National Hall of Fame as one of the 100 Greatest NHL Players in history. He made an impact in more ways than one. He was nicknamed Superman of Ice Hockey. There are so many tales about his abnormal strength. But surprisingly Tim had weak eyesight so much so that out of ice he would always put on glasses. Tried his luck as an entrepreneur in Donuts and then Coffee and founded the most popular North American Tim Horton Franchises in 1964, presently working in a score of countries with 3,600 outlets the world over. It came to Pakistan in February 2023, broke all records of first day sales in Lahore and opened its sixteen outlets in different cities of the country in the first go. The great hockey legend died in a single car accident at the age of 44 only.



It is a treat to enjoy coffee at a Tim Horton franchise on a chilly winter day

### **Business Automation**

In November 1990, I was in Wellington (New Zealand). My hosts in Kiwis Post wished to show me their first most modern, fully automated sorting centre. They were all very proud of it. On an inquiry I was told that they achieved that remarkable feat with Canadian assistance. It was something worth seeing but that was just the beginning. Thirty-two years later I had this opportunity of seeing the state of digitalisation in Canada itself. They have embarked on such projects on a massive scale. The moment you step on the Canadian soil at the airport, you start observing the growth in this field on a phenomenal proportion. The disembarking passengers are expected to handle the documentation work themselves for which a very large number of computer stations are in place. The bill payment work at all the town stores like the international chains of Wall marts, No-frills, Sobeys and so on has been digitalised. The transactions at banks, ticketing in transport services, operations in

factories, purchases at pharmacies and multifarious functions in the vast network of governmental offices have almost been fully computerised. Operations like car wash, automatic refills and bill payments at gas stations are no exception. Home appliances like fridges, ovens, washing machines and dish washers are all already available duly Wi-Fi-connected. The artificial intelligence (AI) enables the housewives monitor operations of these machines on their hand watches or cell phones through the relevant apps instantaneously. They can easily take stock of the commodities available in the refrigerator or check requirements of the washing appliances automatically on a remote-control basis.

Experts borrowed from all over the world are seen busy in achieving this fantastic goal of complete digitalisation. One wonders what is in store for the human mind and body in the days to come! But one thing is clear – Canada has taken upon itself the job of leading the world in creating a complete ideal paperless culture. Online orders and services from the stores and even the restaurants and eateries are on its peak here like all over the world.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Casa Loma**

It's a "fairy land, a landmark private building, a complete reflection of Edwardian age heritage, constructed in gothic revival style of architecture" but now a frequently visited museum owned by the Toronto City. Casa Loma is something to be visited to learn many things about the Canadian History. This Spanish word literally means "House on the Hill". It is a chateau on the Toronto Hill in Kingston area and a premier historic attraction. Being the only full sized castle in North America, it was completed in 1914 and took three years to build with its base at a height of 460 feet above sea level. Its builder was Sir Henry Pellatt, a dreamer, an outstanding athlete, a businessman, and a soldier who was always proud of his service in The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. He was recruited as a rifle man and rose to the rank of a Colonel Commandant who took his whole regiment of 600 men to England for training. After retirement he was made the regiment's honorary colonel and subsequently made an honorary Major General. His role in providing hydroelectric to Toronto as a financier will always be remembered. Casa Loma took 300 men to work on it and cost \$ 140,500, 000. Situated on a 5 acres land, it is said to have seven floors with nearly 200, 000 square foot of covered area.



Casa Loma – a complete castle built by a wealthy businessman-cum- a military Commander

### **Agha Khan Park Museum of Islamic Arts and Culture:**

Toronto has several museums and Parks but Agha Khan's Museum has a distinct character. It displays Agha Khan's family collections from the world of Islam. On display are the artefacts showing the exquisite ceramic pieces, paintings, manuscripts, textile, glass and other pieces of art as well as articles like carpets from Iran and elsewhere, "representing more than ten centuries of human history and geographic area stretching from the Iberian Peninsula to China". In short, it provides "an overview of the artistic, intellectual, and scientific contribution of Muslim Civilisation". Most of the 1,200 artworks are from the collection of Agha

Khan's uncle Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan and his wife Princess Catherine Agha Khan which they had been collecting from 1933 to 2003. This museum is now the foundation of North America's first museum exclusively dedicated to Islamic Arts.

These arts pieces were exhibited around the world for years before opening of the Museum in 2014 at the present site at 77 Wynford Drive, Toronto under the patronage of His Highness Prince Karim Agha Khan IV. At a time only 250 art pieces are displayed at the permanent gallery and then replaced by the others. Twice a year organic materials such as textiles and works on paper are rotated to limit the artworks exposure to light and environmental hazards.

"The Museum along with the Ismaili Centre, separated by the well laid 17 acres Park, brings tranquility to a large city, and offers a place of respite from the modern life of Toronto Metropolis. The setting of the Park, known as "Chahar-bagh" (four-part garden) is the Persian and Mughal inspired and has been designed by the Lebanon- based architect Vladmir Djurovic within a natural geometry created by the careful placement of trees and water features.



Entrance to the Museum with a stainless steel structure at its left



All times famous calligraphic pieces at display.



(The currently run Afghan Exhibition)



Ismaili Jamat-Khana is at my back with a portion of the beautiful park completely covered with snow



**Donations for the Museum:** A long list of donations is inscribed on the wall at the first floor, dedicated to this “sparkling wonder, curiosity, and understanding of Muslim arts and culture, the Agha Khan Museum which serves as a catalyst for intercultural dialogue through innovative exhibitions and engaging programs – from captivating performances to thought-provoking lectures, workshops, and film screening”. Here at the top of the list with the highest amount of donation paid is inscribed the name of Sadruddin Hashwani, the well-known Pakistani entrepreneur, businessman and a generous philanthropist.



Tapestry work on a wooden door



Ceramic Basin and Bottle – Iran 13<sup>th</sup> century



Picture of the Persian word for “nothing” (هیچ) in three-dimensional form in stainless steel, set up near the front entrance to the museum. This monumental sculpture is one of numerous versions that Iranian artist Parvaiz Tanavoli has produced since the 1960s in various sizes, shapes, materials and colours. The

great artist explains the background philosophy in following words:

“هیج has multiple layers of meaning – in Persian Sufism it has a great meaning: God created the Universe out of nothing, so if the universe is made of nothing then nothingness is everywhere, in every part of the universe, in all creatures. That’s one way of looking at it, and the other is that it has an appealing physical shape; it has a head, eyes and a very beautiful body. So, from both angles it was a perfect word for me to choose and work on.”

Parvaiz Tanavoli

b. Iran, 1937 –

(Purchased with funds provided by Orbital Technologies Inc. in honour of His Highness the Agha Khan’s Diamond Jubilee 2017)



Quranic Calligraphy of Surah Al- Rahman



A summer scene from the Chahar-Bagh

### **A Visit to Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)**

Toronto has several interesting museums on different themes. But ROM has the distinction of being one of the largest in the North America. It traces its history to 1912 when a few enthusiasts impressed by the reputation of New York Museum

and its counterparts in Europe, decided to embark upon a similar venture here. The name that first comes to mind is that of Mr. Currelly, a gallery dedicated to this name is available even today. It is claimed that this museum “showcases art, culture and nature from around the world and across the ages”. It is Canada’s largest and most comprehensive museum by all counts, attracting more than one million visitors every year. The day it opened to the public on March 19, 1914, it instantly became an object of pride for Toronto.

This building originally housed five museums: The Royal Ontario museums of Archaeology, Palaeontology, Mineralogy, Zoology, and Geology. In 1955, the five museums were reorganised as a single body. In 1968, the museum was formally separated from the adjacent University of Toronto and made into a separate entity. Today ROM is especially known for its collections of Chinese and Egyptian art, American ethnology, and Canadian arts and crafts. There are also exhibits on the origin of life and Earth sciences. The museum is associated with the University of Toronto, stresses research as well as an educational program for the public. Free WI-FI is available throughout the Museum. Guided tours by the enthusiastic staff as well as mobile tours are available by scanning the QR code displayed at different places on the premises. We could see long queues of small kids accompanied by their teachers in various galleries of their interest. The Museum’s

exhibits are equally popular with visitors of all ages. It is a world by itself and even a cursory glance at the various galleries is not possible to accomplish in a single day. The museum claims to house 13 million display items within its numerous galleries. The exhibits range from fossils of living organisms of various periods of earthly life to minerals of different types existing on earth as well as collected from Moon and other heavenly bodies. It is said that ninety nine percent of living organism that has ever existed on earth is extinct. But it is here that some of the extinct species can be viewed by the posterity, thanks to the extensive use of the latest developments in technology. A glimpse of the samples of art, culture and civilisation that ever existed anywhere can be expected to be found here.



(South Asian Gallery.)

We were forced to have two coffee breaks during our day-long visit. We tried to preserve our memories through taking as many snaps as possible as they say: “A picture speaks for itself”. To maintain an all-inclusive museum like this is a continuous process requiring untiring effort, research, and consultation and updating of knowledge. The stake holders here seem to possess an enduring stamina for such a mission.



The main gateway to ROM is an ultra-modern structure in stark contrast to the classical style of the entrance to the neighbouring University of Toronto.





Mining Hall of Fame not only celebrates famous mineralogists but also displays the minerals in a fascinating manner



Skeleton of a mammoth dinosaur





Exhibits from meteoroids and other heavenly bodies



The Persian Gallery



The marine life

Various kinds of exquisite birds and bats are on display in respective galleries and the Bats' Cave at the museum. There are engaging activities earmarked for the children and school kids as well to keep their interest alive while on a visit.



At the West European Section

## **Chapter Six**

### **Daylight Savings**

Although Canada at the present moment of prosperity can be counted as a land with unlimited natural resources yet nothing remains infinite with the fleeting times in this world and the Canadians are fully conscious of their responsibility to posterity. It was here in 1908 that a city in the province of Ontario, called Port Arthur – now known as Thunder Bay – first used daylight saving time when they advanced their clocks by one hour. Germany and Austria followed suit in 1916 to save fuel for World War I efforts – fuel that had been going toward artificial lights. The two countries in Europe became the first ones to use saving time and they widely popularized the idea. The USA then used daylight saving time for the first time in 1918.

In Canada daylight time is set to start on March 12 as clocks jump forward at 2 a.m. Daylight saving time won't end until November 5 when clocks will turn back an hour.

#### **Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee Award**

Recently the Government of Canada installed an award with the above title for outstanding services performed by members of the civil society. It is a matter of profound satisfaction that three Pakistani immigrants were the recipients of this honorific award. All the three gentlemen happened to be from

the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. Their brief profile is as follows:

1. **Abid Khan:** Originally from Peshawar, he migrated to Canada in 2011, living in Calgary since then, is immensely popular in the Pakistani Community of 30,000 in the city. He has launched a Facebook page with 11,000 members from his community whose help and assistance is a matter of creed with him.
2. **Dr. Fazal Manan:** Dr. Fazal Manan is a Ph.D. and a recipient of several medals and awards for his academic works. He had earlier been given the best researcher award by the Queen. Originally belongs to District Dir in KPK but is now settled in Toronto. His reputation for leaving no stone unturned for the welfare of his community is well known. Dr. Fazal Manan has qualified the Public Services Exam of the province of Ontario and is holding a responsible position in the provincial administration. He has been organising blood donation camps and undertaking Fund Raising Campaigns to help in moments of natural disasters. His services during the Covid pandemic were specially recognised by the community as well as the government.
3. **Malik Sakhawat Shah:** Malik Sakhawat originally belongs to Zarobi village of District Swabi in Pakistan. His field of communal service is also Greater Toronto Area. His

untiring efforts to help his community and never to let them down in realization of their dreams and aspirations for a better life as the new settlers in their adopted home in Canada will always be remembered. (Pictures below)

### **The Government in Ottawa**

Ottawa, one of the most beautiful towns visited by tourists in Canada, is the capital of the country. It is located on the picturesque confluence of Ottawa River and River Rideau in the province of Ontario, at a distance of 451 KMS from Toronto, the largest city of the land.

“Canada is a constitutional monarchy, wherein the role of the reigning sovereign is both legal and practical, but not political”. Legally the Crown is vested with all powers of the state. But practically, the power is shared by multiple institutions of the government, exclusively Canadian. The executive is thus formally referred to as King-in-Council; the

legislature as the King-in-Parliament; and the courts as the King-on-the-Bench.



Three institutions—the Privy Council (conventionally, the Cabinet); the Parliament of Canada; and the judiciary, respectively—exercise the powers of the Crown. The term "Government of Canada" commonly refers specifically to the executive—ministers of the Crown (the Cabinet) and the federal civil service (whom the Cabinet direct)—which corporately brands itself as the Government of Canada, formally known as His Majesty's Government. There are over one hundred ministries, departments and crown corporations and over 300,000 persons employed in the Government of Canada. These institutions carry out the programs and enforce the laws established by the Parliament of Canada.

**The federal government's organization and structure:** It was established through the Constitution Act, 1867— as a federal constitutional monarchy, wherein the Canadian Crown acts as the core, or "the most basic building block", of its Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. The Crown is thus the foundation of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of Canadian government. The monarch is personally represented by a governor general and is head of state. A prime minister is the head of government who is invited by the Crown to form a government after securing the confidence of the majority of the members in the House of Commons, forming a governing party. Further elements of governance are outlined in the rest of the Canadian Constitution, which includes written statutes in addition to court rulings, and unwritten conventions developed over centuries.

Constitutionally, the King's Privy Council for Canada is the body that advises the sovereign or their representative on the exercise of executive power. The sovereign appoints the members of Cabinet on the advice of the prime minister who, by convention, are selected from the House of Commons or, less often, the Senate. During its term, the government must retain the confidence of the House of Commons, and certain important motions, such as the passing of the government's budget, are considered as confidence motions. Laws are formed by the passage of bills through Parliament, which are

either sponsored by the government or individual members of Parliament. Once a bill has been approved by both the House of Commons and the Senate, royal assent is required to make the bill become law. The laws are then the responsibility of the government to oversee and enforce.

The Senate is modelled after the British House of Lords with members appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister. The explicit basis on which appointment is made and the chamber's size is set, at 105 members, is by province or territory assigned to 'divisions'. The Constitution divides provinces of Canada geographically among four regions, which are represented equally. Senatorial appointments were originally for life; since 1965, they have been subject to a mandatory retirement age of 75.

While the Senate is the upper house of parliament and the House of Commons is the lower house. This does not imply that the former is more powerful than the latter. It merely entails that its members and officers outrank the members and officers of the Commons in the order of precedence for the purposes of protocol. As a matter of practice and custom, the House of Commons is the dominant chamber. The prime minister and Cabinet are responsible solely to the House of Commons and remain in office only so long as they retain the confidence of that chamber. Parliament is composed



of the two houses together with the "Crown-in-Parliament" (i.e. the monarch, represented by the governor general as ex officio viceroy).

The approval of both houses is necessary for legislation to become law, and thus the Senate can reject bills passed by the House of Commons. Between 1867 and 1987, the Senate rejected fewer than two bills per year, but this has increased in more recent years. Although legislation can normally be introduced in either chamber, the majority of government bills originate in the House of Commons, with the Senate acting as the chamber of "sober second thought".

A glimpse of the Parliament House, the Government House and other official buildings in Ottawa can be had in the following pictures:



Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, described the Senate as a body of "sober second thought" that would curb the "democratic excesses" of the elected House of Commons and provide regional representation. He believed that if the House of Commons properly represented the population, the upper chamber should represent the regions. It was not meant to be more than a revising body or a brake on the House of Commons. Therefore, it was deliberately made an appointed house, since an elected Senate might prove too popular and too powerful and be able to block the will of the House of Commons.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **The largest French speaking city of Montreal**

Our first acquaintance with this city was made at the time of Montreal Summer Olympics in 1976. Pakistan's hockey was at its best in those days. My old colleague Sikandar Bakht was an avid hockey fan and was following every event that our team was participating in through a small transistor radio in his hand. The big problem was that these matches were played at the dead of the night due to ten hours' time difference. We were then living in a small rest house in Rawalpindi in adjacent rooms. I would usually wake up my friend in the morning as I used to complete my sleep by then. One morning when I

knocked at his door and peeped in, he got up with a jerk saying “Have they scored the goal?” I replied innocently “I don’t know about the goal but your radio has slipped out of your hands and is lying on the ground”. That remained the joke of the day later on. Pakistan lost the match by a single goal, yet got the bronze medal but poor soul Sikandar Bakht had broken his radio set.

Montreal is known to be the second largest French speaking city in the world after Paris, the capital of France. It was established in 1642 primarily as a missionary settlement by the French explorers who named it Ville-Marie (City of Mary). It stands at a distance of 258 km from the provincial capital Quebec and 196 km from the national capital Ottawa. The city takes its name from Mount Royal (or Mont Real in French), the three peaked mountain on the island of this name. One of its alternate names is City of the Saints although also called City of the Sin. It soon emerged as a trading outpost for the fur trade, the commodity in much demand then by the European aristocracy. Today it is a major industrial and financial centre in Canada with the current population of 1.8 million (2023). Being the most populous city in Quebec province, it is the hub of culture, art and business but more than anything represents French history and civilisation with a fine blend of English traditions. Montreal is also known as the city of contrasts. Its older area contains the

stunning Notre-Dame Basilica, the historic “Place d’Armes”, and the lively Place Jacques Cartier.



(A local chieftain is seen negotiating exchange of commodities with French traders on the left. The stunning Basilica stands in the picture on the right.)



Montreal lets you experience the glamour of the past, the energy of the present and the vision of the future according to popular perception. That way, it is a vibrant modern Canadian city also known for its lively festivals, nightlife, cuisine and creativity.



In several Canadian cities the important business areas are inter-connected underground. So, it is easier to walk from one place to the other without exposing yourself to the vagaries of the weather in winter. SMT is the convenient transport system in Montreal but one can always hire a bike to pedal through the busy roads from one of the popular Bixi Montreal stations around the city during April to October period.

Montreal has also got large green spaces which it proudly presents to any lover of nature. One can always go to Montreal Botanical Gardens, the Mount Royal Park, and the Old Port where you can relax, cycle on the meandering biking tracks or cruise on the river.

Check out the Olympic Park. Located in the heart of Montréal, this dome once held the 1976 Olympic Summer Games and now includes the Montréal Bio dome, Insectarium, a municipal golf course and the Montréal Botanical Gardens.

The Montréal Botanical Gardens contain over 20,000 plant species in over 30 different (specialized) gardens. Two of the gardens include a full Japanese Garden and the largest Chinese Garden outside of Asia.

The Notre-Dame Basilica is the city's oldest church. Finished in 1656, it features an amazing interior of stained glass windows depicting scenes of the city over time.

The Canadian Railway Museum is a treat for any railroad enthusiast, **featuring** over 150 locomotives and railway cars/vehicles.

### **Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory**

(Thousands of Butterflies in a Tropical Garden)

Canada has numerous localities named after places existing in United Kingdom or elsewhere in the world. So is Cambridge named after the historical University Town of Great Britain in the Greater Toronto Area. We had the opportunity to visit this place, especially reserved for research activities on butterflies. It greatly added to our knowledge about

this most beautiful and common insect found worldwide.

### **Background History**

“Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory is a privately owned Canadian Corporation and derives its income solely from admissions, gift shop and café sales, and facility rentals.”

This facility is spread on a 107 acre site which includes an environmentally sensitive 10,800 square foot indoor tropical garden featuring thousands of free-flying butterflies. It also hosts a variety of tropical plants, birds, and animals, along with several water features. One can always see butterflies emerging from their chrysalis and take their first flight, followed by a walk-through of the mounted and live-insect galleries.



The Conservatory opened on January 26, 2001 as Wings of Paradise Butterfly Conservatory and in 2010 changed its name to Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory to more accurately reflect the Butterfly Conservatory's location and purpose.

Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory is governed by a Board of Directors committed to conservation, education and research, and to provide visitors to the conservatory with a truly unique, affordable and educational family experience. There are several areas in which butterflies play an important role, such as:

**Pollination:** Human survival depends on plant pollination. Without pollinators, we wouldn't have fruits, vegetables or grains, and plant reproduction would come to a stand-still, bees are by far the most



effective pollinators, but other insects like beetles, flies, moths, and butterflies also help pollinate. Again all living things require energy from the food they eat. Butterflies and moths are an important food source for a variety of animals including birds and bats. In fact, caterpillars are an essential component of the diet of songbirds, especially during breeding.

Butterflies are well-loved by nature enthusiasts. Historically, they have been monitored and studied more than any other insect group, making them important model organisms used to investigate many areas of research, including climate change, genetic navigation, pest control, mimicry, evolution, biodiversity, and conservation. So, not only butterflies provide tremendous economic value as pollinators, they also have socio-economic value.

### **Special Features of the Conservatory:**

- There are roughly two to three thousand butterflies in the conservatory at any given time.
- It is maintained at 25-30 degrees Celsius and 80 % humidity year-round. Butterflies are most active on bright sunny days.
- The tropical garden features over 150 species of flowering plants, shrubs and trees that are native to Central and South America, Australia, and Asia.

- Butterflies here are delivered as pupae (Chrysalides) from butterfly breeding forms in Costa Rica and the Philippines.
- Butterfly farming is a sustainable form of agriculture and ensures that natural populations of wild butterflies are not depleted from their native habitat.
- Some valuable information is also recorded on the walls of the conservatory about the honey bees, moths and ants. For example, the following interesting facts are displayed about the common Leaf cutter Ants:
- Leafcutter ants may vary in size, but they work cooperatively in their complex society. Their colonies are sometimes called “Ultimate super organisms” because they behave as a single unit.
- These ants can carry up to 20 times their weight – the same as one who can carry a car.
- In her lifetime, a leafcutter ant queen can produce 150 – 200 million offspring.
- Most of the year, a colony consists entirely of females; there is one queen and millions of her hardworking daughters.
- The ants use their different skills to help each other. The tiniest of the minor workers, called *minims*, help by hitching a ride on cut leaves as they are carried back to the nest, protecting the ant below from parasitic fly attacks.

- The worker ants are dedicated to their queen, keeping her safe underground where she is surrounded by ants who groom and feed her. The queen can have a lifespan of 15 years or longer. Once she dies, the colony will die shortly after.
- Ants go through complete metamorphosis just like butterflies do. They have four life stages --  
- Eggs – Larva – Pupa – Adult.

The scenes captured at the time of our visit will be found of interest to readers of these lines.



The artificial waterfall at the conservatory



Butterflies enjoying their juicy lunch



Visitors studying about the habitat  
of the grasshoppers and other  
insects



Keenly reading the story of butterflies



In front of the ants' colony at the conservatory

## **Royal Botanical Gardens**

Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) were opened to visitors in 1932. Being the largest of its type in Canada, it is a National Historic Site and Canada's plant diversity hotspot, built on land covered by a Treaty between the Mississauga of Credit First Nations and the Crown. These nature sanctuaries consist of 2,400 acres of Carolinian forest, Niagara Escarpment cliffs, rare oak savannah and coastal wetlands accessed by 27 km of walking trails. They are home to more than 50 at-risk species and a major stopover point for thousands of migratory birds. These half a dozen sanctuaries are normally open to the public daily from 8 a.m. to dusk. Amongst these, the historic Rock Garden is considered the birthplace of Royal Botanical Gardens. This was reopened following a significant rejuvenation in 2016 to embrace sustainable trends in garden design and management while still respecting the integrity of its heritage setting. The following additional highlights provided sweeps of inspiring colour and texture throughout all seasons:

Water features, heritage conifers, rock garden bistro, 4 hectares (6 acres), showcasing 1,574 types and 102, 386 individual plants, tree mindfulness walk and historic limestone steps.

We were able to pay a brief visit to RBG on a beautiful clear day in May 2023. But honestly speaking, we could hardly cover a couple of its several parts. The following snaps taken on the occasion will show more than any detailed description in words.



The plaque fixed in the Rock Garden commemorates three world-prominent breeders of rose flowers: Pierre-Joseph Redoute', Empress Josephine Bonaparte and Peter E. Kukielski.

The admission ticket purchased at the main visitor centre and entrance covers the following sites that are located at some distance from here:

- Hendrie Park
- Laking Garden
- Rock Garden
- Arboretum and



- Cootes Paradise Fishway

Walking trails link BRG Centre/ Hendrie Park, Laking Garden and Rock Garden. Facilities exist for lessons in gardening for the beginners and the experts in botanical sciences can undertake research work on the premises. Excellent facilities are also provided on rent for holding of marriage parties in the flowery environment of this earthly paradise.



## Chapter Eight



## **Pakistani Diaspora in Canada**

Watching one night on a Canadian television channel (TVO), I had the pleasure of listening to an interesting discussion carried out by three Pakistani-Canadian ladies from the academic circles of this country. The topic was “Why is Pakistan in a Crisis?” Their candid, enlightened and well-informed talk was not only informative but also pointing towards the under lying deep concern of the participants towards the issues that have beset life in Pakistan in the current political and economic scenario. The panel consisted of Amber Shamsi, originally from the Centre of Excellence in Journalism at Karachi, Marium Mufti, Co-author of the book “Pakistan Political Policies” from University of Waterloo and the third one Sadia Malik, an eminent economist from York University. Despite acknowledging gloomy financial prospects for Pakistan, they were not totally pessimistic, pinning their hopes in better export management, taxation reforms and enlightened political leadership.

I would like to share some information about this highly educated, enlightened and mostly patriotic community of Pakistani immigrants which is beyond any shadow of doubt a potential source of strength for Pakistan.

As per the surveys made in 2021 the following figures emerge:

## **Total Pakistan Origin Population**

303,260 (0.81%)

### **Regions with significant populations**

Ontario	212,650
Alberta	39,535
Quebec	16,645
British Columbia	19,050

### **Languages**

Predominantly English, Urdu, Punjabi, French, Pashto, Sindhi

### **Religion**

Predominantly Sunni Islam with Shi'a Islam large minorities (both Twelvers and Ismailis) and Ahmadiyya, with much smaller minorities of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, and Christianity, Pakistani Canadian refers to the community in Canada of Pakistani heritage or descent. It can also refer to people who hold dual Pakistani and Canadian citizenship. Categorically, Pakistani Canadians comprise a subgroup of South Asian Canadians which is a further subgroup of Asian Canadians.

### **Historical population**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pop.</b>	<b>±%</b>
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2001	74,015	—
2006	124,730	+68.5%
2011	155,310	+24.5%
2016	215,555	+38.8%
2021	303,260	+40.7%

Punjabi people from the Punjab region that would later become Pakistan were among the pioneers who migrated from British India to British Columbia at the turn of the last century. By 1905, as many as 200 participants built the first community from modern-day Pakistan. This community also had a small makeshift mosque in Vancouver. But most of these immigrants were sojourners rather than settlers, and they either returned to Pakistan in 1947 or moved on to the United States. Subsequently, Canada imposed a ban on South Asian immigration that remained in place until after World War II.

Pakistanis began migrating to Canada in small numbers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Immigration regulations gave preference to those with advanced education and professional skills, and the Pakistanis who came during this period, and throughout the 1960s, generally had excellent credentials. Many of them considered themselves to be sojourners, who had come to earn but not to settle or were students who intended to return home when their degree programs were completed. While some went back, others remained to become

the founding members of the Pakistani-Canadian community.

Pakistani nationals were registered in undergraduate and graduate programs at McGill University in Montreal as early as 1949, and at the University of Toronto from 1958 on. By the mid-1950s, there were five or six Pakistani families living in Montreal in addition to the students. This was probably the then largest concentration of Pakistanis in the country. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s most who arrived were young men pursuing graduate or professional studies.

Pakistanis have integrated well into Canadian society, partly due to the Canadian Government's policies and assistance given to all immigrants settling in the country.

Main article: Islam in Canada

Most Pakistani Canadians are Muslims. Religion figures prominently in the lives of Pakistani Canadian families. The majority of Pakistanis belong to the Sunni sect of Islam. Pakistani Canadians also participate in and contribute to the larger Islamic community, which includes Arab Canadians, Iranian Canadians, Turkish Canadians, and Asian Canadians.

Muslim Pakistani Canadians have played important roles in many organizations, including:

- Anjuman Burhani – Dawoodi Bohra Muslim Community
- Canadian Islamic Congress
- Canadian Shia Muslim Organization
- Islamic Society of North America
- Muslim Association of Canada
- Muslim Canadian Congress
- Muslim Student Association of Canada

Although the majority of Pakistani Canadians are Muslims, there is a sizable community of Christians as well. In recent times, Pakistani Zoroastrians (called Parsis) have come to Canada mainly from the city of Karachi. Pakistani-Canadian Hindus and Sikhs also tend to stay in their own communities and share religious and cultural life with fellow Indo-Canadian Hindus and Sikhs.

### **Language**

Most Pakistani Canadians speak English or French. However, many also speak a second or third language, as they often tend to keep hold of their native tongues, which includes Urdu, Punjabi, and Pashto etc.

### **Geographical distribution**

Provinces with Significant Population of Pakistani Canadians (2001 - 2021)

<b>Province</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>
Ontario	52,830	109,295	212,650
Alberta	5,450	17,825	39,535
Quebec	7,990	12,470	16,645

British Columbia	6,270	9,770	19,050
Saskatchewan	495	3,195	7,640
Manitoba	565	1,810	5,030
Nova Scotia	305	490	1,285

Figures from the 2021 Canadian Census from StatsCan indicate that there are 303,260 Canadians who claim Pakistani ancestry.

### **Metropolitan Areas**

Metro Regions with Significant Population of Pakistani Canadians (2001 - 2021)

<b>City</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>
Ontario Toronto	43,035	90,610	162,710
Alberta Calgary	3,455	10,450	24,050
Quebec Montreal	7,890	12,220	16,060
British Columbia Vancouver	5,680	8,865	15,765
Alberta Edmonton	1,745	5,480	12,765
Ontario Hamilton	2,055	3,705	8,820
Ontario Ottawa	2,255	3,910	7,885
Ontario Kitchener-Cambridge Waterloo	1,045	3,210	8,015
Saskatchewan Saskatoon	255	1,705	4,150
Manitoba Winnipeg	560	1,590	4,660

Ontario Oshawa	480	1,225	6,965
Saskatchewan Regina	220	1,330	2,940
Ontario London	665	1,010	3,850

## **Local municipalities**

There were 162,710 Pakistani-Canadians in the Greater Toronto Area per the 2021 Census, making it home to one of the largest Pakistani diaspora communities in North America. Per the 2021 Census, there were 41,705 Pakistani-Canadians residing within the actual city of Toronto; the majority of the community is concentrated throughout the suburbs of the GTA.

There are 41,025 Pakistani-Canadians residing in Mississauga per the 2021 Census, comprising 5.76% of the City's population. This is up from 27,345 recorded in the 2011 Census. Urdu is the 2nd most common reported mother tongue after English, and there are 55,765 Urdu speakers in Mississauga.

Pakistani-Canadians made up 3.81% of the population of Milton in 2011, per the 2021 census this number has tripled to 12.88%, making it one of the fastest growing Pakistani communities in the nation. Urdu is the 2nd most commonly spoken language, with 19,830 speakers per the 2021 Census.

There are 10,825 Pakistani Canadians living in Metro Vancouver per the 2016 Census. Most Pakistanis

who live in Metro Vancouver reside in areas such as Surrey, which has 5,565 Pakistani Canadian residents per the 2016 Census.

### **Culture, Lifestyle and Economics**

Many Pakistanis have used an adaptation technique, and are accustomed to a bicultural lifestyle. At home they live as traditional a life as possible. The old values and hierarchical decision-making patterns are generally respected, and traditional clothing, food, decorations, and language provide the warmth and reassurance of the familiar. Pakistani Canadians who are members of the community believe in the symbolic importance of owning homes. Those who came to Canada from Pakistan via East Africa or the Gulf are more likely to be involved in business. A number of Pakistani Canadians are also traders and are primarily involved in exporting and importing goods to and from Pakistan. A number of Pakistani-Canadian businessmen and companies have participated in this development.

An important aspect of Pakistani participation in the Canadian economy has been the increasing number of Pakistani-Canadian women who work outside the home. The experience of Pakistani-Canadian women varies, from educated women with large social and economic freedom, to those separated in the community from traditional gender roles. Still, Pakistanis have shifted towards more freedom for Pakistani-Canadian women, including later



marriages, more liberal attire, and greater social and economic freedom.

Young people who were born in Canada or brought as children share a particular set of issues and concerns with their parents and the wider Pakistani-Canadian community. Their perspective regarding adaptation and integration is generally not informed by significant direct experience of the culture and values of the homeland, and, as a result, parents and grandparents take on a mediating role. They have to decide what aspects of their traditional lifestyle and values must be left behind and what can be transferred to and re-established in their new home. Most significantly, they generally assume the responsibility for making these choices for their children as well. The family – even in its truncated form in the diaspora – is both the base for substantial cultural transfer and the source of intergenerational conflict.

### **Community and media**

The Toronto Pakistan Day Event is a small-scale event held on Pakistan Day to celebrate Pakistani culture. A number of Canadian television networks broadcast programming that features Pakistani-Canadian culture. These television shows often highlight Pakistani-Canadian events in Canada, and also show events from Pakistan involving Pakistanis who reside there, for example, The Voice of Pakistan – Vision TV (since 1971).

## **Relations with Pakistan**

Main article: Canada–Pakistan relations

Pakistan International Airlines serves Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport three times a week non-stop to Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad and has been one of the most profitable routes in the entire network.

## **Politics**

### **Canadians of Pakistani origin**

Wajid Khan and Rahim Jaffer were members of the House of Commons of Canada. Wajid Khan represented the riding of Mississauga-Streetsville district of Ontario as a Conservative Member of Parliament while Rahim Jaffer was a Conservative Member of Parliament for the Edmonton—Strathcona district of Alberta. Currently there are two Pakistani-Canadian women serving in the 42nd Canadian Parliament: Iqra Khalid representing Mississauga-Erin Mills and Salma Zahid representing Scarborough Centre. Both women are Liberal Members of Parliament elected to seats in Ontario. Pakistani Canadians can also be found in the provincial legislatures as well as on municipal councils.

Salma Attaullah Jan, a Toronto artist and community activist, was named a Canadian Senator by Governor General Michelle Jean, on the advice of Prime

Minister Stephen Harper, on 9 July 2010, and will sit with the Conservative caucus. With this appointment, Attaullah Jan became the first Canadian senator of Pakistani Pashtun descent.

Shafiq Qaadri is a family doctor and politician in Ontario, Canada. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, representing the riding of Etobicoke North for the Ontario Liberal Party.

*(Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia)*

**Pakistani Business Investors:** Numerous entrepreneurs from Pakistan have generously invested in Canada in various projects. The well-known TV and Film actor Nauman Ijaz is one of them. His “Larachi Restaurant” on Derry Road in Milton is doing a thriving business and is very popular with South Eastern diaspora in particular. It appears to be a rendezvous with many Pakistani-Canadian artists who are here in good number. The place prominently displays their goodwill messages all around. Our hosts took us there for a farewell dinner and the camera captured a few snaps on the occasion. The taste of sizzling malai-boti, seekh-kebab and mutton nihari aside, the Pakistani crowd was an added attraction.

[Visiting Nauman Ejaz’s Lahore-Karachi (Larachi) Restaurant]

**An Aftar-Party with Spanish speaking friends:**

We were having our fasting month of “Ramadan” in March-April 2023 in Milton. One day Roquiyah informed us about her two guests coming on a visit from Columbia in South America. One was the mother of her sister-in-law Luz del mar and the other was her brother. Both were on a visit to Canada. They were invited to come for dinner. One little issue involved in this visit was that the old lady could only speak Spanish. I and Roquiyah decided to pick up a few simple sentences in Spanish to make the guests feel at home, courtesy Google translation. After copying a few customary phrases on a piece of paper we started memorising the same. For correct pronunciation I consulted Adil Hasan, an old friend of my French classes on the phone who also knew Spanish. His tips proved useful to the extent that the guests were not only happy to know that at least somebody knew a little Spanish but also appreciated my Spanish accent. “Where have you learnt Spanish”, they asked. “From a friend of mine”, I disclosed. But that led to a lengthy conversation in Spanish by the mother, falsely believing that I could follow her. That was, of course, all Greek to us but it was great fun no doubt.

Just before the dinner it was our “Aftar” (Fast-breaking-time). We invited them to join us on the table. Now there were a variety of tasty delicacies on the table, samosa, pakora, dahi-bhale, dates, sharbat and the usual stuff for fast breaking. Our description of the food items in response to their queries, made

these things further mouth-watering. Roquiyah had to cry out that it was not the main dinner and that they must stop eating for a little while till proper dinner is served. The guests ultimately declared that they liked these items as appetisers.

In subsequent discussion, I asked about their names. The son said, "I'm Leonardo, of course not the world famous artist Leonardo da Vinci, but you can call me Leo." His mother said that she was Luz. "But your daughter is also Luz, isn't it?" I said. So she said that she was Luz Marina (Light from the Coastline) and her daughter was Luz del mar (meaning Light from the Sea). Suddenly, I realized that in Spanish names they put the family name in the beginning unlike in English and most other languages where it is at the end.

The common introductory Spanish phrases, I learnt and used that day included the following:

Bien Benido ..... (Welcome)

Buenos Dias .....(Good Day)

Comos estas? ..... (How are you?)

Por favor ..... (Please)

Como fue su viage? ..... (How was your journey?)

Audios ..... (Good Bye)

Gracious ..... (Thank You)

The reader can use these words in such a situation with impunity. Canada has a large number of

immigrants from the neighbouring Spanish speaking continent and learning their beautiful language can be an added advantage while interacting with them. Later I found that the two cleaning ladies visiting our house once or twice a month were also Spanish speaking. Same was the case with the ladies working at our hair-cutting saloon and many of the taxi drivers. So, our efforts in trying at Spanish conversation can probably add in creating a friendly atmosphere all around.



(Aftar Dinner with the guests)

**Celebrating Eid with Canadian Muslims:** GTA has a number of mosques and community centres, spread all over its constituent towns. There also exist various organisations run by the Muslim community to manage these mosques and the centers. Alternatively, in neighbourhoods where there are no proper mosques, the community hires premises on rent to hold Friday congregations and other

communal events. We held our Friday congregation in the nearby Milton Sports Stadium which is very well-maintained. But the Eid Prayers are held in the adjacent park to the stadium. A piece of land spreading over one and a half acre has already been purchased by the community here to build up a custom designed mosque and an Islamic Centre for this particular area and the construction work is likely to start soon. Since Canada's population is a mixture of various nationalities, it is always a worth-seeing scene to witness a mini United Nations attired in multi-coloured costumes at such events. Three Eid Congregations were scheduled to be held, one after the other, at this site. Families with the whole household were participating. The Park with multiple sport facilities was an ideal place for the accompanying kids in particular. Although the "Khudba" (Eid Sermon) was in Arabic but the preceding lecture by an Islamic scholar was in English to enable the multilingual crowd understand the Islamic teachings. The Imam's melodious recitation of the Quranic verses was worth listening to.

After offering the thanks-giving prayers at the completion of the month of fasting and in indulging in a little chit chat with other jubilant members of the congregation, we decided to visit Mississauga in search of an expected Eid Fair. We visited the ISBN Centre which houses a school for the Muslim kids, an Islamic Centre, a library and a beautiful mosque.

Here too there was a crowd of different nationalities, men, women and children in their festive dresses in all hue and colours from Japan, China, Malaysia and Indonesia on the one end and from Africa, Europe, Americas and the Arab world on the other. I would like to share a few pictures to give the readers a feel of the event as follows:







(The conventional henna-decorated hands with Eid Greetings)

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### **Comments by Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel**

This short travelogue is the story of Syed Altaf Hussain Shah's visit of a few months to Ontario Region and Montreal city in the Quebec province of Canada. It is the diary of an enlightened tourist who painstakingly noted what he saw, from "the irresistible Niagara Falls", the Ontario and Kelsey Lakes, the History Museum. The Agha Khan Islamic Art Museum, and the Royal Ontario Museum to the stunning Notre Dam Basilica and Royal Botanical Gardens in Montreal. Dozens of photographs and historical information collected from publications and the internet supplement lucid descriptions of the natural sites and architectural edifices making this thoughtfully crafted travel chronical a pleasurable reading.

Altaf Shah introduces us to the small Pakistani-Canadian community, including those belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who are enriching their adopted home but also serve to cement friendly and cooperative ties between Pakistan and Canada.