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“Majority white Canadians should keep in mind that no matter how good life is for the Indians who move here, it is nevertheless a wrenching experience.”

I have noticed during the seventeen years that I have been in Canada that the problem of racial discrimination is a two-way street. There are white Canadians who are ignorant and intolerant of people with different appearances and customs. But there are many immigrants who are clannish, who are reluctant to adapt to the customs of their new homeland. When intolerance and clannishness collide, discrimination is the result.

My own attitude is one of total integration, but to some extent I can understand the feelings of other people. My decision to be clean-shaven and dress like any other Canadian is a personal matter, something which I adopted long before I came here. I am a Canadian now and so I do as is considered normal for the white majority here. For many of my countrymen, this is not acceptable. Their identity is still with the old customs and dress, and so they hold onto these visible signs. There is nothing wrong with this, but it does cause them troubles which I do not encounter.

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There is also a marked difference among East Indians between those who grew up in cities, who attended public schools, and those who come from the countryside and small towns. Those of us from the cities learned very early that there are many different kinds of people, and the key is to get along despite the differences. In the countryside, there is more of a sticking-together, and a lack of any experience except one’s family and small group of friends and neighbours. This lack of English language and experience, which one can see especially among East Indian women, makes them afraid of strangers. They do not know how to approach people different from themselves. When they come to Canada, the differences are overwhelming, so they hold on even more tightly to the customs of their home villages.

