

[Fate draws families together]

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CANADA IS HOME

Fate draws families together

This is a story of fate and how, because of fate, two families came to enjoy a lasting friendship. The story begins in India with a young girl who had a fascination with life in the west. Even so far as asking every fortune teller she met to read her palm and tell if her future included a trip abroad.

It is the story of Madhuri Anand who for the past 17 years, has taught the art of Indian Style cooking at the Mississauga night school classes. Madhuri admits that even as a child she was fascinated with life in the western culture, particularly the young peoples freedom of choice.

Ironically it was in studying a young girl the freedom to choose her own husband that resulted in Madhuri's achieving her desire to come to Canada. In India, marriages are arranged by the parents and grandparents of both the boys and girls. Little did Madhuri's parents know that in carefully selecting a suitable husband for her they had chosen a man who also dreamed of living in Canada. Both Madhuri and her future husband, Andy, were thoroughly screened to be certain they were compatible to each other, even to the point of consulting their horoscopes. What a disappointment it must have been for their respective families when they decided to try life in Canada.

Her life in India had been very restricted. Even her friends and playmates had to be approved by her parents. When she was first married, her father-in-law, disapproving of her choice of a groom,

Indo Canadian

Joan Mayo



sent him away and chose one he thought would be more suitable.

Here and now in the city of Arraich in northern Punjab, her basic schooling was obtained in a school for girls in Amritsar, followed by studies in a government college and finally the Punjab University, where she received degrees in the faculty of arts, bachelor of arts and master of arts, majoring in political science and philosophy. All courses were taught in English. Although she earned a diploma in social service work, being a girl, her parents would not allow her to work.

Her husband, Ramesh, known in Canada as Andy, was born in Punjab but lived most of his life in the capital city of New Delhi. He first obtained a bachelor of commerce degree, then earned a research institute where he studied gay kites. At the time of their marriage, he owned his own business in scientific instruments in Delhi.

The decision to give up their comfortable life in India and strike out on their own in a country they had only read about and where they knew not a single person, was a difficult one and one they had to keep secret from their families. Traveling with their one-year old daughter Varvata, they first took the train from Delhi to Calcutta, then by plane to Hong Kong, by ship to San Francisco, ending with the long train ride from San Francisco to Vancouver.

Here is where their luck changed and fate took over. Arriving in Vancouver, they went to the bank to collect the money they had forwarded, only to be told the money had not arrived. Having already spent all of their travelling money and not knowing anyone in Canada, they related their plight to the people at the department of immigration. A friend in India had given Andy a letter of introduction to the Mayo family. The immigration people knew that the late Mayo Singh had helped many new arrivals, so he telephoned Mayo's family in Delhi, who agreed the young family to move in with them until they could make their own arrangements.

As fate would have it, their account had been put in the wrong

file, and even though they received a letter of apology from the bank, if the mistake had not been made they would never have come to Durban at all and the friendship that has grown between our two families, might never have been.

To combat her loneliness, Madhuri signed up for night school, taking courses in accounting, bookkeeping and several handicraft and gardening courses. Andy joined the Chamber of Commerce, took a job on the school board, was vice chairman of the Centennial Committee and they both joined the Independent Order of Foresters. In 1969 Madhuri began teaching English to new Canadians and East Indian cooking.

After 16 years in Canada, and the births of three more children, they still longed for their families back home. A visit back to India proved they were still torn between life in India and Canada. Four years later, Madhuri took one of her Canadian friends home for a visit. Still, after 20 years in Canada, they were disappointed every where they went, and even when one day they slipped out unnoticed, when they returned her family seemed to know everywhere they had been, that day.

Now the frontiers of Canada has won out over the more restricted life in India. She relishes her interest in social work, keeping a special spot in her heart for the sick and elderly often cooking and delivering meals to them.

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ARTIST

Mayo, Joan; Singh, Mayo, 1891-1955