



**Melanie Wattenbarger Interviews Writers in Toronto, Canada**  
**May 2013**

In May 2013, Ms. Melanie Wattenbarger, ESR from Mumbai University went to Toronto, Canada, to do field work and interview Indian Diasporic writers based in Toronto on whom she is doing her Ph.D. research

Interviewing Authors in Toronto

By Melanie Wattengargter

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My trip to Toronto to conduct fieldwork forced me to revisit some of the initial research questions of my project proposal. The simple act of having to explain my project to each new author I met with brought into focus the main tenants of the project which concern me at this point and what I wanted to get out of my time there in Toronto. I ended up with two main points of investigation for this trip: I wished to get a feel for Toronto ever narrowing in scope from the city as a whole to the writing community to my specific authors and how they fit into the wider cityscape as diasporic Indo-Canadians. I also found that I was primarily concerned with questions of authenticity, both felt and perceived, and I wanted to clarify on this trip where exactly my authors fit in this investigation and tease out what exactly it was about authenticity that I was questioning. At the end of the trip, I had been able to meet with and interview Farzana Doctor, Jasmine D'Costa and Shaun Mehta. At this time, RohintonMistry has declined giving an interview.

I conducted interviews in local coffee shops and D'Costa's home. I asked all three authors the same set of questions concerning home, living in diaspora, and their writing. Also while I was in Toronto, D'Costa took me around the downtown and introduced me to some of her contacts in the writing community there. This trip left me with a sense of a stratified yet distinctive writing community in which all four of my chosen authors for this project play a role in, if perhaps they all do hold different positions of integration in the writing community.

Overall, my trip to Toronto was packed full and left me with a sense that my original postulations on for this CoHaB project have all been correct so far, but the issues involved here stretch deeper and down different avenues than I first perceived. I wish to return to Toronto in one year's time to meet with these authors again and get commentary on how their work is going, how their participation in the writing community has changed (or not) and participate myself in the writing community a bit more. In the spirit of reaching for scientific accuracy, I wish to return and spend a bit more time in the community to confirm that my short visit was not an anomalous moment where the community coagulated for a few short days but is more disparate in reality. I also look forward to seeing Jasmine and Farzana and perhaps even Shaun this next year here in India as they all are planning possible trips to Mumbai in the next twelve months.

