



Migration and Multiculturalism in *No New Land* by M.G.Vassanji

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Abstract: Due to globalization, we have seen a worldwide trend towards frequent migration of people. In 21st century the desire to uproot and find a new place to live is both forced and choice. In other words, people may cross borders for political, economic, or even a combination of the two reasons. The advantages of emigrating to another country economically are amplified by unfavourable political situations. Challenges of acculturation and acclimatization connect with the search of better opportunities. M.G. Vassanji's, an eminent diasporic Canadian writer in his novel. *No New Land* discusses the struggle of Indian immigrants who left their country twice to fit in host nations like Africa and Canada. The physical and cultural conflict that Asian and African immigrants experience in Canada will be the highlighted in this paper, and it also discusses how their intercultural migration has succeeded in celebrating a multicultural society. It aims to draw attention to the immigrants' attempts to recreate a land similar to their own using collective cultural memory and their aptitude for drawing connections between their native country and their adopted one. It will investigate how preserving their past and assimilating the present connect. Vassanji highlights a new type of culture which forms when different communities interact. Vassanji's work presents the convergence of cultures that characterizes both East Asia and Africa which marks him a multicultural writer

I. Keywords: Migration, Cultural conflict, Immigrants, Multiculturalism

II. INTRODUCTION

A group of immigrants from East Africa and other countries are shown in Vassanji's novel *No New Land* (1991), which is set in Toronto and shows them attempting to adjust to life in a new country. The book depicts a variety of immigrant experiences with a particular emphasis on the Lalanis and their goals for the past, present, and future. Vassanji himself belongs to the second group of migrants who live in a liminal space that characterises their experience of migration. Community values, personal identity, history, the impact of colonialism, and diversity are some of the bigger issues he addresses. The most accurate and in-depth exploration of African life that has not been covered in prior novels may be found in Vassanji's works.

The purpose of my research is to explore the concept of Multiculturalism and how it is depicted in *No New Land* by M.G.Vassanji. Also to explore the concept of migration and its relation with multiculturalism in the selected work of .Vassanji.

Canada is often considered to be a "country of immigrants," and while this is accurate, it is not due to the immigrant population itself but rather to the circumstances or status of the immigrants. The policy of Multiculturalism in Canada not only accepts immigrants, refugees, and exiles from all parts of the world, but also aids in their social, political, and economic advancement. Retention of their native culture, religion, language, and traditions is one of the main issues immigrants in host countries perceive. Because of the numerous demands from the host country, immigrants frequently compromise and lose the aforementioned identity-related factors.

.In Vassanji's *No New Land*, this story of worldwide uprooting and erratic migration is dramatised. The novelist uses this example to demonstrate what happened to Asian Africans in Canada. The characters in this book endeavour to find the illusory world with the gilded walls, silver pillars, and musk-scented floors. However, the hard and horrible reality they encounter leads them to the realisation that Canada cannot be perceived as a foreign place. Vassanji depicts the victims of immigration as a careful observer; while being forced to continue living there and learning more about Canada every day, they ultimately feel victimized:

"We are but creatures neither of our origins, and however stalwarts we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new worlds, and the ghosts from our pasts stand nor far behind and are not easily shaken off."(Vassanji09).

Even when immigrants are denied to accept host society as their homeland people started to attack them.

"What do you have there, Paki? Hey,hey? Paki-paki-paki...." Esmail, punched in the stomach, had been thrown down and was crying in horrible, pathetic moans, "Save me, save me, I have done nothing." People shouted encouragements: "Get up! Stand up!" But Esmail couldn't get up. (Vassanji 96)

The majority of immigrants aspired of a prosperous life before coming to Canada and believed that their lives would change. But when they arrived in Canada, they noticed their mistake.

Vassanji's *No New Land* serve as a means of self-discovery, helping Indians rediscover their cultural heritage and defining African identity. He seems to imply that in order to exist between different cultures, one must have a distinctive identity, in this case a sense of being in-between. Vassanji's *No New Land* analyses how emigration trends have altered the multicultural

patchwork of Canada. Many Asians and Africans who were uprooted during the English colonial era took shelter in Canada. The end of slavery in Europe and its colonies resulted in a serious labour shortage on plantations for sugar, tea, cocoa, and rubber. This caused British people to look at Indians who worked on public projects like roads, harbours, ports and other offices in different nations. Due to this system some approx one million people migrated to different colonies. The story revolves round the Lalanis and Esmail, Jamal, and Nanji embodies the central topic and add to the adventure.

Haji Lalani, father of the protagonist had migrated to Zanzibar at the tender age of sixteen in 1906. He tried to establish an identity for himself in East Africa, and became a manager of an Indian firm. Although he secured himself and established his identity but still his land is still alive in his mind :

“...the land of birth which they had left of long time ago, to which even the longing to return had been muted, although memories still persisted”(Vassanji10)

For Haji Lalani, this new land is full of opportunities and he had succeeded in marinating his cultural inheritance and religious identity but still his urge to return to his home land is prevalent. Vassanji through his characters depicts the challenges of multiculturalism and features of a diasporic writer.

The protagonist of the book is Nurudin Lalani, the son of Hanji Lalani, who immigrated to East Africa during the colonial era. After his father passed away, he is unable to manage the family while working as a salesperson and operating a shop where people go to hang out:

“The shop remained open to give the old man something to do, for which the elderly who had come to depend on it over the years were grateful. His one remaining pleasure was to discuss religion...”(Vassanji19)

Immigrants are invariably considered as outsiders in their host nations. They are perceived as rivals by the public for both employment and real estate. Nurudin also decided to migrate after the end of his father's era. But his migration also, like his father's was a forced one.

The Lalanis are a fictional Asian-African shopkeeper community known as the Shamsi, and they stand in for all minority immigrants to Canada, particularly those who are recent arrivals from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. The unfamiliar and threatening aspect of their new surroundings causes these immigrants to frequently feel like outcasts. The Lalanis are worried about their future even before they get to Canada, which is made worse by their past humiliation in London and subsequent travel to Canada. They worry that every move will be a mystery and a trap as they get used to their new home. As a result of their distinctive appearance and way of life, their challenges are rooted in their unfamiliarity and cultural alienation. They have drastically different lifestyles, they feel terrified by the new customs of their chosen nation. The Lalanis, however, overcome their apprehension in the pursuit of greater prospects and opportunities.

The Toronto residence of the Lalanis family serves as a miniature version of Canada's larger Asian community. The Lalanis reside in Rosecliff Park, a tiny, diverse neighbourhood made up primarily of Asian immigrants from Africa. This multicultural neighbourhood attempts to live in an Indianized Asian manner. The residents of Rosecliff Park enjoyed gossiping, debating, and tasty snack parties regardless of their many religious beliefs. They also stick to their own principles and lead secular lives. No New Land reveals how customs from one culture are adapted to an entirely distinct cultural environment. The tiny snack stand in Rosecliff Park has a striking resemblance to the traditional tea shops and dabhas in India. Throughout the entire book, Vassanji utilises food as a form of cultural capital. The story is filled with mouthwatering imagery, from tea and samosas to chappati tiffins. It represents a way of life, a religious taboo, and a sense of community solidarity in addition to serving as confirmation of the Rosecliff Park residents' identity. The sale of food is significant since it signifies both the seller's and the buyer's subsistence. The religious observances, Indian celebrations, and a few other cultural observations made in Rose Cliffe Park support the liberal and secular cultural No New Land closely examines how Canadian culture has affected each character's psychological composition.

Jamal and Nanji are two learned individuals who immigrated to Canada from Africa in search of opportunity among the many manacles. Jamal adjusts effectively to the shifting demands to maintain control of his life, sometimes by scheduling appointments to meet with people and other times by selling samosas to flaunt his position. Nanji is an idealist who observes apathy in his new country as well as underlying issues. No New Land features two significant examples of racism. The first is about Esmail, a small character from the East African Asian Shamsi community. He is initially treated unfairly and physically assaulted by white boys at the Toronto tube station as he is leaving work. This is due to two factors: first, the dominance ideology; second, the fact that locals view immigrants as competitors for their jobs and other political and social positions.

“The three louts had come up behind Esmail and began their abuse. “Paki!” one of them shouted joyfully. Esmail turned towards them, looking frightened. “What do you have there, Paki? Hey, hey? Paki-Paki-Paki...” they leered, they jeered, crowding in on him in front, behind him the subway tracks. ... Esmail, punched in the stomach, had been thrown down and was crying in horrible, pathetic moans, “Save me, save me, I have done nothing.” People shouted encouragements: “Get up! Stand up!” But Esmail couldn't get up (Vassanji 96).

The event involving Esmail makes other immigrants anxious and raises concerns about their safety in Canada. The immigrants fear that Canada will see more of similar oppressive situations. With the addition of new cultural enclaves, Canada's multicultural mosaic has grown, and Vassanji's narration makes this clear. Other minor characters that symbolize different social and cultural clans can be found throughout the book.

The Portuguese-born girl who accuses Nurudin for rape is resides in a distinct neighbourhood of butchers and fisherman. Ramesh, an immigrant from another region of Africa, and Susheela represent the Hindu community in Toronto. People of mixed identities can be found in Canada, a country with a rich history. But Vassanji ironically also describes his immigration experience to Canada with a number of unfavourable events, such as snowfall, a welcoming white man, Roshan and her husband Abdul looking worn out, and switching to a bus instead of a taxi, all of which served to inform Nurudin and his family that life in Canada is not simple. Due to its multicultural policies and vague notion of nationality, Canada is consistently preferred by immigrants from the third world. But in practise, it differs too much. Nurudin, the protagonist of the novel *No New Land* learned about Canada's truths pretty quickly. Despite having eight years of expertise, he was still passed over because he lacked the necessary "Canadian experience." The word “Canadian experience”, Nurudin heard most of time in his job interviews. Canada is a land of opportunity, but it also transforms into a place of cultural displacement. People often favour a person's skin tone over their appearance.

“You check the mail hopelessly, before taking you bus to meet the jobs head-on. These are the first days and you hate yourself for arriving in winter. Braving the punishing cold, you beat the footpaths, searching for vacancies. You don Yonge Street, then Bloor, Dundas, and Queen, the East End, then the West. Taking refuge in donut shops, using precious change to make phone calls doomed by the first word, the accent. I am salesman, I was a salesman. Just give me a chance. Why dont they understand we can do the job. “Canadian experience” is the trump they always call, against which you have no answer. Or rather you have answers, dozens, but who to tell except fellow immigrants at Sixty-nine.”(Vassanji44)

Nurdin finally obtained a job, although it was completely unrelated to his status. Numerous immigrants, including Romesh, Nanji, Abdul, and many others, shared Nurdin's illness. Immigrants tend to avoid taking on more important roles in society due to the host population's sense of uncertainty. People are concerned about how their sociopolitical viewpoint may impact immigrants. Immigrants take employment that give them hope for a future that never materialises.

Another key elements of Vassanji's multicultural fiction is linguistic diversity. His fictional language is English, despite the fact that he incorporates other colloquial languages into his writings. Vassanji claims that because English is widely read throughout the world, it helps his culture acquire momentum. Different vernacular languages from Africa and India are featured in Vassanji's works. He is particularly interested in how Indian dialects—including Hindi, Gujarati, Sanskrit and Kutchi, are used. Additionally, he enjoys the African language Swahili.

In Canada, as the immigrant population is diverse, with many different religions and cultures, it becomes a multicultural country celebrating all the religions but it is also difficult to maintain one's past and traditions. Because of this, immigrants struggle not only to fit in with Canadian culture but also to stand out from other different cultures. Rosecliffe Park serves as a symbol of diversity and openness. It is a mosaic-style environment that symbolises diversity and plurality. The people who live there are of many racial origins and speak various languages. The concept of multiculturalism here stands true where a society consists of different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds while emphasizing diversity against to homogeneity. Multicultural societies are culturally heterogeneous societies.

Canada eventually turns into the long-lost emigrants' home away from home. Canada is famous for its multicultural mosaic, provinces, and bilingual system. The demand for tolerance and openness is likely to increase as racial and cultural diversity increases. Vassanji has drawn the transitional period in a person's life as it is entwined with Canada's multicultural environment a great deal. The novel is directed by the synchronic structure from the present to the past and to realms of experience that are outside the immediate referential context. Vassanji has extended the various aspects of multicultural Canada, including its role as a haven for expatriates and as a place where the homeless can find no new home. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift in the perception of the Canadian government and its stance towards the Indian and other minority communities.

Multiculturalism and other associated laws and policies do more than just safeguard such communities from racial, ethnic, and other forms of prejudice while simultaneously supporting immigrants' efforts to uphold their respective religions, cultures, and traditions within Canadian society. Vassanji mostly highlights on immigrants' constant attempts to build and construct their identities in a blended society.

III CONCLUSION

The paper attempted to examine the experiences of Asian and African immigrants in Canada as well as their struggles to deal with the tensions between their cultures and the local environment. The paper highlighted the immigrants' attempts to strike a balance between assimilation and the preservation of their cultural identity through its analysis of M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*. In M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land*, cultural diversity is one of the significant topics covered. In multicultural Canada and Africa, the host culture and the immigrant culture are almost always very different. Because they had no other options, Indian immigrants to Africa embraced creole culture. But in Canada, they are in a very different situation since they are constantly torn between accepting their own culture and that of their host country. The best illustration of someone suffering away from home is Nurdin and his family. Multiple migrations can be difficult, forcing people to juggle their cultures. People began to consider their identities in both their native nation and the new one as a result of numerous migrations. The paper also covered the difficulties with adjustment and the contribution of society to the journey of immigrants. In its conclusion, this paper underlines the significance of comprehending the intricacies of immigrant experiences as well as the necessity for a more welcoming culture that celebrates and respects cultural variety.

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