



TREATMENT OF DIASPORIC ELEMENTS IN M.G. VASSANJI'S WRITINGS

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Abstract:

The present paper focuses on the "Treatment of Diasporic Elements in M.G. Vassanji's writings M.G Vassanji is among those front ranking South Asian immigrant writers from Canada who see themselves as unfixed selves or who comprehend their identity in terms of their being twice displaced as first, he migrated from Gujarat to Africa and then to settle as a diasporic in Canada. Vassanji in his novels represent the problems that the Asian diasporas face in Western countries. They can neither give up their old cultures and traditions nor they can adapt themselves new. So they feel themselves in-between and they long visit their homeland again. He also focuses on the interaction between the Indian community and the native Africans and the generational differences among first, second and third generations of Diaspora, gender related conflicts/crisis, the transformation of subjectivities, and the emergence of new patterns of life with cross-culture interaction etc.

Keywords: Diaspora, Identity, Vassanji, Racial Discrimination, Ethnicity, Colonialism.

Introduction:

Moyez Gulam Hussein Vassanji is among those front ranking South Asian immigrant writers from Canada who see themselves as unfixed selves or who comprehend their identity in terms of their being twice displaced' Born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1950 and raised in personal and communal histories of in any his characters. His fiction engages in retelling alternate accounts of these histories, little known officially and given almost negligible significance. These are histories or stories the complex process of migration and its cultural



political manifestations, experienced and undergone not only by Indian but African characters as well.

M.G. Vassanji is today arguably a great writer of contemporary diasporic literature. He, like many of his characters is a writer of double displacement; from Gujrat to Africa and then to settle as a diasporic in Canada. In most of his writings, the thematic and political issues related to post-coloniality find its prominent place, His novels represent the problems that the Asian diasporas face in western countries. The blurb on the cover of *In-Between World of Jikram Lal* (2003) reads: "This novel is part of Vassanji's great talent to demonstrate that the minor changes unexpected love, sex, accusation-in the life of a very modest man are, in fact, transformations of history."

Main Thrust:

The term 'Diaspora' belongs to a network or complex or structure of concepts which are couched in such terms as exile, migration, immigration, expatriation, émigré, refugees, etc. by and large, these terms convey almost the same thing i.e. leaving the home under various pretexts. 'Diaspora' itself is a word from the Greek language describing a process of sowing the seeds by scattering them. The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary offers two meanings of the term 'Diaspora' as follows:

1. The dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel,
2. The dispersion of any people from their homeland.

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are histories or stories of the complex process of migration and its cultural and political manifestations, experienced and undergone not only by Indian, but African characters as well.

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Brutality, Bissondath presents the varied experiences of his protagonist who leaves his Caribbean Island to settle in Toronto. Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, a hybrid text combining travelogue and fiction. captures in vivid terms the turmoil of colonial time in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

The experiences of migration and living in a diaspora have animated much recent Post-colonial literature, criticism and theory. The literature produced by 'diaspora writers' such as Naipaul, Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Amitav Ghosh, Hanif Kureishi, Bharati Mukherjee, Caryl Phillips and Ben Zephaniah has proved immensely popular in western literary criticism. Similarly, in the works of academics such as Avtar Brah, Homi K. Bhabha, Roy Chow, Carole Boyce Davies. Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, the new possibilities and problems engendered by the experience of migrancy and diaspora life have been readily explored. The possibilities include creating new ways of thinking about individual and communal identities, critiquing established schools of critical thought and rethinking the relationships between literature, history and politics. One of the



important offshoots of the above has been the way history and experience has been reshaped and relocated following cross-cultural encounters and diasporic dispersals across continents.

The creative writers all over the globe have portrayed these multiple issues pertaining to diaspora lives and experiences from different angles and perspectives but the space occupied by the diasporas is so diverse that all the diasporas cannot be clubbed together. Moreover, their concerns and sensibilities vary to a great extent as per their generation, individual perceptions and community and race-specific identities and issues, but overall, their dominant concerns pertaining to diaspora experiences have been of similar nature as discussed so far

of East Africa serves as the backdrop in his novels. He also incorporates prime historical figures that exercised their authority in the region and influenced lives of the native Africans as well as diasporic settlers. Vassanji alludes to Vasco de Gama, the first European who reached East African coast. Vassanji hints at various multitudes of people who populated several belts of East Africa from all the corners of the world such as Portugal, Arab, India, Germany and Britain. Portuguese subdued the African area in 1500 after whom Omani Arabs established their foothold in the region in the early 18th century. Vassanji speaks of Omani Sultan Seyyid Said Majid in *The Gunny Sack* who took Mzizma by peace and named it Dar es Salaam- the haven of peace. Vassanji has amalgamated history, biography and politics deftly in all his novels. He has made adept use of period details through which his immigrant characters pass through.

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