Chapter 6

The In-Between World of Vikaram Lall:
Black and White Picture
The fascinating story *The In - Between World of Vikram Lall* unfolds over almost five decades and spans two continents, is structured around Vikram Lall’s ‘Confession’ as he reflects over his life in the ‘in-between’ world of Kenya before, during and after independence. Safely ensconced in the Canadian wilds, where he lies in hiding from the Kenyan government. Vikram goes over the story of his life, from his humble beginnings as the son of Indian shopkeepers in Nakuru to his glitzy post-independence role as a money launderer in Nairobi for the government of Jomo Kenyatta.

In *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), the work for which Vassanji had the honor to be the first writer to be twice awarded the prestigious Giller Prize, Vassanji once again turns to explore a significant part of the life experience. In referring to his inspiration of writing the novel, Vassanji points out that he was drawing upon the "memory of [his] own childhood": "I was born in Nairobi, and when I was about four, the Mau Mau were active, and it was a time of pain and darkness, from what I remember". (P.4) Such a “remembrance” about his childhood inspires him to write a novel about the Mau Mau rebellion. Set up in the form of a memoir, the novel is a reminiscence story of the narrator/protagonist Vikram Lall, who is like Vassanji a descendant of a family of South Asian ancestry living in Africa for several generations. Earning the ironic "distinction of having been numbered one of Africa's most corrupt men,” Vikram is now leading an exile life in his new "home" on the shores of Canada’s Lake Ontario. In this what he terms a “clement retreat,” Vikram gradually unfurls the story of his past-a story about his family's multiple migrations and their entwinement with Kenya's modern history over the past one hundred years. Recounting the story of Vikram's East African Asian family, the novel then depicts the effects and after-effects of the Mau Mau rebellion, from the colonial repression in the emergency to the political tumult in independent Kenya. thereby reexamining the rebellion and its potential ongoing significance. ("How New Novels Explore Kenya's Moving History", *Lifestyle Magazine*. P.12).
M.G. Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram* Loll introduces the readers to the narrator, Vikram Lall. Lall, “one of the Africa’s most corrupt men” who headed his country’s “List of Shame”, narrates this novel, a personal and political story of Kenya during the years before, during and after its independence from Britain. The narrator, a Kenyan born Indian, now living in Canada, in hiding from those that would hound him in Kenya, recounts the story of his life when he is in his sixties.

Divided in four parts - The Years of Our Loves and Friendships, the Years of Her passion. The Years of Betrayal and Homecoming - *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* is a bold attempt at telling the epic tale of Asian people in Africa and in cross-culture world. The story opens in colonial Kenya in the 1950s, around the time of coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Vikram Lall, the protagonist remembers his early life.

Lall’s story begins with his happy childhood in Kenya with his parents, sister Deepa, his uncle and other extended family members and close family friends. Nakuru in the Great Rift Valley is the setting. This is a blackwater town on the railway line built by Vikram’s grandfather and other Indian coolies brought in by the British. Here Vikram’s father runs a grocery.

This novel is a profound and careful examination of Vikram Lall’s search for his place in the world and at the same time it deals with rootlessness of those who have no fixed national identity. In independent Kenya he wants to secure his identity as a civil servant but the officers and politicians cut him out. On the basis of his talent and diligence he becomes a successful fixer to ensure his place and his family’s in Kenya. But he is embroiled in a corruption scandal and thus his identity suffers from danger. He is declared as “one of Africa’s most corrupt men.” He has been labeled with “a cheat of monstrous reptilian cunning.”

The protagonist of this epic tale is depicted less as a man who is out to get whatever he can than as a man who has found himself in a position in which he can’t refuse to do what he has been told to do, even though he knows that it is wrong. His life is dependent less on his own will than it is on the political whims of the day.
Indeed Vassanji’s view of Kenya’s Asians appears as ambivalent as his in-between protagonist’s identity crisis. For Vikram, the ambiguity of his identity will morally and emotionally cripple him in later years as he turns — impersonally and without too much reflection — into a money-changing middleman. In the newly independent Kenya, where power has shifted to a group of black elites headed by Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of the country, Vikram’s community has suddenly slunk from protected colonial collaborators to potential victims. Disproportionately wealthy, avowedly apolitical and intent on keeping themselves culturally and economically apart from black Africans; the Indians now face two stark choices: Pack up and flee — hopefully to Britain — or shell out considerable sums to sundry officials and thugs with political connections to survive. In this climate of rampant corruption, Vikram is the ideal invisible go-between, the middle man who can be trusted to transfer slush funds, hold awkward secrets and pay the requisite personal respects — along with suitcases of cash — to an increasingly duplicitous Kenyatta ensconced in Nairobi’s lavish State House.

Structurally, the novel is organized along the two-parallel narrative threads. One, set in the past, in the Kenya of 1950s, through to the present. The other, set in Canada, but anchored in the past by Lall’s frequent flashbacks to the Kenya of his earlier life. As Vassanji did in his last novel, Amriika, he guides his narrator to a safe location to reminisce. In Amriika it was California. Here, with the frozen black eternity of Southern Ontario outside his window, Lall’s mind can travel freely back to the Kenya he knew. Canada is the in-between, a perfect blank, and for Lall a place to slowly work over these memories, smoothing out his troubles and regrets.

The In-Between world of Vikram Lull tells the tale of displacement of Indians who came to East Africa and from there to Canada. Acute and bittersweet, the story of the novel is told in the voice of the exiled Vic who eventually leaves Kenya and takes shelter in Canada. The eponymous narrator is an old man in exile. It is not self-imposed exile but he is forced to flee by anti corruption investigations and death threats.
Vikram is a man displaced from history and politics. Caught between several worlds Vikram and other Indians are in effect homeless. Many of them doubly so, owing to exile that the division of India forced upon many Indians. Kenya and Tanzania and Uganda, cruelly purged its Indian population by the early 1070s simply to assuage and to fortify nationalist or tribal ideologies that at least threatened to become as repressive as the imperialism they replaced. When the Kenyans eventually gain their independence, the Indian community finds itself caught in the middle, as Africans try to take over not just the properties of the British, but also the properties of Kenyan Indians. Even those who have lived, as Vikram has, all his life in Kenya.

Vikram’s grandfather had arrived in Kenya as an indenture. His exile had taken place due to poverty and repression of the British. Vikram’s father has to leave Nakuru due to insecurity and Vikram has to leave Nairobi due to racialist ideologies of Kenya. Vassanji superbly limns the pathos of this condition of a perpetual exile.

As with so much of Vassanji’s work, The In-Between World of Vikram Lall is a novel concerned with the grand themes of life, love and identity; a story about exile and belonging, it has its central unifying thread in the depths of memory. Here Vassanji explores a conflict of epic proportions from the perspective of immigrants trapped in the perilous in-between. Immigrants nowadays are not what immigrants used to be in 19th century or early 20th century because there is so much communication. The world is a much smaller place. This makes it easy for Vikram to get out of Africa but not so easy for him to escape it.

The Kenya that Vassanji writes about changes as the story progresses. In the early years, when Vikram is growing up in Nakuru, the land is still a British protectorate. The people live in constant fear of the Mau Mau, whose brutal attacks on white settlers and gruesome oath-taking rituals become the stuff of Vikram’s nightmares. With consummate skill, and a great deal of sensitivity, Vassanji explores the subtle distinctions that exist between different racial, ethnic and tribal groups during that period of rapid change. The whole spectrum is represented by one way or another, from the old-fashioned allegiance of Vikram’s father to Queen and country to the nationalistic fervour of ‘Africanization’. Vikram, who is not ‘white enough’ to be
British, like his African friend Njoroge, realizes early on that he and his sister Deepa inhabit a murky middle ground which makes them suspect to both the white and black communities. In Vikram’s own words, "We lived in a compartmentalized society: every evening from the melting pot of city life each person went his long way home to his family, his church, his folk." (The In-Between World of Vikram Lall, P.1).

The contested the memory of the Mau Mau rebellion in late-colonial Kenya (1952 to 1960) has been a vital one. A critical anti-colonial resistance movement led by Kenya’s largest ethnic group, the Gikuyu, the Mau Mau rebellion is controversial for its role in Kenya’s independence. It focuses upon different representations of the Mau Mau rebellion-Mau Mau historiography.

Re-narrating the Mau Mau rebellion based on the experience of East African Asians, Vassanji represents how East African Asians "in-between" position complicates the dominant way of memorializing the rebellion as a binarist white-black racial clash. With a restitution of the circumscribed role of East African Asians back into the memory of the Mau Mau rebellion, Vassanji suggests the necessity of opening up the memory of the rebellion for a wider reconsideration.

After the introduction of Vassanji, it is continued to explore his complementary narrative of the Mau Mau rebellion in The In-Between World of Vikram Lall. It will be first explored how Vassanji depicts the "in-between" situation of East African Asians in the novel. By dramatizing the history of multiple migrations and displacements experienced by an East African Asian family, Vassanji forcefully represents the ambivalent "in-between world" of East African Asians. It will be then investigated how, with their ambivalent in-between position, East African Asians work towards a new way of memorializing the Mau Mau rebellion.

In observing the "narrative trajectory" of Vassanji’s early texts, Amin Malak points out that “Vassanji presents-consistently and concurrently-bifocal images of private drama within communal crises" (P. 280). The idea that Vassanji’s narratives tend to hold a “bifocal” perspective, as will be shown in Section III of this chapter, is central to my argument that Vassanji’s novel presents a new way for re-memorializing...
the Mau Mau rebellion. But before it is done so, it is need to be noted that what stands behind these "communal crises" presented by Vassanji is the unique history of East African Asians. Although the contact between India and Africa had dated back for several thousand years, it was at the end of the nineteenth century that this relationship underwent a drastic change. As the British Empire began its direct rule in East Africa by exporting its “locally-bred” citizens to settle in its newly-acquired colony, it meanwhile began to enlist people from its oldest colony-India-to participate in this colonial business. Mainly working as "plantation workers, railway builders, clerks, custom officials, policemen, and soldiers" (Sarvan, p.512). these Indian immigrants came to occupy positions disparaged by white settlers. The result of such a governing strategy was to create a "three-tier plural society" in colonial East Africa in which, as succinctly summarized by Michael Twaddle, "white officials and settlers lived at the top of the colonial hierarchy, black Africans survived as its base, and brown settlers fitted themselves into its middle layers". (P. ix).

It is obvious that Vassanji has deliberately inscribed this historically-constructed "in-between" situation of East African Asians into the act ofcrafting Vikram's family drama. In The In-Between World of Vikram Lall, Vikram traces the origin of his family history to his paternal grandfather’s arrival in Kenya at the end of nineteenth century;

We have been Africans for three generations, not counting my own children. Family legend has it that one of the rails on the railway line just outside the Nakuru stations has engraved upon it my paternal grandfather’s name. Anand Lal Peshawari, in Punjabi script-and many another rail of the line has inscribed upon it the name and birthplace of an Indian labourers. (P.16).

As "part of the labor mobility within the British empire” (Malak, p.277) that I have mentioned, Vikram's grandfather was "recruited" by the colonizers to participate in the British Empire's colonization of East Africa. Like many of his fellow countrymen, he left his hometown in northwest India to work as an indentured laborer
to build the Uganda Railway, the "Gateway to the African Jewel" (PP.16-17) that links the port city Mombassa to the inland territory of Uganda; and, with the completion of the railway, he decided not to return to his "homeland" back in India but to adopt the place he had been working for years as his new "home" (PP. 18-19).

As if in accordance with the grandfather’s initial displacement, "homelessness" becomes a major theme of this family’s story in which the engraved rail functions as "very significant knowledge central to our existence" (P.16). While Vikram himself is like his grandfather, being away from his homeland to lead an exilic life in a foreign country, the other members of his family are not immune from this fate. The cataclysmic Partition of India in 1947 has not only inflicted vast damage on the people of the Subcontinent but moreover rendered some exilic Indians "homeless": "With the independence and partition of India they [Vikram’s mother and her brother Mahesh] had lost their homeland. That weighed heavily on all our family, but especially on those two. the freshest arrivals from there. By some perverse twist of fate, Peshawar, our ancestral home, had become an alien, hostile place: it was in Pakistan” (P.25).

With their multiple migrations and displacements, these East African Asians develop what Malak terms "a multiplicity of affiliations" (P.277). Straddling cultures and places, they have oscillated between different loyalties. Thus the eight-year-old child Vikram intriguingly finds that he is bestowed with conflicting role models that stand at the two poles. On one end stands his "proudly Kenyan, hopelessly ... colonial" father Ashok (P.21). Born in Africa, this ex-coolie's son would demonstrate his loyalty to the colonizers by joining the anti-Mau Mau Home Guard during the Mau Mau rebellion. While his father plays a willing-to-be possessed colonial subject, being clearly among those Asians who, as despicably described by Mahesh, "get flattered when a District Commissioner visits their mosques or temple or pray for Our Beautiful Queen and the Empire" (P. 137), his maternal uncle Mahesh will pull him to the other end. Labeled as a "communist" by his brothers-in-law, this newly-emigrated political radical continues his advocacy of anti-colonial Indians. on occasional days, such as India’s national day.” we learn, Mahesh “paraded Nakuru’s main streets in
Khadi, the Pyjama and long shirt combination of homespun cotton that had been the symbol of Indian protest, the uniform of those who had fought for India's independence" (P. 24). Viewing the Mau Mau rebellion as the "Kenyan freedom struggle," Mahesh becomes a supplier of goods for the Mau Mau rebels hiding in the forests.

By dramatizing how this East African Asian family has been multiply intersected by the twisting forces of history, Vassanji forcibly represents the "in-between" situation of East African Asians-as Vikram finds that he is stuck between his father's total submission to colonialism and his uncle's radical anti-colonial activism. To further reveal the state of "in-betweenness" experienced by East African Asians, Vassanji deliberately investigates the most domestic period of one's life: childhood. It's the Family legend begins with the arrival of his grandfather from India, Vikram's own personal story starts amidst the high tide of the Mau Mau rebellion in 1953. In that year, when these subjects of the British Empire get their new monarch (P. 5). Vikram, the eight-year-old son of an Indian grocer, along with his sister Deepa befriend a Gikuyu boy Njoroge, who is the grandson of the servant of Vikram's neighbors, and William (Bill) Bruce and Annie Hrucc, the children of a white settler family. While the "friendships" of these children seem to form a promising picture of harmony, the force of the Mau Mau rebellion is ready to encroach on the "innocence."

The brutal killings committed by the Mau Mau rebels (including the family of the white settler Mr. Innes); the following police raid in cracking down the rebellion; and eventually Bill and Annie's ranking as the newest victims of the Mau Mau rebellion Vikram's "innocent" childhood is completely consumed by the Mau Mau rebellion. "Our world had changed," Vikram observes. "We were in the aftermath of a tragedy which had struck suddenly in a furious moment, destroyed the composure of our lives, and departed" (P. 157).

By staging Vikram's loss of innocence as the major plot in the first part of the novel, Vassanji appears to be gesturing towards Fredric Jameson's famous observations in "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." With a stress on the "cultural forms," Jameson in this observes: "Third-world texts, even
those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*" (P.69). While it is fair to critique Jameson’s "sweeping" claim of reading "all" third-world literature as "national allegories" (P.69). It is, though Jameson’s attention to the intricate relationship between the "private" and the "public" is helpful in reading Vassanji here. As described by Jameson. Vassanji has dramatized the “libidinal dynamic” of the private to bring the "political dimension" into view. The supposedly "innocent" play-acting among the children in Vassanji’s novel is Sound to be already inscribed by political awareness; while the white boy Bill can unquestionably assume the role of winner/ruler. Vikram and Njoroge, who are both colonial subjects, "always took strict turns on who was to be Indian and who cowboy, who cop and who robber" (P.27). Through their play-acting games, the positions of these children within the colonial structure in Kenya are revealed, strengthened, and—through the subsequent murders—forcefully dismantled.

As Vikram begins to detect his difference from Njoroge through these play-acting games—he observes that "I do recall that his being different, in features, in status, was not far from my consciousness. I was also aware that he was more from Africa than I was" (P.27). He soon learns more about his perilous position. His "friendships" with a black boy and two white children in colonial Kenya eventually initiates him into realizing his role as an "in-between" Indian:

There was a depth to my friend [Njoroge] that I could not reach, could never fathom even when we became close. Just as there was a mystery and depth to Bill and his Englishness. Why was my own life so simple? Why did it seem to irrelevant? In that fateful year of our friendship, when we played together I couldn’t help feeling that both Bill and Njoroge were genuine, in their very different ways; only I, who stood in the middle, Vikram *all* cherished son
of an Indian grocer. sounded false to myself, rang **hollow**
lke a bad penny. (P.54).

While Bill and Njoro ge are **dichotomized** into playing their respective roles as a **white** colonizer and a **black colonized**. Vikram, the "cherished son of an Indian grocer." has no apparent place in this antagonistic relationship. Under the **white-black** racial clash of the Mau Mau **rebellion**, he is stuck as an “**in-between**” subject who can only sound “false” to himself.

In the previous section it has been **investigated** how Vassanji uses the story of Vikram’s East African Asian family in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* to represents the "in-between" situation of East African Asians. With a depiction of East African Asians' implication in the colonial history—that they acted **historically** as participants of the British Empire’s colonial business in East Africa—Vassanji reveals how the experience of **multiple migrations** has enabled East African Asians to dwell in an ambivalent "in-between world." Now the question is: how can such an “in-between” position **help** the reader to learn more about the Mau Mau rebellion? Or, in the words of the critic Arun Mukherjee, how can one write if one’s narrative "does not position itself as the voice of the colonized" (l. 172). In the following section, I will explore how Vassanji writes from this what Mukherjee terms "a hard place" (P.172) to work towards a new way to memorialize the Mau Mau rebellion. ("Introduction". *Oppositional Aesthetics: Reading from a Hyphenated Space*, P.vii.)

As suggested by Vikram’s identity as a “fake” in the antagonistic relationship of the Mau Mau rebellion, East African Asians have been summarily **reduced** to the infamous appellation “the Indian Question” and cast aside as an “irrelevant question” in Kenya's political scenario. In their pioneering study of the Mau Mau rebellion—The *Myth of “Mau Mau”*: Nationalism in Kenya—Carl G. Rosberg, Jr. and John Nottingham have **briefly** mentioned the presence of East African Asians in the beginning and immediately wrote them off with a short comment: “However, following the declaration of the principle of the paramountcy of African interests in 1923, the largely middle-class oriented and religiously fragmented **Indian population**
played only a marginal role in the expanding conflict between the white power elite and the dominated African population" (*Another Last Words*, P.39).

By reinscribing the presence of East African Asians back into the conflict scene of the Mau Mau rebellion, Vassanji brings into view how the dominant image of the rebellion as a binarist white-black racial clash has come to exclude or seriously circumscribe other voices. East African Asians, in Vassanji’s narrative, can not simply enjoy the "fruits of freedom." The most celebratory moment of Kenya’s history—indepedence—is recounted by Vikrani in a flat reporting tone: “The year 1965 and Kenya had finally achieved independence. Great changes had taken place since the stroke of midnight announced freedom eighteen months earlier” (P.161). While the independence of Kenya functions as a catalyst event that triggers the major narrative actions in "Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat*, this "historic ‘happening’" (Sarvan, P.515) is evoked *only after a lapse of eighteen months* in Vassanji’s narrative. Unable to justifiably claim themselves like Ngugi’s Ciikuyu characters as participants of the "Kenyan freedom struggle," East African Asians are then displaced from participating in this significant moment of establishing the nation.

Being those who “do not fit into” (Mukherjee, P.169) the dominant political narratives, East African Asians are further marginalized in post-independence Kenya. Posing itself as the antithesis of white colonialism, post-independence Kenya has pursued its project of nation-building on the criterion that "Kenya is the country of black people" (Ngugi, *A Grain* P.65). Building itself upon such an assumption, post-independence Kenya has perpetrated rhetoric like "Asians did not really belong, they were inherently disloyal" (*In-Between World*, P.342) to persecute East African Asians:

Even though they "had been in the country since the time of Vasco da Gama and before some of the African people had even arrived in the land". East African Asians are thrown into the state of suspicion in independent Kenya. Holding ambivalent affiliations with the former colonizers, they then inevitably become easy targets for African nationalists to
vent their hatred of colonial rule. This anti-Asian mood reached a climax in 1972, when the then Ugandan president Idi Amin issued an expulsion order to "cleans[e] Uganda of its entire Asian population by deporting them." an exorbitant gesture that nevertheless made "many African leaders applaud[d] him" (P.330).

By giving a voice to East African Asians in the novel, Vassanji revsals the detrimental effect of memorializing the Mau Mau rebellion along the line of a simple racial binarism. Presuming the bionarist opposition between the (white) colonizer and the (black) colonized as the dominant model, dominant representations of the Mau Mau rebellion hinder rather than enable critique of the pursuit of an essentialist national identity—that "Kenya is the country of black people"—popularized in post-independence Kenya. Excluding East African Asians from the memory of the Mau Mau rebellion, these dominant representations of the rebellion are then available for appropriation by the likes of Idi Amin as tools for the persecution of minority communities: "Little did they know," notes Vikram Lall, "what a slippery slope it was from that move toward genocide in Rwanda, and then elsewhere." (P.330).

Faced with these dominant representations, Vassanji proceeds to offer a new way of memorializing the Mau Mau rebellion. White Ngugi uses co-present multiple voices in A Grain of Wheat to represent the "whole African struggle for identity" (Ngugi, Interview with Reinhard Sander and Ian Munro, P.52). Vassanji shuns constructing such a collective identity in The In-Between World of Vikram Lall. Instead, in referring to the structure of the novel as a "confessional memoir," Vassanji emphasizes his intention of using a first-person narrative in investigating the past:

When I write about the past, the present always matters—who's telling the story. From what perspective, how much can you really know about the past, the ambiguity and contradictions and the subjectivity of history and memory. The idea of some telling you a story about the past and being conscious of that, that he's remembering and
gathering and giving shape - it's not someone standing outside it. an omniscient narrator-that is very important for me. (Interview with Fisher. PP.53-54).

With his attentiveness to both the past and the present. M.G. Vassanji deliberately sets up a first-person narrative to move constantly between two temporalities and localities.

On the one hand, after Vikram, the first person narrator, declares that this is going to be a story of “one of Africa's most corrupt men,” the novel begins to probe into Vikram's past in Kenya, tracing how he arrives at such a “career.” On the other hand, however, at the end of almost each chapter, the novel shifts to direct a spotlight on Vikram's present exile life in Canada, depicting his process of recounting his past in his new home.

Thus organized into "two parallel narrative threads" (da Silva), The In-Between World of Vikram Lall clearly follows Malak's observation about Vassanji's early texts: that Vassanji presents a "bifocal" perspective in his narratives. Formulating Vikram's construction of his past through such a "bifocal" perspective, Vassanji forcefully dramatizes the effect of the novel's narrative structure. Moving between the past in Kenya and the present in Canada, Vikram then begins a process of acute self-examination: "I long believed that mine were crimes of circumstance. of finding oneself in a situation and simply going along with the way of the world. I've convinced myself now that this excuse is not good enough; as she [Seema] put it so graphically and forcefully. That's what many of the killers in Rwanda would also say" (PP.405-06). Laying bare the memories of his life to reexamine them from "a vantage point in a new world" (I'urbide, P.46). Vikram begins to recognize how his part deeds are inevitably linked to his present situation: he can no longer innocuously claim himself as a "neutral facilitator" (P.374) but rather directly confront his complicity. And by discerning the inevitable connection between the past and the present. Vikram comes to recognize his linkage with Kihika in terms of their complicity. as he eventually realizes that Kihika's implication in the murders of the Bruces is comparable with his engagement in political bribery: “I recalled Kihika, how
uncompromising I was in my judgement of him, as a young man. Now Joseph was my judge" (P.406).

Undertaking the project of writing/remembering in his "Canadian retreat," Vikram reaches out to engage-or fail to engage-in holding conversations with several characters, among whom his best friend Njoroge’s angry young son Joseph figures prominently. Vikram's failed communication with this targeted audience indicates, as rightly observed by Neil ten Kortenaar, "how much the political imagination, by its tendency to allegorization, denies people’s humanity" (P.182). Like his father Njoroge, Joseph is a fervent political activist, being sent to Vikram in Canada to "escape the clutches of the police following a large riot" back home in Kenya (P.14). Enraged by the post-independence state’s persecution of "his people, the Kikuyu." Joseph styles himself as one of the "Sons of Mau Mau," who enjoin their fellow Gikuyu youths to "Come to Kenya and light" with the oppressing government (PP.29-30). Thus obsessed with his ideas of and assumptions about political justice—his thoughts of "revenge" and "war"—Joseph refuses to interact with Vikram but rather prefers to retain the racial category of seeing Vikram as "an Asian" (PP.371, 403).

If M.G. Vassanji dramatizes Vikram’s abortive relationship with Joseph to suggest the urgency of undergoing history-remembering—that the opening up of history is for the sake of building up communication—his text further presents a second targeted audience: Vikram’s sister. The evocation of Deepa—who is described by Vikram as the "only one who known virtually all about my life, with whom I’ve shared almost every private thought" (P.87) in Vikram's memoir-writing points out the intimate character of remembering. A caring and thoughtful sister who sends Joseph to Vikram to strengthen the “bond” between the two. Deepa works like a guiding "light" (which is what her name “Deepa” means) to accompany Vikram to undergo his reconstruction of their collective memories (PP.14, 87). Her presence reminds Vikram of the importance of his writing; and, through his writing, Vikram has managed to preserve the collective communal memories-like the ones he shares with Deepa—that are otherwise ready to disappear: "How the past was slipping away:
soon the **untold** stories among the older **Molabuxes** and the **Lalls** would simply have disappeared into the winds” (P.284).

Functioning as a tool of **communications** and preservation of collective experience, Vikram’s writing works to open up **memoris** to invite a wider participation in the project of exploring the past. The **gradual** significance of the librarian **Seema Chaterjee** in the latter part of the novel suggests the operation of such a process. On the one hand, **Seema** is posed as a total outsider in Vikram’s **story**—unlike Joseph and Deepa who share the **same past** with Vikram, she is Vikram’s new acquaintance in Canada; on the other hand, however, **Seema** shares Vikram’s experience of displacement: a **Bengali immigrant** whose family were also "rendered refugees by the Indian partition." **Seema** establishes a bond with Vikram in terms of their shared "tortuous histories and migratory roots". With her double roles, **Seema** works as an alienated yet intimate audience on **whom** Vikram’s memory-writing leaves a conspicuous effect. Like a “**detective-woman**” (P. 265) who digs out Vikram’s **past** to expose his real status as an unconscionable businessman emerging from "corrupted **Africaa**." **Seema** nevertheless undergoes a noticeable transformation as her "**discovery**" of Vikram grows **deeper**; her quick and harsh **judgment** of Vikram as "an evil genius" who mercilessly exploits the suffering Africans inevitably becomes murkier and less righteous after she hears Vikram’s account of his own story and ends up establishing an intimate relationship **with him**.

With **Seema**’s transformation, the novel ends with a call for readers of the novel to join in this project of **re-memorialization**. Entitled as “**Homecoming**,” the last part of the novel proper, which is composed of a single chapter, traces how Vikram returns to Kenya to "meet [his] destiny". (P.412). With the **termination** of Vikram’s memoir-writing in Canada, the "two parallel narrative threads" (as da Silva puts it) of the novel converge into a present-tense **narrative** that **dramatizers** how Vikram is attempting to "start anew" (p.418) his maneuver to cleanse his disreputable past by reconciling with the "**Anti-Corruption Commission**" in **post-independence** Kenya. Thus ending the **bifocal** **narrative** that runs throughout the **novel** with a present-narrative, **Vassanji** forcefully **brings** "us"-the readers who are **reading** the novel-into
the fore. What do "we" make of Vikram Lall, who has introduced himself as one of "Africa's most corrupt men." after hearing his story? Is he really an amoral man who, though surrounded by numerous ethnic clashes and killings, made his "millions: tens hundreds of them" (P.374) Eventually, as suggested by Vikram's failed attempt to pursue a ready-made brand new start in Kenya. Vassanji does not offer a transcending reconciliation for his readers to "solve" these questions. Ending the novel with the disturbing image of Vikram's unknown fate amidst a blazing lire. Vassanji alerts the reader that history has not yet been "enclosed"-our project of memorializing the past is still ongoing. Thus society is radically divided.

In such a radically divided society, interracial love is not only frowned upon. it can have explosive and far-reaching consequences. Vikram's sister, Deepa, learns this the hard way when she re-establishes contact with her childhood sweetheart, Njoroge. Vikram's friendship with a Muslim girl in Dar es Salaam is threatened by racially-inspired attacks from her people. It seems as if the only alternative is to settle for a traditional Indian marriage or, as Vikram ironically puts it. "Rice and dal and chappati forever." Though examples of successful interracial relationships exist - Juma and Sakina Molabux, Janice and Mungai-- they seem the exception rather than the rule. In post-independence Kenya change is in the air. but it seems that old prejudices persist - or have been replaced by new ones.

M.G. Vassanji brilliantly captures an entire era in the history of Kenyan politics. Njoroge, who as a child was the grandson of the Lalls' returns university-educated and at par with his former employers. On the road to a brilliant political career. Njoroge distances himself from Jomo Kenyatta and his increasingly corrupt regime, turning instead to the communist sympathizer, Kariuki. Through his characters. Vassanji captures the corruption and moral ambiguity of Third World politics; Vikram Lall introduces the readers to a dark underworld of furtive dealings, bribery and extortion, and political murder.

However. self-avowed 'monster' Vikram has his redeeming traits. Vassanji ensures that our sympathy remains with the help by giving him the predominant voice in the novel. Furthermore, to parallel the reader's gradual acceptance of Vikram as
something other than a monster, Vassanji introduces the character of Seema Chatterjee, a librarian who works in the small Canadian town where Vikram is hiding out and in whom Vikram begins to confide. There are times when his famously cold and calculating nature gives way to human feeling, and his little acts of generosity or his love for his family tip the balance in his favour. Was he, as the claims, just a pawn in a bigger game? The novel is both his confession and his attempt at restitution, inspired by the amval of Joseph Njoroge’s son.

Despite the sensational nature of his hero’s confession, ‘The In-Between World of Vikram Lall’ is quiet, subdued, and reflective. A masterfully written epic that presents a vivid picture of Kenya during a turbulent period in its nascent history. Vassanji’s novel has an elegiac quality to it, as it both lie and his principal character are saying farewell to the Kenya of their childhood while putting to rest a few ghosts from the past.

The In-between World of Vikram Lall, - compelling record in the voice of a character described as "a cheat of monstrous and reptilians cunning, took three years to write. After research in Kenya and Britain M.G. Vassanji devoted himself to the novel in a dark office at University of Toronto. It was a hard process of creation and discovery. It was like working on a sculpture. When this novel appeared in 2003, it met with immense international success.

In The-Between World of Vikram Lall one can get Vassanji’s articulation of a most complex. This multicultural novel brilliantly captures nearly all the characteristics of a good epic. It is profound and careful examination of an immigrant's search for his place in the world. It also takes up themes that have run through Vassanji’s work, such as the nature of community in a volatile society, the relations between colony and colonizer, and the inescapable presence of the past. The major thing that stands out in the book is people who are in-between. The feeling of belonging and not belonging is very central to the book. In his various interviews M.G. Vassanji articulates time and again that when he lived in Tanzania he belonged and did not belong because he had come from Kenya. In short, this novel deals with exile, memory, alienation, longing for home, in-between status of immigrants and
search for identity. Here Vassanji demonstrates how the individual is caught in the conflicting demands of race and nation.

It is indeed vital to recognize contextual influences that inform Vassanji’s literary practice. When Vassanji utilizes the history and experiences of his community to create his textual worlds, he enters into what has been called the pact between a writer and his community, scaling his status as a committed artist. This pact between the writer and his community is often acknowledged by Vassanji himself and others. For instance, upon the publications of his first novel *The Guns of September*, Vassanji did a homecoming tour of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1981. In a subsequent interview with Wahom Muthai he said:

I have tried to differ a certain kind of East African Asian, to create a mythology, which applies not to a nation as in Ngugi Wa I hiong’s case, but to a minority which does not know where it belongs (M.G. Vassanji’s words in an interview with Wahom Muthai).

This pact between M.G. Vassanji as a writer and the Asian African community becomes evident in the sentiments of the renowned Kenyan Asian African ethnographer Sultan Somjee after reading *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*. He says:

Reading the book. I felt I know all this; I have lived it; I feel it in my veins...I feel I have met and worked with the variety of characters among both Asian families and African friends, and breathed the fragrance of the landscapes but Vassanji has put in touching words what a lesser writer can’t do with such mastry. (P.67).

Narrated by Vikram Lall, a disreputable middle-aged businessman, from his new home on the shores of Canada’s Lake Ontario, *The In-Between World of Vikram Loll* is an epic tale of modern Kenyan history, mapped out amid the major
transplantations of the Lall family. In the course of about five decades, three
generations of Lalls have migrated across three continents in the westward movement
followed by a growing number of African born Asians. As a young man, Vikram’s
grandfather, Anand Lall – along with tens of thousands of other indentured labourers
– is shipped from British India to an alien, beautiful and wild country across the seas
to work on the grand Mombassa-Kampala railway. Britain’s gateway to the African
jewel. In this adopted land Vikram’s father, Ashok Lall, runs a grocery store in the
central Kenyan town of Nakuru before moving to the capital, Nairobi. And it is from
this country – now independent and governed by a clique of nepotistic politicians –
that an adult Vikram is forced to flee by Kenya’s anticorruption hounds. Lall is
fugitive, not from justice, and there is none where he comes from. Now he is alone
and lost in the snowy Ontario, suspended between multiple worlds. neither Asian,
nor African, nor Canadian, neither innocent nor guilty, a captive observer: "My name
is Vikram Lall. I have the distinction of having been numbered one of Africa’s most
corrupt men. a cheat of monstrous reptilian cunning. To me has been attributed the
emptying of a large part of my troubled country’s treasury in recent years. I head my
country’s List of Shame. These and other descriptions actually flatter my intelligence.
if not my moral sensibility. But I do not intend here to defend myself or even seek
redemption through confession; I simply crave to tell my story. In this clement retreat
to which I have withdrawn myself, away from the torrid current temper of my
country, I find myself with all the time and seclusion I may ever need for my purpose.
I have even come upon a small revelation – and as I proceed daily to recall and
reflect, and lay out on the page, it is with an increasing conviction of its truth, that if
more of us told our stories to each other. where I come from. we would be a far
happier and less nervous people”. (The In-Between World of Vikram Lall, P:1).

In the majestic Rift Valley, Members of the dominant Kikuyu tribe, impoverished and festering under the massive European land-grab are taking secret
oaths to drive out the white colonizers. Faced with furtive, loosely organized
rebellions they have taken to calling Mau-Mau uprising in an attempt to demonisc the
restive tribes, the British administrators is waging their very own war on terror.
Attack and counter attack are going on. Brutal killings of white settlers by Mau-Mau
rebels are followed by vicious British crackdowns involving prolonged detentions, which in turn fuel further local support for the Mau-Mau. But the bloodshed engulfing this troubled land has yet to touch the 8-year-old Vikram, growing up in Nakuru.

Every Saturday morning, in an unpaved “parking lot” near his father’s grocery store, Vikram plays with his little sister, Deepa, and their friends, Hill and Annie—a pair of well-scrubbed English siblings—and Njoroge, the mott block, woolly-haired grandson of the Lall’s faithful Kikuyu gardener.

In a move that sets the tone of much of the work, Deepa and Njoroge soon develop a strong affection for each other, one that will haunt the narrative at the end. It is here too that Vio, the anglicized name of Vikram used throughout the novel, falls in love with Annie who used to play Sita to Ram in a Diwali-inspired game.

The idyllic life around Vikram soon begins to collapse as the Mau-Mau insurrection enters his life. Eventually, Vic does take a secret blood oath with Njoroge to support Jumo Kenyatta, the leader of the Mau-Mau movement. He discovers his Mahesh uncle’s secret activities in support of the Mau-Mau. The Mau-Mau rebels increase the frequency of their raids against the whites. In a gruesome attack they kill the entire Bruce family including Vic’s beloved Annie. Vikram never recovers from this horrific and tragic event.

The horrible killings and increasing unrest create a sudden displacement for everybody. Vikram’s family moves to Nairobi hoping to have safer home, away from the Mau-Mau killings. Still Vic cannot manage to shake away his image of the brutal killings. After moving to Nairobi, Vic’s father, Ashok, gives up business as a shopkeeper and begins to work as an estate agent. He starts selling the houses of many white Kenyans who choose to flee the newly independent nation they once called home.

The novel resumes in 1965, after Kenya has achieved independence. Jomo Kenyatta has advanced from political prisoner to president. Vikram, now a Kenyan citizen finishes his education at Dar es Salaam to seek his opportunities in the world.
The family’s personal lives begin to deteriorate as they must adapt to the changed circumstances of life in the city, rather than their previous lives in the less urban area of Nakuru, where everyone knew and respected each other.

Njoroge, Vic’s childhood friend, is in Nairobi, too, studying Economics at Makerere. One day he shows up, handsome, personable, well educated, and idealistic. The Lalls have not seen him since his grandfather died in custody. Once again he becomes an intimate friend of the family. Here Njoroge and Deepa try to rekindle their love. They prowl up a passionate love affair but neither community approves of their relationship. Deepa’s love is fiercely opposed by her mother. Eventually Deepa is married with Dilip, a young and wealthy Indian. After marriage Deepa and Dilip soon leave for London, but Deepa’s love for Njoroge remains a central theme in the novel.

Njorogo now marries a black woman. Vic himself marries with an Indian woman. Everything around Vic simmers and burns slowly and his own life becomes predictable and mundane -- marriages to a virgin Indian girl, a pack of children and straight family life. Rice and daal and Chappati forever. Curiously passive, at least on his own account. Vic is set for life as an Indian businessman, part of a new Africa, but when Njoroge appears, things begin to change. Eventually, by the support of Njoroge, he gets a job in the Ministry of Transport.

Part three, entitled ‘The Years of Betrayal’, and is the largest and most dramatic part of the novel. This part seeks to encompass the varied and multiple ways in which human beings betray each other, themselves and their nations. In the period covered here Lall’s father is unfaithfull to his wife; Deepa to Dilip; Vic to his wife Shohha; politicians such as Jumo Kenyatta, Okello Okello and Paul Nderi will betray their people: friends and family both cheat and suffer the ignominy of deception and lies. This section provides also a map of Kenya’s long and painful period of transaction between political independence and national maturity. Although a detailed portrait of the experiences of Kenya’s small Indian community, the novel tells a boarder tale of the new nation’s struggle for harmony between different ethnic groups and their political representatives. Here, again, Vassanji tells the grand narrative of
Kenya's political, national struggle through a focus on the acts, dreams, fears and desires of anonymous people such as Vikram Lall and the Asian Africans.

This third section of the novel is very impressive. It traces Vikram’s career. It chronicks Vic’s gradual progression from working as an employer of the Ministry of Transport to becoming a crucial cog in embezzlement scheme in high places, almost without realizing it. After completing his studies at the University of Dar es Salaam, first as comptroller in the Ministry of Transport and then as a personal assistant to Paul Nderi, a corrupt minister. On the basis of his talent and diligence he swiftly raises through the ranks, to the point where he has the trust of all powerful Father of the Nation, Jomo Kenyatta. As a fixer of rare talent, Vikram is gradually drawn into a web of official and political larceny.

Nderi uses Vikram to conduct a massive money-laundering scheme involving American aid money and members of Vikram’s extended family who become the chief financiers of corrupt deals and dubious transactions on behalf of powerful politicians. He is sucked from a successful civil service career into the corruption of a postcolonial Kenya, where he becomes involved, with others, in scams that skim millions of dollars of aid money from public coffers. earning him the notoriety of one of the most hated men of his time and place. In the end he is framed by his party. led down by the very people that employed him. He is the perfect scapegoat. After his dismissal he is a marked man in Kenya. He escaped to Canada. from where he tells his life story.

In the last section entitled "I-homecoming", Vassanji develops a present day counter plot, which sees the adult Vikram living in a snowy town in rural Ontario. The local librarian herself of Indian extraction, begins to find out about Vikram’s tainted past. Meanwhile Njoroge’s angry young son, Joseph, visits Vikram. Now settled in Canada, Deepa has asked Lall to look after Joseph who is shortly to begin colleague in Toronto. Between the two men there is a little affection. In spite of that Joseph agrees to come and stay. and Vic to take him in out of respect for Deepa’s wishes. Vikram reveals that Joseph had become involved in student activism back home in Kenya, a tempting and hazardous occupation. He resents his radical politics -
Vic’s tense relationship with Joseph, who despites Vikram for plundering his country, sets Vic reflecting on the past.

Throughout the novel Vic agonises over whether go back to Kenya and deal with the consequences of his past actions. Joseph’s unexpected decision to go back to Kenya, as the political situation once again flares up, finally persuades Vic to undertake the trip he ponders throughout the novel. Although lie intends to secure Joseph’s release, he decides to return to Kenya from his safe haven in Canada and also to pay his debt to Kenya, and to settle a new in the place he calls home. Yet again, he is placed in an in-between position, expected to take the blame for the actions of senior ministers whose skin colour exempts them from guilt and responsibility. The head has changed but the body of the politics is the same. Vikram concludes that to the Africans he would always be the Asian, the Shylock; he would never escape that suspicion. that stigma.

As it has been discussed in the previous chapters that a sense of identity, a feeling of discrimination and demarcation, have always been important issues in the writings of the literary members of Indian diaspora. Writing from "a hyphenated" space probably instigates authors like Vassanji to manifest their expressions of identity. The feeling of belonging and not belonging is very central to the book. In this context this is deeply a personal book. Vassanji articulates time and again that when he lived in Tanzania he belonged and did not belong because he had come from Kenya. It is true to the protagonist of The In-Between World of Vikram Lull.

Vikram is dispassionate about the moral choice he’s made. According to him politics confused him: large abstract ideas bewildered him; and-what was definitely incorrect in newly independent Africa - he had no clear sense of the antagonists, of the right side and the wrong side. In his urge to tell his story without moral judgements or frills, Vikram is always the objective chronicler. "In this element retreat to which I have withdrawn myself, away from the torrid current temper of my country", he writes at the start of the book. "I find myself with all the time and seclusion I may ever need for my purpose." (P.2) While Vikram has sought refuge in
"Clement" Canada his new country seems to barely impinge on his consciousness, intent as he is on recording his past in a distant, dangerous land.

Deepa and Vikram can’t realize their dreams of getting married to their beloveds. Though, finally they make marriages. but these relationships provide little emotional sustenance, or finally protection. We learn that Vikram’s sister had never been emotionally satisfied after her forced break-up with Njoroge. The portrait of Vikram’s father is one of great pathos. He will neither be Indian enough for his wife’s relatives, nor African enough for the African descended Kenyans, even after he takes up after his wife’s death, with an African woman. After moving to Nairobi, Vikram’s father gives up his business as a shopkeeper and begins to work as an estate agent. The condition of the family begins to deteriorate, as they must adapt to the changed circumstances of life in the city, rather than previous lives in the less urban area of Nakuru, where everyone knew and respected each other. Here in Nairobi the members of this family have lost their identity. Nobody knows them. They do not get proper response there. Vic, the metonymy of Indian Kenyans, wants to survive but rootlessness, racism, displacement and in-betweenness appear as barriers before him.

In The In-Between World of Vikram Lall the major thing that stands out is people who are in-between. The story revolves around Vikram Lall whose grandfather, Anand Lall, was brought from India as an indentured worker to Kenya to help build the East African railway. Though his grandfather played a significant role in the development of Kenya, the status of his family remains enigmatic unsettlers. Indians in Africa are viewed as the other by both whites and blacks. While reading the book one can easily conclude that Vassanji’s world is really in-between because as an Indian in Africa, he is positioned between two groups, the Europeans and the Africans, neither group of which he could be an intrinsic pan of and looked down upon with deep suspicion, by both.

As an Indian child growing up in 1950s Kenya, Vikram Lall is at the centre of two warring worlds – one of childhood “innocence”, the other a "colonial world of repressive, undignified subjecthood." In a quite retreat near the shores of Lake Ontario sits Vikram Lall, who has been forced into exile: he is in his own words,
"numbered one of Africa's most corrupt men, a cheat of monstrous and reptilian cunning." Now he wants, not to speak in his defence, but to simply explain his life. He begins with 1953, when he was eight years old, and living in British ruled Kenya. Lall inhibits a place in-between the young playmates in his town. He feels that he is neither a native of the land like his friend Njoroge nor is he anything like Bill and Annie, the children of British colonials; in a sense Vikram Lall is an in-between from very early in his life.

The novel deals with Vikram's liminal position. He is a migrant in Canada, a perpetually offshore Indian and a native of Africa. His in-between world is that of the Asian African in colonial and postcolonial Africa. He belongs to Indian community of Kenya, which is socially and politically sandwiched between the White and the Black. Before Kenyan independence the British used the Kenyan Indians to suppress the Africans. Anyway, things were not rosy in Kenya after independence. The social hierarchy gets flipped after this independence leaving the Indians in the middle again. The Africans, drunk on this new state of African power, turned not only upon their ex-rulers, the British, but also upon Kenyan Indians, trying to seize their properties and business through sheer intimidation.

In fact, The In-Between World of Vikram Lall tells the story of an immigrant named Vikram Lall who represents the Indians in Kenya. Indeed, the Indians hold that tenuous in-between position, not as lowly or poor as the Africans, but definitely lacking in power and subject to the colonial overlords. Like his father who continued to work as a middleman, no longer in a shop hut in the field of real estate. Vikram also took work as someone else’s agent.

The In-Between World of Vikram Lall is not only a history lesson. Beneath it is the much more intimate story of the fate and fortunes of Vikram Lall and his extended family. Here Vassanji explores the subtle distinctions that exist between different racial, ethnic and tribal groups during that period of rapid change. The whole spectrum is represented in one way or another. From the old-fashioned allegiance of Vikram’s father to Queen and country to the nationalistic fervour of Africanization. Discussing the three tier racial society of East Africa Taban Lo Liyong says, “This
society comprises of indigenous Africa (Blacks), Caucasian (Whites) and Asiatic (BROWNS).” Vikram, who is not white enough to be British, like his friends Annie and Bill, or quite black enough to be like his African friend Njoroge, realizes early on that he and his sister Deepa inhabit a murky middle ground which makes them suspect to both the white and the black communities. Vikram feels that they lived in a compartmentalized society: every evening from the melting pot of city life each person went his long way home to his family, his church, and his fold.

Vikram is a native of Africa whose racialist ideologies do not admit that he is in fact of native of it. Vassanji superbly limns the pathos of this condition. Though Vic is a third generation Asian African, he understands that Njoroge is somehow more Kenyan than he or his family ever is. Vikram’s childhood, for a while, seems almost idyllic -- spent in the company of his British friends, Bill and Annie Bruce. the gardener’s child, a Kikuyu. Njoroge and his own sister Deepa. It is unlikely multiracial mix of kids whooping it up in a "parking lot", a calm before Kenya’s political storms will rip them along the very racial lines they appear to have transcendent in more innocent times. But even in childhood, racial intersections are self-conscious affairs. Vikram, for instance, is acutely aware of his nebulous status between the oppressors and oppressed an existential state ol'in-betwccnness that will dog him for the rest of his life. He could not help feeling that both Bill and Njoroge were genuine, in their very different ways; only he, who stood in the middle, Vikram Lall, cherished son of an Indian grocer. sounded false to himself, rung hollow like a bad penny.

In his very early life Vikram experiences the racism that was apparent everywhere. The British, or whites, were at the top of social ladder, while the Africans were on the bottom. Stuck in the middle were the Indians. In such a racially divided society, interracial love is not only frowned upon, it can have explosive and far-reaching consequences. Deepa and Njoroge’s love story is drawn particularly gorgeously chiseling out the politics of race, class and identity. Vikram's sister, Deepa learns this the hard way when she re-establishes contact with her childhood sweetheart. Njoroge, They try to ignore the cultural and colour barriers of that era.
They want to marry. But neither community approves of the relationship between them. Njoroge, who deeply loves Deepa, finds her family as obstinately against their relationship as Vikram finds his girl friend's family to be against him—her family is Muslim from Gujarat, while his is Hindu from Punjab.

Beautifully written this episode reveals the fears and prejudices that always existed in the Kenyan society. Vikram, ever the keen observer, supports his sister's forbidden romance. although he himself, damaged by the loss of his first love, although he himself, damaged by the loss of his first love, finds he can't follow through with his own courtship of Yasmin, a Muslim girl he meets at University in Dar es Salaam. His friendship is threatened by racially inspired attacks from her people. One night Vikram and Deepa are attacked bya mob of Tanzanian Muslims who have identified Vikram as Nairobi Punjabi Hindu courting a Muslim, whose sister is dating an African. Their breaching of tribal boundaries is an African. Their breaching of tribal boundaries is an abhorrent to their contemporaries as it is to their mother. The inclusive dream of their childhood is revealed as just that, dream. It seems as if the only alternative is to settle for a traditional Indian marriage. Deepa resists her fate, but friendly coercion wins out again, and brother and sister, shaken and changed, follow the stereotypical and supposedly safe paths that are expected of them by their communities. For Vic, it means marriage to an Indian virgin girl, a pack of children, and the straight family life. Rice and daal and chappati forever. Though examples successful interracial relationships exist—Juma and Sakina Molabux, Janife and Mungai—they seem the exception rather than the rule. In post independence Kenya change is in the air, but it seems that old prejudices persist—or have been replaced by new ones.

In The In-Between World of Vikram Lull, Vassanji returns to the theme that preoccupied him in earlier works. It deals with the strange position of Asian Africans in East Africa. In the figure of Vikram Lall, Vassanji has created a character whose life reflects the myriad experiences of thousands of Asian Africans in latter half of 20th century. but also, more generally, a figure through whom he explores broader issues of the Indian diaspora.
M.G. Vassanji is quite a wordsmith. His descriptions of Indian Food, family life and community are both rich and delicious. Like many other writers of Indian diaspora, Vassanji uses the names of Indian cuisines deliberately. With the help of this use of the author wants to affirm the existence and identity the Indian immigrants in Kenya. As we know that the cultural identity that comes up through food is very energetic because it highlights the everyday modes of life. This is reason why Vassanji mentions the names of Indian foods in his novels. In Now New Land Sheru Mama and her husband tend to serve chappati that way:

“Samosas” are the favourite snacks of people of northern part India. They like to take them with tea. Even in The In-Between World of Vikram Lall one can find great fascination of Indians for samosa and tea. Remembering his idyllic childhood Vikram says: ... Indians families having stopped over in their cars for bhajias, samosas, dhokras, bhel-puri and tea ... my father and mother always ordered tea and snacks from Lakshmi. (P.23). It is not only description of about food, but also of enumerating the traditions, customs and typical Indian characteristics that prove the fact that maintenance of culture is an innate trait of immigrants. Vikram and his family, and all the other inhabitants of Nakuru try to maintain their culture.

Esman regards that a diaspora is a minority ethnic group of migrant origin, which maintains sentimental or material links with its land of origin. It is true of this novel. One can see that Vikram’s father Ashok, an Indian diaspora, finds references to Indian politicians, such as the pro-axis figure Subhash Chandra Bose and even Gandhi himself, to be "quite alien."

Rooks set in Kenya, hardly mention the presence of Indians who played an important role in the growth of Nairobi, the building of the railway, and the politics of the country, their dilemma was that they were both Asian and African. After Amritka when Vassanji’s publisher asked him what he was doing next. he replied her that he was going home. This book is it. This is nothing but longing for home. Here the author shows his clear inclination towards his back home.
In the **first** section of the novel **Vassanji** creates a world of immigrants that is a classic, with all the tensions between the **generations** and the desire to become part of new land without losing the old culture. **Vic**'s world has an added complication: The Indians, brought in as cheap, reliable, if **despised,** **labour** by the British, and are regarded as the outsiders by the Africans. **Among** the Indians themselves ape-old animosities from home continue, exacerbated by the savagely murderous **partition** of India. The **Lalls,** Indians from Peshawar in what is now **Muslim** Pakistan, no longer have 'a home', even if they wanted to return.

The idea of home for **Vassanji** is, in fact, always **something** of a creative act. East Africa has continued to haunt his novel; a complex place the circles again and again, seeking understanding, seeking re-entry. **Though** most of Vassanji's books have been located in Africa, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* is the first book in which through his protagonist Vikram Lall, Vassanji revisits Kenya and brutal Mau-Mau uprising that led to its freedom. Throughout the novel Vic agnostised over whether to go back to Kenya and deal with consequences of his past action. Although he intends to search and secure **Joseph,** he decides also to pay his debt to **Kenya** and to settle a new in the place he calls home. But when he returns to Kenya he finds that to the Africans he would always be the Asian, the Shylock; he would never escape that suspicion, that **enigma.** Caught between many worlds Vic along with numerous Indians are in effect homeless.

One of the **major** concerns of **Vassanji** is "how history affects the present and how personal and public history overlap." There is tendency, however, for **Vassanji** to dwell too much on the past, and much of the first half of the book proceeds laboriously through the colonial days in **Nakuru. Lall**'s childhood in Kenya, in the early 1950s, glows with memories; it is a sunshine world, where the falls in love with little girl called Annie. And then quickly the author shifts to the post independence era in the second half. **Vikram Lall** is a grown man trying to make a new life in **Canada,** a country as different from his homeland, Kenya, as it could possibly get. Nevertheless the still winter nights in **Canada** stir memories in **Vic,** of the pregnant Kenyan **nights** when the freedom fighters, the Mau-Mau, roamed the streets, and created their own
path of justice. It was the nights that curdled the blood that made palpable the terror that permeated the Lall’s world like mysterious ether. He reminisces the faint yet persistent chir-chir-chir of crickets or the rhythmic croak-cmak of frogs when it rained. the whine of the solitary vehicle on the road. seemed only to deepen the hour. enhance the meaning of ominousness lurking in the dark outside. The Mau-Mau owned his darkness.

One of the most impressive thing about this time novel is that it gives voice to a people, some of whose forebears were in Africa before Portuguese, who have tended to keep their heads down and their mouths shut - and were not infrequently booted out - Vikram Lall says proudly that he is the third generation African; a boast from the time when people said such things. and believed them. He is the son of a grocer, who was himself the son of a Punjabi labourer, an indentured ‘coolly’. brought to East Africa to build the railway line from Mombasa to Kampala, through six hundred miles.

*The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* was published in Canada in 2003. Though the title immediately suggests a biographical story and that of an Indian, Vikram Lall, it also hints at an inherent ambiguity “in-between”, and, interestingly enough, it is this qualifier which actually gives the keynote to the tale that follows. Since the title page clearly states that the author of the narrative is M.G. Vassanji, the first paragraph makes puzzling reading, since it abruptly changes the identity of the narrator, establishes the new one as an unreliable character and suggests an unexpected geographical setting for the tale. Where one expected an Indian story one is offered instead an African background: ”My name is Vikram Lall. I have the whole of Kenyan political life. After years of aiding the corruption of others in high places whose attitude had abetted his own lack of moral conviction, Vikram Lall was severely hit by the death of Kenyatta, his ultimate protector.

> Without my almighty protector. I realized. I was naked. easy picking for any enemy I had casually made on the site. […] As I had discovered once before, I was an easily disposable commodity. (P. 390).
As the years of the new **regime went** by, Vikram Lall, the perennial **go-between**. had to play a "close game": but, even if the politicians **were different**, the old corruption remained, and was even more **cynically** blatant. **The** situation changed for the worse when, instead of **acting** as an intemiediary, he decided to play the **role** of a "front man" in a **scam**:

The Gemstone Scandal. **noun synonymous with me and my activities was** was what put **me** on that **shaming list. But that arrangement of business deals was not even my idea. It simply fell into place like a **fortuitous hand at poker. All we had to do, my partners and I, was to pick up the cards and play.** (L’. 406).

Because of international **political involvement in the scam**, Vikram Lall and his family’s lives were **at stake. He was left with no other recourse but to speak out**, to expose the extent of the conuption they had so far been party to. Such a threat of exposure was, in itself; a death sentence: so, fleeing the country for a **secret haven was the only solution. Hence, the Canadian episode, which offered a possible future. The fourth section, "1-homecoming," chronologically follows the Canadian episode that is interspersed in the various chapters. It not only takes the reidorshack to present-day Nairobi, but is also itself a "homecoming," as the narrator has **finally** come to terms with his experiences and has decided to speak out, to reveal "his" truth to the Anti-Corruption Commission and bear the consequences:

All the wealth, **the money I have made over the past years**, I am going to give it up—most of it—part to the **Commission and part to a foundation. I will start new. I will come clear on the Gemstone Scandal. That should satisfy them and the Donors and the World Bank.** (P. 418). **Ultimately I will have my say and make my peace with my world. (P.431).**

**However**, the interests of many more were at stake. Once Vikram's intentions were made known to the Commission and the latter **agreed** to offer an amnesty, **the**
Kenyan government, fearing his revelations, declared the Commission illegal and disbanded it. Vikram’s lawyer was then arrested and tortured; Vikram’s safe-house was set ablaze; and the narrative voice vanishes with these last words: “Go, run. I will follow you…” Vikram Lall’s fate remains uncertain, hovering between unwillingly drawn into the political sphere, since he was posted as assistant to Minister Nderii and became close to Kenyatta himself.

The third section, "The Years of Betrayal," deals with the apex of Vikram Lall’s career. These years of betrayal (Notice the plural, compared with the titles of the previous sections) seem the longest and most important for the autobiographer’s purpose. They are those of the betrayal of illusions - illusions of youth for Vikram, Deepa and Njoroje, on a personal level; but also the patriotic illusions of a newly independent country where the ideals of the Fighter for Freedom have been betrayed, where the expectations of a whole nation have been turned to ashes due to the greedy cynicism of its elites. The Mau Mau, or freedom lighters, like the Indian business people who are instrumental in economic nation-building, are replaced by clannish communal injustice and tribal nepotism. During those years, Vikram Lall’s love for and loyalty to his country were undeniable, and he was enthusiastically working for the good of his motherland; further, his position also enabled him to protect the interests of the Asian community sorely threatened by the Africanisation policy of the government. His role as mediator ("facilitator," as he calls it) was all the more important because he had direct access to the figurehead of power.

However, his role as go-between soon evolved and took him to shadier zones, since foreign companies were trying to bribe him into favouring their contracts with the government, which he rather naively only perceived in retrospect. When instructed by his Minister to exchange increasingly large amounts of foreign currency, provided by Western interests, into Konyan money – to sustain, he was told, the political actions of the national party – this mission was carried out with no benefit to himself. He just used his connections with the business community of Kenya, whose most affluent members were, indeed, Indians.
As all these transactions were presented to him, by the Minister, as being in the national interest, Vikram Lal was left with no real choice but to comply with his orders, once again in the uncomfortable position of being between two worlds. Indian businessmen, who were easy targets of the Africanisation policy, also could not decline, and this was the price to be paid to avoid seizure of assets and massive expulsions. But, the necessities of official politics, as Vikram discovered only chance, were just to cover up the ever increasing corruption of the powerful, reaching as high as Kenyatta’s own family. So far, Vikram’s specific position and the very useful, but dangerous knowledge it entailed had been mainly used by others, he they “perpetually upwardly mobile” African politicians (who) desired to get hold of bribe money and launder it into valuable economic assets or the no less “upwardly mobile” Indian businessmen of Nairobi, which included his relatives (who desired to benefit from insider-trading advantages and to obtain government contracts): “I was their banker of choice, the alchemist who could transmute currencies, the genie who could make monies vanish and produce gold out of thin air” (P. 304). His powerful position had come, once again, from his silence. By not speaking out, he had been offering a cover up for the corruption and deception that, to his disgust and dismay, had invaded the life and death, the character still wandering in the in-between world of the title.

For obvious reasons, a straightforward autobiography, as opposed to a biography, traditionally ends before the death of the protagonist. Since Vassanji’s work leaves the readers in doubt, from the point of view of poetics, at least, this provides an other questioning as to the author’s exact intention with respect to the genre of the text. What in the para-text of the title page was presented as biographical fiction now takes the shape of the autobiographical narrative of a protagonist who shares some features with his creator. Vikram Lal, like Vassanji, is a Kenyan Indian living and writing in Canada. They are also roughly contemporaries in age, so their childhood and years of growing-up were spent in a similar political environment. The similarities stop there. however, the work is not the disguised autobiography of the author, in the way, say, and Marcel Proust’s Remembrance of Things Past is. What Vassanji has established with his reader is not an autobiographical pact (impacte autobiographique, as Lejeune defines it), but rather a novelistic pact (impacte
romesque) in which it is accepted that the autodiegetic narrative is due to a fictional protagonist. the reader agreeing to a Coleridgean "willing suspension of disbelief." Nor, though it uses the form, is it a fictional autobiography, since there is no equation "author = narrator." So Vassanji is being rather mischievous with his reader and, in this sense, giving the readersa roguish somewhat misleading tale.

Indeed the (auto) biographical nature of the story is neither essential nor necessary to either the gist or even the plotline of the novel. It could just as easily have been written as a third-person heterodiegetic narrative: this somewhat shows that the author's aim was not really to write the biography of a particular, albeit fictional, individual (even if it was the story of his corruption through the circumstances of his life); but rather, to expose by these homodiegetic means the corruption of a system in the aftermath of decolonation. More than Vikram Lall's destiny, what really echoes in the reader's mind, once this substantial volume has come to its end, is the history of Kenya from mid-twentieth century to the present.

The real interest of the work is to be found in its socio-political nature rather than in the psychological one that could be expected of an (auto) biography, fictional or not. Vassanji, once again, mischievously clouds the issue. Under the guise of an individual life-story told by its protagonist, Vassanji provides a fictionalized, satirical interpretation of historical events. More than through auto-diegetic narrative, it is through diegesis itself that the reader should focus his critical attention. The "world" is, in fact, the real subject of the novel, rather than Vikram Lall. As "Public Enemy Number One," he is, so to speak, a synecdoche for the ambient corruption of his country and, in terms of plot, in a good position to expose the mechanisms of that corruption, a corruption that not only extends to the supposedly great and good (the presidential entourage, as well as Kenyatta himself and his successors), but also to the Western countries and international organizations which had dealings with Kenya. The smug cynicism of foreign agencies and the appetites of African politicians are both denounced in terms of their double-standard discourse, as is their complicit corruption of public life through also being his sweetheartly. of family parties with
grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins -- that is, were it not for the troubled times in which it took place, precisely recorded as 1953:

It was a world of innocence and play under a guileless constant sun; as well of barbarous cruelty and terror lurking in the darkest night: a colonial world of repressive, undignified subjecthood, as also of seductive order and security. (P. 5).

As the dramatic political impact of adult activities soon began to impinge on this innocent, childish, multicultural play, Vikram Lall found himself unwittingly embroiled in the events leading to his English friends' massacre by the Mau Mau, and this traumatic experience reverberated throughout his life and relationships with his closer circle. Because he saw and said nothing, this tragedy happened. Indeed, to protect his beloved uncle who was a Mau-Mau supporter, he did not disclose the theft of his own father's revolver, which proved lethal to the Bruce family and, as a consequence of their massacre, led to the death of Njoroje's grandfather and the boy's departure in the care of social services. Somehow the position of the Indians in Kenya had placed him at the crossroads of colonial society, so to speak, wedged between the settlers and the natives. His fate was that of the whole Indian community in Kenya, as Vassanji defines it: "Their dilemma was that they were neither white nor black, and they were both Asian and African" (P.5). A conflict of loyalties, too overwhelming for a child, placed him in a position that, if made public, would have already made him appear "deceitful and unreliable" to one of the other of the three communities.

Vikram Lall destroyed his childhood world and psychologically isolated himself from his family. From then on, the lurking, guilty feeling that he was becoming a solitary creature separated from his herd (which is another sense of the term "rogue") remained with him as a secret wound. While "The Year of Our Loves and Friendships" ends with the recollection of such tragic events, the second section of the novel, "The Year of Her Passion," takes the reader to the early stages of independent Kenya as well as Vickram Lall's and his contemporaries' adult and
professional life in Nairobi. The dilemma evoked by Vassanji is, then, very powerful and intense. Metaphorically, throughout this part it is represented in Deepa’s passionate love for Njoroje and the deep suffering that this star-crossed love entails. Here again, Vikram was the witness of the tearing apart of two people he loves and was the instrument of their separation by society’s dictate. He was in-between two worlds – that of his loyalty to his contemporaries Njoroje and Deepa, and of his loyalty to his family, his mother, in particular. Both young men were making their way in the world, Njoroje in the politics of the new country. Vikram as a civil servant in the national railways. Partly through their friendship, Vikram Lall, despite being Indian, which made him suspect and somewhat undesirable in the new African regime, was also progressively and out the early decades of the postcolonial period."

To satisfy their common greed for Kenya’s riches, they stopped at nothing, from subtle bribery to assassination (No less than three of the characters were killed in kidnappings, road accidents, or shooting attacks, and there were at least two attempts on Vikram Lall’s life before that final arson-attack). Even the childhood years of innocence were marred by the threat of “barbarous cruelty” and colonial oppression. The picture here painted of contemporary Kenya is grim and bitter; and, through Vikram Lall’s strong words against Kenya’s current “madness,” the reader can feel Vassanji’s bitter pain and disillusionment. Even though such feelings are indeed shared by the author and narrator, nevertheless this work essentially deals with “the question of Kenya” rather than the part played by one of its citizens in the history of the nation. More than a biographer (albeit of a fictional protagonist to whom he gives the narrative voice), Vassanji is a political novelist in the satirical and moral vein. The obliqueness of his denunciation, through a character purported to be the epitome of national villainy, yet untruffled by his and others’ shady deeds, just reinforces the irony of the denunciation:

The List of Shame has long intrigued her [Seema, his Canadian Indian friend and now love] It does sound so dramatically damning. It counts me the most corrupt man in our country. itself ranked one of the most corrupt nations in the world. what does that make of me? (P 405)
Finally, Vikram Lall does not actually pretend to exculpate himself, and the picture of such a character drawn by Vassanji raises the issue of collaboration in large-scale, shady, even criminal historical events.

Exile, dislocation and displacement have been inevitable motives in Vassanji’s writing. They try to encompass Indians living in East Africa. Some members of this immigrant community have to leave East Africa under pressure. They have to migrate to Europe, Canada, or the United States. Vassanji attempts to show how these migrations affect the lives and identities of his characters.

The novel unfolds "as a remembrance told by Lall as he looks back on his years in East Africa from the safe distance of Southern Ontario. He has earned this exile from his beloved Kenya." Throughout the novel, the author brings the readers back to Vikram’s present location, Canada, from where he is recalling his past life and decline – which mirrors that of his beloved country. In short, as an immigrant Vikram "retains a collective memory, vision, or myth about his original homeland – its physical location, history and achievement." (P.67).

As one can know that Vassanji’s work duals with labyrinthine worlds of memory, The In-Between world of Vikram Lall is not an exception. Vassanji himself admits that this novel is first of his books to deal with the memories of Kenya, where he spent his early life.