Preface
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It is often known that literature is the essential expression of a civilized human being. It is a written record of his feelings, spirits, thoughts, emotions and aspirations aiming to register the history of human soul. It may not be possible for him to achieve this objective always. For any literary piece to deserve the objective, it must be rich with universal interests and yet have a personal touch. Though the objectives of literature change on changing from person and the spirit of age, it sometimes endeavors to keep ideals upon which the human civilization is developed; then the task becomes very difficult because it has also to sustain the interests of the readers.

In the simplest way, literature tries to record what man sees, thinks, feels and experiences about the various aspects of life. It is this very inquiry that has made writers like M.G. Vassanji famous worldwide with their profound writing skills. He is concerned with the effects of history and the interaction between personal and public histories. Public history is the memory and folk history, as well as colonial history; all three have been integrated in his novels. The colonial history of Kenya and Tanzania serves as the backdrop of almost all his novels.

M.G. Vassanji’s writings have increasingly received attention by a number of literary critics who have focused on issues such as migration, diaspora, citizenship, gender and ethnic. The cognizable intention of Vassanji in producing such wealth of immigration literature on the Canadian literary hemisphere is to let the world identify a victimized community’s historic past, journey into present and towards uncertain future. His self-accountability towards his own community settled either by chance or choice in the New World by his literary works. These works are part and parcel of Canadian literature-abounding it, proving that a Diaspora is really a possibility in Multiculturalism.

In the multicultural Canada, voices of different solitudes find prominence. Writers like Vassanji are highly encouraged in spirit by the Canadianness in the sense that it is what with which they are identified. With the Canadian identity itself first, the Diaspora could make a mark on the literary scene as a whole. Vassanji is an equal representation of Canadian ‘multiple solitudes’. His serious concern is the problems the immigrant community faces in
their exile and alienation; how these migrations affect the lives and identities of his characters, is seen widely in almost all his novels.

M.G.Vassanji represents in his novels the impacts of the planetary movements and displacements that were a direct result of this European imperialism. The British also facilitated the dislocation of hundreds of Asians from Indian sub-continent to East Africa to work as labourers during the construction. Vassanji reflects this in his novels. The main characters whose live stories the novels revolve around. situates their belonging in Kenya through their living style.

The present thesis aims at observing the multicultural aspects in the selected novels of M.G.Vassanji.

The present thesis is conveniently divided into Seven Chapters.

The First Chapter is Introduction. The 'Introduction' chapter unveils a perfect survey of the word "multiculturalism". It tries to describe the term 'Multiculturalism' or 'Diaspora' to make its meaning crystal clear. Such a meticulous and planned attempt is very essential to study multicultural writers like M.G.Vassanji. A short history of Multiculturalism has been discussed before spelling out the author's life and work profile. M.G. Vassanji's wonderful and satisfactory narrative style attracts the readers a lot. His reader oriented approach and his gripping story-telling stand out to be very special as it is as natural as his life-reflecting characters in his novels. His concern is the problems the immigrants face in their exile. His contribution to the Canadian literature in passing the problems of Indian immigrants in Canada, speaks a lot about his postcolonial perspective in terms of immigration as well as multiculturalism in the present Globalized society. Multiculturalism is the key whose effect is shown on every social sphere.

The Second Chapter concerns itself with M.G.Vassanji's first novel The Gunny Sack from a multicultural perspective. Here the theme of identity, displacement or the exploration of geographical boundaries, whether imaginary or physically marked boundaries between different communities, races and cultures is beautifully sketched in The Gunny Sack. It also explores the history and the story of Indians in East Africa during the colonial period who were forced to leave after the Independence of Africa, with feelings of alienation. As
the novel begins, in exile from Tanzania, Salem Juma, opens up the gunny sack given to him by a beloved great aunt. Inside it he discovers the past. his own family’s history and the story of the Asian’s experience in the East Africa. Its relics and artifacts bring with them the lives of Salem’s Indian great-grandfather. Dhanji Govindji, his extensive family, and their loves and betrayals. The backdrop of this story is the socio-political face of the East African coast. of Zanzibar and Tanganyika over a century. Through a mesh of charming childhood vignettes, the readers can see the effects on Asian community of Tanganyika’s independence, riots, rebellion, nationalism and socialism. The novels richly peopled with credible characters and there is a story on every page. Told with humors and understanding, the events chase each other and at times they tend to make the plot sag under their weight but then that is an accepted characteristic of the modern novels. The resulting mosaic leaves an unforgettable picture of the life of the Asian community, its practices and prejudice, its inroads into the insular character. Vassanji has created a family memoir, a coming-of-age story that looks at the past with affections and understandings.

The Third Chapter is devoted to M.G.Vassanji’s novel No New Land which contains the fate of Asian Africans in multicultural Canada. The structure of the novel No New Land is circular. From the dream world Canada, Vassanji throws his immigrants to the harsh realities of the No New Land, Canada. He portrays the difficulties of the immigrants who have come to the New land, and the readers see how the immigrants are victimized. The protagonist in the novel is Nurdin Lalani whose family is a double immigrant one, which goes from Asia to Africa and from there to Canada. Along with Nurdin Lalani, the readers are introduced to cast of wonderfully drawn characters, where lives interweave with the Lalani. One among them is the upcoming, enterprising lawyer Jamal. Nanji, Jamal’s classmate and friend is another stroking character. In this way there are many characters in this amazing story who circulate round the main character ‘Nurdin’ in a tremendous way.

The Fourth Chapter entitled The Book of Secrets discusses how the displacement and migration affect the loves and lives of immigrants. The novel is a story of displacement, physical and emotional and of one’s search for importance. love and safety in the face of dramatic terrestrial machinations. In many ways The Book of Secrets is written for Eastern immigrants to the West. Particularly in those times of shifting borders and alliances. But to epitomize the true flavor of the book, one must see a film song often recited by prancing
school girls in *The Book of Secrets* "The World belongs to one who loves” they sing with more than a touch of sadness.

**The Book of Secrets** embraces a sage realism that harkens to an earlier style of storytelling. It is the story of a stolen diary, belonging to a 15th British governor of a small fictitious town in Tanzania beginning at the start of this century. Around the diary is woven a fabulous story about a young Shamsi Indian and his mysterious wife, and the forces of world history that break down their door and haunt them for three generations. It is an encompassing tale meanders through lives, but makes its way back to the centre trade like improvisational Jazz as soothing and emotion-provoking. Beyond the obligatory travails of forbidden love and a dabbling in magic realism are explored as truths of life. 'fold' from the perspective of a retired school teacher Dar es Salaam, who finds the diary and reconstructs the story. Vassanji’s tale is rich with memorable interludes and vivid descriptions of Indian East Africa from 1913 to 1988. And despite the potentiality and simplicity of a very probable narrative, the engine that truly powers the novel is really its littleness in the face of the overwhelming historic events that engulf it. The evolution of community is an important theme in the book of secrets. The perseverance of Arab-Indian culture and the preservation of its community’s central tents despite geo-political and commercial forces of change are binding strings kept strong in Vassanji’s thematic web.

The **Fifth Chapter** is confined to M.G. Vassanji’s two novels *Amriika* and *The Assassin’s Song*. Though the order of these novels affects the chronology of the years they have been published, the researcher wants to place them in one chapter observing the similarities in the themes of these two novels. This is the reason why they have been put under one title. Secondly the secondary material available for these novels is lesser in the market. *Amriika* is a remarkable novel of personal and political story that spans three decades. It explores the eternal quest for one’s home and identity. *Amriika* deals with the story of an immigrant named Ramji, who tries his best to formulate an identity of his own in America. The story reflects that the journey undertaken by a migrant or migrant community in search of identity, belonging and security is normally shattered by doubts, challenges and never-ending feelings of despair. Thus *Amriika* is a novel of betrayal, disillusionment and discovery set in America during three highly charged decades in the nation’s history. Vassanji is particularly good at delineating the delicate mixture of idealism and smug
certainties that made the young people of the day so irritating and so appealing. This is an earnest and intelligent novel. The Indian born author, Vassanji, sedulously charts an Asian-Africa immigrant's experience of three decades. The novel may be viewed as a classic immigrant story. It is a kind of snapshot of the picture of the past three decades. It is a primer on descendant politics and a very mysterious love story.

The Assassin's Song is a beautiful study of the differences between ancient customs and modern desires of different people. The hero of this novel Karsan is a migrant who has a lot of desires to fulfill. It is a strong story of a shrine, Pirbaag, its revered custodian and his family. Their meditative and open Islam which has been absorbed Hindu cosmology and devotional songs passed down the Generations. Vassanji locates them in a fictionalized enclave, but their myths and practices are very much real. In the novel, the self-righteous hate prevails to devastating effect during the Gujarat massacres of 2002, when thousands of Muslims were killed. Vassanji takes a stand against the religious militancy through a ballad, a poetic lament which grips the reader's hearts. It has been done effectively by the great writer M.G.Vassanji.

The Sixth Chapter describes M.G.Vassanji’s fifth novel The In-Between World of Vikram Lall. It examines the ambiguous situation and strange position of Asians in Kenya who are viewed as the others by both the Whites and the Blacks. They hold the tenuous in-between position. This story, which unfolds over almost five decades and spans nearly two centuries, is structured around Vikram Lall’s confession as he reflects over his own life in the 'In-Between' world of Kenya before, during and after independence. Safely remaining in the Canadian wilds, hiding from the Canyan government, Vikram Lall goes for his life, from his humble beginnings as the son of an Indian shopkeeper in Nakuru to his glitzy post-independence role as money launderer in Nairobi for the government of Jomo Kenyatta. In this novel, M.G.Vassanji brilliantly captures an entire era in the history of Kenyan politics. Through his characters, M.G.Vassanji captures the corruption and moral ambiguity of the Third World Politics. Vikram Lall introduces the readers a dark underworld of illegal dealings, bribery and extortion, and political murders. The In-between World of Vikram Lall is quite subdued, and reflective. A masterfully and skillfully written epic that represents a vivid picture of Kenya during a turbulent period in its history. Vassanji’s novel essentially has an elegiac quality to its credit.
The Last Chapter is said to be a way of Summing Up. It covers briefly all the *earlier* chapters which are discussed in the chapters. M.G. Vassanji’s wonderful narrative style is a gift given by the Almighty. It is really a mesmerizing attraction to the readers. His reader-arresting power and synthesizing historic facts with splendid variety make readers enjoy every bit of his writing. His gripping story-telling style stands out to be special as it is incomparably as natural as his life-reflecting characters in his novels. His readers always tend to love his works because they are a mixture of sorrows and hopes of a community which is circumstantially and forcibly displaced across the trans-continental wilderness.

M.G.Vassanji’s contribution to the Canadian literature in articulating the problems of Indian immigrants in Canada speaks of his postcolonial perspective in terms of immigration and multiculturalism. In the globalization scenario, multiculturalism is a buzzword whose effect shows on every social sphere, and particularly on literary domain.

M.G.Vassanji, through his narratives proves that there is a necessity of examining the true ground real situation in the lives of immigrants, and exploring the past reality situation and in light of immigrants position in the culture-centred phenomenon, taking seriously into consideration what every immigrant experiences like exile, isolation and alienation which are manifested central characteristics of immigrants need to be understood from every possible dimension. The perennial aspects of immigration like social alienation, physical exile, and cultural and religious isolations are part of post-colonial consciousness. These things are clearly described in all M.G.Vassanji’s novels and stories.