Chapter - 3

No New Land: Double Immigrants
*Nu New Land* is Vassanji's second novel. It is a poignant story of the immigrant experience. It creates a rich portrait of a transplanted community. Here Vassanji appears as a keen observer of lives caught between one world and another.

There are burgeoning writers encapsulating the contemporary concern over globalization, acculturation, immigration and multiculturalism. Writers like Michael Ondaatje, Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Parameswaran, Hanif Khureishi, Rohinton Mistry and others present diversified ethnic phenomena of nations like America and Canada. Vassanji is one such writer of multiple cultures. M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land* is a fictional documentary touching the arenas of multicultural Canada rendering room for cultural assimilation. *No New Land* accommodates the doubly immigrated Indians who are undergoing 'international' diaspora' and depicts Canada as a "Shangrila for international refugees.

The Shamsi community delineated in the novel represents the Indian community immigrated to Africa during colonial regime and later in the postcolonial time, transplanted in Canada. The immigration to Canada proves to be an escapade into sanctuary of hope and life. Chelva Kanaganayakam observes: "If you were to speak of what the novel is about, "It is about the emigrant population in Toronto, forced to begin a new life in a strange and often unwell land, confronted with obstacles, prejudices and disillusionments. ("Don Mills and Dar es Salaam" *Floating the Borders: New Contexts in Canadian Criticism*, Chelva Kanaganayakam. P.200).

What distinguishes Vassanji's work from that of other multicultural writers is its vibrant, affectionate depiction of the double migration of his South Asian characters? At the centre of Vassanji's fiction is the Indian Shamsi community. The members of this community make their first voyage to East Africa in the late 19th century as part of the labour mobility within the British Empire, working functionaries. Starting out as shopkeepers and businessmen settling on the coast of British East Africa and German East Africa. they possessed the necessary linguistic and political inside knowledge to assist the colonial administration in ruling an
inaccessible and unruly hinterland. Their role as marginal men lent them the flexibility to operate as cultural translators and function as "a buffer zone between the indigenous Africans and the colonial administration." *(Ambivalent Affiliations and the Post-Colonial Condition: The Fiction of M.C. Vassanji, P.277)*.

In postcolonial times, the position of the Indian communities in East Africa became untenable. The postcolonial regime marginalized the Asians of East Africa. With the nationalization of rental properties, the Asians of East Africa were forced into the international diaspora. The second voyage begins in the sixties from postcolonial Africa toward Europe and North America. As Vassanji’s narrative indicates, this second wave of migration by his characters is prompted by racial tension (between native Africans and those of South Asian ancestry) and socio-economic changes as the now mostly South Asian community finds its privileges radically curtailed or threatened with the rise of African nationalism.

This saga of global uprootedness and unstable migration is dramatised in Vassanji’s *No New Land*. Here the novelist illustrates the fate of the Asian Africans in Canada. The characters of this novel try to chase the mirage of a world that has walls of gold, pillars of silver and floors that smell of musk. But the reality they face is very harsh and awful, and finally they realize that Canada cannot appear as a new land. Like a keen observer Vassanji portrays how the immigrants are victimized; still they have no option except to keep on living there and discovering something more of Canada everyday, but finally they feel:

We are but creatures neither of our origins, and however stalwarts we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new worlds, and the ghosts from our pasts stand nor far behind and are not easily shaken off. (*No New Land, P.9)*.

In *No New Land* Vassanji, portraying different incidents caused by racial discrimination, explores through the characters the psyche of rootless, frightened and insecure minority immigrants who are pitted against the hypocrite fanatic majority.
He wants to **draw** the attention of the readers on the themes of exile, alienation, memory, nostalgia, identity, race, culture, tradition and community.

M.G. Vassanji defends his books by saying that even Michael Ondaatje's *The British Patient* is not a *Canadian* novel; neither are **some** of Atwood’s novels. He says, "I have been called a Canadian novelist, an African writer and a South Asian writer." He further says: ("Ramji’s *Amriika*’). "My second book, *No New Land*, is based on a place in Toronto. I write about subjects that are familiar to me. I have just finished a collection of short stories based on Toronto. Africa and India. One story tells about an African who buys land to build a mosque. The cultural industry in the United States and Canada look at you twice. In Canada there are many South Asian writers now, and so we cannot be ignored." (Gene Carey. P.11).

The plot whirls around the predicament of Lalani's who are transplanted into a land of dazzling prospects and laborious struggle. Nurdin Lalani, the protagonist of the novel is a prototype of the emigrants who envisions that Canada is a fairy land and the emigrant passport to Canada is the magic wand to heat all maladies. Canada's purvey of cultural friendly nuance is manifested interwoven with the lives of Lalani's and other Asians characters who mildew the cast of *No New Land*. Acculturation and Assimilation are the two chief bi-products of Canada's migration friendly policies and Post-colonial epoch has fashioned.

Vassanji’s *No New Land* is an infotainment dissecting the Canadian multicultural mosaic relations by dynamics of immigration. Canada has been a refugee to many Asians and Africans who were dislocated during the colonial era of English. All South Asians now living in Canada are from Pakistan or Sri Lanka; many came from India, via Africa or the Caribbean, where their ancestors had settled in British colonies either in the nineteenth century or the early twentieth. After most of these colonies gained independence from Britain in the 1960s, many of their Indian citizens immigrated to western countries such as Britain, Canada and the United States.
The Lalani family in Vassanji’s No New Lund represents the transplanted and dislocated Asians. The Britishers knew that Indians could be trustworthy administrators, clerks, menial servants. Hence, the Indians were taken to Malaya, Burma, Ceylon, the British colonies in Africa. The first wave of migration was in vogue during the Asian and African imperial rule. Vassanji has delineated this first wave of immigration in almost all his fictional works and No New Lund is no exception to this. In 1906 Haji Lalani arrives from Gujarat and joined as an apprentice to an Indian firm. Soon by dint of hard work, he prospers and sets up his own shop like other Asians who emigrated under the ascendancy of British.

Nurdin Lalani, the son of Haji Lalani floated along with the current of second wave of immigration and anchored safety in Canada. Arun Singh comments: “The family of the protagonist Nurdin Lalani is a double immigrant family- Asia to Africa to Canada” (P.82). America and Canada were the two nations rendering haven to the secondly migrating populous. No New Lund mulls over the ethical transaction and Canada as the No New Lund exhibiting cordial reception to all identity-sick emigrants. Though, there are many other countries sheltering diverse ethnic groups in the world, Canada outstands all the other by implanting emigrant accessible scenario.

Canada, someone must have whispered the word somewhere. What was Canada – a distant place most did not know where, a pink mass on the map beside the green of Greenland. Suddenly everyone was talking of Canada: Visas, medicals, interviews, "landed". In Canada they needed plumbers, so those who did not know one end of spanner from another, School teachers, salesmen and bank clerks. all joined plumbing classes and began talking of wrenches and discussing fixtures they had never seen in their lives. Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal. You got the most recent news outside mosques after prayers, when men await their women and during morning and afternoon teatimes at the A-T and other tea shops: who had left the price of the dollar, the most recent black-market-related arrests. They talked of Don Mills as if it were in Upanga. The building of Rosccliffe Park was known; it seemed, in intimate detail. The rich had left almost overnight following in the great nationalizations. (No New Lund, P.92).
The novel explicates Canada as a dream land for people from developing countries all over the world and especially Africa and Asia. Nurdin Lalni’s family undertakes the flight of enormous hopes for promising prospect of high living and secured identity. Lalani’s are denied economic sustenance in Tanganyika like other Asians and so embark on their navigation. Nurin take leave of his past and perform his expedience of emerging a new trend. a new living in Canada land with opulence and technically advancement. The land genially welcomes the Lalanis and other Asians unlike London they are prohibited even to generously saunter in the city. Vassanji has furthermore excavated the topographical ambiance of Canada in No New Land. The collective residence of the Asians and Africans in the suburbs of Toronto and exceptional shopping streets are well furnished the unfolding of the montage tale of foster civilians. The Lalanis abode in Toronto represents a microscopic view of the Asian's macrocasm in Canada. The Lalanis live in Roscliff park which is a small heterogeneous community constituted by Asians migrated from Africa. This diverse neighbourhood tries to live an Indian Canadised Asian way. They irrespctive of their different religious beliefs adhere to their own values and live a secular life and the inhabitants of Rosecliff Park loved gossips, debates and choice morsel parties.

At Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park and its neighbours the new immigrants were beset by hosts of prosely-tizers. They came from several different sects, singly or in packs, using all manner of approaches. bearing literature and tidings, good Will and goodies, warnings and mercy. But in the Dar immigrants these missionaries met a litigious lot, for they love to debate, and they debate nothing better than community politics and religion. Zera would be in unmatched form. She could tell of her master. Missionarys’ legendary public debates in Dar against sheikhs, Pundits, priests. and scientist. So when the Bibles were produced, they were gratefully accepted. (No New Land, P.103).
No New Land divulges that the cultural practices are translated into a new cultural context. The small refreshment stall in the Rosecliff Park very much resembles the vernacular tea shops and dabhas in India. The religious prayers, the Indian festivities and few other cultural observations conducted in Rose Cliffie Park confirm the secular and liberal cultural No New Land scrutinizes the impingement of Canadian ethos on the mental fabric of every individual character. Nurdin Lalani, the protagonist of the novel epitomizes the attributes of a person who has forsaken his individual respect and individual identity with the homeland. He strives hard in Toronto to commence his earning, however: he is all time sacked by the employers for dearth of Canadian by women for physically abusing her. His psychological shifts evince his gradual rupture from the innate emotional attachment and disintegrated self. He unleashes his equanimity and drifts towards the mayhem of uncertainties. However, he reconciles with forlorn present and wistful past.

Jamal and Nanji are two erudite specimens emigrated from Africa to Canada groping opportunities amidst the assorted shakles. Jamal well to the changing demands to retain his grip on life, sometimes by selling samosas and sometimes boast his status by making appointments to meet. Nanji is a man of ideals who ascertains apathy in his adopted land which is appending with existential qualms.

Nurudin's children extensively imbide the Canadian ways of living and even detest their father who does mental jobs. Nurudin's children stand for the transformed Asian-Canadians who are not troubled by their pedigree or nostalgic reminiscence.

One envies these children, these darlings of their mothers, objects of immigrant sacrifice and labour, who speak better-sounding If not better English: one envies them their memories when they are grown-up. Take this girl in hijab, standing in the elevator, head covered, ankles covered, a beautiful angular face, long body, who could have come straight from northern Pakistan. But when she opens her mouth, out flows impeccable Toronto English, indistinguishable from that of any other kid's discussing
what?-last night's hockey game. in **her arms**, covered with a decorated green cloth, is a heavy book also apparently in **hijab**. She's on her way to Quran **class**, on the fourteenth floor. (P.29).

M.G. **Vassanji** has vividly explained the **micro** Asian community rummaged its ethical distinctiveness. The Asians who transport themselves to this new territory almost immediately form brotherhood with their own clans. **Lalani**’s mingle with the new and changed social coverlet which bequeaths a special warmth and aroma to its **denizens**. They soon discover common social gatherings and **similar** way out **for their** recreation and a **glee** from **their panoptic** routine. A new Asian or African emigrant with all ease finds new social bonds to share and an outlet to pour **his anxieties** about past and future.

The multicultural mosaic of Canada is aggrandized with other cultural communities and this is palpable in **Vassanji**’s narration. There are other minor characters in the novel that represent other social and cultural clans. **The girl** who accuses Nurudin for her rape is a Portuguese and **she** dwells in a **different** locality of fishermen and butchers. Ramesh is also an emigrant from other parts of Africa and **he** and Susheela stand for the Hindu community based in Toronto. **There are people of mixed identity living in Canada** a nation with assorted legacy.

The novel, **No New Land**, opens in Canada, with the **Lalani family** shown in the grips of a big tension and panic because Nurdin Lalani, the **head** of the family, has not come back home from work. Nurdin and his **family** had come from Africa and settled down at Toronto. The family of the protagonist Nurdin Lalani is a double immigrant family – Asia to Africa to Canada. The novel moves in flashback of incidents and events.

After **Hazi** Lalani had died and his business sunk, someone whispered the world – Canada. Many families were **flying** to Canada for better prospects and to become rich. Roshan, the sister of Nurdin’s wife, urges the Lalani family to come to Canada. And the **family** takes a flight to London. The situation of Nurdin in the plane
becomes an objective correlative and as such it predicts the predicaments he has to suffer in Canada. With his family Nurdin is on the night plane. The plane has magical lights. The magical light of the plane is but the light of Nurdin’s mind and the night serves as the prediction of the problems he is going to face in Canada. At London airport, the immigration officers shatter their dream to halt and see London. At this Nurdin could do nothing except calling them "The bastards?" (P.34).

At Toronto airport, Roshan and her husband receive the Lalani. Roshan gives them a pack of chewing gum saying, “This is Canada.” In a way Roshan tells all about the ‘multiculturalism’ of Canada in a symbolic way. “You go on struggling against the problems that never come to an end like a chewing gum. If you want to get rid of this chewing gum you cannot throw it out of your mouth.” (PP. 35.

After Nurdin comes to this multicultural Canada, he struggles hard to find a descent job. But his efforts become futile. He remains unemployed for a long time that adds to his misery. Zera, Nurdin’s wife gets a job as a receptionist in a doctor’s clinic. So to reduce the economic pressures they put up with the family of Zera’s sister. But as the children of both of the families land up fighting most of the times, a severe quarrel between Zera’s family and Roshan’s family arose. One Friday evening, when Roshan was ironing her husband’s pants, the children of Zera and Roshan started fighting. Both the mothers ran to pacify the quarrel. In the mean time, the iron burnt a leg of the pant. Abdul became furious, and in anger, slapped his wife. Seeing her sister being slapped by Abdul, Zera could not control her rage and shelunged at Abdul with the hot Iron. Nurdin came in between to block Zera’s way and Abdul was saved. A loud quarrel ensued. Threats and abuses were exchanged, and the two families separate. The Lalani move to sixty-nine Rosecliff Park, in Don Mills, a suburb of Toronto.

Through a party where new Canadians meet the old, the Lalani come in contact with other inhabitants of Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park. They meet Jamal, the lawyer, Esmail, the baker, and several other people from the East Indian community. Gradually, Nanji, a young professor, becomes a very good friend of Lalani children - Fatima and Haniff.
One day, when Nurdin was returning from her corner store with milk for the next day, he meets an Indian couple from Guyana, Mohan and Laxmi. Their car breaks down and so they were not able to go ahead. As Laxmi was pregnant, Nurdin feels pity for the couple and brings them home to stay overnight. Next day Romesh, Mohan's brother, comes and takes them away. It is Romesh who finally helps Nurdin to get a job in Ontario Addiction Centre. The companionship of Romesh gives him confidence, which he had lost during the period of job-hunting in Toronto. He felt a sense of enjoyment in the company of Romesh. He starts adopting himself in the unfamiliar environment. Romesh helps him in searching his familiar place. Thus the relationship with Romesh makes him confident and acquainted with the unfamiliar surroundings.

In the Ontario Addiction Centre, Nurdin meets Sushila, the daughter of Narendas, for whom his elder brother, Akbar had an amorous feeling in adolescence. She had played with Nurdin because he was much younger to her. Gradually, Nurdin develops a clandestine relationship with Sushila. He makes it point of meeting everyday at her house in Kensington Market. Nurdin finds a satisfying companionship with her.

One day when Nurdin was wrapping up his work in the Ontario Addiction Centre, he sees a white woman in distress. He puts his hand forward for help. But unfortunately, he was arrested with the charge of sexually assaulting this white woman. Thus throughout the novel, Vassanji focuses the struggle of the Lalani family in multicultural Canada. Their struggle, however, takes a different and bizarre turn when Nurdin is charged with sexual assault. The novel ends with an optimistic note. The white woman drops the charge of rape against Nurdin. Once again the Lalanis start living a smooth life. But it remains a dilemma whether such things will not happen again.

No New Land deals with the story of Shamsi community. Here Vassanji gives voice to a Canadian immigrant experience. He illustrates the fate of this community in Toronto where Nurdin Lalani emigrates with his family. The snow that Nurdin and his family encounter on entering Canada becomes metonymic of Otherness. The hostility
of the weather anticipates that Canada is a country causing alienation and isolation for Nurdin and his family. After their arrival in Canada, Nurdin and his family have trouble finding accommodation. Eventually they move to Don Mills where various members of the community who have migrated to Canada before now live under appalling circumstances, cherishing the "illusion of home and shelter from an alien society." It seems that "the tension between assimilation and acculturation to mainstream Canadian culture, versus maintaining some kind of racial or cultural integrity brought over from the old land." Disappointments and humiliation that Nurdin experience bring about unwillingness to adapt culturally. A new land profoundly alienates him. For him Canada is not different from Africa. This place turns out to be 'no new home' and No New Land because the same experience of disillusionment in the home left behind in Africa gets repeated in the new home in Canada. In Africa he was in trouble and in Canada also he is in an uneasy position. But in the hours of distress time and again he remembers his homeland, Tanzania. He is always hanging between these two lands. It seems that he in neither neither here nor there. Thus No New Land can be said to detail, "the ironies. the pathos and the hardships of having to live between two worlds, neither of which provides the harmony of a life that the mind imagines and craves for."

As the readers know that multicultural writings arc invariably concerned with writers’ attachment to their homelands, it is quite evident in Vassanji’s No New Land. Here the readers get an elaborate description of East Africa in the second chapter. In this context Vassanji can be compared with Rohinton Mistry who also describes his homeland India in his novels like Such A Long Journey and A Fine Balance. But this attachment by diasporic writers is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to their current places of abode. Caught physically between the two worlds, the diasporic writers are "transitional being" or "liminal personae" that is they are in the process of moving from one cultural state of existence to another. In this state of transition, some respond ambivalently to their dual cultures or societies. For others, the liminal or transitional state is too prolonged to cope with, and they may withdraw to their ancestral identity or homeland. Perhaps this is why the protagonist of No New Land, Nurdin Lalani, and other immigrants try to circumscribe themselves within their own
land. They remain attached to their ancestral customs, traditions, languages and religions. Throughout the novel, *No New Land*, Vassanji embellishes the characters with their ancestral traits. The cultural identity that the characters of *No New Land* try to formulate is an ambivalent conflict between traditions and cultures of their places of abode and homelands. Due to this conflict the Asian African community gets segregated. Therefore, this community feels alienated from the mainstream of the Canadian society. So Vassanji has described this community in segregated apartments in the building, Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park.

The quest for identity is one of the important issues in the writings of diasporic writers. Vassanji’s *No New Land* is not an exception. In this novel Vassanji attempts to explore the quest for identity through the character of Nurdin Lalani. Lalani endeavours to establish an identity of his own. The family, the community and the society obstruct his endeavours. The displacement, racial discrimination and the generation differences put hindrances in the way to formulate an independent individual identity.

Sooner or later, Canada becomes a home away from home for the long disoriented emigrants. Canada is accredited with maple leaf, ten province, hi-lingual system and multicultural mosaic. The greater the diversity of the racial and cultural mix, the greater the need for tolerance and openness is expected. Vassanji has prolifically sketched the transitional phase in an individual’s life interwoven with the multicultural setting of Canada. The synchronic structure steers the novel away from the present to the past, to areas of experience that lie beyond the immediate referential context. Vassanji has accordingly extrapolated the different facets of multicultural Canada, a refugee land for the expatriates and *No New Land* for a homeless someone. The well-knitted narrative of the novel suggests that Canada is an asylum for the peripatetic individual and nurture that Canada its national heritage with the amalgam of diverse culture.

Vassanji in his *No New Land* and *Thr Book of Secrets* tries his utmost best to paint the reality picture of the life of Shamshi Community which is made a prototype example of how life is like in transcontinental wilderness.
Immigration is a new phenomenon spanning mostly from nineteenth century and intensifying through twentieth century - gravitating itself before the Independences right across the continents. Immigration is not regional that confines itself to only a particular geographical space but its tentacles spread from Oriental countries to African hinterlands and from there to trans-Atlantic geo-spaces. Neither immigration is by only one set of people belonging to one specific region of a country, nor does it have any zeal of settling in a specific nation out of fascination for that geo-space, but it is all due to the situation on the ground.

The ground reality is the pressing effect of colonization. Colonizing the Third World for material development indicates the imperialist arrogance geared to the appropriation of a weak and backward society through domination, and thanks to which people's prompted movement from one part of the world to the other occurs and reoccurs. This forced displacement has visibly preceding and culminating causes of victimization, marginalization, economic degradation and most importantly the quest for survival.

The marginal societies, irrespective of place, space and time are always the critical victims of the ominous brutality of suppression and alienation. The colonial era across the continents, spanning centuries together, triggers and clamps its apartheid system of governance on the wider sections of societies whose lives, as a consequence are mired in the quagmire of dilapidation, and decline.

Unable to bear this caustic treatment by the invaders - the pervading life snatchers, indeed, of the nadir-stood marginals, being caught in unawares, consciously or unconsciously - the fringed people are in search of a better life and therefore, are on the move from their native place to alien lands. And due to the grinding wheels of time in which the suffering becoming conscious of problems, leave for a world still ridden with uncertainty and instability.

With an intention to make their lives livable, with an aspiration to lead their lives with a dignified note of enjoying equality and freedom, these natives of one country immigrate to another country. But these imaginary Homelands, as Salman
Rushdie puts it, are no better either as these geospaces are also the victims of multiple-colonizations suffering heavily from the dearth of bondage, inequality and human freedom. The so called anticipated 'better places' are so murky situationalized in the context of fragmentation as regards the political situation and governance as it is challengingly experienced by these immigrants in their native lands. So, both are alike and tantamount to cause umpteen troubles.

Further, there are yet other places which are considered to be the best places to live in and lead there in an equally utopian way where all the problems can be easily solved. All the life’s comforts can be enjoyed and all the human related dignities, like equality, respect and freedom can be, to the maximum extent, experienced.

No equality. No dignity. No ultimate freedom. The inmigrants’ imaginations tend to make them aspire for boundlessly abounding life which, after having experienced the life there, in the long run, leaves them caught in despair and depression. These immigrants go through painful experiences being themselves placed in unfamiliar situations, visually a minority, their extended family close neighbourhood, people they grew up with, excitement and challenges. Their transcontinental journey in search of a better life lands them in an unimaginable abyss of mental stress and depression, a painful experience that in order to make this jigsaw puzzle – in fact, the solution-less one – known to the wider world, they are very much now inclined to narrate their own stories – the stories of sufferings, ups and downs and labyrinths.

And to break the silence, these immigrants spreading across the trans-nations take the refuge of narratives, historicize the circumstances that have compelled them to migrate and double-migrate and the current multi-dimensional problems they are encountering now in yet another bubbling space.

The issue of immigration and its after-shocks is the perfect theme in the writings made by the expatriate writers like. Kohinton Mistry, Ven Begamudre, M.G. Vassanji, for example. whose dislocational descriptions through images of the historical reminiscences speak volumes of the South Asian Multicultural Society.
The Canadian South Asian Multicultural Society, as it is known for its specificity, deals exclusively with the issues of the immigrants living in Canada, either having been migrated there directly from South Asia or double-migrated across three continents. They have now to first balance life between two worlds.

It is as if departures are from Dar and arrivals at Ontario. And as Kay Boyle opines, "a stranger arrives in a town and a stranger leaves the town." (P.190). Relatively, it is imperative to not ignore the voices crying out in tortured dissent, drawing world wide attention to the nature of self-will, freedom and human identity and the manner in which these are abused. The West constructs images of the East so as to preserve its domination. There is a discernable history of European representation and appreciation of the Orient which has a definite relationship with the history of European colonialism.

The positive assertion of the migrant's identity and his problems of being located and dislocated in terms of history are the excruciating factors for expatriate writers to probe and bring out the facts through narratives. In the scenario of multicultural mutations, writers still juggle between narrating the past and exploring the frontiers of freedom and opportunities in the new age.

So, in the fact-gathering business, predictably, expatriate Indian-writing after Independence has reflected the state of influx. The multiculturisties cannot disown the past and they are not quite comfortable with their new-found freedom and infinite opportunities. The resultant tension has created exciting fiction.

The extraordinary success of the Indian Multicultural writers in the International literary scene is attributable to a variety of causes. Multi-cultural identity is a reality of the modern age. Writers of Indian origin like, Salman Rushdie or V.S.Naipaul carry in their novels a resilient repertoire of language and tradition. Often, they trace their roots to the linguistic and literary traditions of their primary cultures. They are the creative voices and they never die: they echo and amplify through memory, through the process of re-reading, re-interpretation and translation.
The writers of *Diaspora*, largely, South Asian Canadian writers relate history with something, enrich and change it with imagination and sensuousness of personal experience, and break the culture of silence and oppression. "The history of the novel is the history of human liberation, by putting ourselves in others' shoes by using our imagination to free ourselves from our own identities; we are able to set ourselves free." In the modern literary landscape, the sense of identity-loss, the human resistance and the need to share new ideas with the world, recreating a world in which individuals, communities and nations violently interact with one another, constantly reinventing theniselves – the self-discovery. Of course-arc inevitably part of post-colonial theories and cultural studies. And the multicultural writers practice all these definitive qualities in their works. ("Taboos: M.G. Vassanji", *The Power to Bend Spoons: Interviews with Canadian Novelists*, P.205).

The Immigration Literature which must certainly include all the above system created out of despair and neurosis is a tedious exercise of nostalgia and the examination of the pat finds greatest meaning. The nostalgic stories are about multitudes and are about an entire society.

The Post-colonial transcendental interaction of notions speaking of cultures – has produced "Post-colonial" writers who have already made such a mark on the world of letters for the past 20 years or so. And such legion of literati possesses the expatriate writers like Michael, Kamala Markandeya, Bharati Mukherjee, M.G. Vassanji, and many more.

Expatriate writing occupies a significant position between cultures and countries. It generates theory and defines positions as it constructs a new identity which negotiates boundaries and confines and relates to different temporal and spatial metaphors. Cultures travel and take root or get dislocated and internalize nostalgia or experience amnesia.

Writers' living abroad live on the margins of two societies and cultural theory is today being created by people who live on the margins. An important question is how does one define the margins? Do the margins expand themselves and does the
centre shift? Or is it that peripheral areas further divide themselves and the centre remains the same. indifferent to what is happening around it? Does theory emanate from the intervention of marginal voices, or is it that their voices are controlled and homogenized by the centre?. Migratory movements have been governed by different reasons at different times of history. and contemporaneously as well. Economic reasons governed the movement of indentured labour and the trading of communities; they have also governed the pursuit of a higher standard of living. Opportunities for work research and freedom have motivated migration. Again migration from a colonial state to a free country calls for an entirely different set of assumptions.

The multicultural community is varied and complex. Indian Diaspora is one of the most varied. representing half a dozen religions...seven different regions of India and a dozen castes. It has shown a great mobility and adjustability as it has often been involved in a double act of migration – from India to West Indies and from there to metropolitan centres; from India to Africa and then to Europe or America and Canada on account of social and political reasons.

The multicultural Indian is "like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homes and that's the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world." Yet this multiplicity of 'homes' does not bridge the gap between "home" - culture of origin, and 'world' - the culture of adoption. The boundaries have an uncanny habit of persisting in thousand different ways. and are very often conflictual.

Throughout the novel, Nurdin tries to formulate an identity for himself. He is obsessed with the negative feeling that he had now lost identity due to the displacements from Africa to Canada. He starts developing a feeling that the new identity – an African immigrant of Asian origin – has been imposed on him due to his displacement. Whether he likes this new identity of his or not, is of no significance. As everything around Nurdin is new and unfamiliar, the feeling of alienation envelops him poignantly. He indulges in memory. He remembers that back in Africa, he had some identity of his own. He knew a lot of persons there. A lot of persons also knew
him. They had honour and respect for him. But in Canada he has no recognition. Thus he attempts to locate an atmosphere of familiarity in the vast and unfamiliar city. In this attempt he visits sixty-nine Rosecliff Park. There he finds the members of his own community. This attempt offers him relief. He feels that he is not an alien in the new place of settlement. The sense of security develops in him. It shows his innate attachment to his community.

It is essential for each culture to have its own distinguishing identity in a multicultural state. But when a new identity is imposed on the basis of race, colour and religion, the cruel brutalities become rife with reality. The characters of No New Land feel that a new identity has been imposed on them due to displacement. His imposition is very dangerous for them. It challenges their original identity. The brutal fact of imposition of the new identity on them is that it arises in the context of discrimination. In No New Land the discrimination based on colour is projected powerfully in the following observation: The black kicked the readers out, now the whites will do the same. Where do we go from here? (P.103).

Through this observation, M.G. Vassanji attracts the readers' attention not only to circumstances under which the people belonging to Indian origin left their Africa but also to the fact that they have lost their sense of a secure identity. Now they have to adopt and adapt to an atmosphere of an unknown, unfamiliar environment. Their identity now will be clubbed together with the people belonging to India. Something that Hazi Lalani, the father of Nurdin, had lost when he had migrated to Zanjibar, East Africa, in the first decade of the twentieth century. He had laboured hard to establish himself there. He knew that it was impossible to return to the land of his birth. So he had built a home for himself, where he could breathe an air of security. He felt that his family would no longer suffer from uprootedness. He died "believing he had found a new country for his descendants." (P.160).

But very soon Hazi's belief shattered. After his death the political scenario changed in East Africa. It became independent. With the Black coming to power, the era of the White domination came to an end. As Indian people did not belong to either of the groups – neither whites nor blacks – they were treated with discrimination.
After the Africans obtained political independence, superior authorities often took decisions unfavourable to Indians. Their Citizenship was taken away and they were expelled out of the country. Hence when Nurdin Lalani and his family were thrown out of Tanzania, he had an option of going to Canada. But Canada does not appear as a new land. The black and horrible face of discrimination is visible in an incident that takes place in the subway tunnel in Canada. This incident clearly shows that the discrimination rules the roost here as well. At this tunnel three white youths attack Ismail, an Asians immigrant from Dar es Salaam. They joyfully abuse him. Pointing to his package of meat pies. they shout. "what do you have there. Paki? Hey, hey? Paki-Paki-Paki." They punch him in the stomach. The bystanders cannot do anything. Nanji is one of them. The three youths force their domination over others. They have a feeling of superiority because they are born whites. They expect that people around them should acknowledge the superiority of their colour.

This incident provokes the immigrants for agitations. People assemble at Esmail's residence. Once more they are bound to think of their existence:

"What now'? Was this a sign of things to come danger to self and property, to wife and kids? Have we come to the right place after all"'(P.202).

Nanji, a young immigrant professor, also suffers from racial discrimination. Often returning from the University by bus, Nanji sits alone on the seat. Many passengers remain standing but do not sit near him and all the way Nanji thinks about racism:

Racism, the world kept intruding his mind and kept pushing it back. On what basis is racism? It could be my face, dark, brooding, scowling. and cratered." (P.209).

The novel No New Land opens with two incidents. Both are the results of racial discrimination. Nurdin's daughter Fatima gets admission in art and science instead of pharmacy, the prestigious one, and Nurdin is accused of raping a white girl.
The later incident becomes central to the novel. **Fatima**, ultimately, accepts her plight and decides that art and science were not so bad after all. But Nurdin has to face many problems in and out of the family. The white lady **Mrs.Broadbent** refuses to serve him lunch in the cafeteria. She declares in a hostile tone that she is not going to serve the rapist.

In African city Dar, Nurdin had to face fierce racial discrimination. He was neglected there for he had fairer complexion. He had realized that even the peons in Dar rose above him merely because of their black skins and in the promotions too he saw himself overlooked and neglected. Even in Canada he has to suffer a lot due to racial discrimination. In spite of being sufficiently qualified, as a **seller** of shoes, he remains **unemployed** for a long time. In fact, he hunts wildly for the job but the same story is repeated everywhere if he had a Canadian experience. He is being discriminated against because of his having a different identity. He feels that the job market in Canada is made only for a certain group of people – the whites. The story of discrimination is at climax in the following observation:

“I am afraid, Nurdin,” Mr. Rogers said, “We gave the job to someone else.” Nurdin exploded, "But my experience! I know shoes, I can give references." "I am sorry, there were many applicants." "I know I do not have Canadian experience," he breathed hotly and with emotion on the phone, “but how can I get Canadian experience if you do not give me chance? I have sold shoes for eight years! Eight years…” "Perhaps you were overqualified, sir." That was a new one. Over qualified. Good for laughs, and it got many. (P.189).

A feeling of demarcation and discrimination and a sense of identity have always been in the writings of writers like M.G. **Vassanji.** Writing from a “hyphenated” space probably instigates him to **manifest** his expressions of identity.
In No New Land, Vassanji discusses the question of culture. Since Canada has a multicultural ethos, preserving one's own culture becomes a vital issue. Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park, the building situated in Don Mills, in the suburbs of Toronto, represents a cultural identity as a whole. The macrocosmic outlook of this building projects an amalgamation of different people belonging to similar origins. They interact among themselves to protect their culture, tradition and customs. They create a friendly atmosphere through their interaction with one another. This friendly atmosphere in Sixty-nine Rosecliff Parl. avers to the fact that maintenance of a mixed cultural milieu among all the Canadians is a necessity. Otherwise, the danger of the eventual annihilation of one's own culture is very obvious.

The microcosmic view of the Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park, projects that through the people dwelling there are distinguished as Indians, but in reality they exist in diversity. They belong to different parts of India. Some are Goan, some are Madrasi, some Hyderbadi, some Gujarati, and some are Punjabi. There are Indians not only from India but from different parts of the world as well. For example, the Lalanis belong to East Africa. Ram Deen belongs to the Caribbean Islands. Shbru Mama and her husband Ramju, and Gulshan Bai belong to India. Though there is clear portrayal of diversified cultures of India, it also prevents at the same time a single blend of various identities belonging to an umbrella identity called India. Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park reminds one of Firozsha Baag created by Rohinton Mistry. This apartment building from Tales from Firozsha Baag encompasses the exhibition of a unique cultural identity exactly like Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park of No New Land.

The existence becomes important for an immigrant in an alien land. When he is surrounded by an atmosphere of unfamiliarity, he feels that he does not have a proper space to live in. He experiences that he is being treated as an outsider. He can't avail himself of any privileges and adventures in the society because he exists as a member of the minority. This sense of minority gets deep rooted in his mind and soul, because of discriminations and inequalities which he faces every moment of his life. Gradually, therefore, he needs a space for existence. Such a need troubles Nurdin too.
Nurdin feels that several individuals have shaped his existence. He can't exist on his own. The dominance of his father in his early life gives birth to a feeling that he has no individual identity. And thus being unable to formulate his own voice, Nurdin thinks that he has no space in his family. He is being circumscribed to a particular domain and someone else is drawing the boundary. The identity that he exists with is being given to him by the family, the society, the community he lives in.

Nanji, the young professor, and Jamal, the lawyer, also try to grapple to question their respective existences. When one is unemployed, one struggles for one's livelihood. During the struggle life becomes too hard to live. The existence is obviously questioned. The struggle for existence becomes so complicated that one lives an absurd existence:

"But suppose I use my free will to decide to go on with this absurd existence, as you call it..." "Well, if you really choose that...to go on living...then you live with that choice facing you every moment of your life. You are truly alive. Most people go on mindlessly of course; they don't choose to live. That's because they do what they are told or made to do...And think of this: when death comes unasked, when it takes you by surprise, it will rob you of even this free choice. Because when you thought you were choosing to live, it was only letting you live. The only way you can exercise free will, defeating it, is by taking your own life. (P.76).

M.G. Vassanji portrays this question of existence through the characters of Jamal and Nanji. Their sense of survival becomes a big question. In fact, the question of morality and ethics, of good faith and compromise keep on tormenting Nanji. When one is tormented by such question on life, one feels that surviving is not possible in a society where one is being categorized as a member of the minority group. His existence becomes problematic and so to get rid of this problem of life; he likes to live in a world of dreams and illusion.
'Roots' play a significant role in the lives of immigrants. Their behaviour, attitude, and modes of life seem to be formulated by their roots. Nurdin has his roots in India. His father went to Africa many years ago with certain innate Indian characteristics. Nurdin inherited these characteristics and came to Canada with them. The Indian characteristics can be seen through the customs, tradition, typicalities and cuisines that Vassanji portrays in No New Land. It can be observed in the very beginning of the novel. When Fatima receives envelope from some University, which may decide her career, she becomes excitedly anxious. Becoming nervous may be a human trait, but whispering prayers superstitiously due to nervousness, anxiety and excitement is a typical Indian characteristic.

It did not occur to her that the decision she awaited had already been made a few days before, and she whispered a prayer in much the same as her mother sometimes did. (P.3).

Nurdin's wife Zera also shows that typical Indian traits in her. When the Lalantis immigrated to Canada, Zera had got with her lots of souvenirs and memories from Africa. But when they settled down in Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park, most of the things went to the dustbin, except the photograph of Hazi Lalani. It was the first objecte to go up on the walls. One may draw a conclusion that this sort of respect for father-in-law may be a traditional human trait but lighting incense sticks and holding them in front of the photograph is an Indian trait of respect and devotion for the father-in-law. Hanif, Nurdin's son, has also some innate Indian characteristics. Hanif calls Nanji "Eeyore." Eeyore is an accented form of the Indian word for friends. This is a typical way of summoning friends in India. Friends are sometimes called as 'yaar'. Yasmin Ladha, one of the Indo Canadian authors, also uses this word 'yaar' in her collection of short stories, Lion's Granddaughter and Other Stories. She addresses her readers as “yaar-readerji.” Not only the Lalantis but other people of Indian roots in the Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park also have such inborn Indian characteristics. Jamal uses the term "chacha" to summon an aged person. ‘Chacha’ is an Indian word to show respect for the elderly people. It is an Indian word for uncle.
Through the various characters of *No New Land*, Vassanji beautifully portrays some Indian traditions and customs. Touching the feet of the elderly guests always concludes the welcoming ceremony in Indian tradition. When the Missionary, the religious man, comes to Nurdin’s apartment, there was a traditional welcoming ceremony. As he entered the room the females of the congregation, dressed in white, attempted an elaborate welcoming ceremony. "with touching of feet and cracking of Knuckles and garlanding..." When one visits someone’s house for the first time, it is an Indian tradition to take sweets or fruits along. Nurdin does not forget his tradition. When he and Romesh visit Sushila’s house at Kensington Market, they take some fruits with them.

While portraying Indian traditions, customs and typical characteristics, Vassanji talks about the Indian cuisines. As it is known the food one takes, affirms the traits of a particular place. The food that the Indian dwelling in Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park eats shows that they belong to India. For instance, chappatis is the staple food of people of Northern part of India. Indians prefer to take it with pickles. They even tend to put ghee or clarified butter over the chappatis. Sheru Mama and her husband, Ramju, tend to serve chappatis that way:

Sheru Mama makes hundreds of chappatis everyday and baby-sits to toddlers at the same time, while husband Ramju helps with the dishes and puts the required dollop of margarine over every chappati. Her customers tend to be single men who will eat a chappati with a pickle, or butter and jam, or curry canned in the United States. (P.61).

"Samosas" are one of the favourite snacks of the people of Northern part of India. They like to take them with tea, especially, “Tea would fetched and samosas.” Vassanji mentions about having Samosas with tea even in one of the short stories in *Uhuru Street*. In 'In the Quiet of a Sunday Afternoon', Zarina sells Samosas to the Indian people living in Uhuru Street. We can get a sentence like this. “I have tea and wait for the woman to bring samosas.” Indians are well known throughout the world for a variety of fried and spicy food. Even in breakfast, they prefer to have fried.
When Mohan and Lakshmi, the Indians from Guyana stayed back for a night in Nurdin’s apartment, Zera made some “puris.” Uma Panneswaran, in her *Rootless hut Green are the Boulevard Trees*, mentions several Indian cuisines. One of her characters says:

> How about puris? I haven’t had a good Indian meal in ages. Here. I’ll get the dough ready. Arun, it is time you wash your eyes. Slice some onions for raita’. (P.20).

The literary members of Indian diaspora use the names of Indian cuisines deliberately. Through this act they want to affirm their existence and identity. In fact, the cultural identity that comes up through food is very powerful because it exhibits the everyday modes of life. This is the reason why Vassanji mentions the names of food in all his works. It is not only descriptions of about Food, but also enumerating the traditions, customs and typical Indian characteristics that prove the fact that maintenance of culture is an innate trait of immigrants. Nurdin and his family of Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park try to maintain their culture.

The South Asian literature that is embodied in the works of M.G. Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry or Ven Begamudrc is a recapturing of a way of life that is lost for ever, with the modernization and development of the Third World countries. It is also a socio-cultural documentation of the history of the South Asians as they migrated to different countries. The personal histories that are depicted in these narratives are the construct of the writer’s version of reality as he perceives and projects it through his perspective. Talking about the postmodernist novel, Linda Hutcheon states as follows:

> Fiction does not mirror reality; nor does it reproduce it. It cannot. There is no pretense of simplistic mimesis in historio-graphic meta-fiction. Instead fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality, and both the construction and the need for it are what are fore-grounded in the postmodernist novel. (*Canadian Multicultural Fiction*, P.14).
The narratives are important not only for their content but also for their stylistic techniques. The objective/subjective position of the writer as he narrates as an insider, but with the distanced perspective of the outsider, requires a subtle use of irony, which is evident in the writings under consideration. Linda Hutcheon states that “there is no doubt that ethnic and racial minorities play a very visible role in postmodern culture today” and goes on to quote George Lipsitz's suggestion that their "exclusion from political power and cultural recognition has enabled them to cultivate a sophisticated capacity for ambiguity, juxtaposition, and irony – all key qualities in the postmodern aesthetic." Thus the use of irony is a tool that the immigrant writer exploits to distance himself from the experience and yet to narrate it from within, and project the personal narratives, that the postmodern aesthetic signifies as fragmented histories, through their writings. They construct the past through memories but also use the construct as a metaphor to interpret the present: the metaphor becomes a tool to negotiate the difficult passage of racism and alienation/hostility that they encounter in their individual day-to-day living.

No New Land is novel that has very explicitly projected the disadvantaged situations of an immigrant in WASP society where either the Canadians are out to fleece them under the guise of familiarizing them with the Canadian ambience, for example the sale to which Nurdin and his family are invited, offered snacks and drinks and then asked for payment, or be it the racist attack on Elaise at the subway station or the treatment that Nurdin gets at the hands of his female employer at the restaurant. The only other way to combat the racism and otherness is by being too good at their own game, that is success and confidence as is embodied in Jamaal. The first generation migrants might have certain difficulties in adjusting to the new ambience but the second generation, the children, adapt well since they are willing to assimilate into Canadian culture as this is what would make them socially acceptable among their peers. Hence, the picture is clear: success is what counts in this new competitive world and the confidence to brazen out all marginalizing tactics and demand one's rights.
The novels written by the South Asian immigrant novelists contain little evidence of themes or subjects which may be related to the religion of South Asia. But most of them are indirectly related to South Asia, since their ancestors come from the South Asian region. Their themes vary but can we see in them the quest for identity?

_No New Land_ follows the direction of most South Asian Canadian Writers in gradually talking on Canadian subjects in their work. If Canadian Literature is defined as literature written about Canada, most South-Asian Canadian writers tend to become more Canadian the longer they stay in Canada.

Neil Bissoondath reviewing _No New Land_ takes the author to task for what he sees as a "need to present the whole, to be a kind of literary ringmaster for the community circus." *(Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism, P.45)* He argues that Vassanji’s attempt to portray the whole Ishmaeli community in Toronto to prevent him from creating fully individualized characters. If critical insights are to be put aside, things aplenty appreciable include that Vassanji does create brilliant character sketches even if his chief aim is to provide a cross-section view of the East-African Ishmaeli community in Toronto. If a wholly Canadian analogy may be used, _No New Land_ is more like _Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town_ than _The Stone Angel_, each excellent in its own way.

_No New Land_ seems to show integration and assimilation of the children of the immigrants into Canadian Society. It does not advocate anything, but offers a candid, realistic, informed and persuasive appraisal of the fate of South Asian immigration in Canada.