



TREATMENT OF THE THEME OF EXILE IN *THE GUNNY SACK*

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ABSTRACT: *In The Gunny Sack, Vassanji has depicted very vividly how the feeling of being a foreigner is the genesis of all uncertainty as far as the Indian Diaspora is concerned. Salim Juma, the narrator-protagonist, narrates how the Shamsi community, which settled down in Africa and helped the empirical forces in crushing the local Africans, was dislocated by economic factors. Dhanji Govindji, the narrator's great grandfather settled in a village called Matamu and begot a large number of progeny. Vassanji throws light on the various issues which the Indian Diaspora encountered in an alien land. The Indian migrants played the role of a buffer and did not show much sympathy for the nationalistic movements. The present paper is an attempt to probe The Gunny Sack and to offer yet another dimension of the process of identity formation. It reveals how the relations between immigrant Indians were conditioned and influenced by various social and historical circumstances.*

KEYWORDS: *Migration, Identity, Exile, Diaspora, History.*

With stormy East Africa as setting, M. G. Vassanji's first novel *The Gunny Sack* (1989) narrates the story which goes on to assume vast and epic dimensions. It capsules the vicissitudes of some members of Shamsi community who migrated to East Africa in 1885 from the economically tight situation in the Indian state of Gujarat. The event envisages two prominent features which demonstrate the social set up and the colonial and post colonial situation. The narrator, Huseni Salim Juma, gets the gift of gunny sack from his great grand aunt Ji Bai. What the gunny sack contains is so odd and strange; a bead necklace, a Swahili cap, three padlocked books and a blood stained muslin shirt which takes the narrator down the memory lane. Vassanji writes, "Memory, Ji Bai said, is this gunny sack..." (*TGS* 327). Sudha P. Pandya says that *The Gunny Sack*, "is poignantly rendered story which stands out most importantly on account of the writer's attitude to the collective memory and his handling of it" (85).

In *The Gunny Sack*, Vassanji has traced the ups and downs of immigrant Shamsi family which begins with Dhanji Govind himself and concludes with Salim Juma, Dhanji Govind's great grandson. The four generations of this diasporic family witness revolutionary transformations in and around the Eastern fringe of the great continent known as Africa.



When crops fall in Junapur, DhanjiGovindji's sixth sense comes into play and he decides to make his way towards East Africa. He sets up his business in Matamu with the help of the Mukhi, DevrajRagavji. He begets Huseni through the alliance with Bibi Taratibu, a black woman. At this stage, rumours reach Gujarat that the migrant businessmen are begetting half-caste children from local black women. This complaint sends DhanjiGovindji away to return with Fatima as his wife as a step in line with keeping the blood pure. Gulam, another son is born out of this wedlock. The sons grow up as the years roll by. Huseni gets married to Moti and Gulam to Ji Bai. Huseni, a hybrid misfit, hobnobs with blacks and DhanjiGovindji's advice regarding Solar Race cuts no ice with him. On being rebuked, Huseni runs away from home, leaving behind his wife Moti, and Juma, their son. DhanjiGovindji spends more and more time and money in searching his half- African son. One day he is found murdered for embezzling the community wealth in quest of his lost son.

The descendants of DhanjiGovindji, the community of Indian Diaspora that survived for fifty years in Matamu, turn homeless overnight when British-German scuffle overtakes the region. The trading Indian community scatters in various directions and the Shamsi family reaches Dar es Salaam. While the runaway Huseni is lost forever, his son Juma is retrieved in the narrative after a gap of two decades. After being deserted by his mother, Juma grows up to adulthood in the house of HaasanPirbhai where he is reduced to the status of a servant. In due course of time, Juma marries Kulsum, the narrator's mother. They form a happy household in Nairobi with the birth of three children- Begum, Salim (the narrator), and Jamal. The family witnesses mighty and earth-shaking events as the Mau Mau rebellions resort to brutal and wild killings. No one knows when they will strike, where they will strike, and whom they will strike. The days of British colonialism are numbered. The Mau Mau upsurge spreads terror and fear everywhere which adds to the travails and sorrows of diasporic settlers.

Early one morning Kulsum gives out a heart-rending scream as Juma has expired. The sudden demise of Juma forces Kulsum and her children to shift to Dar es Salaam where Kulsum runs a tailoring shop to make both ends meet. After reaching Dar es Salaam, there is a sort of reunion between Kulsum and Ji Bai. Kulsum learns about the misdeeds of DhanjiGovindji from Ji Bai but is unwilling to accept the tainted ancestral background. The radical changes occur at every level in African countries after the end of British colonialism.



Tanganyika becomes Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, the President, announces nationalization to rob the diasporic settlers of their estates and properties. The novel shows how the problems of the Indian Diaspora multiply after independence. There are rumors that Asians will receive harsh treatment in Tanzania like Uganda under Idi Amin's direction. It is quite obvious that the situation is becoming ominous and sinister for diasporic settlers. They will face harsh and unpleasant times as the transformed situation emboldens the Africans and frightens the Asians. The Indians are forced to join the National Service Camp for the betterment of Tanzania. Salim Juma has been sent to a far-off camp against his desire. He develops sexual relations with Amina, an African girl during camp days. Kulsum reacts very sharply to this affair between Salim and Amina. Salim does not stop visiting Amina even after his marriage to Zuleika. The repressive African government detains Amina and other members of her group for anti-national activities. Salim is hurriedly exiled abroad under the impending threat of arrest for being Amina's close friend. Kulsum's close-knit family disintegrates when all her children leave for the West. Begum, the narrator's sister elopes with an Englishman and settles in England. Sona, his brother migrates to the USA for higher studies. Salim Juma gets final shelter and refuge in Canada where he inherits the gunny sack bequeathed to him by Ji Bai. The novel ends with Salim contemplating his tenuous relationship with his wife and daughter and decides not to return to Africa.

The Gunny Sack delves deep into major public issues like marginality, immigration, racism, alienation and homelessness which make the migrants to rethink their relations with their host country. Vassanji's prose is successful in capturing the pangs of dilemma which vex a diasporic identity in a foreign land. The questions of race, history, and identity crop up for those migrants who live on the margins and lead a pathetic and dispossessed life in colonial and post-colonial Africa. The Diasporas carry a peculiar mindset, being loath to put their trust in anyone other than fellow Indians. This narrow-mindedness comes in the way of their establishing such links as may provide mutual assurance and closeness with the mainstream people. The Indian Shamsis can never place whole-hearted trust in the Blacks. the Indian Diaspora, especially the Shamsi community in Tanganyika always rally behind those who are in power; whether this position is occupied by the Germans or by the British. In a cynical vein, the narrator states how among "the trading immigrant people, loyalty to a land or a government always loudly professed, is a trait one can normally look for in vain.



Governments may come and go but the immigrants' only concern is the security of their families, their trade and savings" (*TGS* 63). As the political atmosphere begins to hot up, the Mau Mau freedom fighters launch their militant campaign to loot, rape and kill the English settlers. Most of the Shamsi and non- Shamsi Indians cry foul rather than show sympathy for the freedom fighters.

The British police launch the operation Anvil to hound the Mau Mau activists who resort to horrifying and wild killings to smash the colonial set up. It becomes quite clear that the British and the Indians will no longer breathe calmly or dominate quietly. The Blacks would show no mercy to the Indians either. The Africans regard them with misgivings and misapprehensions. The diasporic settlers seem to be falling on evil days. When the local Black community gets into the seats of power, they can never forgive the Indians for their anti- national role. The safety and security of these migrants depends squarely upon the goodwill of the Black people. It is sad that the myopic Indians have never done anything to win the hearts of the Black people and become the easy targets. The Indian immigrants, basking in the sunshine of prosperity, fall on evil days and become paupers overnight. The worst befalls the Indian settlers in Uganda where Idi Amin engineered their expulsion from African countries. Vassanji describes how the soil begins to become shaky everywhere for Indians when the Big Man gave out that he is doing all this at the behest of Allah. God spoke to him in dream that the , "Asians were sabotaging the economy, hoarding to create shortages, smuggling sugar, coffee and currency, not paying taxes...and they were not integrating, not allowing their daughters to marry Africans. Therefore, Allah concluded that the Asians must go" (*TGS* 299). Africans can see through that the Indians refrain from assimilation through marital alliances and consider their own cultural values superior to those of Africans. For such conflicting loyalty to their adopted country, they paid a hefty price.

The Gunny Sack shows how the Indian Diaspora became vulnerable to persecution, exploitation and harassment in independent Tanzania. Some Indians who were born in Africa boasted that they were Africans but their protestations did not avail them. The dukans were not only padlocked but also handed over to the Africans. The security and prosperity of the Indian immigrants vanished into thin air in no time when Arusha Declaration came into effect. Hassan Uncle ran to Kulsum's place and clamored, "Arre, in which world you all live? Haven't you heard? Our buildings, our houses, all gone. Saaf! Clean! Nationalised!" (*TGS*



297). Asians were undone when the corrupt African rules resorted to cheap public tactics by nationalizing the properties and assets of the diasporic settlers. The Indian Diaspora suffered severe blows while most of them failed to recover from this severe shock. Hassan Punja who rose from rags to riches could not survive the loss. The Indian Diaspora was left rudderless, anchorless and dispossessed after the Africans took over. The Indians could not digest the fact that they had been reduced to second class citizens. So, they found it better to migrate to Western countries. In post colonial Africa, says Chnadni Patel, “their physical homelessness that resulted from these policies was followed by a mental or imagined homelessness as Indians realized they were caught between two worlds” (66).

The new regimes launched the process of Africanization which added to the difficulties of the Indian migrants. The National Service was launched on a major scale to impart military training and political awareness. It was made obligatory for all school and college students. The new administration extended tacit support to racial hatred, violence and discrimination. The Indians were under immense pressure to wed their daughters to the Blacks to accelerate their assimilation in the mainstream. The diasporic settlers suffered endlessly for upholding the supposed purity of their race through sexual conservatism. Assimilation into a foreign culture is an uphill task for the migrants whether it is Canada, England or America. The immigrants are an assemblage of people having different cultural backgrounds, values and ideals. They cannot swallow the bitter pill of accepting a foreign cultural set up in toto. Vassanji presents a real picture of rising afflictions of Asian Diaspora: “At a Diwali celebration, the Prime Minister of Zanzibar said that Asians must intermarry with Africans” (*TGS* 227). The Indian immigrants resist overtly that their beautiful daughters should not be forced to marry black people. In particular, the first generation Indian immigrants became queasy at the very thought of such a possibility. This forced cultural and racial intermingling disenchanted the Indian diasporic minority.

Indian Diaspora abhors interracial or cross cultural associations to keep their identity distinct. Kulsum, an orthodox mother, shuns completely any interracial liaison to preserve the Shamsi identity of her children. When Begum wants to marry an Englishman, Kulsum bursts out, “Over my dead body. Do you want to murder me?” (*TGS* 236). When Sona decides to go to America, Kulsum issues strict commandments, “Don’t marry a White girl. Don’t smoke or drink. Don’t eat pork. Don’t turn your back on your faith and



community. Don't forget your family”(288). Kulsum's sentiments are genuinely universal as far as the Muslim Diaspora is concerned. Kulsum is unwilling to accept the mixed heritage because miscegenation is an anathema to orthodox Indians. They feel helpless with changing times and try to hold on to age- old traditions and customs as far as possible. In this context, ManjuJaidka remarks: “So, the cultural baggage that the migrant carries with him remains stuck like a needle in the groove of an obsolete record, rigid and formidable, not keeping pace with time” (23). It becomes a big headache for Sona to get clearance from the customs. Indian culture does not encourage violations of cultural boundaries. They try to preserve their regional, cultural, religious and linguistic identity even among themselves. So, moving with a narrow groove is a part and parcel of Indian way of life. If Kulsum opposed Salim- Amina relationship vehemently, it is just like any Indian mother. Kulsum is more culture conscious and takes great pains to preserve ethnic identity of her children.

Indians are known for their orthodoxy and adherence vis-à-vis customs and traditions. They can't tolerate even some slight modification and change. DhanjiGovindji's relationship with Taratibu, an African woman, creates a furor in Gujarat against this laxity on the party of Shamsi migrants. These Indians were asked to return and get married to avoid half- caste progeny in foreign land. This complaint sends Dhanji away to return with Fatima as his wife. Thus, the first and the second generation Indian Shamsis adhere to the customs and traditions faithfully to keep their identity distinct. Yet, the younger generation is not totally allergic or hypersensitive to such propositions. They learn the local language, try to dress like local people, organize processions and swear loyalty to the new African regime. They try to go on with their efforts at acculturation, yet, they learn with a sense of shock that they are at the periphery and not at the centre, being treated like the 'other'. The references to racial and ethnic differences are scattered overtly and covertly throughout the novel. Vassanji gives a balanced and guarded version of racial prejudices which Indians encounter in an alien land through various instances. The narrator's girlfriend Amina tells him without mincing words that he is not an African. Salim reacts very sharply: “Why do you call me 'Indian'? I too am an African. I was born here. My father was born here- even my grandfather!” (*TGS* 211). Amina rejoins with bitter and taunting remarks, “And then? Beyond that? What did they come to do, these ancestors of yours? Can you tell me? Perhaps you don't know. Perhaps you conveniently forget- they financed the slave trade!” (*TGS* 258). Vassanji like



other writers of Diaspora shows that the immigrants and their children may adopt and incorporate the culture of host country but they are not treated as the true Africans. They are always looked upon as the intruders and strangers by the local community.

Asians in Africa are classed together and are presumed as single homogeneous entity. However, this population is composed of many distinct cultural groups. Various castes of Hindus and Muslims inhabit this country and reveal conflicts among them due to religious or cultural differences. The local people regard Indians/Asians as a compact group but Vassanji shows in *The Gunny Sack* how identity markers like caste, colour, religion and community subject them to various divisions and dissensions among themselves. His narrative, says Jasbir Jain, gives voice to “the local or national politics, to the experience of being alienated, obscured, peripheralised and marginalized” (75). In post independence period, the Africans treat Indians as second class citizens. The story of discrimination, unfairness and prejudice shows its ugly and venomous face even in the National Services Camp. The narrator’s experiences are very bitter and sour as he gets third rate treatment from the Sentry on his way to the Uhuru Camp. It appears that the Black Sentry wants to harass him because he is an Indian. He makes Salim run with the trunk on his head and remarks, “Shuka- Shuka- Shuka- get out! Who do you think you are? Are you a minister? Do you think you are an Ambassdor, a balozi? The Queen of England...” (TGS 249). All this shows that the Blacks are getting it back on the Indians. The latter rarely got justice in the post colonial administration run by the Africans. The Indians were finding it hot after the departure of the colonial protectors.

The times were good when the first and the second generations of the Indian Shamsis were holding the fort. They could maintain their distinct identity because there was no threat. They held onto their customs and traditions rigidly because they confronted no challenges. The White colonizers show scant interest in what the Indian settlers do. The Whites keep the Indians at an arm’s length but give them the freedom to operate freely in their own circle. The Indian Diaspora faces massive onslaught to its culture when the Blacks take over. The Africans have long entertained grouses against Indians and look upon them as stealers of their bread. So, they seek to hunt and hound the Indians out of their cozy and comfortable places. There is a wide chasm between the culture and heritage of both the communities. In short, the Africans and the Indians must exercise the greatest restraint to live



in peace and harmony; but the Africans are in no mood to forgive and forget. The Europeans wound up their colonial shop and went back to their mooring in the West. The Indian immigrants in Africa who have left their Indian homes, history and culture behind, feel insecure and seek survival at all costs. It is this invidious position that makes them so vulnerable to outside dangers and risks. The Indians are in no way less rigid and inflexible, so all this makes their position very odd and queer. According to R. Radhakrishnan, these immigrants confront the vexed questions of “solidarity and criticism, belonging and distance, insider spaces and outsider spaces, identity as invention and identity as natural, location-subject positionality and the politics of representation, rootedness and rootlessness” (129). The most painful aspect is perhaps the problem of cultural identity which is at stake with the migrant community in a hostile and alien environment.

On foreign lands immigrants make various efforts to attach their younger generation to Indian culture and heritage. Victor J. Ramraj remarks in this context: “Though diasporas may not want actually to return home, wherever the dispersal has left them they retain a conscious or sub-conscious attachment to traditions, customs, values, religions and languages of the ancestral home” (114). When Ji Bai and Gulam reached Matamu after marriage, an Indian band playing wedding tune welcomed them. As they crossed the threshold of their home, “a shower of grain greeted them, waiting women broke into a geet, and the crunch clay saucers under their feet wished them good luck” (*TGS* 25). The Indian diasporic families celebrate Indian festivals, Diwali and Id, with great pomp, processions, dances and feasts. On such occasions, they prepare Indian meals and visit mosques and temples. Thus, those who settle in alien lands as Diaspora continue to be true to their culture as much as possible. Vassanji feels that the Indian Diaspora can never turn their back on their native prejudices and predilections. They carry their good and bad notions wherever they go. The minds of the Indians carry a heavy load of irrational superstitions as they continue to believe in ghosts, spirits and supernatural powers. The Indian Diaspora in Africa seek solution of their problems by consulting gurus, pirs and fortune-tellers like their fraternity back home. Salim narrates how, “Seven years passed; seven years of childless marriage, in which jotshis, pundits, sheikhs and pirs were consulted, star, tea leaves, palm and archaic read, predictions made and proved false” (*TGS* 87). Kulsum was blessed with ‘aulaad’ after a Pir offered her an apple. The narrator is thrashed mercilessly when he spills four gallons of



milk. It is regarded as an ill- omen which has caused the death of his father. The narrator himself approaches KassimKurji to talk to his father's spirit. The man enjoying the supernatural powers tells the narrator, "The djinns say that the man has a big soul. He cannot be called. He is with God" (*TGS* 165). No migrant community severs its links with the past and can't give up its value system. The identity of being an Indian cannot be shaken off, even if India is a lost paradise or an unknown territory, even if the individual has discarded all recognizable traces of Indianness.

Vassanji gives expression to the feelings of first generation Diaspora who can't break their emotional link with their ancestral homeland. Ji Bai's desire to visit ancestral home in Bajpur stunned everybody. Though she spent major part of her life in Africa, yet she received spiritual consolations only by visiting her native village in India. She bursts in tears to see "marks on the wall made by children just as she had imagined or remembered them to be all these years... unsteady and weak on her feet... she went forward and touched wall. A rough surface; she ran her old bony hand over it... she put both hands against it, once, twice, thrice and wept?" (*TGS* 327). Ved Mehta aptly describes similar emotional turmoil: "...I can never altogether renounce the country in which I was born; never renounce my mother tongue, my Indian childhood, my Indian memories, my brown skin and distinctive Indian features- never entirely stop being an Indian" (240). The Indians can never treat a half- caste as if he were their equal. Hybrid identity poses serious challenges and produces psychic problems. Huseni, the half- caste feels drawn towards his Black mother and Mshenzi friends. DhanjiGovindji scolds him severely. Huseni has a deep- seated bitterness for his father who has deserted his Black mother, Bibi Taratibu. His single aim in life is relentless enmities towards his father, "whose every move he tries to thwart, every rise in esteem he tries to bring down" (*TGS* 17). Huseni with his mixed parentage finds himself in unenviable position. He becomes a constant thorn in the flesh of DhanjiGovindji by befriending the barbarians and behaving wildly like other Africans. *The Gunny Sack* is a fast- paced novel as it covers the epic saga of four generations. As there is no peep into the psyche of half- caste people, so there is no scope for deeper character analysis or study of identity related problems.

Indian Diaspora does not face any major problem as far as the native language is concerned. They come out with their own solutions according to the situation. The second generation Diaspora speaks Swahili even better than the native people. Vassanji has peppered



this novel with Swahili words such as *afande*, *samba*, *maji*, *bwana*, *buibui*, *dengu*, *askari*, etc. Indian diasporic families listen to Hindi film songs which the Africans also imitate. The narrative in *The Gunny Sack* remains firmly focused on what happens to an immigrant family. Vassanji looks upon the gunny sack as a metaphor for his collective memory. The contents of the gunny sack help the narrator to discover his past. Through this metaphoric device, Salim offers a restatement of what he has seen himself and heard from others. Salim states how Ji Bai untied the loose knot of Shehrbanoo, the gunny sack which helps him to rake up old memories. He narrates, “Ji Bai opened a small window into that dark past for me... a whole world flew in, a world of my great- grandfather who left India and my grandmother who was African, the world of Matamu where India and Africa met and the mixture exploded in the person of my half- caste grandfather Huseni” (*TGS* 166). It is pertinent to note that this chain of memories starts with DhanjiGovindji who is the first generation Diaspora. All his deeds and actions- good, bad or otherwise have their root in his exile. Thus, the gunny sack and Ji Bai cumulatively conserve the diasporic experiences of exile which Dhanji’s descendants face in Africa.

Vassanji provides many insights into history, colonialism, post colonialism on East African Continent where Indian merchants lived, prospered and finally lost the claim to tranquil existence. The Indian Shamsi traders thrived on African East coast for centuries but ultimately are embittered when their estate or businesses were confiscated. The Indian immigrants in Africa were forced to flee the adopted land in the wake of threats to their cultural and racial identity. The go- betweens undergo a sudden fall in newly emergent Tanzania where political violence, racial tensions, economic injustices thwart their sense of belongingness to the adopted land. In post colonial Africa they become the victim and are threatened with mass deportations. Vassanji tells Ray Deonandan in an interview that “Indians are fence- sitters... from this imperial history; we’ve become the middle- men everywhere we go. Sometimes, this is a reason for scorn, but provides a good vantage for observations” (June 12, 2008). The migrants do not have strong or deep roots in the soil so they run away whenever there is a crisis. The history of any migration in the world proves this point. DhanjiGovindji’s exile is voluntary. It is an effort to tide over an economic disaster that threatens Junapur in the form of famine. This migration to Africa is dictated by bitter and irreversible economic factors. Thus, migration can be an outcome, says Paul White, “of



tensions between the individual's desires and opportunities- as a reflection of past circumstances and of expectations for the future" (15). The Shamsi migrants arrived in East Africa not only in quest of economic opportunities but also as a result of natural disasters and calamities in the Indian subcontinent. They shifted their allegiance with the change in the centre of power. In British Empire, they had the privilege of proximity to the government and were placed higher than the Africans in power hierarchy. They played a major role in subjugating the local Africans so that they could pursue their dreams. Vassanji provides a sympathetic and realistic portrayal of the sufferings of a Shamsi family when the British canopy folds up and the Indians are left high and dry. *The Gunny Sack* is an epic novel delineating immense changes that overtake the Indian diasporic settlers in EastAfrica. Being a diasporic writer himself, Vassanji has lent this novel an aura of authenticity and genuineness. The Indians pass through various experiences, growing rich, enjoying life, feeling that the good days will never cease. Yet, change is the law of nature and political and post colonial changes very often leave them unguarded and unprotected.

In *The Gunny Sack*, Vassanji has recorded many incidents which poignantly pinpoint the sordid spectacle of racism, prejudice, hostility and ruthless marginalization. Vassanji has soared high into the esteem of readers by lending a human touch to the tragic-comedy of diasporic experience. It is firm and unshakeable philosophy of all migrant writes that they can have access only to, in the words of Rushdie, "an imaginary homeland" (10). Vassanji, like many other diasporic writers, feels that India or homeland is a distant vision and a remote memory. Salim, the narrator, has never visited India, the land of his origin, yet his connections are valid and can be lived only through imagination. Salim begins to realize that home is an imaginary place that he can never reach. His family is breaking up and the fear that haunts him is about the place where he should go. He feels that such place is nowhere to be found easily. He is confined to a basement in Canada from where he is assessing his position: "But home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I lost" (*TGS* 159). The sad fact is that he is a nowhere man, a homeless person dreaming of homes.

Migration affects the manner in which the members of the community see themselves and in trying to understand this, Rushdie views about migrant identity are useful when he asserts, "Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we



straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools” (210). The Shamsi immigrants take great pains to preserve their cultural conventions and traditions. The younger generations seek assimilation in the mainstream for the sake of survival, but they face resentment as Africans regard them with misgivings and misapprehensions. The Diasporas undergo psychic trauma after settling in another country where they feel there is no place which they can actually call theirs. Displacement from motherland generates total sense of disillusionment when shifting colonial powers destabilize them in the adopted land. The descendents of DhanjiGovindji bear the curse of homelessness in strongly compelling conditions. Salim provides a peep into the reasons behind leaving the home: “Have I followed a destiny? Satisfied a wanderlust that runs in the blood? ... I, like my forefathers before me, have run away. But what a price they paid. DhanjiGovindji, his self- respect and his sanity. His son, the joy of family life, the security of community life” (TGS 80). Loss of home, exile, displacement and nostalgia are common experiences for the unfortunate immigrants who are trapped by the circumstances to bear this painful condition. Vassanji, says Chandni Patel, explores the ways in which “individual identities are changed by journeys- their own, their ancestors’, and those of their community” (59). He shows the effects of multiple migrations on the lives of Indian immigrants.

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