

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

That modern literary practices and theories can set an elaborate preparatory ground to conduct an effective study is rightly proved by the application of new historical practice in this study. A new historical reading of M. G. Vassanji's novels and an inquiry into the fictional community of Shamsis established on the theoretical framework of new historicism is constructive and generative with several progressional estimations. Moreover, it also furnishes a far-reaching arena with tools of analysis appropriating socio-cultural appraisal.

The new historical apparatuses and concepts applied in the present study have been 'Anecdote', 'Thick Description' and 'Counter History.' However, the Anecdote and Counter History are more or less, interchangeable and are intended for similar purposes. Therefore, the chapters employing the modus operandi of anecdote and counter history investigate analogous avenues namely, inception, evolution, and progress of the Shamsi and Khoja Ismaili community.

The present study of a new historical reading of Vassanji's fictional community is affected by implanting certain parameters. The installed parameters or considerations have been the pertinence of new historical practice in deciphering a fictional community, the evolution and development of the community, and the personal dimensions of sustenance and the connotation of such paradigms in the present context.

The introduction chapter comprises the connotation of new historical practice in construing the submerged realities and counter histories of a few minority cultures limned in literature and M. G. Vassanji as procreator and representative of one such culture. The

second chapter incorporates the application of anecdote in studying the origin and evolution of Shamsi community and a brief survey of Khoja Ismaili community.

The third chapter includes the technique of thick description and its application in interpreting the ethnographic patterns of the community, various socio-cultural idiosyncrasies of the community, an analysis of distilled results and their relevance to the present context. The fourth chapter integrates world historical events paralleling the phenomenon occurring in community's history, the interplay between history and counter history, the onward stride of the community and the traits invigorating the forward movement.

The general observations and synthesis of the findings of the present study are furnished with passable validation. The technique of new historicism has been machinated and devised to ascertain in detail the history, socio-cultural practices and progress of a fictional community limned on M. G. Vassanji's fictional canvas.

The inferences derived from the fictional works can be classified according to the convenience of the study as well. Each pair of novels renders a separate set of ideas. For instance, *The Assassin's Song* and *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* relate to the factors enkindling religious fundamentalism and the syncretic faith as the former's foil. *Amriika* and *No New Land* focus on the conception of adoption and adaptation. *The Gunny Sack* and *The Book of Secrets* assist the readers to evolve and develop a comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural idiosyncrasies of the Shamsis.

However, the presence of overall conception is pervasive in all the select novels and the memoir. For this reason, an inclusive study of all the select works is conducted in

all the chapters generating a whole idea. The instances and case in points are dispersed all along the chapters and a systematic compartmentalisation yields a suppositional rundown.

The second chapter presents a thorough delineation of the evolutionary history of the fictional Shamsi community closely succeeded by an elaborate evolutionary history of the Khoja community on which the former is modelled. This object has been achieved by employing anecdotes which are fragmentary tales interrelating important narrations. It is ascertained by the researcher that Vassanji's Shamsi community shares several socio-cultural and religious aspects with the Khoja community in general and Khoja Ismaili community in particular.

The preliminary juncture of analysis is always a macro narrative as per the new historical practice. Relatively, anecdotes and trains of associations acquire precedence over rigorous particulars and seemingly, new historicism emphasises on hermeneutics over causal explanation. Nonetheless, the interpretation exacted out of the anecdotal analysis sets forth rational premises. An attempt has been made to substantiate the reliability of anecdotal analysis by furnishing an evolutionary history.

Synthesis of anecdotes and factual particulars juxtaposed with fictional circumstances is an intriguing practice of getting acquainted with history. Incorporation of anecdotes in literary analysis has been a most modern instrument, more or less, adopted from other disciplines in general and anthropology in particular. This approach of unfolding narratives by introducing anecdotes has been functional in denudation of the enshrouded counter history. The anecdotes of 'Pir Shama', 'Pir-Sadr-Deen' 'Nur Fazal' and so many others help in disentangling further the embroiled threads.

One of the most significant findings of the researcher has been that the unravelling of history as a potential mechanism for designing a better present. M. G. Vassanji is ardent in his method of entangling world history with the personal history of fictional individuals in his works in order to disentangle the present from the past. The author's intention has been to rummage through the untouched fragmented memory and distil a real history which carries several individual and collective identities of persons and communities.

M. G. Vassanji's memoir and the fictional works are some of the vital inputs for an explicit sociological and cultural interpretation. The select works furnish several particulars of a very significant era which has by some means escaped the official historical records. However, a reading of these works, taking into account the biographical elements of the author who has produced these works and the downplay information which is in one way or other the muse for the fictional plots and fictional characters like Salim in *The Gunny Sack*, Alfred Corbin in *The Book of Secrets*, and Ramji in *Amriika* render a meaningful analysis.

The Shamsi community chiefly modelled on the Khoja Ismaili community delivers a diachronic perspective encapsulating the origin, the progress and the contemporary condition. The anecdotal analysis of the Shamsi community espoused with historical data on Khoja community provides a life-size depiction of a particular community. A credible evolutionary history of the fictional Shamsi community is discussed and the probability of its being modelled on the Khoja Ismaili community is substantiated with an elaborate survey of the latter.

Further, Vassanji's narratives moving forward and backward in time and space, delve into some veiled truth and identity. The meandering time pattern, especially, the

backward sway from present to remote past and sometimes the origin, renders a passage of the community through time. Similar to the memoir, *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*, all the other select fictional works are written in the same fashion, comprised of memories, diaries, and so on.

As a matter of fact, this technique of transition to past by means of some very small token or relic represents a full-fledged era of the community history. The individual memory representing the collective memories of his or her particular community makes an impression, a carving bringing out the personal and communal chronicle. The interplay between the past and the present coordinating the dates, names and places chart chronological yet, unleashed archives.

The factors facilitating the origin of the Shamsi community alongside Khoja community in Northwestern part of India is adequately speculated. There have been mere passing references to the arrival of a Sufi Pir Bawa in the form of anecdotes and ancestral legends; however, the practice of anecdotal analysis renders room for infinite, yet, logical interpretation as it assists in building up the narrative. Moreover, the parallel reading of Khoja community and the fictional Shamsi community enable an illustrated survey of either of the communal groups. Besides, the economic motive behind the inception and dissemination of the Shamsis is conclusive, particularly the aspect of employment.

The contemporary context constitutes and supplements the recent historical aspects. Employment has been one of the objectives of immigration in the twentieth century and the century succeeding it. The colonial regime appointed labourers from colonies for blue-collar jobs. At present, the developed nations hire work force from third-world countries so that the benefit could be cost-effective. Recent economic affairs have witnessed mass

migration of work force from developing nations. As Pieterse observes, "In the 1960s, in the wake of the embourgeoisement or 'privatization' of the Western working class, Third Worldism fulfilled the desire for a new historical subject" (19).

It is palpable that there has been very modest research conducted on the particular Khoja community which acts as the model of the fictional Shamsi community. There has been some matter produced by the community scholars on the historical development of Khoja Ismailis, nonetheless, the written records are hardly ever accessible for general perusal. There is a little research and encyclopaedism accomplished in the study of Khoja Ismaili community and therefore, the author's interest to excavate the unexplored domains is explicable.

In the vein of the anecdotal analysis of the preceding chapter ascertaining the origin and development of the community, Geertzian Thick Description is another new historical device instrumentalised, in order to decrypt the cultural symbols from quotidian life and deliver a socio-cultural interpretation. The application of thick description technique yields dynamic and wholesome results by indulging in the dichotomy of classification and generalisation, shifts and alternations in the ethnic patterns.

Thick description technique has been attested to be a functional instrument in concentrating and diluting the data mustered with apposite prototypes. According to the modus operandi, the meanings are retrieved; symbols are deciphered and all inclusive versions are protracted. Particular elements are isolated, internal relationship between those elements is specified and eventually, the whole system is characterised in some general way. Likewise, cultural habits and social patterns are identified by isolating specific descriptions and then a common thread which binds them all is found.

Culture functions as a viaduct connecting the aesthetic and ethical consciousness of life. It is a blanket term enveloping various aspects of life, namely, social idiosyncrasies, food and dressing habits, festivals and ceremonies and religious and spiritual protocols. Accordingly the knowledge of the culture of any communal group or religious sect is required to specify, determine and analyse its explicit tendency. Conceivably, an exemplifying account of the socio-cultural habits of Shamsi community conveys decipherable speculations.

Apparently, cultural transformation along with evolution has been a recent phenomenon in the diasporic writing. Therefore, it is imperative to formulate a proportional study of the culture which has undergone considerable change during the process of diasporisation. Shamsi culture, despite its intactness and ne plus ultra state undergo modification during the diaspora, the ethno-graphical analysis has proved to be constructive.

The socio-cultural habits and patterns are corroborated with adequate illustrations and instances drawn from the fictional scenario. The socio-cultural behaviour of the Shamsi community reveals numerous potentials which are not just mere idiosyncrasies, but, capital guiding principles for enhanced and quality living. Emphasis on family ties, community living and Mukhiship which is unlike hereditary dominion based on the astuteness and experience of an individual, characterise a healthy community system.

Community solidarity is a very strong adhesion binding the community individuals to each other communally and morally. It keeps the position of the Shamsis fortified, impregnable and well-built against looming hostilities. This is discernible in all walks of

life including trade, social activities and spiritual means. Moreover, the cause of brotherhood and communal interest surpass all other convictions.

In addition, the unambiguous approaches to widow remarriage and integrity of social and moral sense are exemplary. Widow remarriage is recommended, encouraged and facilitated. Men marrying for the second time is customary in the oriental religions; however, the widowhood of women culminated with second wedding is exceptional. There are some conventional limitations in the name of conservatism; nevertheless, the freedom of woman in her widowhood to marry again is impervious. In *The Gunny Sack*, Moti's in-laws giving their own widowed daughter-in-law for remarriage is an extraordinary deed.

Another interesting finding of the present research has been the syncretic faith of the Shamsis which can be measured up as elevated and laissez-faire. The fictional Shamsi community prototyped on the Khoja Ismaili community explicates the features of the latter which is again presumably a religious tolerant communal sect. As the Khoja Ismaili sect has been proselytised from Vaishnavism to Islam, the community's approach towards either of the religions is non-interventionist and secular in outlook because the progressive attitude is their kernel motive. It can be ascertained that their flexible credence and welcoming reconciliation with change is a fulcrum aiding the movement of the community. On the whole, it can be observed as an immunity tool against the religious fanatic attitudes and a defence mechanism against the emergent religious antagonism.

In the contemporary period, the presence of 'reign of terror' administrated by religious fundamentalism and anesthetised fanaticism has been global. After the two Great Wars, the chronic phenomenon of terrorism sprouting from religious fundamental kernel appears to be the drastic aggression against humanity. The fundamentalist ideas emanate

inhuman toxin. As Peter Herriot observes, "The most basic characteristic of fundamentalism is that it is reactionary. Its basic stance is oppositional, as it is always hostile to an Other, whom it perceives as threatening" (9). Vassanji's partly fictional and partly actual prescription of syncretic faith is undeniably a dynamic and most effectual inoculation against the affliction of contemporary religious fundamentalism.

Vassanji's works have meticulously limned a macrocosm conciliating a marginalised and minority set of individuals, in order to illustrate the rapport between pretermitted parts to its whole. Evidently, there is some kind of gulf between the minority culture and mainstream culture which convenes impassivity and discriminations. What is more, such individuals belonging to a minority ethnic group, more or less, undergo a disagreeable experience which is flavoured with a sense of insignificance and lack of recognition.

Cultural transformation has been one of the inevitable characteristics of Shamsi culture over a period of time. This transition in cultural pattern has been owing to the unavoidable globalisation of culture and the approach of the Shamsis towards change and adaptation. Another factor influencing some variation in the Shamsi culture is the emergent trend of multiculturalism. The Canadian and American multicultural policies generate a conspicuous impact. Nonetheless, come what may, the nucleus stratum of the Shamsi ethnicity along with the cultural spirit remain unscathed and integral.

Another significant finding and observation of the researcher has been the fictional narratives juxtaposed with historical facts succeed in delivering embedded and hitherto concealed records. This is indeed one of the recent postmodern and new historical techniques assimilated for creating the archives of counter historical narratives from

individual and collective memories. The fictional instances limned in Vassanji's works synchronise well enough with the factual events to describe the backdrop and contextual information for the imaginary domains.

In addition to the fictional substantiation of these counter historical facts, the writer's memory itself, illustrated in his memoir, *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*, assists in revitalising and attesting to the interface of memory and engrafted narratives. The allusions to Vassanji's personal life and ancestral history rationalise, to some extent, the conclusions drawn on the socio-cultural and evolutionary developmental history of the Shamsi community. It can be inferred that there is some personal and autobiographical signature nuanced in the fictional narratives as well.

An inclusive bildungsroman history of the fictional community is delineated running parallel to the world history. These assorted occurrences facilitating the global experience of few individuals in a communal linkage is surmised in defining the uncharted history of a particular community running analogous to international history. The very inception of the community tallying with the historical glamour of geographical explorations and religious pilgrimages toward the current position of the community corresponding to the present globalised multiculturalism is scrupulously graphed between the lines of the texts. Further, the world phenomena like, the first wave of migration from Indian subcontinent to East Africa, the European colonial regime, the national movements in East Africa, the independence of the East African nations and so on, closely run alongside the consequential episodes of the Shamsi community's history.

However, it is apparent as well that the large-scale events leave an ineffaceable impact on the petite Shamsi community, thereby involving it in one way or the other in the

global phenomena. For instance, Idi Amin's proclamation to expel the Asians from Uganda visibly alarms the Shamsis in Tanzania owing to their family tree's roots in India.

Likewise, World War II which appears to be a remote experience for a small minority community living somewhere in the port towns and villages of East Africa, endure affliction and aggression from the European colonisers: English and the Germans as they fight carrying the Great War.

Vassanji's memoir proves to be an outstanding certificatory tool endorsing the ideas and thematical conjectures. The memories of the remote past and the present homecoming amalgamate and generate a synthesis of actualities and inferences. This finely tuned synthesis of memory, fiction and history confirm to be the most adequate paraphernalia ascertaining the vicissitudes in personal lives of a community. As a point of fact, this technique appeals to the writer and appears to be his predilection.

The functional use of individual and collective memory is far-reaching and of utmost importance, especially, in the case of a community which is, more or less, not documented. The procedure of recollection, selection, and replication of the same into textual archives as memoirs or fiction is utilitarian. Peter Gottschalk appraises the implication of collective memory: "The notion of group memory has found increasing currency among historians, anthropologists, and the mass media" (6). Memories of the individuals serve as the principal source for delimitating the socio-cultural history of a decentralised community and further, assist in extrapolating the community's potentialities which can perhaps be of all-inclusive significance.

The global experiences framing the fictional plot and circumstances supplement the backdrop and a purposive investigation of such phenomena as well. Various noteworthy

issues structure the flux and reflux of the Shamsi community including, waves of migration, colonial and postcolonial experience, multiculturalism, diaspora, globalisation and religious fundamentalism. Such contextual particulars allocate a meaningful and gainsaying inquiry.

Religious fanaticism and riots that result from the fundamentalist theories is one such pathogenetic calamity contemplated in the study. The works, specifically, *The Assassin's Song*, *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* and *Amriika* mull over the extreme and atrocious end results of the religious fundamental carnage. The community accommodated in the fictional terrains prototyped on the Khoja community embraces syncretic faith and, unlike the fanatics observes spirituality with generosity rather than ferocity. Moreover, the progressive and harmonious approach of these community individuals renders more distinct and lucid depiction of cacophony.

The syncretic faith of the community manifests a counteractive stratagem for the religious fundamentalism which is unremittingly espoused with hatred and carnage. The Godhra Kand furnished in *The Assassin's Song* and purposive reference to the aftermath of communal violence in *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*, divulge the stark realities defiling the sanctity of peace. It is made obvious that the thin line separating humanity and bestiality can be trespassed effortlessly. The antiphonal thoughts of the writer unveil his personal impressions in *The Assassin's Song*:

So troubling, so heartbreaking is this phenomenon we call the 'riot' in India that I find myself caught up in a need to understand, to grasp and comprehend the pure hatred for a fellow human being that lies behind the quality of violence that is inflicted on the innocent each time. Perhaps there

is no answer. We are too complex as a nation, too raw as a people, etc. But perhaps this madness to try to grasp the ungraspable is an affliction incurred from having lived away so long, in a culture where a rational answer is only a matter of effort. I have become naive, forgotten the skill of blinking at the right moment, letting the unspeakable pass away. Still, this is what I am.

(307)

Vassanji's manifestation of local feuds between Hindus and Muslims attests to the animalistic intuition of men to kill each other under the pretext of religion is the grotesque certainty. Karsan, the protagonist of *The Assassin's Song* asks the Pir Sahib, "Why do Hindus and Muslims hate each other?" Pir Sahib retorts: "They don't hate each other. They're only sometimes afraid of each other . . . and there are those among them who exploit that fear" (93). This premise that few self-centered persons devour and satiate their vulgar appetency by exploiting the interest of common man in the guise of religious fundamentalism is intelligibly pertinent in post-independent India.

The partitioning and sectionalisation of humanity on the basis of religion is all-inclusive. This segmentation had better to be noticeable no more than in the ways of worshipping and not conjuring religious insurrections. The Shamsi community seems casting aside the religious disparities and impressing upon the readers, the consensus of 'one God', " - There's nothing to choose, Karsan, we have been shown our path, in which there is neither Hindu nor Muslim, nor Christian nor Sikh, just the One. Brahman, the Absolute. Ishvar. Allah. God" (TAS 310).

*The Assassin's Song* limns coalesced effigy of India extolling secular mythoi and enduring the nemeses of separatism undercoated with religious and communal riots. Nur

Fazal, the Sufi saint in the novel stands for the secular and religious liberalism dotting on the faith of Hinduism and Islam. He is a patron reaching out for Hindu beliefs and seeking spiritual felicity in Islam. The paragons like love, righteousness, compassion and humility mutually underlying Hinduism and Islam constituted the canon of his religious impressions. Gadivaras, the followers of Nur Fazal adhered to the allegiances of the saint and promoted religious tolerance in Gujarat's Haripir. Haripir rivets around an image of utopia where the inhabitants tune the strings of Islamic beliefs and vibrate the melodies of Hindu Kirthans. Karsanwala's father, the Pir Baba erects forts of spiritual veneration with judicious mixture of puranic teachings and Islamic ideologies to his devotees.

The Sufi saint, Nur Fazal's mythical biography enamelled with spiritual apocalypses constitutes the narration of *The Assassin's Song*. The arrival of Nur Fazal, his miraculous feats, his theological values, and his legacy to the people of Haripir in the form of Pir Baag—all endowed in the novel fabricating a poignant memorandum. The charismatic tale of Nur Fazal in India forwards an invigorating vista of Hindu-Muslim accord where the Hindu ruler, Vishal Dev idealises a Muslim saint for his indomitable credence in universal divinity. The instance when the statue of Lord Shiva stirs and welcomes a Muslim saint is subtly hyperbolic, however, making plain the verity that whilst Gods do not discriminate their worshippers, why does man in futile try to swerve on foundation of religious conviction? Nur Fazal indoctrinates a consequential speculation in the course of his conversation with Vishal Dev venerating the attribute of religious tolerance of India and the significance of it:

'No, Great King, I am but a scholar and a man of God. My name means light, Your Majesty,' replied the sufi astutely, 'but you truly are the sun itself

in these realms. Your kingdom is known far and wide outside Hindustan as a haven of tolerance where differences in belief are not persecuted. There is but one Truth, one Universal Soul, of which we all are manifestations and whose mystery can be approached in diverse ways. That is my creed, and if called upon to advice or comfort, this is what I teach.' (TAS 10)

The set-up of the narrative is sophisticated, yet necessary as an explanation of not only Karsan's pre-travel worldview, but also the religious landscape of Pirbaag, which changes along with history. Hindus and Muslims in the fictional village of Haripir unite at the shrine, but gradually become aware of lines being drawn, from Partition in 1947 to wars with China and Pakistan. The story of Nur Fazal, though rendered in a more self-consciously archaic style, nevertheless illustrates the effort it takes to achieve multi-faith tolerance, and the ease with which it can be broken. The tale of Nur Fazal is embedded in the novel as an antidote for the stings of violence which are emulated by the communal holocausts.

*The Assassin's Song* lucidly expostulates that communalism is an ideology which affirms that society is divided into religious communities whose interests disagree and disparity in beliefs deprecate religious lenience. It also fortifies the premise that the antagonism practised by the people of one community against the people of other community and religion mould into the social deformity termed as 'communalism'. Communal hostility augments into sham acts like, human butchering, looting, dishonouring women and other such brutalities. Rabindranath Maharaj regards *The Assassin's Song* as, "a cautionary tale about the division of the world into zealous little factions" (33). Post-godhra impact delineated in the novel resonates the curses of a

ravished secular society where inter-religious brotherhood is massacred by egocentric individuals and their postulations.

The anatomy of migration is analysed with orientation to the community represented. The phenomenon of migration comports vital implications tracing the movement of a decentralised community through international traffic. In fact, it functions similar to a clincher or a decisive factor determining the kismet of the particular community. The migratory phenomenon is decisive in engendering numerous shifts in an immigrant's living pattern.

Taking into consideration, the apparatuses of memory, authorised amnesia and forgotten history, the observations pertaining to the counter historical aspect of the community are shaped. Patently, the community under study is a product of imagination, nonetheless, the resemblance with Khoja community and the personal nuances of the writer render a credulous interpretation. Vassanji's imaginary community accommodated in real historical terrains and living through large events unfolds the layers of forgotten past.

The history of a unique community running parallel to the large world events which have directly or indirectly shaped the contours of the former, projects a distinctive method of exploration. This theoretical framework regulating theoretic experiment espoused with imaginary experience is global, personal, social, cultural, anthropological, and historical. In fact, global vistas and episodes visualised from a personal standpoint render an insightful understanding. Hence, Vassanji's fictional characters representing personal expression wading in the mainstream traffic always appear to be reaching the junction of experience and information.

It is palpable that the confrontation with Western culture and Western ideologies surpassing the circumscribed and constricted space of the Shamsi individuals help the community to acquire a progressive foresight. The ethnic life of the community succumbs to a considerable transformation corresponding to their geographical shift across continents. However, the non-interventionist approach of the Shamsis enables them to reconcile with new-fangled and strange prospects and in turn, this cultural and geographical ceasefire between part and the whole contributes to a great extent in building up the community system.

Reconciliation with change is a sheath defending individuals against a sense of unfamiliarity. In fact, a person welcoming change is immune to the ailments and maladies which transpire hopelessness and antipathy. Change is a vital stimulant enabling the act of movement. There can be hardly any movement devoid of change. Change and movement are complementary. The abnegation of the latter makes the former static and stationary.

Vassanji's fictional community is established on the principles of reconciliation with change and initiation. The Shamsi individuals innovate and initiate an assortment of ways to survive and thrive. These traits attest to be very constructive and endow the sustainers with alternatives. Movement turns out to be progressive when accompanied by change and invention: "So you change and invent as you go along" (*Amriika* 211).

Socio-cultural and political perspective sufficing the function of an optical instrument, the writer studies the anatomy of religious riots. In addition, a diagnostic version of such man-made cataclysms is conceived as well. Vassanji ponders over riots in *The Assassin's Song*, "The 'riot' is a euphemism for intercommunal murder; it allows the perpetrators to go free, for rioters need not be charged, murderers must. And so they are

back again during the next conflict with their swords and their knives to feed once more on the blood of the innocents"(308).

Culture, society and history are allied terms complementing each other. Differences and similarities in different cultures in a society bring them together. Sometimes, a society is constituted by individuals embracing similar culture. History of culture explicates its affluence and ancestry. Cultural proposal is a determining factor in social mechanism. Analysis of a particular community's culture requires a scrupulous assessment of individuals and groups as is clearly given in the following passage:

Contemporary work on ethnicity often takes as its starting point an emphasis on the social mechanisms of ascription and categorisation through which individuals define commonalty and 'difference' from others. In the context of urban complex societies anthropologists are increasingly running up against the limits of the discipline's structural-functionalist premises of holism and integration which creates problems in conceptualising 'society' and 'culture.' (Qtd. in Campbell 169)

Literary texts work beyond literary gratification, elucidation and education. These function as stimulants inspiring and invigorating ideas. Ammons concurs, "In my experience many people care intensely about altering the world in positive ways and are drawn to literature because, in addition to pleasure, they seek inspiration" (XI). The present dissertation is an interdisciplinary study yielding noteworthy outcomes which entail passable deliberations. The principal focus of the dissertation has been literary texts and literary theories. Nonetheless, the disciplines, namely, history, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies are conspicuously complected into the contents and the end result. Further,

every single discipline appears to be having ineluctable correlation with other disciplines forming an interactive nexus.

The study has been conducted within its stated scope and limitations. The select fiction and nonfiction works of M. G. Vassanji are interpreted with special reference to the community of individuals delineated and the interpretation is facilitated by applying the new historical practice. The investigation is established on either of the concrete and abstract facts and theories respectively, in order to divulge an interpretation corroborating germane approximations.

Nonetheless, the select works of M. G. Vassanji under the present study are surcharged with abundant scope for potential research in the future. The recommendations for future research directions are copious. However, on a broader scale, the potential researches can be presumably labelled as, multidisciplinary and inclusive. Certainly, these works fit the definition and role of writers proposed by Amin B. Sajoo in his article entitled "Civil Imagination after September 11, 2001," published on the website of *Ismaili Institute*:

This is where educators, writers, artists and public intellectuals play a crucial role. They shape our social imaginaries, the way in which we picture the world we inhabit. Shared public images lie behind how we understand ideas like 'democracy,' 'justice' and 'religion' - and act accordingly. . . . It is in this sense that the poet Shelley deemed writers to be the 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'

Vassanji's works attract ample recommendation for further research in various disciplines and particular areas, to mention a few: Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Studies,

Sociology, Theology, History, Anthropology and Political Science. The fictional narratives contain many sociological elements and therefore, will make an ideal subject for a sociological study. The political ideologies in a colonial and postcolonial Africa can be investigated with reference to Vassanji's novels set in East Africa. Likewise, cultural aspect is abundantly explicit and in different dimensions, for instance, multiculturalism, diasporic culture and the culture of the particular community which is already discoursed in the present thesis.

The novels, *The Gunny Sack*, *The Book of Secrets*, *No New Land*, *Amriika*, and to some extent the memoir, furnish colonial and postcolonial regimes. The European imperial governance of English and the German is vibrantly elaborated in *The Gunny Sack* and *The Book of Secrets* furnishing with a postcolonial panorama from either of the colonised and the coloniser's perspective. Consequently, the novels have sufficient range for exploration in postcolonial study.

The historical episodes and phenomena supplementing the backdrop of the fictional and reminiscent narrative, invite further excavation into the area under discussion. Particularly, the national movements in East Africa, the Great Wars, the formation of Tanzania and so many other historical allusions are furnished alongside the narration. Moreover, in *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*, the excursions are excavations into immediate and remote history dating from the invasion of Gazni upto the Godra Kand in Gujarat.

Following the same line, the historical and socio-cultural nuances of the particular community limned in the works invoke inquisitiveness and profuse research interest. The syncretic faith of the prescribed community is significant and research worthy from the

religious or theological point of view as well. There can be numerous arguments, debates and theories extracted from the peculiar spiritual facet of the community individuals.

Further, the theoretical framework applied here - New Historical practice testifies to be a constructive critical and diagnostic instrument. Despite its recent emergence and short span of ontogenesis, the practice appears to be consequential. It is indisputably an effectual approach shaping ideas and dealing with global and human experiences. Schmitz opines, "New Historicism considers literature as being just one among a multitude of social discourses that all participate in establishing and interpreting a common view of the world and of human society" (160).

The writer's memories encapsulating the collective memories of his people, places, nations and time unlock portmanteaux of souvenirs which are all set for an exhibit in the museum. The display can be successful only if it is aligned, coordinated, and organised methodically alongside with explanation of adequate particulars. Accordingly, literature is one such systematic and prolific means of representation. It is worthwhile to make a note of the observation made by Drake here, "Don't be afraid to lay claim to the collective memories of your family, your tribe. Writing memory poems can be a process of self-definition"(26).

In addition to this, the application of theoretical techniques and practice on such literary texts is bound to yield lucid understanding. Ideas mined from theoretical quarries are multidimensional. Clifford Geertz asserts, "Theoretical ideas are not created wholly anew in each study; as I have said, they are adopted from other, related studies, and, refined in the process, applied to new interpretive problems" (26). The literary analysis of these texts with the precision of theoretical practices is bound to yield interpretations

which subsequently engender cogent ideas. Complying with the above stated premises, the application of new historical practice in the present study, in order to assess the fictional community accommodated in Vassanji's fictional domains and the actual community of his ancestry related in his memoir, generate comprehensive outcomes.

The predicament of a minority community, the drastic impact of Africanisation, racial and national discrimination, struggle to sustain and survive, adopt and adapt, embracing change and hope are so many input and output estimations derived from actual and fictional instances. The contexts in which Shamsis and Khojas succeed in their settlement in East Africa stipulate their audacity and enterprising fortitude; their ability to make most of the opportunities and cull out optimal profits from them; to adapt and assimilate the variegating drifts.

Michael Jackson avers, "The world is thus something we do not simply live and reproduce in passivity, but actually produce and transform through praxis, creating a sense that life is worth living . . ." (XXII). What is left behind is equally imperative as what lies ahead, defining, projecting and leading the way onward. Tout ensemble, the world can turn into a better haven for the survivors and infirmary for the sufferers with some hope. This hope can be instilled when people are prepared to change for good, to adopt, to adapt, to compromise, to secularise, and to strive so that they will be making the sum total of unwavering and peaceable progress.