

## Chapter IV

### Ellipses in the History

"Hope is a way of acting. It implies more than faith, need or dream"(Aronson 10). Vassanji's fictional community driven by hope marches indomitably onwards sweeping over impediments and negotiating with adversities. The watershed episodes of the world history constitute all the landmarks of the community's itinerary on one hand. On the other hand, the account of Vassanji's community tags along the world phenomenal events constituting the ellipses of history.

The author's intentions, ideologies, and cultural nuances are imperative in the analysis of literary text. The manipulation of ideology in circulation which is contemporary to the articulation or production of the text is one of the principal apparatuses of the new historicists. In some instances, the practice of new historicism has been referred to as 'poetics of culture' by Stephen Greenblatt and it is alleged that the object of a poetics of culture is to investigate those cultural practices that make works of literature possible.

There are two rudimentary foundations underscoring the new historicists' methodology. The first one is to approach a literary work treating it as a discourse containing ideological products. The second is affected by the school's credence that literature is one of many representative texts of an era. A text is an encrypted documentary latently deporting composite construct. According to Veenstra, "A text is much more than a written, linguistic phenomenon. Contrary to most of the objects of many of the sciences, a text is produced by humans, and as a human-made object it is radically informed by all the forces that condition and shape our societies and histories" (178).

Greenblatt integrates self and society ascertaining the interplay between the social culture and the individual identity. Moreover, his practice aims at a close reading of petite and less popular cultural debris and ransacks them in order to expatiate. Greenblatt's meticulous and insightful analysis highlight that a text is educated by the same cultural dialectics as society at large. The socio-historical context of a text conditions its textual representations and similarly a text enlightens and sometimes even configures the historical process. Accordingly, a text considered as a social practice is a representation of macro level of the social order where individual is the nucleus. Samaddar remarks, "Archives produce documentary proof; in the same way the literary texts become the evidence of the cultural theorist" (194).

The practice of new historicism proposes a subjective approach to literature and according to it, an individual's identity is fashioned by social institutions. The supposition that literature is a social construct which is shaped by the society and reciprocally is active in reshaping the culture of that society, is contingent dialectics. In fact, literature is a cultural edifice reinforced by more than one consciousness. Accordingly, social, political, religious, and economic agents of a certain society ascertain the text it generates. These factors circulating in a society through social energy are encrypted in the works of art, thereby, propounding the governing collective predilections. Lois Tyson's views are worth considering in this context:

In a similar manner, our subjectivity, or selfhood, is shaped by and shapes the culture into which we were born. For most new historicists, our individual identity is not merely a product of society. Neither is it merely a product of our own individual will and desire. Instead, individual identity and its cultural milieu inhabit, reflect, and define each other. Their relationship is mutually constitutive (they create each other) and dynamically unstable. (284)

The principal object of new historical practice is to concentrate on the voiceless, oppressed, marginalised and dispossessed. It focuses on analogous conceptions of intertextuality of literature, history and political ideologies. The practitioners of new historicism recommend that the delineation in literary texts is not merely the imitations of pragmatism, but they also act as a catalyst in concretising and unveiling socio-political encryptions.

In point of fact, the historical narratives catering to the marginalised and unrecognised voices represent the primary focus of the new historical practice. A plurality of voices and an equal representation of historical narratives from all cultural groups facilitate to guarantee veridical social consciousness. However, it is obvious that historical representation from all ethnic groups is absent in the historical journals and this dearth of equal representation renders a deficient version. Hence, new historicism attempts to promote the progress and dilate the awareness of the histories of marginalised people. For Kaes says, "In this light, literature seems less like an expression of social norms (as in traditional social history) and more like a medium for an intricate appropriation and interpretative reading of the world" (156).

Literary texts contain historical consciousness which is imperative in contemplating both people and time. Matthew Wilson enunciates, "Historical consciousness, leavened by the imagination, allows us all, no matter what our experience and ethnicity, to know where we all stand in the present" (97). There can be two modes of comprehending and appraising world history. This twofold process encapsulates the perusal of grand civilisations on the one hand and the itinerary of minority cultures which have prioritised mobility on the other. In the context of latter, Geyer opines:

It has its origins in the histories of discovery, maritime empires, and nomadic formations - including, not least, the histories of forced and voluntary migration.

It is a history of mobility and mobilization, of trade and merchants, of migrants and diasporas, of travelers and communication. It is a history, ultimately, of rootlessness with the more general issue of 'nomadism' or its maritime equivalent, 'piracy,' shadowing it. Key words for this history are 'diaspora' and 'borderlands,' both as the 'privileged site for the articulation of [national] distinction' and as the site for hybrid and mixed identities, created at the crossroads of many histories. This history comes in many contemporary (Hong-Kong Chinese, Indian, Jewish, Palestinian, Chicano, Asian-American, and Caribbean) as well as ancient (Hellenism, Inner Asia) or localist (Silesia, the Alsace, Michigan's Upper Peninsula) inflections. (1039)

Greenblatt has a preference for discourse of particularity and idiosyncrasies over master narratives. He posits literary text in the matrix of history and in doing so debunks the mutuality between literature and historical dimensions in an attempt to articulate the role of collective beliefs and the shaping experiences. The manipulations of the new historical practice imbibe the decrees issued in order to animate the undermined versions. Veaser in his article entitled "Re-Membering a Deformed Past: (New) New Historicism," points out, "New Historicism relates an alternative history, presents transcripts that are not only 'hidden' but also crooked, misquoted, gibbous, and defaced. It digs out the powerfully disturbing anecdotes that incubate within booming triumphalist histories"(4).

The article—"Counter History and the Anecdote" in the book *Practicing New Historicism* hypothesises the corroboration of anecdote and counter history as a motif of the practice. New historicists' exercise of anecdote being a methodological preference is a machinery in excavating counter historical narratives. Counter history is deliberated as an

adversary to the dominance of the grand narrative and truncated existences of marginalised communities. *Practicing New Historicism* establishes the conception of counter history in a cogent approach:

We take the term from Amos Funkenstein, who finds its earliest instances in rabbinical polemics against the Gospels, but who applies it to the early stages of secular history as well. Counter-history opposes itself not only to dominant narratives, but also to prevailing modes of historical thought and methods of research; hence, when successful, it ceases to be 'counter.' (52)

Catherine Gallagher in "Counter History and the Anecdote" in *Practicing New Historicism* quotes Raymond Williams and Michel Foucault in order to assert their impressions and approach towards counter history. Williams rummaging through the contours of counter history in literary texts distils counter historical elements from literature, "Williams, however, did not read literature as the direct expression of otherwise forgotten mentalities, but rather as the record of submerged, semiconscious structures. He read literature as the history of what hadn't quite been said"(62). Moreover, his locutions like 'counter history' and 'ideological critique' leave an indelible impression, "One implication of Williams's work is that literature itself can be read as counterhistory, but first one would have to abandon or drastically modify the kind of 'ideology critique' that had formed the standard fare of literary critics on the Left" (60).

Michel Foucault is another very important theorist and his conjectures on power have a striking impact on the new historical practice. His, "Lives of Infamous Men," which he refers as 'anthology of existences' is a kind of exposition on the quotidian lives of individuals who are enveloped in the murkiness of unpopularity and hardship. Catherine Gallagher distinguishes Foucault, "Michel Foucault was one counterhistorian who consciously tried to root sentimental

nostalgia for such beings out of his work and yet confessed in the late 1970s that encounters with those who remained unassimilated into the narratives of power had always animated his studies" (66).

The untrodden spheres are trespassed by the new historicists in order to draw the radius from the margins to the centre of the circle of human existence. The individuals residing in liminal space enduring a sense of disorientation and displacement; persons and arenas maladjusted and trodden with vulnerability comprise the populace of such counter historical versions. These recessed, shrouded and elapsed narratives are surfaced by engaging anecdotal methods which are triumphant in mining such extraordinary substance from canonical texts as well. Catherine Gallagher in *Practicing New Historicism* explicates:

Counterhistories have tried instead to revive that alterity, fostering disciplinary eccentricity; and it was that eccentricity that the anecdote carried into literary criticism as well. The force field of the anecdote pulled even the most canonical works off to the border of history and into the company of nearly forgotten and unfamiliar existences. There literature's own dormant counterhistorical life might be reanimated: possibilities cut short, imaginings left unrealized, projects half formulated, ambitions squelched, doubts, dissatisfactions, and longings half felt, might all be detected there. They were buried beneath the surface, no doubt, but would stir, one hoped, at 'the touch of the real.' (74)

History pursued and interpreted through anecdotes is counter history. This counter history is opposed to dominant narratives and estranged from popular modes and methodological conveyance of history. It is subverted narration rendering numerous possibilities of reformed

present. Greenblatt believes that, "Both counterfactual and alternate histories are thought experiments starting from fictional suppositions . . ." (53).

The subverted narratives which reverberate the archives of abandoned reality are the underscoring insignia of counter history. These obscured and interred annals call for vents to emerge in view the practice of new historical reading satisfies the object of exhuming such themes, "The new historicist anecdote was a conduit for carrying these counterhistorical insights and ambitions into the field of literary history" (54).

This progression of arguments establishes the premise that counter history is antithetical to dominant historical discourse and perhaps there are means to harvest it. Counter memory can be reckoned as a potential mechanism of narrating veiled and obliterated past. Historical narratives commence with the totality of human existence and subsequently propel towards particular actions and events within that totality. Whilst, counter-memory begins with the specific and the particular and eventually navigate in a centripetal axis, counter-memory excavate into the past seeking for the concealed histories obviated from dominant narratives. The object of this appliance of counter memory is to bring to the surface the submerged memories and drowned versions of collective memories; to enrol into the public discourse, "In a land without history whoever supplies memory, shapes concepts, and interprets the past will win the future" (Qtd. in Esbenshade 72).

There are some cultures just confined to the individual memories and slip away through the passage of time. Such cultures are at the verge of extermination owing to the dearth of space they occupy in popular history and their marginalised standing in the social order. This calls forth an investigation into the remote and near past enfolded in transitional phases and

transformational modes. Therefore, it is indispensable to muster fragmented data from individual and collective memories to conceive certain cultural patterns and identities.

A new historical interpretation of M. G. Vassanji's works is prone to divulge the dominant ideologies prevalent during the creation of his works to the contemporary period and the metamorphosing cultural identity of a particular community. Social and cultural practices mould the author's receptiveness and the product of his imagination. The counter histories' narratives embedded underneath the memory of fictional characters like Ji Bai from *The Gunny Sack* and Ramji from *Amriika* running parallel to the popular historical events like Indian migration to East Africa and American counter culture respectively, demystify a whole new communal identity. Colonialism, waves of migration, eurocentricism, African nationalism, postcolonial era, religious multicultural policies of America and Canada, religious fundamentalism in America and India impacting the communal identities of Shamsis compose the cartography of Vassanji's terrains.

Shamsi community individuals representing the marginalised, and identities existing in the liminal space aid in interpreting the interplay between part and the whole especially the part which is unnoticed and submerged underneath the circulation of cultural hegemonies. Nevertheless, the tenor of such indistinct and inaudible voices is modulated by the frequency and plangency of the activities fashionable at large scale. These activities are either sustaining accelerators or unconstructive disruptions however, the impact is considerable on the shaping of such minority communities' destinies. Despite the fact that the space occupied by these overlooked communities is negligible, their cultural course of living and social identity is contingent on the international drift.

Despite the fact that, the records of Khoja community on which Shamsi community is modelled have escaped the attention of historians and official archives, the collective memory of the community individuals assist in renovating and arraying a sequential narration emphasising the progress and transformation. This *modus operandi* of rummaging and reassembling the detected anecdotes from the memory constitute the framework of such containment. As Vassanji him self says in *The Gunny Sack* ". . . I stopped to examine the collective memory - this spongy, disconnected, often incoherent accretion of stories over generations"(75).

Vassanji's narration embarks on parallel tracks unravelling imaginary tale and historical episodes simultaneously. More or less, all his narrations are reminiscences of the past penetrating the present through diaries and other relics. His characters appreciate the responsibility of memory and the contours rendered by jumbling and assembling it. As Ji Bai said, "Mememory . . . is this gunny sack [. . .] I can put it all back and shake it and churn it and sift it and start again, re-order memory, draw a new set of lines through those blots, except that each of them is like a black hole, a doorway to a universe [. . .] It can last for ever . . ." (305).

The historical chapter of the rampant mobilisation of individuals and goods across the borders is the factual information communicated in all texts and in Vassanji's creative regime as well. Whilst, the birth of Shamsi ethnic community, the proselytising of Vishnu devotees into Sufi followers under the direction of Pir Shama and the submerged reality contemporary to the same era is embedded in the memories of the fictional characters who articulate the historical consciousness of bygone times. Vassanji, himself is assiduous in this enterprise of rescuing the drowning past with the assistance of narration and this is palpable in his memoir effusing personal and historical facts voicing out a specific chronicle.

The evolution of Shamsi community has been noteworthy foregrounding the human mobilisation of fourteen and fifteenth century in terms of commercial traffic, pilgrimage and geographic expedition owing to the widening of topographical avenues. India in general and the coastal provinces in particular had been extensively affected by this upsurge of trespassing precincts especially for lucrative transaction. The maritime trade linking the Western coastal India and the Eastern coastal Africa has served as a conduit between two trading polls and catalyst setting off the first wave of migration which carried away the Shamsi community. However, religious missionaries and pilgrims embarked on similar navigation after realisation of their spiritual enterprise in offering their precepts as therapy for many sufferers. This eventual proselytising inculcated diametrical consequences in the form of intracommunity comfort and intercommunity conflict which is yet another factor triggering the migration of the neonatal community individuals.

The first wave of migration transporting Indians to the other colonies of Britain has been an imposing cusp in the history deflecting the course of individuals' lives. This highlighted entry in the historical journal corresponds to the mobilisation of Dukawallah community from the Western part of India which constitutes more or less a mythical memory of the Shamsi individuals. Trade being their prioritised concern, the traders had set off for the hub of commercial ventures. In addition, the communal disturbance in India accelerated their passage as well, as testified by *The Gunny Sack*:

But that was the puff that grew into a wind. India was only beginning to feel its seams. It was due to community conflicts, with origins in that conversion some three centuries before, that my young great-grandfather Dhanji Govindji, sporting an umbrella, a new turban and new leather shoes, but otherwise quite

undistinguished, left Junapur early one morning on a bullock cart on the road to the harbour town of Porbander. (8)

Diaspora is the crucial experience acting as an agent of socio-cultural transformation in the lives of the Shamsi community. The African diaspora is one of the characteristic diasporas which is analogous to that of the Jewish, Greek, and the Armenian ethnicities. The expression of immigration and diaspora intersperse the confluences of migratory trajectories. Debentured labourers and the traders surmounting maritime commerce succeed in procuring passage to East Africa.

There are several fertile intersections in the lives of Shamsi individuals owing to the complex diaspora phenomena. There are certain questions that this brief account of the East African Indian diaspora brings to the foreground. The Indians in East Africa conducted by the colonial administration as debentured labourers and by economic motives as traders can be distinguished as labour / trade diaspora.

However, by the turn of the century and after two generations of settlement, the vibrant traders entered into the civil and administrative services as well which thereby is described as administrative diaspora. The concept of trade diaspora is undeniably allocated for long trading relations that Gujarati Indians had had with the East African coast. However, the procedure of Africanisation and Idi Amin's callous strategies of Asians' expulsion discerned the East African Indians 'victim diaspora,' in consequence comparable to the Jewish, Armenian, and African American traditions.

The European imperial regiment instituted in East Africa acted like a fulcrum drawing in the Indian immigrants and by and by, manipulating their sojourn. The British and the Germans succeeded in extending their colonial dominion by means of diplomacy, commerce and cost-

effective credentials. The British conducted trade with Zanzibar and further patronised the 'sultan.' As a result, the diplomatic kinship progressed further and the English attained their object of colonising East Africa. In 1884, the German explorer, Karl Peters, travelled inland from Zanzibar and spent the next several months collecting signatures on treaties from local African chiefs on behalf of his organisation—'Society for German Colonialism.' Bismarck recognised his efforts and accepted the treaties as the basis for a German claim over East African territory.

World history records the imperial regiment of European power in East Africa which constitutes a very important chapter in the colonial chronicles. The impact of this crucial phase on the immigrant Shamsi community enables it to render its auto version, encapsulating individual and community experience. The political ideologies, principally based on the colonial interest and circulation of cultural hegemonies represent the core of intercolumniation space between coloniser and colonies.

The colonial regime pervading in the East African countries regulating the imperial aura manipulates the group identity of the Shamsis as well. The Indians share more conceptive affiliation with the English and are obliged to the British colonial authorities for conferring British passports and citizenship, nonetheless, the influence of German is manifested among the Indians. In some way or other, the German interference and authority have been inescapable for the traders in spite of their non-aligned position. The voice of the Shamsis muffled under the totalitarian sway of European colonisers had to endure the ruthless measures imparted by the Germans as well, "German justice was harsh, swift and arbitrary" (TGS 17).

Anglo-centricism is one of the attributes that renders subtlety to the socio-cultural approach of the Shamsis in East Africa. The Shamsis labelled as British Indians adopt an anglicised affiliation and are drawn towards the superordinate division, "They spoke proudly of

Churchill and Mountbatten, fondly of Victoria. What schoolboy or girl had not heard over the radio the reassuring chimes of Big Ben before falling asleep, or the terrified voice of Dickens's Pip, the triumphant voice of Portia, the Queen's birthday message" (NNL 22-23).

Nonetheless, this patriotic inclination towards the English had been unable to curtail the marginalised and substandard status. Fictional premises accommodating Shamsi community demarcates the ordeal of Asians in the colonised Tanzania suppressed by imperial rule and reviled by the natives in the pre-independence era and the plight of Asians in democratic Tanzania in the post-independence era as well. The imperial rule seems both a benediction and a veto for the Asian community interwoven with African experience. Andru Peek in his review of *The Gunny Sack*, enunciates, "Though it presents a powerful account of suffering and the hard, sometimes brutal treatment of Asian Africans at the hands of blacks and whites, it also describes marvellously involved patterns of interconnection between black and Asian African experience" (63). It proves a blessing by bestowing opportunity for fruitful trading and proves unfavourable as the symptoms of imperial ailment infect the Asians as well. However, the Asian interlopers endure an 'in-between' position exploited by Europeans and detested by the natives.

More or less, all the international events including the world wars have touched the social and cultural identity of the Shamsi community. The Second World War has triggered off a chain of events in the European colonies and East Africa witnessed many such waves of hostilities. The resultant Anglo-German conflict in the African territories had a substantial impact on the social and economic life of Shamsi community. Vassanji says about such conditions in his *The Gunny Sack*:

It was August 1915. . . . News of the war reached them through word of mouth and gossip in the village, and dispatches from Sheth Samji in Dar es Salaam.

Exports to India and Britain had stopped, there were shortages of food and stockpiles were being depleted, and the government had introduced the one-rupee note to conserve metal. . . . The prevailing mood among the Indian dukawallahs of Tanganyika was that of uncertainty; of being alien subjects in a time of war. (53)

The Anglo-German conflict in Africa, corollary to the world wars has been a distinct version of the great wars. This impenetrable hostility between the British and German troops imparts inhibitory and suffocated state for the immigrant Shamsi community. The wedged individuals are compelled to act upon either of the party's interest as, spies; or fight and die. Moreover, economic drain is burgeoned forth as a result of monetary exploitation, eventually unsettling and violating the economic security of the Dukawallah community.

The in-between world becomes the wretched abode of the Indian traders. The Indian community being very minor and non-native undergoes a traumatic experience due to the sense of insecurity and acrimony of homelessness. The Indians dread for their lives during the collision between English and Germans as some of them support Germans and some of them are bribed to serve English and are altogether desperate to survive, "What worries me is that now there is no manuari to defend us . . . how long before the British cannonballs go flying through our roofs? The Mdachis have had it, you think? The Mdachis are trembling. To the north are the British, to the west the Belgians, and to the south are also the British" (TGS 52).

The apprehension of Indians is augmented by the adverse closure of their trade and the overwhelming horrendous emotions of impending warfare between the colonial interlopers. The wreckage of economic potency ushers an impregnable sense of loss and insecurity among the Indians. The Asians suffer on account of sense of alienation as well. Michael Bucknor in his review of *The Gunny Sack*, avers, "Unfamiliarity contributes to the sense of alienation that they

experience on arrival" (16). They regret their unsettled position as *The Gunny Sack* delineates, "They could attack Matamu from the sea, or they could land troops here and march to Dar es Salaam. Tell the other Indians what I have said. If the British attack, the Africans can run to the bushes, but where will you run?" (55).

Divided loyalties and factional allegiances had been a consequential malady affecting the socio-cultural and economic consciousness of the Shamsi minority communal group. The Indians unlike the other foreign trespassers remain tranquil and ingest the assault which is in the form of social and economic threats which is echoed in *The Book of Secrets*, "How do the little people fare in a war between big powers? In answer, the Swahili proverb says, 'When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers'" (149).

Repression is another apposite term designating the ordeal of the Indian immigrants under the command of warfare. The commercial and social routines of the Shamsis are disquieted by the callous cacophony of the hostilities between Germans and English as described in *The Book of Secrets*, "It was late in the night. Pipa and his wife had woken early that day, before dawn, to the distant sounds of guns, and like the rest of the town, had waited in anticipation of whatever else was to happen" (122).

The egotistical interests of imperial rule have always been a catalyst in the exploitation of the colony and it is certifiable in the case of Tanzania as well. Vassanji supplies a version of Imperial governance in East Africa levying its superfluous overtures on the natives arbitrating an unremunerative influence on the lives of Indians. The administrative policies implemented by the English disoblged the commercial tidings of the well-established Asians. *The Gunny Sack* realistically brings out the situation, "During the hartal of 1923, the strike called by Indian shopkeepers to protest against the Government's requirement that accounts be kept in English,

they had to close the stall even when they could ill afford to, they didn't have a shilling in the house" (156).

Nationalistic revolts pursuing the vein of liberty from the imperial governance is an inevitable segment of colonial history. Maji Maji and Mau Mau rebellion are unique and contribute importantly to the national movements in the history of East Africa and the events are no doubt narrated in the political science versions. The impact of these insurrections on the Indian Shamsis who are ostracised and disregarded is traumatic. Vassanji's characters retrieve from their memory lane the stark circumstances surged as a product of these disruptions.

East Africa possessed with national revolutionary spirit strikes on the Shamsis in either pre-independence or post-independence eras. The mutiny of Maji Maji and Mau Mau punctuate the nationalistic flare of the Africans prior to independence underscoring antagonism against the colonisers, whilst, the post-independence national mutiny has been against the Asians branding them as exploiters, stigmatising the entire community for unscrupulous demeanour.

Maji Maji rebellion had been a belligerent device of the Natives against the German imperialists. This technique grounded on the Native medicines and conducted by a medicine man contrived to defy the callousness of the German authority involved the Shamsis either by force or by choice which is brought out clearly in *The Gunny Sack*, "If you refused to take the medicine, it was said, straightaway you would receive a spear in your belly. And if you took the oath and went about chanting 'Maji maji maji maji . . . ' and were caught, straightaway you would be strung up from the nearest mango or mbuyu tree" (18-19).

Similar to the Maji Maji rebellion, the Mau Mau uprising has been another momentous event in the history of nationalistic movement in East Africa. Mau Mau, principled on secret oaths and secret society originated in Kenya and flourished largely among Kenyans; however, it

motivated patriotic fervour among Natives in neighbouring countries and disseminated kernel ideas for Maji Maji uprising. This means of restitution and remonstrance against the British imperial rule had a little toll on the Indian Shamsi community as well. "The dreaded words were Mau Mau" (TGS 85).

Similar to the national uprisings and international conflicts, the Zanzibar revolution of 1964 impressed mayhem in the lives of the trader community. The Zanzibar Revolution of 1964 has witnessed the downfall of the Sultan of Zanzibar and his principally Arab government by local African revolutionaries. Zanzibar has been an ethnically diverse state consisting of a number of islands off the east coast of Tanganyika and it had been granted independence by Britain in 1963.

However, a succession of parliamentary elections resulted in the Arab minority resuming the grip on power which it had inherited from Zanzibar's former state as an overseas territory of Oman. Afro Shirazi Party (ASP), held responsible for the revolt has been frustrated by under-representation in the Parliament despite winning fifty four percentage of the votes in the July 1963 election. The principally African Afro-Shirazi Party allied itself with the left-wing Umma Party and early on the morning of 12 January 1964 ASP member John Okello mobilised around 600-800 revolutionaries on the main island of Unguja.

The trader's community from India extrapolated the circumstances and secured asylum in the colonial vicinity. There are factors absolving the panic of the traders as they have been the ones who established relationship with Arab traders and eventually moved into the trading centres. The Indians had a virtual control on Zanzibar's lucrative trade in the 19th century and employed as the Sultan's exclusive agents, monopolised the market.

Accordingly, the Indian Shamsis had to share the fate of the Arab people or leastwise, had to dread the possible impeachment of being allied with the accused. Somehow, the target of the Zanzibar revolution was the execution of Arabs; nevertheless, the Indians had to undergo trepidation and panic because of the horror of retribution. The transfer of power from one hand to the other—from the Sultan to the self-government, bringing in political changes had been a source of apprehension and anxiety for the Indian Shamsis.

Nonetheless, the Dukawallah's community cutting through all these elusive junctures keeps commuting onwards. The king's rule in India; the twofold colonial rule in East Africa; the self-government in postcolonial Africa; the democratic and federal policies of the United States and Canada are political interludes in the communities interminable itinerary. However, the principal concern of the Shamsis has been the security of their trade and their family in either of the all-inclusive stationary and transitional phase, "Among the trading immigrant peoples, 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 60).

Another watershed episode in the economic and political history of independent East Africa has been the Africanisation of all important sectors including commerce and administration. It is undeniable that this measure had enforced unfavourable state of affairs for the Dukawallah community and the nationalisation of private properties of the Indians pulverised their economic solidity. Somehow, this drastic measure jeopardising the socioeconomic security of Shamsis recommended another move and another new relocation in other countries.

Africanisation closely following the independence has been a counteractive measure adopted by the self-government pursuing restitution. This implied a form of confirmatory feat to

rectify racial anomalies within the government sector that had been prevalent during the rule of the British administration. However, the consequences of this governmental strategy turned out to be unwholesome and cataclysmic for the Indian community which had counterproductive subtlety on the whole as understood from Vassanji's works. The Indians were forced to take early retirement or in several cases were relieved of their jobs.

The metamorphosis of Tanzania from an acquiescent colony into an egalitarian country is suggested in *The Gunny Sack*, *The Book of Secrets* and *No New Land*. The transitional phase of Tanzania with its amendments in the social, political and economical milieus crystallises the changing plight of Asians and other non-native communities as well. The Asians who have been living a satisfactory life in the imperial administration, flourishing in their tradecraft receive a severe downfall at the hands of self-government which embarks on the strategy of 'nationalisation.'

The nationalisation of private assets had an adverse effect on the Asians who have been utterly reliant on merchandising. This recession in the domain of minor communities produces harrowing impact on them and convinces to alter their conservative way of living, which is depicted through *The Gunny Sack*, "And after the election, which TANU won for the Africans, Asian started telling Asian, We must change, we must diversify. The duka is doomed. We must go into industry, into the professions, into farming, we must move into other economic sectors. Wait and see, said others, the British have not left yet" (170).

The Asians endure a pugnacious and inconsiderate conduct from the newly constituted government under the sway of freedom fighters and native panjandrums. The democratic governance passes ordinance sealing off the shops of the Indians under the pretext of improvising economy and nationalisation. The native administrators accused the Asians of their

eccentricity towards the nation's integration, "Then there were of course the demagogues out to provoke reaction against the Asians. 'The Asians are not integrating enough!' thundered one. 'If you want to stay in Africa, you must learn to live with Africans . . . the days of your dukas are numbered!'" (TGS 185).

The independence of Tanzania instituted the debut of hostility between the natives and the Asians resulting in carnage, atrocities and natives' brutal assault towards the Asians. The macabre vista limning the uprisings of Africans is delivered in the some episodes. Various factors contributed to the mutiny of the natives against the Asians who prefer to live in Tanzania rather than vacating it like the English. The African natives seem to regard Asians as imperialists along with the English and Germans and consequently anticipated their evacuation as well. Further, the natives realising the flourishing stature of Asians in their land identified them as impostors exploiting their economy. Accordingly, pursuing their retribution, they violently harass the Asians ruthlessly looting their houses and shops. *The Gunny Sack* presents a vivid portrayal of such condition:

Men and women - no children - running up from the sidestreets empty-handed, running back arms full of goods - readymade shirts and singlets, shoes, harmonicas, radios - joyfully recalling the name of the bountiful Japanese ship (from which they had got nothing): 'SakuraMaru ! Sakura MaruV What they could not carry they dropped on the road, and they returned, not to pick things up but to go to the source of the fountain itself, a newly broken-into store. Some undressed right in the shops, and ran home half buttoned up carrying armfuls.

(206)

Expulsion of Asians from Uganda punctuating the national history of East African countries has impressed upon the personal histories of the individuals as well. The Shamsi community comprising the inmates of Vassanji's imaginary territories had their personal version of history articulating the ordeal of probable pariah community. Despite the fact that, the Shamsi community populated Kenya and Tanzania, the impact of Ugandan expulsion had been so substantial, adverse and emphatic that the sinister shadow fell upon the Asians of neighbouring nations as well.

The proclamation of Idi Amin in the year 1972 has been a cusp diverting the lives of the Shamsi community transforming and transporting them for ever. His decree issuing the expulsion of nearly seventy five thousand Asians within the stipulated period of ninety days bankrupted and terminated a contented era for them.

The Africanisation of the civil service in East Africa and the ruthless policies of Idi Amin engendered the procedure of the 'twice migrant phenomenon.' Consequently, the Indians had to migrate for the second time and embarked on another move to UK, Canada and United States.

An allusion to the expulsion of Asians from Uganda is specified in Vassanji's novels. The fulminant evacuation of Asians in Uganda elevates the insurgencies of natives against the Asians in Tanzania. Idi Amin of Uganda envisages Almighty admonishing him about the ominous presence of Asians, "Allah told him 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, the Asians must go" (TGS 280).

The drastic action mechanism materialising in Uganda germinates its iniquitous influence in Tanzania. The natives avenge the Asians whom they conceive as self-seeking opportunists

savouring the economy of their home land. The realisation of Asian legerdemain aggravates the natives who callously scathe the Asians:

Girls had been kidnapped, never to be seen again. It was this, more than anything else, they feared . . . a cowering bunch of dukawallahs with prayers on their mouths, against an army let loose in the name of God. They left penniless, except for what they could hide on their bodies without discovery. There was an inordinate number of women in period, Red Cross reported. (TGS 281)

There have been numerous eruptions and deluges in the form of insurrections, bigotry, racism and national antagonisms eroding the footing of undersized and minority socio-cultural communities. Circumscribed to similar predicament, the Shamsis are uprooted from the African soil and displaced in other parts of the hemisphere. In addition, the established economic stability, socio-cultural identity and political ideologies of the Shamsis are fractured and undergo transformation corresponding the geographical relocation. By and large, dismantling and unsettling the collective standing of the individuals:

How to recall a storm, the actual downpour, the continuous pelting, in this case, of events that battered at the old world and brought down the shaky structures which had lost their foundations? Wiped clean was one prevailing image, exaggerated and too personal, applying perhaps to the bankbook, for a storm wrought by human hands does not wipe clean but leaves debris behind. Broken hopes, broken families, above all, broken faith washed away by the torrents into time's flooding gutters, to be replaced by a new cynicism: every man for himself and God against all. (TGS 274)

The prognosis signalling opportunity for amelioration and an escape from all menaces manoeuvres the itinerary of the Shamsi community. Somehow, the community individuals are invulnerable, homeless and exposed in the vastitude of the world. The sense of homelessness and desire for belonging somewhere manipulates the trait of adaptation. However, the effort to return home is seldom successful and instead of retracing the steps, many of them mull over making way ahead, "Leaving home had been easy, not so the return" (TBOS 134).

The rising tension in the international atmosphere leaves an impression on the small Shamsi community as well. As a matter of fact, it gives the impression as though the whole world is in conspiracy against the minority trader's community who has plainly anchored their sails in the coastal East Africa seeking better prospects. The community individuals sandwiched between two nationalistic spirits and in transitional phase identified themselves yielding to the demand of external force exerted by the pressure of invasion and eviction, "As the decade drew to a close, it seemed that an old innocence had slowly faded, or been sloughed off, and a new consciousness by inches emerged. . . . The cold war was intense, and the atomic threat hung over our heads too" (TBOS 267-68).

The metamorphosis of imperial regiment into postcolonial sovereign status has realised tremendous amendments complying with postmodern idiosyncrasies. The Shamsi individuals attempting to keep their pace with the course of changes have manifested symptoms of unrelenting volition and confrontations. Moreover, tracking the movement of international measures and guided by credo of progressive canons and non-interventionist standards, they take responsibility of their movement. Vassanji In *The Book of Secrets* quotes from *Heart and Soul* (1966), *The Memoirs of Sir Alfred Corbin*, KCMG, OBE:

Many are the conditions of life we met that would sound unbelievable today, many customs we saw that have disappeared from the face of the earth. Today the word Empire is taboo and colonialism is discredited. We do not have subject races but underdeveloped nations. A chapter of world history has therewith been closed.

We went with the best of intentions, to give of our best. . . . (TBOS 329)

Accordingly, by the later decades of the second half of the twentieth century the East African Indians exemplified microscopic versions of the various phases of diasporisation. The early immigrants in particular had strong focus on their native land, India and sometimes tended vision for home coming whilst the second and third set of generation Indian immigrants in East Africa conceived their homeland India as a myth and folklore.

Migration has been the community's forte regardless of the corollary condition or factors patronising it, at times migration of convenience and occasionally migration out of calamity. The first wave of immigration from India to coastal towns of East Africa is prompted by convenience and opportunities of constructing better prospects. However, the Shamsis appeared to be for eternity on move in the terrains of new home seeking security and superior affluence. The traits to acclimatise, relocate and recommence make them more compatible and resourceful, "If they did not return they could start again, elsewhere" (TGS 56).

The next phase was that of family re-unification from the 1920s and 30s, and the third was the consolidation of community ties within the new location. Somehow, by the time the East African Indians earned the status of being re-diasporised in the 1970s, they had arrived at the rear end of the multi-phased diasporisation process becoming metropolitan citizens.

This transference from third-world nation to metropolitan of Canada appends more experience. Giri ruminates, " . . . diasporic populations now constitute a significant part of

metropolitan populations worldwide, notably in the West" (220). Whilst, pursuing the same vein, Monika Fludernik says, "In the scenario of globalization, the emigre is part of a cosmopolitan 'scene' in a major cultural centre in the West" (81).

On account of their highly urbanised, technocratic and managerial dexterities, these migrants were poles apart from Indians who had originally migrated to the Western countries in a straight line from India. Lack of inclination to go back to India and their inability to return to East Africa rendered them their customised prognosis. In order to optimise the chances, they consolidated their families firmly within the new societies in the West they had settled into. In addition, unlike migrants coming directly from India, the East African Shamsis were able to move with an entire three-generation set of a family with them to their new homes, in consequence allowing them to swiftly reproduce the community networks in their new locations that had been securely evolved within their East African societies since the 1890s.

Canada's multiculturalism has been proved a coincidental endorsement synchronising with the massive exodus of Asians from East Africa, by this means, constituting the second wave of migration. It has been an extraordinary bonanza for the immigrants all over the world and especially the refugees from East Africa. In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. It entails that by so doing, Canada affirmed the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language, or their religious affiliation.

Canada's multiculturalism proclaims its fundamental belief that all citizens are equal in status. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities; can take pride in their ancestry; and have a sense of belonging. This recognition bestows on Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them not only receptive to, but also accommodative of the

diverse cultures. Moreover, the Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding. In this connection Peter Li reckons, "One factor that has contributed to the social construction of cultural diversity is Canada's official policy of multiculturalism" (135).

By means of this multiculturalism, Canada recognises the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs. Mutual respect assists in developing mutual and common attitudes. New Canadians, no less than other Canadians, esteem the political and legal processes, and intend to address issues by legal and constitutional means.

However, this has been the general representation of the Canadian multiculturalism on a macro level. The role of such a singular and significant impetus is communicated as personal and communal version by the Shamsi characters. The Canadian experience of a marginalised community juxtaposing contentment and ordeal consummate a true rendering of the compatibility of this dynamic occurrence.

Vassanji's *No New Land* is an infotainment dissecting the Canadian multicultural mosaic redacted by dynamics of emigration. The sway of emigrants from different parts of the world on Canadian culture and likewise the corollary effect of Canadian cultural affluence on the espoused citizens is experienced by them. Acculturation and assimilation are the two chief by products. Canada's migration friendly policies and Post-colonial epoch has fashioned.

Nurdin Lalani, the son of Haji Lalani floats along with the current of second wave of migration and anchors safely in Canada. Arun Singh in his article titled, "M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*: Exploding the Mosaic Myth" comments, "The family of the protagonist Nurdin Lalani is a double immigrant family - Asia to Africa to Canada" (82). America and Canada were

the two nations rendering haven to the secondly migrating populace. *No New Land* mulls over the ethical transaction and Canada as the 'no new land' 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 others by implanting emigrant accessible scenario.

Canada surrogates the homeland for more or less all the Shamsis who lost the direct connection with their roots decades ago in South Asia; the geographical refuge and psychological comfort to the homeless who self exiled themselves for the sake of livelihood and later, those who were imposed exile upon by the Africans. The scope of immigrating to Canada, a land glorifying the multiculturalism emancipates the Shamsis who have been suffering estrangement and nostalgia. Canada is another distanced land for the Asians bestowing a national identity and a social asylum. Vassanji presents Canada from an immigrant's perspective in *No New Land*:

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, 'landeds.' In Canada they needed plumbers, so those who did not know one end of a spanner from another, schoolteachers, 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 buildings of Rosecliffe Park were

known, it seemed, in intimate detail. The rich had left almost overnight following the great nationalizations. As the uncertain tension-filled months passed, friends would come to say goodbye, others simply disappeared, and you understood or were told that they had got their landings and were now probably somewhere in Don Mills. (28-29)

Moreover, the novel, *No New Land* explicates Canada as a dream land for people from developing countries all over the world and especially Africa and Asia. Nurdin Lalani's family undertakes the flight of enormous hopes for a promising prospect of high living and secured identity. Lalanis are denied economic sustenance in Tanganyika like other Asians and so embark on their navigation. Nurdin take leave of his past and perform his expedience of emerging a new trend, a new living in Canada land with opulence and technical advancement. The land genially welcomes the Lalanis and other Asians unlike London where they are prohibited even to generously saunter.

The Shamsi immigrants receive implausibly friendly and sympathetic reception in Canada. After the inconsiderate treatment in East Africa which had been their home for the last couple of centuries, the amiable aura augments their certitude. However, it is apparent that the Shamsis from Tanzania are looked upon with compassion as they are received as the Ugandan refugees who are treated like the survivors of a catastrophe, "African immigrants appeared in the limelight for a brief period when the Uganda refugees started arriving. In the basements of churches, welcoming committees got busy. Clothes and food were collected, Bibles ordered" (NNL 49).

The beginning of another new era manifests a confluence of prototypical experiences of the immigrants ranging from excitement to anxiety. The realisation of exotic and unfamiliar

territories dawns upon the Indian immigrants from East Africa supplying eclipses of apprehension and uncertainty. However, the determination of the Shamsis to adapt and tread on the exotic trajectories sweep over the tremors of unacquainted phase:

After their initial excitement, the days of wonder when every brick was exotic and every morning as fresh as the day of creation, came the reckoning with a future that they'd held at bay but was now creeping closer. They had come with a deep sense that they had to try to determine it, this future, meet it partway and wrest a respectable niche in this new society. (NNL 43)

Vassanji has furthermore cartographed the topographical ambiance of Canada in *No New Land*, in order to substantiate a congenial space. The collective residence of the Asians and Africans in the suburbs of Toronto and exclusive shopping streets are well furnished in the unfolding of the montage tale of foster civilians. The Lalani's abode in Toronto represents a microscopic view of the Asian's macrocosm in Canada. The Lalanis live in Rosecliffe Park which is a small heterogeneous community constituted by Asians migrated from Africa and this diverse neighbourhood try to live an Indian Canadised Asian way.

On the whole, the liberal and secular policies of Canada coordinate and assemble the dismantled lives of the Shamsis. The Lalanis familiarise themselves with new Westernised avenues in no time and more over, discover a home away from home. The small refreshment stall in the Rosecliffe Park very much resembles the vernacular tea shops and dabhas in India. The religious prayers, the Indian festivities, and some other cultural observations conducted in Rose Cliffe Park confirm the secular and liberal cultural policies of Canada.

Nonetheless, there had been two-fold effect on the Shamsi community relying on the individual's aptitude to absorb the change for flattening the hurdles obturating on the way to

normality. Nurdin's ordeal manifesting degradation, moral disintegration and inferiority complex stand for the deflating spirits of the Shamsi immigrants on one hand. Jamal's accomplishment in terms of successful career, economic stability and social standard is attributed to his compatibility and Canada's congeniality. He realises limits of the world and his unconstrained competence to observe and absorb, "If there was anything Jamal learned from the Don Mills demo, it was that the world was a bigger place, and he had to grab it, make a prominent place for himself in it. . . . Accordingly, he took his chance when it eventually came" (NNL 114).

An allusion to racial favouritism is discerned in the novel as well. There is an episode demonstrating racial antagonism which is not dominant, yet pervading the secular countenance of Canada. Ismail is an Indo-African Canadian immigrated to Canada who experiences the hassle of racial discrimination. However, he is assailed by some thugs who seek pleasure in pestering docile individuals. This implies that racism is not a practice but an accident in the novel and Ismail is compensated for his humiliation by the State authorities. The immigrants well adopt themselves in Canadian fabric meandering a racial tolerant and cultural secular nation.

Sooner or later, Canada becomes a home away from home for the long disoriented emigrants. What so ever is the cultural and racial disparity, the diverse Canadian culture before long liquefies into a symmetrical kaleidoscope. Shamsi voices attest this implication that with globalisation and the escalating movement of people from one country to another, the challenge of appreciating and accommodating cultural differences has become a universal experience.

The political state of America in the later half of the twentieth century reveals the modern American history corroborating numerous radical movements and ideologies. This incumbency surcharged with extremist and far-reaching persuasions besides having global surge, affected the communities away from the centres as well. The voice emitting from the excavation in personal

memories furnish a conformal projection of the state of affairs confirming a junction of diverse practices and values:

It was a marketplace of ideas they were in, a veritable souk, this city of colleges, Cambridge, Mass., founded by another persecuted people three hundred years before. It was a home for heresies, where the intellect found a place to be and become, find its rhythm from a multitude of beats, sample from dozens of tastes. Flyers everywhere - on public walls, on lampposts, on notice boards, or handed out enthusiastically in the corridors, on sidewalks, at building entrances - shrieked out their messages like hawkers peddling their wares. What have we here? What do you bring with you? Weigh in your truth against ours, try our truth, and see its glory; or, if you happen to be lost, bring us your homeless tortured spirit, let us comfort your loneliness and doubts, choose this path already picked by a thousand others just like you. Everywhere, gurus, pirs, psychologists, zealots of every stripe were fishing for disciples. (*Amriika* 29)

American counter culture of the 1960s and 1970s constitute a very remarkable part of American cultural history. The counterculture of the 1960s began in the United States as a reaction against the conservative social norms of the 1950s; the political conservatism and social repression of the Cold War period; and the U.S. government's extensive military intervention in Vietnam. Peter Brooker observes, "Combined with the agendas of the social movements this orientation marked the onset of cultural politics" (44). A number of freedoms were endorsed within countercultural communities: freedom to explore one's potential, freedom to create one's Self, freedom of personal expression, freedom from scheduling, freedom from rigidly defined roles and hierarchical positions.

Accordingly the smoke emitted from the smouldering flare of the revolutionary spirit of America smother the simple-minded Indian immigrants. Evidently, the cause of the revolution being third world countries, the immigrant individuals arrived for academic and other objects are treated as subjects of their radical discourses and are pulled to the centre. The students like Ramji, Karsan and Nanji receive extraordinary doses of education by experience and furthermore they are in one way or the other drawn in the activist circle. In addition, Shamsi community individuals hailing from third world countries are dazzled by the lustre of American life and feel vulnerable amidst the vociferations.

However, the Americanised *modus vivendi* rendering a transparent representation of the multifarious facets of urbanised norms generates commingled impressions. The interaction with American plush and sophisticated manner of living leave perceptible ripples on the surface of the Shamsi lifestyle as well. In the beginning, the sumptuous *modus vivendi* of the Americans augments the sense of alienation, uncertainty and fear among them. Eventually, they grow accustomed to these newfangled idiosyncrasies which appear to deliver reassurance of a sanguine prospect.

The American counter culture of late 1960s forms the backdrop of the first half of *Amriika*. Ramji's academic navigation is hampered by the anti-war demonstrations and spiritual avocations which constitute the counter culture in America. The communal habitations of hippies, the anti-Vietnamese war demonstrations, and the activism of students against the American super power over third-world countries and the spiritual sway of the East are principal constituents of counter culture and are very seamlessly interwoven in the plot. The bombing in Kendall service station, the protest march in front of the Vietnamese embassy, the spiritual colloquium and some other activities attributing the counter culture are catalogued in the novel.

Harish Narang comments in this regard, "America of those days, as the author tells us, was a market place of ideas where 'everywhere, gurus, pirs, psychologists, zealots of every stripe were fishing for disciples' and where revolutionary radicals supported the Vietnam War through the organization of sexual orgies" (48).

A progressive movement led by the youngsters, constituted the essence of the counter culture. As Arun P. Mukherjee points out, "The novel explores the nature of the relationship between group identity and the identity of the individuals belonging to the group" (88). The urge to expound liberty and resistance to American imperialist policies formed the main objectives. The radical and revolutionary aura is embedded in the novel, "If you're against the war, say it! If you oppose university investments in South Africa, say it! If you denounce CIA-sponsored assassinations, say it! Don't wait for McGovern - the next election is three years away - force the hand of that bum in the White House! Join the protest!" (82).

One of the major impacts on the Shamsi immigrants in the avant-garde aura has been self-assurance and poise to contribute. Ramji's apprehension for taking part in the demonstration is eventually supplanted by audacity. The Shamsis who regard themselves as inferior and subordinate to the Americans, eventually develop self-respect and a friendly ambiance. Nevertheless, the realisation of belonging to a minor community, a negligible culture does not elude their neonate and revolutionized conceptions. The Shamsi individuals hailing from a progressive community find it less difficult to assimilate despite their Indian value system. However, the community traditions and ideals are kept intact and unscathed from the Americanised subtleties.

The influx of Shamsis in America and in Canada bestows them with endowments of illumination and astuteness to identify their individualities in sophisticated radiation. The

interplay between the role of Shamsi community and the role of expansiveness of America assert the modest position of a small community dwarfed by dominance of the ambiance. Somehow, these proportions disentangle other convolutions, for instance, the self-realisation as brought out in *Amriika*, "The truth? God? The greatest achievement of evolution is that matter in the form of mankind begins to understand itself, as we sit here, you and I, discussing"(30).

The Shamsis securely anchored in America and in Canada adopting embracing make-shift home march on towards a foresight parting with the home in the past. It is not that they have severed or amputated their lineage, in point of fact, they carry onwards with their past remoulded in future framework. Homeward itinerary is hindered by the realisation of barren, void and vacant spaces, "But you do have a home, it's just that there's nobody there . . ." (*Amriika* 189).

Religious ideology of fundamentalism has been a potent driving force shaping the recent global events and affecting all-inclusive communities. Religious fundamentalism, one of the most perilous and sinister agents of militant activities has been extremely active in the last two decades. Recent history records occurrence of numerous aggressive and violent proceedings as consequence of such fundamentalist ideals.

The Iranian revolution, otherwise known as the Islamic revolution (1978) can be looked upon as a prototypical occurrence which had manifestly paved way for numerous such radical episodes of its kind, all over the world. As hostility with American diplomacy had been one of the end results, version of this religious militanism followed in America as well. The overlooked data in these archives of modern history, the probable impact of these currents on the minority Shamsi community are supplied in the Memoir of Ramji counterbalancing a counter historical narrative.

The sense of security and belonging of Shamsis living in America is disquieted once again owing to the eccentric appearance of the 'Phantom Author.' The episode of 'Phantom Author' who challenges the fundamental beliefs of Islam in his letters becomes the central mechanism working the plot in the last part of *Amriika*. The non-interventionist fashion of the person attempting to unloosen the ties of fundamental beliefs, responsible for the chain of events demonstrate how agents and influences work their way to annihilation in the name of religion, "And so the self-styled liberator of Muslims from orthodoxy and Middle Eastern domination had set off something he had obviously not intended. But the cycle of events had to go on, reach its conclusion, and, in the process, would strike like a bolt of lightning a conspicuous and sympathetic target in its path" (323).

No matter what, the foundation or cause may be instigating such controversies, the end product is collectively and hitherto adverse. Accordingly, Shamsis, who are Islamic in several ways begin to sense the tremor in the security compartment of their lives in America. Further, the bombing of the bookstore displaying the book containing collected letters of the 'Phantom Author' fetch more tension to all Muslims including the Shamsis:

But he was bothered by the possible consequences of the incident. By its connection to the Phantom Author, it was bound to touch the lives of all Muslims on the continent, good and bad and apostate alike, from the mainstream to the heretical fringe. What possible end could the bombing achieve? Who could be responsible for the madness? Who was the Phantom? (*Amriika* 318)

The catastrophe striking the ending note of Ramji's memoir divulges the plight of minority groups in times of crisis. Despite the fact that, his involvement with Michel, a suspect of bookstore bombing is not religious or political and perhaps coincidental, the legal limitations

imposed on him make his circumstances vulnerable. The incessant interrogation of Ramji by FBI long after the incident attests his position doubly dangerous on account of his community status.

Somehow, these superfluous doses of religious fundamentalism do not seem to shake the solidarity of the community and the foundational beliefs of the Shamsis. The Shamsis believing in synchronised ways of Hindus and Islam and the progressive standard of living of the West proposing liberal ways and peace are beyond the grasp of radical ideas. In fact, for once, Ramji supposes Sona, his friend to be the 'Phantom Author' of the letters speculating and projecting liberal and anti-fundamental thoughts.

In the same vein, the religious riots following the Godra Kand and the partition of India-Pakistan marking the Hindu Muslim divide add to the turmoil. These events hardly escape the Indian history of carnage and riots. The repressed voices and stifled sobs of those who believed in either of the faiths suffered no better than the others. The followers of Nur Fazal and the individuals who believed and worshipped the ideals of syncretised faith render a particular version of near past representing counter historical narration.

Similar to the Shamsis, the protagonist community accommodated in *The Assassin's Song* epitomise syncretic faith, in-between world and minority status. In other words, liminal space is the community's terrain lying between or beyond the margins of Hindu and Islam, "We are neither and both. We bow neither to Kashi nor to Kaaba, et cetera. And we are respected for that" (TAS 93). Pir Baag, an imaginary territory is the abode of the Gadivaras and the pilgrim shrines represent the ideals of syncretised faith.

However, this singular community idealising secular and liberal credo endures harrowing reaction from the very partition. There is an ephemeral orientation to the India-Pakistan partition in *The Assassin's Song* adumbrating the splitting up of communal harmonies and yet Pir Baag,

an ideal sanctuary of religious tolerance stands its ground for its principles. People seemed drawing and crossing precincts; refugees were killed by their own neighbours; and a macabre of violence thwarted the nobility of human beings. Religious fundamentalism was also lulled by the tidings of partition:

In Haripur there had recently arrived men in thick black beards, white caps, and long white shirts, clutching copies of the Quran and preaching the tenets of Islam; other men in white homespun cotton and two-cornered pandit caps came, preaching a purer Hinduism. Purity - shuddhi - was the key word. Cease blasphemous cow and idol worship, said the Muslims; abandon carnality and return to the basics of the ancient Vedas, retorted the Hindus. (TAS 52)

Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Pir Baag clung to their fidelity in the canons of Gadivaras. The custodians of the shrine represent the secular constitution of India where all religions are addressed equally and respect all faiths. Unlike other ethnic sects, the Gadivaras being essentially Muslims and followers of a religion espousing both Islam and Hinduism do not prevaricate to limit or delimit the geographical boundaries. They reflect on the secular prospects and eventually prefer their domicile of religious tolerance in India:

After decades of struggle India had arrived finally at the threshold of independence, yet in a state of turmoil and far from unity, for the unthinkable was about to happen. Unless Mr Jinnah could be charmed or otherwise placated, it was certain that the nation would be broken, with a separate country called Pakistan carved out up north for Muslims. Although Pirbaag harboured the precious memory and the grave of a Muslim Pir, the question of Hindu or Muslim had never arisen before for its followers. Now they were forced to confront it, but

many waited for the Saheb to give the lead. It is said that my Dada spent many hours over several days meditating inside the mausoleum before the grave of the sufi, as was the wont of the Sahebs at moments of crises. Finally he emerged from these consultations with the decision to go and see Mahatma Gandhi in his ashram. Upon his return from this journey Dada made a declaration to a gathering at Pirbaag, reminding those assembled that the path of the Pir was spiritual, it did not give importance to outward forms of worship. Therefore Hindus and Muslims were the same, and the Saheb would not abandon this ancient site, granted to the Wanderer centuries before by the kings of Gujarat, for some place called Pakistan. (TAS 51-52)

However, the utopian ambiance does not last long and is pulverised by the surge of religious conflicts purporting separatism, 'selfistan.' Religious insurrections materialise out of very inconsequential issues and develop into colossal upheaval as is demonstrated in the imaginary Haripir. Mere allegations act as serious provocations and conflagrate Hindu Muslim feuds is evident in the quarrel between a Muslim merchant and his Hindu neighbours in the novel:

When suddenly a cold chill had descended upon the street, muting all sound, and a wave of nervous apprehension came trembling through; the shops began to close one by one. The barber stopped and reversed, hurried towards the back of the Hindu quarters; the vegetable hawker pushed his cart to park it outside a shop, adjusted his green dhoti, and scampered off. Harish, Utu, and I parted company without a word, infected now by this new and still incomprehensible fear. (TAS 92).

Godhra Kand has been a dreadful episode oppugning the secularism of India and like sweltering coal contusing and bruising all around. The real facts follow as—the Godhra incident took place on 27th February in year 2002. The Sabarmathi Express arriving from Ayodhya—a consecrated place for Hindus - with Hindu pilgrims was set to fire by a Muslim mob at Godhra station. As a result, 59 Hindu passengers—mostly women, children and senior citizens returning from the holy city of Ayodhya—were burnt alive and the resultant riots and massacres killed 794 Muslims and an additional 254 Hindus. The post-Godhra Kand also exerted adverse impact all over the country.

In *The Assassin's Song*, the Godhra event is described by the protagonist, Karsan with adequate details which he musters from epistolary sources i.e. the letters from his father narrating the horrifying vista and through other media as well. The narrative of the novel also gives an insight into the predicament of common man through the epistolary recounting of Karsan's father, "I write is as we reel from the news that a railway bogey in a train full of pilgrims returning from Ayodhya was set on fire outside Godhra. Those inside were trapped and all perished, including children. What a ghastly and thoughtless crime. Now blood will pay for blood, and all madness will be set loose upon this land" (TAS 335).

The Gadivara's of Haripir adhering to the teachings and principles of the Sufi legend believe in tolerance and harmony. In fact, they strongly trust in the immunity of fortification of their community against the uproar of the Hindu-Muslim hostility and deem their position to be tenable. Saheb, the custodian of this faith believes in this imperviousness as it is apparent in his letter to Karsan:

But right now is not a good time to come; we are going through bestial times yet again; demons are on the roam feeding on blood and the screams of the innocent.

But here in Haripir and Pirbaag, we will manage, as we have always done; our people can be made to see reason. This madness will soon be over, and I will inform you when it is safe to return.' (304)

Whatsoever their ideologies maybe, the flare of the communal carnage does not spare the Gadivaras. The Hindu mob branding them as Muslims assaults them and insults the structure emblematic of spiritual synchronisation. On the other hand, the Muslims do not identify the Gadivaras as one among them. Ultimately, Pir Baag and its denizens are disillusioned by the smouldering lava of insanity and hatred which engulfs an entire set of value system leaving behind the wreckage as delineated in *The Assassin's Song*:

Back outside, the glare of destruction. The clamour of disbelief. This could still be a dream, this wrecking ground. Visions swimming before me of the heyday that had passed . . . the hopes and prayers brought here by the hundreds on Saturdays, the music of the ginans, the whiff of incense early at dawn, and the tinkle of bells . . . and all the history and legend and permanence of Pirbaag. I had denied its charge, but surely not to see it thus, pulverized, testimony only to the death and agony of those who had come to hide in it, or to protect it from the havocking mobs. (262)

The fictional narratives juxtaposed with historical facts succeed in supplying embedded and hitherto concealed records. The diaries, memoirs, letters, historical records, relics and reminiscences of individuals constituting narrative within the corpus narrative resemble embedded narrative. As Alan Palmer defines, "Its more familiar meaning is a self-contained narrative that is embedded within a so-called frame narrative"(20). However, these narratives equating the collective experience compile history and are overt certainty. Gyanendra Pandey

affirms, "However, the agent and locus of history is hardly pre-designated. Rather, accounts of history, of shared experiences in the past, serve to constitute these, their extent and their boundaries" (4).

Besides, the fictional corroboration of these counter historical facts, the writer's memory itself, manifested in his memoir, *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*, aid in revitalising and attesting the interaction of memory and embedded narratives. The memoir which is more or less, a travelogue transcribing Vassanji's experience in India juxtaposed with his personal ruminations affixes supplementary contingents to the acquaintance of his fictional community which is prototyped on his own Khoja community.

Accordingly, the self-reflexive narration ascertains an on-key representation of large chronological events and personal histories of individuals. Vassanji supplies details on the first emigration of Khoja community to East African coastal settlements and the immigrant's consciousness which was largely affected by British colonial subtleties, "The East African countries became independent from Britain in the early 1960s. But by then to my generation and in my community of people, our spiritual home, so we naively thought, was already England. We believed we could shed our ancestral connections for a thin veneer of colonialness, an ersatz sophistication" (VIII).

*A Place Within: Rediscovering India* consolidating the geographical and psychological drift of a particular community individuals which the author represents himself, is undeniably a pragmatic credential to the fictionalised mental synthesis. An appraisal of this memoir serving as an addendum dispenses additional and coeval sensibility supplementing the scenarios limned on fictional canvas.

Moreover, the autobiographical record furnishes with diasporic consciousness and enthusiasm of retracing the roots and routes, "It was as if, during that visit, I was in some sort of a bubble . . . this is the homeland, to which I am returning on behalf of my family after seventy, eighty, a hundred years" (3). In addition, Vassanji has supplied data on the migration of his family in the year 1885 and his grand father, Lalji's passage to the boundaries beyond with adequacy.

The memories of the remote past and the present homecoming amalgamate and generate a synthesis of realities and estimations. Sooner or later, the imagined community transmitting pragmatic circumstances and representing large-scale measures substantiates prognostic ideas. Since, imagination can be a foil to reality the former can be substituted for the latter for a better interpretation. Samantrai observes, "Nations are legal and economic realities, but also imagined communities" (48).

This acute synthesis of memory, fiction and history attests to be the most competent paraphernalia ascertaining the vicissitudes in personal lives of a community. As a matter of fact, this modus operandi appears to be the personal preference of the writer who mulls over the countenance of past and concludes that his technique of blending fiction with history is considerably enlightening, "Why this obsession with the past? . . . There are the ways of the mystic and the scientist, to answer this question; and there is the way of history and fiction, which I find more compelling. In how I connect to the history I learn about myself (APWRI 46).

These assorted occurrences facilitating the global experience of few individuals in a communal adhesion is conjecturable in demarcating the uncharted history of a particular community running parallel to international history. Memories of the individuals serve as the primary source for delimiting the socio-cultural history of a decentralised community and

further, assist in extrapolating the community's potentialities which can perhaps be of more all-inclusive significance.

Various significant issues frame the flux and reflux of the Shamsi community including, waves of migration, colonial and postcolonial experience, multiculturalism, diaspora, globalisation and religious fundamentalism. Moreover, the progressive and harmonious approach of these individuals renders more distinct and lucid depiction of cacophony. Religious fanaticism is one such pathogenetic aspect and Alberto Toscano delimitates fanaticism as, "the effect of a false consciousness that abuses sacred things and enslaves religion to the whims of imagination and the unruliness of the passions" (104).

Further, the phenomenon of migration comports vital implication tracing the movement of a decentralised community through international traffic. The migratory phenomenon is decisive in engendering numerous shifts in an immigrant's living pattern. Particularly, the cultural identity of the individual undergoes multiplex refractions and this subjected cultural identity is predisposed for other prospective alterations. Henry Frances observes, "As migrants begin to achieve (however modestly) their goals and realize their ambitions, they begin to feel ambivalent about their cultural identity" (43).

Modernity is the parole communicating metamorphosis of approximations into action mechanism paving way for escalation. Somehow, it is a universal experience. Appadurai comments in this regard, "Our assumption is that modernity is today a global experience (even if the term modernity is, in some sense, a category of Western history and reflexivity)" (1). Tallying either of the constructive and unfavourable conditions defining the progressive movement of this community encompass global experience which is principally considered modern by contemporary standards.

To sum up, Vassanji's imaginary community accommodated in real historical terrains and living through large events unfolds the layers of forgotten past. This version of personal history countersigning the uncharted itineraries cogitates a state merging past and future. Equilibrating the memories of past and hopes of future confirms a conducive circumstance. "It suggests a happy compromise, an ability to 'look ahead into the past, and back into the future'" (Qtd. in Shahani 44).

The confrontation with Western culture and Western ideologies surpassing the circumscribed and constricted space of the Shamsi individuals acquire a progressive foresight. More over, it fetches the Shamsis a sense of global and wide-ranging awareness, a sense of oneness with the world and the entire humanity. Ramji's affirmation confirms the above stated assertion, "Back in Dar we thought only of our small community; . . . Nevertheless, how liberating, how exhilarating, to think that one belonged to a larger world, cared about it, could make a difference to it!" (*Amriika* 67).

The illustrated events and occurrences exemplify hope and progress as the community's strong suit. The hope to discover a better prospect transports the community across the continents despite the impediments in the form of antagonism and negative response. All the way through, the community registers a progressive movement accommodating forbearance, adaptation, solidarity and modernity.