



## Social Affiliations In M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*

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### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

Living under another sky is not always smooth for human migrators. Initially, the new land may seem promising and bustling with activities, but as time passes unexpected hardships arise. Despite being good-natured and hardworking, migrants often feel like intruders and experience loneliness and longing for their native land. To escape these afflictions, they seek affiliations with groups of like-minded persons to protect themselves from the challenges of living in an alien land. This paper explores how social togetherness proves to be an effective remedy for healing the traumatic experiences encountered by immigrants in a foreign country. Due to British colonial rule over Asian and African continents, Indian workers were sent in large numbers from India to Africa throughout the nineteenth century. These labourers were recruited to construct the railroads that linked the three British colonies in East Africa—Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. While the immigration of Indian labourers is viewed as a kind of colonialism, their removal during the years after the independence can be seen as a part of decolonization. Though they were accused of failing to support the Africans who were then involved in armed resistance against the British colonialists, the Indians were forced to flee Africa. This paper attempts to study the experiences of these deported Indians as they are described in M.G. Vassanji. The Canadian author M.G. Vassanji's family was likewise expelled from Dar es salaam, Tanzania. He also discusses the Indian Shamsi's scrupulous adherence to the many social and cultural norms and how they encountered in their new country, Canada. This study looks at the migrant population's experiences and the affiliation topic. This study will try to argue how steadfastly South Asian Canadians adhere to their ethnic ideals. The article will explain the social affiliation before demonstrating how the author approaches affiliation as a necessary component of the community's ethnic record.

**Keywords:** Colonization, Displacement, Discrimination, Enclave, Indian Shams

### Introduction

Living under another sky is not always smooth. Like migratory birds, the modern man travels to nations far from their homeland. However, unlike those winged migrators, human beings fail to fly back home as they continue their search for new life in the new land. Human migrators fly to faraway lands not simply to find friendly and warm climatic regions but to have newer sources for material gains and newer roots for a dream life. At first, the life away from home will bustle with activities. New places and new acquaintances will create impressions that seem to be smooth and promising. However, as the winged chariot of time flies by, things begin to change rather radically. Problems begin to crop up. The migrants begin to face unexpected hardships. However good-natured, friendly, and hard-working, the migrants are always treated as intruders. What seemed to be so promising turned out to be painfully problematic. Loneliness and longing for the native land will slowly creep in to make life miserable. To escape such afflictions, the migrants eventually look for suitable affiliations. The word affiliation refers to a group of like-minded persons. Such groups or associations are formed to protect immigrants from afflictions under another sky. People come together based on regional, racial, linguistic and many other affiliations. Social affiliation is one such affiliation. This paper focuses on how social togetherness proves to be an effective medicine in healing the traumatic experiences in the alien land.

Canada is a country that was historically settled by Europeans after the discovery of North America in the late 15th century. Along with these white people, Canada is also home to a number of Native American tribes, including Metis and Inuit. These people appreciated having their own culture and languages prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Up until the origin of the first European "explorers" in 1670, nothing changed. The Europeans, particularly the English and French, significantly altered Canada; they took the land and forced the European languages and cultures onto everyone. Canada was established as a British territory in 1776, and Quebec was designated as the province for Europeans who spoke French and were Catholics. To gain their independence, the Canadians have opted for a diplomatic approach with the British colonisers. The colony was made a Dominion of Canada by the North America Act of 1867.

In 1982, as its people started to establish their own institutions, Canada was formally recognized as a sovereign nation. Canada observes a national holiday on the first of July. However, the link to London is not completely severed. For instance, after consulting with the Prime Minister of Canada, the Queen of England selects the Governor General, the first office in Canada, for an extended period. Due to the country's need for workers, people from all over the world have begun to swarm there. Following World War II, Canada was forced to accept a sizable influx of immigrants from non-European countries due to the demands of economic expansion. In Canada, immigrants from India make up the largest ethnic minority. When British colonisers attempted to strengthen their hold on East Africa by building a network of railway tracks connecting all their colonies in Africa, the immigration of South Asians, immigrants from the subcontinent of India, began around the end of the nineteenth century. About 32 000 indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent were used for this building. Many of these workers deceased as a result of the difficult working circumstances they were forced to endure.

The Indians left when the railway projects were finished in 1901, but roughly 7000 labourers remained in Africa to start their own businesses. They had enjoyed enormous business success. At the cost of the Africans who were battling ferociously for freedom from the colonisers, several educated South Asians also held high positions in the management of colonial and private institutions. The new African military chiefs of the post-independence era started the "Africanization" initiative in the 1970s. Due to this policy, South Asians were forced to leave their homes and leave Africa. A small sum of pocket money was simply provided to some of them before they were permitted to leave. Some of the deported individuals made the decision not to return when poverty and political upheaval initially swept throughout the Indian subcontinent. The England is where they would much prefer to go. Those that choose not to go to the England instead went to North America, which includes the USA and Canada. There were a number of cultural and religious distinctions among the deported South Asians.

The Shamsi ethnic group is one of those expelled. Shamses are Muslims who have their own distinctive religious practises and are descended from the Ismaili branch. This group includes the author of the book chosen for this study. South Asian immigrants from Africa who eventually immigrated to Canada had unrecorded experiences in either their countries of citizenship—India or Africa—or in Canada. This helps the author's pen get sharper.

M. G. Vassanji was tasked with recording these unwritten tales of his people. In 1950, he was born in Nairobi, Kenya. After his father passed away, Vassanji and his family relocated to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. As he himself is an immigrant who has been relocated twice during his lifetime Vassanji has moral authority among his people to give voice for the discomfort caused due to their immigration. Vassanji received a scholarship in 1970 so that he could continue his studies in nuclear engineering in the USA. He began writing fiction in 1982 when he founded and became editor of *The Toronto South Asian Review*. He has published seven novels and two collections of short tales to date. He commits his writing to chronicling his ethnic group's exiled experiences, a phenomenon that influences the works of immigrant authors in Canada.

Affiliation has played a major role in the improvisation of the immigrant's life. The state or connection of being closely related or affiliated with a specific individual, group, party, company, etc. is referred to as affiliation. Affiliation is a pleasant, personal relationship that can be close at times. Concern for creating, sustaining, or recovering a favourable affective relationship with another person or persons" is an example of affiliation. People who have a strong need for affiliation frequently have a higher level of empathy. More crucially, in addition to developing new contacts effortlessly, one may also learn how to keep them. Because of their affiliations, immigrants have a strong urge for affiliation and feel quite good at networking events.

The main need for affiliation is affliction because immigrant peoples always faced many kinds of trouble by the natives. Themes like racism, identity issues, and displacement are some of those that frequently appear in Vassanji's literature. This study analyses *No New Land's 1991* work of the same name. Vassanji, G. It examines the relationships between social ties. The story of an Indian Muslim family who immigrates to Toronto illustrates the issue of allegiance. They are Nuridin Lalani, his wife Zera, and their two kids, Fatima and Hanif. This study will demonstrate how steadfastly South Asian Canadians adhere to their ethnic ideals. The article will next go over the three different types of affiliation before demonstrating how Vassanji deals with social affiliation as a necessary component of the community's ethnic record.

Post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha uses the phrase "affiliative solidarity" to describe how immigrants from the former colonies are treated in Western nations (Bhabha, 1994, p. 230). Amin Malak uses the term "ambivalent attachment" to describe a situation in which an immigrant is exposed to two opposing cultures of belonging: that of the originating nation and that of the host country (Malak, 1994, p 277). Religion is cited by

Sean Hier and Singh Bolario as a "essential social indicator" in an immigrant's life in their study of how racism affects immigrants in Canada (Hier&Bolario, 2012, p. 171-72). Because it represents the immigrants' sense of belonging to the nations they have fled from, the relationship between the immigrants and their ethnic communities is significant in post-colonial literature.

The term "South Asian Canadians" is used to refer to immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. It is used to avoid misunderstanding with the specific Native American group that is referred to as Indians in the area. Immigrants from South Asia include those from Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India. With an average of 5% of the total Canadian population, they are one of the most powerful minorities. Vassanji's fiction is one of these works, and it draws on the diversity of this society in terms of languages, lifestyles, and religion.

### *Social Affiliation*

Characters in immigrant fiction frequently favour intra-ethnic friendship and union over inter-ethnic ones. Relationship-related topics like friendship and marriage are treated carefully in South Asian Canadian literature. Vassanji, the author of *No New Land* (1991), decides on his characters' feelings of allegiance through their marriages and friendships. In terms of friendships, the novel depicts friendships between two or more people who share a common ancestry as an indication of ethnic identification.

People who are diverse in terms of education, age, and social background become friends out of a sense of ethnic solidarity. Through the persona of Nanji, the narrative depicts the guests' reality. He meets the Lalani family and, despite having more schooling than Nurdin Lalani and his wife Zera, they become great friends. While Nurdin at the time was unemployed and looking for a job as a shopkeeper, Nanji was a college professor at Wordsworth College. Nurdin's wife Zera has no formal schooling. She has, at most, served as a Chinese doctor's receptionist.

This interethnic friendship develops into a source of shared accountability and a means of understanding one another's needs. When Nanji and Nurdin's family first meet, Zera offers Nanji help in his search for a suitable wife. Fatima and Hanif, the family's two children, must be cared for by Nanji. Nurdin's children adore Nanji and regard him as a "hero" for his scholastic accomplishments, despite the age difference between them. Nanji works to advance the education of the kids. He takes them, for instance, "to the science centre and the library" (80). For these kids to have a healthy upbringing in Canada, Professor Nanji must make many time sacrifices. This might be seen as a sign of his racial affinity for this family.

Narratively, Nanji is portrayed as a role model Indian character who is succeeding in Canada. Nanji serves as an example for the younger generation in the community and is a professor at a university. He is devoted to the people in the neighbourhood, as the novel demonstrates. But when it comes to his account of his relationship with Esmail, Nanji's allegiance is unclear. Nanji boards a train in the evening at the station at St. George Street after finishing his class at Wordsworth College. On the station, he observes Esmail, an ethnic acquaintance wearing a "Kaunda suit," from a distance. Because he doesn't want to attract the notice of a three-man racist gang who are on the platform looking for a new victim, Nanji chooses to avoid approaching Esmail. Esmail's calls for assistance can be clearly heard as they suddenly attack him. As people swarm, police officers arrive right away. Nanji is startled and unintentionally keeps his distance. The real pain for Nanji is that he fails to live up to the rules of his community, which means that he is unable to confirm his identity as a man faithful to his own people.

The novel also implies that the ethnic Indian Muslims in Canada are familiar with the others on ethnic grounds. He has served as the government's "constitutional expert" in Dar (72). Jamal made such quick progress as a lawyer and immigration agent after moving to Canada, earning a sizable income. Abdul, on the other hand, appears to be uneducated, and according to his social history, he has been employed in Dar as the "head mechanic at Datsun" company (37). Abdul works as a "gas station attendant and mechanic's assistant" in Canada (37). Roshana, Abdul's wife, works as a factory worker. People in Dar who knew Jamal "barely by face and primarily by reputation" included Abdul and Roshana (58). "They would get to know him better once they were in Toronto" (58). This implies that exile lowers social rank and fosters deeper relationships among members of a particular ethnic group. It depicts a different ethnic group.

Additionally, Vassanji contends that interethnic union is a sort of ethnic affinity. People are urged to select marriages from within their own ethnic group. The story of Nanji and Khadija, whose father is a missionary, exemplifies this kind of dedication. Khadija, whose name is frequently shortened throughout the book as Kati, is drawn to Nanji a few days after she and her father arrive in Canada. The attraction between Kati and Nanji makes her father, as well as her friends Jamal and Zera, happy. On one occasion, Fatima, Hanif, and Kati are all on their way to the movie theatre when Nanji is seen clutching Kati's hand. The father of Kati, a missionary, gently corrects Nanji, saying, "What's this, I hear you've been holding my daughter's hand" (200). Nanji's "a marriage proposal" as a response brings the embarrassing situation to an end. Kati's father says, "It is our norm not to prolong engagements," in a way that emphasises complete submission to ethnic laws. Nanji was unable to argue, thus (201).

Jamal's experience with marriage is distinct from Nanji's in that Jamal uses marriage to strengthen his sense of belonging. Jamal is friendly with every family in the neighbourhood, as the narrative demonstrates. He is the immigration officer who makes it possible for these families' relatives to arrive. Jamal represents South Asians who unintentionally break Canadian law in his capacity as an attorney. However, his marriage to Nancy,

a Canadian woman of English ancestry, widens the chasm between him and his ethnic group. His marriage is an effort to "leave" the Rosecliffe community's ethnic "dead" world and enter a "larger" one. This marriage poses a danger, in Nanji's opinion: "Jamal was going into the world to conquer it, and he would conquer it if he played his card well and did not fall" (115). Jamal's union with Nancy serves as an example of how losing one's ethnic identity through marriage to a European spouse. The marriage of Jamal is seen as proof of his supremacy.

The wedding festivities reveal Jamal's distance from Rosecliffe's citizens. His ethnic group had no preference at that event. They are, however, "thrown among people they could not relate to" (Ibid). Jamal is also accused of no longer tolerating the familiarity of the greetings used in tea shops (Ibid). In actuality, the Rosecliffe ethnic community "had never forgiven his wedding reception." Jamal benefits by maintaining contact with some of his beloved pals, including Nanji, in this marriage. Later, when Jamal and his white wife visit Rosecliffe, nobody welcomes them except for Nanji. Jamal screams, "Eh, Chacha, what about me," when Chacha enters the open house in Rosecliffe bearing tea and samosas. The man starts serving the men but ignores Jamal (160). Chacha apologises after giving him a long look, stating, "but we thought...Oh sorry then" (160).

The common and preconceived belief among Rosecliffe residents, as is shown in this speech, is that Jamal has lost his cultural identity as a South Asian due of his marriage to the white Nancy. In a pertinent sense, the story of the missionary's son strengthens the notion that marriage is considered as a matter of ethnic affiliation. When the son intends to wed his American girlfriend, his father is upset because he feels that this is a blatant disregard for South Asian social and ethnic norms. As a result, "father and son had not exchanged a word for some years now" (191).

On the other hand, having a different ethnic background may make it harder for immigrants to integrate with the local population. With time, this difference grows larger. The language barrier is a crucial indicator of this disparity. Zera, for instance, is a clinic receptionist. She loses her work as a result of her poor English communication skills. In other words, the immigrant's ability to learn a foreign language is not aided by the ethnic life of the enclave (a proficiency which becomes an excuse for discrimination against the immigrants in employment). When it becomes a barrier that prevents the immigrant from accessing the cultures of other people, ethnic allegiance may also negatively affect the immigrant.

For instance, if Nurdin sees a girl sobbing on the ground, he goes over to her and asks if she needs any assistance. The young lady stays silent. Nurdin repeats his query while showing sympathy, placing his hand on her back in anticipation of her response. The girl screams out of nowhere, accusing Nurdin of attempting to rape her. The cops are informed of the problem. The issue with Nurdin is that he does not have the opportunity to learn about other Canadians' cultures and adapt his behaviour as a result of living in an ethnic enclave. This draws the conclusion from affiliation that it is important to assess an immigrant's unique experience in the context of his or her ethnic community, rather than outside of it.

### Conclusion

Through the events and people in his debut book *No New Land*, M. G. Vassanji asks certain queries and forces readers to reconsider several topics. These problems include some of the following. The immigrants living in exile get authority from their ethnicity. The immigrant is given the opportunity to maintain his or her identity and practise their culture once they have settled in their ethnic community. Additionally, community involvement can help immigrants become economically independent by giving them the ability to start their own businesses, which can shield them from the majority's bias against them in the workplace.

The research on immigrants' experiences in exile to date has focused on issues of community rather than those of the individual. The community itself is the emphasis as a result. The novel's conclusion implies that there are two ways in which immigrants are connected to their countries of origin; the first is a sense of desire or belonging. The second is a connection to their exiled ethnic group. Since the immigrant is required to demonstrate this attachment in daily activities as demonstrated in *No New Land*, it is more than just a feeling.

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