

VASSANJI'S AMRIIKA: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF IMMIGRANTS' DILEMMA

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ABSTRACT

M G Vassanji is a celebrated name among the fraternity of diasporic writers. He has penned down many well-acclaimed novels, numerous short story collections and non-fictional works. He is known for his exclusive and extraordinary portrayal of migrants' lives in his novels. Vassanji's *Amriika* published in 1999 is the epitome of the moral, cultural, religious, political and above all existential dilemma of immigrants in America. The novel is not an ordinary tale of migration; rather, it is an unaccounted journey of a minority community and its history of displacement. In *Amriika*, Ramji, the protagonist cum narrator, belongs to an eclectic Shamsi Muslim Cutch-Gujarati community of Tanzania. He reaches America from Dar es Salaam to study in a technical institute in Cambridge. He finds American life mesmerizing with its all comfort and glamour. Nonetheless, he is surprised to see the dilemma of Americans in regards to faith and cultural values.

After facing racial discrimination and political derangement, Ramji comes to realize the importance of the richness of his roots and culture. Throughout the narrative covering major years of his life, Ramji has been shown pinning for home. He strives to have a homely life. For this, he even asunder from his first wife and settles in California with Rumina. Nevertheless, after a while, Rumina too disappears leaving Ramji homeless and clueless of his fate and identity - a conspicuous dilemma of every migrant across the globe. The present analysis is an attempt to spotlight various social, cultural, religious, historical and political trajectories in the immigrants' lives in America – the land of dreams and opportunity.

Keywords: Immigrants, Dilemma, Identity, Home, History, Roots

M G Vassanji is a celebrated name among the fraternity of diasporic writers. He has penned down many well-acclaimed novels i.e., *The Gunny Sack* (1989), *No New Land* (1991), *The Book of Secrets* (1994), *Amriika* (1999), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), *The Assassin's Song* (2007), *The Magic of Saida* (2012), and *Nostalgia* (2016). He has also published numerous short story collections and non-fictional works. He is known for his exclusive and extraordinary portrayal of migrants' lives in his novels. Religious fundamentalism, tradition v/s modernism, morality, the portrayal of the Third World, migration, diaspora, citizenship, gender and ethnicity and some international historical events are few prime areas on which the writer has kept his main focus while narrating his telltales in novels. Among others, the issue of home and identity is pivotal for him as when asked about his diasporic existence, Vassanji himself alleges that, "In my heart, I am still very much an African, but I have lived in Canada for a long time and it feels like home. At some point in your life, you realise there are several homes" (Qtd in Marshall and Dyer).

Vassanji is concerned with the effects of history and the interaction between personal and public histories and their mutual overlapping. Public history, folk history, and colonial history - all three are interrogated in his works. Vassanji's *Amriika* published in 1999 is an epitome of the moral, cultural, religious, political and above all existential dilemma of immigrants in America. *Montreal Gazette* summarizes *Amriika* in a very succinct and apt way, it comments, "*Amriika* may be viewed as a classic immigrant story . . . [which] becomes, among other things, a kind of snapshot of the zeitgeist of the past three decades, a primer on dissident politics, a suspenseful mystery and a love story". The present analysis is an attempt to spotlight various social, cultural, religious, historical and political trajectories in the immigrants' lives in America – the land of dreams and opportunity.

In *Amriika*, Ramji, the protagonist cum narrator, reaches America from Dar es Salaam to study in a technical institute in Cambridge. Ramji belongs to an eclectic Shamsi Muslim Cutch-Gujarati community of Tanzania. Ramji is not his first name; it is his last name that he has acquired from his Gujrati ancestry. His first name is not mentioned in the novel. He is known only as Ramji. The community of Shamsis belongs to India whose ancestors were converted from Hinduism to Islam by Sufi saint Hazrat Shamsul Arifeen. More than a century ago, these Shamsis migrated to Dar es Salaam probably as indentured labourers. Dar es Salaam is the largest city, principal port, and leading commercial centre in Tanzania, East Africa. Through the worldview of Ramji - a university student, Vassanji paints the heterogeneous picture of Amriika as pronounced by native Indians and America as it really is. It lit up the grey area of American history in times and after Elvis, Madona, Kennedy and Donna Reed. The novel, "sedulously charts an Asian African immigrant's experience of three decades of recent American history. Here is a writer from the Indian diaspora who wishes to write back not just to the empire, but also to his homeland" (Roy).

After his parents' demise, Ramji is brought up by his, "singer and healer" (Vassanji 3), Grandma. She is airy for him who keeps on haunting him even after her death. He thinks of Grandma as a muse who has been the only link with Dar es Salaam after his shift to America. It is from her that he gets the first impression of America. Ramji says:

Our ancestors were Hindus who were converted to a sect of Islam and told by that refugee from the Mongols to await the final avatar of their god Vishnu. In grandma's words, the sun would arise that day from the west. How far was this west? Where did it begin? . . . My people sought it first in Africa, an ocean away, where they settled more than a hundred years ago. But in time this west moved further and became – America; or, as Grandma said it: Amriika. (Vassanji 3)

America in this novel is not merely a geographical domain that is known to be the world's superpower today. The place has a metaphorical presence in the novel. When Ramji learns Ginnie has terminal cancer; she comes to embody for him the brave spirit of Middle America - cheerful, generous and enthusiastic even in the face of imminent death. Once he reaches America, he exclaims: "Everything was America now, everything would be America. You could say that word, Amriika, a hundred times without repeating it once, each time would be different, that was the wonder of it" (Vassanji 19). In this way, America becomes a way of life for Ramji, a phenomenon. After shifting to America, Ramji has also come to know about the flip side of the coin. He talks about the negative face of America with hold of technology and science on people there. He delineates, "And then the ugly side, the frightening America: dangerous streets, es, drugs. Blackboard jungle, cement jungle, neon jungle . . . and the death's head of technology: ICBMs and MIRVs, marvelous and terrifying. As a teenager, he would wake up frightening by nightmares about the coming Third World War" (9).

The story opens in the present time as per the narrative of the story. It is the year 1995 and Ramji is interrogated by an FBI agent named agent Will Jones as Ramji is suspected of having being involved in a bomb blast in a bookstore at Ashfield. He is living in California near the beach. He is often visited by three young children called Lata, Leila, and Hanif. Ramji is all alone at this critical juncture of life. Prodded by the investigating officer cum Psychologist Will Jones, he ventures to recount his life and ancestry in a form of memoir in the year 1995. Giving a quick glimpse of his ancestors and community, the story takes off from 1968 - the year when Ramji lands up in America as a student.

In this way, the novelist has used the flashback technique and Ramji starts to conjure up his life from the moment when he departs from Dar es Salaam to America for his further studies. He left his home in 1968 along with his school friend, Sona. Sona was also mesmerized by the promises of the American dream and had the desire to live in the land of opportunities. Apart from a preface like a chapter entitled "Beginnings", the novel is divided into three sections: Schrodinger's Cat, A Grand Reunion, and Phantom Obsessions. The first section "Schrodinger's Cat" covers two initial years (1968 -1970) of Ramji's life in America after his immigration there. The second section "A Grand Reunion" figures the jump of twenty-three years in the life of Ramji and other characters of the novel. And the last part that involves the climax and denouncement of the novel, "Phantom Obsessions" has its setting in the winter of 1994-1995.

History has a brooding presence in *Amriika*. In the opening sentence of the novel, Ramji altercates, "We come from the small people, though we did not think so ourselves as such" (Vassanji 1). Small here may have various ramifications. It may be a small Shamsi community from India, may refer to their further marginalization in Africa as an immigrant and on the top of it, it resonates with Shamsi's as Third Worlds migrants in America that are seen as the underprivileged flag bearer among First World countries. "Vassanji has inevitably woven his newest tale around the issues of exile, longing, displacement and, ultimately, acceptance" (Carey). Moreover, on the very onset, Vassanji makes it clear to the reader that *Amriika* is not an ordinary tale of migration; rather, it is an unaccounted journey of a minority community and its history of displacement. "Vassanji's engagement with the past is praiseworthy. Unlike the archives, where the past is already digested as the raw material for history writing, the past here is a past of memory. For him, it is an aesthetic necessity, and it has great sacral value" (Roy).

Ramji loses his chastity with Ginnie Morris, his hostess in America before shifting to his hostel room in Tech. Even after shifting to his institute, he continues to visit Ginnie. During one such visit, he is confounded to find that Ginnie was suffering from cancer and had got bald due to chemotherapy. Ramji tries to move forward in his life at Ginnie's advice and has several other relationships. At the house of Morris, Ramji feels a different kind of physical satisfaction with the materialistic luxuries available there. He finds American life mesmerizing with its all comfort and glamour. But he is equally surprised to see the dilemma of Americans in regards to faith and cultural values. Chris Morris had recently joined the Buddhist faith. At this juncture, Ramji comes to realize the importance of the richness of his roots and culture. Ramji altercates, "That there is greater moral fibre and spirituality where you come from – as he'd been taught – and less materialism? That we don't go searching for useless causes and new faiths as Americans do, we know exactly who we are?" (21). Accepting the importance of his South-Asian origin, Moyez G. Vassanji himself avers in one of his interviews, "the Indian diaspora is very important . . . once I went to the US, suddenly the Indian connection became very important: the sense of origins, trying to understand the roots of India that we had inside us" (Kanaganayakam 21).

Like all other young men, Ramji has also arrived intending to get and learn the best of America and then returning to the homeland to make the best out of it: "He Has come with a vow of constancy against temptation, a promise to uphold his identity and faith. That was the promise all the young people left with when they departed for Europe and America: to return intact" (Vassanji 26). Ramji has an eternal quest for home as he was given a farewell by his people with a message, "Wayfarer, keep looking back" (46). With each new beginning in his life, he convinces himself that it like coming back home like marrying Rumina, being the team member of the magazine *Inqilab*.

Ramji feels the racial discrimination and his illusion breaks about the land of America as full of freedom and equality. He says, "There is no persecution here, but we still feel a sense of oddness, of smallness, of . . . insignificance?" (27). He further says, "In Dar, not rich ourselves, we lived next door to Africans and were not terrified", but, "here even a simple street scene has an aura that frightens" (36). In America, Ramji comes to know that all Africans are considered thieves and their land as the land of animals and heathens. Even then there is some charm in living in America that Ramji and Sona do not regret coming there. The reason being their constant hope of getting back to their homeland as better persons, "There was no doubt in their minds that they would return as soon as possible to their young nation and participate in its development" (88).

The aftermath of World War II and the Cold war between capitalist and communist countries bring forth a 'beat generation' refusing to conform to mainstream American values which lead to the emergence of the Hippies and the counterculture. The young generation was putting in the dock the traditional ways of life and was trying to experiment with certain other ways of living. They were involved in sexual excursion without guilt, consuming drugs to experience another level of consciousness, and was taking very active participation in politics and social and religious activities. Most dominantly, the novel covers the social and political reaction to the Vietnam war (1955-1975) in America. America was justifying its involvement in the war by citing the reason of Domino theory. According to which if America will ignore the influence of communism in Vietnam, it would lead to the strengthening of communism in other adjacent countries of Vietnam. While the population of America, particularly youngsters on university and college campuses, were condemning this imperialistic lust of government.

Civilians were protesting as they felt that the war was an unnecessary burden on the country and was draining its economical and human resources. The reaction against the war was coming from every corner be its natives, whites or other immigrants like African and Asian there. While commenting on hideous and heart-wrenching outcomes of the American war in Vietnam, Lucy Anne Miller says to Ramji, "Then you must know of the war crimes – the antipersonnel bombs and napalm. . . . burn babies and small children. And American bombers are doing to the environment what it will never recover from. The sheer arrogance of this country in the world . . . The sheer arrogance of power" (76).

The Anti-war movement became part of a larger protest movement against the traditional American values and attitudes. Many African American women viewed the war in Vietnam as racially motivated and sympathized strongly with Vietnamese women. Such concerns often propelled their participation in the antiwar movement and their creation of new opposition groups. Many Asian Americans were strongly opposed to the Vietnam War. They saw the war as being a bigger action of U.S imperialism and connected the oppression of the Asians in the United States to the prosecution of the war in Vietnam. Unlike many Americans in the anti-war movement, they viewed the war not just as imperialist but specifically as anti-Asian propaganda. The anti-war sentiment by Asian Americans was fueled by the racial inequality that they faced in the United States. There was a great deal of civic unrest on college campuses throughout the 1960s as students became increasingly involved in the Civil Rights Movement, Second Wave Feminism, and the anti-war movement. Women were a large part of the antiwar movement. African-Americans were often involved in the Civil Rights Movement and the antiwar movement.

Ramji, at the campus of Tech, finds himself pulled by the politics of dissent common among the students there whereas Sona wants to remain neutral to politics. Sona, the obstinate orthodox, is unwilling to change. He even tries to convince Ramji to stay away from the politics and to focus upon reviving his cultural roots in the USA as Sona himself was trying to do. Vassanji captures, quite clearly, the tension that exists between people who want to preserve 'the old ways' at all costs and people who want to question orthodoxy and establish new traditions. In the novel, on the one hand, there are characters like Sona who are fundamentalist and want to keep the uniqueness of their culture unspoiled. On the other hand, there are people like, Mr Darcy who are against religious and cultural fundamentalism. Among these two contradictory sets of people, one notices some characters like Ramji who are in-between space - pulled by history but also driven further by the promises of a glorious future.

Ramji, the follower of liberal ideology, feels that "America, this land of multiple choice . . . , had yet another choice on offer: to join or not to join the protest" (82). Ramji has made up his mind to be with the Anti-war group. Sona feels miffed with him for being involved in a cause that has nothing to do directly with their homeland. He chides Ramji and says, "'Look, you're proselytizing! You've picked up the Christian ethic, you want to save the world-you've become an American!' The taunt was meant to suggest he was changing" (84).

Ramji's Ethiopian roommate tells him that, "It is the worst time in America" (48). Ramji is swayed by the multiculturalism and hypoactive political ambience in his institution. He becomes active in a student demonstration in Tech. During this phase, he comes in contact with Lucy-Anne Miller, "the radical" (96), through

his roommate Shawn. Lucy Anne Miller is an American who belongs to the family of liberals. She claims to be a member of the Freedom Action Committee. The committee aims to project its solidarity with black people's struggle in America and Third World struggle all around the globe and are against, "American empire and military-industrial complex" (77). Therefore, Lucy-Anne Miller is a social activist and wants to work for the emancipation and empowerment of the Third World. For her, Ramji is representative of the exploited and oppressed Third World. "He was surprised and flattered by the attention he got . . . He was the man from Africa, an authentic Third Worlder, to whom they were sympathetic, yet it seemed to him that they could not quite understand him" (74). Lucy is one among her generation who are overwhelmed by revolutionary theories but do not have the practical experience of things. In his review Kara Babcock opines:

Ramji is disappointed in the way the privileged, mostly white American students take him up as an almost token symbol of his cause and have very little practical understanding of what it's like to live in the "third world" countries they are claiming to fight for. He observes that these students only think of the Third World as a concept, of Africa as this abstract notion; they don't understand or seek to understand the nuances of the cultures and countries that exist beneath these labels.

As the title of the novel, the nomenclature of the first section of the novel is metaphorical in nature. The wheel-chaired physics professor Peter Bowra enables Ramji to see himself as a Schrodinger's Cat 'entangled' between identities. 'Schrodinger's Cat' refers to a scientific experiment in which a cat is closed inside a box with poison in it. The experiment concludes that the cat is both dead and alive until the box is not opened. It is a situation of utmost uncertainty and dilemma for the scientist about the existence of a cat in that closed box. In this section, a similar dilemma about the existence of Ramji as an immigrant in America has been projected. After listening to Professor Bowra's lecture on Schrodinger's Cat, Ramji realizes that "to his grandmother back home, who could have no idea as to what exactly was happening to him, he would be very much like a Schrodinger's Cat" (Vassanji 39).

When Ramji is fed up with his life at Tech, he comes in contact with a girl named Lyris Unger. Lyris is an American and follows a guru from Indian origin to whom she calls 'satguru'. It refers to the spiritual barrenness in America in the wake of scientific developments. Ramji feels attracted towards her and at her behest, he goes to the 'ashram' of that guru. He does not find anything spiritual there but gets a peaceful and serene ambience away from the carousel and violence at Tech campus. He starts spending most of his time in the ashram and gets a room in place of his contribution to the publishing department of trust at weekends. He comes to Tech only for his classes and returns to Lyris at the ashram.

The ashram has its headquarter in Boston and is very popular among Americans. Vassanji writes, "America possessed the fresh mind of a child – or youth – but was deluded as the young always are in the exuberance of their possibilities and their energies, without the wisdom of experience, unaware of their limitations. It was ready to receive the ancient wisdom of the East" (126). Ramji has no quest for spirituality. He has chosen to stay in the ashram for the sake of Lyris and to get some personal space. But one day, he is informed that Ginnie is dead. Some days back, Ginnie had sent him an invitation to pay a visit to her. Ramji did not go as he did not want to meet her with his changed outlook. Now, he has guilt that why he hid when she was dying.

In desperation, he swallows almost the whole bottle of Aspirin. He gets delirious. When he gains his consciousness, he finds that Lyris has left the ashram for another Guru Maharaj-Ji. He meets Sona at a conference in Tech that is a joint venture of Professor Bowra and his guru and they have an argument. Sona argues that all the mysticism and devotion Ramji's so-called guru teaches him is already very much part of their tradition and they need not run after something new. Rather, they should maintain what they have and try to revive what they have lost. Ramji replies, "I just want some space [. . .]to be. To be let alone from the past, not worry about what I'm called, and what I'm supposed to be . . . I am what I am" (140). He feels overburdened by the expectation of roots and home culture and wants to cherish the fruit of multiculturalism that America is offering to him.

The Tech conference breaks the spell of spiritual quest in Ramji and he realizes that it's the mind, not the soul that is his world. In absence of Lyris, fed up with the ashram, Ramji gets back to his life at Tech.

Unconsciously, he gets involved with the group of misled youngsters who have destroyed the ancient building of the Institute of Strategic Studies or ISS by a bomb explosion. One day, he finds Anne Miller in his hostel room. She has come to hide here as she was one of the suspects in the recent bombing in the city. She claims to be innocent and pleads him to give her shelter for few days as she has made up her plans to fly away to Canada. Though he doesn't agree with Anne Miller with her all Third world cause stuff, Ramji helps her by giving her refuge in his room. He ruminates over the situation of Anne who is fighting for a shallow cause the reality of which she is completely unaware. He thinks that Anne "has no inkling of the world I come from . . . And in my country, Indians like me are sometimes called foreigners even though we've been there more than a century. . . does she realize that . . . I am an Indian and African and all screwed up with Western education, and all she sees is 'Third World'" (152).

He concludes that Lucy's sympathy for the third world is the result of her, "inner confusion, unhappiness, rage? or a combination?" (12). She is hurling out her existential rage in form of violence done in the name of a Third World cause. She is supposed to run away to Canada on Saturday. Ramji takes her to the music department of Tech on Friday evening. Friday evening is the day for Shamsis to pray. Sona sets up a mosque and they chant and listen to Sona as their mukhi. But the police reaches there and arrests Lucy. She holds Ramji responsible for her arrest and condemns him by calling him a cheat. Ramji has not informed the police and he is left awestruck at Anne's arrest.

Thereafter, Ramji comes in contact with a friend named Jamina from Dar es Salaam. He falls in love with her. Jamina rejects him for a guy Nabil to whom she considers the right person for her. Heartbroken and unable to complete his studies, Ramji restarts his life by marrying a girl named Zuli a vivacious and pretty Dar girl. In the second section, the story leaps twenty-three years. After spending more than two decades in America, Ramji looks back at his journey and accepts:

There was no walking back of course. . . There was now a sense of freedom. I had an awareness of a larger universe than the one I had known and of all the manners of possibilities, of *choice*: in one's beliefs and actions. I wouldn't say there was any less anxiety in this freeing myself of the faith and the moral order of my ancestors, of the sense of guilt and sin which keeps one bound to their universe. (162)

Ramji is now the father of twins from Zuli. He has shifted to Chicago and run a business of book distribution in partnership. He exclaims, "at last, I thought. I was coming home. If only Grandma had been alive to bless my future!" (168), but his marriage turns out to be a fiasco. His misconception of feeling at home in a foreign land wears out with the conflicts and clashes between him and Zuli. Jamila who has rejected him as a lover but still considers him her community friend arranges a week of get-together with all her old friends from Dar es Salaam. She names it "mustard-seed". In his seminal book *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, Robin Cohen refers to such mobilization among diasporas:

Diaspora often *mobilizes a collective identity*, not only a place of settlement or only in respect of an imagined, putative or real homeland but also *in solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries*. Bond of language, religion, culture and a sense of a common fate impregnate such a transnational relationship and give to it an effective, intimate quality that formal citizenship or long settlement frequently lack. (7)

This phase of mobilization can be traced in *Amriika* during this second section of the novel entitled 'The Grand Reunion'. Jamina invites Ramji and Zuli as well. They are passing through a very tense phase of their married life where arguments and silences have taken hold of their relations. They accept the invitation by considering it a needful break from their monotonous life. Among community friends, "It was as if they shed the veneer they have acquired in adulthood and as family men, and they become the schoolboys they had once been; they would get silly and nostalgic . . . and the conversation ranged from recipes and restaurant to how the community was doing in North America, from the global economy to the novels by Indian authors. . . (Vassanji 179-180). Therefore, Ramji has become a confused and scattered self, belonging to many faiths and roots simultaneously, a perfect epitome of diasporic identity.

On their arrival at Jamila's place, they meet other couples Salma and Aziz, Iqbal and Susan. Among them, Ramji gets the chance to meet his friend Sona who have come there with a young girl, Rumina from Zanzibar. All raise their eyebrows at the fact that despite coming with his wife Amy, Sona has come with an unknown girl. Sona introduces Rumina to all, but most specifically to Ramji as Rumina is doing her doctorate in Swahili and needs mentorship of Ramji in this case. Therefore, the relationship of Ramji and Rumina that started as a teacher-student relationship gets fonder day by day. Finally, Ramji feels that Rumina is his only chance of happiness in life. Zuli, after knowing the relationship between Ramji and Rumina, decides to separate from him. Ramji divorces Zuli and looks forward to fulfill the void through Rumina.

He gets the offer to work in a magazine *Inqilab* run in patronship of Mr Darcy to whom Ramji describes as, "the awesome intellectual" (4). Here he meets Rumina again and they start living together. His life seems to be moving smoothly, but fate takes its turn and Ramji is left rootless, faithless, and family-less at the end of the novel. The story reaches its climax. Ramji is approached by Michael alias Mehboob who claims to be the brother of his classmate back at Dar es Salaam. Michael is suspect of a bombing in a bookstore at Ashfield that has resulted in the death of three people. He claims to be innocent and requests Ramji to publish his version of the event that would prove him innocent. He has come to seek refuge from the police. Life has brought Ramji in a similar situation as he has gone through during his college days.

Reluctantly, Ramji provides shelter to Michael in his house. Michael gets friendly with Rumina quite fast and easily. Through his conversation with Michael's father, Ramji unearths Michael's involvement in the bombing. Ramji interrogates Michael and finally, Michael accepts his crime. He apologizes in front of Ramji. He even gets ready to hand over himself to the police the next day. The next day, Ramji joins a procession organized by the Shamsi community in California with the motto of 'run for the Shamsi's unity'. On his way in this procession, he is informed of Rumina's hospitalization. He runs to the hospital. He is told that in his absence, police have broken open in his house to arrest Michael. Michael refused to get arrested and Rumina acted as a willful hostage to him in the entire episode. Unable to sneak away from the police, Michael commits suicide by shooting himself. All this happened in front of Rumina and Rumina has a deep psychological impact of that incident. Ramji brings her back home. He finds Rumina very much changed after that day. She is not even ready to tell him anything about that episode. At her insistence, one day Ramji resumes his work at the office of *Inqilab*. Back at home, he finds that Rumina has left the home with all her clothing. After a series of searching, he comes to know that Rumina had spent some time at Dar es Salaam, but now she is not even there. And at the end, Ramji is left once more with that sense of perpetual longing and impossible hope signaled by the very word 'America'.

In this way, *Amriika* is a narrative of its protagonist Ramji's odyssey from East to West and has been unfurled through a cultural lens mirroring the interface of subculture with larger North American society. The novel has taken up the poem "Facing West from California's Shore" as its epigraph. The use of this poem on the very exposition of the novel seems an attempt to introduce the all-pervasive theme of migration in the novel. In this poem Walt Whitman writes: "I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of /maternity, the land of migrations, look afar, / Look off the shore of my Western Sea, the circle almost circled . . ." The circle almost circled refers to the journey of protagonist Ramji's race from the remote East to the farthest West covering almost the whole globe. Like migrant depicted in the poem, Ramji too has not been able to fulfil his quest after his displacement, the poet further says: "Now I face the home again, very pleas'd and joyous, / (But where is what I started for so long ago? /And why is it yet unfound?)" (Qtd in Vassanji)

The immigrant, here Ramji, is not able to explore the potentialities of the newfound mysterious land, America. He says, "And here I stand, after so many years; and perceived from this, its westernmost rim, the earth is flat. And my destiny ends here . . . There is no going back, of course; just a surely there's no going on and around to where I began" (Vassanji 1). Hareshwar Roy also propounds that, "Being an immigrant, he suffers from identity crisis. He remains a wavering character. He is full of contradictions – religious, ethnic and personal, yet we never feel their full force. Maintaining a strategy, Vassanji's narrative is coldly detached". In his old days, Ramji feels the fast change in the social and political scenario around him. He senses the change in the issues and challenges for the next generation. Referring to Lata, Leila and Hanif, Ramji says, "Their burdens are of

different orders: they discuss sex and AIDS, religion and intermarriage, the hang-ups of their immigrant parents; and their own impending futures. But I suspect they too are sometimes drawn to beginnings" (Vassanji 2). Hence, throughout the narrative covering major years of his life, Ramji has been shown pinning for home. He strives to have a homely life. For this, he even asunder from his first wife and settles in California with Rumina. Nevertheless, after a while, Rumina too disappears leaving Ramji homeless and clueless of his fate and identity - a conspicuous dilemma of every migrant across the globe.

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