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The Intersection of Tradition and Cultural Preservation in M.G. Vassanji's No New Land

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Abstract

Language and literature are embedded upon the cultural hierarchies in the society. The variation in both shows the differences in the societal background of the people. The people tend to maintain a level of standard in the society. The people develop strata of respect and recognition despite the toils of the past. The ancestral past had sufferings and ailments paved a path to the raise in unique literatures and in the development of various language patterns. The indigenous people had an original language which was considered to be tainted by the foreign invasions during the monarchy and during the colonial oppression. People responded both physically and mentally to the changes in the society, channelling the agony into protest. These protests are the ignition to a set of literatures that fuelled up the people to attain freedom and also to a literary quench. This protest prolonged even after the freedom by the societal challenges of preserving the heritage of the self among the cultures. The researcher has chosen the novel No New Land by M.G. Vassanji for the study. It talks about an immigrant family and its struggles in a new land, with hopes of overcoming the challenges in the society. This paper puts light upon the factor of the society where economics, politics, culture and the people intersect and cope up along the historical prejudices. Culture cannot be studied in unison; it shapes itself with the ailments and the developments of the factors surrounding it.

Keywords: Culture, Heritage, Immigrant, Indigenous, Politics.

Introduction

People traditionally believe that literature reflects the lives and means of subsistence of their ancestors. The people of the century and those of the future are also reflected in this. A single tone cannot be used to define literature; instead, it can be multiplied according to the preferences of the readers of the time. For both authors and readers, the adaptability of coping into the later decades adds to its interest. The world becomes interconnected and the scholars are grappling with implications of globalization. They also look at how the world is produced and received in relation to race, gender, culture, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Literature is created and perceived globally as a result of the continuous interaction and idea sharing between cul-

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tures. Every individual must fight for identity recognition in an amalgamation of cultures brought about by ongoing cultural change and human migration. The fight for identity endures over the millennia, despite the fact that the generations adjust to the new environment. M.G. Vassanji's book *No New Land* centers on the Lalani family, an Asian immigrant family who migrated to Toronto, Canada, from Africa. After coming here in hopes of a better life, the family quickly discovers that it is impossible to escape the world's traditional norms. Nurdin was devastated when he was wrongfully accused of sexually abusing a young woman. He had to contend with his own identity in this world and battled to clear his name. Following a number of life disappointments, Nurdin came to the realization that it is possible to both adapt to the new culture and keep one's cultural heritage. He achieved inner peace in society after realizing that it was acceptable to be open-minded and to interact with individuals from different cultures. Nurdin was brought up to be a submissive middle child who always shows deference to authority. Nurdin discovers that the society he lives in is considerably different from his own. He was surrounded by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and not everyone shared his cultural ideals. Because of his degree and experience, he finds it difficult to get employment and feels cut off from the community, which he perceives as superficial and materialistic. In the new world, Nurdin's used, traditional lifestyle as a scholar and well-respected instructor feels alienated. He joins a Muslim group and teaches Urdu classes because he feels disoriented in the new country due to the practices of the other people. Additionally, he participates in a political movement that defends immigrant rights. The study's problem statement states that immigrant communities must strike a balance between cultural preservation and assimilation into new societies. Furthermore, intergenerational interactions with immigrant populations are characterized by varying degrees of cultural adherence and adaptation. The above will be examined through a qualitative study of Nurdin Lalani in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*.

Objectives of the Study

The key objective of the study is to illustrate Haji Lalani's struggles and resistance to retaining immigrant ethnic identities. Second, this study aims to examine Haji Lalani's function

as a cultural savior and the implications for understanding his actions in achieving a strong approach to balancing the known devil and the unseen angel. Finally, the researcher sees Haji's actions as a saviour of the destitute immigrant culture.

Methodology of the Study

The researcher adapted the standard principles of research technique established in the MLA handbook 9th edition for this research article. In addition, critical techniques such as the sociological approach, psychological approach, and features of intersectionality were used. The researcher conducted a qualitative research study and descriptive approach to analyze M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*.

Literature Review

The researcher thoroughly studied the other characters and their interpretations. However, in light of the researcher's views, some research has been conducted to examine how the novel's characters embody the intricacies while dealing with intergenerational conflicts and societal pressures they confront. Despite the hardships, the personal growth of the impoverished character, Nurdin, was examined as an aspect of cultural negotiation; nonetheless, the ignored themes of intersectional tension and the intricacies of society's structural hurdles were not thoroughly examined.

Hussein Ali Abbas in his paper "The Different Types of Ethnic Affiliation in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*," discussed the concept of 'Ethnic Affiliation' in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*. The study focuses on the many types of affiliation, such as residential affiliation, religious affiliation, and social affiliation, and how these elements relate to the characters' coping mechanisms in an alienated country.

Vasant Naik's paper "Racial Discrimination in M. G. Vassanji's Novel *No New Land*" examined the issue of racial discrimination through the prism of diaspora literature. The research has mostly concentrated on racial discrimination in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*.

In his article "Men in the Land of Promise: Immigration and Challenges to Masculinity in M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land*," Mr. Edwin Asa Adejei discussed the portrayal of masculinity in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*. The study focuses on the obstacles that men experience in an immigrant society, as well as issues about socialization.

Shizen Ozama debated the transformation of identities in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land* in the article "With This Past Before You, All Around You: On the Transformation of Identities in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*". The study looks at the limitations of cross-cultural dynamics, the shifting of cultural positions, and the characters' belief in the possibility of cross-cultural transformations in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*.

In the paper "Identity in a 'liminal' Space in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*," Arup Chandra Das discusses the characters' desire for identification as well as the sense of nostalgia caused by migration. The study examined the quest for identity in a liminal environment from a diasporic perspective.

The review of literature highlights the multifaceted themes in M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land*. The study intends to present a nuanced view of "The Intersection of Tradition and Cultural Preservation in M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land*" by drawing on the aforementioned studies and identifying research gaps, so contributing a unique research proposal for literary discourses. No prominent papers are not found related to the present topic. So, this study will be a landmark in studying the Intersection of Tradition and Cultural Preservation in M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land*.

Intersection of Tradition and Cultural Preservation

Cultural hierarchy is a system of social ranking within a particular culture. It is determined by elements like family history, occupation, and level of education. It is regarded as a means of upholding social stability and order in the community as well as a means of guaranteeing equitable treatment for all. Cultural hierarchy plays a significant role in Nurdin's life. He was brought up to be respectable and to appreciate supremacy. Nurdin is committed to preserving his cultural heritage in spite of the difficulties he encountered in Toronto. First-generation immigrants always feared they wouldn't be able to adjust to their new environment, while later immigrants did just that. Similarly, Haji Lalani, Nurdin's father, had a difficult beginning to his business in Congo, but eventually his store gained local fame. However, as a result of the growing number of stores in the area, his business is not as successful as it once was. In his spare time, he participated in spiritual conversations and was also spiritual. He married and had

three sons and four daughters on the recommendation of his mosque superiors. Haji has a reputation for being strict and moral. He would never think twice about reprimanding a girl who lacked modesty simply by glancing at other men or sending a rude boy away in handcuffs.

Narandas had two daughters and a younger son. With the second daughter, Nurdin and Shamshu played. The older daughter was tall and dusky, with a prominent jewelled nose-stud She did not talk to Akber, of course, because Akber was an adult. He was sixteen. . . . He was in love with her and pretty certain his affection was returned Then Akber wrote a note - beginning with a ghazal and ending with "Will you marry me?" He sent it with a servant with specific instructions as to whom it should be handed. The servant headed straight for the opposite flat, without a moment's thought, and the first person he saw there was Narandas's wife. "What do you want?" she asked. He handed her the note. The note ended up on Haji Lalani's lap.

The Germans, in their time, had a standard punishment for offences, called simply "Twenty-five," for the number of strokes of a whip. . . . Haji Lalani took the German option and beat his son senseless using a schoolmaster's cane. . .

Narandas moved away with his family. Akber was married off to a local girl, and a year later moved to Tabora, inland. . . . (Vassanji 17, 18)

Early on, the Lalani family was taught the moral way of life in the most difficult way conceivable. It demonstrates that Lalani was a devout and honest individual. Nurdin Lalani remained a morally upright man as a result of these severe treatment. Nurdin's height was average, and he always participated in mischievous activities but was careful not to get too involved. He makes such a subtle impression on the family that they view him as a useless individual who spills tea while carrying it.

The nation's citizens endured great hardships merely to gain acceptance into civilization. Even from wealthy nations like America, people moved to Canada from all over the world. The law that General Idi Amin passed stating that Asians should be deported from Africa to their own countries or to the fugitive camps is the main reason of this incident. Many people migrated as a result, settling in other nations that provided assistance, such as Canada. The

people had to endure a great deal of hardship once they settled down in order to gain acceptance in society and recognition as members of a customary group. People from the same sect band together and mistreat or abuse those from other sects. People had to work for generations and get some notoriety before they could move up into higher strata. One of the people who struggle to fit in with society is Nurdin. Nurdin learned that in order to be at recognized strata, one must accept the stratum, despite the fact that the voyage was difficult.

There were those whose final act of faith in the new country was to put the savings of two generations of toil to develop a mud and limestone dwelling into a two storey brick building. These buildings lined Dar's main streets, each a monument to a family's enterprise, proudly bearing the family name or else that of a favourite child. When they were taken, that was the final straw. (Vassanji 25)

The place where Haji Lalani died, at Oyster Bay, was a peaceful spot under the gently swaying branches and rustling leaves of two neighbouring trees... It was as if Haji Lalani a whole era died, a way of life disappeared. Some would say it was the onset of the new era that killed him. (Vassanji 21)

General Idi Amin's exodus from Uganda led to a migration to Canada, where individuals settled among people from different cultural backgrounds. In the early years of the settlement, people struggled to find stable housing, employment, and opportunities to interact with people from various parts of the world. It affected every one of their lives after they settled in the country. Haji Lalani was prone to taking things personally, and it was clear that the new way of life did not fit him, which is why he died. The people are not the only elements of society; politics, the people's economic situation, and the business world are also included. All of these topics have been highlighted by the author, who has dispersed the ideologies across the book. Haji was interested in all of these things.

Conclusion

For immigrants, especially those who experience social marginalization and displacement, assimilation into a new society frequently results in psychological and identity issues. The research questions provide a range of perspectives on Nurdin's preservation of cultural conflicts and the effects of immigrant groups' as-

similation. The researcher respond to the first research query is that every immigrant face a set back at the start and eventually it eases itself away from the difficulties; however Nurdin had intersectional aspect of attack on the race, culture and religion. Nurdin was initially unprepared for the significant shift, but he changed and absorbed his immigrant identity by integrating into a community that embraces him and absorbs his qualities. The relationship between him and his children as well as the other younger generation in the nation is the subject of the second question. Nurdin attempted to consume pig in an attempt to feel included, even though contemporary social conventions normalize the consumption of items that go against his religious beliefs. This is among the situations that led to conflict between his cultural background and contemporary social expectations. "...And you became, morally, like them. The Canadians" (Vassanji 127). They felt like they belonged due to the immigration to London, the cancellation of Lalani's arrival there, and the detour to Canada, where they were accepted. As a result, the family was in a state of readiness to participate in cross-cultural activities and to disregard all of the cultural norms they had been adhering to. Despite their efforts to adopt the ideals of other cultures, the Lalani family eventually returned to their roots.

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