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Nativization of Fear and Anxiety as Identity in Selected Fiction of East African Asians

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Abstract
This paper explores the concept of fear and anxiety in the identity formation process among East African Asians as captured in their selected works of fiction. It analyzes identity and belonging by examining how emotions of fear and anxiety are presented in the selected texts through characterization and imagery. Using Bahadur Tejani's *Day After Tomorrow*, Peter Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle,* M.G Vassanji's *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* and Imam Verji's *Who Will Catch Us as We Fall?* the paper analyzes the changing trends and images of fear and anxiety among East African Asians, that make their interaction with the native Africans almost impossible. This paper is therefore, geared towards exploring how the complexity of contemporary race relations between the Asians of East Africa and the native African communities, which is driven by fear and anxiety, find expression through literary narratives. In this paper I employ psychoanalytic theory in engaging with the texts owing to the emotional issues of fear and anxiety that makes it focus on the fragmented image of the Asian world and explore the alienated individual consciousness such as the interstitial position that the East African Asians find themselves in. I conclude that fear and anxiety plays a role in the process of identity formation among East African Asians in their quest for belonging in the region.

Key Words : Anxiety, Asian, cosmopolitanism, East Africa, fear, identity, belonging.

Introduction

Asian immigrants have lived in East Africa for many years, during which they have contributed a lot towards the political and socio-economic development of the region. However, they have not been able to freely integrate with the native African communities as highlighted in the selected texts. Their long history and immense contribution in East Africa, has led to many scholarly works being written about them mainly focusing on the historical accounts and genealogy, but the psychological aspect of their identity formation which form a motif in their literature and literary experiences has been left out.

Anxieties of belonging have historically been the ultimate preoccupation of diasporic Asians in East Africa, offering them a platform for conversation with their host communities (Ocita, 2013). Against this background, Hawley (2008) suggests the need to investigate ways in which conversations between and among Asians and Africans are still ongoing and how constructive they are. In this paper therefore, I examine images used by the authors in the selected texts to illustrate emotions of fear and anxiety among the Asian characters in their interaction with native Africans.

Many minority communities in the world have experienced collective fear and anxiety as a result of their placelessness/ dislocated identities. In the USA for instance, the Black minority have historically grappled with the issue of racism as a result of their being a minority community within a dominant white population. This has led to their living in fear because of racial discrimination. As a way of fighting for survival, the minority Blacks have had to demand for equal rights over the years. Literature has remained an important tool in the process of expressing the concerns, anxieties and fears of the Black community in the United

States over the years, where names like Martin Luther King Junior, Malcolm X, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Richard Right, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker among others have prominently featured.

Down in Africa, there have also been cases where minority communities have had to grapple with fear. South Africa for instance, went through a period of torture and suffering during Apartheid where the Whites openly discriminated against the Blacks, Asians and Coloureds (mixed race people). These experiences were shared in texts written by various authors such as Peter Abrahams, Dennis Brutus and Alex La Guma who worked hard to fight for independence through their literary works such as *Mine Boy, Letters to Martha* and *A Walk In the Night* respectively.

East Africa also has not been spared in the narration of minority experiences and anxieties, being one of the most multicultural and multiracial regions that comprises of native East Africans, Africans of South Asian descent and Whites. The Europeans have also manifested anxieties as a result of their minority status in East Africa, which highlights their sense of fear in the midst of a foreign community. This is observed in the texts such as Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* (1937) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). This gives the region a cosmopolitan outlook as it is entrenched in a history of migration, identity formation and transformation.

Changing Trends of Anxiety among East African Asians

The sense of fear and anxiety among the East African Asians has been observed over various periods in history, only taking different forms at a time. As described by Ojwang (2000), this periodization is important for unlocking the question of the changing, complex nature of racial imagineering. The imagineering involves the process of identity formation in the East African Asians as a result of translocation and dislocation. For instance, when the Asians first arrived in East Africa during the precolonial period to participate in the construction of Kenya- Uganda railway, they were anxious about how life in Africa will turn out to be. However, their greatest fear was about the hostile environment they encountered away from their familiar home. In her work, 'From Jhelum to Tana' (2007) Kapur Dromson presents characters faced by attacks from the man-eaters of Tsavo, infections with Malaria, Sleeping Sickness, Elephantiasis and Cholera, bites from jiggers, scorpions and snakes. The Asian labourers also encounter attacks from hostile communities like the Kamba, Kikuyu and Nandi warriors who were armed with machetes and spears, determined to stop the railway line from passing through their land. The other source of fear were the numerous accidents during the construction that claimed many lives among the workers (Nowrojee, 2014).

The colonial period also saw the East African Asians experience another form of fear and anxiety. This was the colonialists' divide-and-rule policy which sought to discourage any form of cross-racial engagement in order to maintain the status quo. This classification led to the dispossession of African land by white settlers and Asian traders (Munos & Padurang, 2018). The colonial regulations limited the contact between Asians and members of the local African community leading to a 'system oiled and lubricated by the colonial myth of European superiority over Africans' (Malack & Ondieki, 2017).

The nervous condition during this period comes as a result of the Asian dilemma on whether to follow the colonialist ideology and continue enjoying the privileges or be part of the African process of agitation for independence, which was a challenging position. The native Africans had begun fighting for independence through protests and guerilla warfare.

The British colonial masters had also caused terror to both the native Africans and Asians, as they carried out massacres, forced people to take oaths as well as carried out questionable trials (Nowrojee, 2014). Owing to their in-between position in the racial hierarchy, the Asian community in East Africa too occasionally became victims of such terror activities, for instance, raids were regularly carried out in the Asian quarters to get out Mau Mau rebels which left several Asians injured (Vassanji, 123).

These Mau Mau rebels found themselves among the Asians because of two reasons. One is that some Asians offered the Mau Mau rebels refuge, as they assisted them in fighting the colonial government in the fight for independence. They would go ahead and get guns for the terror group which were used in carrying out their heinous acts. Secondly, some Asians employed the native Africans innocently without knowing that they had taken an oath as members of Mau Mau. Those Asians who happened to be collaborators with the colonial government found themselves in trouble, as they were secretly reported by their native African workers, ear marked and later attacked by the terror group at night. All the two scenarios left the Asians

living in constant fear, whether from the colonial government if discovered that they were colluding with the rebel movement or the Mau Mau rebels if found to be collaborators with the government.

The East African Asians also feared that they would lose their cultural traditions, which fostered a deep sense of community, to the racial assimilation introduced by the Europeans. Faced by this dilemma, they chose to pursue business, a trait that led them to be known as *dukawallahs*- often referred to as the 'local Jews' of Africa (Ojwang 2013). *Dukawallah* was a stereotypical term used by Africans to refer to Asians with exploitative connotations. *Duka* is a Kiswahili word meaning shop, which was the kind of retail business mostly associated with Asians. The Asians stocked their shops with items that were needed by both Europeans and native Africans. The shop is used as a metaphor to show a close association of Asians with Europeans. The business community however, came to be associated with economic exploitation in addition to being seen as non-assimilative, which impacted heavily on the social interactions between the Asian diaspora and the local community.

The dawn of independence raised the expectations especially for the native Africans and some Asians who had participated in fighting for independence. However, there was bad news for those East African Asians, who seemed to have benefited from the caste system of the colonial rule, as they did not know how the new regime would treat them. This was a period marked by a feeling of fear, anxiety and betrayal from the Asians, some who had contributed in the fight for independence and some having been promised rewards after independence. The period therefore introduced another complex form of fear and anxiety within the East African Asians.

When the East African countries attained independence, they first secured the borders, hence there was no crossing over to another country without identification and checks. The Asian traders therefore became the first casualties because of their nature of operation which involved crisscrossing East Africa in search of trading opportunities as well as driven by wanderlust. As Simatei (2000) observes, although colonialism allotted space racially, it allowed both unlimited movements across its vast empire and the existence of autonomous cultural enclaves within its imperial boundaries which favoured the Asians. However, after independence, there is a restriction on the borders which creates a sense of loss to the East African Asian business opportunities. This further creates anxiety over the future of their business ventures across borders.

Then there arose the issue of African Nationalism which was followed by strong anti-Asian sentiments based on suspicion and mistrust of the Asians' role as middlemen during the colonial era (Munos & Padurang 2018). In Uganda for instance, General Idi Amin singled out Asians, blaming them for the country's economic and political problems. He later expelled them from the country in 1972, creating fear and anxiety among the Asians within the region. As Shah, a 31-year-old lawyer says, "Everyone is frightened. What has happened in Uganda has brought home how extremely vulnerable we Asians are in East Africa," (*The New York Times*, August 29, 1972). There was on the one hand the fear that all the Asians in East Africa would be expelled by the postcolonial African regime for being exploitative and discriminative to the natives, while on the other hand they had the anxiety of not knowing where to go, as they formed part of the third generation since the immigration of Asians to East Africa, after being expelled and how they would be received. It emerged that the only country the expelled Asians would go to was Britain which was their former colonizer.

The emigration by the Asians in East Africa to Britain as a result of fear and expulsion from Uganda, developed them into a transnational Asian-African community (Oonk, 2013). A triple heritage (Mazrui, 1986) emerged which consisted of three elements, one is being born in an Asian family, learning the values and traditions of the Asians; two being influenced by the Islamic culture, and third is being influenced by the western culture where they emigrated to. Warah (1998) explores the issue of triple heritage when she researches on the history of the Kenyan-Asians to help her understand her place as a person with multiple heritages. She begins to question her status as a Kenyan immigrant when she goes to study in the United States of America and is asked how come she is Kenyan yet she is brown and not black.

Social Displacement and Cultural Unease

The characters in the selected East African Asian texts manifest actions that are motivated by feelings of fear and anxiety, which are usually stored in the unconscious mind. They are haunted by a sense of cultural alienation, the feeling of not belonging or experiencing foreignness which forces them to constantly struggle

to construct an identity of their own (Samanta, 2014). This sense of alienation is caused by the feeling of displacement from their homeland, which leads to a state of anxiousness as the Asians "strive to recreate a sense of home in an unfamiliar place" (Samanta, 14).

Tejani for instance, in *Day After Tomorrow*, presents Samsher's father Mohemedali, as a person belonging to the second generation Asian emigrant who has to strike a balance between two extreme ends of his existence, the motherland India and the new habitat, East Africa. This duality elicits a serious conflict, both internal and external in the characters such as Mohemedali, since they are still haunted by memories of 'home', while at the same time, faced with the burden of displacement in a foreign land. That is the reason Samsher's father spends time every evening talking to his children about their ancestral land and culture. He has the fear that his generation may get assimilated in the culture of the native Africans, leaving them hanging as nowhere men (Hawley 2008).

The characters in the selected texts, whether from second or third generation, are depicted as caught in a milieu of human displacement, nostalgia and loss of identity. As observed by Bahmanpour (2010), "this sense of belonging to a particular place and culture and, yet, at the same time, being an outsider to another, creates a tension in the individuals," (46). This state of affairs appears to be a distinguishing feature in characters in the selected East African Asian texts. That the second generation is pained by the feeling of ambivalence which has its roots in the displaced community, described by Anwer, (2017) as effects of 'rooting, uprooting and re-rooting,'. For instance, Tejani describes the Asian traders as people who are constantly living in fear, especially on Fridays, "For them Friday was the day of fear. Fear, as the handful of traders felt hemmed in by the vast horde of black peasants." (Tejani, 15). This is a paradox since the Asians fear the natives and yet benefit from them through trade.

Although the Asians did business with the natives, as their livelihood depended on it, they had a feeling of insecurity which disturbed them whenever Africans came in large numbers to buy goods from their shops, like on Fridays. It appeared the presence of the peasants was a threat to the safety of their business, through looting and robbery. At the same time, it invaded the small private *wepari* world, threatening to dismantle it culturally. This is through the influence they had on the Asian children through interaction, and even intermarriages. For instance, in the case of Mohemedali in Tejani's *Day After Tomorrow*, where he ends up marrying an African woman and getting hybrid children against his culture. Samsher also finds himself falling in love and eventually marrying Nanziri, a native African whom together, they get a child.

The Asians abhor intermarriages, especially with native Africans, which reveals their racist attitude that demeans the status of black people. That is the reason characters like Mohemedali try as much as possible to keep their children from interacting with natives, by detaining them behind the counter in their shops, and constantly talking to them every evening about their own culture and beliefs, an issue that is too hard for the children to comprehend. Even when the children go to school, the parents are keen on what is being taught, lest they lose their identity and become more of native Africans than the superior Asians.

The ignorance of the Asians concerning how Africans lived contributes to their sense of fear, '… they knew nothing about how a black man lived, his customs, his food habits. So, all the traders found their presence in the village strange and disturbing. Though they depended on it for their livelihood.' (Tejani, 15). The fear illustrated in this statement as fueled by ignorance, amounted to fear of the unknown. Africans remained mysterious to the Asian. This explains why the East African Asian is unable to integrate in the native African society. They attempt to create a close knit society that does not open up to any other community except Asian, a factor that contributes to feelings of hatred and mistrust from the native Africans.

In Nazareth's *In a Brown Mantle*, the Asians become fearful of the native Damibian politicians because of the way in which they contact their politics. They are shrewd and ruthless as they exploit their own people, which makes them appear worse than their former colonial masters. When criticized by members of other races like the Asians, they are angered and come up with slogans of hatred and propaganda against them, which is a means of diverting attention and ultimately staying in power.

The narrator, D'Souza, runs to exile in London out of fear for his life, where he narrates the story of his past and that of his country, Damibia. At the beginning of the novel, D'Souza portrays himself as an innocent man, going against his conscience that keeps urging him to confess his sins, 'Confess- when I had

committed no crime?' (Nazareth, 2). But as the story goes on, it emerges that D'Souza has indeed committed a serious economic crime of taking huge sums of money in form of money as bribes and stashed them away in a Swiss bank. This makes him run away because of fear of being arrested and charged.

As a result of the feeling of hatred by native Africans towards them because of the role as collaborators with the whites, the East African Asians are faced with fear and anxiety for their safety and future in the region. When the natives decide to fight for their freedom through Mau Mau movement, some of the Asians become victims. The colonial police also unleash terror to the Asians through raids out of suspicion of hiding the rebels. For instance, in Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* Lall narrates,"The police regularly raided the Indian residential areas expecting to find Mau Mau hiding among the servants." (Vassanji, 32). These raids usually lead to the arrest and injury of members of the Asian community, mostly owing to mistaken identity, as was the case of Saeed Molabux nicknamed Madrassi, "the officer, the corporal and other askaris converged on Saeed, raining rifle butts and kicks on his back as his body curled up on the ground like a worm and tried to shield his head with his raised elbows." (2003, 38). This scenario describes a case of mistaken identity where a dark Asian resembling an African is cornered by the police mistaken for a Mau Mau suspect. The interstitial position occupied by the East African Asians is very precarious in a way that, it makes them victims of hate from both the Whites and Africans.

There is also fear expressed by the second generation East African Asians over losing their own identity to the native Africans. Having lived in both the original home and immigrated one, they perceive themselves as a dislocated group that is faced with the danger of losing identity in the foreign land. This fear is witnessed in Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* when Vikram's mother issues a stern warning to Njoroge to leave her daughter alone:

> I want you to understand that I have lost my home in Pakistan. I have no cousins or uncles or aunts, no parents. At least let me have a normal family, where I can see my grandchildren grow up as Indians, as Hindus. I had dreams too, of children and grandchildren- whom I can understand, can speak to….and bring up in our ways. I have nothing against Africans. But we are different. (Vassanji, 248).

In the lamentation above, Vikram's mother expresses her fear and anxiety concerning her identity as an Asian, despite having migrated and later settled in East Africa. She has this feeling that her identity would be lost through her daughter's intermarriage with native Africans, giving rise to a hybrid generation that has no idea of what an Asian culture looks like.

A similar show of fear and anxiety is witnessed in Verji's *Who Will Catch Us as We Fall?,* when Raj's family moves to a new estate for security reasons. The first night in the neighborhood is eventful when they encounter Simran, an Asian girl being beaten by the father (Samsher) and thrown out of the house after being found with Patrick, the night guard, kissing. Inspite of her mature age (she is studying in university in England), Simran cannot make an independent decision concerning her life especially concerning relationships and marriage. When she attempts to explain to the father about how people live in London, he retorts, "Do they teach you to run around with a boy behind your family's back? To have a relationship outside of marriage? Outside of your culture? We have our own rules here, our own culture," (Verjee,233). Samsher being a second generation Asian, is afraid of losing his identity through the daughter's cross-racial marriage. He knows the union would result in a cross-racial generation, hence endangering existence of their Asian identity.

Pooja supports Samsher's action, claiming that he is teaching the daughter a lesson, "She must know that she cannot shame her family that way," (Verjee, 234). What she forgets is that her own daughter, Leena is also sailing in the same boat, having an affair with Mike who is a native African. Pooja's husband, Raj sympathizes with the girl and offers to host her for the night when he finds that the father has indeed thrown her out of the house at night. Simran is therefore taken to Raj's house, albeit under protest from Pooja.

Images of Fear and Anxiety in Entangled Genealogies

The authors in selected texts have used imagery to highlight the issues associated with fear and anxiety among the East African Asians. These images are in form of colours, objects, structures, and time of the day.

White versus Black

In Tejani's *Day After Tomorrow*, Samsher encounters a group of White hunters who stop in his village, while on his childhood adventures. One of them carries Samsher and sits him on a dead lioness, then start to photograph him, as generic 'native' (Tejani, 1971, 11-13). The relating of an Asian child (Samsher), with the native African points at the relegated position occupied by the East African Asian towards the end of the colonial regime in the region.

Black is associated with nativenes, primitivity and inferiority while White is viewed as a symbol of superiority and power. Asian on the other hand, is associated with capitalism because of their obsession with money as well as alienated mannerisms. Samsher finds himself developing hatred for his community as a result of this:

> When he went to the Bazaar in the afternoons, he shuddered at the desiccated men and women he saw ... Like life-less automatons they sat in the shops, their beady eyes lighting up when a customer entered the shop. If he didn't buy anything, he was cursed vehemently behind his back. Then once again the owner lapsed into an excruciating final lethargy. (Tejani, 57)

The Asians are described here from the capitalist perspective, because of their obsession with business and alienation. The only time they interact with native Africans, or even whites, is when transacting business. They therefore, assume the image of the 'White' colonial and neo-colonial exploiter, a character that makes Samsher uncomfortable with his community.

The Asian is sometimes referred to as a 'Jew' of East African because of their historical in-betweenness, a position Jones (2009) describes as, 'sometimes strategic, sometimes miscalculated, sometimes manipulated.' (56). Tejani takes a position that is not consistently worked into the narrative as either a complication or deliberate displacement of the more prominent black/white conception of race in East Africa.

The Gun

The gun has been consistently mentioned in the literary texts of East African Asians when narrating about the strained relationship between the whites and Blacks. The Asian characters are also seen to be owning revolvers for security reasons, a privilege that native Africans are not entitled to. As it turns out, the other two races (whites and Asians) acquire the gun to protect themselves against native Africans.

Vassanji's description of the gun in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* emphasizes on the dangerous and unpleasant function it is capable of performing. Vikram explains how the father would go to the bedroom and bring out, "his revolver, a rather ugly, dull black thing inside a brown holster ..." (Vassanji, 60). The description of the gun in unpleasant terms points to the fact that whatever the weapon does is scaring, that it is just a tool for torture and pain. The mention of a black gun in a brown holster is symbolic of the feeling of fear and anxiety among the East African Asians. The Asians being brown in colour, acquire guns to protect themselves against the Blacks.

The colonial government also uses scaring pictures on the pamphlets to scare people and show how evil and wicked the Mau Mau are, "This one had a drawing of a devilish black man with large eyes and open mouth, leaping out of the yellow page, under the caption: The Mau Mau want your gun!" (Vassanji, 61). The white government warns fellow Europeans and Asians against associating with native Africans, as they would end up losing their guns which is their form of security.

The image of the gun is used by Vassanji to highlight fear among the colonialists. Owning it assures security to the owner against Mau Mau attack, but at the same time losing the gun would lead to stiff penalty from the colonial government. For instance, when Vikram's father loses his gun, he is scared more of the government punishment than his own security, "Papa was frightened too. There was a stiff fine for losing a gun, there would be stiffer repercussions." (68). The expression describes why it is scarier to lose the gun than acquiring it. The colonial government would assume the individual has colluded with the Mau Mau and given it out. Eventually Vikram's father is fined twenty-five pounds for losing the weapon, but his African servant, Amini is arrested and taken away never to be seen again, because of the loss of the gun.

The Shop

The association of the shop (*duka*) with Asians in East Africa cannot be ignored as evident in the selected literary texts. This is because of the Asian endowment with entrepreneurial skills. The image of the shop goes beyond just business and as Makokha (2014) explains, 'Rather than seeing a migrant people, with complex identity crises struggling to adjust to the transfer of authority from a White Self to a Black Other, blackest Africans tend to see the *dukawallah* and his emasculating habit of emptying the Black man's wallet and coffers.' (65).

Most of the native Africans attempt to understand the East African Asian community from the perspective of the *dukawalla* stereotype. This concurs with Bhabha's (1994) view that stereotypes are a major discursive feature in the ideological construction of otherness. The East African Asian image is viewed as a stereotypical *dukawalla*, always waiting to con natives of their money through shrewd business.

The shop plays significant role to the Asians in East Africa. Apart from being their source of livelihood, it also acts as their refuge. In *Day After Tomorrow*, Mohemedali believes in the shop more than even school for his children. That is the reason why he insists that the son leaves his assignment and goes to work in the shop, "We must work hard to attract a regular group of customers. You must come and attend to those whom I cannot look after. You understand? There will be no bread in the house and you won't go to school anymore." (Tejani, 30). To the father, the shop is a source of wealth and liberation, but to the son it is a prison, since it denies him freedom to socialize and interact with friends as well as do his homework.

Samsher's father therefore fears that without the shop, him and the family would be doomed. The shop now is perceived not only to host the wepari's goods of trade, but their fears as well. To the older generation, it is used to cushion their fears of being poor and insecure, whereas the young generation views the shop as a symbol of slavery and imprisonment. The shop is also a symbol of financial security. The Asian needs financial security to maintain his place of prominence in the East African society. Loss of this security would amount to sinking to the level of the natives, hence the fear.

Darkness

Darkness has been adversely mentioned in the selected texts, bringing into perspective a sense of fear and anxiety. For instance, in Tejani's *Day After Tomorrow*, the Asians are depicted as people who exhibit fear of darkness. Their worst and most dreaded moments are when the sun goes down and darkness slowly sets in, "Fear of the darkness and the people it contained consumed everyone. No one ventured outside the four walls of their house, as soon as the sun disappeared over the horizon." (Tejani, 21). Darkness is therefore perceived to conceal dangerous human beings (most likely native Africans) who engage in outlawed activities such as robbery, rape and murder targeting the Asians.

When Samsher's father forgets his money bag at a friend's house, he does not go, but instead choses to send his half cast son. This act could signify that a hybrid child is perceived to be more courageous and feel safer walking in darkness than an old Asian. Mohemedali still harbors the belief that a *wepari* son is tough in mind and body. When Samsher gets to Merali's shop and knocks shouting his name before being allowed in, the old man grambles, "Is it fit to send a child wandering in the darkness at this hour? Supposing there are thieves standing outside and they rush into my house? What are we to do?" (Tejani,23). It is ironical that the Asians fear being robbed at night by native Africans, and yet they rob the Africans during the day through their businesses when they overcharge them.

The same fear of darkness is manifested when Samsher goes to visit his uncle Gulamhussein, who lives in the city of Kampala. The uncle lives in a mansion which is located in Kampala's suburbs, but that does not prevent them from the chronic nervous conditions, "Every evening Samsher saw his aunt fretting terribly. She felt the night coming and dreaded it. Darkness meant sleeplessness and the day meant tiredness." (Tejani, 56). The family's neurosis of fear becomes too much that it forces Samsher to leave the house and disappear back to the, "poor and unhealthy but welcoming house above the Blue Room Hotel" (56)

Vassanji also highlights on the metaphor of darkness in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, which is commonly associated with the robbers, lunatics and beggars. As commented by Odhiambo (2000), the darkness can be viewed from two perspectives, one, that Africa needs cultural enlightenment, or two, that the continent has been resisting all attempts to illuminate it.

During the colonial period, Asians live in a lot of fear from both the whites as well as the native Africans. They fear the whites because of the way they harass them (Asians) on suspicion that they are collaborating with Mau Mau. The fear of native Africans emanates from their perspective that they (Africans) hate them, and are out to revenge for being exploited and betrayed by the Asians. Having joined the Mau Mau movement, and fearing repulsion by the colonial government during daytime, the native Africans carry out their heinous activities at night, under the cover of darkness. It is these criminal activities that make the Asians afraid of darkness, "It was the nights that curdled the blood, that made palpable the terror that permeated our world like a mysterious ether." (Vassanji, 46). The Mau Mau operate at night in gangs of between twenty and forty members armed with crude weapons and guns. They earmark a house and gain entry by poisoning the dogs, hack the security guard to death before finally descending on the victim mercilessly. Because of the activities that take place at night, darkness is synonymous with danger, that is why Asians are very fearful whenever evening comes.

The Journey

The East African Asian texts are dominated by thematic concerns of movement and formation of migrant subjectivities. The journeys play a significant role in narrating history of the East African Asian community, as depicted in the selected texts. Most of the characters in the selected texts or their parents are propelled to travel either because of wanderlust or as a result of fear and anxiety in the inhabited land. For instance, Mohemedali in *Day After Tomorrow* narrates stories of horror to his children when referring to his journey from India to East African, "There I was told the lion ate man and the people were all black and there were no roads. Only railway." (Tejani, 7). The stories of the construction of railway in East Africa creates fear in the minds of children, especially when the characters like Mohemedali recount scenes of horror such as the encounter with the man-eating lions of Tsavo, battles with the native Africans who were resisting to have the railway pass through their grazing land and attacks by diseases such as Malaria.

The movement of the Asian community from their ancestral land into East Africa leads to dislocation, which is regarded as a break from the old identity (Goyal, 2017). The connection with the homeland (Asia) is so strong that it makes them experience loneliness while in the host country. It is from this experience of loneliness, mixed with the fear and anxiety of losing their culture to the host nations, that drives the East African Asians into developing insulation. The community therefore finds itself in a 'sandwich' culture, lying between the motherland and the host country.

These modes of transport, the ship, train and plane give the characters an opportunity to claim belonging in the new lands as a result of dislocation. Goyal (2017) illustrates, "The feeling of rootlessness, alienation, confusion, nostalgia, dislocation and sufferings due to discrimination on the basis of race, culture, religion and language concludes into conflicts, fight for identity and on the other hand lead to birth of feeling of marginality in the minority group. This results in the creation of a fractured identity."(6)

Vassanji highlights the images of mobility through the characters who are propelled into a world of shifting boarders. In *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Lall, who is introduced as the protagonist narrating the story of his life from exile in Canada. He had flown out of the country for fear of being arrested and persecuted for the economic crimes he committed in Kenya. Lall therefore makes a journey by plane to Canada to escape justice for committing economic crime. Also when tracing his identity, Lall narrates the story of his grandfather and the friends who migrated from Asia to Africa using the railway transport, and later settled in Kenya. He reveals that his father was born in Kenya, a claim that is meant to assert his identity as a Kenyan citizen, a desire he held so strongly, "his fantasy was partly to do with desperate need to belong to the land I (Lall) was born in." (Vassanji, 59). The railway therefore becomes a bridge that connects the Asians with Africans. This connection plays an important role in dealing with the anxieties of Lall and, by extension, the entire East African Asian community, concerning their identity and belonging.

There is another Journey made by Lall's family in August vacation by train from Nakuru to Nairobi and Mombasa. This seems to be the most enjoyable journey for the whole family, as Lall's parents like the adventure as well as the beautiful scenery, making his mother comment, "This is where I have married and made my home…and this is my husband's and children's country" (Vassanji, 122). Even Vikram Lall himself out of excitement confesses, "I would see, feel and experience it, in similar ways so frequently in

my life; in some essential way, it defines me. This was my country- how could it not be?" (121). Lall's comment confirms the psychological feeling of unbelonging that had haunted his community for long. The fact that they reiterate their belongingness to the country, underscores the inherent doubts they have. Why claim a country that is already yours? The East African Asians have been denied identity by the native Africans throughout the novel, despite having inhabited the region by birth and blood. The railway journey therefore, provokes the psychological battle in the minds of Lall's family members, when they experience the beautiful scenery of their country, but are forced to remember the opposition received from the natives, heightening the anxiety.

Vassanji also associates the construction of Kenya-Uganda railway with the feelings of fear and anxiety among East African Asians when narrating their history of migration. Vikram narrates a chilling story of attacks by wild animals, pestilences and humans:

> Our people had sweated on it, had died on it. Crashed under avalanches of blasted rock, speared and machete as proxies of the whites by angry Kamba, Kikuyu and Nandi warriors, infected with malaria, sleeping sickness, elephantiasis, cholera, beaten by jiggers, scorpions, snakes and chameleons, and wounded in vicious fights with each other. (17).

In this case, Vikram describes the painful experience that the Asian immigrants go through while constructing the railway in East Africa. This experience makes the East African Asians associate the railway line with fear and trauma because of what their ancestors went through.

It is therefore, evident that fear and anxiety play a significant role in marking out the East African Asian identity, as highlighted through characterization and imagery in selected Asian works of fiction. The Asian characters in the texts grapple with such issues as in-between-ness, ambivalence, and marginalization in their attempt to claim citizenship in East Africa, which results in feelings of anxiety and fear. The second generation East African Asians are possessed with fear and anxiety of losing their original Asian identity and at the same time, acquiring a new identity which is African.

The authors have used varied images effectively to represent fear among the East African Asian community. As such, it is emergent that fear and anxiety betray the discomfitures of the East African Asians in terms of their sense of belonging and in turn, solidifies their communal identity. The perceived threats against them makes them to upscale in-group identity and make more claims to their East Africanness.

There is also anxiety surrounding sexual relationships between the East African Asian community and native Africans which is highly sensitive and regarded as a taboo for the Asians. This form of anxiety about the incompatibility of intimate relationship between Asians and Africans breeds ground for stereotypes concerning the Asian community. The Asian characters become paranoiac whenever they discover their children, especially girls, having a romantic affair with a native African boy, and are ready to do everything possible to stop the relationship, including killing somebody.

The anxiety demonstrated by the Asian community in East Africa displays their concerns about maintenance of racial/ethnic purity, which would then mean loss of the Asian identity. As a result of their fear of losing an identity, the East African Asian community develop a form of cultural insulation, which keeps them together, and prevents other races from accessing them. This is witnessed when some Asian characters decline to engage in relationships with native Africans, instead preferring to date fellow Asians. This insulation is what contributes to misconceptions from other races towards the Asians.

While they isolate themselves to maintain racial identity and purity, the East African Asians equally marginalize themselves and remain a distinct minority that is treated with suspicion by the locals. This is the ambivalence of their aloofness. They want to be East African without being African. The Asians want to belong to the East African nations on their own terms which creates problems with the native Africans.

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