

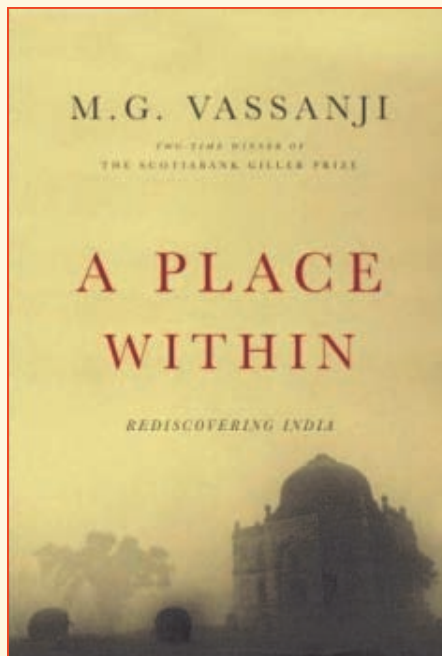
By: Sheniz Janmohamed

Two-time Giller Prize winner, M.G Vassanji, has done it again. His first non-fiction book, *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* is a fascinating intellectual and ancestral journey through India. Born in East Africa, Vassanji traces back his ancestry to Gujarat, India. Vassanji reflects on his first trip to India, and the impact it had on his understanding of his ancestral identity. When he returns years later, he gains insight on his earlier travels, and documents how the country has grown and changed over time. His journey takes him to Gujarat, Simla and Kerala to name a few, and yet he seems to have a firm grasp on each place he visits.

One of the most interesting elements of the book are Vassanji's discussions with various personalities in India- the famous author, playwright and actor Bhisham Sahni as well as professors, intellectuals and controversial political leaders. While describing these meetings, Vassanji lets the reader in on his thoughts, confessing his disappointments, revelations and hopes.

Unlike many travel writers, Vassanji steers clear of the typical 'touristy' observations, and delves deeper into the historical and

sociological landscape of India. Vassanji



explores the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in India, referencing the tumultuous history of riots in Gujarat. He is unafraid to address his own complex emotions and fears,

and does so with grace and humility, "...what came to mind instead was that I could not accept India's embrace and turn away from the violence. It must in some way be a part of me."

Visiting places sacred and mundane, Vassanji's attention to detail is astounding, "...sidewalk vendors selling juice, fruit and vegetables, handkerchiefs and underwear, slippers, jewellery, luggage, luggage, on after another, so that it can be hard to get through into the street...bicycles piled like flies upon a piece of meat." Vassanji has spent much time researching and reflecting, enriching the text with historical tidbits, personal observations and quotes from other prominent writers/authors. He is acutely aware of the biases of historical documents, and presents a more holistic view of history through his own intellectual discoveries.

A Place Within: Rediscovering India is a pilgrimage to M.G Vassanji's ancestral past, a cultural rediscovery and a fascinating investigation of history and politics.

Buy *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* at www.amazon.com

TECHTALK

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Pandigital (www.pandigital.net)

Pandigital, a veteran digital photo-frame maker, is doing its best to stand out from the competition by incorporating a variation of the familiar touch-screen interface in its new line of PanTouch digital photo frames. You might call it touch screen "lite"; rather than touching the screen, as you would do with a device like the iPhone or an ATM, you instead touch the edge or perimeter of the frame to call up a menu and navigate. In concept, it's not a bad idea. And in practice, it's not bad, either. But it does take some getting used to.

PanTouch interface offers a degree of convenience over using traditional buttons; bright, sharp 8-inch diagonal display; 512MB of built-in memory, plus slots for virtually all memory card types, as well as USB connectivity for digital cameras, computers, and thumbdrives; supports MP3 and video playback; bundled remote.

