



JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

presents
an Extension Lecture by
M. G. Vassanji (Internationally
Acclaimed Novelist)

“History, Myth and Fantasy”



M.G. Vassanji is one of Canada's most internationally esteemed authors. He was born in Nairobi, Kenya, into a community of the Indian diaspora, and spent most of his youth in Tanzania. An Ismaili Muslim of Gujarati heritage, he attended the University of Nairobi before winning a scholarship to study in the United States. He received a BSc from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a PhD in theoretical nuclear physics from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1978, he moved to Canada, where he initially worked at the Ontario nuclear research facility before beginning his literary career two years later.

Over his career, Vassanji has authored nine novels, three collections of short stories, a travel memoir about India, a memoir of East Africa, and a biography of Mordecai Richler. His work has often focused on the role of family histories in providing identity, exploring both the colonial history of East Africa and the successive waves of migration that people and families go through. He is the first author to have won the Giller Prize twice, for *The Book of Secrets* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*. He has also received the Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction, the Commonwealth First Book Prize, and many other honors. A member of the Order of Canada and the recipient of several honorary doctorates, he lives in Toronto but continues to visit his native East Africa and his ancestral India.

This brings us, most excitingly, to his new book, *The Apparition* (Doubleday Canada, September 2026). Described as his most ambitious novel yet, it bends history, myth, and fantasy to cast an eye on how empires are built and how they collapse. Set in the fading years of the 13th-century Delhi Sultanate amid famine, court intrigue, and fears of invading Mongol armies a strange, luminous presence suddenly appears in the western sky. Amir Hassan al-Shirazi, a Sufi poet and historian, is charged with uncovering the truth of this apparition. What follows is a visionary tale in which Delhi falls not to barbarians, but to the Avians a half-man, half-bird race who claim to offer a purer order. Yet beneath their fragile harmony, old fears and new cruelties take root: books are censored, memories rewritten, and those who question the regime vanish. Bending historical fiction with speculative fiction, *The Apparition* is a penetrating exploration of the rise and fall of empires, the seductions of power, and the fragile persistence of compassion amid the ruins of history.

MIR ANIS HALL,
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BUILDING, ADMIN
BLOCK

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PM

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