

**A STUDY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
INDIAN AND AFRICAN COMMUNITIES
IN EAST AFRICA**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SURAIYA TABASSUM



**Centre for West Asian and African Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067**

1995

FOR MY PARENTS



जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University

14 July 1985

CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled "A Study of Relationship between Indian and African Communities in East Africa" submitted by "Suraiya Tabassum" in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is her own work and has not been previously submitted to any other university for the award of any degree.

We recommend that this dissertation should be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

PROF. VIJAY GUPTA
(Supervisor)

DR. GULSHAN DIETL
(Chairperson)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is the outcome of the combined efforts of a number of people.

First and foremost, I owe a sincere debt of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Vijay Gupta. His affectionate and invaluable guidance has enabled me to piece together and complete this work. He not only guided me with help, suggestions and insights, but showed great faith in me and endured my diversions from the main track with patience. Above all, I think myself lucky student working under him.

I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Manzoor Alam, Sanghsen Singh and Mr. Masood Alam. In fact I could not have even thought of completing this work without their support.

Many thanks to my supportive family. My parents who showered utmost care and encouragement to me and themselves faced many hardships. I am particularly thankful to my brother-in-laws Mr. Mohd Saleem, Mr. Aslam and sisters Zareena or Gazala. I am beholden to my friends Nivedita, Suchita, Neeraja, Pena, Farah, Shagufta, Ranjana and Telha and my sweet brothers Omar and Asif who all have helped me at all stages of my work and encouraging me all along.

Many many thanks to Mr. Gulshan Batra for typing the text with perfection and dedication as if it was his own dissertation.

Suraiya Tabassum
SURAIYA TABASSUM

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PREFACE

The majority of Indians migrated to East Africa in modern period when European colonized this African territory and Indians were called as indentured labourers. Later on they involved themselves in trade activities and other Indians from India also joined them. But in this period Indians relationship with Africans was not the same as was existing between them before the arrival of Europeans. Both communities were carrying on trade activities without any differences or prejudice. Europeans created such an atmosphere which brought differences between them which continued even after independence of East African territories as colonial heritage.

Through this dissertation, an attempt has been made to find out the causes of differences between two communities which were or are existing along with the social, economic and political background of various periods.

This dissertation has been divided into five chapters with conclusions giving possibilities of good relationship of Indians and Africans.

Chapter first gives an idea of the history of Indian's immigration and settlement in East Africa. In spite of the geographical complexities Indians had connections with East Africa through trade and even while making a settlement they ^{came} ~~came~~ across unlimited obstructions.

Chapter second is about Indian's relationship with the Africans during the colonial period when the whole society was segregated and colonialists were implementing segregation

policies in every field of life. These policies were responsible for different social and economic background of Indians as well as Africans.

Chapter third provides information of the participation of Indians in the independence struggle along with Africans. In this chapter it has been tried to make it clear that though some Indians were cooperating with Africans for the sake of safeguarding their interests, some Indians joined anti-colonial struggle on humanitarian ground.

Chapter fourth is about the involvement of Indians in the trade union movement of East Africa which boosted the political movement.

Chapter fifth puts forward the position of Indians in independent East Africa when they felt themselves discriminated by the Africanization policy of independent African governments. In this period Indians faced the question of citizenship as well as expulsion of Indians from one East African territory. This chapter throws a light on the reasons which were responsible for all these.

In conclusion an attempt has been made to find out the solutions which can bring friendly relationship between two communities in the same manner as their ancestors were having before the colonization of East Africa.

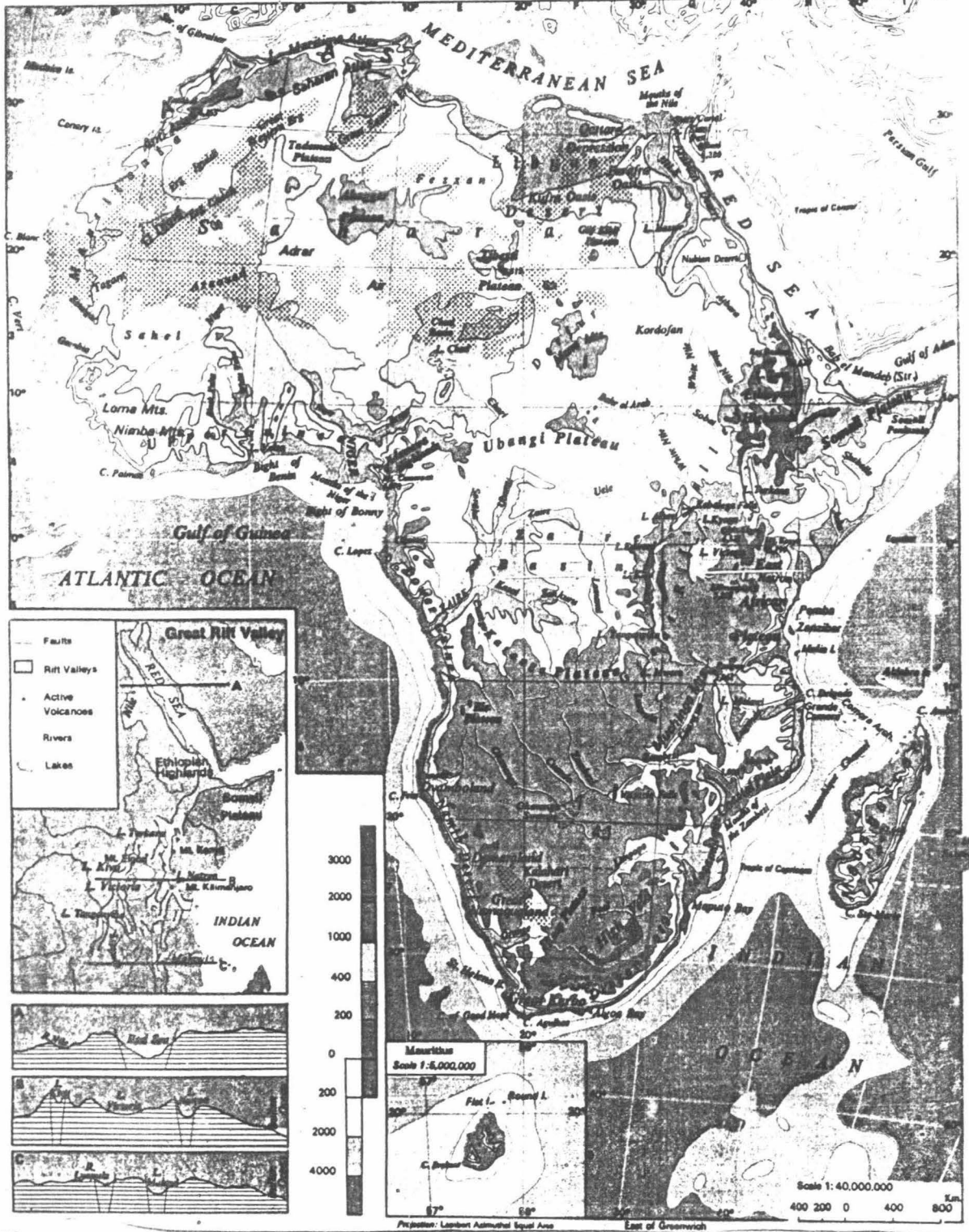
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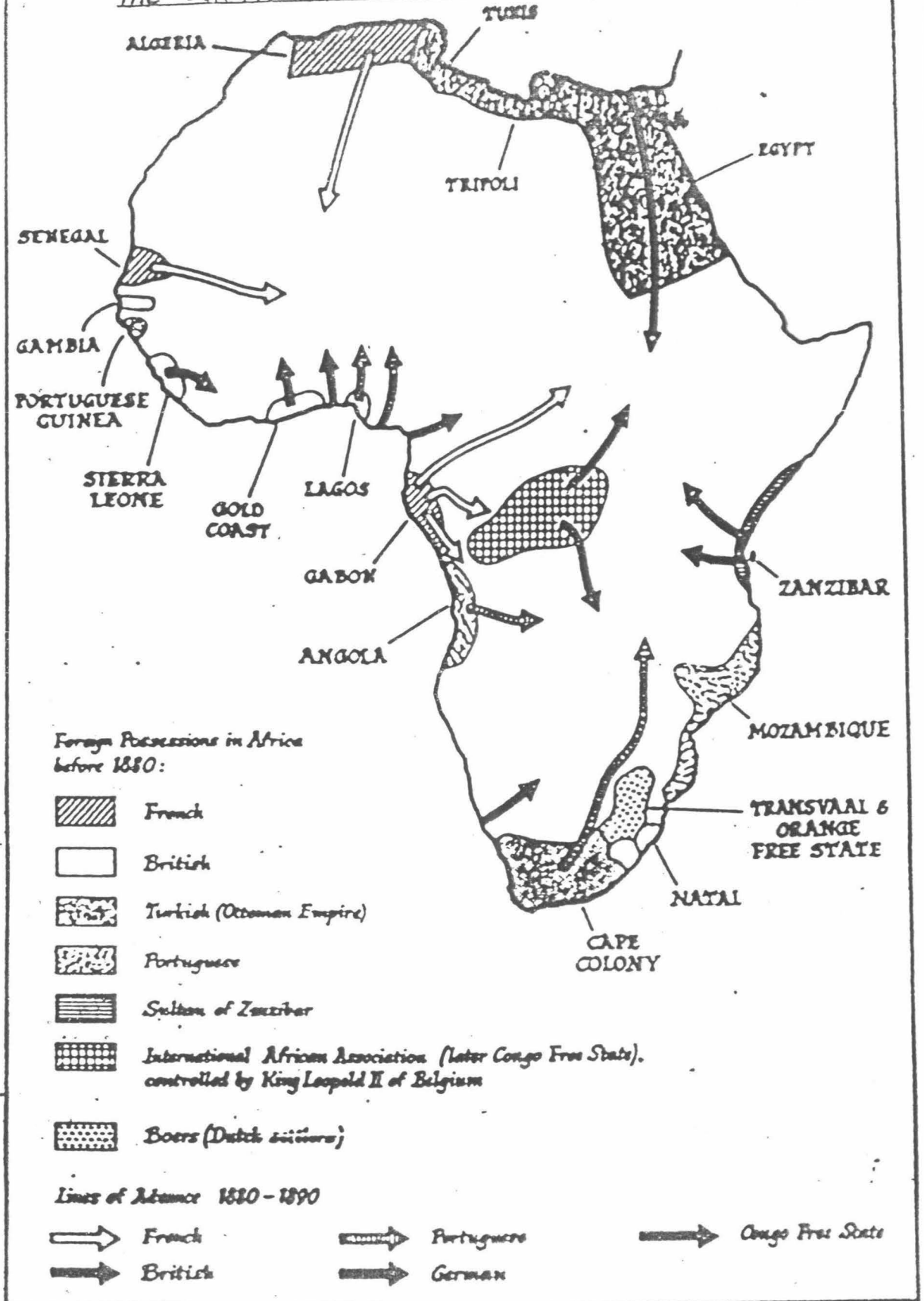
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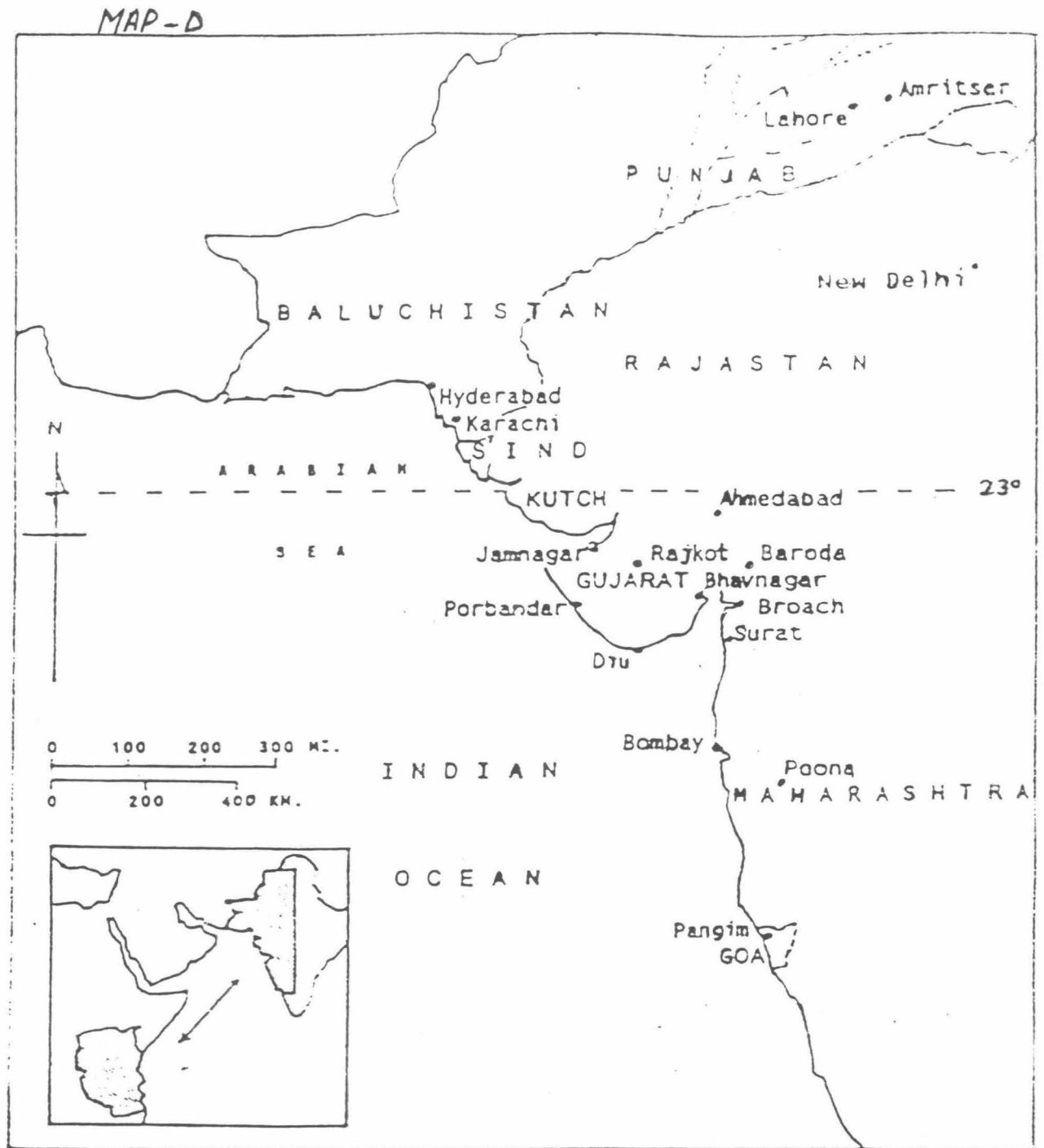
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MAP - C

THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA 1880 - 1890 =



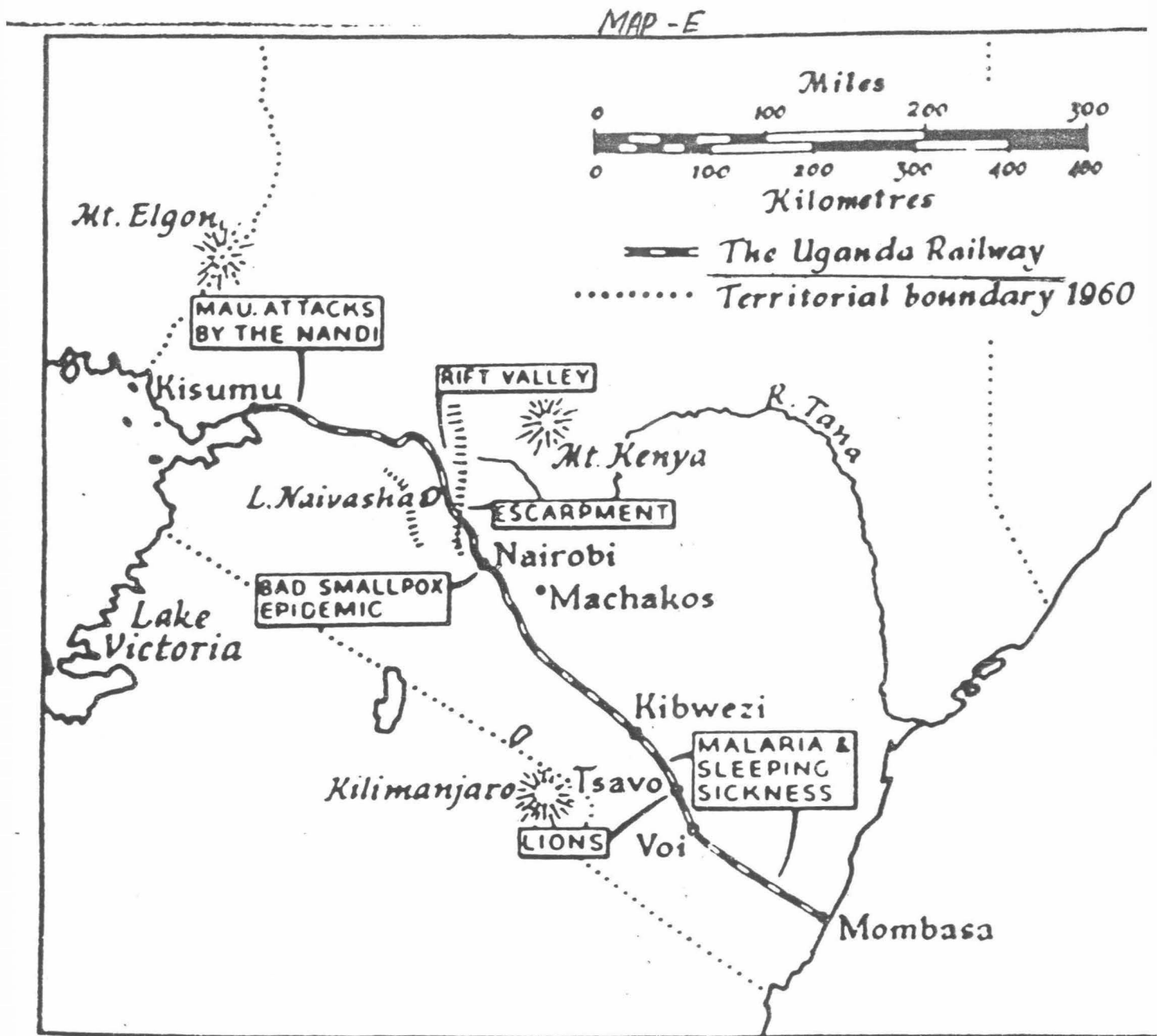
Source: Gideon S. Were, Derek A. Wilson, "East Africa through a Thousand Years" (London, Evans Brothers Limited, 1974).



MAP ■: NORTH-WEST INDIA. 1890-47

Areas of Asian Emigration to East Africa

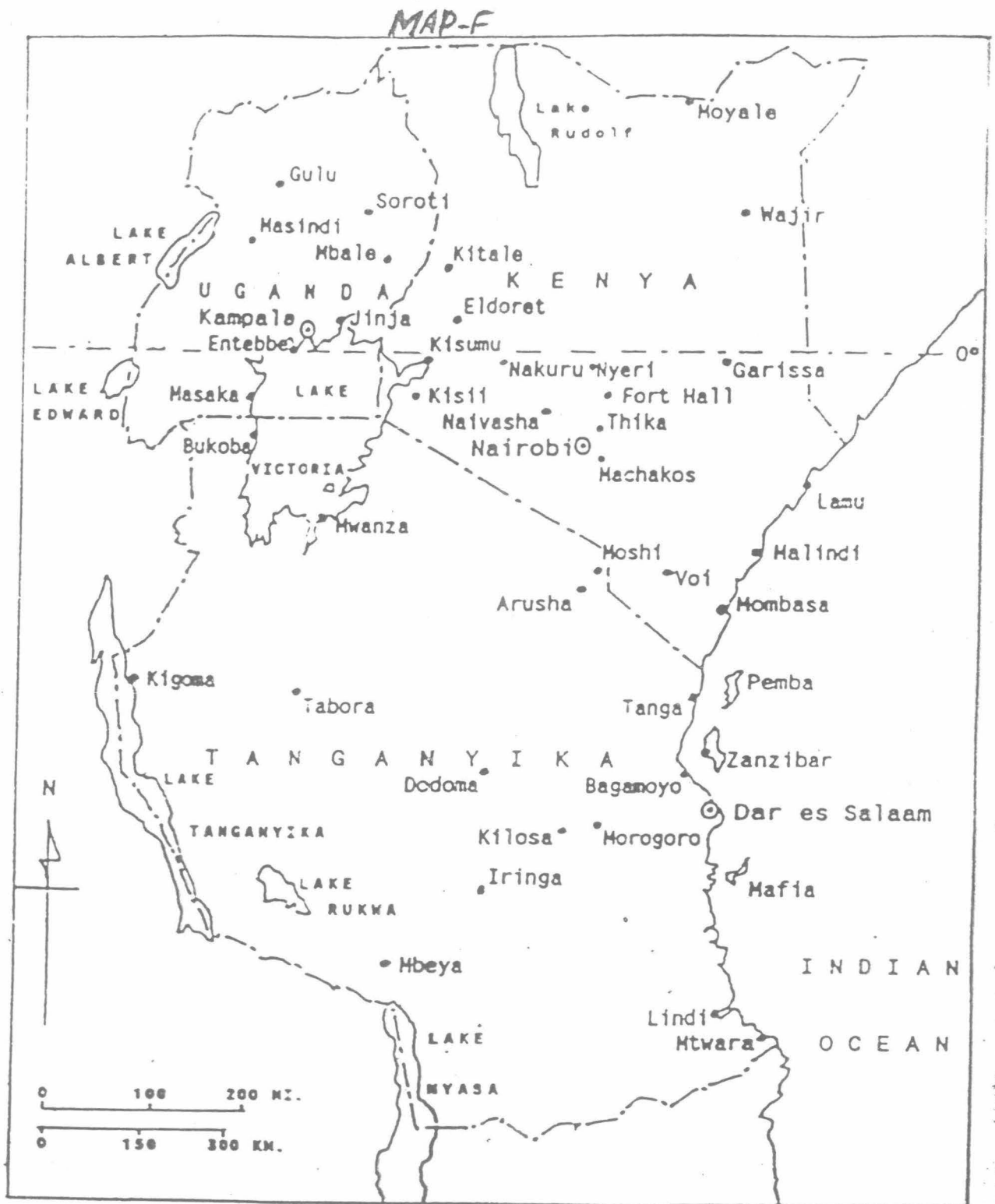
Source: Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality: Asian Politics in East Africa: 1900-1967 (New Delhi, Orient Longman Limited, 1993).



*C. Ehrlich in Oxford History of East Africa, Vol. II.

CONSTRUCTION OF UGANDA RAILWAY

Source: Gideon S. Were, Derek A. Wilson, "East Africa through a Thousand Years" (London, Evans Brothers Limited, 1974).



MAP ■: BRITISH EAST AFRICA, 1960

Main Commercial Centres

Source: Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality: Asian Politics in East Africa: 1900-1967 (New Delhi, Orient Longman Limited, 1993).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INDIAN IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN EAST AFRICA

The name 'East Africa' has come to be applied to a relatively small portion of the eastern part of Africa. The part is, however, a geographic whole, surrounded by physical features that have acted as boundaries since long before there were any political divisions of the land. To the East the Indian ocean, to the south the Ruvema river, to the west the great crescent of lakes, and to the north the desert, these are the barriers that have contained East Africa giving it an identify, separate and distinct from the Sudan and Ethiopia to the north, the Congo forest to the west, and to a lesser extent, Zambia and Malawi to the south.¹

There were areas in which settled human life was impossible and which were either uninhabited or peopled only by nomads. Such were the arid desert and semi-desert lands stretching from northern Kenya down into central and eastern Tanzania. In west and south-east Tanzania, there were moist plateau areas which could provide good agricultural land but where settlement was hindered by the Tsetse fly, a disease carrying insect which gives sleeping sickness to human beings.² Down much of the centre of

¹ C.P.Kirby, Countries of today, East Africa: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, (London, 1968), p.1.

² Gideon. S. Were, Derek A. Wilson, East Africa through a thousand years, (London, 1974), p.4.

East Africa there runs a strip of land which was for the most part too dry for settled agriculture but fairly rich in natural vegetation, grass and bush. This vegetation provided grazing for large herds of wild animals and also for cattle and the area has provided a home for hunters and herdsman.³

Thus, East Africa was a difficult country to cross and areas of settled agricultural life tended to be isolated. There were large tracts of arid, water-less desert and semi-desert. There were areas dominated by the tsetse fly and the malaria carrying mosquito. There were the forested mountain and highland regions. There were the steep escarpments of the eastern and western rift valleys. Before the building of roads and railways, therefore East Africa could only be a land occupied by many different people living indifferent ways and largely independent of each other.⁴

Inspite of all these geographical and physical hindrances, Indians had connections with the East African people. From the earliest time the east coast of Africa has been involved in the network of Indian ocean trade and merchants from India have a long history of commercial intercourse with east African coast. References are found about the existence of a close-knit network of Indian ocean trade and the role of Indian merchants along the east coast of Africa as the principal suppliers of cotton, cloth, beads and sundry manufactured articles and as importers of ivory,

³ Ibid., p.5.

⁴ Ibid.

gold, iron, gem-copal, ambergris, incense and slaves.⁵ The excavations of Indian made glass beads along the coast and at Zimbabwe and Ingombe Ilede, the use of the Indian system of weights and measures and of Indian cowries as currency, the Indian origins of certain African plants notably the coconut palms and similar other information provide further evidence of early Indian contacts with East Africa.⁶

Indians' having contact with East Africa centuries before

For over two thousand years Indian were at the heart of the economic activity which brought the influences of a wider world to the east coast of Africa. Indians rarely controlled the great oceanic trade routes and never controlled politically or militarily the East African coast itself.⁷ Although Arabs may have been politically dominant on the eastern African coast from about the 13th century, the trade of the Indian ocean was always dominated by Indians and their capital. They all participated in the trade and were involved in mining. Their capital fuelled the trade and their ships sailed between India and East Africa.⁸

Arabs seem quickly to have recognised that it was to their

⁵ J.S. Mangat, A History of the Asians in East Africa: C-1886 to 1945, (London, 1969), p.1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Dharam P. Ghai, ed, Portrait of a Minority Asians in East Africa, (London, 1965), p.1.

⁸ Cyril. A. Hromnik, "Indo-Africa" Towards a new understanding of the History of Sub-Saharan Africa, (1981), p.40.

advantage to tolerate Indian traders. A victorian traveller, William Gifford Palgrave has referred to the king of Zanzibar Sayyid Said, as an admirer of Indian commercial enterprise who in 1804, at the age of fifteen, annexed the throne of Oman, as a consequence of murdering his rival.⁹

Said encouraged Indian traders to settle in Muscat and later on in Zanzibar. Said relied on Indians to carry out his economic and political policy. Said granted Indians full religious toleration, removed all dues and restrictions on them, took them into his confidence, and entrusted them with responsible positions in his personal service and government. He made Indians in charge of government finance and always kept an Indian as collector of customs, the most important posts. Because of this favoured treatment and Said's unusually liberal fiscal policy, Indians were attracted to Zanzibar.¹⁰

Palgrave records in 1865, "Sa'eed knew that, whatever might be the energy and enterprise of his own born subjects, their commercial transactions would never attain real importance except

⁹ Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, Indian in Africa, (Calcutta, 1970), p.9. For further detail see R. Coupland's book, East Africa and Its Invaders: from the Earliest times of the death of Seyyid Said in 1856, (London, 1938), p.108, who has described that Said was induced by the pressure of his supporters and by personal ambition or by fear for his own life to make a bid for power. Said invited his cousin Bedr-bin-Seif for a conference and in the course of a seemingly friendly conversation drew his knife and stabbed him. Bedr escaped, desperately wounded, through the window but was overtaken and dispatched by Said's followers.

¹⁰ Robert G. Gregory, India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939, (New Delhi, 1980), p.18.

by the cooperation and under the lead of Indian merchants and accordingly used every means in his power to allure the Banians¹¹ of Cutch, Gujarat and the Concan of Muscat and by absolute toleration, special immunities and constant patronage rendered the port a half-Hindoo colony".¹²

Indian merchants addressed as Banyans journeyed to Zanzibar from India to take part in the commercial activities of the island and in particular to help in financing the slave trade. The Banyans sometimes were required to contribute as much as twenty percent for tribute. They also paid a high proportion of the irregular levies made at the command of the Sultan of Oman when he had particular need for fund to finance his wars "against the puritan Wahabi or other opponents of his authority".¹³

The number of Indians grew rapidly in Zanzibar from a handful to about 2,000 in 1840 and to over 5,000 by the 1850s. It was these men who provided the finance to revive the trade of the coastal towns. Sultan Sayyid Said and Arab merchants operating from Zanzibar became highly debted to them financially. Indians controlled the custom houses and a great proportion of the export-import trade of the East African coast was in their

¹¹ In India, traders or money lender is known as Banyan.

¹² George Delf, Asians in East Africa, (London, 1963), p.2.

¹³ Kenneth Ingham, A History of East Africa, (London, 1962), p.22.

hands.¹⁴ Thus, apart from growing role in the retail and wholesale commerce of the island, the Indian traders also came to play an important role as the principal financiers and bankers of Zanzibar in the 19th century. The firm Jairam Sewji invested large sums of money in East Africa. Others, like Tarya Topas, a leading trader during the 1870s and 1880s and Ludha Danji, agents of Jairam Sewji, were also leading financiers in Zanzibar. In 1835 Jairam Sewji was awarded the contract to collect the customs of Zanzibar Sultanate.¹⁵

In Zanzibar the coastal traders borrowed capital from the Indian commercial houses and led caravans of porters laden with a variety of goods, including cloth of various sizes and qualities, beads, copper, wire, guns and gun-powder into the interior in search of ivory.¹⁶

In 1889, Said concluded with Britain a commercial treaty which guaranteed the British subjects (Indians) in Zanzibar, the liberty to enter, reside in, and trade with any part of the Sultan's dominions. The establishment of a British consulate in Zanzibar in 1841 gave further encouragement to the Indians to immigrate into and settle in Zanzibar with a feeling of greater security than before. Afterwards carpenters, blacksmiths, masons

¹⁴ John E. Flint, ed, The Cambridge History of Africa from c.1780 to c.1870, (London, 1976), vol.5, pp. 273-277.

¹⁵ Mangat, n.5, pp.21-23.

¹⁶ John E. Flint, ed, n.14, pp. 273-277.

and labourers came to settle in Zanzibar.¹⁷

Portuguese records also speak of the important role of Indian traders in the flourishing Afro-Asian settlement all along the east coast of Africa. As Freeman Grenville explains - "The contribution of India to the civilization of the Swahili can not easily be measured, but its presence is certain".¹⁸

The early Portuguese were the only Europeans who recognized and acknowledged the important role of Indian traders and navigators in all parts of the Indian ocean and particularly on the East African coast. Even after the Portuguese settlement, India was having trading links with East Africa and within the area of Portuguese control Indian activity and influence even developed new forms. For the Portuguese, after all, their east African possessions and tributaries were part of a great oceanic empire of which Goa was the economic, administrative and cultural centre. In a real sense the east African coast became a province of an Indian administration and Indians especially Goans, were soon actively involved in Portuguese penetration and development. Indian labour was used to construct forts along the coast. Indian traders and adventurers and junior administrators took part in the chequered process of penetration into the interior.¹⁹

Shri Mangat cites. Sir Bartle Frere who stated in a

¹⁷ Chattopadhyaya, n.9, p.341.

¹⁸ Mangat, n.5, p.6. Swahili refers to people of the coastal region.

¹⁹ Ghai, n.7, p.2.

memorandum dating 1873 regarding Indians in East Africa that "a few ships made an annual voyage from Mandaive in Kutch, and from Surat, Bombay and occasionally from other parts of the Kattywar (sic) and Malabar coasts, bringing ivory and other African produce in exchange for cloth, metals and beads, but their return from what was then a most hazardous voyage was a great event at all the ports to which they belonged... while Surat and Guzerat (sic) had a large manufacture of blue cotton cloth as late as fifty years ago, East Africa was the chief market for it".²⁰

During 1850 the British consulate also reported - "The trade of this port with India is becoming important".²¹ The Indian traders were able to extend valuable service to the European explorers by acting as their local bankers, helping to equip their expedition and on occasions contracting to forward additional supplies of provisions and trade goods to them in the interior.²²

Indian economic role in East Africa assumed increasing importance during the later half of the nineteenth century. Sir Frere explains - "Hardly a loan can be negotiated or mortgage effected, not an import cargo can be distributed nor an export cargo collected which... does not go through Indian hands. The European or American, the Arab or Swahili (sic) may trade and profit but only as an occasional link in the chain between

²⁰ Mangat, n.5, p.6.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p.11.

producer and consumer, of which the Indian trader is the one invariable and most important link of all".²³

The steady expansion of the enterprise of Indian trading communities in Zanzibar owed much to their commercial skills and business acumen. It was however, as traders that the Indian presence in the interior of East Africa became particularly marked during the early years of the colonial period. Apart from some of the skilled immigrants who established business as builders and contractors, the real pioneers of Indian commerce in the interior were the old established merchants from Kutch and Bombay in Zanzibar and along the coast. The freedom of enterprise, by the European administrators accounted for the continued expansion of their historic mercantile connections with east Africa.²⁴

In the late nineteenth century as the British assumed control of the interior, Indians were accorded a prominent part in the future development of East Africa. The founders of the Imperial British East Africa company - Sir William Mackinnon, Sir Donald Stewart, Sir John Kirk, William Burdelt Coutts, Robert Palmer Harding and George S. Mackenzie hoped to provide an outlet for Indian's surplus population.²⁵ The company investigated the possibility of inducing Indians to settle along the main river banks but was unable to find sufficient numbers of

²³ Ibid., p.12.

²⁴ Ibid., p.49.

²⁵ Robert G. Gregory, n.10, p.47.

willing Indian participants. Later for the purpose of administrating East Africa, British East African Company hired, through British government, Indian personnel and indentured labour. It adopted Indian legal system for administrative purposes.²⁶

Indian as indentured labour

During the later half of the 19th century, the British were expanding this empire in Africa. To control the water way to India, after the completion of Suez, they needed their dominance over the Red Sea region. This required developed transportation with the interior. To achieve their colonial aims, the British undertook to construct railway to connect Lake Victoria to the Indian Ocean at Mombasa.²⁷ Since skilled and semi-skilled African labour was not available and even unskilled Africans were not willing to take up employment. The British government encouraged recruitment of Indian labourers in East Africa.²⁸

In May 1891 Sir Guilford Malesworth Consulting Engineer for Railway to the Government of India who had been engaged to make the first of several reports on the proposed railway, stated that it probably would be necessary to depend on imported labour.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., p.48.

²⁷ Delf, n.12, p.11.

²⁸ H.S. Morris, The Indians in Uganda, (London, 1968), p.8.

²⁹ Gregory, n.10, p.48.

Within the same year Captain J.R.L. Macdonald who had been employed for seven years in India on railway construction and frontiers defence was appointed Chief Engineer and to survey the route for the railway, he brought with him from India not only several European officers of the Royal engineers but also 37 Indian Kalasis (riggers) and four Indian Temadars (army officers). In March 1893 after the survey, Macdonald recommended the employment of Indian labour. Among the company officials who envisaged a future for Indians in East African interior, the most outstanding was Frederick D. Legard.³⁰

The Government of India was unwilling to provide indenture labourers because of bad experiences of Indian labour in other countries. Kirk, Vice-Chairman of the Railway Committee records - "we began by trying native labour but we found that we could not get enough of it, to begin with and that it would not go on continuously that the natives when the rains began, had to go back to their own gardens for the purpose of cultivation. Then came a time of famine owing to want of rain and labour was almost impossible to get. Then we appealed to the Indian government. The response from India was not enthusiastic because of the many unfortunate experiences with indentured labour in other parts of the empire. The government of India agreed to provide labour only on condition that every emigrant, at the end of three years service, would be afforded the three fold option of renewing his contract, returning to his home village with all expenses paid or

³⁰ Ibid.

remaining in East Africa as a settler and forfeiting his return passage".³¹

The Imperial British East African company became bankrupt due to excessive expenditure on fighting the African patriots who resisted colonialism. The company surrendered its occupied areas in 1895 and direct British rule was instituted over the area between Buganda and the coast and in 1896. Later this area was joined with the coast Protectorate to form the East African Protectorate.³² Indians were brought to East Africa Protectorate as indentured workers.

Most of the indentured Indians were imported between 1896 and 1901 and were employed in the construction of the main line of the railway, from the coast to the lake Victoria. In January 1896, the first batch of 350 Indian labourers from the Punjab landed at the port of Mombasa, under the escort of R.O. Preston.³³

Although the number of Africans working on the railway never exceeded 2,600, the total of Indian employees rose from 3,948 in 1896 to 6,986 in 1897 and to 13,003 in 1898.³⁴ The Indian fears of sad experiences as indentured labour proved to be right because of various incidents which occurred in East Africa. The

³¹ Ibid., p.51.

³² A.J. Hughes, East Africa: The Search for Unity, (London, 1963), p.94.

³³ Chattopadhyaya, n.9, p.333.

³⁴ Gregory, n.10, p.51.

European authorities of the railway discriminated against Indians and Africans. They did not provide them same protection which was provided to the European employees.

The railway workers faced many dangers and hardships. Soon after beginning the work in the humid coastal low lands, they suffered from malaria, jiggers, dysentery, scurry, ulcers and various liver complaints. The first Indians who returned to India were in a filthy condition. Twenty six died during the return voyage in 1899-1900.³⁵ The condition of the returning emigrants improved, however, after the Indian officials complained to the Chief Engineer of the railway. Among the minor hazards in East Africa were man eating lions and bubonic plague. In December 1898 two cunning the voracious lions brought the construction to a complete stop for three weeks at Tsavo, 136 miles from Mombasa. Each night Indians and Africans were dragged from their tent beds and eaten. Before the lions were shot by the intrepid divisional engineer, Lieut-col J.W. Patterson, they had devoured twenty eight Indians and countless unfortunate African natives.³⁶ In spite of these incidents, Indian labour continued its work and proved to be diligent and competent. Eventually it was because of the Indian labour that railway project could be completed. Molesworth, after inspecting the railway again in 1898-99 reported the output per head as 'most satisfactory'. Herbert Samuel, who visited East Africa as M.P. in 1902, remarked

³⁵ Ibid., p.55.

³⁶ Ibid., p.56.

'the progress of these portions of the Africa would have been slow indeed, had it not been possible to draw open our Asiatic possessions for unlimited supplies of subordinate labour with brain and hand.³⁷

Prof. Gregory adds 'even when built without Indian drivers, signalman and station masters the railway could not have been maintained or run'.

Indian as Dukawallah

After the completion of the railway in 1902, of the total number employed 25,258 (78 percent) returned to India or 6,728 (21 percent) chose to stay in Africa, and of these 2,000 (8 percent) remained in the employment of the railways. A few, according to J.P. Loregrave, Railway Public Relations Officer, became market gardeners near the towns, others settled in Kavirendo and grew rice, cotton and sim-sim, while some carried on their trader as carpenters or stone masons. But the majority who made a home in East Africa, earned a living as traders, opening small stores wherever there was an opportunity to sell their wares.³⁸

The Indians who returned told stories of their vast opportunities in Africa and a certain number, together with friends and relatives, who could afford it, subsequently migrated at their own expense. The construction of the Uganda railway gave

³⁷ Ibid., p.58.

³⁸ Ibid., p.60.

these traders the opportunity to extend their activities in land. Indian commercial men and petty traders many of whose ancestors had traded along the coast for generations and financed the caravan trade with the interior, followed the railway as it advanced towards the lake.³⁹

Many of the officers, both of the company and later of the protectorate, had hoped that Indian peasants could be persuaded to settle as farmers in East Africa. But the Indians had no wish to become farmers as they looked to East Africa for opportunities for trade. In Kenya and Uganda an extensive system of trade and markets was missing. These countries needed merchants.⁴⁰

Since the Europeans were not willing to undertake the petty trade on small shops in isolated centres or to peddle goods among the Africans, only Indians, already possessing the knowledge, the capital and connections and the lines of communication were available for the task and ready to face the physical dangers and hardships of life in the interior for a very small return or to face the real possibility of bankruptcy.⁴¹ The last decade of the nineteenth century marked an important landmark in the growth of an Indian factor in the interior of East Africa. The officially sponsored participation of the Indians in the process of "opening up" of the interior led to an increasing flow of 'Indian immigrants', skilled and semi-skilled employees.

³⁹ Morris, n.28, p.9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 8-10.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.11.

businessmen and traders into the East Africa territories. With these immigrants also came some of the institutions of British India - including the rupee currency which became the standard currency all over East Africa and Indian laws as well as British Indian methods of administration.⁴² Sir Harry Johnston described East Africa as "America of the Hindus" or contemplated the growth of Entebbe as the future Calcutta, a new capital on the Mau Plateau as the Simla, Mombasa as the Bombay and Fort Portugal as the Darjeeling of the new East African empire. In addition official policy generally continued to favour Indian association with the process of Economic development.⁴³

Indians built the shanty towns at each stop along the route and from these centres they fanned out as dukawalas into the hinterland, often far beyond the sphere of administrative authority. The Indians usually despatched their goods to remote areas by a system of portage. Occasionally an Indian used a Kalani, a four wheeled cart which could carry 1,600 pounds of merchandise but in tsetse areas a Kalani, often had to be pushed by porters.⁴⁴

Outside the larger centres of population the chief evidence of Indian penetration was the small shop or duka. The Indian petty shopkeeper had carried his merchandise into the most remote areas and had been the chief agent in introducing the products of

⁴² Ibid., p.61.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gregory, n.10, p.82.

Europe and Asia to the Africans.⁴⁵ Indeed his remarkable tenacity and courage had been mainly responsible for stimulating the wants of the indigenous people, even in the remotest areas by opening to them a shop window on the modern world and for collecting for sale else where whatever small surplus were available for disposal. He stocked a bewildering variety of articles likely to attract his African customers: unbleached calico (amerikani), calico prints, handkerchiefs, blankets, umbrellas, cheap hurricane lamps, basins, cooking-pots, hoes, kerosene oil, matches, soap and provisions such as tea, condensed milk, sugar, biscuits, flour and cereals.⁴⁶ Duka was usually the same type of wattle and daub structure as the village hut or it was a small corrugated-iron shed so that the African customer naturally felt more at home in it than in a European store. Moreover "Indian shopkeepers, having infinite patience and being content with a very small profit could carry on business under conditions which would be unprofitable for a European trader. Often he was the village money lender too, ready to purchase in bulk any native produce for which there was a good market".⁴⁷

Indian traders were adept in "duka" trading. Most of them had been in their own father's or uncle's shops. For them "duka" keeping and trading had been a family inheritance which in many

⁴⁵ L.W. Hollingsworth, The Asians in East Africa, (London, 1960), p.5.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.6.

cases passed on from father to son. Thus the art of trading had virtually become a part of their lives. It might be that some of the India's "duke" traders had little or no formal school or college education, but in the normal trade dealings even the University commerce graduates, not belonging to the trading community would find it difficult to beat them in their trading talent and alert business faculty. Some of the Indians traders might have been relatively new to the job in the sense that trading had not been rooted in their family traditions.⁴⁸ They had obviously taken to trading as a matter of convenience finding it a profitable proposition in the East Africa's conditions. But they, too, having been familiar with the working of market forces, were quickly on their own with a little guidance and help from their fellow countrymen.⁴⁹

For several years "dukawallah" had to pave his way through very trying and tough conditions indeed. There was no proper transport and only a patchwork of footpaths leading into the interior African habitats. Some of the African tribes were still viewed to be dangerous by the unfamiliar strangers and above all disease and death were common place. Malaria, blackwater fever, plague, sleeping sickness were the most dreaded diseases and widespread.⁵⁰

⁴⁸. R.R. Ranchandani, Uganda Asians: The End of an Enterprise, (Bombay, 1976) p.86.

⁴⁹. Ibid., p.87.

⁵⁰. Ibid., pp.89-90.

But undeterred by these circumstances a 'dukawallah' carried the mechanism of monetary Economy in the interior to create new methods. In the process, he introduced a set of new values of work for money, to produce for the market to cultivate economic crops and to manufacture other goods not merely for exports but also for the expanding domestic market.⁵¹

Indians who migrated to East Africa to look for new opportunities as traders initially used to join or attendants with shopkeepers of retail and wholesale. Preservance and industry brought expanded opportunity. Before dawn he arose to sweep the floors and replace the shelf stocks and until nine or ten P.M. through a fourteen to eighteen hour day he was busy behind the counters running errands or even helping to care for owner's children. After a year or two the more enterprising, he left the city to open a shop of his own in small remote town where competition was less intense and he stocked his new shop with goods purchased whole sale or taken on credit from his former employer. So in time the parent stores became wholesalers as well as retailers and a network of related interest spread over the interior while they worked, most Indians spent their profits only on the barest necessities. They lived frugally behind their shops, shunned luxuries and reinvested in their growing business.⁵²

⁵¹. Ramchandani, n.48, p.90.

⁵². Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality. Asian Politics in East Africa 1800-1967, (New Delhi, 1993) p.8.

Industry, ingenuity, thrift and education were bound eventually to bring wealth. Business in all its varieties retail and wholesale shopkeeping, distribution and transport, money lending and insurance, property rental, construction and artisanry posed the foremost opportunity.⁵³

An increasing number of Indian merchants had meanwhile established agencies at the mainland ports and from there coastal settlements some of them were to spearhead the expansion of legitimate commerce along the old caravan routes where Arab and Swahili Caravan traders had formerly operated and later along the new lines of communications opened by the construction of the railways.⁵⁴ One of the earliest Indian merchants to launch such expansion into the interior was Sewa Hajee Paroo, who operated from Bagamoyo and chiefly in German East Africa. Sewa Hajee began his career initially as a supplier of trade goods and provisions to the late nineteenth century European explorers and also recruited porters for their Caravans. Subsequently, he established an agency of his Zanzibar based firm at Bagamoyo and began organising his own caravans into the interior. Later he extended his operations all along the old-caravan route opening stores or agencies of his firm as far as the Lake region and Taveta. The various agencies in the interior were regularly supplied by Sewa Hajee's caravans from Bagamoyo with a variety of trade goods, cotton cloths, gems and ammunition, beads and brass

⁵³. Ibid., p.9.

⁵⁴. Mangat, n.5, p.50.

wire which were exchanged for the products of the interior- principally ivory.⁵⁵

Allidina Visram was another important pioneer trader who carried the activities of his fellow Kutch merchant, Sewa Hajee. By the early 1890s Allidina Visram had extended his operations all along the old caravan route opening branches of his firm at Dar-es-Salaam, Sadani (near Bagamoyo), Tabora, Ujiji and at Kilima in the Congo.⁵⁶ Allidina extended his commercial activities to other parts of Uganda, opening stores at Jinja, Kisumu and along the river Nile. At first Allidina's chief export from Uganda was ivory. But he was also among the first to purchase other local products; hides and skins, groundnut and chillies, sesame and cotton, in fact anything and everything which tended to develop the country's resources. Besides his role in the development of the import and export business of Uganda. Allidina's stores proved to be extremely useful to the administration in the early years by acting as bankers and providing cash loans at a time when money was scarce.⁵⁷

His contributions were best summed up in a later government minute on the subject -

"Allindina Visram, who was one of the pioneer traders in Uganda, I think, he was one of the first Indians to take up trading in the Protectorate, certainly the

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.50-51.

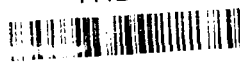
⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.52.

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first who did so on a large scale, about 30 years ago, he opened a store at nearly every government station and in the early days was of the greater assistance to government in many ways, such as transport, purchase of local product etc. Officers in Out stations were dependent, in those days, upon Allidina's agencies for the necessaries of life, nor did he abuse his monopoly by charging high prices."⁵⁸

Another outstanding Indian trader to launch expansion into the interior at this time was Alibhoy M. Jeevanjee. He established a branch of his Karachi-based firm at Mombasa and started business as storekeepers and contractors. His firm undertook the construction of a series of the early buildings for government offices - staff quarters, post offices and railway stations between Mombasa and Kisumu. Similarly, he began investing in town land on his own account and sometimes in partnership with other traders such as Allidina Visram and was probably the leading property owner in Nairobi and Mombasa at the turn of the century.⁵⁹

The prospects for business enterprise were highly favourable and the history of Indian settlement in East Africa is replete with tales of success. The government was favourably disposed towards Protectorate for it was realized that the Indian trader was an indispensable factor in the opening up East Africa

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.53.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.55.

to trade and commerce. Mr. C.W. Hobley, one of the earliest British officials to serve in the East Africa Protectorate described that in the first days of British administration whenever the government opened a new district post the District Officer usually invited Indian traders to settle there because they supplied a definite need.^{e0} During a visit to East Africa in 1907 when he was Under Secretary of State for the colonies, Mr. Winston Churchill was impressed by the industry, thrift and sharp aptitudes of the Indian traders who maintained themselves in all sorts of places where no white man could earn a living. In his book My African Journey he paid tribute not only to the Indians who more than any one else had developed the early beginnings of the trade but also to the coolies who had helped in the construction of the Uganda railway.^{e1}

Sir John Kirk who was COUNSUL General in Zanzibar for many years gave evidence in 1909 to the committee appointed by the colonial secretary to report on 'Emigration from India to the crown colonies and Protectorate' when asked whether the Indian trader was 'an important feature', he replied that if he were driven out they might as well 'shut up the protectorate'. Moreover, it was the Indian, he said, "who kept down prices by supplying things at a moderate rate and a moderate profit."^{e2} Sir John reminded the committee that it was chiefly due to the

^{e0} Hollingsworth, n.45, p.53.

^{e1} Ibid.

^{e2} Ibid., p.54.

predominant influence these British subjects had established for themselves along the coast that Britain had been able to build up its position in East Africa at the time of the Partition treaty. The Directors of the Imperial British East Africa company were also favourably disposed towards Indian immigration. In the early days of cotton industry Indian played a useful role as middlemen by travelling through the countryside to collect cotton from the growers which they then resold to the few existing ginneries.⁸³

Aga Khan in his book Indian in Transition, portrays very beautifully the role played by Indians in East Africa -

"The contribution, the Indian has rendered to civilization and material development of East Africa, dating from before the advent of European influence in Zanzibar and on the adjacent mainland, can scarcely be over-estimated. Commerce in every branch, the development of agriculture, the supervision of public utility, the higher forms of skilled labour, the exercise of no insignificant share of political influence amongst chieftians - all these were in Indian hands for many a decade before Europeans began the work of thorough and scientific exploration of the East African Mainland, and the pioneers of this great enterprise, Stanley, Kirk and others were indebted to Indians, same as the late Sir Thiria Topan, for the organization of their expeditions into the

⁸³ Ibid.

interior." ⁸⁴

From the above description it is clear that Indians were having trading contact with East African territories even before the arrival of the Britishers as colonialists. In the late 19th century when most of Indians were called to East Africa as indentured labour for the purpose of constructing Kenya-Uganda railway from Mombasa via Nairobi to Kisumu on Lake Victoria (permanent way), some of them decided to settle there after the completion of that project. Finding Indians useful for their colonial rule the Britishers helped them in settling there and consequently the Indians played very important role in the economic life of East African territories. Their economic activities were supplemented by political and social actions.

⁸⁴ Indians outside India, Indian Review, Madras (1920), p.842.

Table 1.1 Asian Population of East Africa, 1921-62

	1921	1931	1939	1962
Kenya	25,253	43,623	48,897	178,613
Tanganyika	10,200	25,144	25,000	92,000
Uganda	5,200	14,150	17,300	77,400
Zanzibar	13,772	15,247	15,500	20,000
Totals	54,434	98,164	104,697	388,013

Source: Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality: Asian Politics in East Africa: 1900-1967 (New Delhi, Orient Longman Limited, 1983).

CHAPTER 2

INDIAN'S SOCIAL RELATIONS UNDER COLONIAL RULE

The British colonial rulers also encouraged Europeans to settle in East Africa. The Europeans were induced by promising them fertile land and cheap labour. The colonial Government reserved for them the best land and introduced laws to force Africans to work for them. The Indians and Africans were also denied access to these lands and thus were kept out of a very profitable sector. They and the Africans were kept out of political arena that could enhance their power. This established a regime of segregation.

The issue of segregation dominated the Kenyan society more than Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar because of predominant presence of Europeans in this country. However, Kenyan political struggle against discrimination dominated the scene of entire East Africa.

Long before the Europeans arrived in Kenya the British colonists had begun to think of Kenya as a white man's country. This was because they had found a vast sparsely populated land area in the Kenya Highlands, situated at five thousand to nine thousand feet above sea level. The highlands climate attracted the European settlers. The high lands fertility was also suited for agriculture, particularly for sugar and coffee, tea plantations.¹

¹ Saggi, P.D., ed., Indian overseas year book and who's who, (Bombay), p.52.

Efforts were made to get as large a number of Europeans as possible to settle in this area. During early years of the century a large number of white settlers from South Africa both British and Dutch moved into Kenya and were settled on the land in the Kenya Highland area.²

Another reason of infiltration of European settlers in East African territories was the opening of Mombasa-Uganda railway. After the completion of railways, the question of financing the railways arose. Following solutions were prepared to solve this problem -

- 1) This was done on the plea that Indians were overcrowded in India and thus needed a place to settle.
- 2) That the Jews who did not have a homeland of their own and demanding a place in Palestine, be settled in Kenya.
- 3) Early economic leaders like Lord Delanere opposed settlement of Indians and Jews and that's why European settlement on both sides of railway line was encouraged. The plan was that the tariff of movement of goods and passengers shall be able to finance the railway.

Segregation in East African Society

When the European population became large enough, they found Indians an obstacle in their pursuit of exploitative dominance. Europeans introduced a system of check in regard to the land. This was done to disallow Indians to have any position in state

² Ibid.

business. The European's plea was that they were checking speculation in land and preventing an undesirable elements from buying land. They wanted Indians to keep out of every important economic sector by debarring them to make investment in land and property.³

From the early days of their settlement in Kenya, European settlers left no stone unturned in excluding the Indian community as also the Africans from the best available land in Kenya and also in reserving the same for themselves. As early as 1906, the European settlers started campaign against Indian settlement in Kenya's Highland areas, noted for healthy climate and agricultural potentialities.⁴

On 17 December 1907, Kenya's Governor, J. Hayes Sadler, wrote to the then Secretary of State for colonies, Lord Elgin -

"There is a growing tendency amongst the white settlers in the uplands to keep the Indians not only out of the uplands but out of the country altogether. The spirit is akin to that prevailing in Natal and elsewhere and is due to the fact that the white can not compete, in the least, with the Indian shopkeeper for supplies of provisions and articles of daily use or as a petty trader. By all means, let us keep the land in the uplands, known as the white settlement area, for whites

³ Marjorie Ruth Dilley, British Policy in Kenya Colony, (London, 1966), p. 141.

⁴ Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, Indians in Africa, (Calcutta, 1970), p. 377.

only, but outside this I see no reason why we should not give small allotments of land to agricultural Indians, not to Indian traders who would not themselves cultivate".⁵

As desired by the colonists, a noticeable change began to take place in their policy, in so far as, they began to take administrative measures which were designed to make it difficult for Indians to possess land in the Highlands. Consequently Land Board of the British East African Protectorate recommended, in 1907, that government land in certain specific areas should not be allotted to Indians and that Indian immigration should be discouraged.⁶

Indians were, however, allowed to purchase land in certain sectors in urban areas. With the result they had in some cases, rows of houses and shops. But such type of restriction did not apply to Europeans who were permitted to buy and sell land and therefore it became the basis of discriminatory practices on racial lines.

Nevertheless, on the pretext of administrative convenience Highland areas were reserved for whites only. Whites regarded colonisation, as a perfectly definite religious creed. In the words of one of the British colonists, Sir Vorthrup Macmillian, "God's rule is that the white-Race should rule and we - in this

⁵ Marjorie, n.3, p.373.

⁶ Saggi, n.1, p.52.

colony, are determined to follow God's rule".⁷

Indian settler's services came to be rewarded by various restrictive measures, social, economic and political, intended to prevent them from gaining an ascendancy over the country's affairs by keeping them under white men's control.

Like the Natal Europeans, Kenya's white settlers feared that they might be swamped by the Asiatics in the near future unless unlimited immigration from Asia, particularly from India, was checked in time. Thus certain categories of Indians seeking to enter Kenya were declared prohibited immigrants. Any Indian without visible means of support or likely to become a pauper or a public charge was, for instance, classed as a prohibited immigrant.⁸ In the face of growing Indian population in the East African territories, the colonial governments of Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Uganda also issued ordinances towards asserting the further flow of Indian immigrants. During the early decades of the century the colonial authorities sought to prevent the new arrivals from India from entering into their territories by giving them the bad name of prohibited immigrants.⁹

From the above description, it can be inferred that colonial authorities were convinced to the failure of European settlers in commercial field in the presence of Indian traders and it was the foremost cause of segregation of society. A sanitation expert,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Chattopadhyaya, n.4, p.377.

⁹ Ibid., p.381.

William Simpson advocated in 1913 of both residential and commercial segregation of Kenya's Indians on sanitary ground. Simpson did not advocate the policy of Asiatic segregation in vain. In his despatch of May 21, 1920, the then Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, directed that "the principle of race-segregation should be adhered to in the residential areas of townships and wherever practical, in commercial areas also".¹⁰

They wanted to segregate Europeans, Indians and Africans in order to reserve certain areas for white settlers. They made an excuse that in the interests of social comfort, social convenience and social peace, the residence of different races in different areas was desirable and so far from stimulating, it was calculated to mitigate hostility and ill-feelings.¹¹

Though there was no policy of racial segregation in Uganda but Africans, Europeans and Indians usually lived in different parts of the towns.¹²

The East African society was compartmentalised in three or so social groups which was reinforced by economic, social and political discrimination and segregation. There were, for instance, separate residential areas for the different communities, separate schools, hospitals, maternity homes, clubs etc. On the political level, the institution of separate

¹⁰ Ibid., p.370.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² H.S. Morris, The Indians in Uganda, (London, 1968), p. 113.

electoral communal representation stimulated racial political parties, and made racial interests inevitable as political issues. On the economic level, the compartmentalisation was reinforced by a racial salary structure in the public and initiatives, in the private sector, by the exclusion of non-whites from the 'white highlands' of Kenya and restrictions on Indians on land ownership and cultivation, especially in Kenya and Uganda, by the existence of African reserves and wide disparities in the quality and number of social and economic services provided by the governments for different races.¹³ The result of all these policies was to preserve and strengthen the political, economic and social dominance of Europeans in East Africa. The Indians tended to occupy the middle place in this system, while Africans were always at the bottom.¹⁴

Africans, Europeans and Indians were encouraged to fit into a system in which class was largely determined by race. Africans were to labour, Europeans were to control the means of production and Indians were wedged in between as intermediaries. Government's support for this system was reflected in the colony's racially defined educational policies, wage scales and promotions in both public and private sectors, in political representation on local governing bodies, in land allocation in rural and urban areas and in all other areas where the three

¹³ Dharam P. Ghai and Yash P. Ghai, Asians in East Africa: Problems and Prospects, The Journal of Modern African Studies, (Cambridge), vol.3, no.1, (1965), p. 35.

¹⁴ Ibid.

communities came into contact.¹⁵

The government's education policy was instrumental in establishing these races and class divisions for students at an early age as all government schools were segregated by race and sex from primary school onwards. Government's expenditure on pupils in the three communities was wholly disproportionate to the number of school-age children in those communities. The government's civil service as well as the colony's private sector was similarly structured with both pay scales and limits of promotion determined by race. Only the Europeans, moreover, were permitted to attain the highest levels of decision-making while Indians were accorded positions as accountants and bank keepers and Africans as clerks and office-boys. This system also prevailed in the private sector with income distribution generally measured by race rather than proficiency.¹⁶

Like everywhere in East Africa also, the white man invariably believed that he was the bearer of the burden of civilising the 'savage African', and always accused the fellow Indian settler that he never shared that burden and as such played no role in the advancement of Africans towards the adoption of the so-called 'civilized' life-style. The entire East African society before the second world war had been divided pyramidically and Indians had come to occupy a middle-tier

¹⁵ Dana April Seidenberg, Uhuru and the Kenya Politios: The Role of a Minority Community in Kenya Politics, 1939-1963, (New Delhi, 1983), p.8.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.8-9.

position. The African interests had received little attention from the colonial masters who had all along concerned themselves mainly with their own economic interests and the interests of the white settlers.¹⁷

The highlands of Kenya and Uganda, the most fertile and climatically the best areas, were taken away from the Africans. The dislocated Africans were crowded in the surrounding lowland African reserves from where they trekked to work on the white planter's farms from dawn to dusk. Under the African customary land law, the land is equated with mother. It cannot be owned or alienated. Dr. T.O. Elias explains - "It is a common feature of all types of African land tenure that 'ownership' is normally never vested in an individual but is a group... with in each group, however, individual members have specific portions allotted to them by the family head, in much the same way as the local chief allots - at least notionally specific parcels of the village land to the constituent family heads according to need".¹⁸ But in Kenya, Africans were dispossessed of their richest community lands located in the high land region; they were not adequately compensated for the loss, or properly looked after in other spheres of modern sector of economy.¹⁹

The legislation enacted early in the century to provide and

¹⁷ R.R. Ranchandani, ed, India and Africa, (New Delhi, 1980), p.16.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.177.

¹⁹ Ibid.

regulate labour imposed severe hardships on the Africans. Hut and Poll taxes, which had to be paid in currency rather than kind, forced African men into employment for most of each year mainly with European planters or public works departments (PWD). Africans were also required to work in their own areas without remuneration for several weeks each year on the maintenance of roads and drainage systems.²⁰

A Masters and Servants ordinance was issued in 1807 in order to bind the Africans to his work and avoid desertion. The ordinance empowered the administration to punish a labourer for absence from work, in subordination and negligence in work. The punishment could either be imprisonment or cash fine. The imprisonment could be imposed in the form of labour to be performed on government project or on European's farms.²¹

In the East Africa Protectorate, because of the emphasis on European settlement, the system was most severe. There in 1915 reserves were delineated and Africans were prohibited from leaving them except for purpose of labour. That same year a Native Registration Ordinance required every African male above the age of sixteen to register with the government submitting not only the particulars of his life, but also a full set of finger prints, and to carry on his person when outside his reserve a

²⁰ Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality, Asian Politics in East Africa, 1900-1967, (New Delhi, 1993), p. 124.

²¹ Vijay Gupta, Kenya Politics of (IN) Dependence, (New Delhi, 1981), pp. 52-53.

Kipande.²²

If the African was caught, away from his work without his Kipande or without its proper endorsement, he could be arrested. He had to get endorsement on Kipande which was to be made in English, against certain payment. The power to demand the production of the Kipande was abused by the police, who a number of times took bribes from the labourers. For offences against the Native Registration ordinance the African was liable to a fine of Rs. 20 or three months' imprisonment or labour. It indicated the date of entering and leaving the employment of a European and no African could enter a new employment if the Kipande had not been signed by the previous employer.²³

Misunderstanding Between Indian and African

The colonial administration in Ehrlich's words, viewed African as "incapable of entrepreneurship, in experienced, too eager to run before they walk."²⁴ But then, nothing was either done to prepare them for such tasks. On the contrary, the entire economic policy was conducted in a way which literally ruled out African participation in modern sector of the economy beyond the supply of unskilled and semi-skilled labour and the cultivation and marketing of peasant crops of elementary level. The trouble was that early schemes of residential racial segregation had

²² Gregory, n.19, p.124.

²³ Gupta, n.20, p.53.

²⁴ Ramchandani, n.16, p.178.

virtually thrown them out of the main stream of the nerve centres of commercial development in the early stages of economic growth.²⁵ Africans could hardly be expected to build houses in European or Indian quarters since the building regulations and sanitary prescription were beyond their means to meet with. They were thereby pushed to the peripheral surroundings of the urban centres or those who worked as domestic servants lived in the "out houses" of European and Indian residential buildings. Another key sector which badly handicapped African vertical mobility was education and training. Apart from missionary education, the government spent very little on African education.²⁶

Even under the category of clerks, an African might be a copy typist while a non-African was generally a responsible cashier etc. The non-African immigrant communities had thus left the indigenous African population miles behind them in economic sphere. The striking feature of this peculiar colonial system was thus a wide imbalance of wealth between the indigenous African population and the alien settler communities of Asian descent. The system had badly choked for African the outlets for vertical mobility.²⁷

Consequently, Africans were invariably left behind Indians in educational achievements also. This then created a grand for

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 181-182.

wage differential between Africans and Indians and Africans and Europeans as well as Indians and Europeans. Under the British colonial system, as it evolved in East Africa, the Africans were relegated to a subordinate position. They suffered disparities in every walk of economic life. The African animosity towards Indian settlers was the product of such disturbing elements in the structure itself.²⁸

The commercial sector, from small 'duka' keeping to large-scale merchanting, was dominated by the Indians. That's why the friction was most acutely felt in the commercial sphere, although the sectors like subordinate services and artisan skill were also enveloped in the climate of friction. The bazaars in cities and towns, were lined with Indian shops. The fashionable residential localities were mainly occupied by Indians and Europeans. Most of the privately owned buildings belonged to Indians and Indians held commanding position in the commercial set-up. The product of this warped colonial pattern of economic development was a three-tier social order based on racial lines. The Indian community occupied a middle-layer position, with precious little free mixing among the three racial communities. Apart from formal sundownness and meetings in the marketing places and scout organisations, there was no other racial contact. Each community retained intact its cultural trait and taboos.²⁹

The inevitable consequences of stratification of colonial

²⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 182-183.

society was a kind of ghettoization, white housing areas, brown bungalow quarters and black hutments in the fields. Moreover, Europeans projected Indians as merciless exploiters of the Africans and as a trading community that had come to East Africa to grab what they could not get at home.

African antagonistic attitudes towards Indians arose largely out of the social, political and economic dynamics generated within such a context, but a great deal of the so-called African attitudes to Indians were in fact initiated by Europeans and adopted by Africans. By becoming the individuals who put colonial exploitative policies into effect, they inevitably came to take the blame for an exploitative colonial system, while the real authors of the system remained relatively free from African hatred.

Indians have been looked as an obstacle by Africans in their way of economic development. Indian's themselves being a colonized people and politically weaker than the British, were manipulated to serve the colonizer's economic interests. They acted as middlemen between the white colonizers and black Africans. The organisation of East African society was constituted in such a way that it led to the separation of Indians and Africans as their relationship remained confined to economic activities as shopkeeper-customer or master-servant level. This did not bring them closer to each other.

The concentrations of Indians in towns and settlements and in trade and industry had important consequences in their

relations with Africans. Most Indians were richer than most Africans and because the Indians lived together in crowded settlements and were a specialised trading group, they were highly conspicuous and a potential source of envy and dislike to the Africans, who met them mainly as buyers of produce, shopkeepers and givers of credit.³⁰

Indians occupied middle level bureaucratic position and also captured the operations of artisans such as masons plumbers, carpenters, tailors etc.

Indians have been blamed for being conservative community who were glad to be left alone to pursue their own traditional ways and maintain their culture. As colonial system defined areas of occupation and activity on a racial basis, it made it easier for the Indians to identify his role and as he was an immigrant, unsure of his rights and status, he was probably grateful to be spared the pains of transition and the tensions of racial conflict and competition.³¹

Indian has retained his preference for a distinctly oriental style of architecture, with flat roofs, curved walls, balconies deep verandahs and ornamental windows. The grouping of nationalities into particular areas in towns has been encouraged not only by legislation such as Kenya 'white Highlands' restriction of ownership in certain areas of Europeans only but also by the rigid zoning of areas for high-density, medium

³⁰ Morris, n.12, p.143.

³¹ Ghai, D.P.and Ghai, Y.P., n.12, p.36.

density and low-density housing. The distrust and misunderstanding between the races of Africa were magnified by the rigid hierarchial divisions in the large towns, where Africans, Indians and Europeans met only at work. As soon as the evening came they went to their own areas, mixed only with their own kind. The larger the town, the more rigid were the divisions, the more inflexible the separation between the races.³²

In the African environment where they encountered a new economic situation and associated with peoples at quite different culture, the Indians sought to preserve their separate identities. Confronted with exceptional forces of social change, they reacted by strengthening their communal ties. They were moved to this end also by the colonial governments. The Indians were left to establish their own schools, libraries, hospitals and dispensaries, religious edifices, insurance and credit agencies, welfare organisations and social and recreational facilities. For these reasons the Indians rallied within their communities to form organisations for raising funds, constructing buildings and administering the services essential for their welfare and development. The religious community thus became the focal point of the Indian's association outside their families. The Indians tended to confine their social activities and even their business relationship to people to the same culture. With

³² C.P. Kirby, Countries of today, East Africa-Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, (London, 1960), pp.100-101.

rare exception, they refrained from marriage not only with Europeans but also Africans.³³

Africans had shown their resentment against the Indian presence in East Africa. This was because of the fact as Lord Hailey pointed out, that almost 90 percent of trade was in the hands of Indians. The reason was Africans had appeared on the commercial scene very late. Their functioning on the economic plans was yet marginal, largely complementary to that of the Indians. All the same Africans resentment over India's methods of trading both buying and selling was noticed.³⁴

As African farmers brought their produce to the Indian trader for re-sale in the larger urban market, they did not come face to face with the consumers who brought their produce. They felt to be exploited by the Indian dukkawalla whom they thought enjoying great profit. For long, Indians had a virtual monopoly of wholesale and retail trade and the marketing of minor cash crops, especially in Uganda and Tanganyika. Their dominance in the distributive sector of the economy exposed them to widespread criticism for alleged dishonest practices and to charge of exploitation. These included the problem of short weight, misleading information, overcharging or any number of other ways by which customers felt themselves cheated. But in a majority of cases, criticism was levelled against the widespread practice of

³³ Gregory, n.19, pp. 19-20.

³⁴ Ranchandani, n.16, p. 176.

bargaining in Indian shops.³⁵

Any system of bargaining must inevitably lead to the charging of different prices to different customers, and thereby to complaints of exploitation and racial discrimination. It is perhaps also true that many Indian traders have shown themselves more interested in quick profits rather than in steady, long-term gains, and have not hesitated to exploit temporary scarcities to make windfall gains. All these malpractices have served only to promote ill-will and distrust between the customers and the trader.³⁶

According to Frank Furudi - "The Indian attitude towards Africans also had a negative impact. Indians considered Africans as being inferior to them. In their day-to-day activities Indian racism caused more irritation among Africans than similar European attitudes."³⁷ The novelist James Ngugi portrays aspects of this uneasy relationship (in *Weep Not Child*) thus - "The Indian traders were said to be very rich. They too employed some black boys whom they treated as nothing. You could never like the Indians because their customs were funny in a bad way ... the Indians were not liked and they abused women, using dirty

³⁵ Dharam P. Ghai, ed, Portrait of a Minority Asians in East African, (London, 1965), pp. 103-104.

³⁶ Ibid., p.104.

³⁷ Frank Furedi, "The Development of Anti-Asian opinion among Africans in Nakuru district, Kenya", Journal of African Affairs (Oxford), vol.73, no.292, (1974), p.349.

words they had learned in Swahili..."³⁸

In the small townships, the practice of Indian traders of dealing with Europeans before Africans (and often at separate counters) was another source of irritation with Indians rather than Europeans. For example, in their role as the commercial middlemen of Nakuru district, Kenya, the Indians were bound to suffer from a certain degree of unpopularity. "It was a commonly shared view among Africans that Indian traders had a secret agreement to keep down the price that they paid for agricultural produce. It was commonly viewed among Africans that there was no way, you could win with the Indians. He would use bad weights or cheat you with the money. If the women protested he would swear at her".³⁹

The Africans felt frustrated because they thought that they could have obtained much higher prices for their maize the vegetables in the reserves that they received from Indian traders. The situation, whereby Africans were dependent for a great part of their livelihood on the rate of produce to Indians, was in itself bound to create a certain degree of suspicion. This suspicion was generalized by a relatively few but well known cases of business malpractices were committed by Indian traders. In one case, a number of Africans employed on one of Mr. Chadwick's farm, lost a considerable amount of money when the local owner of a duka went bankrupt and fled. Chadwick reported -

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

"It seems that certain of my boys have been in the habit of using this duka as a bank and have produced books supporting their claims, showing receipt by this Indian of sums varying from 20/- to 73/- on deposit".⁴⁰

Similarly, some Africans claimed four months pay from a sikh contractor at a saw mill near Elburgon. The contractor had left the area after finishing his assignment without paying the wages of his workers. It must be emphasised that these cases of malpractices by Indian traders were not widespread. But that stories to this effect were naturally circulated and embellished, with the result that it became an integral aspect of African popular folklore in Nakuru district. The relationship between Kikuyu women and Indian traders was full of antagonism and tension; indecent and suggestive remarks made by some Indian traders to Kikuyu women, added an explosive dimension to the situation. One women recalled -

"Indian traders were dirty to us, often they would treat us like prostitutes. I never wanted to deal with them unless I had to".⁴¹

It is true that most Indian traders were hard bargainers, but they were not on the whole interested in degrading their trading partners. Nevertheless, a dirty remark here and there tended to create a widespread belief that Indian men were generally 'dirty'

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.350.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 350-51.

to African women. Like middlemen all over the world, Indians were seen as a group of greedy thieves, who were certainly not to be treated. The general racist attitude expressed by Indians towards Africans only added more heat to anti-Indian sentiment.⁴²

Africans totally forgot that first introduction to a monetary economy had been made by the Arabs but it had been the Indians who had carried out the main task of its development. It was they who had undertaken the risks of pioneering and its real dangers to life and money. When much later the Africans entered the field and encountered some similar risks, those which inevitably accompany small-scale business in an under-developed economy, their frequent failures were all too readily attributed to the entrenched position of the Indian. It was invariably forgotten that the Indians had experienced comparable difficulties half a century earlier, and that their safeguards then had been the established trade on the coast and not official agencies and services. With a few exceptions it was also overlooked that the Indians, enclosed as they were with in towns and trading settlements, by no means monopolised the whole market.⁴³

It is clear that during this period, relationship of Indian and African communities have not remained the same as they were having before the arrival of Europeans in East Africa. It was partly by segregated policies of colonists and partly by acts of

⁴² Ibid., p.351.

⁴³ Morris, n.12, p.144.

Indian themselves. Even Africans formed their attitudes towards Indians to some extent as shown by Europeans.

CHAPTER 3

INDIAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter basically deals with Indian's involvement in East African politics and their support to African anti-colonial movement. An attempt has been made to discuss their efforts for unity, (the impact of Indian political struggle on the African political movements and various incidents which created a closeness in their struggle. It is noted by starting in 1920s, the Indian African movement in a common struggle against the British and the whites, continued till the attainment of independence that is 1963! This involvement goes beyond political parties to trade union and to some extent to the armed struggle which Kenyans had launched against the British.

Like Africans, Indians had felt the repressiveness of colonialism as has been stated in the previous chapter and from the beginning, the settlers were hostile to the Indian presence and this hostility increased with the passage of time. Thus the Indians were drawn into politics and their main contenders were the whites and not Africans. They fought for equality with the other beneficiaries of colonialism, that was the whites.¹

For this purpose, they formed the colony and inter colony organisations essential for that purpose. These organizations

¹ A.S. Kala, "The Role of Asians' in Kenya's Nationalist Movement", in R.R. Ramchandani, (ed), India and Africa, (New Delhi, 1980), p. 207.

included not only the basic political associations and parties, but also the allied chamber of commerce and other trading organizations, the printing presses and newspapers and the trade unions necessary for a successful political endeavor.²

Indians carried on political activities from 1800 as earliest political organization in East Africa was the Mombasa Indian Association organised on the initiative of L.M. Salvi. Savle was assisted by three of the wealthiest and most influential Indians in East Africa - Allidina Visram and the brothers Alibhoy and Tayabali Mulla Jeevanjee.³ When A.M. Jeevanjee took the lead, the political opposition by the Indians to the discriminatory practices seriously began. He wrote articles in the Indian newspapers to draw the support of the Indian nationalist opinion against the anti-Indian politics of the Kenyan colonial administration which were formulated at the instance of the European settlers.⁴ In 1909, A.M. Jeevanjee became the first Indian to be nominated as member of the legislative council of Kenya.⁵ After the retirement of Jeevanjee in 1911, the government denied to appoint any Indian in Jeevanjee's place at the pretext that there were no prominent Indians of sufficient educational qualifications for appointment

² Robert, G. Gregory, Quest for Equality - Asian Politics in East Africa, 1800-1967, (New Delhi, 1993), p.32.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A.S. Kala, "The Role of Asians in Kenya's Nationalist Movement", n.1, p.208.

⁵ Ibid.

to the legislative council.⁶

As Indian settlement expanded, political associations were established in Kisumu, Naivasha, Eldoret, Fort Hall, Nairobi and other parts of Kenya. Indian Association in the other territories appeared somewhat later. In 1909 the Zanzibar community formed a committee of Indians which was to be renamed in 1914 the Indian National Association.⁷ Indian political activity became more organised when the East African Indian National Congress (EAINC) was formed in March 1914.⁸ In Uganda, Indian Associations were established at Jinja in 1918, in Kampala and Mbale in 1919 and in most of the other towns during the twenties.⁹

In Kenya, the Indians were demanding equal representation with the Europeans, on the legislative council, the end of segregation in the townships and the right to hold land in the Highlands. They also asked for promotion on merit, not race, to the highest posts in the police, army and civil service.¹⁰

White Paper of 1923

This friction between the Indians and the Europeans reached its peak, in the early 1920s. This tussel between the alien races

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gregory, n.2, p.32.

⁸ Kala, n.1, p.208.

⁹ Gregory, n.2, p.32.

¹⁰ Zoe Marsh and G.W. Kingsnorth, An Introduction to the History of East Africa, (London, 1957), p.194.

had pushed to the background needs and grievances of the Africans. [In respect of long pending Indian demand for equality with the Europeans in Kenya, the British government issued a White Paper in 1923 called "The Indian Question".¹¹ One important aspect of the White Paper was that it promised place of prominence to the African cause] It initiated the doctrine of African paramountacy. It stressed that the British must safeguard the interests of the Africans since Kenya primarily belonged to the Africans.¹²

The White Paper did not give any representation to the Africans while it granted five seats to the Indians in the Kenya legislative council, elected on communal system as against common franchise. It continued the practice of reservation of alienated land for Europeans in the Highlands and kept the Indians as well as Africans out. It restricted Indian immigration on the plea of economic interests of the Africans.¹³

Though in theory African interests were hailed to be paramount vide of 1923 White Paper, yet in practice the Kenya colonial administration was primarily devoted to the white man's interests.

[This White Paper was a turning point for the Indian outlook, the Indians were urged by the leaders of East African Indian

¹¹ Kala, n.1, pp. 208-11.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Zoe Marsh & G.W. Kingsnorth, n.10, p.195.

National Congress to improve their relations with the Africans¹⁴ as upto this period Indians were not directly associated with Africans in demanding political reforms. They came to know the fact if both Indians and Africans join their hands in their anti-colonial struggle, they would be able to gain success in their mission. Thus the Indians expanded their political movement to support Africans.)

By this time the Africans had organised themselves into political groups against the British. Africans in their own land were reduced to the lowest position on the socio, political and economic ladder by the British government and the European settlers. Their physical differences were used to downgrade them in the social order. The discriminatory practices adopted by colonial administration aroused Africans to challenge the government and settlers supremacy. Their tribal, religions and cultural organizations became vehicles of protests. Their protests were directed against the settlers who had deprived them of their land and were forcing them to work on European farms. The protest against the government took place over the question of Hut Tax and Poll Tax, forced labour recruitment, Kipande (registration certificates) taking of finger prints, imposition of undesirable headmen or chiefs etc.¹⁵

Africans formed anti-Europeans and anti-government movements

¹⁴ Kala, n.1, pp. 212-13.

¹⁵ Vijay P. Gupta, Problems of Parliamentary Democracy in a Multi-Racial Society (Kenya), (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Delhi), p.204.

aimed at achieving for the Africans political rights, an equal status and removal of disabilities. In 1920, the Kikuyu Association, the first African political organization of Kenya was formed. At a Nairobi meeting it was renamed as The Young Kikuyu Association.¹⁶ The movement was directed against the European settlers who had 'stolen' African land and were forcing Africans to work on European farms, the Missions which supported the settlers plans, the government, which had imposed the humiliating taxes and the Kipande for the benefit of Europeans.¹⁷

(Harry Thuku, who had been elected Secretary of the Association was in constant formal contact with some Indians. Thuku received help from Indians like M.A. Desai, Hussein Suleman Virjee, G.B. Tadvalkar, K.N. Jani and others.¹⁸ Desai, being the editor of the East Africa chronicle, gave prominence to the Kikuyu grievances in his newspaper. Some of the active Indian leaders like J.M. Mazareth, A.B. Patel, M.A. Desai and others aimed at bringing Africans and Indians together in their joint nationalist struggle against racial discrimination by the Europeans.¹⁹)

According to J.S. Mangat - "Their political disaffection in

¹⁶ Vijay Gupta, Kenya's struggle for freedom, Africa Quarterly, (New Delhi) vol.3, no.4, Jan-March, 1964, p.211.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Kala, n.1, pp. 212-13.

¹⁹ Ibid.

East Africa was of crucial importance in initiating Indian attempts to associate politically with the Africans... In a sense much of the Indian opposition to the political demands and aspirations of the Europeans - with the exception of immigration restrictions - coincided with African news".²⁰]

The East African Indian National Congress supported the African cause to a great extent and all the Indian leaders showed absolute sympathy towards the issues that caused grievances to the Africans.²¹✓

(During the twenties and thirties, Indians in East Africa saw the success of Satyagraha (passive resistance movement) launched by M.K. Gandhi in India. They had been visited by prominent Indian nationalists and in turn attended debates in the Indian National Congress and participated in anti-British demonstration in India.²² Inspired by freedom struggle in India these Indian leaders constantly assisted Africans.) In their public pronouncements, they favoured the representation of the Africans by the Africans themselves in the legislative councils at a time when they were represented by unofficial Europeans.²³ (They almost invariably demanded for increased representation in the

²⁰ J.S. Mangat, A History of the Asians in East Africa - c1886 to 1945, (London, 1969), p.168.

²¹ Kala, n.1, pp.212-13.

²² Dana April Seidenberg, Uhuru and the Kenya Politics, (New Delhi, 1983), p.79.

²³ Yash Tandon, A Political Survey in Dharam P. Ghai, ed, Portrait of a Minority Asians in East Africa, (London, 1965), p.77.

legislative councils. They fought for the principle of equality for all races, including for instance, the opening of the white Highlands for the Africans and Indians like Europeans and the ending of racial segregation in public places.²⁴⁾

A.M.Jeevanjee who was one of the initiators of Congress, is said to have been the founder of Indian politics in East Africa.²⁵ Desai was the foremost in merging Indian demands with those of the African nationalists. In 1923 Desai visited the colonial office as head of an Indian deputation and presented a petition on behalf of the East African Association to the Secretary of State. One of the demands was for an increase in African wages.²⁶

Collaboration of Indian and African Leaders Against Whites

Indian leaders assisted Harry Thuku in drafting resolutions, telegrams and other correspondence. They also financially assisted Thuku and provided him a car with driver to rally his followers in the reserve. The office of Desai's newspaper, the East African Chronicle, became the headquarters of Thuku's East African Association and Desai's press printed Thuku's broadsheet, Tangazo (The Announcement).²⁷ Desai wrote editorials in support of the movement and travelled to Kampala to assist

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gregory, n.2, p.34.

²⁶ Ibid., p.127.

²⁷ Ibid. p.40.

coordination with another nationalist organisation The Young Baganda Association. In the legislative council, he repeatedly defended Africans and introduced a resolution for a common civil service examination open to all races.²⁸

The support which Indian leaders were giving to Africans was not liked by Europeans and they tried to spread among the Africans that the help which they were getting from Indians was not for their welfare. This is evident from a letter²⁹ written by Harry Thuku himself in which he gave description of his meeting with Mr. Maclellan Wilson, the Vice President of the convention of Associations. During conversation Thuku was blamed for supporting Indians and telling his countrymen to trust Indians instead of trusting the white men.³⁰

Harry Thuku organised a protest against the pass laws in Nairobi, the government arrested him and sentenced him for instigating Africans against the administration. His political party the KCA was banned. At the time of protest, the government fired on the unarmed crowd which was burning the passes and killed many Africans. This created a panic in the whole city and enlarged the movement of the Africans.

In 1927, J.B. Pandya, Indian commercial and political leader, founded the Kenya Daily Mail. In his publication Pandya

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ This letter was published in Democrat on 15th December, 1923.

³⁰ Observer, Indian and Native Interests, The Colonial Times Annual 1944-45, (Nairobi), p.26.

hoped to organize the Indian trading community throughout East Africa in a drive for an end to racial discrimination and the introduction of a common roll. Africans as well as Indians were to be the beneficiaries.³¹✓

Beginning in 1924-25 when the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) was formed by Joseph Kangethe and Jesse Kariuki.³² It also received support from Indian politicians and journalists. The KCA was bringing its own journal Mwigwithania. This journal was printed by Desai and Sitaram Achariar who at the same time were upholding African labour demands in their own newspaper, the Democrat.³³✓

Although the twenties till his death A.M.Desai carried the banner of Indo-African unity for ending discriminatory colonial practices, During the General Secretaryship of Kenyatta of KCA, Dass took over the leadership and became the defender of both Indian and African interests.

In 1929 he had accompanied Kenyatta to London to present a Kikuyu Central Association petition to the colonial office and through his connections with the League Against Imperialism, fostered a number of public addresses by Kenyatta in England. In 1931 as a member of Kenya Indian delegation, Dass assisted two KCA representatives Kenyatta and Parminas Mockerie, in submitting

³¹ Gregory, n.2, p.170.

³² Ibid., p.40.

³³ Democrat was published from Mombasa. Ibid., p.127.

a list of grievances to the joint committee.³⁴ Two years later, among six Indians who were examined by a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into land problem i.e. the Carter Commission - Dass was the most vocal in support of Africans.³⁵

In 1931, Patel, a barrister, Phadke, first Indian appointed to the Executive Council of the Kenya colony were sent by the government with the consent of the East African Indian National Congress to present the Indian's views to the Joint Committee. In a statement to the committee, Patel asserted that the Indians 'whole heartedly' supported the paramountacy of Native interests, in all its implications.) He advocated removal of African crop restrictions, the Kipande and unfair African taxation.³⁶

Along with the nationalist movement, trade union movement was providing another common platform for Indians and Africans to demand for their rights. The foremost trade union leader Makhan Sing was busy in organising Indian and African workers under the banner of trade unions.

During 1938 Dass helped the KCA leaders, Jesse Kariuki, campaign for political support in North Nyanza.) In July 1938 he was involved in the Kamba Protest march in Nairobi and was accused of instigating the riot that followed the arrest of Samuel Mwindi Mbingu. With other Indians he worked for Mbingu's release. In August 1938 Dass read in the legislative council a

³⁴ Ibid., p.42.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p.41.

petition from the KCA opposing new discriminatory land measures.³⁷ In 1939 he was the only councillor to voice African objections to imperial orders in council that defined the boundaries of the European highlands and the Kikuyu reserve.³⁸

During 1940s, the colonial printing works owned by Girdharilal Vidyarathi, became the official newscentre of the Indian community. His papers, The Colonial Times and Habari Za Dunbia commented weekly on such issues as the Kipande, the usurption of land from the Africans and the color bar.³⁹

By 1939 the KCA had become a national organisation having members from all walks of life and from all tribes.⁴⁰ The phenomenal growth of the KCA as an African political movement worried the European settlers and the government. The European settlers demanded that it should be banned and the government once again complied with their demand. In May 1940, the KCA was banned, its leaders were arrested and its monthly journal was closed. This resulted in the African political movement going underground.⁴¹

During the War Indian Businessmen Availed Opportunity of Making Money

³⁷ Ibid., p.43.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Seidenbeg, n.22, p.89.

⁴⁰ Gupta, n.16, p.215.

⁴¹ Ibid.

While one section of the Indian community was assisting Africans in their struggle against the British, the Indian businessmen concentrated on making money. As far as possible they ignored the war-time price and wage controls and the rationing of food and combined with Africans in the development of black market. Many young Africans moved in to cities to share in this economic opportunity. When the Kenya government undertook to move all Africans not in registered employment back to the reserves, a considerable number of Indian businessmen, for a fee of a few shillings, signed the African pass cards as false 'employers'. Many Indian businessmen in the large urban centres, and a number of Africans, became visibly more prosperous during the war. In Nairobi, a number of important European properties, including wool worths, Kenwood House, the continental cafe, and the hair-dressing Salam Maison Marie, were acquired by Indians.⁴² Near the end of the war European criticism of the Indians reached its height. Shirley V-cooke, the independent legislative councillor who was regarded as a liberal among the European leaders, was the Indian's far most critic. In an article "The Indian Question" of September 1944, Cooke described the Indians' war efforts as 'contemptible', as castigated their trading practices, impugned their standards of conduct and citizenship and called for new restrictions on Indian immigration.⁴³

Shortly after the war began, to prevent profiteering and

⁴² Gregory, n.2, p.52.

⁴³ Ibid.

inflation, the government fixed wages and the prices of food stuffs. More serious measures were introduced in 1944, a Land Control Bill and a Crown Lands Bill, supplementing the order in council of 1939, provided for a Control Board of settlers to oversee transactions in all agricultural land and empowered the Governor to veto any transaction involving more than twenty acres.⁴⁴ Under this legislation, the Indians were barred even from holding shares in a company that had land interests in the highlands. Later in 1944, the governments throughout East Africa by decree placed strict controls on further Indian immigration. In opposing these measures the Indians pursued policies highly beneficial to the Africans. Two other Indian councillors, A.B. Patel and S.G. Amin, argued in 1944 for the appointment of Africans to the administrative boards and to the legislature.⁴⁵

Post Anti Colonial Movement Intensifies

In 1944 the Kenya African Study Union (K.A.S.U.) was organized by Eliud Mathu, the first African to be nominated to the legislative council of Kenya. The Kenya African Study Union's main aim was to unite the African people and promote their social, economic and political interests. Two years later, at its second annual conference in 1946, the K.A.S.U. changed its name to the Kenya African Union, and Jomo Kenyatta took up the

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.53.

leadership of the Kenya African Union (K.A.U).⁴⁶

During the initial post war years, African and Indian leaders were drawn together in opposition to the continuing war - time restrictions and the European movement for autonomy. It was the Indians who took the initiative. At a large Indian meeting in November 1944, W.L. Sohan, Secretary of the Nairobi Indian Association, called for strong Indian-African cooperation. Indian leaders then invited representation from the Kenya African Study Union at the meeting of the congress, and the President Gichuru became in October 1945 the first African ever to attend an open session.⁴⁷

In mid December 1945, Indians and Africans were confronted by the British government scheme named Kenya Plan for establishing a settler dominated British East African Dominion. This was presented in the form of colonial paper no. 181. The Indians offered this flair and wrote editorials in their paper against it. The British government acted authoritatively and arrested members of The Colonial Times staff i.e. G.L.Vidyarthi, W.L. Sohan and Haroon Ahmed. Similarly, the East African Trade Union congress led by Makhan Singh and African leader Fred Kubai opposed government measures.⁴⁸

The Dominion Plan was represented by removing Paper 181 and substituting it by Colonial Paper 210. This change became a focal

⁴⁶ Gupta, n.15, p.215.

⁴⁷ Gregory, n.2, p.72.

⁴⁸ Seidenberg, n.22, p.168.

point for collective Indian-African agitation. The new proposals, published on 5 March 1947 called for the establishment of a central legislative assembly composed of five representatives from each territory.⁴⁸ As the Europeans were in the majority in the council, those proposals were to ensure the membership of at least two Europeans to the proposed Central Assembly from each territory. When Indians and Africans came to know that the principle of racial equality in representation was to be replaced by a system which, in effect, granted settler domination over the new union, they protested.⁵⁰ Indian community was represented by D.D. Puri, Bachulal Gathani, Romesh Gautam and Chanan Singh. African community was led by B.A. Ohango, Henry Muoria, M. Gikonyo, H.S. Gathigira, T.Mbotela and Nganga. Indian newspapers, published in English, Gujarati and Swahili voiced the grievances of the Africans as well as those of the Indians.⁵¹ A prominent sikh contractor, Sardar Bhagat Singh Biant said - "Is the white settler trustee and champion (of African rights) because he has usurped and reserved the most fertile land in the colony for himself? Is the white settler trustee and champion) of African rights) because he has been instrumental in prohibiting the sons of the soil to grow certain crops and raise their standard of living? Is the white settler trustee and champion) of African

⁴⁸ Of the five representatives, one was to be an official, one was to be selected by the Legislative Council, and three were to be appointed by the three racial groups. Ibid., p.85.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 88-89.

rights) because he has managed to create the squatter labour system, the Kipande and the conscription Regulation?"⁵²

From 1946 to 1952 the Indians attempted to consolidate their position by forming an alliance with the newly emergent African elite. The various political organisations of both communities agitated for increased representation on the Legislative Council universal suffrage and the removal of the color bar from all aspects of colonial life.⁵³ Several African leaders responded to Indian initiatives by urging closer Indian-African ties. At a procession and public meeting on 4 July organized by the Nairobi Indian Association to protest against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, an ordinance limiting Indian rights in the Union of South Africa, four Africans were invited to address the meeting. Speaking to a crowd of approximately 5000, Muchochi Gikonyo, a newly-appointed member of the Nairobi Municipal Council, advocated unity of action by Indians and Africans. Henry Gathigira, editor of Habari Za Dunia, remarked that he was prepared to stand by their side. Even Jomo Kenyatta asserted that the Indians and the Africans have politically many things in common and a common platform can be built where the members of the two communities can work together on completely equal footing.⁵⁴

In July 1946 at a joint meeting of Africans and Indians held

⁵² Ibid., p.80.

⁵³ Seidenberg, n.22, p.75.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

to celebrate an impending trip to London by an African delegation, S.C.Amin, President of the Congress, assured Indian support for the deputation by formally handing over a large check to help cover the costs of the trip. In replying to Amin, Gichuru thanked the Indian community on behalf of KAU and stated that the Africans would never forget this donation of which not one penny had been contributed by their so-called white Trustees. Similarly, the Eighteenth open session of the Congress, held in Mombasa was attended by several African representatives including James Gichuru, Francis Khamisi, Peter Mbiyu Koinage, Senior Chief Koinange and Muchochi Gikonyo. In his presidential address Amin assured that all sections of the Indian community would give the Africans "cooperation and assistance at this critical period of their history".⁵⁵ Peter Mbiyu Koinage, also commenting on Indian-African unity, stressed the fact that while the Indians had taught the Africans useful trades, the only results of European instruction was the production of African waiters and cooks. He suggested that arrangements should be made whereby Africans might go to India for educational purposes and to improve understanding between the two groups. Resolutions were then passed advocating closer understanding between the two communities and the creation of an organisation to further this aim. In addition, the congress recommended increased African representation in the Legislative Council and an appointment of

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.81-82.

an African to the Executive Council.⁵⁶

British again tried to revive the plan of closer union. Indian and African leadership reacted against this scheme since they thought it was against the interest of both communities and served the interests of whites only.

In April 1949 the Congress sent a letter to Creech Jones stating that closer union along the proposed settler lines would be against the best interests of the indigenous population and the Indian settlers. Two weeks later, a meeting of congress members including A.B. Patel, D.D. Puri, Chanan Singh, J.M.Nazareth, Shanti Pandit and KAU representatives was held, to discuss the formation of a united front against the Europeans. Famous Kaldeni Hall meeting was held in Nairobi on 23 April where many thousand of Africans and Indians packed the Hall and congregated outside for over three hours. Indian and African leaders shared a common platform in voicing their anti-settler demands. A.B. Patel moved a resolution that was seconded by Tom Mbotela, Vice President of KAU - "The time had now come when the non-European communities must form a constructive political unit to fight and overthrow the unscrupulous domination which some irresponsible unofficial Europeans intended to enforce".⁵⁷

Makhan Singh delivered an impassioned speech that "the time had come for the people to unite and demand in a single voice, that the country was their and that no foreign power had the

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.82.

⁵⁷ Seidenberg, n.22, p.103.

right to rule over it. That should be the aim of Africans, Indians and progressive Europeans. The British government had declared the independence of India, Burma and Ceylon; similarly it should immediately declare the independence of the East African territories".⁵⁸

Mau Mau Movement in Kenya

In 1940s, the Mau Mau movement was started by some militant Africans in Kenya. They became deeply resentful of European laws which denied them a voice in the government. Reserved areas were overcrowded with increasing African population and workers were paid low scale wages for full time work in both rural and urban areas. Many Africans had neither land nor income. In May 1952 the Kenya African Union refused to recognise as African representatives those whom the government nominated for the new Legislative Council. Their refusal and their repeated demands for twelve additional African seats in the council went unnoticed.⁵⁹ During the summer of 1952, having greatly increased its membership since its formation in 1948, Mau Mau called for "land for freedom" and intensified its anti-British militant activities. The Kenya government declared a state of emergency and arrested Kenyatta and ninety eight others and KAU was banned. The next seven years were to be filled with arbitrary arrests, beatings and tortures of subjects, unwarranted shootings

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.104.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.110.

and the hoarding of suspects in concentration like conditions to await trial, many of which never took place.⁸⁰

At this time, some Indians were terribly afraid of aligning themselves with the Africans in their political struggle. The entire atmosphere of Kenya was vitiated by repression which the British had launched against the Africans, no Indian was coming out to support the Africans openly. Rare among the few was Pio Gama Pinto who strongly supported African movement and their demands. In 1953 he persuaded the Indian solidarity movements to receive KAU leaders in India and organise rallies in support of Kenyans. It was the time when British were trying to divide Africans on tribal basis⁸¹ and trying to raise puppet leadership for serving their interests. Pio Gama Pinto campaigned for Indian and African unity and gave a call that there was no African or Indian, they were all Kenyans. He also tried to organise meetings for bringing peace in Kenya since the guerrilla war was going on and European atrocious repression was continuing. Pinto took a decisive step in early 1950s. He believed that the (EAINC) East African Indian National Congress's stand on African's course was too moderate to force the colonial governments to change substantially. He mobilized some Indians, who had returned to Kenya after their studies abroad and quit the EAINC. They - Messers Eritz De Souza, Arvind Jamidar, R.B. Bandari, K.P. Shah and Chanan Singh formed the Kenya League. The

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.111.

⁸¹ Kala, n.1, p.218.

League called for the introduction of equal political rights in Kenya for all races.⁸² Pio Gama Pinto could not continue these activities because the British government charged him of instigating the Africans and arrested him.⁸³

Another Indian Apa Bhai Pant, the first Indian High Commissioner for East and Central Africa also tried to bring both communities closer. Within a short time, he arranged weekly outings, including picnics and dances. Since the segregation in hotels and restaurants precluded inter-racial meetings. Pant and his wife Dr. Nalini Devi with his first secretary A.R. Rehman set an example for others to follow. Pant's office and residence became multi-racial forum for discussion of many topics. Pant also arranged Indian scholarships for higher education of Africans in India.⁸⁴ He continued close relationship with Africans during emergency which the Kenyan Government had declared to fight the African revolt. He was implicated by Kenyan administrative authorities of encouraging violence and aiding anti-government armed movement known as Mau Mau. Eventually a document was forged showing that he had encouraged violence, and on the basis of that document, Pant in 1954 was recalled by the Indian government.⁸⁵

Mau Mau movement had tremendous effects. It brought Kenya into the line light the world over and aroused the anti-colonial

⁸² The Weekly Review Nairobi (W) February 24, 1995, p.27.

⁸³ Kala, n.1, p.218.

⁸⁴ Gregory, n.2, pp. 86-87.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.88.

forces in Africa, Britain and in the rest of the world. The Africans raised their voice and exerted pressure on the British government to change its policies.

Anti-Colonial Movement in Other Territories

Indian politics in Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar was somewhat different from politics in Kenya. In these territories political issues never attracted the attention of resident Indians to the same degree - like Kenya, as the number of Europeans settlers was not large there. In 1950 the Indian leaders of Dar es Salaam formed a new political organisation, the Indian Association.⁸⁶ Beginning in 1950 leaders of the Indian Association began to meet frequently with Africans, including Julius Nyerere, an African leader, to consider formation of African political organisations. They helped to institute the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1954 and afterwards to further its progress. Two Indian brothers, Surendra and Randhir Thaker, also devoted their printing works to issuing the TANU weekly Mwafrika and in 1959 established their own newspaper Ngurama (Thunder) as a voice of African independence.⁸⁷

The Indian's involvement in the nationalist movement of Uganda began in 1952 when the Uganda National Congress (UNC) was formed.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Gregory, n.2, pp. 106-107.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.108.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.112.

The Central Council of Indian Associations, the Central Council of Muslim Association and the Kampala Indian Association all sought cooperation with African politicians and supported the Uganda National Congress's general multiracial platform.⁶⁸ In 1958 a group of young Indian intellectuals including Gurdial Singh, Rajat Neogy and Nattoo Karia - known as 'young turks' with Dr. Muljibha Motibhai Patel as their guru formed the Uganda Action group (UAG).⁷⁰ Their principal aim was to explain to the African and the Indian aspirations. And to collectivize and channelize and mobilize both communities for independence. Associating with the more militant Africans, they contributed to Milton Obote's rise and to the breakaway from the UNC in 1959. This led to the founding of Uganda People's Congress (UPC) led by Milton Obote. Later most of the Indians in the Uganda's Action Group, above all Gurdial Singh and Shafiq Arian worked closely with Obote, and the Uganda Action Group supported the Uganda People's Congress's demands for independence under a common roll and universal adult franchise.⁷¹

1959 to 1963 was the era of tremendous changes in East Africa. It had become certain to the Europeans that they could not continue to rule the country without associating the Africans. They accepted the eventuality and agreed for Independent constitution. But the die-hard amongst the Europeans

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.113.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

tried to create regional divisions hoping to protect their interests. Consequently lots of new alignments emerged and broken and re-emerged. Lastly constitutions were finalised for grant of independence to East African territories and by 1983 all East African territories were granted independence.

From various activities of Indians it is clear that politically active Indians wholeheartedly participated in the East African nationalist movements by supporting African leaders. In this period, we see a beautiful picture of Indian and African unity or friendship. It was anti-colonial movement which brought them together on the same platform.

There is no doubt that even though privately most of the Indians had reservations about the capability of the Africans to rule themselves, they were sincere about their public stand and were influenced partly by ideological considerations of equity and justice - partly by a realistic consideration that power must eventually pass into the hands of the majority that is Africans and partly because of their own countries of origin had taken an open stand against the continuation of colonialism.⁷²

⁷² Tandon, n.23, p.77.

Table 3.1 Establishment of Local Asian Political Associations, 1900-48

KENYA			
Mombasa	1900	Thika	1926
Nairobi	1906	Elburgon	1927
Meru	1918	Nanyuki	1928
Machakos	1917	Naivasha	1929
Kisumu	1918	Kyambu	1931
Nakuru	1919	Eastleigh	1932
Kijabe-Masai	1920	Kitale	1932
Lumbwa	1920	Limuru	1933
Kericho	1921	Mariakani	1933
Kikuyu	1921	Kakanega	1934
Lamu	1921	Karatina	1934
Nyeri	1921	Elmenteita	1934
Eldoret	1923	Morogoro	1934
Fort Hall	1924	Thomson's Falls	1948
Gilgil	1924	Embu	1948
TANGANYIKA			
Tanga	1914	Bukoba	1920
Dar es Salaam	1918	Tabora	1921
Moshi	1920	Tanga	1921
Mwanza	1920	Morogoro	1934
UGANDA			
Jinja	1918	Kabale	c. 1930
Kampala	1919	Njoro	1934
Mbale	1919	Mbarara	c. 1934
ZANZIBAR			
Zanzibar Town		1909	

Source: Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality: Asian Politics in East Africa: 1900-1967 (New Delhi, Orient Longman Limited, 1993).

CHAPTER 4

INDIAN'S ROLE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

In this chapter we propose to study the growth of African and Indian working class movements, their struggle against the discriminatory practices of colonial government and their role in the nationalist movement in East Africa. Here an attempt has been made to highlight the close relationship between national liberation movement and working class struggles. These two were interwoven and could not be separated as every struggle of the working class was also struggle against colonial subjugation. Moreover, in addition to the formation of Indian political associations and the development of a Press, (a trade union movement was also organized by Indians and in this way the trade union movement, which served political as well as economic ends, became another common platform for Indians and Africans to fight against colonial rule. We base our discussion on the formulation that "Trade union means an association of workers in one or more occupations - an association carried on mainly for the purpose of protecting and advancing the members economic interest in connection with their daily work".¹

In East Africa trade unions played an additional role of becoming an important factor in the struggle of liberation from

¹. Vijay P. Gupta, 'Problems of Parliamentary Democracy in a multi-Racial Society' (Kenya) (unpublished thesis, University of Delhi), p.240.

colonialism. They also fought for improving the wages and working conditions of labour.

In the formulation, popularization and direction of trade unions, the Indians played a key role. They established the first significant trade unions in East Africa and subsequently they were instrumental in assisting Africans in union organization and development.²

In East Africa, African labour had to bear severe hardships because of the legislation enacted by colonial administration. They had to pay Hut or poll taxes in currency rather than kind which forced them to work mainly for European planters. They were required to work in their home areas without remuneration for several weeks each year on the maintenance of roads and drainage systems. The wages were low, the hours long and the working conditions harsh.³ Indian labour had to face the same type of problems. They had to work without the benefits of a minimum wage. African and Indian workers both had a similar need for labour organization.

Indian and African Labour Unions: 1900-1945

From 1900 to 1912 Africans and Indians remained busy in protesting against discriminatory practices of colonialists and demanding their rights. For this purpose they adopted an

². Robert, G. Gregory, Quest for Equality, (New Delhi, 1993), p.123.

³. Ibid., p.124.

effective tool of strike. In 1914 a week-long strike was launched in Mombasa by Indian railway and Public works Department workers combined with Africans.⁴

The East African Indian National Congress and the affiliated Indian Associations of Nairobi, Mombasa and other centres supported the interests of both Indian and African workers. Indians assisted Africans in the establishment of their political organisations such as young Kikuyu Association and East African Association which was later renamed the Kikuyu Central Association [KCA] which continued to agitate on behalf of African workers along with demanding for political reforms.⁵

Meanwhile, acting apart from these political organisations, Indian and African workers had continued the formation of trade unions as Indian clerical workers established an Indian Civil Servants Association and a Railway Indian Staff Association soon after 1918, and Indian artisans combined to form a Kenya Indian Trade Union in 1934. Africans also constituted their own Kenya African Civil Servants' Association and a Railway African Staff Association and a Kenya African Teachers' union in 1934.⁶

In the 1930s, the trade union movement in East Africa took a new turn under the leadership of Makhan Singh, an Indian Printing Press worker. Consequently, the trade union movement in East African originated under the influence and direct participation

4. Ibid., p.125.

5. Ibid., pp.126-27.

6. Ibid., p.128.

of Indian trade unionists, specifically Makhan Singh.⁷

In 1935 labour Trade Union of Kenya was established by Makhan Singh. It was an attempt of first successful combination of Indians and Africans. The Labour Trade Union of Kenya was the creation mainly of Makhan Singh. Being aware of the plight of Indian and African labour in colonial Kenya, Makhan Singh conceived of reforms through a democratic, non-racial organisation. Early in 1935 he was invited to reorganise the Kenya Indian Labour Trade Union. At a general meeting in April 1935, he transformed it into the Labour Trade Union of Kenya (LTUK). He became the honorary secretary and Gulam Mohamed, a railway employee, the first President. The LTUK was formally constituted in June 1935. A constitution, setting forth the aims and immediate demands was approved and membership was declared open to any worker irrespective of caste, creed or colour.⁸

Two successive newspapers were soon launched - the Kenya worker and the East African Kirti - edited respectively by Makhan Singh and Mota Singh. In march 1937 the LTUK was renamed the Labour Trade Union of East Africa⁹ (LTUEA). Through LTUEA, Makhan Singh attempted to unite African and Indian workers at East African level. This was a difficult task as Indians were identified with the exploiters. In most cases the interests of

7. Vijay Gupta, Kenya: Politics of Independence, (New Delhi, 1981), p.56.

⁸. Gregory, n.2, pp.128-29.

⁹. Ibid., p.130.

the African workers clashed with those of the Indian workers. The Indian-African workers' unity was almost impossible to achieve but credit goes to Makhan Singh who made it possible.¹⁰

In April 1937 all Indian artisans employed in the building works demanded higher wages and to press their demand stopped all works on the new buildings in the towns. African workers were influenced by the struggle of the Indian workers. The Native Affairs Department Annual Report for 1937 recording this change states - "Natives have as yet no organised trade unions but there is no doubt that they took great interest in Indian strikes and not long after they would endeavour to form their own Union".¹¹

This struggle of the Indians helped the African political leaders realise the importance of trade unionism. Soon trade unions were formed. Scattered workers in various industrial and service units were collected and organised under professional umbrellas.¹²

In Tanganyika, local Indians have been credited with influencing the formation in 1937 of the first important labour organisation, the African labour Union (ALU) of Dar es Salaam. An Indian advocate, Ramakrishna Pillai is said to have encouraged and advised the African Labour union leaders in policy, formulation and launching opposition to closer union of East African states that the British government had proposed to

¹⁰. Gupta, n.7, p.59.

¹¹. Ibid.

¹². Ibid.

integrate Tanganyika - a Mandate Territory with its East African possessions.¹³ In Uganda trade union movement as a political as well as economic activity started very late. It was far inferior to its counterpart in Kenya and Tanganyika because of the absence of a settled working and urbanised population.¹⁴

In 1939 Makhan Singh celebrated May Day as workers day of victory. This was the first time that a workers' meeting was held on the Worker's Day. The Kikuyu Central Association President Jesse Kariuki joined the meeting along with African workers. Similarly three months later in July 1939 some of the KCA leaders attended the 3rd conference of the Labour Trade Unions of East Africa. Jesse Kariuki and George K. Ndegwa, Secretary of the KCA were elected members of LTUEA.¹⁵

The most significant development in Kenya Trade Union movement was the August 1939 Mombasa strike. The strike began with the municipality workers for higher wages, and quickly spread to electricity, docks, post and telegraph workers in the town. The strike was sponsored by the LTUEA and supported by the KCA. The LTUEA and the KCA held a solidarity meeting of Indian and African workers in Nairobi. The government used all the high-handed methods to break the strike. One hundred and fifty workers were arrested. However, the strike was a success and

¹³. Gregory, n.2, p.153.

¹⁴. Ibid., p.154.

¹⁵. Gupta, n.7, p.80.

ended in workers' favour.¹⁶

The African working class gained an invaluable experience from the Mombasa strike. It was reflected in the subsequent years' struggle. Mombasa workers provided most militant, bold and far-sighted leaders, capable of leading the working class in uncompromising struggle against imperialism. The cooperation between the Africans and the Indians grew deeper during this period. A British M.P. Fenner Brockway observed - "There is closest cooperation between the leaders of the Indian and African communities and a realisation that they must act together in the interest of both the peoples - because of the close cooperation between the Indian and African communities in Kenya...".¹⁷

The growth of African trade-union movement in any form was beyond the understanding of the Kenya administration. The administrators, then disapproved of strikes, agitations and demonstrations and identified these activities with rebellion punishable with severity. The Labour commissioner expressed his opposition to trade unions - "I am not in favour of trade unions for the natives".¹⁸

The government tried to crush trade unions by arresting all the main trade union leaders. They included Makhan Singh, Jesse

¹⁶. Ibid.

¹⁷. A.S. Kala, The Role of Asians in Kenya's nationalist Movement in R.R. Ramchandani (ed.) India and Africa, (New Delhi, 1980), p.216.

¹⁸. Gupta, n.7, pp.60-61.

Kariuki, George K. Ndegwa and 21 others.¹⁹ These leaders were kept in detention for the entire period of the second world war. But suppressive measures did not change the African aspirations. The workers were on the move and could not be denied their rights indefinitely. During the war period food shortage and increased cost of living arising because of war brought about a series of strikes in 1942 by the railway workers of Mombasa and Nairobi. The railway workers strike gave new strength to trade union movement. The government was forced to extend the minimum wage ordinance from Nairobi to Mombasa, where African trade union movement was beginning to provide a challenge to colonial situation.²⁰

Trade Unions: 1945-60

The trade unions helped in deviating the nationalist movement from taking tribal form. It gained both strength and membership. As Barnet points out there was "a good deal of overlap in both the leadership and ranks and file membership of Kenya's African political trade union movement. Their cross linking---was tending to produce a single movement."²¹ The government reports also referred to the close link of trade unions and political movement. It was stated in 1946-47 Report of the African Affairs Department of Kenya that , "For the first

¹⁹. Ibid., p.61.

²⁰. Ibid.

²¹. Ibid., p.62.

time Africans began to hold meetings, numbering frequently as many as 5000 people, in the open spaces, in the location (African areas)... at first these meetings were concerned chiefly with Labour Conditions of Africans in Nairobi but they gradually became more and more political and concerned principally with conditions outside Nairobi".²²

The Indian-African labour movement was also growing increasingly militant. In mid January 1947 the largest strike took place among Port and Railway workers in Mombasa. The strike action, lasting several days with 15,000 strikers participating, succeeded in producing on the island a complete stoppage of all activities which depended on African workers. This was supported by many influential Africans and Indians, though declared illegal by the colonial authorities. Support for the strike was also echoed in the Press coverage given by several Indian and African newspapers. Haroon Ahmed was sentenced to six months imprisonment for his editorials in the Daily Chronicle expressing criticism of the government's handling of the strike and for his obvious sympathy for the strikers.²³ With the return of Nakhari Singh in August 1947, the trade union movement acquired a radical wing. The Labour Trade Union of East Africa and later the Larger East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC) formed in May 1947 became the nerve centre for the activities of the more militant

²². Ibid.

²³. Ibid., p.95.

Indians.²⁴

The repressive measures failed to weaken the labour movement, although it helped to enhance Makhan Singh's popularity, and inspired a new co-operative venture in union organization. Makhan Singh assumed the EATUC's presidency and Sheth became General Secretary. From the beginning the new co-ordinating organization had five affiliated unions - the LTUEA, Transport and Allied Workers' Union, Tailors and Garment Workers' Union, Typographical Union of Kenya and Shoemaker workmen's Union. Its membership comprising Africans and Indians in these unions, totalled about five thousand.²⁵ Its programme of demands included an eight-hour day and forty-five hour week, a minimum wage, a fortnight's annual local leave with full pay, workmen's compensation, an old-age pension, compulsory and free primary education and inexpensive secondary education, decent housing and abolition of forced labour and of employment of children under age fifteen. Makhan Singh and Sheth administered the EATUC in co-operation with Kubai and other African leaders and began an intensive campaign for Labour and political reforms.²⁶

After several ineffectual attempts to suppress trade union, the government acted authoritatively. In 1949, against vigorous EATUC opposition, it introduced a series of bills and regulations

24. Ibid., p.97.

25. Gregory, n.2, p.130.

26. Ibid.

that required the re-registration of trade unions, permitted deportation of British immigrants and aliens, imposed compulsory trade testing and wage fixing and sanctioned forced labour of the unemployed. The government refused the EATUC's application for registration on the ground that it was not a trade union.²⁷

By 1950 new trade unions were formed, strikes increased and, under Makhan Singh's leadership, trade unionism was tied to nationalism. In the opinion of some scholars the Unions became more strong than political movement. As Rosberg and Nottingham have asserted, the movement by then had become 'a far more militant vehicle for championing African aspirations, than KAU'. It was 'the organizational focus of urban African politics'.²⁸

In May 1950, Makhan Singh and Fred Kubai were arrested, EATUC files were confiscated and office was sealed. The charges were that the two leaders were officials of an unregistered trade union and that Makhan Singh was an undesirable immigrant subject to restriction under the new deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) ordinance.²⁹ Immediately after the arrest, the remaining union leaders met and decided to call a general strike and for that purpose a strike committee was set with Chege Kiburu as acting President of the EATUC and Mwangi Macharia as acting General Secretary. Their demands included not only the release of Makhan Singh, Kubai and Kibachia but also a minimum wage of

²⁷. Ibid., p.139.

²⁸. Ibid.

²⁹. Ibid., pp.139-140.

Shs.100 and independence for the East African territories. The strike which began as planned in Nairobi and spread to Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu, Thiko, Nyeri, Nanyuki and even to remote centres such as Kisii, grew to immense proportion.³⁰ Following the strike the EATUC and its leaders were suppressed through a combination of covert decision and administrative order. In a trial without jury the EATUC was redefined as a trade union, and Makhan Singh and Kubai were found guilty of leading an unregistered union and fined Shs-110 each. Kubai was then released but Makhan Singh, under the second charge of being undesirable immigrant, was served with a restriction order by the Acting Governor. For the next eleven years, until October 1981, he was to be detained in remote out posts near the Ethiopian border. Kiburu was sentenced to twelve months in prison, while Macharia was given eleven months hard labour followed by restrictions. The EATUC was deprived of leadership and could no longer exist.³¹

Following the banning of the East African Trade Union Congress and arrest of its leaders, the world Federation of Trade Union lodged a complaint with the International Labour Organisation.³² Due to International pressure Kenya Government permitted the formation of Central Organization Unions. All trade unions were affiliated to Kenya Federation of Registered

³⁰. Ibid., p.140.

³¹. Ibid.

³². Gupta, n.7, p.89.

Trade Union (KFRTU). The KFRTU was formed in June 1957 under the Presidentship of Mushegi Karanja General Secretary Aggrey Minya and Treasurer S. Osore.³³

During emergency period 1952-62 the trade union movement made new progress and continued to play an important role. The KFRTU changed its name to Kenya Federation of Labour in 1953. It provided a unity forum for carrying forward the independence struggle. The Kenya Federation Labour filled political gap created by the banning of Kenya African Union.³⁴

At this time Pio Gama Pinto another Indian leader was working with other Africans in trying to revitalize the labour movement. Although Pinto continued to work for labour, he became increasingly involved with journalism and the freedom fighters and their families. It was because of these other activities that Pinto was arrested in 1954 under operation Anvie and then detained until October 1959.³⁵

In 1960 Pio Game Pinto and in 1961 Makhan Singh both were released. But there was split in the KFL as some members blamed that this organisation was working for the benefit of a few individuals and not for the workers. In this way trade union movement could not exert the same influence as it was capable in doing earlier.³⁶

³³. Ibid.

³⁴. Ibid., p.70.

³⁵. Gregory, n.2, p.150.

³⁶. Gupta, n.7, p.75.

Trade union movement in East Africa did not confine only to the economic boundaries but became an influential force in boosting nationalist movement. It crossed all boundaries which were creating differences between India and Africa as well as among Africans themselves. Trade unions comprised its members from every corner of society. While demanding for labourer's rights, it also voiced against colonial administration. Thus along with Trade union movement, the National movement became stronger and in this course Indians played a very important role. It was owing to the cooperation of both communities that Europeans had to surrender. Among the Indian leaders, the most outstanding and devoted trade union leader was Makhan Singh who really without any self interest worked for the welfare of only labour community and did not separate this community on the basis of colour or race.

CHAPTER 5

INDIANS IN INDEPENDENT EAST AFRICA

Indian involvement in anti-colonial struggles in East Africa was limited to certain individuals. Very few Indians suffered together in jail. Very few of them ever marched together in rallies or protests. The Indians and Africans had little social contact. They lived separately in separate areas. The colour bar practices did not permit them to join same clubs or entertainment organizations. Even on happy or sad occasions like marriage or death inter-racial gatherings were non-existent. After independence some Indians tried to be friend Africans. The later were invited to drinks or dinners hoping to gain favours or associate them in partnership or joint commercial or industrial ventures. Since Indians held middle level jobs the Africans demanded Africanization to enable them as excess to higher rungs of the economic ladder. This created an atmosphere of distrust. The next course of the demand for Africanisation was general deprivation of Africans. They demanded more openings for them. In the background of these demands was the pre-independence era.

In order to understand the reasons which have been responsible for creating differences between Indians and Africans, we have to go back to pre-independence period. During that period certain aspects of socio-economic changes took place that widened the gap between Indians and Africans and extended the arena of conflict between the two. Indian population nearly

doubled between 1948 and 1983 because of two reasons - immigration and natural process - and almost the whole of this increase was absorbed in the urban areas, especially in the capitals of the three countries. This happened because of the ban in Kenya and Uganda on the non-Africans buying land in agricultural areas and partly because of Indian's inability to find employment and business opportunities any where except in the towns.¹

This urban-centered life affected the conduct of the Indians indirectly. It made them socially more exclusive and economically less dependent on other races and secondly, gave an "Indian look" to all major cities in East Africa.² At the same time, Africans began migrating to the towns in ever large number in search of gainful employment. The standard of living of the Indians had risen to a level much higher than that of the standard of living of the Africans. As an Indian leader, A.B. Patel observes "I can say, that, within my experience of the last twenty years in this country, the average standard of living of the Indian had risen much higher than it was when I came to this country...".³ An ever-growing number of unemployed Africans crowded the cities, where they found prosperous Indians. The domination of the Indians in business and commerce frightened the up-and-coming

¹ Anirudha Gupta, The Asians in East Africa: Problems and Prospects, International Studies, 1968-69, p.278.

² Ibid., p.276.

³ J.S. Mangat, A History of the Asians in East Africa c1886 to 1945, (London, 1969), pp. 140-41.

African businessmen.⁴

At the same time colonial government initiated certain schemes for educational development and Indians being mostly in the towns benefitted more than others. Educated Indians easily captured middle grade jobs of the government, railway and postal system.

Indians employed in both government and private sectors increased and average earning of the Indians went up and in 1962 it was eight times more than the average earning of the Africans.⁵ On the other hand though the number of the African children at the primary level also increased tremendously, but for want of funds and resources, very few of them could go in for higher education. In the employment market, therefore, the Africans could aspire only for low-level jobs.⁶ The Indians in the public service aroused the envy of the educated Africans, and the competition between the Africans and Indians took an unpleasant turn.

Such type of amicable relationship which grew between Indians and Africans was colonial legacy. They had not been achieved by a concerted attempt on the part of the Indians to exploit the resources of Kenya through political pressure or underhand dealings. They were the inevitable result of the circumstances in which the Indian community initially came to

⁴ Gupta, n.1, p.278.

⁵ Ibid., p.277.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 277-78.

East Africa.⁷

Africans considered Indians as a hindrance to their advancement. In the late fifties it became clear to the Africans that the Europeans would quit sooner or later, and that it was the Indian that constituted a long-term problem. Hence, the African attitude towards Indians became untrend. One could notice a general resentment of Africans towards Indians and a hostility in their tone and manner reflecting a desire to attain the privileges which the settlers community had enjoyed their interest clashed more with Indians since most of the petty trades were occupied by Indians or Asians as the Europeans remained either as whole sellers big planters or chief administrators. There is no evidence of expression of violence in this hostility but the demand for Africanisation certainly included assignments of those positions to Africans which Indians occupied. This was also regarding dukawallas as well as residential areas.

After independence, the Africans widely resented the nature of the economic order in which they were placed at the lowest step of economic ladder. Africans expected from their nationalist governments to provide Africanisation. That implied not only doing away the racial structuring of society but also active and positive policy to promote African interests and African advancement to provide sufficient scope for their vertical mobility - a ladder with sufficiency of steps to take care of

⁷ Rajdeep Sardesai, Foreign Affairs, Times of India, (New Delhi), 26 September, 1989.

their smooth upward movement.⁸

Before independence African leaders were busy in assuring Indians for the protection of their rights in free independent East Africans as for example Jomo Kenyatta, an East African leader, appealed to all Indians living in Kenya to unite with Africans which would help in speeding up the fight for independence. He assured Indians that it would be the responsibility of African leaders in free Kenya to protect the interests of all citizens irrespective of racial differences. He was confident that Africans would not shirk their responsibility in this regard.⁹

Mr. S.C. Gautam, President of the Kenya Indian Congress agreeing with Kenyatta told Indians that they had nothing to fear in an independent Kenya.¹⁰

Tom Mboya, General Secretary of KANU, stated the similar view - "a future African government wants their (Indians) presence in the country to play a part not only in commerce and industry but in other walks of life too".¹¹

The African leaders, on the one hand committed themselves to protection of Indian rights but on the other they also had to

⁸ Prakash C. Jain, Racial discrimination against overseas Indians, (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 182-83.

⁹ Indian outside India, Indian Review, Vol.62 (1981), p. 326. [Madras]

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Aloo, J. Dastur, India and Indians overseas with special reference to East Africa, in Anirudha Gupta, ed, Indians Abroad, Asia & Africa, (New Delhi, 1971), p. 330.

safeguard the interest of Africans so that a lot of the majority could be improved. The Independent governments faced a dilemma they neither wanted to expel the Indians fearing a breakdown of economy (as it later on happened in Uganda) nor they wanted open rebellions by the Africans who wanted a share in the economic, political and social spheres.

It was the fact that Indians were in the middle level and the Africans at the bottom in all meaningful sectors of economy, polity and administration. The need was to change the old structure and introduce a new formation by creating a non-discriminatory, non-racial structure.

This meant Africanisation to upgrade the Africans and de-Indianisation of some of the privilege sectors to allow the Africans to move into the vacated positions.

In view of Africans pressures and also leaders earlier commitments, governments of three East African countries took up steps to change the racial characteristics of the polity or economy and thus launched a regulated and phased programme for ending discrimination against the Africans. They followed a policy of comprehensive change towards reconstructing the society. This involved reallocation of the traditional roles of the different communities and of generating greater social and economic mobility of the Africans.¹²

East African governments subscribed to Africanisation to

¹² Vijay Gupta, Kenya: Politics of Independence, (New Delhi, 1981), p.159.

place the matters of state and business firmly in the hands of African citizens. Some Indians objected to it and asked for "Kenyanization", "Ugandanization" and "Tanzanization" in order to safeguard themselves. Since the intentions behind Africanisation were really democratic, it did not matter what term was used.¹³ As one African Economist puts it - "whenever a minority group controls more resources than other groups, emotions tend to domestic reality".¹⁴

Since the policy of Africanization aimed to effectively eliminate Indian traders, the Trade Licensing and Immigration Acts of the Independent Kenyan government placed obstacles in the way of Indian enterprise.¹⁵

Economic pressures came to be applied on Indians in the form of forced retirement from railways, government service and compulsory repatriation. In Kenya, there was rapid Africanisation of jobs that resulted in throwing hundreds of Indians out of jobs.¹⁶

Africans alleged that the skills and training which Africans had acquired from Indian business firms, had been the by-product of their employment with the latter rather than the result of a

¹³ Yash Tandon, Political Problems of Indians in East Africa, n.11, p.215.

¹⁴ Rajdeep Sardesai, Times of India, New Delhi, 26 Sept. 1989.

¹⁵ Frank, Furedi, "The Development of Anti-Asian opinion among Africans in Nakuru District, Kenya", Journal of African Affairs, (Oxford), Vol.73, no. 292, (1974), p.357.

¹⁶ Dastur, n.11, p.330.

conscious attempt to promote the economic position of Africans. As most of the Indian firms were small, essentially family concerns, in many cases the employment of Africans in 'responsible' positions would have meant a loss of jobs for some members of the family.¹⁷ In the face of pressure from African leaders, some Indians started business in partnership with Africans. Towards the end of 1964 the (Indians) Dar-es-Salaam Merchants Chamber announced a comprehensive scheme to accelerate the participation of Africans in the commercial and industrial sectors of the economy, through loans, partnership and training in commercial techniques.¹⁸

From the very day of independence the issue of citizenship also became a question before Indians. Since Uhuru, (Independence) most of the Africans almost automatically ceased to hold British passports and opted out for the citizenship of their respective countries. Indian and other settlers were however asked to opt for either of the three citizenship -

1. Kenya, Uganda or Tanzania citizenship
2. British citizenship/subjects
3. India or Pakistan citizenship

Most of the Indians did not opt for citizenship of countries of their origin or settlement instead chose to be British subjects.

¹⁷ Dharam P. Ghai and Yash P. Ghai, "Asians in East Africa, Problems and Prospects", Journal of Modern African Studies, vol.3, no.1, (1965), p.42.

¹⁸ Ibid.

They had been blamed for showing lack of respect for the newly independent countries by seeking British nationality. Those Indians who applied for the citizenship of East African countries faced a strange silence of the East African governments over their applications for citizenship and, at the same time the African governments gave the impression that the Indians were unwilling to accept their citizenship.¹⁹

Tom Mboya, Kenya's Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, criticised Indians for not taking up Kenya's citizenship. He said that their behaviour was stupid and warned them to change their attitude and help Africans in nation building tasks.²⁰

Fritz deSouza, an Indian legislator and Deputy Speaker demanded to know in Parliament - "I think it is only fair for the government to change the constitution, if it does not intend to abide by the constitution, but not, at the same time, on the one hand, to accuse these people and say, "you Indians and Europeans did not apply for citizenship, it shows disloyalty", etc., something I have hearted stated so often in this House, and, on the other hand, when people have applied to say, "No, no, we are not going to give you citizenship because we do not like you". Now, which is it? Are we accusing them for applying and saying

¹⁹ Gupta, n.1, pp. 280-81.

²⁰ Indians Outside India, Indian Review, vol. 83, 1964, p. 447. [Madras]

that we do not want to give it to them".²¹

Mr. Kantilal Purushotham Patel, a former Indian Manager of a drive-in-cinema in Nairobi, who was deported from Kenya for his failure to exhibit the Kenya government documentary "Kenya Becomes a Nation" on the Jomo Kenyatta Day explored the fact that the action of the government was a complete negation of fair play and justice...²² Mr. Patel said that Indians living in Kenya were under the constant threat of being sent out from that country if they suffered the anger of official dom on a flimsy issue.²³ Mr. Kantilal Patel who was born in Mombasa and who lived there for 19 years, indicated that "although the present government was claiming democratic principles, in actual practice it was dictatorial". The local population was anti-Indian in its deeds and raised the cry that Indians were the exploiters of the Kenyans for ages and that they had to bequeath whatever they had for the economic well being of Kenya.²⁴

Both Kenya and Tanzania made things difficult for the Indians. The Kenya Citizenship Bill of November 1963 did not confer citizenship even on those who qualified automatically, they were required to take an oath renouncing their previous citizenship, they could even be deprived of it, if they worked

²¹ Gupta, n.1, p.281.

²² Indians Outside India, Indian Review, vol.63, 1964, p.503. [Madras]

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

against Kenya's interest.²⁵ In Tanzania immediately after independence, there was considerable hostility, even at the parliamentary level, to permitting the Indians to sit in parliament and enrol as members of the TANU.²⁶

Such type of government attitude created naturally a great confusion in the minds of the Indians. The Indians believed, therefore that in times of uncertainty a British passport would protect them like "an insurance policy".²⁷ Apart from security purpose another reason of holding British passport on the part of Indians was economic. In the United Kingdom, the level of earning was good. Opportunities for advance to senior jobs were rare but employment was available for everyone willing to work. Any reduction in earnings was made up by the cheap medical and educational facilities. Migration of Indian artisans to the United Kingdom always meant a large increase in earnings. An artisan in Kenya, for example, might earn £ 50 a month. The greatest attraction of the United Kingdom was that children would receive education at British universities.²⁸

Indian community was widely criticised for exporting capital. This probably was due to widespread fears of a breakdown of law and order in East African countries, leading to crisis of

²⁵ Dastur, n.11, p.330.

²⁶ Yash Tandon, A Political Survey, in Dharam P. Ghai, ed. Portrait of a Minority Asians in East Africa, (London, 1965), p.83.

²⁷ Gupta, n.1, pp. 281-82.

²⁸ Singh, n.11, p.183.

confidence among the immigrant communities, and a fall in domestic investment and a large outflow of capital abroad.²⁹

A story was frequently told in East Africa of Indian shop keeper who kept three sets of account books - one for the taxmen, one for the family and one locked away in a safe to which the proprietor alone had access. It was meant to convey the impression of dishonesty and reflected a widely held view that the Indian businessmen in Africa was a crafty schemer to whom money was all important.³⁰

The Indian patriotism was challend and instances as follows were cited. For instance it was stated that an Indian with British citizenship was operating a textile mill in Tanzania while he and his family were based in Kenya. His sons were Kenyas with their book accounts allegedly in the UK. They blaned Indians for sending money first to U.K. and from there to India.³¹

The Indians did not feel secure and instead of using their profits consolidate their economic base in independent East Africa they looked for ways to get their capital out of the country.

Norman N. Miller in his Book "Kenya - The Quest for Prosperity" stated that while the process to 'Africanize' Kenya

²⁹ Anonymous authors, Independent Kenya, (Britain, 1982), p.42.

³⁰ Guardian (London), 12 Aug. 1982.

³¹ Financial Express, (Bombay), 30 July 1975.

was going on, Indian tradesmen became the targets of politicians. The main purpose was to exclude Indians who did not hold Kenyan citizenship from trade license renewals.³²

Even Kenya African Democratic Union which initially professed to be pro Indian, later on changed its attitude towards Indians. The Party's Secretary General Martin Shikuku, speaking on an Industrial Development Bill on the floor of the House of Representatives at Nairobi stressed the need for removing Indians from the country's commercial field.³³ Shikuku told the House that 'machinery should be set up to buy out large Indian business firms and make them available to Africans, he added - although Kenya had achieved political independence, the meaning of Uhuru would not be apparent to the ordinary African until he had seen changes in the country's economic life.³⁴

Among the East African nations Kenya was the foremost in encouraging African entrepreneurship under the leadership of Kenyatta. President Jomo Kenyatta told the nation that Indians would be regarded as number three citizens in Kenya. He gave the whites position number four, Africans on the top, followed by Arabs as number two.³⁵

In 1967 Kenya passed a legislation requiring citizenship for

³² Norman N. Miller, Kenya - The Quest for Prosperity, (USA, 1984), p.47.

³³ Haraprasad, Chattopadhyaya, Indians in Africa, (Calcutta, 1970), p.432.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Financial Express (Bombay), 18 July 1975.

employment and the conduct of business. All non-citizens had to apply for re-entry permits and dependents' passes. Greatly increasing the Indian's insecurity, the laws prompted an exodus from Kenya beginning in December 1967.³⁶ In subsequent years the non-citizens failed to obtain trading licenses and work permits and many who applied for citizenship met delays and obstacles. A large number of those who remained in business were served quit notices and their premises were assigned to Africans.³⁷

In Tanzania, among the drastic changes announced in the Arusha Declaration was a programme of nationalization in which the government assumed either total ownership of or a majority interest in the principal instrument of production. The programme affected Indians in all sectors of the economy.³⁸ In addition to taking over the key industries, mining and processing of agricultural produce, the government nationalised banking, insurance and a large portion of the import-export business. The aim, attained through a gradual increase of government participation, was a complete socialization of the economy.³⁹ The result was a rapid decline of private business affecting Indians. Although President Nyerere professed attachment to a

³⁶ Robert G. Gregory, Quest for Equality. Asian Politics in East Africa, 1900-1967, (New Delhi, 1993), p. 99.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p.111.

³⁹ Ibid.

non-racial policy, his efforts to eliminate the middle class had racial implications. Indian shops all over Tanzania were closed.⁴⁰

Indians residing in Zanzibar also faced similar treatment as their brothers were facing in the rest of East Africa and this process continued even after its union with Tanganyika.⁴¹

In Tanzania in 1967 pressures mounted on the Indians and several who had been away for a short time were not allowed to return without entry permits, others were expelled for one reason or other.⁴²

In Uganda, the same process was going on. After independence the Uganda Indians quickly disappeared from the mainstream of politics. Initially, while encouraging African businessmen, President Obote emphasized cooperatives much to the damage of independent Indian business. By 1966, for instance, marketing cooperatives were being allocated 75 percent of the cotton crop. In 1967 after introducing a new constitution which vested power in the office of the President, Obote intensified the take-over of commercial and industrial concerns.⁴³

In early 1969 the Uganda Parliament passed two Acts, The

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ For further detail see - Indians Outside India, Indian Review, vol.64, 1965, p.207. 200 Indians were not given payment of pensions who had served the former British administration there. Even grant of £400,000 was made by Britain to Tanzania to help payment of pensions to retired Indian civil servants.

⁴² Dastur, n.11, p.331.

⁴³ Gregory, n.36, p.114.

Immigration Act and The Trade Licensing Act, which regulated the scope and activities of the non-citizens in Uganda.' By the Immigration Act, they had to apply for new entry permits or certificates of residence and secure these within six months. This provided government an opportunity to decide who would stay in Uganda, and for how long, and in what line of business.⁴⁴ For those who were given permits to stay, had to apply for the Trade Licensing Act. This Act aimed at controlling the area range of commercial activity of non-citizens.⁴⁵

It allowed the government to declare areas where non-citizens might not trade, and it placed specific commodities on a schedule for African trading to be distributed through a National Trading Corporation. The idea was to Africanize the country's economy.⁴⁶

In the words of Bert N. Adams - "Beginning in the 1960's, the pressures upon them increased under the new independent African governments. Through work permit legislation and the Trade Licensing Act, as well as propaganda, the position of the Indians deteriorated as the africans began to implement the growing sentiment of "Africa for Africans", the Indians with their highly visible role in the Ugandan economy, were ready

⁴⁴ Tandon, n.13, p.216.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.217.

targets for such sentiments and legislation.⁴⁷

Realizing that the economy was still dependent on the Indians, Obote nationalized many of the larger companies and negotiated with the leading traders and manufacturers with the result that none had to yield a 60 percent share to the government.⁴⁸ His measures to drive the Indians from the import-export and whole-sale trading were permitted to remain ineffective, and The Trade Licensing Act proved as severe a hardship for the aspiring African businessman as for the Indian traders. When he perceived that many Indians were leaving the country, Obote announced that he was considering of granting citizenship and hence the right to trade.⁴⁹ The contradictions between his policies and actions created widespread unrest, increased African resentment against the Indians and became one of the causes of the military coup of January 1971.⁵⁰

When Idi Amin toppled the regime of Milton Obote with the assistance of a comparatively small section of the Ugandan armed forces, some Indians welcomed this particular transfer of power because according to them they felt to be harassed to a great

⁴⁷ Bert N. Adams, The Kin Network and the Adjustment of the Ugandan Asians, Journal of Marriage and Family, vol.36 (Feb. 1974), p.190.

⁴⁸ Gregory, n.36, p.115.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

extent through Obote's Immigration and The Trade Licensing Acts.⁵¹

Idi Amin found Indian commercial community as a hurdle to the African advancement. The educated Africans were resenting against Indians who were holding junior and middle level clerical and technical posts in the public and private sectors.⁵²

When the colonial administration handed over power to the independent Uganda government in 1962, European officers ceased to be a barrier to African advancement. Most Indian civil servants, however, only exchanged masters and were seen as a legacy and a reminder of the unhappy African days in the Ugandan civil service.⁵³

The Indians came under the criticism from the Africans for exploitation on two grounds as employers and as middlemen in commerce. An African alleged - "Indians in industries are more apt to keep to their own caste whether they are qualified fitters, mechanics or electrical engineers and others of Ugandan origin, Indian employer would underemploy Ugandans at Shs 400 per month, while an illiterate Indian artisan or mechanic would draw Shs 2,000 or more a month."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Michael, Twaddle, ed. Expulsion of a Minority. Essays on Ugandan Asians, (London, 1975), p.8.

⁵² Nizar, Motani, The Ugandan Civil Service and the Asian Problem, 1892-1972, n.51, p.102.

⁵³ Ibid., p.104.

⁵⁴ Dent, Ocaya, Lakidi, Black Attitudes to the Brown and White Colonizers of East Africa, n.51, p.90.

According to Yash Tandon - "Economic separatism of the Indians in East Africa is more justly under attack than their cultural antiquities. An Indian's love for sitar rather than Kinanda and his habit of taking his family for a stroll round the bazaars of Kampala in the evening rather than joining his friends for a chat in the bar are cultural antiquities that irritate others. His economic exclusiveness, on the other hand, by which he will not only have to take an African into his business but also build a network of trade relations with his fellow Indians has dangerous consequences".⁵⁵

Indians were also criticised for their social exclusiveness as stated above. Africans alleged that their life evolved around Hindi video films, religious ceremonies and family gatherings and inter caste marriages were not permitted among Indians. The isolation of the Indian community was the product of its rigid communal and caste traditions. While the caste system as such could not operate in East Africa, the social mobility of the individual continued to be influenced by considerations of caste and creed.⁵⁶

Another reason of the isolation of Indians with Africans was that most black Africans had such a low opinion of Indians that they did not want to associate too closely with them. For example, if a black girl was going around with an Indian, she was considered of loose character. She became loose, a prostitute,

⁵⁵ Tandon, n.13, p.219.

⁵⁶ Mangat, n.3, p.141.

ought to mean that she was already written off as far as being a proper member of the African community was concerned ... By going with an Indian she was seen to be sinking even lower than the lowest African could go. Thus for a 'clean' or good African girl to marry Indian was just unimaginable.⁵⁷

This desire to remain culturally isolated from African society was one of the main weapons used by former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin to gather support for his decision to expel the Indians from his country in 1972.⁵⁸

Thus being charged of economic exploitation and social exclusiveness, Indians were expelled from Uganda. At the time of expulsion, Indians were controlling some 80 percent of the retail trade and most of the country's industries. But after the expulsion of Indians, Uganda faced economic crisis. The physical removal, instead of replacement of Indians by a trained African manpower had adverse effects on the economy. The considerable loss of skilled man power led to a reduction in the operating efficiency of large parts of the economy. The manufacturing output declined, public finance on the revenue side fell.⁵⁹

The factories were completely starved of spare parts and no attention was paid to new machinery infrastructure. The total neglect of the transport system nearly stopped all movement.

⁵⁷ Lakidi, n.54, p.96.

⁵⁸ Rajdeep Sardesai, Foreign Affairs, Times of India (New Delhi), 28th Sept. 1989.

⁵⁹ Vijay Gupta, Obote Second Liberation, (New Delhi, 1983), p.102.

There was total chaos and the economy nearly collapsed. The Ugandan Shilling lost its value, inflation sky rocketed, essential commodities like sugar, oil, butter and bread disappeared from the markets and corruption became widespread.⁸⁰

Having seen the result of the expulsion of Indians from Uganda, Daniel arap Moi government did not adopt or encourage Idi Amin style racist attitudes to solve its social and economic problems while there was discontent among Kenyan legislators against Indian dominance or the economy. A heated debate on the subject was sparked off by Mr. C. Muthura, M.P. who wanted to know when the commerce ministry would Africanise the post of director of external trade, held by a Kenyan of Indian origin.⁸¹ Mr. Eliud Nwamunga, the Commerce Minister, told the second session of the Nyogo Parliament that Kenyan of non-African origin were citizens of the country and as such there were no laws to prevent them from doing business.⁸²

In 1982, army made an attempt to take over power and for this purpose, an aborted coup was planned against Arap Moi. The loyalist forces had to work for three days to suppress anti government elements and during these days there was a riot, loot or rape cases in Nairobi, causing harm to traders and residents of a particular areas. Since the Indians were in majority in

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.103.

⁸¹ Times of India (New Delhi), 11 May 1981.

⁸² Ibid.

these areas, they became the victim. It is alleged that this was an anti-Indian riot but it was not true.⁸³

The Moi government though sympathetic towards Indians indicated that it would be harsh to greedy businessmen. This was taken to mean Indian businessmen.

In one case four Kenyan Indians were taken into custody on charges of failing to remit Kenyan Shillings 485 million in foreign exchange to the government. In another case another Indian businessmen and four officials of the customs and excise Department were remanded in custody on charges of conspiring to defraud the government of more than shs 19 million.⁸⁴

A controversy sparked off in the local press when Indian and African contributors gave their views on interracial attitudes in Kenya. All this started from the statement of a Gujarati girl who demanded that Hindu parents should give freedom of movement to their young girls.⁸⁵ This controversy took a serious turn when some Hindu ladies in a joint letter said that they (Hindus) were from the "Holy race" and, hence, they would not mix up with the sinners of other races. Then very hitting and befitting replies were given by the African correspondents who said that "Pack and Leave" was the right answers to those who thought they would not integrate themselves into African society because they

⁸³ Vijay Gupta, Kenya Coup: Who Benefits? Mainstream, 21st August 1982.

⁸⁴ Chander Mehra, Four Kenyan Indians remanded, The Statesman (New Delhi), 30th Sept., 1987.

⁸⁵ Financial Express (Bombay), 10th Octo., 1974.

were "holy".⁶⁶

But such type of incidents did not affect rest of the members of Indian community. President Daniel arap Moi himself said that the government crackdown was not meant to discriminate against any single community and that most of the Indians in Kenya were good law-abiding citizens while only a few of them were crooks who were indulging in illegal deals. He warned the Aga Khan owned Nation (newspaper) against publishing reports and which were contrary to the aspirations of the Kenyans.⁶⁷

In Uganda, Africans came to know the importance of Indians after they were pushed out of the country. Like President Obote, President Yoweri Museveni after coming to powers in 1986, appealed to Indians expelled during Idi Amin's regime to come back and reclaim their property. During his tour to India in 1993, President Museveni apologised for the agony caused to the Indian community. Many Indians have since returned to Uganda and are in the reconstruction process.⁶⁸

Indian businessmen and skilled personnel who fled to countries like Canada, Britain and the U.S. are now injecting a fresh vitality into the economy. Following the liberation of trade in foreign exchange in 1990, now many Indian shops line Kampala streets and other major towns setting, buying and transferring millions of dollars worth in international

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Mehra, n.63.

⁶⁸ The Observer, (London), 7th July, 1993.

currencies weekly.⁸⁸

During the period of transition in East African countries, Indians played political role. They joined political parties and were elected to parliament. They were appointed ministers, ambassadors, representatives of government, judges, civil servants, police officers, professors etc., but they were not accorded the same position which they were hoping before independence.

From the whole discussion we come to the conclusion that during post independence period Indians were faced with dilemma of living exclusively as immigrants or mixing with Africans as citizens in all the three East African territories. The reason of this was the independent African Governments were compelled to follow policy of Africanization either by allotting or reserving certain places for Africans or by practicing nationalization of industry, business, services and also by citizenship laws which created conditions unfavourable to Indians. There grew a feeling of harassment amongst the Indians and of combined exploitation of Indians by Africans. To some extent, Indians have contributed to their own plight by not making their effort to associate with Africans.

The feeling of Africans were once expressed by President Idi Amin who told those Indians who had the courage to remain behind after the expulsion, "This is the spirit of the second Republic of Uganda. If you had done like that long ago, what is happening

⁸⁸ Ibid.

now (referring to the Expulsion) would not have happened. You must now come out and identify yourselves with Ugandan Africans. You must go with them and stop isolating yourself... I want to see Africans marrying Indians and vice-versa. I will attend those weddings myself".⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Lakidi, n.54.p.98.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

In this study, we have discussed the relationship of Indians with Africans in East Africa along with their social, economic, political and educational status. (Indians had contacts with East Africa centuries before the Europeans reached the coast. From the available historical record, it is known that Indians had cordial relations with the indigenous people centuries before.) They had growing trade with them. Indian skilled personnel i.e. sailors, navigators, traders and administrators were engaged by the East African entrepreneurs. East Africa exported goods to India such as ivory, gold, iron, gem, horns and copra etc. India also supplied cloth, species, perfume and probably some brass and copper utensils. Indian ships visited east coast for this purpose over the centuries. Indians became very closely associated with the Africans and Arabs who were residing on the coast. As in Zanzibar Indian traders met special treatment during the period of king Sayyid Said. Being encouraged by king, most of Indian traders settled in Zanzibar and their number grew gradually. These traders financially assisted King and other Arabs, moreover they were controlling custom houses. Thus at that time East African economy was dominated by Indians.

During the later half of the 19th century the Britishers in order to establish their imperial hegemony occupied Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar i.e. countries in the east of Suez (canal connecting Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea for the purpose of shipping). With this began their colonial activities in East

African and its interior land. Besides serving their strategic interests colonisation also helped the Britishers in establishing new sources of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods.

Around the same time Germans occupied Brundi, Rwanda and Tanganyika. This annexation helped them to carry on commercial activities in these countries and they invited or encouraged Europeans as settlers. They faced the problem of labour for their farms as African labour was not willing to take up employment in European farms. The British government encouraged recruitment of Indian labourers in East Africa and most of the Indian labour was recruited for the purpose of constructing Kenya-Uganda railway. This project was started in 1896 and completed in 1902. While a large number of Indians returned home after its completion, some decided to stay back and get involved in trading. Relatives and friends of those Indians who had been to East Africa, migrated there after the railway had opened opportunities for trade or other professions. At the same time European settlers were also encouraged to come and settle in East Africa by British administrators.

The European settlers demanded the division of the society in segregated ethnic groups. Complying with the demands of European settlers, stratification of the society was done by British administrators. Thus the Europeans were accorded upper most class level. Indians became middle class while the Africans remained at the bottom. Britishers very cleverly followed its old policy of "divide and rule".

The organisation of East African society was constituted in such a way that it led to the separation of Indians and Africans and their relationship remained confined to economic activities as shopkeeper-customer or masters and servants. Such type of relationship did not bring them closer. The commercial sector, from small "duka" keeping to large-scale merchanting, was dominated by the Indians. The Africans were used to bring their produce to the Indian traders for resale in the larger urban markets. The Africans did not face the customers who bought their products from the Indian shopkeepers and therefore they thought that Indians were cheating them and were enjoying great profit at their expense. African customers also blamed Indians for using short weight, providing misleading information, overcharging, practice of bargaining in Indian shops, or any number of other ways by which customers felt themselves cheated. The settlements of Indians in trade and industry had important consequences in their relations with Africans. Early schemes of residential racial segregation had kept Africans out of the main centres of commercial development of the urban centres. Indians being in towns availed opportunities of education which Africans could not take up. Being educated, Indians also occupied a number of middle ranks in government departments which Africans were unable to get. Consequently, Africans remained behind Indians in this field also.

In the political field also Indians were given some rights which were not granted to Africans for instance as early as 1908

Jeevanji, an Indian settler became a member of the legislative council of Kenya. All this created more antagonism than the feeling of friendliness and fellowship.

Whether as traders, shopkeepers or agriculturalists, the Indians in East Africa contributed a great deal to the well being of the territories. They also suffered the anti-Indian measures of the Europeans. The Europeans projected the Indians as 'merciless' exploiters of the Africans. The purpose of this projection was to deny Indians equal rights with them. Like the Africans, the Indians also had to face the resentment of Europeans. Thus during the anti-colonial struggle both India and Africa communities came forward to oppose their common enemy overlooking their differences. There are definite proofs to show that Indian community had full sympathy with the national aspirations of the Africans. It was with the Indian help that Harry Thuku's young Kikuyu Association could print and distribute leaflets inciting a crusade against the British government. A young Indian journalist, Pio Gama Pinto, identified himself with all the African demands for social and political rights and suffered imprisonment. An Indian trade union leader, Makhan Singh, was associated with the workers and was the founder of the East Africa Trade Union Congress. The Kenya freedom party which fought for Kenya's freedom was founded with Indian support. Its leader was an Indian, Chanan Singh. The Indians in Uganda and Tanganyika had full sympathy with the Africans in their struggle for freedom.

Sometimes we get an impression that most of the Indians supported the Africans only in so far as that helped the Indian cause. We can not deny the fact that early political activity was motivated with self-interest. If it had not been for the Indians in Kenya there was real danger that white settlers would have taken the full control of Kenya as happened in Southern Rhodesia. When the European settlers were consolidating their position in East Africa it was the Indian who challenged their supremacy. These early efforts of Indians resulted in British Government white paper of 1923 on Indian Question. The political struggle which till then was confined to Indians and Europeans, became three-cornered, the Africans emerging out as the major contenders in the power struggle against the British colonial rule. Indians joined hand with the Africans in their struggle. Some did it in order to avoid any clash with the Africans, Indians cooperated with the Africans and helped them in their cause because they believed in the elimination of colonialism. Sailing on the same boat, the Indians and Africans cooperated in several ways in their joint struggle against colonial domination and racial discrimination.

The Indians continued to emphasize the primacy of African interests and to oppose all discriminatory measures affecting the non-European communities. In their congress and local political associations, in their federation and the allied chambers of commerce, in the legislatures, and in the press, they campaigned for a common electoral roll, equitable distribution of land,

equality of economic opportunity and an end of racial discrimination. They also took the lead in developing a trade union movement that fought for these political demands as well as for the improved conditions for the working class. In addition, the Indians provided a valuable assistance by representing Africans in the colonial governments before they were permitted a direct representation.

Sometimes, Indians had to face anti Indian attitude of Africans as in East Africa an allegation was brought against the Kenyan Indians in Kenya's pre-independence days that they assumed the role of "junior partners" to the colonial government. During the Mau Mau movement, for instance, many Indians in Kenya were alleged to have joined the British police force. But a fundamental fact was ignored that those were the days of British dominance over Kenya and that a few Indians who might have joined the colony's police force, had perhaps been obliged under the conditions of their service to use force to put an end to the lawlessness arising out of the Mau Mau movement. In those circumstances they were forced to follow the orders of administrators. If we cast a look at pre-independence days of India, particularly during the days of the Swadesi movement, the Indian police was obliged, by the conditions of their service under British government, to adopt repressive measure against their own countrymen who fought for their country's freedom. And Indians were not alone there were thousands of Africans in Kenyan Police force.

Irrespective of their reservations, it can not be ignored that East African territories could get independence with the cooperation of Indians and Africans both. The period of nationalist struggle presented before the world a very good example of the friendship or fellowship between the two communities.

After independence in the three East African territories a change was noticed in the relationship of Indians and Africans. Africans began demanding for the enforcement of the policy of Africanisation in order to take commerce, industry, trade or services in their own hands. Earlier the Africans were denied a proper position in their own home lands or to a great extent Indians were in a better condition compared to Africans. Thus after becoming independent, Africans demanded justice from their governments. Independent governments of East African territories, accepting their demands, implemented the policy of Africanisation. This policy adversely affected Indians and most of them were thrown away from their previous positions which they were holding before independence and this was the reason that they hesitated in accepting the citizenship of their residing countries. They preferred to keep British passports. Such instances continued to disturb the growth of amicable relationship between Indians and Africans. There were often instance of demanding segregatory regulations against Indians and the unique case of expulsion of Indians on a large scale from an African country happened in Uganda in 1972 when President Idi

Amin expelled all Ugandan Indians.

Though independent East African governments tried their best to keep out Indians from commerce, services and other sectors. Another reason of becoming alienated on the part of Indians was social exclusiveness which Indians maintained in inter-racial relations and the fact that a majority of them were engaged in petty trade and commerce had only helped to perpetuate the image of Indian settlers in host countries as a single racially distinct, community interested only in making money through any mean.

Although Indians on their side blame Africans for their specific characteristics of exclusiveness, there is no denying the fact that Indians lived a life of exclusiveness. It was the reason that Indians remained stuck to each other or not to integrate with the majority community in order to assert their own identity and unity to face the threat of extermination. Threats of loot or rape though very rarely implemented created a distance between Indians and Africans. For example, in August 1993 in Kenya, a gang calling itself "the sons of liberty" attacked an Indian couple. But such type of cases are very rare and happens only because of some disturbing elements present in the society.

But to achieve this they should totally identify themselves with the aims and aspirations of their respective nations which means that they should not sheepishly follow the will of the majority but should actively participate in building this will.

In conclusion we can quote the words of President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere - "we appeal to all thinking Europeans and Indians to regard themselves as ordinary citizens of Tanganyika, to preach no Divine Rights of Africans either. We are all Tanganyikans and we are all East Africans. The race quarrel is a stupid quarrel, it can be a very tragic quarrel. If we all make up our minds to live like ordinary sort of fellows live and not to think that we were specially designed by the creator to be masters and others specially designed to be hewers of wood and drawers of water we will make Africa a very happy country for every body".

A new phenomenon can be seen in East African countries that younger generation of Indians born and brought up in East Africa is trying to be close with Africans and those young Indians who have returned from England after completing their education have formed associations having common interests with Africans. If the same process continues, we can expect in near future the same type of friendly relationship which was existing between Indian and African communities before the arrival of Britishers in East Africa.

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