

# Negotiating Identities: Asian Communities in Tanzania

by

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## Introduction

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Maintaining a sense of identity is perhaps one of the most important things for Asians in Tanzania. Various components such as region of origin, language, religion, and culture combined strengthen group boundaries. Having spent nearly a third of my life in Tanzania, and having subsequently returned several times, I was amazed to see how the Asians there have survived through many hardships after their migration from India, and managed to strongly preserve their identities (or sometimes negotiate them) in a country that was ready and willing to forsake them at one time.

The term Asian in the East African framework refers exclusively to individuals originating from South Asia coming from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; however, majority of Asians in East Africa are from Indian or Pakistani origin (Voigt-Graf: 1998). Voigt-Graf states:

“Before the partition of British in India in 1947, immigrants from South Asia were usually known as ‘Indians.’ Thereafter, the term ‘Indian’ was no longer acceptable to the Muslims who form the majority of Asians in Tanzania. It should be noted that ‘Asian’ is a racial category; in fact most Asians in Tanzania have Tanzanian citizenship and therefore legally are Tanzanians and Africans” (1998: 1).

I will attempt to illustrate how identity is maintained yet even negotiated by Asians in Dar es Salaam in various ways such as in the simple reference to themselves as “Asian,” “Tanzanian,” or “African.” For the purpose of my discussion, I will refer to this group of people as Asians, since they themselves used this term in reference to themselves.

Furthermore, the majority of Asians who arrived in East Africa came from an impoverished agricultural background in Northwest India, most of them from the regions of

the present day Indian State known as Gujarat. I conducted my fieldwork on the Gujarati Hindus who immigrated to East Africa in search for what they thought would be a better life. Asians make up the minority in Tanzania, with only 42,000 people out of a country with some 28 million inhabitants (Voigt-Graf 1998: 1). Even though trading between the Indian subcontinent and the east coast of Africa has existed for centuries, immigration of Asians to the area began only in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 1 focuses on Asian immigration from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the effects that decolonialization and the creation of an independent Tanzania had on the Asians. In colonial times, Asians filled the ranks of the middlemen minorities and upon departure of the European colonizers, Asians were left stranded as largely unwelcome remnants by the Africans. There was tremendous insecurity prevalent amongst the Asians during this period leading to active steps taken by the group to promote some sense of security. Although Asians have often been the target of discriminatory laws, violence, and prejudice, they have managed to maintain their internal solidarity.

Chapter 2 discusses how through the formation of communities, Asians have maintained their identities and unity. Asians in Tanzania have established many communities which are based on caste and are of cultural, religious, and economic importance. In certain areas such as temples and marital relations, space was not negotiated because it would cause for the compromise of their identity which these Asian communities were not willing to do. However, in other areas, such as volunteer service organizations and Oyster Bay (waterfront on Toure Drive in Dar es Salaam), there was some negotiation of spaces that took place between Africans and Asians. Overall, both groups knew their respective places and these spaces were essential for the maintenance of identity.

Chapter 3 discusses the transnational networks that Asians in Tanzania have maintained with their overseas diaspora. Furthermore, the notion of cultural nostalgia and the 'myth of return' that seems to be present within many diasporas is absent amongst the Tanzanian Asians. Regardless, the emotional attachments (especially the cultural and religious ones) for their ancestral country of India still persist. There however seems to be a shift of immigration of Asians from Tanzania to Western countries from the 1960's and 1970's to present day. This further creates and maintains mobility of the Tanzanian diaspora through these transnational network formulations.

### **Methods**

This research is based on the scholarship present within the field, and empirical fieldwork that I conducted. The empirical data was collected through standardized interviews with 25 Asians in Dar es Salaam from December 2006 to January 2007. The interviews were conducted by means of a standardized questionnaire with the majority of questions being open ended (See Appendix 1). This would allow me to qualitatively analyze the appropriate topics in the chapters. I have conducted interviews with chairmen of the various Asian communities as well. Even though this research was conducted in Dar es Salaam, I am fairly confident that the results may apply to Asians in other areas of Tanzania. This is possible for me to say because over half of the Asians in Tanzania reside in Dar es Salaam, and the remainder in other areas of Tanzania whereby they organize themselves in similar ways to those in Dar es Salaam (Voigt-Graf: 1998).

Due to the limited time I had in conducting this research, obtaining a larger sample was not possible. I was interested in seeing if the results have any correlation with different

age groups, thereby allowing me to evaluate if the generational gap plays role forming opinions or changes in viewpoints. I therefore made it a point to sample informants in three different age categories; 15-30 years old, 31-60 years old, and above 61 years old. To control for any results specific to gender, I had intended to interview 3 men and 3 women in each category, thereby resulting in 18 total informants. However, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview 25 people. I interviewed 9 individuals in the 15-30 age group (4 men and 5 women), 8 individuals in the 31-60 age group (5 men and 3 women), and 8 individuals in the 61 or older age group (5 men and 3 women), consciously maintaining the minimum sample criteria for each category in the age groups to be included in this study.

I did not have a standard sampling method as such, because the sample population was not a large percent of the total population. It was through visits to the temple, personal affiliation, and various cultural events that I was able to meet people for interviews. Once I began interviewing, informants directed me to other contacts. I interviewed many individuals at their homes, workplaces, schools, and restaurants. Some of the informants are family members who directed me to their friends or acquaintances. I asked every informant if I should use a pseudonym when referring to them and did so for those who requested it. I was generally alone with the respondents during the interview, which resulted in the most honest answers. Respondents were mainly from the upper and middle classes. Unfortunately I did not have the means in the time allotted to interview members from the very underprivileged classes because many of the respondents did not have correspondence with these individuals and thus I could not be directed to interview them.

I have managed to interview at least one member from just about every sub-community present in the Hindu Gujarati community in Dar es Salaam. Gujarati communities

are organized based on the divisions of *jati* (occupational group by birth). Many individuals are no longer carrying on their hereditary occupations; however, communities still identify themselves according to their respective *jati*. These labels are important especially when it comes to endogamy. The differentiation between *jati* and *varna* (caste) will be discussed further in Chapter 2. For the purpose of this introduction, I wish to only discuss the various Hindu Gujarati *jatis* that I was successful in interviewing. **Bhatias** are the Kutchi-speaking group, who were traditionally merchants or traders and became very wealthy in India from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are a sub-caste of Hindus that originated in Lohar Pradesh, which covered a large part of what today is Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, and the Hindu Kush, and migrated in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to Saurashtra and Kutch, which are now part of the Gujarat state in India (Chande 2005: 32). “The **Lohanas** come from the rural districts of Cutch and Kathiawar, traditionally working laborers, masons, husbandmen, shopkeepers, and traders” (Campbell 1988: 122). The **Patels** have an agricultural background and come from the central region of Gujarat (Tinker 1977: 7). According to Tinker, “The migrants to East Africa however, were mostly relatively poor landowning peasants who began to leave their home area after the great famines at the turn of the century” (Tinker 1977: 8). There are many craftsmen or artisan Gujarati sects. These include the **Rajput Dhobi** (once warriors who eventually took on the profession of washermen), the **Suthar** (carpenters), the **Mochi** (shoemakers), the **Bhoi** (carriers), and **Soni** (goldsmiths)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> I did not interview others such as Darji (tailors), Rana (manual workers), Nai or Hajem (barbers), the Surti (diamond cutters), the Sorathia (potters), the Kharva (seafarers), the Luhar (blacksmiths), and the Gadhavi (royal bards) due to time restraints (For description of the castes see Voigt-Graf: 1998).

I have formulated a graph of the number of members in each of these respective communities (See Appendix)<sup>2</sup>. This description of each community division is important for this discussion because maintenance of community boundaries is one of the most essential aspects for the preservation and reproduction of identity for Asians in Tanzania.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 3 for total and Asian population in Dar es Salaam from 1894-1995 (Voigt-Graf 1998: 130).

## Chapter 1:

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East Africa, like other formerly colonized parts of the world, has undergone radical changes in the last seventy five years. I will discuss Tanzania's history beginning with the period of Indian immigration to East Africa in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, continued by decolonialization and the creation of an independent Tanzania, culminating with the establishment of the United Republic of Tanzania, and finally the process of developing and integrating into the globalizing world. This historical background aids in understanding the insecurity that Asians as the middlemen minorities in Tanzania felt during this time, as well as the measures that they were forced to take in order to survive in the country they deemed as their homeland.

### Asians' Immigration to East Africa in 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the immigration of British Indian subjects into East Africa; some to help construct the East African Railways, or to start a network of commerce in the region, or to work for the British administration<sup>3</sup>. Ramesh Ramji was one of the respondents I had the privilege of interviewing. Ramji's great grandfather was brought to East Africa by the British to help with administering its colony. Ramji states, "He [great grandfather Ramji Bapa] came here as a soldier, but at that time they were referred to as volunteers or pioneers. They helped the British people to make administration and rules. The British wanted to rule these countries in East Africa but they did not have the man power so

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<sup>3</sup> In an interview with respondent Ramesh Ramji he stated, "Others came as workers in different departments to develop this place. Others were brought by the Sultans from Oman [especially to Zanzibar]. Omans went to the western side of India quite often, especially Gujarat. They would then bring them [Indians] here."

they brought man power from India.” Many of these “volunteers” eventually fought with the Africans against the British for independence, which I will discuss later. Many Indians also came to East Africa due to their poor economic status in India, and were in search for better prospects. For example, the chairman of the Rajput Dhobi Samaj in Tanzania, Babulal Chudasama, explained, “My community members came to Tanzania from India more than 100 years ago looking for better prospects in Africa.” One such person who immigrated to East Africa in search for better prospects was Keshavji Chande. Respondent J.K. Chande<sup>4</sup> explained to me how his father Keshavji Chande<sup>5</sup> immigrated to East Africa in 1922, and eventually established a leading commercial house in Tanzania called Chande Industries, Ltd.

Chande states:

“My father Keshavji, at the age of 22, resolved to clear the family’s debts once and for all, not at home in India, but by taking a boat bound for Africa. He followed the lead of one of his cousins Juthalal Velji Chande, who traveled with his brothers to Dar es Salaam in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Juthalal Velji Chande had come aboard a dhow, a small, narrow, but swift one-mastered sailing boat of ancient design used by countless Arab traders over the millennia” (Chande 2005: 18).

Similarly, respondent Dinesh Patel’s father came to East Africa in the early 1900’s as well.

Patel says,

“During that time he [Patel’s father] was doing cotton buying. There is a lot of cotton in Uganda so he used to buy and take [it] back home [to India]. Then he was in so many businesses<sup>6</sup>. He had a shop, then he went sometime in mining, then he had a couple of cinemas, and that he did till he died. He died in Uganda, but we had our cinemas and other businesses here in Tanzania.”

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<sup>4</sup> I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview J.K. Chande, who also wrote the book titled *A knight in Africa: Journey from Bukene*, which I will be referencing throughout the discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Respondent J.K. Chande explained to me that his father Keshavji Chande owned a shop in Bukene, in the Nzega District of the western province of Tanganyika. He sold consumer goods and fuels and also traded in local agricultural commodities, acting as a middleman between the local producers and the markets in Tabora and Dar es Salaam. For more information on middlemen minorities see (Voigt-Graf: 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Many Indians were involved in private enterprises, typified by the ubiquitous *dukawallahs*, which are shops owned by people of Asian origin.

These examples illustrate how many Indians immigrated to East Africa in the early 1900's for a better life than the one they had in India and were mostly active in some sort of commerce or worked for the British administration.

### Segregation and Discrimination during Colonialism

Even though the colonials allowed Asians to enter East Africa, they did not advocate the integration of the three races, but rather, maintained segregation. Kimambo and Temu state:

“By the 1930's Dar es Salaam was quite rigidly segregated into racial areas: the European residential area in the north; the administrative and commercial centre, where the Asian inhabitants also lived; and the African residential area to the west and south. The main African residential area was Kariakoo<sup>7</sup>. Rents were highest there, the area contained many skilled workers, and it became the intellectual and political centre of the town for Africans” (1969: 144).

Kariakoo was the main commercial and shopping area; however, most shops there were operated by Asians<sup>8</sup>. By the mid 1900's, many Asians eventually started leaving Kariakoo and moved to Upanga, which became one of the most important residential areas for Asians (Leslie 1963: 276).

The colonials maintained their dominance over the other two races in the employment sector as well. Africans were directed largely toward agricultural or other menial labor. Asians had already taken a strong hold on the marketplace, but were being directed by the colonials away from commerce and toward the local civil service. Asians suffered tremendous discrimination due to their small political representation. They suffered from lack of trial by jury, the educational and medical services for them was inferior as compared to

<sup>7</sup> However, as Kariakoo grew, social conditions worsened. I was told a number of times never to go to Kairakoo alone as it is considered a dangerous area.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Kariakoo see (De Blij 1963: 40; Voigt-Graf 1998: 131).

their colonial rulers, they were not granted higher posts in the civil service, and traders were required to have special licensing (Gregory 1981: 260; Hollingsworth 1960: 67).

Furthermore, there were segregated schools for these three races. "The whites sent their children to English schools, to be taught in English, the browns to Indian schools, to be taught in Gujarati<sup>9</sup>, and the black Africans to 'native' schools, there to be taught in Kiswahili" (Chande 2005: 26). What I found interesting about Chande's description here is that he put quotation marks around the word native when referring to the Africans because he considers himself to be a native of Tanzania not India. Here we see the patriotism and identification with Tanzania not India. In addition, respondent Biharilal Tanna states, "Under the British rule, there were a lot of demarcations on the basis of ethnicity. There were African schools, European schools where Asians can not go and there were Indian schools." Each school having the curriculum taught in the respective native tongue creates a sense of unity and identity affiliation amongst its members. Many of these Asian schools had educators from India thereby the notion being that the syllabuses would contain Asian material which would result in education being an important medium through which Asians could preserve their culture (Rattansi and Abdulla 1970: 128). However, even though the aim was to allow Asians to preserve their culture through the material they acquired, this did not necessarily occur. Regardless of the segregation of the schools, the education during the colonial rule was still very Eurocentric. As Chande points out, "Even at the Indian schools, the set books had focused almost exclusively on British and occasionally continental European history" (Chande 2005: 37). The British authorities in colonial Tanganyika did not take much interest

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<sup>9</sup> Majority of immigrants were from the state of Gujarat in India, thus, Gujarati was the common language and the medium through which Asians were educated.

in building a strong foundation for the education system. They more or less operated on a laissez-faire basis.

Even though the colonials maintained segregation amongst their subjects, there were still some areas where integration took place. Cricket was one such game that united all the races, but also within the races created a sense of unity. Chande states:

“We Indians as a race, had mastered the game [cricket] in the previous century, and in Tanganyika our Indian teams regularly inflicted heavy defeats on the local British. During these games, and in the subsequent discussions in which we picked apart each aspect of the game, the prevailing hierarchies were set aside” (Chande 2005: 26).

Chande’s choice of words is important in illustrating where he chooses to identify himself. Here he states, “we Indians as a race,” thus illustrating his own identity with the large Indian community. Furthermore, he uses the term “Indian” as racial identification not as a national one. The reason, which I will discuss in detail later on, is that many Asians identified nationally to Tanzania not India. In my earlier discussion on racial segregation of schools, Chande had put quotation marks around the word native when discussing Africans because he himself identified as being a Tanzanian, both in his book and in my interview with him. This is an example of how national identity is negotiated by Asians in various situations.

### The Struggle for Independence

By the mid-1900’s the country realized that independence from the colonials was long due. India became independent from the British colonials in 1947, therefore until the mid-1950’s Asians in East Africa had celebrated the anniversary of India’s independence. In the interview with Biharilal Tanna he explains to me how he and his family used to celebrate India’s Independence Day in Tanzania. He says,

“Even as a child I knew all about our scriptures, our Indian history.” I enquired as to why to which he responded; “because we are Indians, and remember I’m talking about 1941, I was born in 1941. I have a photograph from 1948/1949, we used to celebrate the Indian independence day. When we were little babies, my parents taught us about Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, Shiv Bhagvan<sup>10</sup>, and all that.”

Such nationalist feelings towards India raised doubts amongst the Africans if Asians would be loyal to their host country. However, this kind of political identification and loyalty to India is a thing of the past. For example, although Biharilal Tanna associated himself with India, when specifically asked if he considers himself to be an Indian from Africa or an Indian from India he responded “Indian from Africa. In fact not even that. I would call myself an African. I consider myself very much a Tanzanian. My passport may not say that I am a Tanzanian, but in my heart, in my attitude, in my commitment, in my well being, I’m very much a Tanzanian.” Similarly, in my interview with Chande he responds, “I consider myself as a person of Indian origin, but living in Tanzania, a citizen of Tanzania, with a home in Tanzania, with an intention to die in Tanzania, and to be cremated in Tanzania.” During the first few years of India’s independence, Indians in Tanzania were inspired by the political atmosphere; however, the identification today is confined to the cultural and religious spheres. Chande for instance stated, “Fate was to ensure that I was to be a witness to the independence of both my family’s motherland and of my homeland, Tanganyika, and my formative experiences in India undoubtedly shaped my perceptions of independence in Dar es Salaam some fifteen years later.” The labels Chande applies here illustrate that he refers to India as his family’s “motherland,” however, he considers Tanzania his homeland. Many of the respondents had similar labels for the two respective countries. Asians in Tanzania are negotiating their identity in this area. They culturally and religiously identify themselves with

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<sup>10</sup> Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, Shiv are Hindu deities.

India and their ancestral origins; however, politically and nationally they choose to identify themselves wholeheartedly with Tanzania<sup>11</sup>.

Regardless of their patriotism for Tanganyika, during the struggle for its independence, anti-Asian sentiments made it difficult for Asians to be involved in politics.

For example, Gregory states:

“The arrival of Apa Pant as India’s first High Commissioner to East Africa in 1948 and the fact that he took somehow the role of a leader of East African Asians had a great impact on Asian politics. He very much promoted Asian-African co-operation and friendship and tried to contribute to the emerging African leadership by initiating Government of India scholarships for African...students” (1933b: 197).

Informant Ramesh Ramji explains how his grandfather Ramji Bapa was brought to East Africa by the British to work for the British administration. Ramji states,

“My grandfather came here, he worked for one or two years at the age of 16 years and then he left the British work and joined the political party of Mahatma Gandhi Ji called Satya Grah which is now called Congress. Satya Grah means ‘fight for peace.’ Ramji Bapa joined this party that was in Zanzibar, which was later under the leadership of Mr. Apa Pant. Together with the Africans they fought there for Tanzania’s independence. Due to this, he [Ramji Bapa] was not allowed to go back to India before India’s independence due to his affiliation in politics. He then stayed here and opened a laundry because he had no other work because he can’t get work anywhere else because he was against the British<sup>12</sup>.”

This example illustrates how Asians carried the sparks of political activism from India into East Africa and cooperated with the Africans in fighting for an independent Tanganyika<sup>13</sup>.

One of the reasons that Asians in Tanzania carry strong patriotic sentiments for the country is because they fought for its independence.

During the same period, a new generation of Africans, led by the nationalist Julius Nyerere, had begun the preparation of Tanganyika’s future independence. In 1950, Asians

<sup>11</sup> This was a strong sentiment shown in just about every single interview I conducted.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 4 photo of Ramesh Ramji continuing the business that his grand-father RamjiBapa began in the 1900’s.

<sup>13</sup> From the early 1920’s, Asians had helped to initiate African nationalism as the “Indians who emigrated to Africa in those days carried with them the sparks of political awakening witnessed in India. So...the Indian immigrants in Tanganyika were a progressive force asking for measures aimed at majority rule” (Grewal 1967: 70).

established their own political organization called the Asian Association. Since then, leaders of the Asian Association helped Nyerere in establishing the proto-political party, Tanganyika African Nationalist Union (TANU) in 1954 (Voigt-Graf 1998: 82; Chande 2005). However, many members of TANU not only wanted the departure of the colonial power, but also had anti-Asian sentiments<sup>14</sup>. Africans felt that Asians were exploiting the black Tanganyikan workers due to their success in commerce. Africans were still very much in agricultural and menial labor. According to Chande, "At that time, the average annual income of a European in Tanganyika was just under 1,800 (pounds), against just over 500 (pounds) for an Asian a mere 75 (pounds) for an African" (Chande 2005: 51). Even though Asians protested against the discrimination, many supported African nationalism.

Tanganyika was not prepared by its colonial masters for responsibilities of nationhood, and the local economy was chronically underdeveloped, and still heavily dependent on its colonial masters for skills, markets, and capital; however, independence was still pushed forward. The struggle began with the first-ever democratic elections in 1958 in which the country's three main ethnic groups were to receive 10 seats each in the National Assembly. At that time Europeans and Asians combined made up just over one and a half percent of the total population of around ten million people; therefore, the question of race became the first TANU debate. TANU activists wanted economic egalitarianism and claimed it was not about the color of people's skin. However, some went beyond egalitarian arguments, and talked about the need to repatriate minority communities to Britain, India, or Pakistan after independence was achieved. Some even went further to try and gain control of

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<sup>14</sup> Governor Sir Edward Twining had given support for the formation of the United Tanganyika Party (UTP), which supported old colonial ideas about what might constitute a racial parity in an independent Tanganyika. UTP and Twining labeled TANU as racist. For more on UTP and Twining see (Chande 2005).

the Asian merchandising sector by force (Chande 2005: 70)<sup>15</sup>. Nyerere tried very hard to change the minds of the majority in TANU to proceed with the elections making them understand that many Asians were on their side of wanting nationalism and this animosity was wrong<sup>16</sup>. TANU put up candidates for, and then won, all the available seats in those elections. Nyerere kept assuring the minorities (Asians and Europeans) of peace and harmony once the elections passed. These reassurances seemed to have worked because on August 30, 1960, 1.1 million voters gave the TANU candidates, under their campaign slogan 'Friendship for All,' an overwhelming victory. TANU won 70 out of the 71 contested seats. Three days after the election, on September 2, 1960, Nyerere was officially sworn in as Tanganyika's first elected chief minister, and on December 9, 1961, Tanganyika became independent (Chande 2005: 74).

#### Post Independence, Socialization, and Anti-Asian Sentiments

After the rush of independence, the economy was fragile due to the colonial powers failing to educate the Africans for self-rule, and the issue of race continued to be a problem<sup>17</sup>. Nyerere felt he needed to temporarily resign and travel in order to get a fresh perspective to help his country. In his absence, his deputy Rashidi Kawawa set forward the policy of Africanization whereby "260 non-African (mainly Asian) civil servants lost their jobs, and a further 600 Africans were taken on" (Chande 2005: 78). Actions such as these were an effort to remedy the imbalances and injustices during the colonial era; however, Asians were being

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<sup>15</sup> In Sukumaland, near Lake Victoria, Asian middlemen were excluded from the cotton marketing and their businesses were taken forcibly (Chande 2005: 70).

<sup>16</sup> "After the end of the Second World War, a number of so-called 'radical' Asians wholeheartedly supported the Africans. The majority however, still kept aloof from politics and were hesitant in order to ensure a safe bet" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 80)

<sup>17</sup> Africans wanted the acquisition of citizenship for all people other than second-generation true-born Tanganyikans (Chande 2005: 77)

treated as second class citizens in the country they consider to be their own. Nyerere returned back to office and in 1964 and declared that discrimination in civil service must end and therefore, he put an end to Kawawa's Africanization policy<sup>18</sup>. Due to Nyerere's announcement, John Okello lead a revolution in Zanzibar, and in less than 2 days, fifteen to twenty thousand Arabs and Indians had been slaughtered. Rebellion also broke out in the mainland thirteen days later and was eventually suppressed by intervention of the British army and negotiations by Nyerere's ministers (Chande 2005: 79). The revolution and mutiny in response to Nyerere's halt to Africanization caused uncertainty and insecurity for Asians there due to the fact that their existence depended on how TANU addressed the issue of race. In the midst of all this however, barely three months after the uprising led by Okello, Nyerere managed to work with Abeid Amani Karume, the new leader of Zanzibar to forge together the states of Tanganyika and Zanzibar into the United Republic of Tanzania which became official on April 24, 1964<sup>19</sup>. This had the effect of Asians and Europeans now beginning to feel somewhat secure of the final end of Africanization and thus the security of their citizenship.

After independence, the Tanzanian government guaranteed religious and cultural freedom, thereby, enabling Asians to keep their culture and ties to India<sup>20</sup> (Voigt-Graf 1998: 51). Unfortunately, Nyerere began spreading his notion of African Socialism, a movement

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<sup>18</sup> Nyerere claimed that "discrimination in civil service employment as regards to recruitment, training, and promotion must be brought to an end immediately. We cannot allow the growth of first and second-class citizenship. Africanization is dead" (Chande 2005: 79).

<sup>19</sup> Zanzibar maintains its own parliament and president, separate from mainland Tanzania.

<sup>20</sup> "Only with the inclusion of a Bill of Rights into the Constitution of Tanzania in 1984 has the freedom of religion become an enforceable human right" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 51). See: *Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, Article 19, as amended by the Fifth Constitutional Amendment Act, 1984.*

toward a state of family hood known as *Ujamaa*.<sup>21</sup> He cut off any diplomatic relations with Britain, which had a tremendous negative impact on Tanzania's developing economy due to Tanzania's few exportable minerals and its primitive agricultural system. To remedy Tanzania's economic problems, Nyerere issued the 1967 Arusha Declaration, which suggested a new strategy of self-reliance to enable the country's development and make Tanzania dependent more on its own efforts and less at the mercy of international capital interests (Kimambo and Temu 1969: 256). Factories, plantations, banks, and private companies were now all under the ownership of the state. This had a tremendous negative impact on the Asians especially since the majority were predominately involved in commerce. Chande for instance states:

“Ninth of February, barely four days after the Arusha Declaration had been published, I was told to present myself at the office of the Minister of Commerce at 11am sharp. At the meeting the businessmen were told [that] all the shares in our respective milling companies henceforth be vested in the Treasury Registrar, effective noon that day. Existing shareholders would be given “full and fair” compensation. That was it. All of our companies had been nationalized under a minute” (Chande 2005: 91).

Additionally, they were not adequately compensated for their losses as informed to me by many respondents. Chande explains, “The cashier's instructions to not give me any money had been faithfully obeyed, which meant that neither my brother nor I had any money at all to pay for the daily costs of living” (Chande 2005: 97). All of the assets that Chande and his family had worked so hard for all those years had been snatched away by the government. Things like company owned cars and houses would be confiscated by the state and only returned if the owners paid the state. Similarly, Tanna told me how his father had come to

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<sup>21</sup> In Nyerere's pamphlet on *Ujamaa*, he wrote “Socialism is an attitude of mind...a belief in the oneness of man and the common historical destiny of mankind. Its basis, in other words, is human equality” (Chande 2005: 87).

this coast in 1898 and formed a business. Tanna felt that the biggest impact that Nyerere's socialization had on the Asians was it destroyed their sense of security.

During Nyerere's socialization policy and nationalization, some Asians left the country and went to back to India, United Kingdom, or Canada<sup>22</sup> if they had the means. One such person was respondent Raju Dave. Dave states,

"Following independence of the country and the so called nationalization and socialism, this country started going down. All the Asians were worried about their future. So my father packed all us up and sent us all back to India. This was around 1966/1967. We stayed in Ahemdabad for one year, and then the family came back. I came back in 1976, and things were not so good. There were hardly any places to go out, people felt insecure."

However even though people felt insecure, many did not leave the country. Many could not go back to India because they had sold everything or had nothing there to begin with. Tanna states, "My own family had several links [in India], but over three to four generations whatever little was left [in India] was gone." Therefore, many Asians stayed in Tanzania throughout this period of hardship. Chande states, "Unlike my father, I didn't set sail for foreign lands,<sup>23</sup> seeking salvation on another continent. I stayed in Tanzania, in a country I loved and was a native of, but had now seemingly forsaken me." This sentiment is shared by many Asians during that time, who felt as though the country they felt native to had forsaken them.

Furthermore, Nyerere's socialism had caused corruption to grow within the country.

In my interview with Biharilal Tanna he states,

"Majority of people went around breaking the law. I have told the Minister of Finance...that he made me a thief because there was a time, again following Nyerere's philosophy of socialism and all that. I was in the 107 percent tax bracket. Every shilling I earned I had to give that shilling [to the government] plus take out 7 cents and give it to the

<sup>22</sup> Immigration to Canada came much later when Aga Khan worked a deal with the Canadian government for the Ismaili population.

<sup>23</sup> Chande's father had come to East Africa to get rid of his debt he had India, a common reason why so many Asians emigrated from India.

government. That law in my opinion [was] immoral and unethical and therefore, I found nothing wrong with breaking it.”

Africans themselves were not active in commerce, so the socialism philosophy did not really affect them as such, but clearly for Asians it did, therefore, they tried to find whatever ways they could to survive.

As if Nyerere's socialism was not enough of a blow towards Asians; in 1971, Idi Amin, in a televised announcement, ordered the entire Asian community out of Uganda on a 24 hours' notice, allowing only one suitcase per person<sup>24</sup>. Some Asians were put in prison for weeks and once released asked to leave. Amin was truly pushing forward the concept of Africanization. This was truly a devastating time for Asians. Amin did not stop just in Uganda however; he tried to push his way into Tanzania as well. Chande describes, “In 1979, following the takeover of a part of the Kagera region of Tanzania by Idi Amin's forces, the under-equipped Tanzanian army fought back like lions and pushed the Ugandans out of Tanzania. But Mwalimu [Nyerere] didn't stop there. Persuaded of the need for regime change in Uganda, he ordered his forces to press all the way into Kampala, and they toppled Amin” (Chande 2005: 145). This costly military intervention was a great relief for Asians, some of whom returned to repossess their previously confiscated properties; however, this was not of any help to Tanzania's economy.

#### End of Socialism and the Beginning of Open Market

By 1980, Tanzania's economy was not doing any better than in the 60's despite financial and technical aid from the World Bank and other sympathetic countries. Nyerere's socialization was clearly unsuccessful in re-building the infrastructure of the country. In the

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<sup>24</sup> For more information on the expulsion of Asians from Uganda, see (Twaddle 1975)

1960's, there was a lack of investment in the educational system, thus leading to a very small number of African university graduates. The former colonial rulers had emphasized food production to benefit the local European consumers at the expense of native peasant producers, and transport was weak; therefore, limiting links to the outside world (Chande 2005: 172). The economy was still quite underdeveloped. Finally in 1985, Ali Hassan Mwinyi became the eventual choice to be Nyerere's successor. He faced the challenge of creating a new course for Tanzania, economically as well as politically. The civil wars in Rwanda and Burundi caused great numbers of refugees. The Mwinyi government held open the gates for hundreds of thousands of refugees who came flooding through the Tanzanian borders. However, even in the midst of all this, many economic reforms were created by him. Socialism was finally removed. According to many respondents such as Romeet Barmeda, even though Mwinyi removed the principles of socialism and opened up the markets, "The country was technically going backwards. There was lots of corruption and everyone wanted to do things the way they liked because there were no rules. There was no systematic way of doing things." According to Chande it was Mwinyi who "took the risks, he who laid the groundwork for the significant economic and social progress that has been made since 1995, when Benjamin Mkapa became President" of Tanzania (Chande 2005: 177).

Mkapa undertook macroeconomic reform and steered even further away from the philosophies of the *Ujamaa* period. In time, "inflation dropped from double-digit to single-digit, and then down to less than 5 percent. Growth rose around 5 percent. The central bank reserves built up to a comfortable level again" (Chande 2005: 187-189). Mkapa re-established relationships with the international community. There is free primary state education for all children, programs to reduce malaria and AIDS, improvement in health care

facilities, and water accessibility for people within acceptable distances (if plumbing is not available in homes). According to my respondents, Mkapa gave chances for the Asians to make their businesses grow, which was previously taken away from them. Additionally, tourism now brings a significant amount of revenue to the country<sup>25</sup>. Thus, the country is definitely taking steps of moving forward after such long periods of remaining stagnant.

In 2005, 54-year old Jakaya Kikwete was elected as the new President of Tanzania to succeed Mkapa. Kikwete is allowing for the freedom of speech by guaranteeing people their rights. For instance, respondent Kantilal Chudasama said,

“The current president is highly educated. He’s made such rules, that if the police catches you tomorrow you can ask what is the reason, why is he harassing me. There is law in Tanzania now, before there was no law, they could just catch you and throw you in jail, without a reason, there is some sense of law now.”

Similarly respondent Raju Dave states,

“Today the country is fantastic, you’re free, and there is nothing to worry about. There is money for travel overseas and there are no restrictions. Unlike before where if a government official asks for a bribe you have to give it, now you can fight back in a way. Corruption is still there, but it’s better than before.”

Kikwete is systematically installing laws and promoting development with his reforms being pro-market. This in turn is benefiting the Asians and allowing their sense of security to be restored.

Furthermore, globalization is allowing Tanzania to interact and be aware of the international community and not be secluded as it was in the past. Respondent Biharilal Tanna states, “Today in this modern day, they’ve executed Saddam and the whole world knows about it.” Similarly respondent Dinesh Patel states, “With the three presidents after Nyerere, they opened out, the policies were not restricted, the foreign exchange embargo was

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<sup>25</sup> Tanzania’s attractions include national parks such as Serengeti and Africa’s highest mountain, Kilimanjaro.

there, roads were restricted, so much restricted during Nyerere, now everything is becoming open market. Now you can get whatever you want.”

Additionally, there has been a great deal of development since 1999. Expatriate Shanti Shanker states,

“When I came in 99 [from India], I was disappointed because I felt life here was very slow. For instance, there were no good restaurants, very few shopping malls, for entertainment hardly any theatres were there, so I was de-motivated when I came here. From 2003 onward tremendous changes are taking place; many shopping malls, we have a Cinemax Theatre now also, and many restaurants have come up. It has become much more cosmopolitan. People have much more exposure to different markets, international markets.”

Items that were previously unavailable such as basic necessities to advanced technology are now readily available. South Africa has influenced the development of Tanzania as well, such as the introduction of the shopping store ShopRite (See Appendix 5). During my trip, the large shopping mall Mlimani City Mall just recently opened (See Appendix 6). Inside the mall there were many shops and people could purchase items ranging from computers, electronics, gadgets, clothes, to even daily groceries. Tanzania now has 5 star restaurants and hotels such as the Movenpick Royal Palm Hotel. The infrastructure of the country is also improving. Respondent Hitesh Solanki states, “I can not say [we have] skyscrapers, but long buildings are there, shopping malls are there, there are 5 star beach hotels.” Furthermore, Kikwete is making things run efficiently in the country. For example, respondent Romeet Barmeda states, “Previously if you needed a telephone it would take you six years to get one fixed. Now days if you need it it’s immediately done.” The privatization of the telecommunication sector has led to an exponential growth in mobile phone ownership. On my visit there I noticed that even a vegetable seller on the street owned one. It was a very common thing, whereas previously it was more of a status symbol. Even the quality of life is improving. Barmeda explains “The markets are getting better, their [Africans] ratio of

earning is better too. Before the shirts would be 20,000 shillings now the locals [Africans] can buy one for 5,000 shillings.”

Interaction between Africans and Asians has also increased. Respondent Biharilal Tanna states, “As a child, I grew up in a small village, the Asian community was very small and secluded from Africans, which left little opportunity to interact with them.” This is not the case anymore. University medical student Radhika Ramji states,

“There is a lot of communication between Africans and Indians, there are a lot more inter- relationships, not like previously, people work together now. Before Africans would think that these Asians are too business minded they might try to fool us so they did not like to associate with us. Even Asians would say these are blacks we won't like to associate with them, we are high class. That class system is no longer there.”

Africans and Asians are now integrated in schools as well. There are now more opportunities in the educational sector as well such as the United Kingdom (UK) based study in Dar es Salaam as well as new colleges such as Learn IT whereby students can get educated in various fields such as International Business Management<sup>26</sup>. Culturally the races are beginning to accept each others customs and perhaps even like them. For instance, respondent Romeet Barmeda says, “You know there are areas that are Indian food joints and what not, but now the Africans are picking up on our traditions. Many of them wear punjabis and saris<sup>27</sup>. Many locals and even Europeans love our Indian food, so now it's not just like there is an Indian area or joint as such anymore.”

One needs to have the capacity to deal on equal terms with people of all cultures and races. This is particularly essential given the social, racial, and political divisions in colonial Tanganyika. Asians belonged neither to the British ruling group nor to the African majority,

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<sup>26</sup> A citizen in Dar es Salaam can receive a United Kingdom (UK) certificate whilst still being in Tanzania such as respondents Nisha Dharmshi and Poonam Nanji.

<sup>27</sup> Traditional Indian clothing.

therefore, making their lives all the more difficult during this time. Due to Asians' status of being the middlemen minorities, hatred from the masses was targeted towards them. Voigt-Graf explains, "It is a typical dilemma of middleman minorities that the hatred of the masses is diverted away from the colonial elite and directed towards the middleman minorities who are the masses' primary source of contact with the colonial system" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 133). Furthermore, Ghai states, "Important sources of controversy and bitterness between Africans and Europeans were removed by the British on the eve of independence through the policy of generous financial provisions for European farmers and civil servants which enabled them to retire on attractive terms, leaving their lands and posts for distribution to Africans" (Ghai 1970: 183). Asian civil servants were not provided anything of this nature. This further diminished the bitterness between Africans and Europeans and once again targeted the hostility towards the Asians who were the unfortunate middlemen minorities. Post Nyerere's leadership, integration has happened in various spaces as mentioned above, but there are still distinct spaces where Asians have maintained their own separate identity and perhaps will continue to do so, and that is in constraining the boundaries of their respective communities.

## Chapter 2:

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### Importance of Community Boundaries

Communities are an essential mode of maintaining a distinct sense of identity for Asians in East Africa. According to Angrosino, "Overseas Asians in general are conspicuous for their adherence to their traditional culture and even after several generations of living outside India...continue to organize communities that are, in one way or another, characteristically Indian" (Angrosino 1983: 357). However, Asians in East Africa have maintained closer connections to their home country and kept more of their traditions alive than perhaps the larger South Asian Diaspora and even Indians within India. For instance, respondent Khilna Mamlani states,

"I think the culture is maintained quite well here [Dar es Salaam]. I don't think it's maintained that well even in India. For example, *navratri*<sup>28</sup>. If you go to India for *navratri* you'll find people in Western clothes, it's not like what we have here, it's so traditional [here]. People take so much care of dressing, there [India] they just wear jeans and tops. Maybe if you go to the traditional parts of Gujarat you'll find that, but in Bombay you don't see it [traditional wear]."

This is an example that wearing traditional attire during religious functions illustrates that the sense of culture is maintained more strongly by Asians in Dar es Salaam than by Asians in India; a common perception held by many Asians in East Africa. I asked her why she thinks this is the case and she responded, "Maybe it's because people have moved away from India that they keep their culture here, and also because India is following the Western kind of culture. They can't adopt it completely but yet they're trying to follow it." In addition to Mamlani, respondent Rupa Solanki stated,

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<sup>28</sup> A holy festival of Hinduism. It is a festival of nine nights (*nav* meaning nine and *ratri* meaning nights) during which Hindus worship goddess of *shakti*.

“The life is too fast there [India] and the way they [Indians] are dressing up they’re going towards the Western life even though they can not take it, but they still want to. You can not even imagine what these guys are doing, so it’s like they don’t believe in their culture, they are just trying to copy others. So why would I even go and stay there [India], I am happy to be here. Even the music, there’s nothing like Indian there, it’s all English English English!! It’s better here.”

Here we see the perception that the culture in India is becoming somewhat diluted due to a movement towards Western culture. Western culture is often regarded as acquisitive and associated with immorality (Bharati 1970: 65). I will come back to the effect that the influence of Western culture has on Asians in East Africa later. The perception being, therefore, that the communities in Dar es Salaam are keeping their traditions alive much better. Interestingly, Asians in Dar es Salaam view themselves as being the “perfect blend” (as some respondents described themselves) of maintaining their Asian traditions as well as moving with time (“the perfect balance of ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ values”). For instance, respondent Neeraj Chudasama states, “Indians in India are moving ahead now, the people are not religious minded anymore, the culture is getting forgotten. The Indians in the West are overly developed; there is no culture there at all.” Similarly respondent Radhika Ramji adds to this comment by stating, “Culture wise India is moving backward! The Indians in the West are far the other way as well; we in Dar es Salaam are left in the middle. In Africa we may be high thinking, and the way we dress may be modern, but we still go to *mandir* (temple), we still believe in our culture.” This illustrates the notion that Asians in Dar es Salaam perceive themselves as being more able to balance their traditional culture alongside Western influences, more so than the rest of the South Asian Diaspora, and Indians in India.

Just as the other diasporas, East African Asians have united themselves to promote the interests of and keep social and cultural ties to their homeland. They established their respective communities in East Africa based on caste or sect, which is significant in the

everyday lives of their members than the Asian community as a whole. East African Asians are unique in this aspect of creating boundaries amongst their respective communities because the South Asian Diaspora in other countries is much more unified<sup>29</sup>. These distinct sects or castes emerged as separate communities once the numbers of that particular community grew large enough. For example, Morris states:

“In the early days when the territories were being opened up the small numbers of Indians and the hazards of the environment were sufficient to make immigrants hang together in all their dealings with non-Indians. It was convenient to accept the European and African view of themselves...Indian Community...[however]...as soon as the members of that caste or sect grew large enough, then the members of that caste or sect tended to emerge as a distinct group out of the general category of the Indian Community” (1968: 61).

Respondent Kantilal Chudasama for instance states,

“We are the *Shree Sanathan Dharma Sabha*, which encompasses everything [all Hindus], but what has happened now a days is there are many different divisions. Even within the Gujarati community...there are various *mandirs* (temples) since there are too many of us now. All the big Hindu festivals like *Holi*, and *Diwali* are celebrated in this *mandir* and everyone is invited (by everyone he means only Hindus). You would feel as though you are in India.”

Furthermore, the political atmosphere during the colonial period supported the unity of small communities due to the segregation that took place along racial lines (Ghai 1965: 8).

Ismaili Khojas were the first to separate from the larger Asian community “separate from the broader Asian community, to defend their sectarian interests and to establish separate burial grounds, schools, recreational centres, hospitals and other institutions” (Voigt-Graf 1998: 51).

Morris further states that, “The success of these Ismaili efforts and the gradual official recognition of that community in its own right stimulated other castes and sects to follow their example” (1956: 208). There are non-religious facilities that various communities have created such as hospitals, dispensaries, and various sports facilities which are open to

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<sup>29</sup> For example, the Hindu Temple in Peewaukee, Wisconsin (general temple for all Hindus for the various religious and cultural events).

everyone. Many of these communities are also involved in charity work to benefit others, especially the Africans. "The charity work may include donations to disabled poor Africans, to refugees like the Rwandese in Tanzania at present or to institutions like hospitals and schools. Hindus maintain 43 charity organizations in Dar es Salaam" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 52). Hindus identify with their caste and Muslims for instance with their religious community, but even within the Muslim community, there are distinctions, such as the Ismaili Khojas. Therefore, lumping them all as an "Asian Community" is really only to contrast them with the Europeans and Africans, not how they themselves associate their identities.

#### Functions of Temples and Community Centers

The individuals I interviewed are Hindus from Gujarat whose communities are based on the division of *jatis* as stated in the introduction. These communities fulfill various tasks such as fund-raising, administration of and support for their cultural and social activities as well as their educational, religious, health, and welfare organizations. These public and private spaces are used by the communities to preserve and reproduce their culture and traditions as well as times whereby the negotiation of identity takes place. One space which is perhaps the strongest for the preservation of identity for Asians is the maintenance of the temple (or mosque)<sup>30</sup>. Some temples have a hall and a stage inside as well for the various social and cultural events to take place. There is one particular street called Kisutu in Dar es Salaam which has the respective *jatis'* temples lined up (See Appendix 7). There are

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<sup>30</sup> Indians in Mauritius developed what Hollup referred to as ethnic labeling whereby "the Tamils, Telegus, and Marathis claim a distinct cultural identity of their own" (224). Ravidasis and Valmikis in Coventry have established their "own temples and formed their own separate and still strictly endogamous local community" (Nesbitt 1994: 129).

numerous streets such as Kisutu which have an Asian concentration<sup>31</sup>. Even though the majority of Hindus do have their own worshipping spaces in their homes, there are many functions that the temple serves. One such function of the temple is that it serves as a place for social intercourse amongst Hindus<sup>32</sup>. For instance, respondent Shanti Shanker states, "The temple at least once a week I make it a point to visit. At home I also get the same feeling, but the only thing is at the temple you get to meet other people and you come to know various other religious programs because it's put on over there, like various auspicious functions there." This illustrates how attending the temple allows for community members to remain informed of the recent events that are to take place (See Appendix 8). Therefore, the temple gives "A sense of belonging through participation in group activities" (Rayaprol 1997: 65; Raj 2003). Shanker furthermore states, "It depends on the time you select to go also. See if I go on Saturday a bit early like at 5:30 or 6pm, then there is less crowd. If I go at 7-7:30 then people gather, they look forward to talking/chatting. So if I really want to meet people, I would go a bit late. Similarly respondent Beena Keshani states, "We have *ThakurJi*<sup>33</sup> [in the house]. I don't think it's necessary to go to the temple when you have this in the house. Of course when you go to *mandir* you meet people, but you can pray anywhere. In the temple you stay part of the cultural society and know the events that will take place."

Furthermore, the temple going population has perhaps decreased due to life-style changes and distance. For instance, respondent Romeet Barmeda states, "We use to go to the

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<sup>31</sup> These streets in Dar es Salaam include; India Street and Indira Gandhi street as a reminder of Asians' presence there.

<sup>32</sup> Munasinghe writes how Indo-Trinidadian religious leaders, "encourage youths to become actively involved in communities and thereby put into practice the principles of Hinduism" (2001: 110). They served not only a religious institution, but also an avenue for people to interact and feel a sense of belonging in the foreign country. Raj mentions how the temple "has encouraged the development of a clear sense of Hindu identity in a non-Hindu world" (2003: 91).

<sup>33</sup> Deity worshipped by the Bhatia community.

temple everyday in the morning, but slowly due to school and work, it cut down to special occasions, or 3 times a week, or our Indian New Years [when] the whole community meets up. It's becoming more of that since life is changing, whereas before it used to be more of an everyday thing." Respondent Dinesh Patel similarly explains,

"I use to go everyday, but due to my residence very far away, my business is located here it takes a lot of time. But, I do pray everyday. We have a *mandir* in the house so that tradition is still being carried on. A temple in this country is basically you go there if you want to meet people. It's more of a social setting more than worshipping."

Many also felt that if there is a temple in the home, then it is not necessary to go everyday to the temple outside the home for worship. For instance, respondent Radhika Ramji states, "*Tame tamara ghar ne mandir mano to pache mandire javani jaroor nathi*" (if you consider the temple in your house to be a temple then there is no reason to go to the temple).

The majority of Hindus do have some sort of worshipping area in their home (out of the 24 people I interviewed every single one of them had some sort of religious sanctuary in their homes where they prayed daily) (See Appendix 9). 12 out of the 24 people visited the temple regularly (at least once a week), and even though the remainder went only a few times a year, they definitely made it a point to attend during major religious events. There was no correlation of gender or age with the frequency of visits to the temple or how religious individuals were. Regardless of the frequency with which the respondents went to the temple, they all felt that the temple structure was important. For instance, respondent Radhika Ramji states,

"We have Shivratri<sup>34</sup> and other such events [for which] we all go there [temple] and meet. And others go to the *mandir* everyday and they may not have a temple in their house, they may not be well off to afford the murtis (idols) in their home. Plus, *hanuman ne tel charau hoi to mandir ee javu pare* (if you want to put oil on Lord Hanuman you have to go to the temple)<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> A Hindu religious festival honoring lord Shiva.

<sup>35</sup> A religious ritual done to honor the Hindu deity Hanuman, which requires one's presence at the temple.

Furthermore, respondent Neeraj Ramji states, "Other people depend on the *mandir* for food and everything. They don't eat at home because they don't have money, so they go to *mandir* for their lunch like for kichdi<sup>36</sup> and everything." Thus, the temple provides a means of support for the Hindu community at large. Respondent Kantilal Chudasama, who is a committee member for the Rajput Dhobi Samaj in Dar es Salaam explained to me that the temple doors are open to all Hindus, even if they are not Gujarati. He stated, "Every Friday the food here is free, *moong*, *bhaat*, *batetanu shaak*<sup>37</sup>." However, Africans are not allowed, and he explained that they do not enter in the temples either. Thus, both groups know their spaces, and even though temples are public spaces, they are considered to be private domain where identity will not be compromised.

The temple also serves as a means for gossip about members of the community. Respondent Rupa Solanki states, "The temple has become totally gossip, especially about daughter-in-laws. See the ladies that don't work see people like me working. I come home at 8pm I can't attend temple events so they criticize me. The mentality is down, they don't think poor girl is working, they just gossip."

Furthermore, the temple served as a meeting ground for boys and girls. Respondent Palna Solanki states,

"Even some boys or girls if they don't have any other excuse they just say we're going to the temple, and I know no parents are going to say no to going to the temple. They will meet there if they want a private conversation and nobody would suspect really. I have noticed this. Not so many people, but there are some. They won't go directly in the temple, but there is a garden area around the temple so they'll go there."

Not only does it serve as a meeting ground for maintaining relationships, but also for creating new ones. For instance, respondent J.K. Chande states, "You go to the temple and suddenly

<sup>36</sup> Indian dish made of rice and lentils.

<sup>37</sup> *Moong* is a type of lentil, *bhaat* refers to rice, *batetanu shaak* refers to a curry dish made of potatoes.

you find this boy has seen this girl there and it becomes an institution which serves that kind of purpose as well." Thus, the controlled private space of the temple creates a degree of social interplay between Hindus in Tanzania. It helps people understand each other better, builds friendships, and it even creates marriages.

Most communities have their own private community centers which have a hall and a stage where social and cultural events take place. For instance, respondent Babulal Chudasama, the Chairman of the Shree Rajput Dhobi Gnati Mandal told me that they celebrate and observe all their Indian cultural and religious festivals like *Diwali*, *Navratri*, the holy month of *Purshotam*, and *Shrawan*. Picnics as well as cultural events, such as a yearly Easter Program take place whereby there are volleyball tournaments and dance competitions. The Rajput Dhobi community, following the holy rituals for the New Year, also had a luncheon offered at their community center for members (See Appendix 10). This again is another example of a private space maintained by the Asians to uphold their sense of identity. Even though the space is actually a public area, it is used privately by community members.

Along with the temples and community centers, the Laxmikant Odhavji Vishram Shishukunj is another controlled community space through which the Hindu community and more specifically, the Hindu Gujarati community maintain its sense of unity. Shishukunj was founded on June 23, 1955. It is a cultural institution (a type of Sunday school) which children between the ages of 6-16 are allowed to attend. I had the privilege of speaking with the founder of this institution JanardanBhai Shukla. Shukla was recruited by the colonial government in 1953 to come to Dar es Salaam from India. Recruitment by the colonials was common for Indians during this period, as discussed in Chapter 1. Shukla said, "In 1955, people like me thought that young children of Dar es Salaam were wandering around the

streets, had no aim or objective so we felt we should do something so all the kids [Gujarati kids] can unite and play together, and we should have some sort of cultural activity.” Shukla and his friends did not have enough money to purchase a plot, and therefore, used the Mela Mandir, which was a small hall next to the temple. They began by staging dramas for children. A man by the name of InduBhai Dave wrote ballads for the children in Gujarati, and the children would perform those ballads. This brought in enough money through donations for them to purchase a plot, and in 1961, the Laxmikant Odhavji Vishram Shishukunj was built (See Appendix 11). The institution began with 80 children and at one point increased to 400. I asked Shukla why it was named Shishukunj and he said, “Shishu means kid and Kunj means garden. In a garden you find a variety of flowers, different colors, and different shapes. Similarly, in our garden you find a variety of kids, fat, small, thin, tall, short. So it’s a garden of kids. Shishukunj is a garden of kids.”

Every Sunday the children arrive at 8:30am. From 8:30-9am they chant the Hindu prayers, then from 9-10 they play games according to their age and height. From 10-10:30am they eat *prasadi*<sup>38</sup>. I noticed that there were not any idols present there so I asked why the food considered “prasadi” if there is no temple or idol. He responded, “There isn’t a temple here as such, but we call it *nasto* (breakfast) or *prasadi*, but we cook it here and the kids do pray. I don’t like hotel [restaurant] food so I do not allow the children here to eat hotel food in this institution. The kids sit for 45 minutes and eat” (See Appendix 12). Many of these Shishukunj children after the age of 16 still continue to come every Sunday and help out. They are referred to as bhai (brother) and ben (sister) of Shishukunj. They help in making

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<sup>38</sup> Refers to food that has been propitiated to a Hindu deity for blessing and then consumed by the worshippers.

*prasadi/nasto* and leading the group activities (See Appendix 13). Thus, the network continues throughout the generations.

After *nasto/prasadi* they line up in what Shukla calls the "Children's Assembly" whereby he tells them stories for 45 minutes. Shukla explains stories from,

"Ramayan, or Mahabharat, or jokes, but not dirty jokes. The jokes are such that the children get knowledge from them. American children don't have this kind of knowledge. My two grandchildren [in the US], one is in Washington University and the other is in grade 11, they know nothing of our culture, I'm ashamed to say this. I just came back from the US after being there for 3 months. See the kids in America like my grandchildren, they know nothing. My son told me to tell his children of these different stories I know to teach them about our culture and lessons."

Thus, the institution serves as a way to educate the children about traditions, culture, and values, which in Shukla's opinion (as well as many of my respondents) is lost within Hindu children living in Western countries<sup>39</sup>.

At 11:30am, the children go home, but they are allowed to return in the evenings. Shukla explains, "We play badminton, table tennis, cricket, we all sit here. So there is a group here, so the kids are not wandering around in the streets, they have a place to go" (See Appendix 14). As one can see from the photos, the area is quite large, and always monitored. This institution also creates a sense of security for the parents, who can depend on other community members to educate and look after their children. Parents also come here to socialize with each other; therefore, the space serves as a means for social intercourse amongst adults as well.

This institution is a private space which appears to be opened to the public, but its boundaries are quite defined. Shukla says, "This is open for all, but only Gujaratis come since

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<sup>39</sup> Shukla went to Tennessee in 1992 because his son had settled there, but did not like it there, therefore, returned to Dar es Salaam. Frequent trips are made back and forth now. Shukla told me that he began this school in the Memphis, Tennessee for Gujarati children; however, upon his departure from the U.S., the school was not maintained, and therefore closed.

the medium is in Gujarati.” Interestingly, the fact that the food served is called *prasadi* or *nasto* and Hindu prayers are recited in the morning already makes it a Hindu institution, thereby eliminating any non-Hindus from attending. Raj addressed the importance of language when she wrote, “language was linked to religious identification” (Raj 2003: 66)<sup>40</sup>. Language was used as a means to feel connected in a foreign country. Hollup writes, “For Telegu, Tamil, Marathi...language represents a means to communicate cultural identity among themselves-and thereby differences to others-creating a sense of shared past and belonging” (Hollup 2002: 226). Therefore, since the medium is in a language that is not known by all Hindus, it eliminates any non-Gujaratis from attending either, thereby strengthening a sense of community belonging. In addition, there are 2 different libraries; a children’s library and an adult library. Dipen Patel was one of the bhai’s at the institution and he is the caretaker of the children’s library. Books range from encyclopedias to Harry Potter novels (See Appendix 15). He showed me the attendance roster from last year and about 160 children attended the library frequently. The adult library consists of novels in Gujarati, Hindi and English (See Appendix 16). Again, since these libraries are inside the main institution, they are open solely to Hindus, mostly Gujarati members. However, there is a study area when you enter the institution which is open for everyone. Dipen Patel explained that many Africans come there to read daily. The reading materials are not provided by the institution as they are for the children and adult libraries. This study area is just a space for Africans to come and read their own materials. Thus, the library creates a sense of solidarity amongst the Gujarati population in Dar es Salaam, but with a negotiated boundary for use by the general population.

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<sup>40</sup> For more on the importance of language for Asians, See also (Maira 2002: 145)

Furthermore, the institution also creates transnational networks. Shukla said, "Even when they [Shishukunj kids] go abroad and settle down, there is a Shishukunj group [there], and when I visit there, they invite me to their place. We all get together and keep this connection." If a new member is planning on living abroad, the connections are already present to aid a member in settling in the new country successfully. Records are kept from years in order to maintain these networks. I had casually had mentioned that I attended Shishukunj in 1989, just prior to immigrating to the United States. Shukla immediately searched all the files and I was impressed with the speed with which he found my file (See Appendix 17)! The institution therefore serves as a strong networking tool and is very well organized.

In addition, Morris states:

"The Asians being exposed to two different cultural influences, that of their homeland and that of their host society, caused some identity problems. Many East African Indians lived in two worlds and could neither maintain nor change their habits to be completely at home either. If they did so in one world, they would not be easily able to perform their expected roles in the other" (1968: 41).

I would agree with Morris to an extent that Asians lived in two worlds in East Africa, but I would not agree that they were unable to balance the cultural differences in their host society. For instance, at Shishukunj what I noticed was that even though the language medium was Gujarati, the food was Indian, and the prayers were Hindu. Moreover, the national anthem the children sang before the activities began was Tanzania's National Anthem. Here we see the Asians negotiating their identity to some extent. This also supports the point I was making in Chapter 1 and will address more in Chapter 3 with regards to the lack of patriotism and emotional attachments for India that Asians in East Africa possess, especially the younger generations. For whatever reason they sang that national anthem, be it for true patriotic

feelings towards Tanzania, or from some pressure to sing it since they are now citizens there, the fact remains that it was sung. I am more inclined to go for my former reason because they could have easily sung India's national anthem in addition to Tanzania's anthem; however, this was not the case. In my opinion, the patriotism for India is simply not there, whereas in the larger South Asian Diaspora those attachments are present<sup>41</sup>. This example truly illustrated to me that Asians are balancing living in the two worlds quite well, and do not seem to possess identity problems as Morris suggests.

### Importance of Endogamy

An area where the negotiation of identity definitely does not take place is with marriages. The maintenance and future reproduction of Asians' communities is best achieved through endogamy. But before I delve into the issues surrounding endogamy, I would like to briefly explain the caste system and how it is carried over by Asians from South Asia into East Africa. In India, society is organized according to caste, which has been carried over into East Africa<sup>42</sup> by the Asian immigrants. It is important to discuss the difference between *varna* and *jati* because these terms often get mixed up. According to Bharati:

“The *varna* system is a ranking system which is uniform throughout India and refers to the theoretical division into Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (rulers, warriors), Vaishyas (merchants) Shudras (workers) with Untouchables being outside the system. In contrast to this theoretical division, the thousands of *jatis*, or castes, make up the operative situation on the Indian subcontinent. *Jatis* can be defined as units whose members are endogamous, commensal<sup>43</sup> and follow a hereditary occupation” (1972: 27).

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<sup>41</sup> For instance, at various cultural shows I have attended both in the US and Canada, I have noticed that India's National Anthem as well as the US National Anthem or Canada's national anthem get sung (for their respective countries) before the event takes place. Another example is at the University of Wisconsin-Madison when the Indian Student's Association presents India Nite (cultural program). Once again we see the US national anthem as well as India's national anthem sung prior to start of the program.

<sup>42</sup> For more information on caste, see (Beteille 1969; S.C. Dube 1994; Dumont 1980).

<sup>43</sup> This criteria regulates who is allowed to eat together and by whom the food can be cooked.

Individuals are born into a certain *jati*, and that label stays with them regardless if they are continuing their hereditary occupation or not. In fact, many Asians in Dar es Salaam do not follow their hereditary occupations, but that label is important for identity maintenance and endogamy. Through endogamy, boundaries between the various *jatis* are maintained (A.M. Shah 1982: 1). Mayer states that immigrants use the *varna* system to determine their position to each other abroad (Mayer 1967: 5). *Varna* is the theoretical division that refers to the status of the thousands of different *jatis*<sup>44</sup> (Dube 1994: 48).

The issue of caste is quite different in East Africa than it is in India. Unlike India, “no cross-section of Indian society came over, and no systematic sample of the four *varnas* was available here for re-establishing any kind of caste stratification” (Davids 1964: 394).

However, from my research I noticed that the immigrants who came from Gujarati and Kutchi speaking districts do have caste hierarchies. Additionally, Voigt-Graf states, “A hierarchy of *jatis* is virtually non-existent in East Africa” (Voigt-Graf 1998: 56). I am inclined to disagree here because there were multiple instances in my interviews in which members of various *jatis* considered other *jatis* inferior or superior to theirs. For example, respondent Vedika Dharmshi who is from the Gujjar Sudhar *jati* married a man from the Bhoi *jati* and expressed her frustrations with marrying into another *jati*. Dharmshi states that “In my community, it’s modernized, [in] their [Bhoi] community [there] is a lot of gossip and I can see they are not all educated....It is difficult for his community to accept that I’m studying after marriage, but my husband said no it’s fine it will help me.” The perception here is that members in the Bhoi

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<sup>44</sup> It is however a lot more complicated because not all *jatis* fit perfectly into the *varna* system because many *jatis* have been subdivided further which we unfortunately do not have room to discuss here.

community are less educated and more orthodox<sup>45</sup> and her husband just happens to be the anomaly. Thus, there is a sense of hierarchy between the *jatis* especially when it comes to marriage. There are cultural and religious differences which get emphasized especially as a justification for endogamy.

In my interviews, all members of various Gujarati communities expressed how individuals are supposed to marry within their community for the common reason that it makes it easier to marry someone with the same cultural background, ensuring cultural preservation. For instance, respondent Dinesh Patel states,

“I would definitely prefer my own community, so if my son marries a Patel, if not then I would be OK with a Hindu Gujarati girl so that way at least the culture would be maintained. Even the girl’s parents and the boy’s parents will be on the same wave length or the same kind of thinking rather than if they go outside [marry in another religion or community].”

Similarly, when I asked respondent Radhika Ramji what her thoughts on inter-caste marriages were, she responded,

“My first choice will be a Rajput Dhobi (her community) because as far as I’m concerned, I’ve been seeing how everyone in our family is married and it creates a bond between us, we’re all Rajput Dhobis, we have our own *kathas* (prayers), we’re confining it, and then if you marry someone else (implication outside of the community), everything is different you don’t know anything, it creates problems. You’re not just marrying the boy, you’re marrying the whole family.”

Because Hindu Gujarati society is patrilineal and therefore, from a female’s perspective she feels it would be easier to marry into a family from whose community she is already familiar with. Similarly respondent Neeraj Chudasama explains, “My parents’ first preference will be Rajput Dhobi. But they told me that if you don’t get a Rajput Dhobi, she still definitely has to be Hindu. Like she can be Bhatia, Hindu Punjabi, whatever, but I would prefer a Gujarati girl.”

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<sup>45</sup> Interviews also indicated that the Rana community was considered a lower *jati*.

Dating in general was not viewed upon as favorable within Asian families in Dar es Salaam. When I stopped the recorder, one of the respondents explained that he had a girlfriend and she was Hindu Punjabi. His parents however did not know about it and he was not planning on telling them. He stated, "I wouldn't tell them if I had a girlfriend because they'd feel they have to watch me more closely. I respect them a lot and they trust me a lot." He further explained how his sisters did not have as much liberty to go out as he does<sup>46</sup>. This was a view shared by many informants claiming that females are monitored more closely than males. Maira states, "Studies of Indian immigrant families concur that parents have more conservative standards for daughters than for sons regarding dating and pre-marital relationships" (Maira 2002: 155). However, despite the taboo on dating, it is still well practiced. Various informants such as Nisha Dharmshi, Rupa Solanki, and Hitesh Solanki all had pre-marital relationships and eventually married their partners. However, during their pre-marital relationships, they were careful to be discreet in order to prevent the spread of gossip. Maira stated that, "Gossip is one of the several devices used to monitor and control the sexuality of young women" (Maira 2002: 160). My informants (both men and women) explained how they were very cautious about the places where they frequented in fear of who may or may not see them. One often-used term, mentioned by an informant, was "aunty patrol," which referred to women in the Asian community monitoring the behavior of young men and women within the community. Regardless of the aunty patrols, monitoring, or gossiping, the younger generations did date. What is interesting here, however, is that even though the partners may not be in the same *jati*, the majority were still Hindu and from the Gujarati community. This indicates that Asians, even from the younger generation in East

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<sup>46</sup> Maira stated, "Women are believed to be the *izzat* or reputation of the family's status in the community" (Maira 2002: 159). Because of this, they are closely monitored in the South Asian community at large.

Africa preferred to marry within their religion and community; something which may not be the case with the South Asian Diaspora at large.

Even though women may have been monitored more closely than men, both genders were expected to refrain from pre-marital relationships. Gamburd states, "Women are seen as 'clay pots' stained by intercourse, men are seen as 'metal pots,' untarnished by lack of chastity. Since men cannot become pregnant and do not have to be virgins at marriage, their sexual activity does not threaten Sri Lankan purity" (Gamburd 2000: 221). I find these descriptions of 'clay pots' and 'metal pots' to be absurd because both genders are liable for their indiscretions. Reputation is important in the Asian community because if a bad reputation is widely perceived, it often makes it difficult to find a suitable mate, regardless of one's gender. For instance, respondent Radhika Ramji states, "My mummy has always told me that if you have a love marriage or an arranged marriage make sure he is Dhobi, *tu maru naak nai kapavje*."<sup>47</sup> All of my mummy's family married a Dhobi. We've all confined in our community, why do we need to go out of the community when we can find someone good in our community?" Here we see that endogamy increases one's prestige within the community. Gamburd however was resting the burden of reputation solely on Sri Lankan women whereas for Asians in East Africa, the implication is for both genders, not just for women<sup>48</sup>. Hansen illustrates this point well when he wrote, "For men...good earnings, enhanced status and prestige of the entire family, better chances on the marriage market" (Hansen 2001: 264). Women talked about how they would refuse proposals to marry men who had reputations of being promiscuous and untrustworthy. Furthermore, Narayan states, "Indian women in Indian

<sup>47</sup> Literally means "Don't get my nose cut off" meaning, don't make me lose respect.

<sup>48</sup> Gamburd's analogy itself of "clay pots" and "metal pots" does not even uphold because "metal pots" are prone to get scratched and damaged as well!

Diasporic communities are expected to safeguard the 'cultural distinctiveness' of the community by refraining from dating and from marriages that aren't arranged" (Narayan 1997: 177). This is true, but not exclusive to women. Men are expected to refrain from dating as well. This was one of the biggest reasons why respondents such as Hitesh Solanki and Poonam Nanji did not tell their parents of their respective pre-martial relationships. Parents disapprove of both males and females dating and promote arranged marriages out of fear that this "cultural distinctiveness" that Narayan addressed will get negotiated.

Although all the informants had a preference to marry within their respective *jati*, there was some acceptance to marrying outside the *jati*, so long as the members were Hindu Gujarati. However, respondents were still reluctant to marry outside the Gujarati community altogether and definitely reluctant to marry outside the religion. For instance, respondent Radhika Ramji states, "They'll accept if he's [future husband] a Gujarati boy, but I myself would not prefer it. Outside of being Gujarati I don't think the family would accept it either and outside the religion totally not. I don't want to change my ideas and beliefs because it's a drastic change. These changes are not easy and I would not like to disappoint my family." This same view was shared by respondent Biharilal Tanna. He states, "I've got a friend now who is Brahmin, she got married to somebody, also a Hindu, but they are meat eaters. She had a lot of problems, she had to start eating meat and what not, so even that is a kind of thing that can happen." Here we see that even though both parties were Hindu, since the marriage took place outside of the community, one side had to forsake its values in order to make the marriage successful. The fear of the loss of values through inter-caste or inter-religious marriage is the reason for the large preference for endogamy. Tanna further stated, "See the cultural difference is so vast [amongst Hindus even]. What I told you about Hindu and non-

Hindu, those circumstances also apply to Hindus. The same risks are there. For example, someone from Delhi, marries a girl from Kerala, it's totally different. India is a vast country." This perception of marriage outside the community regardless of religion was shared by many of the informants. For instance, Romeet Barmeda responded, "The way I've been brought up and the way our family is, marrying within the *naath* (community) or into another Gujarati *naath*, no Tamil business and no Muslim business. But the way I see as part of the new generation what matters is if the two people like each other and that's what I believe." This illustrates that marrying across *jatis* is acceptable, as long as the members are Hindu Gujarati. The older generations were often more rigid in terms of preference to marry within the same community, but the second and third generations claimed that if their partner was at least Hindu (even from another community), it would be acceptable. But Barmeda was struggling to even accept a Hindu from another community. This is what he meant by "no Tamil business and no Muslim business." Interestingly, even when my respondents claimed that the partner could be Hindu, what they really meant was a Hindu Gujarati, but acceptable if from another Gujarati community. So here we see that in terms of endogamy, the perceptions have remained mostly the same across generations. Barmeda mentioned that he has nothing against inter-religious marriages, but when I asked him if he would marry someone of another religion he responded, "No because my family would not accept it. See they [his family members] are right somehow on a small scale. Their [non-Gujarati partners] culture is totally different and adjustment becomes a big issue." Similarly, respondent Palna Solanki states,

"I don't mind marrying outside the *naath* regarding I'm not changing religion. I would not accept marrying outside the religion. I don't think I should change my religion for the guy. My religion is what I've been brought up in, their values are different than ours. I'm not opposing their religion, but I will feel awkward going into their family. Like if you compare Muslims and Hindus, they are way apart from each other. They eat cow and we

don't, we've been taught from childhood that we are not suppose to accept something like that because we consider it sacred. So why would I eat it?"

Here again we see the perception that automatically a marriage with a Muslim would require her to conform to her partner's religious beliefs and forsake her own values. I then asked, "What if the husband says you don't have to convert?" She responded, "That's OK, but still there will be problems from the family as well and nobody can really live like that especially if you're living with the family." Interestingly, when the topic of inter-religious marriage was brought up, all my informants automatically referred to marriage with Muslims (from South Asia, not the Africans) and not other religions because Hindus and Muslims<sup>49</sup> were the largest religious communities in Tanzania.

Furthermore, Morris illustrates how *jatis* were maintained and the importance of *jatis* over *varnas* for Asians in East Africa especially for endogamy and its maintenance in the Asian Diaspora at large. He states:

"The ease with which India could be visited and the frequency with which people in fact went to and from their homes meant that although they were not able to construct a caste system in East Africa, they were obliged to maintain the identity and a large part of the exclusiveness of their *jati*. In particular, they dared not fail to arrange correct endogamous marriages, so that their permanent return to India—a hope cherished by all achieved by few could once more assume their proper place in the local system" (1967: 276).

I disagree with Morris with the notion that "all" Asians hoped for their permanent return to India; just about all of my respondents claimed no interest in returning to India because Tanzania was considered to be their homeland. There was not only the preference to marry within the community for cultural preservation, but also to ensure help from the community if the marriage begins to fail. For instance, respondent Kantilal Chudasama states, "You know if there is a problem between the couple, I could at least ask my community to help me at the

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<sup>49</sup> These are the Muslims almost exclusively who came from South Asia because that is the area from which the majority of migration of Muslim immigrants into Tanzania came from. A point I discussed in the introduction in reference to Asians.

end of the day. If something goes wrong now, could I ask for help, of course not, they would say "did we tell your daughter to marry him?" [his daughter had an inter-caste marriage]."

Similarly, the Babulal Chudasama, the chairman of the Rajput Dhobi community summarized the disadvantages of marrying outside the community as well as advantage of marrying within the community. He states,

"There are a lot of complications that occur if somebody of our community gets married to a person from another community. The complications regarding religion, the future of the children will be at stake as other communities do not accept mixed castes, and many other reasons. The advantage of getting married within the community is that, in case of any disputes between the boy and the girl, the community management committee will try to resolve in the best interest of the couple. In most cases the disputes are solved to the satisfaction."

Therefore, the maintenance of community was not for the purpose of being accepted back into India, but to reproduce and preserve that community in Tanzania that Asians left behind in India.

In an effort to maintain those boundaries, intermarriage both across caste lines and especially across religions was an uncommon practice as my above examples all indicate. Agehananda Bharati states, "Only about one percent of the Asians have married across caste lines during the long period of their settlement" (Bharati 1967: 319). I was however, fortunate enough to find 4 various examples in which inter-caste and inter-religious marriages did take place. Respondent Poonam Nanji [Hindu Gujarati] married Ali Khan Nanji [Isamili]. Nanji states, "See for me to participate in the Ismaili community I have to change myself. But for him to participate in the Hindu community he doesn't have to change himself, he's invited, generally speaking." This fear of conversion in an inter-religious marriage in order to participate in various cultural activities is what many informants expressed. Similarly, not only inter-religious, but marriages between Hindu Gujaratis from differing communities can

also cause complications as I have discussed above. All the inter-caste and inter-religious couples I interviewed agreed that after being in these types of marriages, if asked to do it again, they would have preferred to marry within their own community. For instance, respondent Vedika Dharmshi states, "Well I would prefer to marry within my caste now. I feel this way now due to my experience. The lifestyle, environment, it's all different. People in my caste have the same values, culture, everything." She further explained that marrying outside the religion was not something she would consider because like the other informants she also felt that there tends to be a requirement to convert or forsake some of her values and traditions, which she was not willing to do. Dharmshi did give an example whereby a Hindu woman married a Muslim man are both steadfastly upholding their own religions and values. However, she also states, "This is a very nice example, but it's rare and difficult." The more common instances seem to be where one side, usually the woman, ends up either converting or forsaking some part of her religion, and thus, instilling the fear amongst people to marry outside of their community.

Furthermore, many informants had explained their hesitations with inter-religious marriages due to the confusion it would cause amongst children. For instance, respondent Khilna Mamlani states,

"I believe it's important to stay within your own religion at least. It may not be a problem for the adults but for children there will be a lot of confusion, like which religion to follow, where to go. I would want my child to marry within my own community. For us, it's easier to settle down within our own culture and community, food habits are different, religion is different. As it is even in your own community when you marry there are a lot of adjustments and this would be double. Outside Gujarati it becomes too separate."

When I asked respondent Poonam Nanji in regards to how she would raise her children she explained,

“They will follow their father’s religion [father is Muslim and she is Hindu]. As long as the kids are with me and they call me mom I don’t mind. We will teach them about both religions. They will be called Ismailies, but they will know what Hindu religion is. I don’t think it’s possible for the kids to be both [Hindu and Muslim] because they’ll get confused.”

Many respondents expressed hesitation towards inter-religious marriages because they felt it would confuse the children of those marriages; the main confusion being over which religion to choose.

Furthermore, for the preservation of the community, members who have had inter-religious marriages were often times not allowed back into the community. This was one of the reasons why Nanji felt shunned from both her own community as well as her husband’s community. Nanji states,

“I’m not allowed in his religion [Islam]. But he prays, [and] he goes to *Jamat Khana*<sup>50</sup>. His *Jamat Khana* has a big compound. You are not allowed to go inside the prayer area but you can go in the compound area. When there are a few functions that are there, his big days, it’s kept in the compound, so he takes me there. The whole community looks at me.”

Similarly, Nanji called the chairman of her Rajput Dhobi community to pay the annual fee of 5,000 shillings so she can get all the invitations for the various events. Nanji states that the chairman at the time responded, “We’ll see and I’ll get back to you, but I don’t think it’ll be allowed.” The chairman never did get back to her, therefore, implying the refusal to her request for membership. This was due to her inter-religious marriage. There was a fear that if members of inter-religious marriages are allowed into the community, the community will eventually cease to exist. For instance, respondent Radhika Ramji states,

“If one sets an example like that then everyone will do it. Even I can get married to a Muslim and come. Will we be left with a Hindu community? Do you realize that how many people are outside the community? So if everyone is allowed to bring their partner who is outside the community then what will be left? We already have limited Rajput Dhobis in our community. So if you start accepting outsiders and not allow your own community to flourish then we won’t have a community left!”

<sup>50</sup> A place of worship in which a congregation gathers for prayers.

Similarly, respondent VanitaBen Chohan states, "If someone marries out of the community like say a Muslim, there is no need to come to our community, they might as well just stay there, they've already changed their religion so better to just stay there. But if a Gujarati marries a Gujarati, even if outside the community, then they [can] come into [the] community because [a] Hindu still married a Hindu."

Many chairmen have tried to erase these perceptions and allow their members to maintain membership regardless of their marital choices. For instance, respondent Biharilal Tanna states,

"I was a proponent in a debate which happened in our community. Our girls Lohana *ni chokri* (Lohana girls) like Sujata, *eloka ne function ma bhaag levanu ke nai* (should girls like Sujata who have married out of the community take part in the community functions or not)? It was a huge debate that spilled over the whole country. I wrote a three page memorandum saying why that girl *aaje mari dikri hoi ene musalman saathe lagan karya hoi to mari dikri to revanij che* (if I had a daughter and she married a Muslim she would still remain my daughter), she had a right to participate fully, it was a peak debate. In the end they had a trump card. They called Bhanu Maharaj who was a chief priest in the *mandir*. He said, *jo apri dikrew bare lagna kare, to gotra badlajai*, (if our girls marry outside our community their origin change), that means they are not Lohanas anymore and since they are not Lohanas they can't be members of the community anymore. I have redrafted the constitution and that will be changed."

This debate was present even in the Rajput Dhobi community, and the current chairman Babulal Chudasama has stated that as long as he is chairman, members of inter-religious or inter-caste marriages will be allowed to participate in the community. Interestingly, this issue of members unable to participate in the community after inter-religious marriages applied to females and not males. A woman is associated with maintaining national identity<sup>51</sup>.

Bhattacharjee sums up the importance of the female's role in maintaining identity by stating,

"The woman becomes a metaphor for purity, the chastity, and the sanctity of the Ancient

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<sup>51</sup> Narayan states, "Women of Indian origin are assigned a significant and peculiar role in maintaining Indian identity" (Narayan 1997: 175).

Spirit that is India” (Bhattacharjee 1992: 30-31). This is why when it came to marriages; Asian women rarely intermarried with other groups because if the woman married into another group, the perception was that somehow this ‘ancient spirit’ would get diluted as well, something that Asians were not willing to negotiate<sup>52</sup>. Even though Africans did not want to affiliate too closely with Asians, they had demanded from Asians to “give their girls for interracial marriages as a sign of goodwill and integration” (Voigt-Graf 1998: 133). During the early years of Asian settlement in Africa, there was a scarcity of Asian women; therefore there had been some intermarriages with African women. However, once larger numbers of Asian women arrived in East Africa after the turn of the century, and Asian men had the means to even go to India to find a bride and interracial marriages came to an end (Bharati 1965: 133). In my research, there were no intermarriages with the African community and I had difficulties in finding such couples, perhaps illustrating the rareness of it even today. Many informants such as JK Chande and Ramesh Ramji talked about their fathers going to India in search of suitable brides. In general it did not appear that Africans or Asians alike were really interested in interracial marriages<sup>53</sup>.

Endogamy plays a crucial role in cultural preservation and reproduction for Asians in East Africa. Hollup states, “It is by conducting marriages with members of one’s own ethnic categories that kinship groups and caste are all reproduced and maintained (Hollup 2002:

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<sup>52</sup> Maira supports this notion when she writes, “Female bodies are often used to represent national identity or ethnic loyalty...notion of chastity and authenticity” (Maira 2002: 14). Later Maira stated, “The figure of a woman is often used to symbolize the national or ethnic group, as in reference to the ‘nation’ as a loved woman, for example, the reference of India as ‘Bharat-Mata’ (literally Mother India)” (Maira 2002: 179). This is an important point in terms of marriage practices.

<sup>53</sup> Van den Berghe illustrates, “Africans have taken over from the whites the entire battery of anti-Asian prejudices, adding to it the virulence of the frustrated underdog. After decades of humiliation, oppression and exploitation, after the bloodbath of Sharpeville and the concentration camps of the Kenya war of independence, the Europeans have achieved the miracle of being less hated by Africans than the powerless Asians whose worst crimes were a bit of cultural snobbery and some sharp business practices such as are inherent in any system of private business enterprise” (Van den Berghe 1970: 172).

227)<sup>54</sup>. Similarly, Nesbitt stated, “the issue of marriage is also crucial to future structural cohesion of the community, for *zat* boundaries have long been maintained through endogamous marriage” (Nesbitt 1994: 140; Maira 2002: 53). Thus, the maintenance of boundaries which are important for Asians in Tanzania and perhaps even in the South Asian diaspora at large are maintained through endogamy<sup>55</sup>. In many ways, endogamy can serve as a way of renewing that Asian connection as well. For instance, Thiara states, “Workers sought marriage partners amongst new recruits. This was a major means of continuing contact especially for indentured Indians and renewing their Indian connection” (Thiara 2001: 126).

Furthermore, women were often times seen as the cultural preservers and reproducers. Rayaprol defined cultural reproduction as being, “the process by which they [people] seek to transmit knowledge, values, belief systems and behavioral norms to the next generation” (Rayaprol 1997: 61). Respondent Biharilal Tanna states, “It is recognized by all that mother is the first teacher and the most important teacher for a child therefore, the teaching regarding the culture, values, standards, difference between right and wrong is on the mother, regardless of *kabila* (community).” Similarly respondent Dinesh Patel states, “Without women I don’t think the religion would be there.” In reference to men, Leonard states, “few fathers were able to teach systematically or well about their religion. Where there were Indian wives, there was more heard about Hindu practices and beliefs” (Leonard 2002: 127; see also Rayaprol 1997: 64; Raj 2003: 42). Respondent J.K. Chande’s eldest son could not speak Gujarati comfortably and Chande stated that the reason was due to his marriage to an English woman.

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<sup>54</sup> Gardner and Shukur stated, Marriage has been the central link between British Bengalis and their rural roots” (Gardner and Shukur 1994: 156). See also (Axel 2001: 14). Similarly Gillespie states, “marriages...play a crucial role in sustaining and re-inventing ties” (Gillespie 2002: 180).

<sup>55</sup> See Mishra 2002: 236 about NRI’s and Raj 2002: 81

Chande states, “No they [children] don’t speak any Gujarati. Unfortunately the mother was English from the two children...the mother did attempt to employ a teacher in England who came once a week to teach them [but was unsuccessful].”

Interestingly however, even though Tanna, Chande, and Patel viewed women as being the predominate cultural preservers and reproducers in the religious sense, Asian men in Dar es Salaam were quite active in preserving their culture and community ties as well. Dinesh Patel for instance stated how the men in his Patel community were active members and they would decide on things such as how to develop the plot of land they had in their possession, how to build new schools for the new generation community members, and coordinate cultural events. Similarly, J.K. Chande was a trustee of the Lohana community and philanthropic organizations such as the Freemasonry and Rotary Foundation. Likewise, Tanna is an active member of a Hindu mission called Chinmaya Mission. Tanna states,

“I was made head of that mission here in Tanzania, so I went down there [India] for it. That is a very important link [to India] as far as I’m concerned. I go on pilgrimages, visit temples, *ashrams*, when there are discourses on the Bhagvad Gita or Upanishads or whatever, our headquarters are in India. Next year I’m organizing a Kailas Yatra [pilgrimage to the Himalayas which is considered holy for the Hindu deity Shiva]. I’ll ask people here if they want to go. There are lots of people who have an intimate desire to go, but there is no sort of commute or organizing.”

Tanna therefore, has an important role in facilitating this trip and allowing Asians in Tanzania to maintain their culture and roots with India and their religion. Additionally, respondent Beena Keshani states,

“It’s not only a woman. In my family when we have something like a *puja* (religious prayers) or something or *thakurji ni seva*, my husband won’t know all of them. He would know to lighten the *divo* (candle) or offer something, but the other things I would have to teach them [children], like what to pray and at what time. But other things like outside activities, how to treat people, what to do when we go to the temple, how to behave with *naath* (community) people, my husband teaches them.”

Even men in the younger generation such as Neeraj Chudasama, Hitesh Solanki, and Romeet Barmeda, did religious prayers every morning in their respective temples at home. So here we see that the cultural preservation and reproduction is not solely the requirement of the woman, but rather the roles are divided and equally important<sup>56</sup>. However, majority of informants stated that it is much easier to maintain the culture when the couple is from the same community or at the least the same religion. This is another reason why endogamy is still strong today within the Asian community in Tanzania.

### Negotiation of Public Spaces

These controlled community spaces mentioned above have allowed Asians to maintain their boundaries; however, there are public areas whereby the negotiation of spaces takes place. As discussed in Chapter 1, under colonial rule, East African societies were racially compartmentalized. There was residential segregation, separate schools<sup>57</sup>, hospitals, and even philanthropic clubs under both German and British rule. Post independence however, there are exclusive Asian dance clubs within both Dar es Salaam as well as the broader South Asian Diaspora, where Indian music is mixed with Western music<sup>58</sup>. The Asian exclusive dance club space was present in Dar es Salaam but seems to be getting compromised. During New Year's holiday, I went to a dance club called Garden Bistro with a few Asian friends and family members. It was mostly an exclusive Asian party, with a few African persons. One of the Asians in the group complained that now Africans "seem to be going to 'our' places."

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<sup>56</sup> Rupa Solanki stated, "He [her husband] sets up the *prasad* (food propitiated to the deity) in the morning. When I'm praying he'll be there for 5 minutes, he'll listen to what I'm saying. Sometimes he'll read those books (religious scriptures)." Thus, we see that she may pray for a longer period of time, but it is her husband who sets up the prayer plate.

<sup>57</sup> For more information on segregation of schools see Morris 1956: 196).

<sup>58</sup> For more information on exclusive Indian dance clubs amongst the South Asian Diaspora see (Maira 2002)

This “our” is referring to the space which was assumed to be an Asian space, but is now being transformed by a social allowance to let Africans enter. At clubs such as this, Hindi music mixed with Kiswahili gets played. One famous song for instance is by Akhil titled “Nakupenda Regina” (I love you Regina). This song became so famous that at an Asian cultural event in Philadelphia, the Asians from Dar es Salaam requested it be played, and everyone danced to it, whether or not they knew Kiswahili because the beat had the familiar “Asian” feel to it. This mixed song is sung by an Asian, and is a great example of how Asians are negotiating even music. Furthermore, clothing was another example. At this club, I noticed that the Asian women wore jeans or skirts, however, combined it with Indian jewelry (such as bangles and earrings). This illustrates that even though their clothing may be westernized, they have retained their identity through their jewelry. I noticed many Africans wearing similar jewelry, thus again we see in certain spaces and through fashion how identity is negotiated.

Prior to independence, segregation was along racial lines, and that has continued to some extent. However, currently, it is based more on family income. Oyster Bay on Toure Drive is a waterfront where people gather to socialize, and many even reside there. Formerly this space was a former European quarter; however, many rich Asians and Africans have moved there. However, even within Oyster Bay there are different spaces for different races. For instance, on Sundays, many people go to the Bay to enjoy the breeze from the waterfront and eat various snacks sold by Africans on the streets. Hindu communities tended to have one area where they gathered, Muslims had another, and the Africans still yet another. I did not notice many Europeans there on Sundays. I remembered on one occasion I was told, “That is too far out, that is the African area, come back to this area.” Thus, the space in which people

socialized was affiliated with their identity, and everyone had an unwritten understanding of their respective places to sit.

Most interracial relationships are confined to the business sphere. These relationships are not solely limited to Asian shopkeeper and African customer relationship, but extend to being colleagues, employers and employees. All the people I interviewed indicated that with business dealings or job related tasks they do associate with Africans; often times they speak English not necessarily Kishwahili because the Africans are also getting educated and many now know English. However, integration does not occur in all spaces as discussed, and those boundaries are in many ways essential for community maintenance and identity preservation for Asians.

Asians in Tanzania have maintained their cultural and religious traditions to a large degree. Other groups such as ex-indentured Asians in the Caribbean, and Mauritius for instance, were cut off from any significant influence from India and did not have the means to keep close contact with their native country. Therefore, they started to gradually integrate with their new environment, to a larger degree than Asians in East Africa (Voigt-Graf 1998:128)<sup>59</sup>. Asians in East Africa have given up their sojourning attitude and regard East Africa as their permanent home; however, they have maintained their close-knit communities up to today<sup>60</sup>. Asians were not willing to give up their culture and tradition for the sake of integration. On the contrary, "The impact of prejudice seems to provoke individuals to assert

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<sup>59</sup> For more information on race relations between Asians of indentured origin and other population groups in Fiji and Mauritius, see (Carroll 1994).

<sup>60</sup> They may be successful in maintaining those community boundaries due to economic advantages that community-based organizations offer in terms of distributing credit, information, and labour (Voigt-Graf 1998: 128).

their identity rather than acculturate to avoid prejudice” (Hinnells 1994: 69)<sup>61</sup>. Furthermore, Asians have a great deal of pride in being one of the oldest cultures in the world and feel superior towards African and European culture (Angrosino 1983: 392-393). In addition, there is not a homogenous culture to which Asians can even necessarily assimilate with. Africans belong to many different ethnic groups with different traditions and rituals which due to European influence are undergoing changes as well (Ghai and Ghai 1971: 36). Therefore, Asians in East Africa maintain their community boundaries as much as possible to preserve the culture they deem so priceless.

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<sup>61</sup> Isolation and segregation was not solely something Asians’ chose on their own, but it was also imposed on them (Voig-Graf 1998: 142).

## Chapter 3:

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### Transnational Networks of Tanzanian Asians

Due to Africanization and nationalization of businesses and schools during the mid 1960's, many Asians left Tanzania and moved to Canada or the United Kingdom. The UK was attractive for employment and educational purposes<sup>62</sup>. For instance, respondent J.K. Chande sent his son to UK to study. When I asked him why he chose that destination he responded, "In those days all roads led to London in this country. Whether my father wanted to buy glasses or tumblers like these he wrote an order to his agent in London. If he wanted to buy half a million pounds worth of machinery he would go to London because historically it was the motherland, the metropolitan power, no other country came into the picture." This is an excellent example of how networks with the former colonizers were maintained. As discussed in Chapter 1, some Asians left Tanzania and moved to the UK due to the Africanization and nationalization policies and even those that remained in Tanzania, often times maintained their UK citizenship such as respondent Biharilal Tanna<sup>63</sup>. Since many Asians felt a large sense of insecurity due to anti-Asian sentiments during the struggle for independence and post-independence, they maintained the citizenship of their former colonizers. Asians took many measures to increase their safety such as: "illegally transferring assets abroad, increased their ethnic solidarity, kept close ties with their brethren in other countries, bribed African politicians for protection and, if all this was not sufficient, they

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<sup>62</sup> "The Aga Khan arranged a deal with the Canadian government after the nationalization of buildings in Tanzania. As a result, Canada became a major destination for Ismaili emigrants from Tanzania" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 151).

<sup>63</sup> Biharilal Tanna states, "My passport may not say that I am a Tanzanian, but in my heart, in my attitude, in my commitment, I'm very much a Tanzanian. I hold a British citizenship."

emigrated” (Voigt-Graf 1998: 143). These steps increased African hostility towards Asians and even harmed Tanzania’s economy, but it was a step that Asians had to take to create some sense of security for themselves during a time when they were devoid of it.

During the first half of the century, Asians sent their children to India for an education since they did not have the means to send them to a Western country. Currently, there appears to be a movement of Asians to study out of Tanzania, many of whom are studying abroad in mostly the United Kingdom, the United States, or Canada, and often do not return to Tanzania at the end of their studies<sup>64</sup>. For instance respondent Dinesh Patel states, “Children of my son’s age (mid-twenties), what I’ve seen with the parents here is that their parents are here [in Dar es Salaam] and their children are studying abroad; so most are either in the States or UK.” Asians with close relatives in these countries, and highly skilled and professional people or those with adequate resources to be potential investors in the western countries get residence permits. Another means to get residence permits in these countries is through marriage with community members who have settled in the diaspora. For instance, respondent Rupa Solanki states, “People are going crazy. You know if it was not me, and somebody else, even if she loved someone else, she would leave him just go and settle there [a western country].” Similarly, respondent Hitesh Solanki adds, “It’s like a psychological disease which is spreading in this country. It’s already spread, it’s on the climax now. Everyone wants to go out [migrate to a Western country]!” All of the third generation individuals I interviewed stated that they would prefer to study in a Western country due to educational opportunities and advancements there and someday even live or retire in a

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<sup>64</sup> There also seems to be an increase in Asian businessmen [former East African Asians who left the country after independence and now live in Canada, UK, or US] in search for investment opportunities, and even expatriates such as my informant Shanti Shanker from India.

Western country such as the UK, or the US. For instance, Hitesh Solanki states, "I'm strongly an enthusiast for scientific tools and technology, and I think most of it I'm missing here and even in India I'll miss it. The way technological advancement is in the West it's nowhere." Furthermore, Solanki along with other third generation informants stated that retirement in a Western country would be desirable due to a general sense of security that they felt would be guaranteed. Thus, the younger generations are creating networks abroad by this shift in movement to the West.

#### Cultural Nostalgia and the Connection to the Homeland

This shift of movement into Western countries has caused Tanzanian born Asians to cease to regard India as the place to return one day. Cultural nostalgia refers to immigrants experiencing nostalgia for what they left behind in the past. Cultural nostalgia grows from immigrants being separated from their "motherland" and not considering "host" countries their homeland. This often alienates groups in "host" countries. For instance, Cohen states, "Diasporas can never be exclusively nationalist because of multiple attachments. They remain socially, politically, culturally, and often economically part of the nation-state of their ancestors" (Cohen 1997: 18). An example of this is in India where immigrants are given "Non-Resident Indians" and "People of Indian Origin" labels, which produce "transnational identities through their [immigrants] decisions to retire" (Raj 2003: 23). Thus, even nation-states play a role in creating and sustaining this cultural nostalgia. Raj says, "...India has official policy changes in which it attempts to position itself as the homeland" (Raj 2003: 183). This further makes Asian immigrants feel that host countries are not their homeland, and which in turn exacerbates cultural nostalgia. Interestingly however, this was not the case

for Asians in Tanzania. There seems to be two possible reasons as Evans discusses as to why Asians have chosen to live in Tanzania. "Those remaining are either committed to Tanzania, or perhaps have nowhere else to go" (Evans 1993: 37). From my research the former reason is plausible not the latter. The majority of respondents' family members in my study have dispersed in different countries and this serves as a kind of insurance for Asians who have stayed on in Tanzania. This dispersal makes the transfer of money easier and in the case of an emergency, Asians would be granted possible citizenship in these other countries due to family reunification purposes. These relatives abroad create a strong transnational network for Asians who have stayed on in Tanzania. Many informants illustrated their desire to retire in Tanzania not because they did not have anywhere else to go as Evans described, but because they considered Tanzania their homeland and would truly feel lost anywhere else. The "myth of return" is simply not present amongst the Asians in Tanzania. Respondent Raju Dave for instance states,

"I think people who want to retire in India are not being patriotic for this country. I would retire here because this is where I've grown up and earned my bread and butter. If I was to go to the UK or India, or to the States, I would be lost. There are people who would want to retire in India. I think they have not lost their ties to India, and perhaps they feel more at home in India, cost of living is cheaper in India than it is here so maybe that's why they want to go there."

Here one can clearly see that Evans' perception of diasporas' inability to be nationalistic in their "host" countries does not apply to the Asian diaspora in Tanzania because like Dave, many of my informants were very patriotic for Tanzania. Only one informant out of the 25 that I interviewed expressed the desire to retire in India, and that one respondent felt that medical facilities were better in India than Tanzania and in his old age, this was an essential requirement for him. Furthermore, he felt that the cost of living was cheaper in India; therefore, economically it was a smarter decision. None of my informants described retiring

in India due to any cultural nostalgia felt for their ancestral country, as the scholars above presumed was the case with the South Asian diaspora.

#### Emotional Attachment to the Homeland

Even though Asians in Tanzania do not desire to resettle in India, the emotional links to their ancestral country still persists. "Their own explanation of the importance of India in their lives is summed up in the following statement: if and when another expulsion or similar catastrophe occurs, India will take them back" (Kalka 1990: 258). Thus, the notion here is that India could possibly be a place of return, but if and only if Tanzania forces them out. In this view, Asians are a typical middleman minority, as Bonacich writes, "Love of the homeland is kept alive by host hostility; one supports the homeland in part to have somewhere to go if things get too bad in the host country" (Bonacich 1973: 593). Furthermore, the physical proximity to India can make it unproblematic for frequent visits. Religious leaders from India have been invited to East Africa since the 1940's to hold lectures (Bharati 1972: 188). Not only religious leaders, but musicians, teachers, movie stars, and other prominent Indians are continuing to be invited (Helweg 1986: 115). For instance, Biharilal Tanna describes that in aiding him to organize a religious tour to India for his fellow Asians in Tanzania; he will invite one of the *swamis* from India to join them. Similarly, J.K. Chande stated, "When Sharmila Tagore's<sup>65</sup> husband came to Dar to play cricket, they stayed at my house." Thus, links to India are still maintained today.

After the Second World War however, these links and ties to India began to decrease.

Gregory states:

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<sup>65</sup> Sharmila Tagore is a famous Bollywood actress.

“World War II was a turning point in the relations with South Asia. Although some continued with difficulty to eke out a living in East Africa, the Asians as a whole were far more prosperous. They had the means not only to send their children to India or Pakistan, but to the United Kingdom and even the United States for secondary and higher education. Increasingly an education in Europe and America was recognized as more valuable and prestigious. Moreover, as a greater proportion of the Asians were born locally, the relation to close ties with South Asia acquired less value” (1993a: 332).

This aids in understanding why education abroad is valued more, and thus, the push to move to Western countries as many of my respondents illustrated. Interestingly, many informants illustrated that they would look for a suitable partner for a boy or girl in Dar es Salaam, not in India or the West. Informants felt that Asians in Dar es Salaam had the “perfect blend of Eastern and Western values.” For instance, Poonam Nanji states,

“I’ve seen people who are grown up and educated in Dar, they have both Western culture and traditional culture, they keep it balanced. They don’t forget their traditions and they don’t forget that they are developing with the country as well. If you go to India, people there are not educated they don’t grow with the country. They are just traditional and they keep their culture, or they are overly westernized. If you go into western countries they would say “what tradition, I don’t like this religion, what is this religion” so they keep the western things going on. But it’s not like that in Dar es Salaam, we keep it balanced here.”

This was a common perception shared by many informants. Asians in Tanzania are both physically in the middle as well positioned themselves value wise as being balanced. There was often times even a negative perception of India. For instance, respondent Neeraj Chudasama states,

“I didn’t really like the place [India] and I find the people [in India] cunning. Even though we are all Indians, we look alike, we think alike, same religion, but in India *badhai marason tamne banavane koshish karse*” (all the people [Indians in India] will try to fool you). In Africa they [Asians] won’t try to fool you. The first impression I got when I landed there [India], the rickshaw guy tried to tell us the meter price was higher than it was. We had the meter chart, you need to have that when you go to India otherwise they’ll try to fool you.”

This was also a common perception by many informants that Indians in India will try to con them, as well as the perception that life there is very fast and competitive. Interestingly, the frequency of visits to India by my informants was very limited, especially those born locally

had fewer contacts to India; therefore, these perceptions are formed from one or maybe two visits. Contacts with India are therefore maintained in the form of occasional visits, remittances, cultural ties and through Bollywood Cinema. Morris writes:

“Owing to their relative affluence, East African Asians have been able to keep their separate identity, to organize effectively and to maintain contacts to their home country. The relative proximity to South Asia obviously renders links to the Indian subcontinent easy. East African Asians have kept contacts to people at home, by traveling to India or Pakistan for visits or studies and for marrying wives from there” (1957: 309).

Morris is correct to some extent; however, the connection to the Indian subcontinent is not nearly as strong as before. For instance, many respondents born in Tanzania had been to India once or twice, mostly for a wedding, medical purpose, or touring. None of the respondents made frequent visits with the exception of 2 members who had friends there and philanthropic affiliations.

Over all, Asians in Tanzania used to invest mostly in East Africa until the Second World War. In the mid 1900s, Asians began to increase their investments in Western countries due to the insecurity they felt in East Africa during that time. Foreign exchange regulations in East Africa made any transactions abroad difficult for Asians. As Voigt-Graf illustrates, “Only recently, with the enactment of the ‘National Investment (Promotion Protection) Act have Tanzanian Asians started to invest in Tanzania again” (Voigt-Graf 1998: 161). These examples illustrate the lack of investments and remittances to India by the East African Asians. Similarly, for Gujaratis who migrated from East Africa to Britain, Kalka explains how they “utilized India as a vehicle to sustain ethnic identity, during and after the migration with the resulting environmental changes” (Kalka 1990: 263). East African Asians who have migrated have little interest in remitting money to the Indian subcontinent. Since there is a lack of “myth of return” prevalent amongst them, it also explains their progress and

success in Western countries (Bhachu 1991: 58). Asians use all their resources and strengths in creating their lives in the host country. However, one area in which they always sent considerable amount of money to India was for charity. Voigt-Graf states, "East African Asians have also contributed to the construction of schools, hospitals, temples, mosques, and other public buildings and memorials in India, especially in Gujarat" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 161).

Scholars have stated that the Asians in East Africa have limited networks with their respective communities abroad. For instance, Voigt-Graf states, "Asians of East African origin are linked neither to migrants who came directly from South Asia to the Middle East or Western countries nor to the various settlements of ex-indentured laborers" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 162). Hugh Tinker stresses this point when he writes, "the different overseas communities are almost completely out of touch with each other" (Tinker 1977: x). I disagree with Tinker because the links of Asians in Tanzania, especially to their respective diasporic communities abroad is quite strong. Both direct and twice migrants go back to India or Pakistan for visits, but Asians with an East African background also keep connections to their relatives back in East Africa with reciprocal visits which many of my informants explained. Furthermore, there are even yearly cultural functions and sports competitions, such as the ones in Philadelphia and Canada organized by the Rajput Dhobi Samaj in the West. These community ties are carried over by Asians from East Africa who have migrated from East Africa. East African Asians have brought with them their skills, knowledge of English and sense of community from East Africa. They remained culturally conservative and highly religious, even more than the direct migrants (Bhachu 1991: 64). Those that have returned to India remain segregated in their own residential areas, bringing with them the profits earned in East Africa (Banks 1994: 146). Thus, regardless of where Asians from East Africa chose

to settle, they maintain their own sense of community through their transnational networks.

Therefore, the various dispersal of the South Asian diaspora does not mean that those transnational networks have decreased. They have in fact remained stronger than before because people now have the means to remain connected.

## Conclusion:

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Asian immigration into East Africa began in the 19th century with the introduction of colonial rule and continued well into the 1950's. After the partition of East Africa between Britain and Germany, the British administration imported indentured laborers from British India to work on railways as well administrative services for Britain's East African territories (Voigt-Graf 1998: 170). Britain took over and maintained Tanganyika as a mandate from the League of Nations. After the First World War, Asians were recruited from British India to work there. During independence and the establishment of the United Republic of Tanzania, a great sense of insecurity emerged amongst the Asian middlemen minorities due to anti-Asian sentiments. "After independence, Asian emigrants from Tanzania far outnumbered new immigrants thus, reducing the number of Asians in Tanzania from some 110,000 in 1964 to a mere 42,000 today" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 172).

Asians in Tanzania are divided into many communities based on castes and sects. The only time they united as one group was to fight against discrimination in colonial times. According to Van den Berghe, "Racism was, to an overwhelming if not an exclusive extent, a Western import and an outgrowth of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism" (Van den Berghe 1968: 7). Voigt-Graf states, "Asians rarely mix with educated Africans, thus, forming their opinion only by their experience with mostly uneducated Africans" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 138). This was not the case with my respondents. As a matter of fact most of the social intercourse between Asians and Africans was amongst the educated classes. For instance, Radhika Ramji (a university medical student) amongst other respondents explained how the communication between Africans and Asians has increased, and people regardless of race, now work together

unlike in the past. These anti-Asian sentiments however caused Asians to unite as one group to fight the racism against them. The upper classes mixed across racial lines in sports clubs, or in international philanthropic clubs like the Lion's Club, the Rotary Club, the Roundtable, or the Freemasonry. Involvement in these various clubs has allowed Asians and Africans to transcend racial boundaries. However, eventually, whenever a community grew large enough, immigrants formulated subgroups within the larger group by creating community organizations in order to preserve their respective cultures in their host country. Community organizations serve both cultural and religious needs for its members, promote their members' interests, raise funds, and are culturally and socially active. Compared to the rest of the South Asian diaspora, Asians in Tanzania are perhaps the most divided amongst themselves and organized in distinct communities. Through endogamy, kinship groups and castes are reproduced and maintained up to this day so much in fact that informants in every generation had a preference to marry within their own respective community.

Identity is negotiated through different spaces and there is a joint consensus on which spaces are considered common spaces where boundaries can be negotiated and in which spaces boundaries are strictly drawn. Even though areas may be public spaces such as the temple and Shishukunj they are nevertheless used privately by the respective community members.

Asians in East Africa do not possess cultural nostalgia for their ancestral country nor have aspirations inspired by the "myth of return" as the perhaps members of other diasporas. Many informants in fact did not consider India to be a place for retirement. They often described India as a harsh place to live, especially after years of having relatives reside in

Tanzania, that link to India is in some ways forgone<sup>66</sup>. However, cultural and religious attachments to India are still prevalent. Asians in East Africa have been able to keep ties with their ancestral country due to sheer physical proximity, improvements in the international telecommunications sector, religious affiliations, kinship ties, marriage arrangements and periodic visits. Asians in Tanzania are a mobilized group and have maintained transnational networks in various countries. They may negotiate their national affiliations by siding with Tanzania or negotiate identity in other ways; however, maintaining cultural and religious ties to India has continued to remain an important factor, an attachment which will perhaps never get negotiated because this attachment allows Asians to maintain a strong sense of identity.

Asians in Tanzania have transnational networks with their relatives and community members in various countries. In fact, many keep in touch more with their relatives and respective community members abroad than perhaps other community members within Tanzania. Several of the informants indicated that they have in fact visited various countries already (especially Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia), thereby establishing stronger links to the respective country. Many travel abroad for vacations and especially for ceremonies such as marriages. Others travel for international conferences for their charitable organizations. Even though Asians in Tanzania are emotionally attached to their homeland they are now turning to Western countries, especially U.K., Canada, and now also the US for economic investments and resettlement.

Identity is an important factor for any group of people, and in order to prevent it from getting negotiated boundaries get created between groups. As Raj illustrates, "Living in a

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<sup>66</sup> "When it came to decide about citizenship, extremely few Asians took Indian or Pakistani citizenship thereby proving that their attachment to their respective home country was indeed confined to the cultural and religious spheres" (Voigt-Graf 1998: 158).

foreign country makes them [Asians] grab their culture harder” (Raj 2003: 77). This aids in understanding why immigrants try to formulate distinct boundaries even when there may be an overlap in practices. These attempts to formulate boundaries and allow for their identities to be negotiated every now and then, builds a sense of pride for Asians and makes them feel closer to their respective communities<sup>67</sup>. In Tanzania, Asians have maintained their identity through the preservation and reproduction of their culture, religion, traditions, and language perhaps more than in other areas where they have settled.

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<sup>67</sup> (See Raj 2003, Nesbitt 1994: 135, Hollup 2002, Rayaprol 1997: 74, Leonard 1989: 131).

## **Appendix 1: Questionnaire**

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**Where were you born?**

**When someone you don't know asks you where are you from what do you say?**

**Do you consider yourself an Indian from India or an Indian from Africa?**

**Have you ever been to India? If so why?**

**Do you visit India frequently? If so why, if not why not?**

**What would you say is the difference between what Tanzania was like when you were younger and what it's like today? Do you think there is a change?**

**Is there anything that people can do in India that they can not do here?**

**What do you consider to be your mother tongue?**

**When you think of all the conversations you've had in this past week, how many are in your mother tongue?**

**During the past one month, how many times have you gone to the temple and why?**

**Do you think it's important to go to the temple, when you have one in your home?**

**Did you have an arranged marriage or love marriage?**

**Do you think the customs, these marriage processes have changed through the 3 generations?**

**What kinds of characteristics do you think the Hindu population looks for when arranging marriages?**

**Do you think that a community should allow inter-caste marriages?**

**Do you think there is a difference between Indians in India and Indians living in the West and Indians living here [in Tanzania].**

**If someone came to you and asked you to set up his son or daughter with a boy or girl, where would you look first? In Tanzania, India, or the West?**

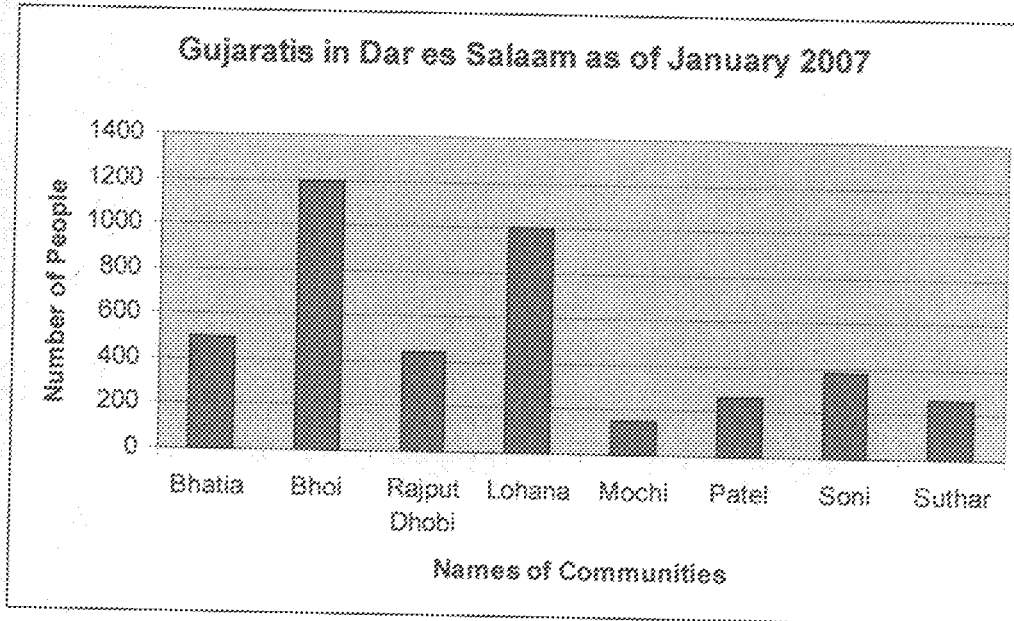
**Among the Indian families living in Tanzania what do you think is the major difference between your parents generation, your generation and your children's generation?**

**Do you think the one gender passes culture onto the children more than the other one? If so why? If not why not?**

**Do you consider yourself to be an active member in the community? If so, how? If not, why not?**

## Appendix 2: Graph

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Source: Author's Research

### Appendix 3: Table

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#### Total and Asian Population in Dar es Salaam for Different Years

Year	Total Population	Asian Population
1894	11000	1620
1913	22500	2500
1921	24600	4000
1931	34300	9000
1948	69227	16720
1957	128742	27411
1967	263780	28153
1995	3000000	25000

Source: (Voigt-Graf 1998: 130)

## Appendix 4: Photos

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Informant Ramesh Ramji continuing the business that his grandfather RamjiBapa began in the 1900's upon migration to East Africa from India.

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 5: Photos

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ShopRite shopping store in the recently opened shopping strip in Dar es Salaam.

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 6: Photos

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Recently Opened Mlimani City Mall in Dar es Salaam.

Source: Author's Research

**Appendix 7: Photos of the various temples of the respective Hindu communities on Kisutu Street**



Figure 1. Source: Author's Research



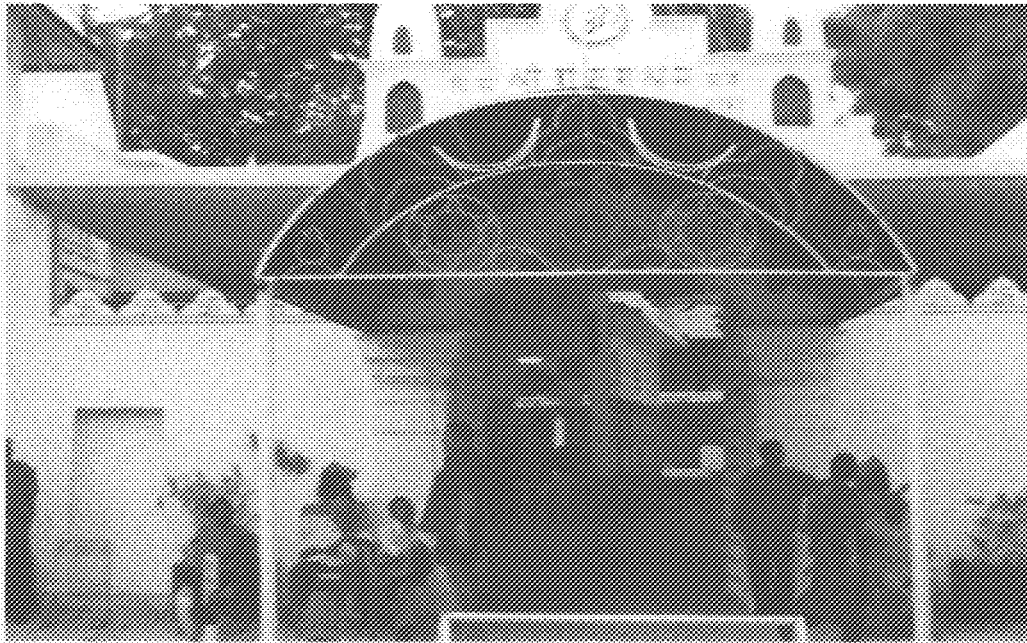
Figure 2. Source: Author's Research



Swaminarayan Temple  
Figure 3. Source: Author's Research



Figure 4. Source: Author's Research



This temple hall is part of the Shree Sanatan Hindu Mandir (photo on previous page). The two temples are across the street from each other. One hall is larger, and more for prayer purposes, the other is more for activities and socializing (although prayers do occur there as well).

Figure 5. Source: Author's Research

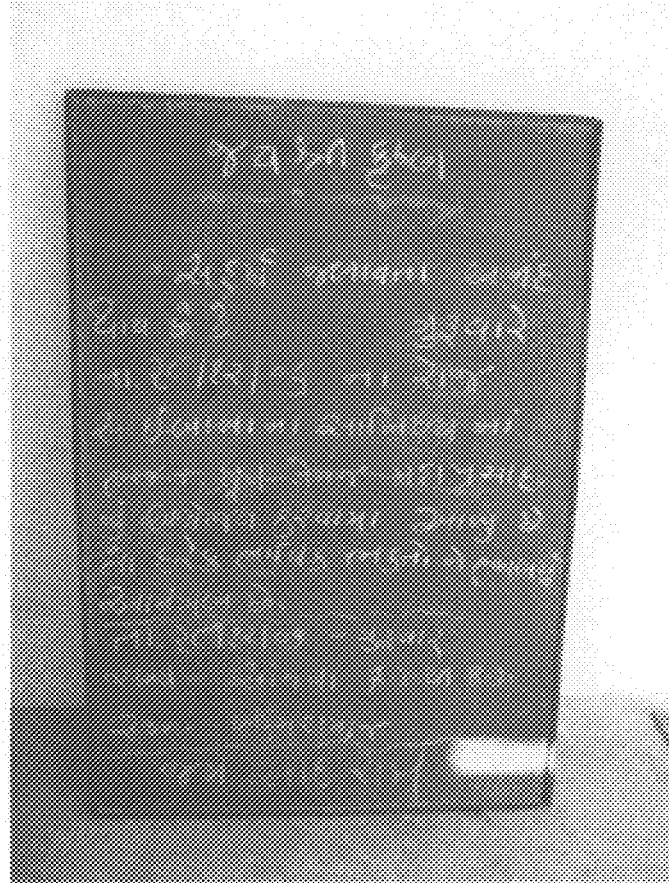


Inside the Shree Sanatan Hindu Mandir where the main prayers take place.

Figure 6. Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 8: Photos

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Sign board posted outside the temple informing community members of the recent events that are to take place (Written in Gujarati).

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 9: Photos

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Informant Shanti Shanker has created a temple with various Hindu deities in her home closet where she worships daily.

Figure 1. Source: Author's Research

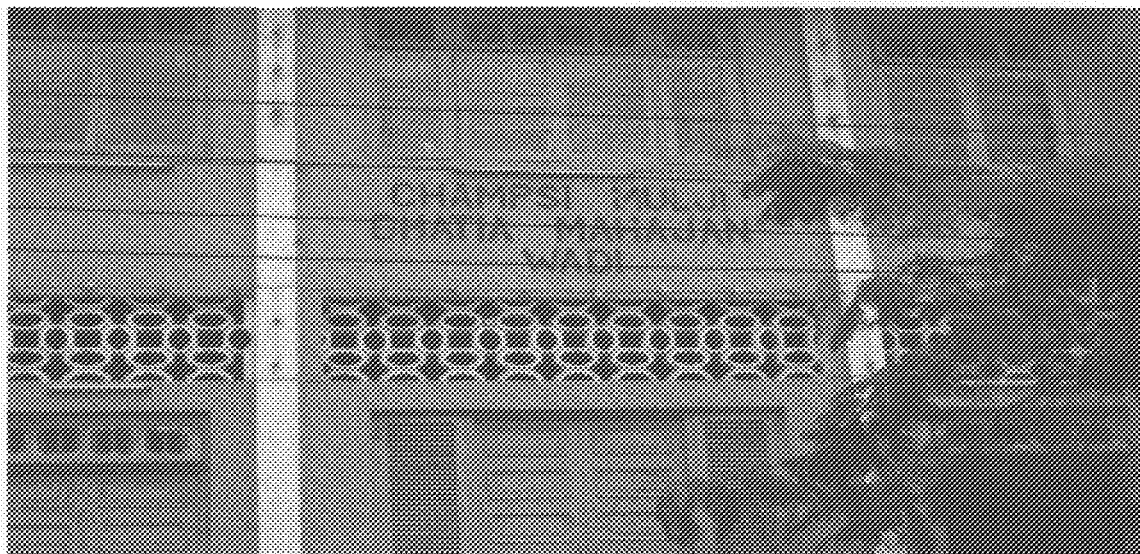


A close up photo of Shanti Shanker's temple with Hindu deities that she has made in her home.

Figure 2. Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 10: Photos

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Hall where the New Year's luncheon for the Rajput Dhobi community members took place.

Figure 1. Source: Author's Research

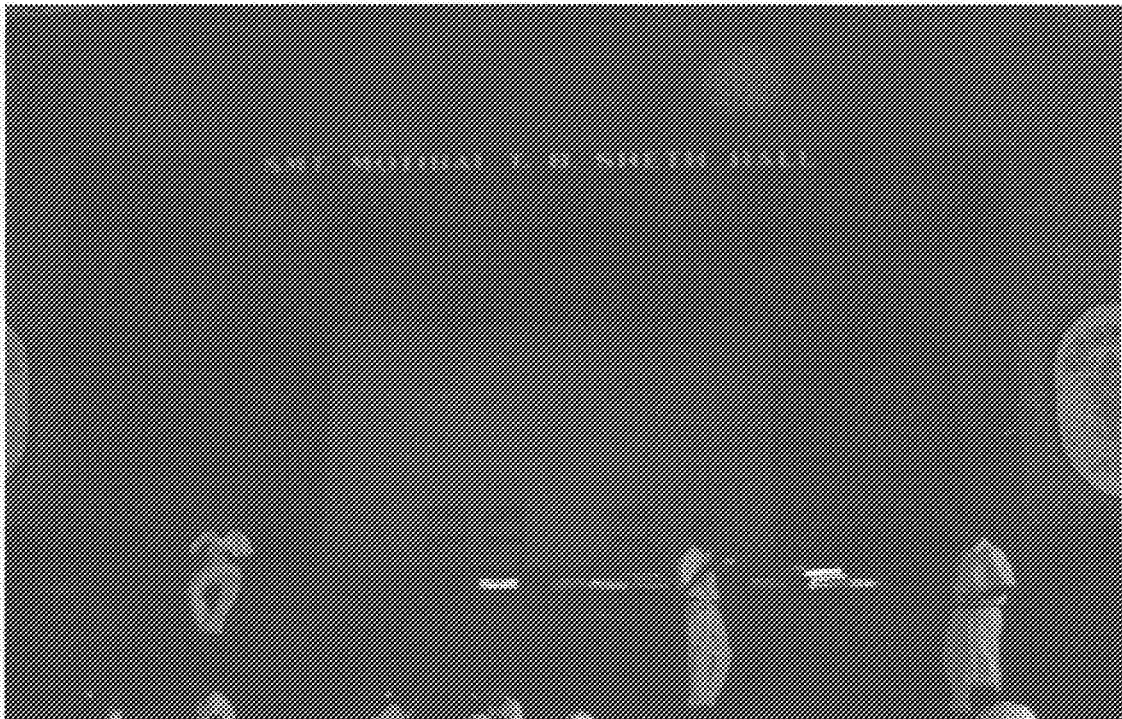


Rajput Dhobi New Year's lunch for community members (inside the hall).

Figure 2. Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 11: Photos

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Laxmikant Odhavji Vishram Shishukunj

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 12: Photos

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Children eating *prasadi/nasto* at Shishukunj.

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 13: Photos

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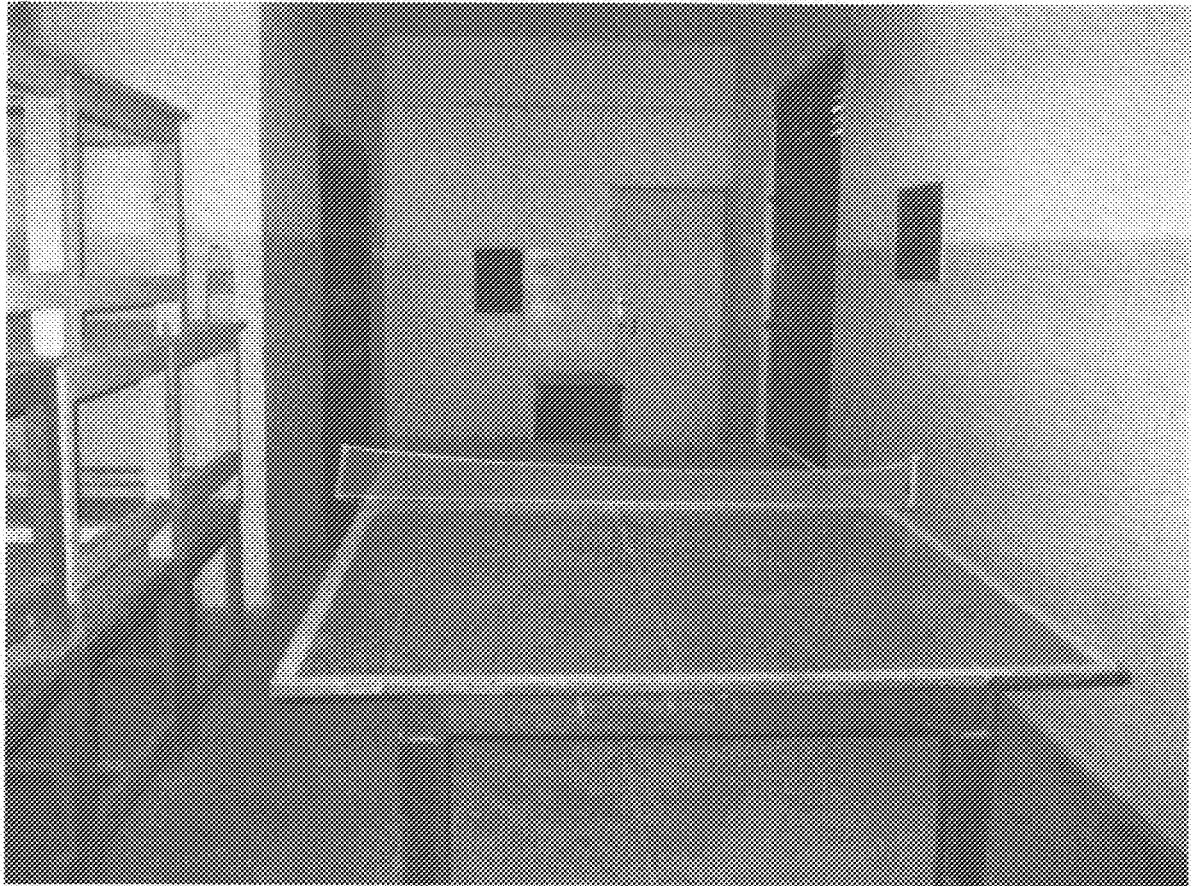


The older kids (*bhai* (brother) and *ben* (sister)) cooking *nasto/prasad* in the Shishukunj kitchen for the children.

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 14: Photos

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Area in Shishukunj for children to play table tennis.

Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 15: Children's Library in Shishukunj

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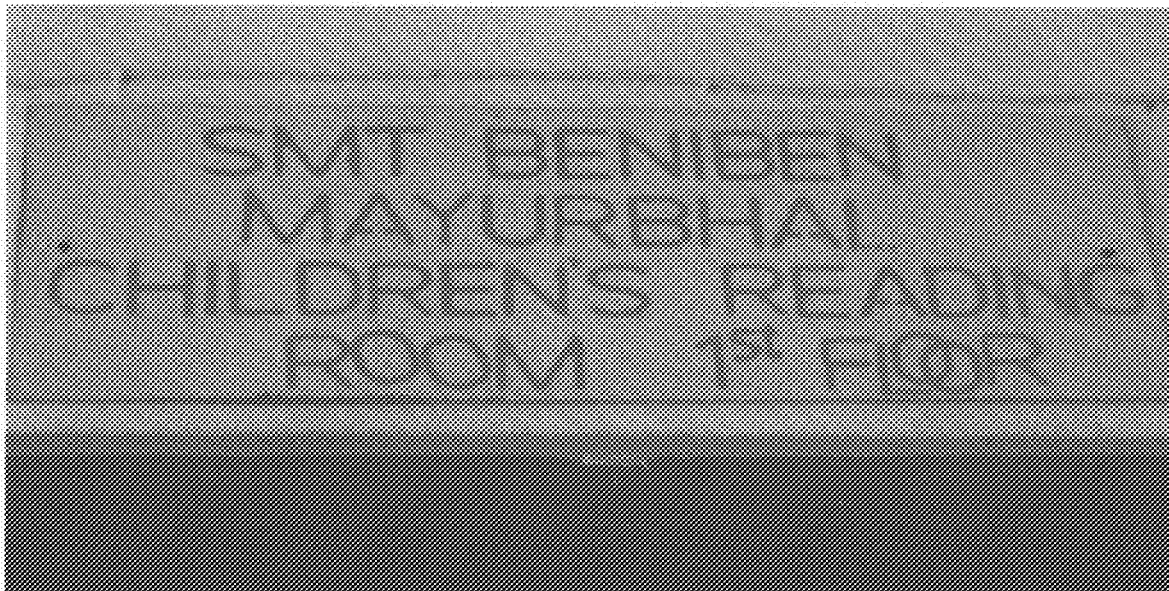


Figure 1. Source: Author's Research



Figure 2. Source: Author's Research

## Appendix 16: Adult Library in Shishukunj

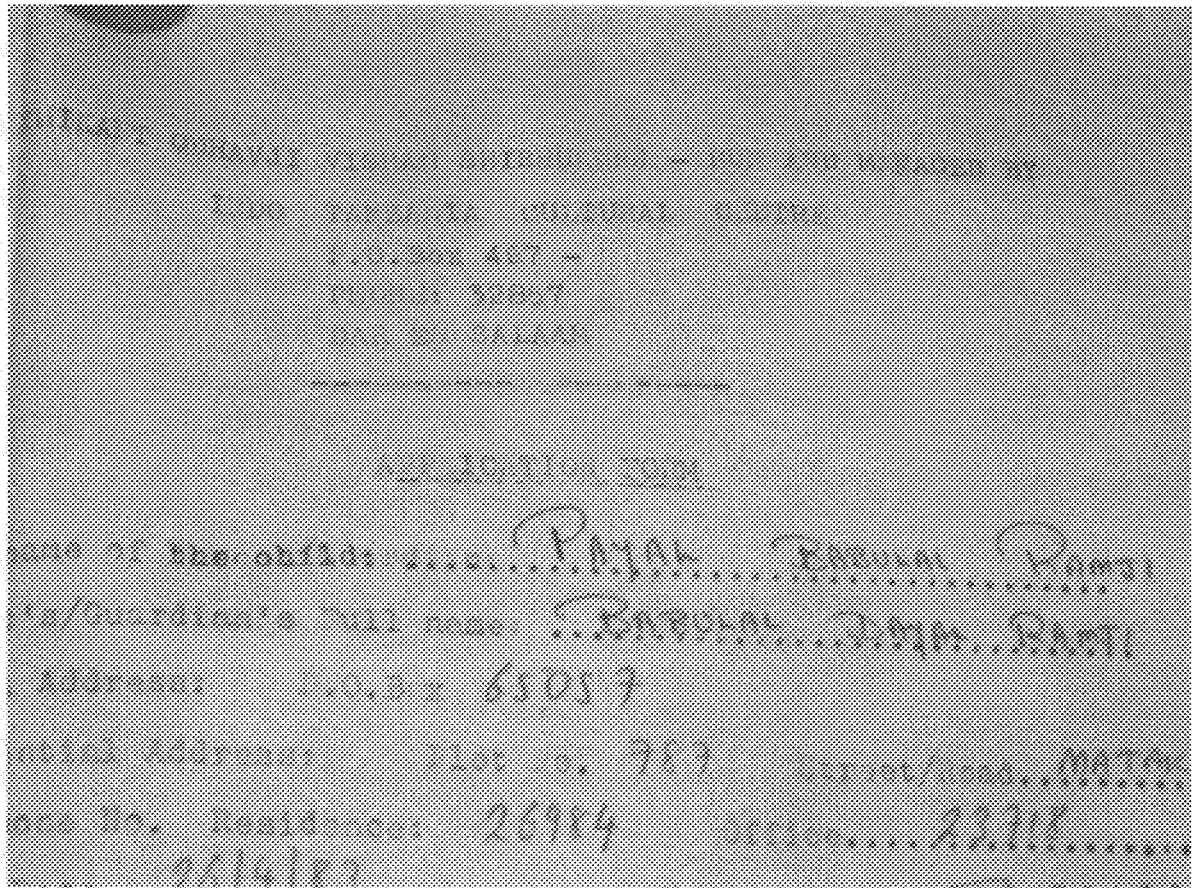
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Source: Author's Research

### Appendix 17: Shishukunj Membership Certificate

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Author's certificate of membership from 1990 at the institution that Shukla presented in 2007.

Source: Author's Research

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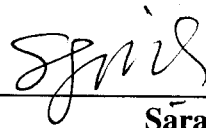
Title of Thesis

**Negotiating Identities: Asian Communities in Tanzania**

**Payal Ramji**

**Languages and Cultures of Asia**

**MASTER'S THESIS**



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**Sarah G. Atis**

**Professor, Languages and Cultures of Asia**

**April 25, 2007**

**APPROVED**