

"HINDU SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA: A CASE
STUDY OF ARYA SAMAJ, 1903-1978"

BY

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other University

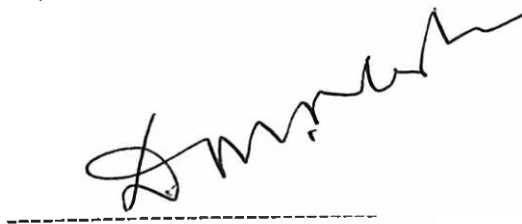


Ombongi Kenneth Samson

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors



Dr. Prem Narain



Dr. Devendra Mohan Misra

DEDICATION

To my beloved mother Nyorianah Nyanchama and father Samson Kiyondi whose personal models, frugal living and sense of sacrifice have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration and guidance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.G.M.	=	Annual General Meeting
A.P.S.E.A.	=	Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East africa (Supreme Council of Arya Samaj churches in East Africa).
A.S.S.	=	Arya Sarvadeshik Sabha (International Aryan League).
C.I.D.	=	Criminal Investigation Department
D.A.V.	=	Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College
E.A.I.N.C.	=	East Africa Indian National Congress
E.A.M.	=	Extraordinary Annual Meeting
H.C.K.	=	Hindu Council of Kenya.
H.R.E.	=	Hindu Religious Education
H.U.M.	=	Hindu Union Mombasa
I.B.E.A.	=	Imperial British East Africa Company
ISKCON	=	International society for Krishna consciousness (Sometimes referred to as the Hare Krishna Movement)
K.N.A.	=	Kenya National Archives
Pt.	=	Pandit
U.K.	=	United Kingdom

GLOSSARY

Antrang Sabha	Management /Executive Committee
Arya Pariwar	Arya Samaj membership
Bhakti	Devotion
Bhavan	Hall
Brahman	Ultimate reality in Hindu religion and philosophy
Brahmin	Person of Brahmana caste - priestly caste
Diwali(Divali)	A Hindu annual festival of lights to commemorate the triumphant entry of Rama of the epic of Ramayana to Ayodhia (Ayodha)
Guru	teacher
Gurukul	a Hindu residential school where a student is a part of a teacher's family
Havan	Worship
Moksha	Salvation from transmigration
Pradhan	Chairman
Raj	rule - normally used to refer to the British rule in India
Samaj	A Society
Sannyasi	A Hindu monk who has renounced the material world

Sati	-	Burning of women in their husbands' funeral pyre (a practice common among Hindus prior to the nineteenth century Hindu renaissance).
Shuddhi	-	Purification (a purification ritual used in converting non-Hindus to Arya Samaj)
Swami	-	a name given to a respected person - normally given to monks who have renounced the material world
Swadeshi	-	things manufactured locally in a country (India)
Swaraj	-	Independence or self rule
Vedas	-	Hindu sacred scriptures which include Rig Veda, Atharva Veda, Sama Veda and Yajur Veda
Vedic Dharma	-	Vedic religion or the religion of the Vedas
Yagna/Yajna -	-	Sacred fire ritual performed by Arya Samajists in their worship services.

ABSTRACT

The Hindus in Kenya are viewed in several general ways, notwithstanding their long history in this country. Often they are identified as adherents of Hinduism, although the tremendous components that constitute Hindus are seldom understood. More often than not, the publicity given in the mass media particularly when the Hindu Council of Kenya (H.C.K) extends material or financial assistance to victims of calamities for philanthropic purposes, there emerges a faint recognition of Hindus as a separate group among Kenyans of Indian descent. As to the actual groups and sub-groups, religious and secular alike, that constitute the whole corpus that most people know as Hindus, scarcely any knowledge is to be found, save for a few books which either lump all Indians together or less meticulously mention some of the groups in question. This study is an attempt to isolate one of the many Hindu socio-religious groups in Kenya: the Arya Samaj and write its history.

As a Hindu revivalist movement, the Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 in Bombay by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a Hindu monk. Born and bred in a wealthy and strong orthodox Hindu family, Dayanand grew to shake the very fabrics of the contemporary society and religion. As an itinerant teacher and preacher he

condemned excessive Hindu ritualism, *Brahmanical* dominance, mistreatment of women and low caste people. His movement and socio-religious reform programme found a congenial home in Punjab northern India, perhaps on account of Punjab's historical propensity towards religious renaissance and Dayanand's physical prowess, vigour and virile character in which the martial Punjabis could find a model. After his sudden demise in 1883 Punjabis not only undertook to spread his ideas in India but also outside.

Hindu immigration to Kenya and subsequent settlement had become apparent in the beginning of this century than ever before, following the establishment of the British hegemony and the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway. No sooner had they settled than the proliferation of their socio-religious organizations was witnessed. A small group of Arya Samaj Hindus from Punjab provided the nucleus of the movement in Kenya. Starting as an organization of only 39 followers in 1903 in Nairobi, Arya Samaj spread its tentacles rapidly to cover the major towns in Kenya by 1930s such as Mombasa, Kisumu, Machakos, Eldoret, Miwani, Kitale and Nanyuki.

Closely intertwined with Arya Samaj since its inception in Kenya are its socio-religious activities. These have revolved around religious, social and philanthropic fields. Religiously, weekly meetings (*Satsangs*) and annual

celebrations are held. The Arya Samaj, unlike majority of Hindu socio-religious organizations is known to seek converts among Kenyans of other races. Furthermore, it was the pioneer in the provision of educational facilities for Indian girls in Kenya.

As a corporate body, the Arya Samaj shunned political activity in Kenya, particularly as from 1915 when the movement was accused of waging anti-British campaign in the guise of religious activities. This resulted into a crackdown on the followers of Arya Samaj in Mombasa by the British military authority. They were charged with sedition and death sentences passed over them. However, they were released in 1918. The events of this period elicited fear among Arya Samajists but hardly thwarted later personalities with Arya Samaj background from rising to the political limelight in Kenya. Notable among these was Gidhari Lal Vidyarathi, an editor and owner of the Colonial Printing Press, who fought the ills of colonialism through the print media.

At the advent of independence, on account of uncertainty and gloomy future portended by the events of the time, a mass exodus of Indians who constituted Arya Samaj membership was witnessed. The movement that had around 10,000 members at the apogee of its activities in the 1940s and 1950s could claim allegiance from about 300 families. The drastic reduction of its numerical strength

affected its operations and activities, nevertheless the zeal that characterized the movement from early this century remained intact. Its liberal approach to religious customs, reform-oriented approach dictated by contemporary circumstances, particularly on education and philanthropy, and possession of modern physical infrastructure vis-a-vis other Hindu groups has tended to make it of great vogue not only among Hindus but other communities in Kenya. This study is a contribution of the understanding of Hindu socio-religious organizations in Kenya in general and Arya Samaj in particular.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRELUDE TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Arya Samaj is a neo-Hindu reform movement started in 1875 in Bombay by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (Sarasvati), a Gujarati monk from Western India.¹ At that period a general social and religious upheaval had pervaded the Indian society, and culminated in the founding of reform movements that championed the cause of socio-religious renaissance. The Arya Samaj was in the main stream of this reformation.

In Kenya, this movement (Arya Samaj) was founded in 1903. It was among the first Hindu revivalist movements to be established and spread in a wider scale among the Indian immigrants. Since then, Kenya, particularly Nairobi city has been the heart of Arya Samaj activities in East Africa, though Arya Samaj organizations were also founded in major towns of Tanzania and Uganda.²

The present study attempts to explore the history of the movement from 1903 to 1978, though a number of spillovers to the present cannot be ruled out wholesale. First, a note on definition will help to clarify some concepts used in the

subsequent chapters.

1.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The term 'Arya Samaj' was adopted by Dayanand himself, the founder of the movement. It was to refer to his organization "aimed at the revival of Vedic Dharma (religion of the Vedas) in its pristine purity and propagation (sic) thereof in India and abroad ... "3 'Arya' means noble or righteous and 'Samaj' means society. 'Arya Samaj' therefore means "a society of the noble".4 In this thesis 'Arya Samaj' is used to refer to the organization composed of people who profess Dayanand's ideas, principles and support his socio-religious programme.

The term 'Asian' used in East Africa to refer to the people who trace their descent to the Indian sub-continent (India and Pakistan) is wrong. This is because 'Asian' can generally be used to refer to any other people from the Asian continent such as the Chinese and Japanese. In this study the term 'Indian' will be used to refer to the domiciled people from the Indian sub-continent before the 1947 partition which resulted into India and Pakistan as we know them today, who are commonly but wrongly called Asians in East Africa. In the post-1947 period the terms 'Indian' and 'Pakistanis' are used to denote people from these countries.

"Hindu" etymologically is derived from 'Sindhu' and 'Al-Hind', the names given by the Persians and Arabs respectively to the area drained by river Indus, the cradle land of ancient Indian civilization.⁵ The religion followed by inhabitants of this area came to be called Hinduism; its basic scriptures were the Vedas and later other books such as the Puranas and Upanishads came up. With the British conquest the term 'Hindu' was Anglicized to India to refer to the Indus valley and the surrounding areas. In this thesis 'Hindu' refers to the believers in Hinduism and any of its ramifications. It excludes devotees of Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism, who also emanated from India and are often confused with Hindus.

Finally, let us examine the concept of minority, which Indians are in East Africa.

The term minority, refer to a group of people

... differentiated from others
in the same society by race,
nationality, religion, or language
who both think of themselves as
differentiated group and are
thought of by others as
differentiated group with negative
connotations. Further they are
relatively lacking in power and
hence are subjected to certain
exclusions, discriminations, and
other differentiated treatment.⁶

From the above definition three things are clear about minority groups - they have to be differentiated on the premise of race and customs, they have a perception that this differentiation from others exist and they are discriminated against by other people. However, this definition cannot be complete especially when the term minority is used to refer to Indians in Kenya without the consideration of their population vis-a-vis the majority Africans. Therefore, in this study the term minority group will be used to refer to Indians in Kenya by virtue of not only racial differentiation and discrimination but also the fact that they are fewer populationwise vis-a-vis Africans. However, that is not tantamount to saying that Indians are of low status socially and economically, given the fact that they constitute mainly the wealthy group and are the backbone of Kenya's business and industrial sector. Milton Yinger aptly observes in regard to this point:

Minority group status, then is not the same thing as low-class. This is not to suggest, however, that the two are unrelated, for there is no doubt that the disprivileges faced by members of minority groups are sometimes so severe that most of them are kept at the bottom of the class ladder.⁷

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since its inception in Kenya early this century, the Arya Samaj has had something

to bear on the history of this country, both in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Although some studies have been made on Arya Samaj and some topics delineated, there is no detailed comprehensive study on the same. Its establishment in Kenya's major towns, its role in promoting Hindu unity, its socio-religious activities and its relations with the colonial authority have been by-passed. All these aspects are significant to the understanding of Arya Samaj in historical perspective and need examination. Thus there exist an information gap which merits filling. The present study is an attempt towards that direction.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This inquiry seeks to examine the origin and formation of Arya Samaj movement in Kenya.

It aims at evaluating the place of Arya Samaj within the wider Hindu community in Kenya, with the view to discovering particularly its role in the creation of H.C.K.

Further, it seeks to identify and analyze the socio-religious activities of Arya Samaj and its contribution to the Kenyan society.

Finally, the inquiry intends to trace the course and find out the causes of Arya Samaj's conflict with the colonial political authority in Kenya.

1.5 THE GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Arya Samaj movement pervaded major urban centers in East Africa from the first decade of this century. The link and co-operation among these Arya Samaj organizations in this region have existed over the years, especially after the formation of the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa (A.P.S.E.A)*, (the supreme council of Arya Samaj churches in East Africa) in 1920. Despite frequent references to the activities of Arya Samaj in Tanzania and Uganda, the present study is limited to Kenya on account of its aims and objectives.

1.6 HYPOTHESES

The believers of Arya Samaj profess to be the followers of Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the movement, and strive to put into practice his ideas and teachings. Thus the first hypothesis of the study is that the Arya Samaj in Kenya adheres to the ideals and practices of its founder - Dayanand.

The Arya samaj in India lay emphasis on the revival of contemporary Hinduism to what it believed to be the most ancient and pristine form of Hinduism: Vedic Hinduism.⁸ On account of that, a number of differences became manifest between it and Orthodox Hindu sects, particularly the Sanatan Dharam. Since

these latter organizations exist in Kenya also, it is hypothesized that Arya Samaj's relations with them are not without friction.

Finally, the main focus of the Arya Samaj was to clean Hinduism of the customs and practices that it (Arya Samaj) considered socially and religiously irrelevant.⁹ Due to that it is hypothesized that in Kenya also, that has been the focus and thus the Arya Samaj has steered clear of political activity over the years.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study has been carried out within the broad framework of Indian minority group and its impact in Kenya. In Kenya as the case elsewhere, the social and cultural heritage, especially of immigrant minority groups differ greatly from those of the indigenous peoples. Such minorities often make efforts to establish community institutions which would nurture their traditional cultural norms and elements. It is from a such perspective that we see the establishment of Arya Samaj in Kenya by the first immigrant followers of the movement from Punjab. It was established to cater for the social, religious and philanthropic interests of its members. This behaviour is typical of a minority group. Nikos Georgulas studying the Greek minority group of Moshi Tanzania, discovered that their first preoccupation was to set up what they referred to as a Hellenic community to perpetuate their religious heritage and provide social services to its members:

One of its earliest tasks was to initiate the establishment of a church and school. Another function was to serve as a body through which assistance could be rendered to destitute and other unfortunate members of the Greek community.¹⁰

Georgulas' observation, though referring to the Greek in Moshi, aptly describes a common phenomenon among minority groups. Most of the Indians who settled in Kenya as from the turn of this century were also involved in the formation of such communal and religious organizations to cater for their socio-religious interest.

Secondly, this thesis has been shaped on the premise of Arnold Toynbee's 'Challenge-and-Response' theory. The fundamental argument of the theory is that "creation is the outcome of an encounter" or "genesis (origin of something) is a function of interaction".¹¹ In analyzing the origin of the ancient world's civilizations, Toynbee views them as products of their environments:

The desiccation of Afrasia, which impelled the fathers of the Egyptian Civilization to penetrate the jungle - swamp of lower Nile valley and transform it into land of Egypt, likewise

impelled the fathers of the Sumeric Civilization to come to grips with the jungle - swamp in the Lower valley of the Tigris and Euphrates and transform it into the Land of Shinar.¹²

Thus the interaction between the Egyptians and Summerians with adverse climatic conditions of the Lower Nile valley and the Lower valleys of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates respectively, led to emergence of civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, the environment cannot be confined to the physical environment which consists of climatic, topographical and hydrographical conditions. Toynbee says:

There is also, however, a human environment, and this consists of all other societies with which any given society has relations in either of the two dimensions of time and space.¹³

Therefore, the human environment poses challenges that lead to the development of new ways of life. For instance, Toynbee sees Western Civilization as a product of simultaneous response of western societies to the challenges posed by both the physical environment of forests, rains and frosts and the Hellenic (Greek civilization) that preceded the former (Western civilization).

This study will examine Arya Samaj movement in Kenya as a product of the environment, especially the human environment surrounding its first generation of followers. They found themselves in a foreign country characterized by diverse cultural elements. Thus they founded Arya Samaj institutions to perpetuate and foster their traditional culture.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

The amount of research work done on the history of Arya Samaj in Kenya is rather small in scope and quantity. Much of the extant literature on Indians in Kenya and East Africa, have steered clear of their socio-religious organizations. The few researches in this field, deal with Indians as a whole and not specifically with Arya Samaj, except for a few and those too rather briefly.

C.Salvadori, Through open doors¹⁴, is a pioneering effort to include all the Indian cultural organizations in Kenya under one cover. Considerable pain appears to have been taken in preparing the treatise, though her work figures conspicuously as a cultural one rather than historical . She described in three pages the formation of Arya Samaj in Kenya.

S.Shah, The study of Arya Samaj in Kenya¹⁵, is so far the only work I have come across that deals directly with Arya Samaj. Shah's work is a Bachelor's degree

dissertation for the University of Nairobi. She concentrates on the 'internal politics' of Arya Samaj Nairobi, where she attempts to explore inter-caste struggle for leadership. She examines the formation and welfare activities of the Arya Samaj Nairobi and the title of her work notwithstanding, she concentrates on Arya Samaj Nairobi and her data sources were primarily from there.

R.S Pareek, Contribution of Arya Samaj in the making of Modern India 1875 - 1947¹⁶, makes reference to Arya Samaj in East Africa in one page. He says that Arya Samaj Nairobi is the centre of Arya Samaj activities in Africa. His work mainly deals with Arya Samaj as it developed in India.

P. Narain, "Asians in East Africa"¹⁷ examines research works that have been done on Asians in East Africa. This seminar paper is both critical of the then existing literature on Indians, and diagnostic. It brings out areas that merit research such as Arya Samaj, Lohana and Ismaili communities. It briefly refers to the formation of Arya Samaj in Kenya and its contribution in the social and philanthropic field. However, it does not exhaust the study on Arya Samaj.

P. N. Vedalankar and M. Somera, "Arya Samaj in East Africa,"¹⁸ is a brief article that talks about the foundation of Arya Samaj in East Africa and it is valuable for some dates. The article is general in its approach and perhaps is not a product of serious scholarly research.

A. Bharati, The Asians in East Africa¹⁹, deals with Indians from an anthropological perspective. He depicts Arya Samaj as a movement that rejects the canonical status of the Upanishads, popular Hindu literature in the nineteenth century. He says that they (followers of Arya Samaj) believe in the Vedas as the only books that are "binding to Hindus".²⁰ Although Bharati has brought a wealth of knowledgeable information to bear on the study of Indians East Africa and goes further to mention particular groups, his work is less specific and more anthropological than historical.

In most of the other researches on Indians in Kenya and East Africa, little is mentioned about Arya Samaj. For instance, J.S. Mangat, A history of Asians in East Africa²¹, P.M . Bhatt, A history of the Asians in Kenya 1900 - 1970²², S.W. Liszka, The contribution of the Asiatic Indians to the economy of Kenya²³, D.A . Seidenberg, Asians and Uhuru²⁴ and P.L. Maini, The Indian problem in Kenya²⁵ generally emphasize politico-economic issues of Indian history in Kenya and East Africa.

1.9 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As discussed above, there is no comprehensive study of the aspects of Arya Samaj that has been done as this inquiry seeks to do. Thus the present study besides augmenting the extant literature on Hindus in Kenya, will shed some light

on the antecedents of Arya Samaj as regards to the aspects delineated here.

Generally, the study consists of significant aspects of Arya Samaj from a historical perspective. I hope that those seeking deeper knowledge of the history of Arya Samaj in Kenya, will find in this study a material for reference.

1.10 SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The present study has been structured on the twin foundation of documentary and oral evidence. The two sources were in most cases used complementarily. Nevertheless, in some cases a particular source was prominent depending on the availability or paucity of evidence from that source and the nature of the chapter. For instance, given the demise of nearly all members of the first generation of the followers of Arya Samaj in Kenya and absence of primary data documents dealing with migratory process, chapter two was primarily produced from secondary sources. It deals with Hindus generally, with infrequent reference to the followers of Arya Samaj, using oral interview testimonies and reports gathered from what sons and daughters of early immigrants could recollect about their parents.

In a bid to obtain documentary evidence, I read and analyzed data about Arya Samaj in books, published and unpublished dissertations, journals, reports, private

papers, newsletters and souvenirs. Reading was done in both institutional and private libraries. These include the library of the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Kenya National Library, Nairobi, Macmillan and Indian embassy library. Material from the library of Arya Samaj Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu were also used.

Data dealing with most aspects of Hindu socio-religious organizations and particularly with Arya Samaj were few in K.N.A. Nevertheless, some documents which shed light on the Indian political activity were obtained, and were mainly useful in building up chapter five .

Oral interviews were conducted with thirty respondents. They were conducted in various Arya Samaj organizations such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu. The oral interviews were not, however, confined to members of Arya Samaj. Respondents from other organizations were contacted with a view to counter checking and supplementing information gathered from the Arya Samaj informants. Some of these included Mrs. Usha Shah, chairperson of the H.C.K., Mr. David Blacknurst of the Theosophical Society Nairobi Lodge, Mr. V.A. Patel of Sanatan Dharma Sabha and chairman H.C.K. Nakuru, and Mr. Gilbert Lusiji(Gopinath) of the Hare Krishna Muhoroni Close Ngara , Nairobi. The ages of the respondents ranged from forty-five years to ninety- three years.

The interviews were carried out randomly, taped and subsequently transferred to record cards. Assistance to identify respondents was given by Dharam Prakash Ahluwalia, the chairman of A.P.S.E.A., various priests of Arya Samaj organizations in different towns, my two supervisors (guides) and the already-interviewed respondents. English was the main medium of communication during the interviews and all the respondents I approached could speak English, although some interspersed it with Kiswahili. I personally conducted the interviews and a research assistant was used in operating the recording machine in the course of interviews, where it was necessary.

Besides oral interviews observation was used to collect some data and make some inferences. Many a time, I attended weekly religious meetings (*Satsangs*) of Arya Samaj Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu and observed their worship activities. Often I was invited to the communal luncheons held by most Arya Samaj organizations after weekly meetings.

1.11 PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Normally, a number of problems beset the path of any enterprise which seeks to write history, so was this research on Arya Samaj in Kenya. These problems revolved around the paucity of finances, language, lack of enough cooperation from some respondents and the political climate at the time of research.

First, the finances provided by the University for this research were far from being enough. Furthermore, it was unfortunate that the research came at a time when the prices of necessary equipment such as record cards, tape recorders, cells, foolscap, and transport and accommodation charges had escalated. The fact that Arya Samaj organizations are located in the main Kenyan towns, made the whole research exercise rather expensive and taxing. To solve the problem of finances, the research fund was often used economically.

Another problem I faced was language, especially given that majority of Arya Samaj official functions are conducted in Hindi, which I neither understand nor read. However, one advantage on my side was that majority of the written articles and books of Arya Samaj are in English and a few in Swahili. That notwithstanding, I had some indispensable articles and books translated for me from Hindi to English. To check translation errors, a given article was translated by at least two people after which I counter checked the copies produced. Furthermore, my informants were able to communicate in either English or Kiswahili, the languages I was using in interviewing them.

Cases of lack of enough cooperation by some respondents, although scattered, were witnessed in the course of the research. For instance, I remember to have contacted some respondent in Nakuru as many as five times before he conceded

to have a word with me. To redress this problem, I tried to explain the aim, objectives and importance of this study to every respondent prior to the interview. The fact that my supervisors were Indians, was a boon to my efforts. Dr. Devendra Misra, a member of Arya Samaj Nairobi, introduced me to the members and officials of Arya Samaj during their weekly gatherings (*Satsangs*). This cultivated their confidence and interest in what I was doing and most of them readily welcomed me to their houses and business premises. This also helped to dispel the fears that most respondents could have had when approached by any stranger, given the contemporary volatile political situation characterized by the preparations for a multi-party election in the country. Dr. Prem Narain, gave me contacts of various persons that made it easy to have access to them, whenever I mentioned his name.

The location of my place of study in the University of Nairobi in the city centre had advantages on my side. It was easy to contact members and officials of Arya Samaj who mostly live in Nairobi. At the same time, most centers of Hindu worshippers are located in the city. Many libraries such as the Arya Samaj library in Vedic House, Kenya National library in Nairobi and Macmillan were within easy reach.

NOTES

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²¹ J.S. Mangat , A history of Asians in East Africa (Oxford : Claredon Press, 1969).

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CHAPTER 2

HINDU MIGRATION TO KENYA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

East Africa's links with the outside world go deep into the ancient time. The region, particularly the coast has been a haven for foreign visitation and activity since time immemorial. Its geography, endowed with well-sheltered natural harbours and seasonal winds blowing to and from it, least militated against early sea farers. Phoenician sailors are said to have travelled from the Red sea down to the East African coast in the reign of Pharaoh Necho (609 - 595 B.C).¹ Kirkman, an archaeologist who did research in the coast opines that the East African coast

... has been in direct contact
with the Southern shores of Arabia,
Southern Persia, Western India and
the islands of the Indonesian archipelago
for over two thousand years.²

Although antiquity veils historical evidence to support the above claims of early traffic to and from the East African coast, it is probable that such interaction

preceded and prepared ground for later coming of people such as the Arabs, Indians and Europeans. It was in the course of these interactions between East Africa and the outside world that some of these groups of people settled here and left hallmarks that exist hitherto. This chapter examines the coming of Indians, with particular reference to Hindus for they constitute the subject of this study and also one of the groups whose influence in Kenya continues to our time.

Kenyan Indians are categorized according to their belief systems in their social and religious milieu. The Hindus, Muslims, Christians (Goans), Jains, Sikhs and other smaller groups such as the Parsis are worth mentioning.³ Past researches have often dealt with all these groups en-masse as Indians while discussing their migration to East Africa in general and Kenya in particular.⁴ This chapter attempts to deal with Hindus out of the other Indian religious groups in Kenya.

However, it is a fact that Hindus in Kenya are from the same areas in India as many other Indian immigrants (Kathiawar, Cutch, Punjab, etc ...), and thus it becomes difficult to isolate them from others for the purpose of discussing their migration to this country. It is significant therefore to state that although speaking here about Hindus, who form the group of which the followers of Arya Samaj are part, intermittent reference will be made to other groups and Indians in general. However, detailed migrational tendencies and patterns are not of

particular significance in this chapter. I shall only attempt to briefly trace the causes and course of Indian migration to the country with Hindus in mind. Most specific examples will be taken from Hindus who called themselves Aryans, who ultimately form the gist of this dissertation.

2.2 CLASSICAL INDO - AFRICAN CONTACTS

Indians, have been associated with maritime activities from ancient times:

The extensive coastline of India fostered trade and maritime activity and made the Indians hardy mariners. From an early period they navigated the seas, both in the east as well as in the west, and their bold sea-faring exploits carried them to distant and unknown parts of the world.⁵

As the above observation shows, trade and commerce have constituted the core of Indian marine activities over the years. It is a popular belief that control of the Indian ocean was predominantly on the Indian hands until the thirteenth century. Even in the Arab waters where Indians had little political influence, their trading activities over there were overwhelming.⁶ The Indian naval industry was well organized in view of the standards of the time. Their naval activity were controlled by organized corporations, which are believed to have been more

or less similar to the European East India Company of the nineteenth century.⁷

J.H. Hornell, who was an authority on Indian boat designs, had this to say about their ships. They were

... square rigged, two masted vessels,
with raked stem and stern, both sharp,
without bowsprit and rudder and steered
by two quarter paddles.*

Therefore, it was not a fortuitous accident that long before Africa and its resources were known to Europeans, Indians especially from West India had been visiting East Africa for trade, given their early involvement with maritime activities. Early travellers and explorers, who traversed the East African coast periodically bear testimony to this ancient Indo-African trade link.

The earliest and perhaps the first treatise which refer to the presence of Indian traders in East Africa is the Periplus of the Erythrean sea (a Greek name for the Indian ocean). The *Periplus* is a Greek classical writing whose authorship and date are subjects of controversy among scholars. Gervase Matthew, an archaeologist, estimated that it was written either late first century or early second century A.D. by a sea captain who intended to produce a navigators' guide or a commercial handbook.⁹ It refers to a flourishing trade in the coast of East Africa where Indians played a vital role.¹⁰ Due to lack of enough historical evidence,

whether or not such presence of Indian traders existed in the coast prior to the authorship of the *Periplus* is open to conjecture. Gregory terms the existence of such links prior to the *Periplus* "largely speculative."¹¹ Furthermore, though evidence of Indian maritime activities abound in their ancient literature, coins and art, scanty reference has been made to East Africa in particular, and generally the references are "vague and uncertain."¹²

Whatever the arguments there be on the existence of Indo-African trade links in the period preceding the *Periplus*, chances are that links between the East African Coast and India were there, notwithstanding the non-existence of reliable historical evidence. The Indian proclivity toward marine activities from the ancient time, which perhaps came as a result of the location of the subcontinent and the propensity of its people towards economic adventure, gave them chances of travelling far and wide, therefore the East Africa coast could have not been the exception. Scholars rightly infer that :

It seems highly probable in view of Indian's extraordinary overseas trade and migration that association with East Africa begun in the previous millenniums would have been maintained and enlarged during the seven centuries A.D, but then there is little supporting evidence.¹³

In the period that followed the *Periplus*, little is generally known about Indian merchants in East Africa. It was from the thirteenth century onwards that a number of travellers testified of the presence of the Indians in the coast. Abu Abdulla Muhammed Ibn Batuta, an Arab adventurer in the fourteenth century, witnessed a large number of Indians trading in Kilwa, a very ancient trading post in the coast. Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller writing in the thirteenth century, made reference to Indian ships from Malabar that frequented Madagascar and Zanzibar.¹⁴ Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer who rounded the cape of Africa and reached India in the late fifteenth century, left an account of Indian presence in East Africa. He witnessed several Hindu ships at various ports where he sojourned in the coast. Eventually it was an Indian pilot, a *Banyan* from Cambay who guided him to India.¹⁵

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, another Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbose gave a description of the coast of East Africa, in which he referred to the increased trade with India. Barbose did not only see coastal settlements with foreign ships frequenting them as earlier travellers like Marco Polo had done four centuries earlier, but also saw a steady progress in the importance of the coastal towns as foreign trade centers, especially trade with India. About Mombasa in the Kenyan coast Barbose had this to say:

It is of great trade in goods,
and has a good port, where there
are always many ships, both of
those that come from Cambay
(Western India) and others which
sail to the islands of Zanzibar,
Manfia and Penda, ...¹⁶

He portrays the coastal towns as prosperous centers of trade, and inhabited by luxuriant people. The merchants from Cambay had already settled in Mombasa and were main suppliers of cloths made of silk and cotton that seem to have been in vogue.¹⁷ However, the prosperity in terms of trade with India that Barbose witnessed in the Eastern Africa coast did not last longer as it was destroyed by his own people (the Portuguese) in the first decade of the sixteenth century.

Therefore, classical records, although scattered in space and time, indicate the existence of mercantile connections between western India and East Africa. Over the centuries Indians broadened their business activities in the coast and towards the close of the fifteenth century, they had "established themselves as bankers, money-lenders, middlemen in all the larger coastal towns."¹⁸

Although reference has been made to early Indian merchants in the coast by travellers and explorers alike, it is important to stress that it is rather difficult to show which group dominated the scene, among the Hindus and moslem Indians.

Despite some claims by voyagers such as Vasco da Gama to have seen several Hindu ships in the coast,¹⁹ it is a task no less exacting to prove the authenticity of such claims. That notwithstanding, it cannot be improbable that both Hindus and Moslems, especially from western India sporadically visited East Africa for trading. It is probable also that these early contacts were primarily commercial and movement of Indian merchants beyond the confines of the coastal strip was scarce. Largely therefore, the early Indo-African commercial contacts in the coast of East Africa as from the first century A.D. signalled the beginning of the historical migration of Indians and set a stage on which their migrational tendencies and patterns were to be based in subsequent centuries. These links and the prosperity that accrued from them over the years were destroyed by the Portuguese bombardment of the East African coast and subsequent establishment of their rule. Henceforth, the presence of Indians at the coast remained at a low ebb for nearly two centuries to resurface in the nineteenth century, thanks to Seyyid Said, the Sultan of Oman, under whose jurisdiction East African coast fell after the ouster of the Portuguese.

2.3 PORTUGUESE ERA AND INDO-AFRICAN CONTACTS

Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India in 1498, preceded and influenced a series of events that dominated the history of the East African coast for nearly the next two centuries. The news of his discovery was received at home as good news because it showed a possibility of gaining control of the

Eastern trade, which had been a dream of the Portuguese over the years. This led to the dispatch of heavy-handed military men to capture and bring under control the East African coast and India, which had been the undisputed centers of commerce in the East.²²

The details of the Portuguese conquest of the East African coast are not as important to this part of the study as its impacts. Suffice it to say that between 1500 A.D. when the first Portuguese military ships anchored in Kilwa and 1510 A.D., the whole of the former Arab-dominated coast fell under the Portuguese hegemony. All prominent towns from Sofala to Mombasa became Portugal's vassal states, except for Malindi which collaborated with the Portuguese during their conquest.²¹ The fast speed at which they seized the East African coast was as disastrous to the Arab and Indian merchants as were their policies. Theirs was total subjection, plunder and monopoly. The prosperity the coastal towns had enjoyed over the years, drastically dwindled. With the decline of trade, the incentive that had been the prime mover of Indian merchants to East Africa was no more. Thus their presence and trade activities in the coast declined.

The Portuguese monopoly over trade in the coast of East Africa greatly affected the Indian presence in this region, but it is probable that it did not thwart them completely as to cut their links. Chances are that some Indian merchants, the

prevalent difficulties notwithstanding, trickled into the East African coast and did some business. In 1593, a number of Indian masons were part and parcel of the group that constructed Fort Jesus, the main Portuguese military garrison in Mombasa.²² That notwithstanding, Indian activities in East Africa were generally kept at a low profile, until the nineteenth century when the Portuguese were forced into oblivion. The following part of the chapter will focus on the resurgence of Indian presence (with a special reference to Hindus) and activity in the coast of East Africa after the downfall of the Portuguese empire and emergence of Seyyid Said of Oman as the ruler of the region.

2.4 THE ZANZIBAR SULTANATE AND THE HINDU PRESENCE IN THE COAST

The history of the Portuguese empire in the East was one of decline and decay not only of the economic prosperity of the subject areas but also its political power.²³ Due to its internal weakness and pressure from colonial territories, her political power in the East showed signs of eventual collapse as early as 1580. Stranders observes:

Thus, in 1580, when the Portuguese throne passed to the King of Spain the Portuguese empire in the East was outward appearances undiminished, but within, the seeds of decay were germinating.²⁴

It was after the ouster of the Portuguese that the Imam of Muscat who had led a

campaign against them, declared his overlordship over the former Portuguese territories in the East African coast.²⁵ It was under the control of Oman Arabs in the coast that Indian activities started rejuvenating, especially under the rule of Seyyid Said who had transferred his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar, thus making it the heart of commercial activities in the greater part of the nineteenth century.

Zanzibar was the largest offshore island of the coast of East Africa. It enjoyed high rainfall and abundance of water.²⁶ It was perhaps its natural beauty that prompted Francisco de Barreto, a Portuguese traveller in 1571 to describe it "as the finest part of East Africa".²⁷ After taking the throne of Oman, Seyyid Said deviated his attention to Zanzibar vis-a-vis Muscat, the then capital city. Internal rivalry and Zanzibar's physical and strategic position played a key role in changing Seyyid Said's focus from Muscat to Zanzibar:

In addition to its physical attractions, political and commercial advantages also weighed heavily in Zanzibar's favor, as against Muscat. There was freedom from fierce internecine squabbles which often wrecked dynastic families in Oman, and ended in the rule of the dagger.²⁸

In 1840 Seyyid Said officially made Zanzibar his capital city. American traders and Indian merchants, with whom came business acumen and trading connections, started to frequent Zanzibar.²⁹

During Seyyid Said's era in Zanzibar, trade was given priority as a source of revenue for his domain. The Indians, who had regained their position as the core of mercantile life in the coast were accorded every impetus to come to Zanzibar. Said's effort to attract Indians to his empire for economic reasons did not start in Zanzibar. While in Muscat he made every attempt to attract Hindu merchants (*Baniyans*) and before his movement to Zanzibar there were about a thousand of them residing in Muscat.³⁰

It was during the reign of Seyyid Said in East Africa that Hindu merchants became significant in the commercial life of the region. They gained a tight grip in the control of the nexus of trading activities under the auspices of the Sultan. Sir Bartle Frere, a British envoy to Zanzibar and Muscat in 1872, hardly two decades since the sultan left Muscat, remarked:

What has struck me most on this coast is the enormous increase of Indian commercial interest during the past thirty years. I will only state that it is hardly an exaggeration to say

that all trade passes through Indian hands.³¹

Sir Frere's observation by implication gives a general picture of all Indians - that is both Hindus and Muslims but our concern here is on Hindus.

The Bhattias, a merchant Hindu community from Gujarat, dominated trade in Zanzibar.³² In the wake of the eighteenth century the Bhattias had gained control of commercial and industrial business especially in the city of Bombay.³³ It is probable therefore that when incentives were provided in Zanzibar they moved swiftly to exploit the new trade opportunities. They outshone their counterparts (Muslims) on account of their business acumen and frugality in their life style. Richard Burton, a British explorer in Zanzibar observed these tenets among the Bhattia merchants as opposed to the Muslims and wrote:

They rose (Bhattia Hindus) in mercantile repute by commercial integrity, frugality, and perseverance, whilst the inability of the Moslem Sarraf to manage accounts or banking put greater power into their hands (Bhattias).³⁴

In Seyyid Said's reign, Hindus increased not only their reputation as shrewd merchants and customs collectors but also numerically. It is estimated that in

1844, four years after the Sultan had come to Zanzibar there were about one thousand Hindus and probably majority were Bhattias. In 1860, sixteen years later, their number was estimated at five to six thousand.³⁵ Burton on his side estimated that there were about fourteen thousand Hindus in the whole of the East African coast between 1857 and 1859 as opposed to twelve thousand Indian Moslems at the same period.³⁶ Even though the number of Hindus in Zanzibar in particular and the East African coast in general during Seyyid Said's era is not verifiable, it is clear that as he (*Sultan*) built his empire on the spoils of the Portuguese empire of the previous century on the pillars of trade and commerce, Hindus moved in as principal trade agents on account of the *Sultan's* incentives that were non-existent in his predecessor's (the Portuguese) time. Thus their population and influence was bound to increase.

They (Hindus) controlled customs on behalf of the *Sultan*. At first, the contract to collect customs was given to Wat Bania firm and later passed to Jairam Sewji, in whose hands it remained for forty years. Such position was often used by the Hindus to advance their interests in Zanzibar and in the coast generally. Hollingsworth aptly argues:

The Customs Master had his agents, who were relatives or Hindu employees of the firm of Jairam Sewji, at every

port on the coast. As he was greatly helped by his key position in Sultan's financial service, it is not surprising that he amassed a huge fortune and that he exercised great influence at the place.³⁷

Although majority of Hindus in the greater part of the nineteenth century were settled and carried out their business in Zanzibar, mention should be made that a small number of them moved to other towns in the coast. In 1870 for instance, a Hindu, Jadewji Dewji was the *Sultan's* chief Customs Controller in Mombasa. He also had a monopoly of export and import trade in the town. He imported rice and textile from Europe and exported large quantities of ivory and spices to Bombay.³⁸ Bhattia merchants are said to have moved to Lamu as early as 1832. In 1858, Burton, a European explorer, estimated that Mombasa had about forty Hindus, while Pangani in the Tazanian coast had twenty.³⁹

In the light of the above, it is undeniable that Zanzibar was the heart of Hindu commercial activities in the nineteenth century, thanks to the *Sultan's* toleration. It provided a base from where a number of Hindu business magnates of the time financed intermittent caravans to the hinterland of East Africa for trade.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is probable that Zanzibar provided a stepping stone through which individual merchants trickled into the interior to form the nucleus of later migration and settlement. It is significant to stress that, although Zanzibar had

become a popular joint for Hindu merchants in the greater part of the nineteenth century, the British occupation of East Africa and the consequent construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway fuelled the movement of most Indian groups to the interior thus detracting their attention from the coast in general and Zanzibar in particular.

2.5 COLONIAL OCCUPATION AND HINDU MOVEMENT TO THE INTERIOR OF KENYA

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a new zeal for the acquisition of colonies had entrenched deeply into the European Society. The urge to acquire raw materials for their industries and the tilt in the balance of power due to unification of Germany and Italy, changed not only the focus but also their attitude towards colonization, the only contemporary alternative for economic power as well as political supremacy.⁴¹ It was in this period of colonialism in Africa that Kenya was engulfed within the fold of the British empire. The British occupation of Kenya had a direct bearing on Indian migration to the country and East Africa at large. A terse examination of the events that preceded occupation is necessary at this point.

The growth of Zanzibar as an important trading post in the coast in the nineteenth century, attracted the attention of the British. By 1877, John Kirk, a British

Consul General to Zanzibar, had prevailed upon Sir William Mackinnon, the founder of the British Indian steam Navigation Company to organize a regular line of steamers to Zanzibar. This gave Zanzibar a link to the international markets and thus gave a tremendous boost to trade to the appeasement of Seyyid Bargash, who had come to the throne in Zanzibar in 1870. Bargash in return leased the coastland in a concession which received scant recognition in the foreign office in London.⁴⁶ In 1887 however, due to the simmering German competition in the acquisition of concessions with the local leaders in the coast, the British renewed their overtures with the *Sultan* of Zanzibar. Gradually, the British influence was extended over to what came to be called Kenya and Uganda. Sir Mackinnon's Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) was given a Royal charter in 1888 to administer the acquired territory.⁴³

Over the years East Africa remained important to the British because of her Asian colonies. It was essentially regarded as "a guard-room along the sea-way to the Asian possessions".⁴⁴ It was no wonder, that after the bringing of East Africa under the British hegemony, the former's links with India, the gem of the British colonies and "a field for overseas services",⁴⁵ became strengthened and extended beyond the commercial lines. The Indian currency and penal code were directly applied in East Africa. The Imperial British East Africa Company officials looked to India for soldiers and other people to maintain law and order.⁴⁶

Therefore, it is worth mentioning that Indian migration to East Africa was intricately related to the British domination in this region. Ghai has rightly observed:

The colonization process gave an impetus to Asian immigration, both the immigration promoted by European powers, and private immigration designed to exploit the opportunities opened up by colonization.⁴⁷

In 1895 the British administration had resolved to construct the Uganda Railway to strengthen administration in the interior as well as harness the resources of the region. India was found to be the source of human labour. Hill, the official British historian of the Uganda Railway indicated this when he wrote:

It was always certain that the railway could never be built within twenty years unless a number of labourers were brought from overseas. India was the obvious source from which to draw a supply of labour...⁴⁸

The decision to use Indians in the construction of the Uganda Railway met some difficulty in the Indian legal circles. The Emigration Act of 1883 did not provide room for the exportation of labour to East Africa. However, the Government later conceded in 1896 and by January 24th 1896 the first batch of 350 railway

workers arrived in Mombasa.⁴⁹

By 1903, about 31,983 workers had been imported. Scholars are divided on the number of the railway workers who remained in East Africa when others left for India after expiry of their contracts. It is estimated for instance that 16,312 workers were repatriated or were dismissed, 2493 met their death in East Africa and 6,454 were invalidated and sent home. It was about 6,724 that remained in East Africa.⁵⁰ Proving the authenticity of these figures is of no particular significance to this study. Whatever number of people remained in East Africa or returned to India, some points are clear from this situation.

The importation of Indian workers was the first systematic massive movement of Indians to Kenya and East Africa in general. Earlier, only a few enterprising merchants came, and it is probable that these were mainly strong and rich businessmen such as the Bhattia Hindu merchants who mainly confined their activities to the coastal strip, although a few who had the financial muscle, manpower and business acumen to withstand the difficult terrain trickled to the interior.

It seems that majority of the railway workers returned to India.⁵¹ A few remained and settled at various points along the railway line conducting business and some

remained in government service. It is likely that these workers who remained in East Africa, however few, prepared ground for their kith and kin to come and join them. Thus the importance of family links and kinship ties cannot be gainsaid when considering the migration of most Indian communities to East Africa. The pattern of settlement of these early immigrants along certain points of the railway line provided the nucleus from which a number of East African towns emerged. Most of the Indian socio-religious organizations in Kenya which came up early this century seem to have been founded by erstwhile railway workers or by those who migrated on their own to exploit business opportunities that were abounding after the completion of the railway. The remaining part of the chapter, attempts to examine the early Arya Samaj immigrants. They were mainly Hindus from Punjab who had opted to remain after the completion of the railway and later were instrumental in sowing the first seeds of Arya Samaj movement in Kenya.

The majority of railway workers came from Punjab, northern India, despite it being away from Bombay, the then main outlet to East Africa. The reasons for Punjab's dominance as a source of railway workers are not far to fetch. The Punjabis were thought to be hard working and their bodies resistant to adverse conditions. Hill, the historian of Uganda Railway says:

The Indian-imported labourers came mostly from hardy tribes of Punjab, where no difficulty has been experienced in procuring as many as wanted.⁵²

Furthermore, the outbreak of a plague in areas around Bombay and Karachi in 1897 changed migratory trends in favour of the northern and eastern provinces. Due to the plague, the recruiting companies were instructed to recruit in areas around Bengali. However, few people proved to be fit for recruitment here. Thus a special permission was sought to make recruitment in Punjab. Very soon afterwards, Karachi in Punjab, replaced Bombay as a recruiting ground and main outlet to East Africa.⁵³ Henceforth, Punjab gained prominence as a source of railway workers to East Africa.

Although Moslems from Punjab were numerically dominant in the railway service, Punjab Hindus were also present.⁵⁴ Among the Hindus from Punjab there were followers of Arya Samaj, a Hindu revivalist movement which had its stronghold there (Punjab).⁵⁵ For instance, Mathura Dass, founder member of Arya Samaj Nairobi came to Kenya in the first batch of railway workers on January 1896. Born in Ludhiana Punjab, Dass was a young man from school when he came to Kenya and served as a cashier in the Uganda Railway.⁵⁶ Baisakhi Ram, also an early Arya Samaj activist in Nairobi came from Ludhiana

Punjab.⁵⁷

Generally, Arya Samaj informants state that majority of the first generation of their immigrants to Kenya were railway workers. Whether followers of this movement had settled in Kenya prior to the Uganda Railway or not is hard to ascertain. Arya Samaj informants and records are mute on this issue. However, it is probable that since there was increased Indian presence in the coast in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, one person or two who had embraced Arya Samaj, visited Kenya in the period prior to the construction of the Uganda Railway. But there is little evidence to support such a view.

Although Dayanand, founder of Arya Samaj, was born and bred in Gujarat, very few Gujaratis were to be counted among his followers in Kenya. Nanji Kalidas Mehta, a Lohana from Gorana, Saurashtra was a striking example. He was a business tycoon in East Africa. Mehta was a great sympathiser of Arya Samaj movement both in Kenya and Uganda. He gave material and financial assistance to many Arya Samaj organizations in these countries. He was attracted to the Arya Samaj movement in 1904 while in Zanzibar.⁵⁸

By and large, majority of early Arya Samaj immigrants in Kenya were railway workers and were mainly from Punjab. They prepared ground for the migration

of a number of the followers of this movement to Kenya by providing either accommodation or employment. Present-day members of various Arya Samaj organizations in Kenya claim either descent or direct connections to these pioneers or their families. For instance, Arya Muni Varma, a ninety-three year old member of Arya Samaj Mombasa recalled that he was invited to Kenya by Mathura Dass, founder member of Arya Samaj Nairobi, to run Arya Girls School Nairobi in 1927.⁵⁹

This chapter will hardly be complete without examination of the factors that prompted Hindu or generally Indian immigration to Kenya. The situation in India, especially in the nineteenth century seem to have played key role in 'pushing' Indians to search for 'greener pastures' elsewhere. Land had become scarce due to rapid population increase. As a result, famine became rampant in agriculture-dependent areas such as Gujarat. As early as 1875, Lord Salisbury, a British official had seen this state of affairs and argued in favour of the indenture system as a solution to Indian Problems:

Having regard to the
greatness of our Indian
population, and the
probability that under
the protection which the
British Government affords
them for depopulation, war
and as far as possible,
from famine and other evils,

that population must increase, especially in the healthier and more densely populated parts of the country, where the numbers already press on the means of subsistence, and the lowest classes at all times little removed from want, it appears to me that from an Indian point of view, it is desirable to afford an outlet from these redundant regions into the tropical dominions of Her Majesty,...

Given the above conditions in India, the British colonization of East Africa and the construction of Uganda Railway, attracted Indians. As seen before, the railway project per se accounted for about 32,000 Indians who came as workers. Even though the majority returned to India, they were followed by other immigrants who came to exploit trade and employment opportunities created thereafter. Such opportunities existing in Kenya at that period made it imperative for some immigrants to change their traditional occupations and join business. Furthermore, the unavailability of land in East Africa as a result of the Government policy of land alienation in favour of White Settlers, made most Indian immigrants to earn their living exclusively from business. The Patels (Patidars), Hindus who came from Chorator Gujarat, changed from their traditional occupation, farming, into business.

Although the economic situation in India accounts for Indian migration to East Africa, its role as a 'push' factor has been stretched so far that it obscures other equally important factors, but perhaps of different magnitude. Of these, the spirit of adventure is worth mentioning.

Indian merchants, especially the Bhattias of Kutch, who had gained business monopoly in East African, particularly in Zanzibar from 1840s henceforth, went home with romantic accounts about East Africa. Legends and fabulous stories were current in India of the bountiful nature of East Africa. A number of people especially the youth found their way to East Africa on account of sheer curiosity and adventure. Nanji Kalidas Mehta was a case in point. Hailing from an economically well-to-do family, he travelled to East Africa in 1900 at the age of 13 only. His father Kalidas was a shopkeeper and a money lender at Gorana and operated a cotton ginnery at Porbandar. At a very early age, Mehta worked in his father's shop and it was likely that the question of poverty and travel abroad for economic gain did not arise at this age. His urge to travel abroad was generated by stories from his relative Gokaldas, who had travelled to Zanzibar in 1892. "His (Gokaldas') example", said Mehta, "served me as a good incentive and filled my mind with thoughts of sea travel which I was to undertake in the future, in spite of all odds and difficult circumstances."⁶²

It is significant to note that the poor economic situation in India and the promising commercial opportunities in East Africa per se, cannot explain wholesale the immigration of Indians to Kenya. Other factors such as the spirit of adventure had a role to play. Nevertheless, majority of Indians, migrating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem to have had an overriding desire for business and employment opportunities, which were few and hard to come by in India. Immigrants such as Mehta, who at first came to East Africa on account of adventure, took a keen interest in trade when they settled down. Lalchand Sharma, a follower of Arya Samaj from Horshiarpur, Punjab, came to Kenya in 1912 on account of the existing business opportunities. He had learnt of such opportunities from one Ram Nand, a man from his village who had established himself in Kenya as a Railway fuel contractor. In 1920, after some years of confinement in the jails of the colonial Government in Kenya, he went back to India but he could not stay for long, for a reason better described by him in his autobiography:

After my 10 months stay at home, I expressed to my people that I wish to go back to Africa because there was no chance in India for me.⁶³

Therefore, the unhealthy economic environment in India as opposed to East Africa, in no small measure influenced Indian immigrations to the latter.

Whatever the reasons that prompted Hindus to come to Kenya, we find that the opening years of the twentieth century witnessed tremendous influx not only of Hindus but also Indians in general. The Arya Samaj Hindus came mainly from Punjab with perhaps sprinkles of people from adjoining areas such as Western Uttar Pradesh. The first generation of these immigrants, some dead and some older people now, had settled in various urban centers in Kenya by 1920s. Their social and religious organizations started showing up as early as 1903, when Arya Samaj Nairobi was formed. Chapter three will discuss the origins of these organizations.

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CHAPTER 3

FORMATION OF HINDU SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA: ANTECEDENTS OF ARYA SAMAJ

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is the dominant religion of India. Unlike Christianity and Islam, it neither swears by any particular founder nor has specific time of founding.¹ However, it is believed to be the oldest of the world religions and has existed for about fifty centuries.² Thus the darkness of antiquity veils the origins of this religion. Historically, it is probable that its origins could be traced to 2500 B.C. The term "Hindu" as alluded to in chapter one is a Perso-Arabic word for the inhabitants of the Indus valley, the cradle land of ancient Indian civilization and their religious beliefs and practices came to be referred to as Hinduism.³

Largely, the Hindu faith is "a synthesis of creeds"⁴ which embraces multifarious scriptures and beliefs. Fundamentally, the Hindu religion shows commonality that is not so much manifested in its organization as in its beliefs, scriptures and worship. Sarma aptly observes:

Hinduism is not a single
monolithic structure. It is

a league of religions with a rather loose federal structure, and with no strong central authority. The unity of Hinduism lies not in any common ecclesiastical organization or a body of priests appointed by any central authority. Its unity lies in common deities and places of pilgrimage and worship.⁵

Over the years, Hinduism has experienced schism and reforms. Some cults and movements emerged within it and some became splinter groups. Usually such movements either emerged due to the zeal and genius of an individual or on the premise of certain aspects of Hinduism such as devotion (*bhakti*). Sometimes others were reformist and rebellious to the contemporary orthodoxy. In this chapter an attempt is made to examine the formation of one of these movements in Hinduism (Arya Samaj), which not only transcended the erstwhile orthodoxy, but also overstepped India's geographical boundary to be established elsewhere. A special stress will be laid on Arya Samaj in Kenya, but mention will be made of its origins in India to provide the background to the chapter.

3.2 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF HINDU SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA

It was evident in chapter two that Indians, particularly people inhabiting coastal areas have had a historical affinity towards maritime traffic and trade activities.

They travelled widely, establishing contacts with several regions in Asia, Africa and Europe.⁶ On account of that, it is a popular belief that India's contact with other regions was primarily inspired by trade and remained commercial over the years. Nevertheless, instances are not unknown where religious and cultural ideas were carried along with trade ware, and led to the formation of Hindu religious and cultural organizations in various parts of the world, especially where Hindu settlement exist hitherto. It was through such travels and settlement that various sects and aspects of Hinduism found their way to East Africa.

Although no precise date can be assigned to the time Hindu settlement started appearing in Kenya, it is held that of all the Hindus, "the Bhattias have the longest known history in Kenya, and East Africa in general."⁷ Having had an overwhelming influence on the economic life of the East African coast in the nineteenth century, the Bhattia merchants started the first Hindu religious organization in East Africa in 1899 - Hindu Union Mombasa (H.U.M). The H.U.M. built its first temple in 1904, thanks to the efforts of a Bhattia Jadveshver Mahadev, who contributed immensely towards the project.⁸ In Nairobi, the earliest Hindu temple was built by one Lala Prasad in 1898 at the present-day Biashara Street .⁹ The period following the completion of the Kenya Uganda Railway witnessed rapid Hindu migration to the country and subsequently led to the proliferation of Hindu cultural institutions in the first two decades of this

century in various towns where they settled in Kenya. For instance, in Nairobi, the Arya Samaj was founded in 1903, Cutch Gujarat Hindu Union in 1906 and the Shree Sanatan Dharma in 1918.¹⁰

Hindu socio-religious organizations were founded in Kenya on the basis of various phenomena. Some were based on the geographical place of origin in India such as the Surat District Association or Cutch Gujarat Hindu Union. Some are reform sects and movements within Hinduism, which early immigrants brought to Kenya such as the Arya Samaj and Swami Narayan cult. Others such as Patel Samaj are based on caste communities. These various criteria of founding notwithstanding, all these organizations have basically religious foundations or have religio-social functions.¹¹

In this case, the Arya Samaj will be the focus. First its origins and establishment in India are discussed.

3.3 ORIGINS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF ARYA SAMAJ :

BACKGROUND

In the nineteenth century, the Hindu pride and civilization had been challenged by both internal and external forces. The Hindu society and religion were no longer operating according to the ancient canons. A rigid caste system was the determinant factor in all aspects of life. The womenfolk were suppressed as it

was manifest in rampant child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, burning of widows in the funeral pyre of their husbands (*Sati*) and general absence of women from day-to-day activities in society. Religion was characterized by *Brahmanical* excesses, where the priestly class enjoyed most privileges conferred by religion such as having access to holy scriptures and education. The lower classes in society had little say in religion and matters affecting society in general. Farquhar, a profound scholar, a Christian missionary and contemporary of Dayanand, had this to say about the downtrodden members of the Hindu society:

Around the Hindu Community
in every part of the country
there lived multitudes of
degraded outcasts, held down
in the dirt by Hindu law.
They number about fifty
million to-day (by 1914 when
he was writing this).¹²

During this time Christianity had started cutting a deep chord into the Hindu society. Proselytizing Christian missionaries had entrenched themselves in India by 1800, especially in Bengal. The Christian onslaught on Hinduism had become profound especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Christian missionary activity received support from Indian Government officials such as Sir Charles Elliot, a lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who applauded the Government's

and missionaries' work of converting the Indian 'heathens' to Christianity.¹³ At the same time, Moslems were crusading against Hinduism. Books and articles purposely to ridicule Hindu religion and society were abounding from moslem theologians.¹⁴ Politically, India was under the British *raj* (rule). The Government of the day was discriminative and always protective of its interests and those of its co-religionists at the expense of the majority Indians.¹⁵ Indigenous industries and other economic activities were crippled by colonial policies in favour of the British. Thus majority of the commonfolk in India in the greater part of the nineteenth century were wallowing in a quagmire of abysmal poverty. A number of economic scholars such as Dadabhai Naoroji brought their erudition to bear on such economic situation in India and laid blame on the British rule.¹⁶ By and large, the socio-religious excesses, the fast penetrating foreign influence and the general economic poverty that characterized the Hindu society created a fertile ground for any individual who promised solace and remedy to acquire mass support and following. It was on account of the genius and zeal of individuals who recognized those existing evils and abuses in the Hindu religion and society that we had a trail of reform movements sparked off by the Brahma Samaj in 1828 founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772 - 1833), whom Farquhar, regarded as "the pioneer of all living advance, religious, social and educational, in the Hindu Community during the nineteenth century."¹⁷

Other individuals in the mainstream of this socio-religious renaissance included Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1883), who influenced greatly the foundation of Prarthana Samaj in 1867, Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), founder of Arya Samaj in 1875 and Rama Krishna Paramahansa (1836 - 1886) after whom the Rama Krishna mission was named. Whereas some of these reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen were inclined to the western world in their thinking and reforms, Swami Dayanand Saraswati marked a great departure from his contemporaries. He invoked the glory of India's past and the Vedas, the ancient Hindu scriptures, as an indispensable source of true Hinduism. His movement spread rapidly in northern India and was taken outside India by his followers with a strong missionary zeal. A brief sketch of his life is a necessary introduction to the study of the movement in Kenya.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in his childhood called Moolshanker, was born in 1824 in a respectable orthodox *Brahmin* family in Tankara, a Morvi state in Gujarat western India.¹⁸ His father Karshanji was a rich banker and an official in Tankara. Religiously, Karshanji was an ardent devotee of *Shiva*, one of the contemporary popular Hindu deities.¹⁹

His affluent background and strict religious environment notwithstanding, Dayanand from the outset portrayed himself as a rational theist with a high degree

of aversion towards tradition and custom of the time. Hardly at the age of five, he had started receiving instructions in Sanskrit. Reading of the Vedas and other devotional books became his delight. At the age of fourteen he had mastered a great part of the vedic literature by heart.²⁰ However, the more he read the more inquisitive he became in a bid to know the truth. His reading resulted into nothing more than preparing him for two episodes he witnessed as a young man after which he resorted to a wandering life in search of answers to the inexplicable and astounding experiences he underwent.

At the night of *Shivaratri* ceremony, where the followers of *Shiva* (deity) were required to stay awake and give food offerings to the deity, Dayanand was struck not only by the behavior of other believers who were overwhelmed by sleep in the great part of the night but also an incident where a mouse climbed the alter and munched the food offerings given the idol of *Shiva*. This incident cast doubt in his mind about the power of the idol. In his words:

Thoughts upon thoughts
crowded upon me, and one
question after another
arose in my disturbed mind.
Is it possible, - I asked
myself, - that this semblance
of man, the idol of a *personal*
God that I see bestriding
his bull before me, and who,
according to the religious

accounts, walks about, eats,
 sleeps and drinks; who can
 hold a trident in his hand,
 beat upon his *damaru* drum,
 and pronounce curses upon men,
 - is it possible that he can
 be the Mahadeva the Great
 Deity, the same that is
 invoked as the Lord of
 Kailash, the Supreme Being
 and Divine hero of all stories
 we read of him in his Puranas?²¹

As the above quotation indicates, the temple episode generated a desire that impelled Dayanand to discredit the erstwhile idol worship. It marked the beginning of a crusade against idolatry that Dayanand was to undertake for the whole of his life. From that time henceforth, he distinguished himself as very averse to even strongly held religious customs. Later, the demise of his uncle and sister under circumstances beyond the purview of his understanding, prompted deep thinking in him and demonstrated to him the deficiencies of human knowledge towards understanding life.

Although his father would have preferred his son being either a *Brahmin* (priest) or an ardent worshipper of *Shiva*, he did not recognize the evident non-recognition of his son of all these. The father made necessary arrangements to have him get married and start life, little did he know that family life were not in Dayanand's mind and forcing it upon him would make him leave home and

delink himself completely from his parents. He fled home in 1864 in search of truth. Heimsath summarizes his wanderings:

Crisscrossing the northern part of the continent, wandering up and down the Ganges, fighting his way through jungles and into glacier-bound passes of the Himalayas, walking across the plains of Hindustan, resting occasionally for a month or so at temples or ashrams, the man eschewed the relative comfort and prestige which he could have had as a settled priest or Guru on favour of rigorous physical life and unsatisfied quest for spiritual truth.²²

In 1860 Dayanand came across a blind *Guru* (teacher), Virjanand of Mathura, from whom he received most of his teachings. Virjanand gave a new orientation to him in the Vedic teachings. He instructed him on the infallibility of the Vedas vis-a-vis other popular scriptures of the time such as the *Puranas*.²³ During his stay with Virjanand who was harsh on his pupil, Dayanand developed the virtues of patience, courage and self-reliance, which enabled him to withstand the onerous task of spreading the vedic religion he was to undertake the whole of his life.²⁴ His wandering in the hills and forests must have given him opportunities to build his sturdy character and molded him into a forceful personality that was

able to face heavy odds in future.

After his schooling under Virjanand, Dayanand became an itinerant teacher and preacher. Like other religious reformers before him, ranging from Martin Luther of Christianity to Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Hinduism, Dayanand was averse to the contemporary religious and social tradition and custom. His sermons, based on the vedas, the ancient Hindu scriptures appealed to many people. He spoke against the *Brahmanic* tradition of dominance and monopoly of knowledge, and wanted to reform the contemporary society into what he believed was the glorious age in India : the Vedic age. This way, Dayanand was doing to Hinduism what Martin Luther did to Christianity. Dr. Griswold of Lahore in 1892 compared Dayanand and Luther:

Pandit Dayanand Sarasvati became finally emancipated from the authority of Brahmanism in some such way as Luther became emancipated from the authority of the Church of Rome. Luther appealed from the Roman Church and the authority of tradition to the scriptures of the Old Testament. Pandit Dayanand Sarasvati appealed from the Brahnamical church and the authority of *Smriti* to the earliest and most sacred Indian scriptures. The watchword of Luther was "Back to The Bible": the watchword of Pandit Dayanand was "Back to the Vedas."²⁵

The proclamation of the vedic message, took Dayanand to most parts of India. In 1872 he was in Calcutta. In 1874 he went to the city of Bombay, where due to great support and success, he formally started Arya Samaj in 1875.²⁶

In 1877, he was in Lahore (Punjab) where his influence rapidly spread so "that Arya Samaj founded there very speedily eclipsed the society founded in Bombay, and Lahore became the headquarters of the movement."²⁷ The Arya Samaj found a congenial home in Punjab during Dayanand's life, despite his Gujarati background, and the foundation of the first Arya Samaj in Bombay. Punjab had a historical vulnerability towards religious renaissance, being the home of many religious reforms, Hindu and Moslem alike.²⁸ However, the success of Arya Samaj in Punjab cannot be wholly on account of its proclivity towards religious reformation as in Dayanand's efforts, his personal example (worth emulation) and the time he spent there. Dayanand went to Punjab in 1877 and stayed for six years, enthusiastically preaching and teaching.²⁹ His efforts combined with his sturdy built body and physical prowess made popular appeal, particularly among the martial Punjabi Sikhs, who found in Dayanand a character model.³⁰

Dayanand's death on 30th October, 1883 was a great blow to Arya Samaj but did not stop the spread of its creed. It had been established firmly in north India. Furthermore, Dayanand had left behind enormous literature such as the *Satyarth*

Prakash (Light of Truth), that probably continued to inspire his disciples besides being a living testimony of his ideals. It was his followers from Punjab with a great missionary zeal, who came to Kenya in the last decade of the nineteenth century that laid ground for the establishment of Arya Samaj.

3.4 ORIGINS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF ARYA SAMAJ IN KENYA

By 1900, Indian immigrants had started settling in Nairobi thanks to the Uganda Railway, which not only enabled easy communication from Mombasa, the gateway to East Africa, but also created a conducive environment for economic enterprise. Some of the immigrants were on Government service, mainly in the railway. Others were businessmen supplying basic material necessities to the White and Indian settlers in Nairobi. The followers of Arya Samaj were among those Indians who had settled in Nairobi and their activities in Kenya could be traced from that time.³¹

At first, the Arya Samaj immigrants were few numerically. At that time, their mode of worship was primarily personal and was carried out in individual homes.³² As the number of Arya Samaj immigrants increased as more people immigrated, a need for religious fellowship arose among those devotees. Regular prayer meetings were held in various people's houses weekly. Such early meetings and the fact that most Arya Samaj adherents hailed from Punjab

cemented their unity, irrespective of their small numbers and paved way for the creation of their organization in Nairobi.³³

On 5th July, 1903, Arya Samaj Nairobi was established in an inaugural meeting held in Jai Gopal's house on River Road, Nairobi. Inder Singh was elected the first Chairman of the Samaj, Kishen Chand Vice Chairman, Badri Nath Arya Secretary, Lakshman Dass a librarian and Jai Gopal became a treasurer.³⁴ A consensus of a number of Arya Samaj informants however is that Mathura Dass and Badri Nath Arya, both cashiers in the railway, were the moving spirits behind the Arya Samaj movement in Nairobi in its formative years. Mathura Dass and Badri Nath Arya used to play the dual role as priests and singers for Arya Samaj, in Nairobi. They guided the members in reciting prayers and the ten commandments of Arya Samaj.³⁵ Their education up to matriculation level, a preserve of a few people in those days, must have given the Arya Samaj respectability apart from placing the elitist skills at its disposal. In 1910 it was Mathura Dass who started the first Arya Samaj girls' school, the first school for Indian girls in Kenya.³⁶

The vigour with which Arya Samaj Nairobi was inaugurated demonstrated that the spirit of reformation was alive among the followers of Arya Samaj, the alien environment notwithstanding. Even though Baldev Kapila, the son of Mathura

Dass, does not recall his father telling him that he saw Dayanand preach and teach, he recollected that Dayanand's teachings and reforms were manifested in his father's life and activities.³⁷ Mathura Dass, born around 1867 in Sahnawal Ludhiana Punjab, the stronghold of Arya Samaj, must have had, either directly or indirectly, Dayanand's influence. His father was a devoted orthodox Hindu but his father in-law was an ardent follower of Arya Samaj.³⁸ Dass married according to Arya Samaj customs . His commitment to Arya Samaj seems to have been buttressed on account of his marriage from a family with strong Arya Samaj beliefs. It was probably this strong influence that made him embrace and work for the rise of Arya Samaj in an alien environment. By 1903, when Arya Samaj Nairobi was at its budding stage, Arya Samaj in India especially in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, was gaining momentum in their socio-religious reforms. While other reform movements such as the Prarthana Samaj were being torn asunder by deep-seated differences among their rank and file, Arya Samaj leaders were successfully soliciting funds for missionary work and the building of Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (D.A.V) Colleges. The first Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College was set up on 1st June, 1886 in Lahore in memory of Dayanand and was followed by D.A.V colleges in places like Jullundher, Dehradun and Kanpur.³⁹ These efforts of Arya Samaj in India probably had a boosting influence on Arya Samaj followers outside India, and Kenya was no exception.

The formation of Arya Samaj in Nairobi was significant for the spread of the organization in Africa in more than one way. Firstly, it was the first branch of Arya Samaj to be founded in Africa.⁴⁰ In the course of time, it became the centre of Arya Samaj activities in this region. Arya Samaj Nairobi over the years hosted important Arya Samaj functions such as conferences and seminars, which increased its importance as a centre of Arya Samaj outside India. S.B. Bhardwaj, the secretary of Nairobi Arya Samaj in 1979 alludes to such importance of his Samaj in his report of that year, which followed the hosting of the International Aryan Conference and the celebrations of the 75th Anniversary:

The reputation of Arya Samaj was accomplished internationally in 1978 during the Heerak Jayanti (75th Anniversary). This Heerak Jayanti got the Nairobi Samaj into the world religious map. While looking back to all our achievements over 75 years since its inception, we earned unimaginable credit to our Samaj through our hospitality, selflessness and compatibility.⁴¹

Furthermore, the significance of Arya Samaj Nairobi also seems to revolve around the fact that it sparked off and preceded a process that led to the establishment of Arya Samaj organizations in various emerging towns of East Africa, where its followers had settled by 1903. As it will be discussed later in the chapter, Nairobi in 1920 became the headquarters of the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa, the Supreme Council of Arya Samaj churches in East Africa.

Mombasa had been the gateway to East Africa over the years. At the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of Arya Samaj immigrants had settled there. On 10th march 1905 they met in Kashiram Bori's house adjacent to the Kilindini harbour and resolved to form an Arya Samaj organization. Later in 1908, the Arya Samaj was properly instituted with Kashiram Bori as its chairman and Shri Vanshilal as the secretary.⁴²

By 1910, the followers of Arya Samaj were settling in western Kenya either as private entrepreneurs or workers in the railway service. As their numbers increased due to immigration of other followers, they felt encouraged to form an Arya Samaj in the Lake Victoria town of Kisumu in 1912.⁴³ Although some sources suggest that Arya Samaj Kisumu was formed in 1910⁴⁴, thus casting doubt over the precise date of its formation, my informants of Arya Samaj Kisumu agree that F.C. Sood, R.D. Dikshit, the Khosla and Kohli families were among the pioneers who were the flag bearers of the Arya Samaj creed in Kisumu.⁴⁵

In the 1930s small upcountry urban centres were coming up mainly because of the influence of the railway and consequent business enterprises. Hindu immigrants, particularly followers of Arya Samaj immigrating directly from India or from Nairobi and Mombasa where quite a number had settled at that period moved into these centres to either tap business opportunities or on government

service. These immigrants organized themselves and formed Arya Samaj organizations in the Rift Valley town of Nakuru in 1932, Eldoret in 1933¹⁶, Miwani and Nanyuki in 1934¹⁷. These organizations and their activities, particularly the setting up of schools for girls made Arya Samaj to have a great following from other Hindu sects and religious groups. Nevertheless, the Arya Samaj in Nairobi remained the heart of the Arya Samaj movement and the other Arya Samaj organizations in the up-coming towns looked to it for inspiration and guidance. Even at present when Arya Samaj organizations in towns such as Nanyuki are moribund and the activities of Arya Samaj in other towns such as Kisumu and Nakuru are at a low ebb, Arya Samaj Nairobi is active with about half of the Arya Samaj membership in the country.

It is significant to stress that by the middle of this century, Arya Samaj was well entrenched in Kenya with its followers in various urban centers. In nearly all major towns in the country such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kitale, Nanyuki and Miwani, Arya Samaj's religious activities were carried on enthusiastically, however, as will be revealed in chapter four, the whole corpus of Arya Samaj activities went beyond the religious domain.

3.5 ORGANIZATION OF ARYA SAMAJ IN KENYA

Shortly before Dayanand's death, the need to establish a centralized system of organization to oversee the smooth running of all the Arya Samaj organizations had arisen in India. Hitherto, various Arya Samaj organizations were autonomous entities. In 1883, a *Paropkarini Sabha* (Philanthropic society) was formed in Udaipur, whose main objective was to be the co-ordination of the activities of Arya Samaj organizations with a view to propagating *Vedic Dharma* and assisting the underprivileged people.⁴⁸ However, by December 1883, only three months after Dayanand's demise, the *Paropkarini Sabha* had achieved little success in overseeing Arya Samaj organizations in India. It was replaced by the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha*, which was to co-ordinate the activities of Arya Samaj organizations regionally (within the provinces).⁴⁹ The *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* was formed in all provinces in India where Arya Samaj had taken root. In 1908, the *Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* (International Aryan league) was formed as a supreme international body of Arya Samaj. Most *Arya Pratinidhi Sabhas* the world over were affiliated to it. It was in the context of Arya Samaj's organizational structure that the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa* (A.P.S.E.A.) (the supreme council of Arya Samaj churches in East Africa) was formed.

The *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa* was established in 1920 in Nairobi as a body encompassing all Arya Samaj organizations in the East African region :

Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.⁵⁰ Hitherto, Arya Samaj organizations in East Africa were nearly independent of one another. Some Arya Samajes had affiliated themselves with *Arya Pratinidhi Sabhas* in India. For instance, Arya Samaj Nairobi and Mombasa soon after their inception were affiliated to the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* Punjab.⁵¹ Later, the need for unity in the propagation of vedic teachings in this region necessitated the creation of *Arya pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa.

The objectives of the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa reflected the ideals of other *Sabhas* elsewhere in the world, especially in India, the cradle land of Arya Samaj. It was fundamentally aimed at the propagation of *Vedic Dharma* (Vedic religion) through the establishment of schools, libraries, *Gurukuls* (residential schools), orphanages and dispensaries, besides uniting and pooling resources of the Arya Samaj organizations in East Africa.⁵²

Structurally, the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* is headed by a democratically elected chairman (president). Elections are held annually and officials are elected by representatives from all Arya Samaj organizations affiliated to the *Sabha*. Arya Samaj organizations in their Annual General Meetings (A.G.M.) elect representatives to the *Sabha*. These representatives in turn meet and elect the officials of the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa from among themselves. All

the property of member Arya Samaj organizations were registered in the *Sabha's* name after its inception.⁵³ The *Sabha* coordinated socio-religious activities of member organizations in East Africa, more so during the colonial period when the region was under the British jurisdiction and thus facilitating communication and links among the three territories that now constitute East Africa.

In the 1960s, political independence was at the threshold of East African countries. Soon after independence, the easy linkage among the three territories, which had existed over the years by virtue of a similar colonial "master" was over. The existence of a centralized organization to coordinate Arya Samaj activities in the different countries of East Africa became difficult.⁵⁴ In the 1970s, the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa confined its activities to Kenya unlike before. A new *Sabha*, namely the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* Tanzania, emerged in Tanzania to oversee Arya Samaj organizations over there.⁵⁵ In Uganda, "Arya Samaj lost its hold on the property and institutions"⁵⁶ following the turn of events in 1972-1973 which led to expulsion of all Indians from that country by president Idi Amin Dada.

Despite the fact that the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa no longer extends its jurisdiction to other countries of East Africa outside Kenya, it continues to retain its original name (*Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa). The main reason

for this revolves around legal technicalities relating to the rescue of Arya Samaj property that remained in Uganda after 1972 Indian expulsion. Justice S.K. Sachdeva, a member of Arya Samaj Nairobi Judicial Committee, shed some light on this:

...one important point we have to bear in mind is that if we change to Kenya Pratinidhi Sabha (from Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa) we may lose whatever slim chances we might have of being able to salvage any of our assets from Uganda.⁵⁷

Therefore, although there was need to establish a *Sabha* with a new name to coordinate Arya Samaj's activities in Kenya as the case had been in Tanzania, the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa* was left intact to take up that responsibility and also for the purpose of salvaging Arya Samaj property from Uganda. M.K. Bhalla, the secretary of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa* in 1978 alluded to the further complications they would have faced if they terminated the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa*:

The present Sabha (Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa) is registered under the Land Perpetual Succession Act whereby all assets of

Arya Samajes are vested with the Sabha. If Steps are taken to formulate a new Sabha only for Kenya, we will have to undergo a long process of getting ourselves again registered under the Land Perpetual Succession Act and transferring assets in Kenya to that Sabha whereby we may be opening a new chapter with the Government by exposing ourselves concerning our assets in the country (sic).⁵⁸

In East Africa presently there exists *Arya Pratinidhi Sabhas* in all the countries save for Uganda. The *Sabhas* coordinate and supervise Arya Samaj activities, with the primary aim of propagating the Vedic religion. The influence of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa notwithstanding, individual Arya Samaj organizations in Kenya have administrative autonomy to control their activities. A particular Arya Samaj organization is controlled by an *Antrang Sabha* (Management Committee). Members of the *Antrang Sabha* are elected in an Annual General Meeting (A.G.M) held by members of the *Arya Pariwar* (members of Arya Samaj). The *Antrang Sabha* has authority to do anything for the benefit of the Arya Samaj. It admits members to the *Arya Pariwar* and it has powers to suspend or excommunicate any member whose behaviour is considered

incompatible with the aims and objectives of Arya Samaj.⁵⁹ The *Antrang Sabha* also appoints sub-committees or boards, for any special purpose from amongst its members possessing qualifications or experience to find solutions to a certain problem or implement a particular policy of the Samaj in question.⁶⁰ S.S. Bhardwaj, the chairman of Arya Samaj Nairobi, in his maiden speech to the members of the *Antrang Sabha* of the Samaj threw some light on its functions:

Antrang Sabha is a policy making body and ensures that the sub-committees work within the framework of their rules and directives of Antrang Sabha. ⁶¹

Despite the powers of the *Antrang Sabha*, disputes and problems beyond the individual Arya Samaj's scope are referred to the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa. Beyond there, reference may be made to the *Arya Sarvadeshik Sabha* in Delhi, the final body in terms of administrative authority of Arya Samaj movement.

The organization of Arya Samaj is largely reminiscent of Max Weber's conception of a bureaucracy. It is made up of relatively autonomous units (Arya Samajes), which consist of sub-units specializing in various duties but ultimately geared towards the teaching and propagation of Vedic religion in the light of Dayanand's interpretations and reforms. On the other hand, the organization of Arya Samaj manifests a democratic institution in which authority emanates from

the ruled, who in the case of Arya Samaj are the members of *Arya Pariwar*. It is the members of a particular Samaj, who determine the nature of their leadership through elections. Dissension in such elections is acceptable and channels for dispute resolution are enshrined in the Arya Samaj constitution.

3.6 ARYA SAMAJ AND THE FORMATION OF THE HINDU COUNCIL OF KENYA

As alluded to earlier in the chapter, Hindus in Kenya fall into different religious groups and sects. Each group, however small numerically formed its own organization either based on its place of origin in India or sect of its faith.⁶² Some of these organizations, such as the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma, came to Kenya carrying with them the differences that had existed between them in India. Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj, condemned the custom-ridden Hindu society and thus shook the very principles that the orthodox Sanatanis stood for. He attacked the Sanatanis' idol worship, excessive rituals and rigid caste system. Most of the time during Arya Samaj's formative years, the "Sanatanists and Arya Samajists were at daggers drawn".⁶³ In Kenya such rivalry continued as the Arya Samajists attacked Sanatanis on account of idol worship and the latter reciprocated by claiming to be true representatives of Hinduism.⁶⁴ Despite the religious differences that existed among some Hindu socio-religious organizations in India, in Kenya aspects that bring them more closer are emphasized. The alien

environment, ethnic similarity and a common home land (India) have been the binding forces among Hindus. In the post-independence period, the rapidly changing situation in Kenya led the Hindus to come together in an all-Hindu organization to redress their problems.⁶⁵ The Arya Samaj, one of the Hindu socio-religious organizations, had a role to play in the process of uniting Hindus. The paragraphs that follow are an attempt to examine Arya Samaj's role in the creation of the Hindu Council of Kenya (H.C.K), an umbrella body of Hindu religious groups and sects.

The events that signalled the formation of an all-Hindu organization in Kenya can be traced to the beginning of this century. At the time, Hindus were numerically few than Muslims and Christians and thus unity of purpose was indispensable for the survival of their tradition and custom. Social and religious organizations that were open to all Hindus were founded. The Hindu Union in Mombasa and the Cutch Gujarati Hindu Union in Nairobi, formed in 1899 and 1906 respectively were striking examples.⁶⁶ Although these organizations were confined to particular towns in their operations, they were early indicators of what was to happen in future as far as Hindu unity in Kenya was concerned.

It is plausible to contend that from the beginning Arya Samaj had addressed itself to the propagation of Vedic teachings and its programme of social reforms,

especially in the provision of educational facilities for girls. As time went by, the followers of Arya Samaj realized that the situation was gradually changing, especially with the dawn of political independence in East Africa. The challenges of the unfolding events required corporate efforts of all Hindus in order to face the future with confidence.

In 1962, a year before Kenya's independence, 120 delegates of all Arya Samaj organizations in East Africa convened a meeting in Nairobi. Their main agenda was to review and take stock of the problems Hindus were experiencing. Shri Anandswami Saraswati, an Arya Samaj spiritual leader from India, attended the meeting and was the main source of inspiration. In the meeting it was unanimously "resolved that efforts should be made to bring the Hindus of the three territories (of East Africa) together."⁶⁷

The 1962 meeting had limited fruition in bringing the dream of Hindu unity to a reality on account of involving only representatives of Arya Samaj in East Africa. However, it was a step in Arya Samaj's efforts towards Hindu unity. It set precedence to the future meetings convened by the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa that laid the foundation of the Hindu Council of Kenya. In 1965 representatives of Hindu socio-religious institutions met in Nairobi to discuss modalities of forging Hindu unity. B.R. Kapila, the president of the *Arya*

Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa, addressing the meeting noted:

... I am thankful to God that he has been benign enough to bring this day so that we could act together with a view to forging Hindu unity in Kenya, which I fervently pray should be a forerunner of East African Hindu unity.⁶⁸

In this meeting it was resolved to create an all-Hindu organization in Kenya. A crucial minute discussed in meeting noted:

This meeting of the representatives of religious and social organizations of various denominations of Hindu faith unanimously resolve to form an all Kenya council of Hindus in order to provide a united association to various sects ...⁶⁹

An ad hoc committee appointed to look into modalities of forming the Hindu Council of Kenya consisted of representatives of all institutions represented in the 1965 meeting. B.R. Kapila and C.P. Gupta both of Arya Samaj were chairman and secretary to the committee respectively.⁷⁰

Although individuals such as Shankarcharya ji Maharaji, who had visited Kenya from India and preached enthusiastically about Hindu unity, could be said to be

the moving spirits behind the formation of the Hindu council, the changing political environment takes the lion's share as a determinant factor of the course of action the Hindus were undertaking. At that time, Kenya had become independent, with a majority African rule. Uncertainty surrounded Hindus about their future in Kenya. The colonial Government had bred animosity between Africans and Indians generally during the freedom struggle. This ruled out cooperation among the two races and only helped to sow seeds of discord between them.⁷² The changing social, economic and political institutions at independence presented challenges that in the eyes of Hindus required macro unity vis-a-vis micro unity of individual organizations. C.P. Gupta of Arya Samaj aptly reflected this in the 1965 meeting when he decried the contemporary state of Hindus:

Upto now we have successfully lived in our self-made communal compartments based on provinces, districts of our origin and sects of our faith. We have been blissfully ignorant of how much harm this practice of ours has done to our growth. And if we compare this growth of ours with growth of other communities in this part of the world, our position becomes more pitiable. The political and social conditions in these countries prior to independence had been controlled in such manner that here was very little, if all

any (sic), social contact among various races and this practices have been more acute among Hindus who unfortunately are almost exclusively Indian (of) stock. This factor allowed us to develop ourselves in the manner we desired, without any external influence of any nature. Besides, we also suffer from various social weakness(sic) to which we tend to cling, although Hindus in India are getting rid of these practices. As a result of these social weakness (sic) we have become a weak part of the community, inspite of our possessing every possible factor which make communities strong and virile. We are thus being choked by difficulties created by ourselves.⁷²

In Gupta's view, what Hindus needed most at that time was "a platform which would represent all of us (them) in every aspect to the outside world, in matters religious, social and cultural etc - an organization which knit us (them) into one strong and united body wherein problems of one section will become problems of all and strength of each part."⁷³

Generally, the creation of the Hindu council of Kenya remained a blue print until 1970s. At that time spiritual leaders from India who had realized the indispensability of Hindu unity visited Kenya and gave lectures to that effect and aroused the latent hopes of Hindus about their unity. Swami Satyamitranand

Giriji is worth of mention.⁷⁴ In August 1973, the dream of an all-Hindu organization became a reality with the formation of the Hindu council of Kenya. The council was an amalgamation of Hindu socio-religious organizations in the country. It was purely a non-political body which sought to unite all Hindu organizations. Summarizing its objectives and activities Usha Shah, the current chairman (chairlady) of the council observed:

Its main objects and aims are unity amongst all, to promote an understanding among religious sects, social traditions and cultural backgrounds. The council assists those in need of moral or financial support and strives to create a bridge between people of different cultures and ethnic groups.⁷⁵

The Hindu Council of Kenya gives humanitarian assistance to victims of calamity, assists Hindus in migratory problems and organizes corporate celebrations of Hindu festivals such as *Diwali*. As from 1985 it started overseeing the teaching of Hindu Religious Education (H.R.E) in primary and secondary schools in Kenya.⁷⁶ In a bid to propagate and perpetuate Hinduism, lectures, primarily touching on religious issues are organized by various branches of the Hindu Council.⁷⁷

It is important to emphasize that Arya Samaj continues to participate in the

activities of the Hindu Council of Kenya. The Arya Samaj for instance elects its representatives to the council in its annual general meetings and sends its subscription annually. In 1974 for instance, in the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi, B.R. Aggarwal and V.S. Sikad were elected as representatives of the Samaj to the Hindu Council of Kenya.⁷⁸ Besides its normal annual subscription, Arya Samaj Nairobi makes special donations to enable the council meet its financial requirements. In 1980 for instance, a special joint meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* and Finance Committee of the Arya Samaj Nairobi held to discuss a request of finances from the Hindu council of Kenya, resolved to donate twenty eight thousand shillings to the council.⁷⁹ After the 1st August, 1982 abortive coup detat disturbances, the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi resolved to donate fifty thousand shillings to the Hindu Council of Kenya for relief work to rehabilitate the affected people.⁸⁰

At the same time, ardent devotees of Arya Samaj have had an occasion to rise to the higher echelons of power in the Hindu Council of Kenya. In 1983 for instance, Pritam Singh Saini, a member of Arya Samaj Nairobi was the Chairman of the HCK. He represented Hindus in the World conference on Religion and Peace First all African Assembly held in Nairobi in August 1983.⁸¹

Largely, Arya Samaj played a vital role in the creation of HCK and in forging

the Hindu unity in Kenya, thus minimizing bitter religious differences that did not augur well for the wellbeing of Hindus in their adopted home. However, it is worth noting that if the foregoing paragraphs suggest that Arya Samaj played an overwhelming role in founding the HCK vis-a-vis other Hindu socio-religious organizations, I must correct such an impression. The HCK was a direct offspring of the sacrifice of individuality and closedness on the part of member organizations, where Arya Samaj is no exception. Its continued operations too manifest cooperation among these organizations.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In the preceding paragraphs, an attempt has been made to trace the origins of Arya Samaj in Kenya, its organization and its role in the creation of the HCK, a non-political supra organization designed to redress Hindu problems in a more corporate way as opposed to individual or small-group approach.

When we generally consider the scale and pace of the formation of Arya Samaj in particular and other Hindu socio-religious organizations in Kenya, it should cause no surprise that their formative period falls mainly either on the first four or five decades of this century. This period *prima facie* represents the time Kenya witnessed a large influx of Hindus. However, mere influx of people is not enough to explain the proliferation of these organizations. Other intrinsic factors

need to be considered.

First, the socio-religious environment of the early Hindu immigrants in Kenya must have prompted the establishment of their cultural institutions. At the time of Hindu immigration and settlement, European religious influence had taken roots in this country.⁸² Hindus, particularly some Arya Samaj followers had witnessed a situation in India, where the Western type of education denationalized Hindu youths, shook their confidence and faith in their own cultural heritage and religion, created a feeling of inferiority, made them westerners in tastes, opinions and habits.⁸³ Thus Arya Samaj adherents were determined not to allow the repetition of the Indian situation in Kenya. Between 1890 and 1940 the spread of Christian influence in Kenya was unrivalled and perhaps it was plausible that if unchecked some Hindus would be converted.⁸⁴ Therefore, it seems probable that the early Arya Samaj immigrants formed their organizations in Kenya to combat the spread of other religions among its followers. In Mombasa where Hindu youth had shown some degree of affinity towards western lifestyle, the earliest activity of the Arya Samaj was the organization of special committees for the proselytization of Hinduism.⁸⁵

Furthermore, it is probable that the state of insecurity in the alien environment

contributed something to the religious reawakening of early Hindu immigrants who settled in Kenya. Those who had participated in the construction of the Uganda Railway underwent the traumatic experience of the man-eating lions of Tsavo so much so that some complained to the colonial authority that they "had come from India on an agreement to work for the Government, not to supply food for either lions or devils."⁸⁶ Others were prone to diseases, especially after their settlement in Nairobi, plague epidemics were not infrequent among these early Indian immigrants.⁸⁷ This state of insecurity was likely to have made small groups to congregate to appease their gods through prayers and tokens for protection in the alien environment.

Whatever the factors that led to their emergence, the importance of Hindu socio-religious organizations in Kenya, especially in the early decades of this century, was not so much in the group identity which they gave them (Hindu) as in the fact that they were a source of social and spiritual nourishment in a foreign land. Socially, they provided comfort and succour to the new immigrants. Religiously, they provided a chance to devotees to seek guidance, protection and success in their endeavours from their deities. Above all, they were important avenues for the provision of essential services such as education and health within a particular group. Thus most Indian groups in Kenya, Hindus and Moslems alike, at the time of their immigration and settlement developed a proclivity

towards organizing themselves into sect, caste or place-of-origin based organizations primarily for their socio-religious survival.

NOTES

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¹⁸ A.V. Shastri, The Arya Samaj: Its cult and creed (New Delhi: Connaught Circus, 1965), p.2.

¹⁹ Farquhar, op. cit. p.102.

²⁰ S.Narajan, A century of social reform in India (London: Asian Publishing House, 1963), p.73.

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²² C.H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1964), p.114.

²³ Ibid. pp.15-16.

²⁴ P.V. Kulageri, Dayanand Saraswati (Bangalore: Rastrothana printers, 1975), pp.20-21.

²⁵ Griswold's article in the Indian Evangelical Review, January 1892 quoted in Farquhar, op. cit. p.11.

²⁶ Ibid. p.109.

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³² Oral Interview Report, J.D. Sharma 24/1/1993, Nairobi.

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⁴⁵ Oral interview Report, S.S. Bhardwaj, J.S.V. Putra and B.V. Kotecha, 14/3/1993, Kisumu.

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⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Clause No. 5 of the Arya Samaj constitution.

⁶⁰ Clause No. 13 of the Arya Samaj constitution.

⁶¹ Minutes of the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 14/15/1975 at Arya Boys Secondary School, Ngara, in Arya Samaj Nairobi
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⁶² All Africa Hindu Conference Souvenir of 1988, PP.23-24.

⁶³ Pareek, op. cit. p 109

⁶⁴ Shree Sanatan Dharma Sabha Souvenir published during *Janamashtmi* occasion, 1986, P 13.

⁶⁵ Orah Interview Report, U. Shah, 26/11/1992, Nairobi

⁶⁶ S. Tilak, "Hindus abroad" in All Africa Hindu conference Souvenir op cit, PP. 151-154.

⁶⁷ B.R. Kapila, "A welcome address read to representatives of Hindu religious and Social institutions gathered in Nairobi on Saturday 27/11/1965, in Arya Samaj Kisumu Correspondence file. 1965.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Minutes of the first general meeting of the representatives of Hindu religious and Social institution in Nairobi held at Mahindar Pall Hall, Parklands Nairobi on Saturday 27/11/1965, p.2.

⁷⁰ P.M. Bhatt, A history of the Asians in Kenya 1900-1970 (Harvard University Ph.D thesis, 1976), pp 48-49 and p. 329.

⁷² C.G. Gupta, " Scope and Aims of a joint meeting of representatives of Hindu religious and Social institutions," a paper presented in the meeting held on 27/11/1965, p.1.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ All Africa Hindu conference souvenir op.cit. p. 26.

⁷⁵ Oral Interview Report, U. Shah, 26/11/ 1992., Nairobi.

⁷⁶ All Africa Hindu conference Souvenir op. cit. pp. 28-30

⁷⁷ Shah, op. cit.

⁷⁸ Minutes of the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 20/3/1974 at Arya Nursery School, Ngara in Arya Samaj Minutes of Antrang Sabha file No.11

⁷⁹ Minutes of the joint meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* and Finance committee of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 24/9/1980, Ibid.

⁸⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 20/8/1982, Ibid.

⁸¹ Saini op. cit.

⁸² W.B. Anderson, " Chronology of Christianity in Kenya 1498-1992" in D.B. Barret Kenya Churches Handbook (Kisumu Evengel Publishing House, 1973), p. 35.

⁸³ Pareek, op. cit. p. 43.

⁸⁴ Anderson, op. cit. p. 35.

⁸⁵ Shastri, op. cit. pp. 19-20.

⁸⁶ J.H. Patterson, The man-eaters of Tsavo and other African adventures (London: Macmillan 1963), P. 72.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 292.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIO - RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF ARYA SAMAJ

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Socio-religious situation of the nineteenth century India kindled a number of social reform movements. The Hindu religion of the time had degenerated into a diversity of religious dogma , idolatry, rituals and sects. Rigid caste system, ban on foreign travels and dependent status of women characterized the Hindu society.¹ On account of these practices, social reform measures were taken from various quarters to curb them. The Indian Government under Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India (1828-1835), banned *Sati*, the burning of widows in the funeral pyre of their husbands, *thagi*, the killing and robbery of travellers, and the sacrifice of human beings.² The early Christian missionaries in India advocated many socio-religious reforms in view of the prevalent practices, to be based on the premise of Christianity and Western lifestyle.³ Dayanand Saraswati, initiated a socio-religious programme to restore what he thought was the lost glory of India. He believed on reformation based on the canons spelt out in the Vedas, the ancient Hindu sacred books. He advocated for the emancipation of womenfolk from the oppressive socio-religious fabrics, development of an education system that manifested India 's past and the end of untouchability and *Brahnmanical* (priestly) excesses.⁴ These activities initiated

by Dayanand have been the focus of Arya Samaj movement in India over the years, with some changes according to the dictates of social religious environment and time.

Arya Samaj, after the death of Dayanand, was strongly established in the north-western part of India. Its assertion of a superior faith, free of strict orthodox beliefs and its aggressive efforts to curb conversions of Hindus to Christianity and Islam, created vigor and national consciousness among the Punjabis. The Arya Samaj's socio-religious programmes began to receive greater support than the Brahmo Samaj of Ram Mohan Roy.⁵ The same zeal characterized the activities of Arya Samaj followers abroad who had mainly emigrated from Punjab, the Arya Samaj stronghold in India.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century, Arya Samajists had traversed the Indian ocean to settle in Kenya and sowed the first seeds of Arya Samaj in this region. What then were the activities of Arya Samaj in Kenya and to what extent did they reflect Dayanand's ideals? The following chapter attempts to provide answers to this question by examining the activities of the Arya Samaj in Kenya since its inception.

4.2 RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

(1) RELIGIOUS MEETINGS

Dayanand had a strong belief in the Vedas. Any religious or sectarian belief short of the Vedic teachings did not augur well with Hinduism in his view. This belief was enshrined in the Ten Commandments (principles) of Arya Samaj:

The Veda is the scripture of true knowledge, it is the paramount duty of every Arya to learn and teach the Veda, to hear it read and recite it to others.⁶

Dayanand based most of his religious convictions and conceptions on the authority of the Vedas and condemned most of the contemporary religious activities and practices as incompatible with the Vedas. The religious meetings which were started by Dayanand as an itinerant preacher as the main forum for the propagation of the vedic teachings continue to be a characteristic of Arya Samaj followers outside India.

It was common therefore that whenever the Arya Samajists settled in Kenya, religious activity was their priority. Most of the Arya Samaj organizations had been inspired and some directly originated from small prayer meetings, held in the houses of some members of Arya Samaj in a weekly basis in the beginning of this century. The Arya Samaj in Nairobi and Mombasa are cases in point.⁷

The efforts of the first generation of Arya Samaj immigrants usually were directed towards the erection of physical structures for their religious activities. In Nairobi, a Vedic temple was built along the present-day Mama Ngina street (Former Queensway) as early as 1916.⁸ In Mombasa the Arya Samajists were meeting in a small hall till 1911 when they erected a Vedic temple.⁹

Common to all Arya Samaj organizations in Kenya is the holding of weekly religious meetings (*Satsangs*). Unlike in Christian churches, where days of worship and religious gatherings are sanctioned religiously and considered sacred, the Arya Samaj does not attach much importance to any particular day for religious gathering. Such a day is often chosen at the discretion of the members of a particular Arya Samaj organization. In various towns, Arya Samaj followers congregate on various days in a week according to their convenience. A cross-sectional survey however, revealed that most of the Arya Samaj branches in Kenya opted for Sunday as a day of worship activities, because government offices as well as the markets close on Sunday thus enabling the followers of Arya Samaj to attend worship gatherings. The Arya Samaj in Nairobi, Mombasa and Nakuru hold their meetings on Sundays. Arya Samaj Kisumu holds her meetings on Saturdays.¹⁰ In addition to the weekly gatherings, Arya Samaj observes festivals like *Diwali*, a common Hindu festival of lights, celebrated in memory of the triumphant entry of prince Rama into Ayodhia after defeating his

arch rival Ravana. The story of Rama is related in the *Ramayana*, the longest and the most popular Hindu epic besides the *Mahabharata*.

Basically, the Vedic ritual of the "Sacred fire" (*Yajna*) is performed in the religious gatherings of Arya Samaj. It involves the lighting of fire using firewood and ghee. A concoction made from leaves of various trees and drops of water are intermittently poured on the fire while the devotees meditatively and in chorus recite prayer *mantras* (verses) which range from prayers for the individual wellbeing, communal health, the nation's prosperity to eulogies to God. The ritual on one hand is a symbol of preservation of the Aryan culture, being the oldest of worship rituals in Hinduism, and on the other, symbolizes purification of people's morals and atmosphere in which they live.¹¹ Absent in Arya Samaj temples or prayers halls (*Bhavans*) are idols of gods (*murti*), a common feature in most Hindu religious organizations and sects. Worship activity in Arya Samaj as depicted on group level seldom involves the grandiloquent and intensive rituals of shrines of various deities. After the performance of *Yajna*, the priest normally schooled on the infallibility of the *Vedas* and its teachings lead the congregation on a lecture based on the *Vedas* or any other aspect in life as seen and interpreted by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of Arya Samaj.

Besides the weekly worship gatherings, over the years regular annual anniversary

celebrations have been a noteworthy feature of the Arya Samaj movement in Kenya. It is a period set aside for the commemoration of the foundation of a particular Arya Samaj organization. The *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa has over the years made arrangements for priests and prominent personalities of Arya Samaj from India for *Prachar* (missionary work) during such occasions.¹² The anniversary celebrations of various Arya Samajes usually attract people from far and wide and present opportunities for socio-religious intercourse and discourse.

Whereas the weekly gatherings and annual anniversaries of various Arya Samaj organizations in Kenya provide a forum for *Havan* (worship) and religious discourses, other intrinsic effects accrue from such gatherings that perhaps have enhanced the survival of Arya Samaj movement in Kenya for nearly a century. The annual anniversaries avail opportunities to review the past of Arya Samaj, which in turn helps to lay strategy for the present and future.

Furthermore, the weekly congregations of Arya Samaj followers in Kenya have cemented their unity over the years. Attendance of such meetings is considered important for the registered members of a particular Samaj. In a number of Arya Samajes, a communal lunch is taken during which members fraternize freely. The author observed this in the various Arya Samajes he visited and had an opportunity to share with members of Arya Samaj in their communal lunch.

The weekly meetings are however, more than just a forum for religious nourishment and social intercourse. Important announcements about matters that affect the followers of Arya Samaj are made at the time of the weekly religious meetings. Often the gatherings provide a forum for deliberations on issues such as the security of the members and areas surrounding their residence.¹³ Being part and parcel of the larger Indian minority in Kenya such regular meetings avail opportunity to Arya Samajists for exchange of ideas for survival and perpetuation in an environment at times hostile to such minorities. Besides being a place of succour and comfort, such congregations give identity and are an indicator of the continued propagation of Swami Dayanand's ideas and reform programme which his followers the world over profess. In such occasions, stock is taken where and in what Arya Samaj followers have erred socially and religiously and corrective measures called for. In a word, Arya Samaj followers as those of other Hindu social-religious organizations find it suitable congregating and solving their problems as a group. Perhaps this common phenomenon may explain why a number of Hindus in Kenya find it appropriate to belong to more than one of this social-religious organizations. Probably, the prevalent thinking in this case is that, as a minority group the diverse the relations one has with others of his religion, though of different sects, the better. Indeed, the deep-seated differences among some religious groups which were mooted and are surviving in India hitherto have seldom found a place in Kenya, where Hindus have tried to emphasize their

commonality as a survival tactic. As an illustration of this fact it is not uncommon to find a Hindu comfortably congregating with the normally quiet Arya Samajists in *Maharishi Dayanand Bhavana* in Parklands, Nairobi, on a Sunday morning and finds it equally comfortable to join the lustrous and vigorous bell-ringing followers of the Hare Krishna on the same Sunday afternoon at their *mandir* (temple) in Muhoroni Close Ngara.

The importance of secular activities notwithstanding, religious activities have occupied a prominent place in the Arya Samaj catalogue of annual events.¹⁴ Basically, the teachings of Hindu religion based on the Vedas are manifest in Arya Samaj's activities. Attending the weekly religious meetings and performing of basic Vedic rituals are commended.

(II) SHUDDHI MOVEMENT

"*Shuddhi*" was derived from a Sanskrit word which means purification. In Arya Samaj terminology, it connotes the conversion to Hinduism of followers of other religions and reconversion of the Hindus who have embraced other religious beliefs.¹⁵ Whereas contemporary reformers such as Raja Ram Mahon Roy could accept some good things outside Hinduism, Dayanand rejected anything from Islam and Christianity and regularly smacked mire on both religions. The

introduction of *Shuddhi* movement in Arya Samaj was his reaction to the increasing influence of Christianity and Islam in India. It dominated Punjabi areas in 1890's and readmitted Hindus who had crossed over to other faiths through the purification ceremony. Dayanand's aversion to alien influence contributed to making the Arya Samaj accept the *Shuddhi* programme, thus prompting Farquhar, a contemporary Christian missionary to comment in 1914:

The Arya Samaj still take large share in the work (converting people to Hinduism); but other bodies, and notably the Prarthana Samaj, are interested.¹⁶

In Kenya proselytization to Hinduism is generally not common. Nevertheless, Arya Samaj is the known Hindu religious and cultural organization that accepts conversion to Hinduism, from people of other races and religions. Bharati wrote of one Hirji Baba, a Nakuru businessman, who influenced a group of Africans to take up Hindu names, dress in Hindu style and learn enough Gujarati to participate in Hindu rituals.¹⁷ However, he does not show what came of Hirji Baba's efforts. It is probable that Baba's proselytization efforts did not carry any lasting effects.

The Arya Samaj's bid to find converts among non-Hindus, especially Africans could be traced to the early decades of this century. Some Arya Samaj

informants observed that in the 1920s some Africans became members of Arya Samaj Nairobi and regularly participated in its rituals.¹⁸ Although the absence of documented data make that idea largely doubtful, it is probable that the early followers of Arya Samaj sought converts among Africans, given the vigor with which they launched the movement in Kenya under Dayanand's call of *Krinvunto Vishwamaryam* (make the whole world Aryan). However, the proselytizing efforts of Arya Samaj bore little fruits, something which my respondents attributed to the British administration that discouraged the apparent closeness between the followers of Arya Samaj and a few African potential converts.¹⁹ Although the respondents could not elaborate on the methods which the colonial Government used to checkmate the influence of Arya Samaj among Africans, the proclivity of the colonial Government to prevent any collaboration between the Africans and Indians can be easily understood, more so when the Arya Samaj did have a political clout in India.

In 1928, the Arya Samaj followers in the East African region who gathered in Nairobi for a conference felt that enough had not been done to preach the Vedic gospel among non-Indians. The conference recommended that the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa, an umbrella body of Arya Samaj churches, should increase its efforts in spreading the *Vedic Dharma* (religion) among non-Indians:

The Congress recommends to the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha that special arrangements be made for Prachar (Missionary work) amongst communities other than Indians in this country.²⁰

Although the Arya Samaj, particularly in Nairobi made varied attempts to convert Africans to Hinduism, little headway was made until 1965, when the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa set up a home for African destitute children in Parklands, Nairobi and named it after Dayanand.²¹ In the Dayanand Home, African orphans were brought up according to the Vedic teachings. They were taught Hindi language and always attended Arya Samaj rituals and religious gatherings.²² However, in 1984 when the Dayanand Home was closed and the premises converted to a nursery school, most of the inmates who were grown ups then, went away.²³ Currently, Arya Samaj membership in Kenya is predominantly Indian, although the respondents were of the opinion that the movement knows neither caste nor racial boundaries, something that is also clearly stated in Arya Samaj creed and literature.

Despite the fact that the Arya Samaj is over ninety years old in Kenya, it is clear that it has made little headway among other local people, Africans and Europeans alike, compared to the more recent Hindu reform movements in Kenya. The Hare Krishna movement (also called *ISKCON* abbreviated from International

Society for Krishna Consciousness) is a shade better. Although established only three decades back in Kenya, it can claim more converts among Africans. The *ISKCON* was formed in the United States by a Bengali preacher Swami Prabhupada in 1966 and the movement came to Kenya in 1972.²⁴ Its followers are loath to identify themselves with Hinduism but its belief in incarnation, and the Bhagavad Gita and other Hindu scriptures, make it part of Hinduism. Although its membership is predominantly Indian as of Arya Samaj, it has a number of non-Indians, particularly African devotees. For instance, of the ten full time devotees of Hare Krishna temple along Muhoroni Close, Ngara, Nairobi, three are African young men. On Sundays a number of Africans intersperse with Indians in the Hare Krishna *Mandir* (temple) for worship.²⁵

Whereas the Hare Krishna devotees take to the streets to chant in praise of Krishna (deity) and thus could easily attract the eye of the public, the followers of Arya Samaj conduct their services within their prayer halls or temples not exposed to public gaze. Some African devotees of Hare Krishna temple Nairobi, claim to have been initially attracted to the movement through the loud chanting and ringing of bells of Hare Krishna devotees in the streets of Nairobi.²⁶ Furthermore, the glorification of Krishna as the saviour of mankind, could find easy acceptance among Kenyans whose attachment to Christianity was only skin deep, as Krishna could easily replace Jesus Christ especially among the

emotionally-moved Pentecostal Christians.

However, Arya Samaj's long existence in Kenya suggests that some factors which have contributed to making it predominantly Indian could be found deeper in history. The imperial policy of 'divide and rule' encouraged separatism among people inhabiting Kenya and so any efforts to have Indians and Africans united were filled with suspicion. The majority of Indians interacted with Africans especially in their commercial activities but that was too superficial to yield any meaningful social and religious interaction. The colonial fabrics were tailored to suit racial segregation and it probably undermined Arya Samaj's bid to make converts among non-Indians. With the advent of independence, although the policy of racial differentiation officially ceased to exist, its legacy lingers around and determines not only inter-racial but also inter-ethnic relationships in the country to a certain degree.

Furthermore, the perception and inter-racial stereotype notions present between Indians and Africans militated against integration and created an uncondusive environment for cultural and religious interaction of the people from these communities. Indians, where Arya Samaj followers were no exception, appeared to be a closed and inward-looking community. Their interaction with others seemed not to go beyond the buyer-seller level, given that majority of the Indians

were businessmen. Their impenetrable marriage norms, strict dietary regulations and their conspicuous absence from public and social functions invited ill feelings from other races towards them and often engendered a social-religious distance, which seldom augured well with conversion of non-Indians to Hinduism as Arya Samaj sought to do. On the side of Africans, the seeming overindulgence and intemperate eating habits, erotic excitement and the 'don't care attitude' associated to them by Indians could have easily negated the latter's efforts to lure them into their religious fold.

4.3 ARYA SAMAJ AND WOMEN EDUCATION

The condition and status of the womenfolk in society have been subordinate to that of men in many parts of the world. Women have been confined within the precincts of the home and their activities revolve around domestic chores and upbringing of children. This description aptly depicts the situation among the Hindus in the nineteenth century India. Child marriages, forced widowhood and neglect of girls' education were prevalent. It was against that background that Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, advocated for the emancipation of women from orthodox religious fabrics. He exhorted parents to give equal educational opportunities to boys and girls.²⁷ Dissemination of knowledge and discarding ignorance became the watchword of Arya Samaj as enshrined in its principles: "Ignorance ought to be dispelled and knowledge disseminated."²⁸

S.S.Pandit analyzed three aspects that constitute the essence of Arya Samaj education : social, religious and secular aspects.²⁹ Socially, education was supposed to enable its partakers to dispel social evil, religiously, to enable one to live according to the ideals of Hinduism as given in the Vedas and to engender a national spirit.³⁰ These aspects were least considered in the Hindu society of the nineteenth century. In areas where traditional education existed, it was an exclusive preserve of *Brahmins*, the priestly class of the Hindu society. In other areas, western education was gradually taking root and its main objective was to nurture western lifestyles. In a bid to reverse this situation, Arya Samaj set up educational institutions to give equal opportunities to both boys and girls. The followers of Arya Samaj carried such zeal to East Africa. Education was emphasized as a means of preserving Hindu cultural norms. However, it is interesting to note that education in Arya Samaj schools as the case was with other Hindu communities, was western-oriented mainly because western education carried with it both economic gains and social status.

By 1903, when Arya Samaj followers had settled in Nairobi, formal education generally received less attention. Christian missionaries were making attempts to provide education for the indigenous people, but this was only done in as much as education was a vehicle of Christian propaganda:

Christian missionaries dedicated themselves to the provision of literary education because it was seen as a most powerful instrument for christian propaganda.³¹

Thus resentment and neglect was directed towards communities, which were averse to Christianity and the areas inhabited by them received little or no attention from Christian missionaries in form of the provision of educational facilities.³²

On the other hand, the colonial Government in its early years was preoccupied with the efforts of consolidating its powers in Kenya and paid little attention to the provision of educational facilities to the people in general, leave alone the Indian communities. It was in 1911 that the Department of Education was created, with a Director and a Board of Education to advise him.³³ By 1912 there were only two Government schools for Indians in Kenya : one in Machakos and another in Nairobi.³⁴ Thus there was a paucity of educational facilities to the Indian immigrants generally. Furthermore, the majority of Indian parents, especially Hindus, considered education of such schools unsuitable for their daughters.³⁵ This situation impelled Indians to pool their resources and in most cases on a sub-communal or sectarian level to ensure the provision of education facilities for their children.³⁶ Salvadori aptly observes:

Although most communities, even the smallest established their own informal nursery schools, formal education on primary and secondary levels was left to large communities such as Arya Samaj (for Hindus), the Visa Oshwals for (Jains), the Singh Sabha (for Sikhs), the Ismaili and Goans.³⁷

The idea to start the first *Arya Kanya Pathashalla* (Arya Samaj girls' school) was mooted by Mathura Dass, a founder member of Arya Samaj Nairobi, in 1910.³⁸ Mathura Dass was among the early educated Indians in Nairobi.³⁹ Born around 1867 in Ludhiana, Punjab, he came to Kenya in 1895 as a cashier in the Kenya Uganda railway. At first, Mathura Dass was offering informal lessons to pupils in his house. As the number of pupils increased, Badri Nath Arya, an associate of Dass and founder member of Arya Samaj Nairobi, started a branch of this school in his house. In 1913, a need arose for a better organized school. A building was erected along the present Mama Ngina street and Arya Girls' school was started there.⁴⁰ In 1947, Arya Girls' school was transferred from Mama Ngina street to Muranga Road (former Fort Hall Road), Ngara on a Government order. The foundation of the new school building was laid by Nanji Kalidas Mehta, a well-known Hindu merchant of East Africa on Sunday 23rd 1947, in the presence of Arya Muni Varma, the principle of the school, Mahendra Pal, the school manager, B.R. Sharma, the president of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha East Africa*

and the then 82 year old Mathura Dass, the founder of the Arya Girls' School.⁴¹ In 1956, the Arya Girls' school was moved to Parklands, where it stands. At its place in Ngara, a secondary school was started to cater for girls who do not secure places in government schools⁴².

In Mombasa, an Arya Girls' school was started in 1913 with an enrolment of twenty-five pupils. The outbreak of World War I and the hostility Arya Samaj Mombasa faced from the British authorities at that time led to the closure of the school until 1921, when Swami Swatantratanand, an Arya Samaj preacher came to Mombasa from India and revived the Arya Girls school.⁴³

In the Lake Victoria town of Kisumu, through the efforts of the late Faqir Chand Mayar and Durga Dass Khosla, Arya Girls' school was launched in 1924. At first, it had a handful of Punjabi girls but later pupils from the Gujarat, Goan and Moslem communities joined it.⁴⁴ In Nakuru, an Arya Samaj girls' school was started in 1931 and was officially opened in 1933.⁴⁵

By and large, by 1930s Arya Samaj girls' schools had been built in nearly all major urban centers of Kenya, where Arya Samaj had branches. The sectarian differences notwithstanding, Arya Samaj schools were open to all Indian communities, especially communities that had not erected their own schools. The

overriding objective of Arya Samaj schools at that period was not only to impart Indian norms to girls but also prepare them in accordance to Dayanands's call for equality between men and women. Hindi language and the basic Vedic teachings were among things given prominence in Arya Samaj schools.⁴⁶ Vidya Sagar, the secretary of Arya Samaj Nakuru in 1933 alluded to the main objective of Arya Samaj schools at that time in his announcement to the public about the opening of Arya Girls' school Nakuru:

With the view to fulfil today's extreme necessity of imparting education to Indian Girls on oriental lines and to inculcate in them the ideals of service to the nation and humanity, the Arya Samaj Nakuru has started the above institution (Arya Girls' school, Nakuru) for the benefit of all Indian Girls irrespective of any distinction of caste, colour or creed.⁴⁷

Although Arya Samaj made a fruitless attempt to start a class for African pupils in the 1920s, the student population of its schools in Kenya in the pre-independence period were predominantly Indian.⁴⁸ This was much in conformity with the colonial policy orientation of that period, where separate development policies for various racial groups in Kenya were nurtured. In 1909, J. Nelson Frazer, a British education advisor to the British East Africa, had

proposed the establishment of three educational systems to cater for the three racial groups in Kenya : Africans, Indians and Europeans.⁴⁹ In the subsequent years, Frazer's idea guided the educational policies in Kenya, as the Government provided educational facilities on racial lines. This effect had its spillovers to the private sectarian or communal schools.

After independence, a number of changes were implemented that brought about developments in Arya Samaj's involvement in the running of educational institutions. The Government assumed more control in the provision of education than before. Racial barriers were broken down and Arya Samaj schools opened their gates to all students, irrespective of colour and religious affiliations. A number of Arya Samaj schools started to be supplied with government teachers and began to be run by Board of Governors. The Arya Girls' Senior Secondary in Nairobi is a case in point.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, currently, some schools are still run by the Arya Samaj as private schools. For instance, in Nairobi, two secondary schools, one primary and two nursery schools are run by Arya Samaj as private schools.⁵¹ In Mwembe Tayari Road Mombasa, Arya Samaj runs a primary and nursery school.⁵² Arya Samaj Kisumu also runs two nursery schools along Temple Road.⁵³ Thus, although Arya Samaj lost the strong control it had over its educational institutions as did other school-sponsoring religious organizations with the increasing governmental control over education, it did not lose complete

touch with them. Even the Arya Girls' secondary school in Parklands though run by the Government, is under the Board of Governors, who are normally the nominees of the Arya Samaj Nairobi and endorsed by the Ministry of Education.⁵⁴ In recent years Arya Samaj Nairobi has contemplated assuming control of its schools if an opportunity arises, as it became evident in one of the *Antrang Sabha* (Management committee) meetings in 1989 where it was resolved :

The Education Board (body overseeing the running of Arya Samaj schools) should keep abreast with the new government policy on private and public schools. Efforts should be made to take back our schools as opportunity arises. The standard of instruction and other educational facilities should be raised and made attractive to our *Pariwar* (members) children who are having to pay very high school fees elsewhere.⁵⁵

Generally, whereas the Arya Samaj in Kenya continues to practice the ideals of Dayanand as far as the provision of education is concerned, a number of changes have been effected in its efforts to adapt to the changes in its social and religious environment. This epitomizes a feature that befalls the ideals of most religious reformers, whereby their followers, with time, come to isolate the ideals that were relevant to the reformers time from those that are relevant to their time.

One of the striking phenomenon that does not seem to have got a place in Arya Samaj movement in Kenya is the *Gurukul* system of education. The *Gurukul* system was in conformity with the ideas of Dayanand and was implemented by his disciples such as Munshi Ram (Swami Shraddanand), an Arya Samaj educationalist-turned nationalist leader, who started the *Gurukul Kangri*, from where the present Gurukul Kangri University in India emerged.

The *Gurukuls* were special residential schools, where children entered at an early age of around eight never to leave until seventeen years were over. Hard life, sturdy character, complete vegetarian diet and celibacy were the ideals inculcated into the youths in the *Gurukuls*.⁵⁶ The Shraddanand *Brahmacharya Ashram*, started by the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa in 1928 in Parklands Nairobi, could be compared to the *Gurukuls* in India in its objective of bringing up boys under strict control, but it did not have lasting effect in Kenya.⁵⁷ It was revived in 1940s as a hostel for students coming from places outside Nairobi for higher education⁵⁸ and later was converted to an orphanage. The *Gurukul* education system did not appeal much to Arya Samajists in Kenya even during the early decades of this century, when it was in vogue among the followers of Arya Samaj in India. Perhaps its relevance was not applicable to the Kenyan situation, where modern education was gradually taking root and was assumed to confer most of the privileges available in society such as employment and business success.

The importance of Hindi as a medium of instruction in Arya Samaj schools in Kenya has gradually diminished though it remains a unifying force among the followers of Arya Samaj, particularly in their religious activities. The emphasis on Hindi as an-all-India language by members of Arya Samaj could be traced back to Dayanand. Dayanand, just like Mahatma Gandhi (an Indian nationalist leader), came from a non-Hindi speaking area. He gave most of his speeches and lectures in *Sanskrit*, an ancient and archaic Hindu language, until 1872 when he started using Hindi, which was more popular to the public.⁵⁹ He advocated for Hindi to be a *lingua franca* of India. He dictated most of his books that exist hitherto in Hindi. Therefore, it is significant to note that the advocacy of the use of Hindi by the followers of Arya Samaj in Kenya was more or less the implementation of Dayanand's programme. Arya Samaj religious functions have been mostly in Hindi over the years. In the 1940s, Arya Samaj pressed for the teaching of Hindi in Government Schools but its efforts could not carry any lasting effect probably because of the situation in Kenya, where English was the main medium of instruction.⁶⁰ At the moment, the youth from Arya Samaj background are taking more and more to English and Kiswahili, the two languages used prominently in Kenya, thus making reading and writing in Hindi problematic on their part. In a bid to cope up with the situation and keep most of the people not proficient in writing and reading Hindi in the realm of Arya Samaj, a number of books and articles that were formerly in Hindi, have been

translated into either English or Kiswahili. The *Satyarth Prakash*, Dayanands's masterpiece writing, was translated into Kiswahili in 1981 by the Arya Samaj Nairobi. Although the Kiswahili translation of the *Satyarth Prakash* is not without some translation errors, it could find acceptance of the generation of the followers of Arya Samaj born and bred in Kenya. The importance of recruiting priests with competence and proficiency in English, has been emphasized in the Nairobi Arya Samaj in the recent past.⁶¹ Over the years the use of Hindi language has declined on account of the situation in Kenya. In the education system English and Swahili are dominantly used to prepare one for a career. Furthermore, Indian parents preferred to send their children to England as opposed to India for further studies, where the relevance of Hindi was non-existent.

4.4 ARYA STREE SAMAJ (ARYAN LADIES' SOCIETY)

Arya Samaj in Kenya has given opportunity to the women to involve themselves in the activities of the movement. In most Arya Samaj branches, this is done through the women wing: the Arya Stree Samaj. The Arya Stree Samaj Nairobi was formed in 1920, with the central objective of involving women "in the Arya Samaj field as active workers have their own plans and schemes to propagate the *Arya Dharma* (Arya religion) amongst women."⁶² It started with fifteen members with Devi Ramrakha as the secretary. The Stree Samaj currently runs a primary and nursery school at Ngara Nairobi. It also organizes Hindi classes for young

children in order to familiarize them with that language.⁶³

In Mombasa, the population of the followers of Arya Samaj has dwindled due to massive emigration in recent years and thus hampering the creation of a strong women wing of Arya Samaj like the one in Nairobi. However, there exists a *Manushi* (women), an organization, which provides a forum for Arya Samaj women, a platform to meet and discuss their problems. They normally meet once a month.⁶⁴

Despite the fact that the women in majority of Arya Samaj organizations have their own wing (Arya stree Samaj), they have not been left out in decision-making in the governing committees of various Arya Samaj organizations. They attend annual general meetings in individual capacities as members of the *Arya Pariwar* and take part in the election of officials. Subject to winning elections women are free to take leadership positions in the governing committees of Arya Samaj. For instance, Mrs. Cholatta is the current secretary of Arya Samaj in Kisumu. Mrs. Aggrawal has prominently featured in the activities of Arya Samaj in Eldoret.

4.5 PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES

Arya Samaj movement in India concerned itself in alleviating the suffering of less fortunate and downtrodden members of the society. At the time of its inception,

conditions of abject poverty were common in the Hindu society, especially among the untouchables, the underprivileged in the Hindu caste system since time immemorial.⁶⁵ Thus "to ameliorate physical, spiritual and social condition of all men" became the cardinal principle of Arya Samaj movement from its formative period.⁶⁶

In Kenya the participation of Arya Samaj in extending philanthropic and welfare assistance has continued, despite the changes that have taken place in its structures and aspects. As from 1973, with the formation of the Hindu Council of Kenya, a more representative body of Hindu cultural organizations emerged, for the channelling of philanthropic assistance to victims of calamity on behalf of the Hindus. Such contributions to the Hindu Council of Kenya notwithstanding, the most historic philanthropic contribution that Arya Samaj made to the Kenyan society was the starting of an orphanage named after Dayanand in Parklands, Nairobi for homeless children.

The origin of the Dayanand Home can be traced to December 1962, during the All East African Aryan Conference, held in Shradhdhanand Brahmachari Ashram in Parklands, Nairobi. In the conference, it was resolved to look into modalities of opening up an orphanage to care for African destitute children. An ad hoc sub-committee was set up to consider the matter. The members of the

sub-committee included Messrs B.R. Kapila, Chandra Prakash Gupta, Jaswanti J. Khosla, D.D. Sood and H.R. Sahi. The women in the sub-committee included Shanti Devi Sharma and Savitri Chhabra.⁶⁷

The sub-committee held two meetings and in January 1963, it was unanimously resolved that:

A 'Rishi Dayanand Ashram' should be established in Nairobi to meet the growing demand for a home for orphans, children born out of wedlock, widows and old persons.⁶⁸

Concerning the site of the orphanage the sub-committee proposed:

The said Ashram should be established at the Shradhanand Brahamcharya Ashram premises and admission should be open to all irrespective of their race or religion, however, all inmates must imbibe Vedic culture and accept Vedic Dharma as propounded by Arya Samaj as their practising religion.⁶⁹

All the Arya Samaj branches in East Africa affiliated to the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* were to contribute money towards the upkeep of the proposed home. On

May, 1965, in an *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* Management Committee meeting held in Arya Girls Senior School, Parklands, the secretary of the Sabha, G.P. Gupta, informed those in attendance that

... the child welfare society of Kenya has provisionally approved of the scheme (setting up of the orphanage) and the children would be taken over by them through a court of law and then handed over to the home.⁷⁰

By 1965, the Dayanand Home started operating with five children under the supervision of Mr. Joshua Mwakiya, executive officer of the Home.⁷¹ On 1st March, 1967, the Dayanand Home was officially opened by the then Vice-president of Kenya, Mr. Daniel Toroitich arap Moi. At this time, the number of the children in the Home had increased to sixteen, who came from varied backgrounds.⁷² Some were orphans from very poor backgrounds or abandoned babies and others were infants whose mothers were incapacitated by disease or poverty.⁷³ These children found hope in the Dayanand Home, as Humprey Slade, the then Speaker of the Kenya National Assembly indicated during the official opening:

In this small Home, which has been established and supported entirely by voluntary contributions, you will find a true home: a place where formerly

homeless children of varying ages are made to feel part of one family, complete with loving foster parents and many kind uncles and aunts, in happiest though simple surroundings. Here too, with opportunities for education in ordinary schools and many social contacts, they are not isolated, but grow up as normal members of our community.⁷⁴

In a nutshell, the establishment of the Dayanand Home to cater for African destitute children epitomizes Arya Samaj's attempts to move closer to the members of the African community by identifying itself with their problems. The inmates were taught Hindi, Vedic rituals and instructed on how to live on a vegetarian diet.⁷⁵ They were expected to grow up in accordance with the Vedic teachings and perhaps become a nucleus of the anticipated conversion of Africans to Hinduism under the aegis of Arya Samaj.

As time went by, it became increasingly expensive to run the Dayanand Home. The needs of the children increased as they grew up and became disproportional to the funds the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa received to run it. Some Arya Samaj branches in East Africa were not honouring their financial obligations by sending their donations to the Dayanand Home in time.⁷⁶ By 1975, the conditions

at the home were poor, when Arya Samaj Nairobi opted to donate twelve thousand shillings annually as aid to the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* to help in running the it besides meeting the fee requirements of the pupils in the various schools they were enrolled.⁷⁷ Over and above the financial constraints, the children became increasingly hard to control, probably because of the poor conditions they were in. Their morality deteriorated and became incompatible with the basic moral teachings of Arya Samaj. Thus the Dayanand Home was closed down and in 1984 the premises were converted into a nursery school, named after Swami Shraddhanand.⁷⁸

Arya Samaj, particularly in Nairobi provides health services to the public. However, the provision of health facilities by Arya Samaj Nairobi, is a recent development. It was resolved to start an Arya Samaj dispensary in Nairobi on January 1971.⁷⁹ On May 12th, 1971, the dispensary was opened to the public at Ngara, adjacent to the *Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushotam Sanstha* (BAPS) Swami Narayan temple.⁸⁰ As early as 1972, the Dispensary Committee of Arya Samaj Nairobi reported that the dispensary was operating at a loss but the Management Committee of the Samaj resolved that "the project must be continued as a service to the public and for propagation of the Arya Samaj work."⁸¹

In the preceding paragraphs, an attempt has been made to examine the

socio-religious activities of the Arya Samaj movement in Kenya. It is clear that Arya Samaj concentrated its efforts on the provision of education, propagation of Vedic religions and philanthropy. Through its *Shuddhi* ceremony it sought converts among non-Indians but with little success. Although most of these activities were undertaken on the framework of Dayanand's ideals, a number of adaptations to the local environment brought in new ideas among the followers of the Arya Samaj.

NOTES

¹ J.N. Farquhar Modern religious movements in India (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), PP.3-4.

² Ibid. P. 17.

³ Ibid P. 15.

⁴ C.H. Heimsath, Indian nationalism and Hindu Social reform (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), P. 120.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Third commandment of Arya Samaj, in the last page of D. Saraswati, Satyarth Prakash: Mwangaza wa Ukweli trans. J.A. Tejani (Nairobi: Arya Samaj and Arya Stree Samaj, 1981).

⁷ Arya Samaj Nairobi Souvenir produced during the 75th Anniversary and the International Aryan conference held in 1978, P. 27.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A Shastri, Fifty years history of Arya Samaj Mombasa (Mombasa: Arya Samaj, 1958), P. 15.

¹⁰ During my field work, I attended the religious gatherings of the Arya Samaj and often had a chance to participate in the rituals conducted during these occasions.

¹¹ Oral Interview Report, R.K. Sharma.

¹² Oral Interview Report, P. S. Saini, Nairobi 13/12/1992,

¹³ Arya patrika, 16/6/1992. This is a weekly news letter of Arya Samaj Nairobi. It is circulated among members and sometimes mailed to other followers of Arya Samaj in other countries.

¹⁴ C. Salvadori, Through open doors: A view of Asian cultures in Kenya (Nairobi: Kenway, 1989), P. 125.

¹⁵ R.S. Pareek, contribution of Arya Samaj to the making of modern India 1875-1947 (Ph.D thesis, University of Rajasthan Jaipur, 1965), P.131.

¹⁶ Farquahar, op. cit. P. 324.

¹⁷ A. Bharati, Asians in East Africa: Jayhind and Uhuru (Chicago: Nelson- Hall Company, 1972), P. 235.

¹⁸ Oral Interview Report, B.D. Kapila, 26/11/1992, Nairobi

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Resolutions passed in the first session of all East Africa Aryan Congress held in Nairobi on 5/8/1928, in Arya Samaj Kisumu, correspondence file 1928

²¹ Document produced at the commemoration of the official opening of the Dayanard Home, op. cit. p. 9-12.

²² Oral Interview Report, P.S. Saini, 13/12/1992, Nairobi.

²³ My attempts to solicit information from the former inmates of the Dayanard Home were fruitless.

²⁴ Oral Interview Report, Umapatidas Umanath Yadav 25/8/1993, Nairobi and Souvenir of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Nairobi, 1992 (not paged).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Oral Interview Report, G. Lusiji/Gopinath, 25/8/1993, Nairobi

²⁷ D. Sarasvati, Satyarth Prakash (Mwangaza wa ukweli) trans. J.A. Tejani

(Nairobi: Arya Samaj and Arya Stree Samaj, 1981).

²⁸ The 8th principle of Arya Samaj quoted in V. Shastri, The Arya Samaj: Its cult and creed (New Delhi: Sarvadeshik Arya pratinidhi Sabha, 1965), p. 21.

²⁹ S.S. Pandit, A critical study of the contribution of the Arya Samaj to Indian education (Ph.D thesis, Maharaja Sayajirao University Baroda, 1974). PP. 122-123.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ D.N. Sifuna, Short essays on education in Kenya (Nairobi Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980),p.8.

³² Ibid P.9.

³³ J. Osogo, " Educational development in Kenya 1911-1924" A paper presented at the Historical Association of Kenya Annual Conference 1969, p.2.

³⁴ Ibid p.6.

³⁵ Salvadori op. cit. p. 337.

³⁶ P.M. Rattansi and M. Abdula, " An educational survey" in D. Ghai (ed),

Portrait of a minority (Nairobi: Oxford University press, 1965) PP. 115-116

³⁷ Salvadori, op. cit. 337.

³⁸ Oral Interview Report, B.D. Kapila, 26/11/1992 Nairobi.

³⁹ R. G. Gregory, India and East Africa: A history of Race relations within the British empire 1880-1939 (Oxford Clarendon press 1971), p. 63.

⁴⁰ Oral Interview Report, Kapila op. cit.

⁴¹ Pratinidhi, Nov-December, 1947, PP. 5-6.

⁴² Arya Samaj Nairobi Souvenir, 1978 op. cit. p.55.

⁴³ A. Shastri, Fifty years of Arya Samaj Mombasa (Arya Samaj Mombasa 1958) pp. 17-21.

⁴⁴ Annual report of the Arya Girls school Kisumu for 1958, in Arya Samaj Kisumu correspondence file 1958.

⁴⁵ Programme of the second Anniversary and opening ceremony of Arya Girls' school of Arya Samaj Nakuru, celebrated on 3rd-4th June 1933, in Arya Samaj Kisumu correspondence file 1933.

- ⁴⁶ Oral Interview Report, A.M. Varma, 28/2/1993, Mombasa.
- ⁴⁷ V.S. Suda, in a poster informing members of the public about the opening ceremony of Arya Girls school, Nakuru, in Arya Samaj Kisumu correspondence file 1933.
- ⁴⁸ Arya Samaj Nairobi souvenir 1978, op. cit. p.33.
- ⁴⁹ Osogo, op. cit. p.2.
- ⁵⁰ Arya Samaj Nairobi souvenir 1978, op.cit. p.55.
- ⁵¹ Oral Interview Report, R.S. Varma, 21/1/1993, Nairobi.
- ⁵² Oral Interview Report, T.P. Manjula, 1/3/1983, Mombasa.
- ⁵³ Oral Interview Report R. Rana, 13/3/1993, Kisumu.
- ⁵⁴ Arya Samaj Nairobi souvenir 1988, op. cit. p.55.
- ⁵⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 26/4/1989, in Arya Samaj Nairobi minutes file 1985 to the present.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 220.

⁵⁷ Oral Interview Report, A.M. Varma, op. cit.

⁵⁸ Pratinidhi, June 1947, p.11. This was an *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa monthly magazine published in the 1940s

⁵⁹ Saraswati, op. cit. P.8.

⁶⁰ Pratinidhi June - July, 1948, P.2.

⁶¹ Minutes of the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of the Nairobi Arya Samaj held on 30/11/1988 in Arya Samaj Nairobi, *Antrang Sabha* minutes file 1985 to the present.

⁶² Arya Samaj Nairobi Souvenir, 1978, op.cit. p.33.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 6.

⁶⁴ Oral Interview Report, M. Indu, 1/3/1993 Mombasa.

⁶⁵ A.L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (Delhi : Sidgwick and Jackson, 1967), p. 145.

⁶⁶ Shastri, The Arya Samaj : Its cult and creed, op. cit. P.41.

⁶⁷ Report of the sub-committee appointed by the Management committee of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha*, in their scheme and recommendations to carry out the provisions of resolution No. 6 of the East Africa Aryan conference held in 1962, in Arya Samaj Kisumu, general correspondence file, mainly having correspondences from the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa, Nairobi.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Minutes of the Management Committee of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa held on Sunday 16th May, 1965, at Arya Girls' Senior School Nairobi in Ibid.

⁷¹ Documents produced for the commemoration of the official opening of the Dayanand Home op. cit. p.12.

⁷² Ibid. P.6.

⁷³ Oral Interview Report, Saini, op. cit.

⁷⁴ Document produced for the commemoration of the official opening of the Dayanand Home op. cit. p.4.

⁷⁵ Oral Interview Report, Saini, op.cit.

⁷⁶ Oral Interview Report, Kapila, op. cit.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the meeting of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 4/3/1975 at vedic House conference room, in Arya Samaj Nairobi Minutes of the Management committee file No.11.

⁷⁸ Standard, Saturday, June 16, 1984,p. 13.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the Annual General meeting of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 3rd and 10th January 1971, in Arya Samaj Nairobi minutes Book of Annual General Meetings 1935 to 1983.

⁸⁰ Minutes of Management Committee meeting of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 13/5/1971, in Arya Samaj, Nairobi, Minutes Book of the *Antrang Sabha* 5/9/1951-28/9/1973.

⁸¹ Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of Arya Samaj Nairobi held on 14/19/1972 at Vedic House, Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

ARYA SAMAJ AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Arya Samaj was a socio-religious organization in most of its aspects and structures. Its exclusive concern at its inception was social and religious reform. Swami Dayanand, its founder, shunned any involvement in political affairs, despite living at a time of the apogee of British Imperialism in India. The mutiny of 1857, considered as India's earliest reaction to the British rule, did not elicit reaction from him and went unmentioned even in his autobiography that he narrated and was publicized in late 1870s.¹ However, Dayanand's brand of nationalism was not so much manifested in his stance on the contemporary political situation as was in his strong aversion to alien ideas and institutions. He was a prime proponent of *Swaraj* (Indian independence) and *Swadeshi* (sole use of Indian-made things). The solution to the Indian problem in his view was not so much in armed struggle against the British, but in eradicating socio-religious ills that had created disunity among Hindus, thus weakening them and created a high susceptibility to the British conquest and consequent domination.² His emphasis on the authority of the Vedas, very ancient Hindu scriptures, as a source of all knowledge and ideas, and the strong favour for an

indigenous government ignited a feeling of national consciousness among his followers and upheld them to the main stream of Indian nationalism.³ Swami Shraddhanand, a prominent personality of the Indian National Congress, who was assassinated in 1926 by a Moslem fanatic, was a leader of Arya Samaj and an ardent disciple of Dayanand. In Punjab, Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, the celebrated nationalists who were the first deportees on charges of sedition, were Arya Samaj followers.⁴ Thus, despite Arya Samaj's non-political posture, a number of its leaders were outspoken on political issues of their time. The emphasis on the ancient India's ideals, gave the Arya Samaj a place in the development of Indian political consciousness and defined its brand of nationalism.

With such an anti-British background, the Arya Samaj movement was the first Indian religious group to come at loggerheads with the colonial authorities in Kenya. This chapter attempts to discuss the events that led to the conflict of Arya Samaj with the colonial authority and subsequently paved way for the banning of the Arya Samaj organization in Mombasa during World War I. In the last part of the chapter an examination is made of the life and activities of Gidhari Lal Vidyarthi, who rose from an ardent Arya Samaj family and contributed to making the press media an avenue for the articulation of Indian and African grievances in colonial Kenya. Although Vidyarthi's activities have been discussed before in the context of the Indian press and its involvement in the struggle for democratic

institutions in Kenya, his Arya Samaj background and its bearing on his activities have been by-passed.⁵

5.2 ARYA SAMAJ AND THE COLONIAL AUTHORITY IN KENYA

The politics of the colonial period in Kenya was exclusively characterized by the conflicting interests of the three dominant racial groups : Indians, Europeans and Africans. The three-tier confrontational situation of the brown, white and black man was based on competition over the country's political power and economic resources. The whites monopolized political power and most economic policies were tailored with a racial emphasis in favour of the politically dominant group : the whites. The Indians were left with mid-level employment and business, and the Africans were marginalised in most aspects. The Indians often under a strong conviction that their role in the establishment of the East African Protectorate was crucial, looked for avenues to express their dissension towards the racially-oriented colonial situation, and clamour for equality in the exploitation of the Protectorate's resources.⁶ Such avenues were found in loose political associations such as the British East Africa Indian Association formed in 1907⁷, the East African Indian Congress formed in 1914 and the press. At no time did Indian socio-religious organizations, Hindu and moslem alike, provide a forum for the articulation of political sentiments, until World War I, when the Arya Samaj in Mombasa was accused of being an accomplice in the anti-British

campaign. The organization was proscribed and its officials sent to jail.⁸

By the outbreak of world War I, the Arya Samaj Mombasa had been in existence for nearly a decade. It had started gaining momentum in its socio-religious activities. In 1911, its temple was renovated and a *satsang* (meeting) hall erected to accommodate the increasing number of devotees.⁹ In 1913, Maharishi Shankar Sharma, an eloquent and crowd-pulling Vedic missionary arrived in Mombasa. His speeches and lectures in the Arya Samaj temple attracted the attention of many Indians in the coast.¹⁰ To the immigrants arriving in Mombasa, the main gateway to East Africa, the Hindu businessmen from the interior who intermittently visited Mombasa for to get supply of imported goods, and those resident in Mombasa for business or on government service, a visit to the Arya Samaj temple, strategically placed adjacent to the Kilindini harbour, seemed automatic. In the course of World War I therefore, the Arya Samaj temple and the Hindu union temple at Makadara, Mombasa, had become popular fora for many Hindus to meet for prayers and social intercourse, in view of the fact that movement was restricted due to the war.¹¹ The Arya Samaj was under the presidentship of Vanshi Lal, a goods clerk in the railway and the secretary Bishendass Rallaram Sharma, a court-clerk in Mombasa. It is probable that the preaching in the temple had been intensified to disseminate the Vedic creed to most people who had made it a popular rendezvous during the war period. Most

of the activities had come to a halt as the war intensified and a time in a socio-religious gathering as that of Arya Samaj was better to the majority Hindus than just idling to pass time.

It was from that temple that Arya Samaj officials and a number of devotees were arrested in 1915 by the military officers and charged with waging an anti-British campaign in the guise of worship. Nanji Kalidas Mehta, a prominent Hindu, often christened the merchant prince of Uganda, who was in the congregation left an eye witness account:

While we were sitting on the verandah and were exchanging our views on religious or social affairs, a Mahratha police officer went to the religious place. He was the head of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D) and arrested those present at the Arya Samaj temple.¹²

Among those arrested there was Vanshi Lal, the president of Arya Samaj, B.R. Sharma his secretary and Rala Ram, the secretary of the Character Reform Committee of the Samaj.¹³ Soon after arrest, they were deported to Voi Military Detention Camp, where they stayed to await judgement.¹⁴

The arrest and subsequent detention of the leaders of Mombasa Arya Samaj could be closely connected to the crackdown mounted by the British army on the camp

of Indian fuel contractors of the Ram Nand-Bodh Raj and Co. in the Tsavo region. The fuel contractors were accused by one Captain Macstead, a military staff officer in the Tsavo, that Messrs Keshavlal and Salve, Government workers in Mombasa, had asked the fuel contractors through one Sita Ram, a railway Station Master at Mtitondei, to assist Germans who had bombed the Uganda Railway in late 1914.¹⁵ Before the bombing of the Uganda Railway, the relationship between the Ram Nand-Bodh Raj and Co. contractors and the British army had been sour. Captain Macstead had asked the African labourers of the company to join the army but they objected to the request because their contract with the Indian fuel contractors had not expired. The Captain was angered by the behaviour of the labourers and summoned Lalchand Sharma and Lala Bodh Raj, of the fuel cutting company to their base in the Tsavo.¹⁶

Later, when the Germans bombed the Uganda Railway, the British army in the Tsavo region suspected a conspiracy between Indians and German soldiers from Tanganyika against them. The mistrust that had cropped up prior to the bombing between the contractors and Captain Macstead, a British soldier, was central in the conflict between the British army and Indian contractors. The British military officers ransacked the contractors' camp and found besides RS.5000, two rupees which were in German coins. This served to confirm their suspicion of a conspiracy of Indians and Germans against them. Lalchand Sharma and Bishen

Singh, workers of the fuel company, Bodh Raj and Ram Nand the main proprietors were arrested and sent to the Voi Detention Camp. Other Indian contractors of the Ram Nand-Bodh Raj and co. in Mtitondei such as Ganesh Dass and Yogi Raj Bali were also arrested and detained.¹⁷

Subsequently, the military crackdown in the Tsavo spread to Mombasa in early 1915 when many Indians suspected to work in cohorts with the Tsavo contractors were rounded up and sent to detention in Voi. It was during the military swoop over Mombasa that Arya Samajists were caught from their temple, alongside other Indians. Among those who were arrested there was Keshavlal Vijayram Dave, court clerk in Mombasa, Lachhmanrao Mahadev Syle, secretary EAINC, Mombasa, Premshanker and Shamshanker, law clerks in Mombasa, Rambhai, an advocate from Zanzibar, Vanshilal, president of Arya Samaj and his secretary B.R. Sharma.¹⁸

Thus, the events that led to prosecution of Arya Samaj officials by the military authorities had much more to do with the alleged Indian association with the Germans in the on-going war than the activities of the Arya Samaj movement in Mombasa per se. The war time soldiers were under the influence of the Martial Law declared in East Africa Protectorate on 10th December, 1914 and gazetted six days later. They had the authority to prosecute whosoever they thought was

a threat to their security.¹⁹ The tactics of playing one suspect against another in the trials of the Indians caught in the military operation in the Tsavo and Mombasa, suggest the paucity of evidence to prosecute them. In B.R. Sharma's (secretary of Arya Samaj) case for instance, his close friend Multan Ram, one of the prisoners, was acquitted when he agreed to sign a drafted statement as a witness that Sharma was regularly giving seditious lectures in Mombasa.²⁰ A sentence of 14 years imprisonment was passed over him. A number of prisoners such as Bishen Singh, Ganesdas Dass and Yog Raj Bali were hanged on charges of assisting and harbouring the enemy (Germans), who bombed the Ugandan Railway. Other prisoners were deported to India and some jailed in the Mombasa prison.²¹

Furthermore, the way the Arya Samaj officials were acquitted quickly at the end of the war and the ban uplifted demonstrates on one hand that the Arya Samajists became victims of the general military operation to eliminate any possibility of conspiracy between the Indians, who had not only understood East Africa better but also could move freely, and the Germans. On the other, it may indicate the paucity of evidence that hit the charges levelled against the Arya Samajists and hence there was no need to lock them up beyond the war period. And finally, if it was plausible that one or more Indians had conspired with either Germans or one of their own in Tanganyika, the territory of the British enemy, such

indiscriminate military crackdown, could easily find justification in the British military circles. Thus a swoop on Arya Samaj was to be expected whether or not involved in events and activities subversive in nature, given the fact that the Arya Samaj temple had become a popular congregating point in the course of world war I.

By the end of 1915, Arya Samaj Mombasa following the arrest of its leaders, had been proscribed and its property was confiscated by the military. The closure of the Samaj spread shock waves among the followers of Arya Samaj, who on every available opportunity were eager to vouch the non-political nature of their organization. Some of my informants were of the opinion that the 1915 episode, prompted the colonial authorities to be vigilant on the activities of Arya Samaj, particularly in Nairobi, which had become the putative centre of Arya Samaj activities.²²

By 1918, the Arya Samaj Mombasa's building was being worn down and its furniture stolen. The *Antrang Sabha* (Management Committee) of Arya Samaj Nairobi decided to salvage the property of the banned Arya Samaj. The secretary of the Nairobi Arya Samaj D.D. Puri on behalf of the committee wrote on 22nd April, 1918 to the Commissioner of Police of the East Africa Protectorate to enquire whether or not there would be any objection from the Government if the

Arya Samaj Nairobi would take over the property of the Arya Samaj Mombasa.²³ The Commissioner of Police Lt.Col. W.K. Notley referred Puri to sort out the matter with the Coast Provincial Commissioner. The Coast Provincial Commissioner L.W. Hobley gave a go-ahead to the Management Committee of Arya Samaj Nairobi, when he wrote to Puri:

I have no objection to the reopening of Arya Samaj at Mombasa providing(sic) that the military authorities have no objection, as the institution was I understand closed by them under Martial Law. You should enquire of the post commandant, Mombasa, on this point(sic).²⁴

On September 1918, the ban on Arya Samaj Mombasa was lifted by the military authorities. It was reopened later in the year and elections were held. Nasibhai Patel became the Chairman and H.B. Sharma the secretary.²⁵ When World War I ended all the Indian prisoners in Mombasa were released including B.R. Sharma, the ex-secretary of Arya Samaj Mombasa. They were to be deported to India but their deportation orders were cancelled due to the intervention of the East Africa Indian National Congress.²⁶

In the years that followed the 1915 prosecution of Arya Samaj officials in

Mombasa, there was a tendency of Arya Samaj as a corporate body to avoid any direct conflict with political authority. My informants emphasized that Arya Samaj confined itself to socio-religious activities such as the spread of the Vedic religion, provision of educational facilities, welfare and philanthropic activities.²⁷ However, a peruse through the *Pratinidhi*, a monthly magazine produced by the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa, reveals a keen interest of Arya samaj in political affairs both in India and East Africa. It was launched in 1946 and must have appealed to a large clientele from the Indian community as it was written both in English and Hindi. It carried articles critical of the colonial Government and imperialism in general.

The *Pratinidhi*, gave a prominent place to Indian nationalists such as Swami Shraddhanand, an Arya Samaj leader who gained repute for his dare-devil courage when he bared his chest before the police guns in Delhi, while the Government attempted to stop the procession he was leading.²⁸ The *Pratinidhi* made several appeals for Indian independence and thus voiced anti-colonial feelings of Indians in East Africa. For instance, in response to the proposal of postponing of Indian independence from 1947 to 1948 in the British attempt to quell the disturbances emerging from the partition of India, the *Pratinidhi* wrote:

Imperialism has always
subsisted on "Divide
and Rule" policy. How

can it hope to bring together the very diverse elements for the creation of which it is itself responsible? Its 150 years presence in India has failed to create Harmony among different communities inhabiting the country. Why on earth then does it want to continue there now for another one year, up to June 1948?²⁹

On the Kenyan situation, The *Pratinidhi* took up issues that had affected Indians from the early decades of the century. For instance, after the East African Indian Congress meeting of 1948, the magazine suggested that Indians had to proceed with vigor in their claim for equality in Kenya:

We want the highlands to be opened to us; we want restrictions on immigration to be removed; we want all racial considerations wiped out in all matters communal, political and educational so that various races residing in this country may have full scope for harmonious development. All this we have been clamoring for year after year, and to no avail.³⁰

It was the view of the *Pratinidhi* that the East African Indian National Congress was paying more lip service to the Indian grievances in East Africa :

Pious resolutions have taken
us no further. There should
have been a "will" to act
behind our boisterous speeches
and wordy resolutions. For want
of this our cause has suffered ...
Loft stage -speeches we have
had enough. We have roared and
thundered, but alas! have not
evinced courage enough to
suffer for our convictions³¹

Thus the *Pratinidhi* magazine, as most Indian-owned newspapers in the 1940s, kept its readers politically conscious and in touch with events in India and Kenya. As a mouthpiece of the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa (a Supreme Council of Arya Samaj Churches), it generally reflected the views of the Arya Samaj in East Africa on the political issues. The *Pratinidhi* gave prominence to such issues as the need for Indian independence in India and equality of all races in Kenya.

However, the political views of the followers of Arya Samaj was not confined to the columns of the *Pratinidhi* magazine. Individuals, who rose through the ranks or had a background of Arya Samaj came to the limelight of Indian politics in Kenya. D.D. Puri , a prominent member and leader of Arya Samaj in Nairobi

became the president of the East African Indian National Congress.³² However, Gidhari Lal Vidyarthi, a self-made journalist who made a fortune in the printing industry, came into the Kenyan political scenario not through the ranks of the EAINC as many other Indians, but through his activities as a journalist and printer. A brief survey of his life of an Arya Samaj background and his activities in the press industry will reveal his stance about the colonial rule in Kenya.

Gidhari Lal Vidyarthi was born in the coastal town of Mombasa on 31st August, 1907. As a second born in a family of six, Vidyarthi grew up in a relatively well-to-do environment. His father Shamdas came to Kenya in 1903 from Layalpur, Punjab. He gradually rose in the Uganda Railway to the position of a Station Master. He was a staunch Arya Samajist and believed in Dayanands's reform programme. His education up to Matriculation (which was a rare qualification those days) was a boon in his career as it enabled him rise ranks rapidly in the Railway service.³³

In conformity with Arya Samaj's ideals, Vidyarthi was sent to India to start his education in a *Gurukul*. As alluded to in chapter 4, *Gurukuls* were residential schools set up in line with Indian tradition, where respect for teachers and aged, exposure to hard conditions and celibacy were some of the virtues inculcated into students. Vidyarthi's background, experience and life in the *Gurukul* in India

blended to make him a strong supporter of Arya Samaj he was in his youthful stage. In the *Gurukul*, he learnt Sanskrit and Hindi, besides getting exposed to anti-imperialist and intensely nationalist environment in India.³⁴

On his return to Kenya, Vidyarthi joined the Government Indian School Nairobi (presently Jamhuri High school), where he sat for Matriculation examination and later joined the Transport Department as a civil servant. Although as a civil servant, he gradually developed a proclivity towards journalism. According to Kul Bushan, his eldest son, Vidyarthi had no formal education on journalism but writing articles on various issues was his delight from an early age. In 1932, Vidyarthi took control of a small printing press started by his father after retirement from the Uganda Railway. This saw him leave the civil service to start his life in the printing industry, least knowing that it could lead him into conflict with the colonial authority.³⁵

An analysis of Vidyarthi's life and activities reveals that he was both the creator and creation of his contemporary society. His anti-British attitude manifested in his newspapers in the 1940s was reminiscent of Swami Dayanands regard of the British rule as profane, which he might have acquired from his Arya Samaj background and his life in the *Gurukul* institution in India. Although his association with Arya Samaj had diminished with his close involvement in the

printing industry and the press, traits exhibited by prominent Arya Samajists in India and Kenya were discernable in his life and activities.

As from 1930s, when Vidyarthi made his venture in the printing industry, the press media in Kenya had witnessed significant growth. Newspapers, ran both by Indians and Africans were increasingly articulative of political sentiments and grievances. *Mwiguithania*, a Kikuyu newspaper which had existed since 1928, *Afrika Mpya*, a Kiswahili newspaper which was a mouthpiece of Kenya African Union (KAU) party and *Sauti ya Mwafrika*, another Kiswahili paper of K.A.U. were among the papers championing the African cause.³⁶ The Indian press however, having the advantage of sophisticated equipment, manpower and long experience in Kenya, was more penetrating and perhaps had a larger clientele. *The East African Chronicle* of M.A. Desai,³⁷ the leader of the East African Indian National Congress, the *Colonial Times* and *Habari za Dunia* launched by Gidhari Lal Vidyarthi in 1933 and 1935 respectively³⁸ and the *Daily Chronicle*, printed and published by V.D. Patel, were dominant among the Indian newspapers.³⁹ Thus, Vidyarthi's press attacks on the colonial Government were much in keeping with the contemporary situation. The non-European opposition to the Government had also become articulate through the press media.

Of all the newspapers printed by Vidyarthi's Colonial Printing Works, it was the

Colonial Times that brought him at loggerheads with the colonial authorities several times. On 7th April, 1945, it carried an article the 'Burma Week' in which the British campaign in Burma was dealt with. The article advanced the view that a successful campaign of the British against the Japanese in Burma was equivalent to replacing an imperial master by another.⁴⁰ To the Government, the *Colonial Times*' article was considered sensitive and likely to affect the operation of the war, thus it contravened the Defence Regulations, promulgated in 1940 which had prohibited the publication of any information related to the War.⁴¹ Therefore, Vidyarthi in his capacity as the Chief Editor of the newspaper was charged with contravening the Defence Regulations and sentenced to three months imprisonment or a fine of Sterling £100. He opted for the fine.⁴² This trial was just the beginning of the several charges that were brought against him subsequently.

In the beginning of 1946, the *Colonial Times* was accused of sedition. Once again Vidyarthi, the editor, Vanshi Dhar, the co-proprietor in the newspaper, and W.L. Sohan, the ex-secretary of the Indian Association in Nairobi were arrested and charged on two counts.⁴³ First, that on 28th July, 1945 they (Vidyarthi and Vanshi Dhar) published a seditious article in Gujarati language on page 12 of the *Colonial Times*. The second count was that on 22nd December, 1945 they had published a seditious publication bearing the signature of one W.L. Sohan.⁴⁴

Sohan's article argued that the treatment of the Indians in India was worse than those of the prisoners in the Nazi German detention camps such as Belsen.⁴⁵ They were sentenced to four months imprisonment and hard labour.⁴⁶ Later in 1947, Vidyarthi was accused of printing a seditious publication not in the *Colonial Times* but in the Kiswahili weekly, *Habari za Dunia*. The editor of *Habari za Dunia*, Ruhinda, was also arrested and fined Sterling £50. Vidyarthi was imprisoned for 18 months and his Colonial Printing Works was banned from printing *Habari za Dunia*.⁴⁷

The causes of the arrests and prosecution brought against Vidyarthi could be viewed on one hand as his anti-British and anti-imperialistic nature, and on the other as the efforts of the colonial Government to censor the press media which had gained prominence as an avenue of articulating views, which could jeopardize its existence. His exposure to an intensely nationalist environment during his education in a *Gurukul* in India must have nurtured an ant-colonial attitude in him.

At the turn of the century, the press in Kenya was not so much under strict Governmental control.⁴⁸ The newspapers were few and the cross-section of people who were reading them was minimal. In the course of time, ordinances were enacted, aimed at increasing governmental control over the press media. The

Books and Newspaper Ordinance of 1915, Telegraphic Press Messages Ordinance of 1934 and the Defense Regulations of 1940, were striking examples.⁴⁹ The need to control the flow of information during World War I and II, and the rapid increase of the African political consciousness among African elites, who had found avenues for the expression of their grievances in the Indian-owned newspapers, elicited the colonial Government's wrath not only against the Indian press but also a few African newspapers that were in circulation.⁵⁰ The news of Indo-African unity in the struggle for freedom had found places in the columns of the Indian press as early as 1920, when M.A. Desai, a leader of the EAINC in his *East African Chronicle* supported Harry Thuku, the leader of the Kikuyu Central Association in 1920.⁵¹ KCA was not existing in 1920. Arent you writing about YKA.

By the out break of the World War I, the articulation of opposition against the colonial Government was proliferating among the Indian and African press. The Government started a crackdown on newspapers with dissenting views.⁵² It was in this process of restricting the press media by the colonial Government that its wrath fell on Vidyarthi, as a printer and publisher.

In a word, Gidhari Lal Vidyarthi was an example of an individual with an Arya Samaj background who dabbed himself in the political affairs of Kenya's colonial period by use of the print media. His training in a *Gurukul*, which was a

seminary of uncompromising followers of Arya Samaj and produced a number of leaders of the Indian freedom movement, provided him with an opportunity to develop an anti-colonial attitude. Later, his greater involvement with the press curtailed his commitment to Arya Samaj compared for instance with his brother Ram Rakha who rose to become the president of Arya Samaj Nairobi. However, Vidyarthi never lost complete sight of Arya Samaj's teachings and programmes. He made occasional financial and material contributions in support of Arya Samaj activities.⁵³

NOTES

- ¹ P. Narain, "The Arya Samaj: Essence and Effervescence: An interpretation Panjab past and present, Vol. XXV Part II, October 1991.
- ² C. H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.28.
- ³ T. Chand, History of the freedom movement in India Vol. II (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1967), pp.422 - 423 and R.S. Pareek, The contribution of Arya Samaj in the making of modern India 1875 - 1947 (Ph.D thesis, University of Rajasthan Jaipur, 1965), pp.214 -216.
- ⁴ Narain, op.cit. p.63 and P.N. Chopra, Religions and Communities of India (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1982), p.28.
- ⁵ D.A. Seidenberg, The Asians and Uhuru: The role a minority community in Kenya politics 1939-1963(Ph.D thesis, Syracuse University, 1979), pp.137 - 144 and F. Carter, "The Kenya Government and the Press 1906-1960", Hadithi 2 (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1970),p.244-246.
- ⁶ The Strong conviction of the Indians that they had to get an equal share of the East Africa Protectorate's resources with Europeans was clearly manifested in

1910 in letter from the London All-India Moslem league to the Under Secretary of state for colonies, concerning racial disparities in British East Africa, KNA, EAINC General correspondence Mic. Reel No.1.

⁷ J.S. Mangat, A history of the Asians in East Africa 1886-1945 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969),p.103.

⁸ N.K. Mehta, Dream half-expressed (Bombay: Vakils Feffer and Simons, 1966),p.121.

⁹ A. Shastri, Fifty years of Arya Samaj. Mombasa (Mombasa: Arya Samaj, 1958), p.15.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.16.

¹¹ Mehta, op.cit. p.120.

¹² Ibid. p.121.

¹³ Shastri op.cit. p.20.

¹⁴ L.J. Sharma, The Innocent Prisoner of Tsavo (unpublished autobiography, 1969), p.25.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.2.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.23

¹⁷ Ibid. p.24-26

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ KNA, Official Gazette of the East African Protectorate, Dec. 16 1914,
PC/coast/1/10/139.

²⁰ Sharma, op. cit. p.30.

²¹ Ibid. p.26-31.

²² Oral Interview Report, B.D. Kapila, 26/11/1992,
Nairobi.

²³ KNA, letter of the Secretary of Arya Samaj, Nairobi, D.D. Puri to the
commissioner of Police, 22nd April, 1918, PC/coast/1/13/61.

²⁴ Letter of the Coast Provincial Commissioner to secretary of the Arya Samaj,
Nairobi, 17/5/1918, Ibid.

²⁵ Shastri, op.cit. p.24.

²⁶ Sharma, op.cit. pp.37-39.

²⁷ Oral Interview Report, Kapila, op.cit.

²⁸ Pratinidhi, Dec., 1946, p.7 and June-July 1948 (Available in Arya Samaj library, Vedic House).

²⁹ Ibid. May 1947, pp.11.

³⁰ Ibid. Aug. 1948, p.5.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Makhan Singh's papers MAK/A/11 correspondence 1947, in the University of Nairobi Library.

³³ Oral Interview Report, K.B. Vidyarthi, 5/8/1993, Nairobi.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Seidenberg, op.cit. p.117.

³⁷ C.Singh, "Manilal Ambalal Desai", K. King and A. Salim (eds), Kenya Historical Biographies(Nairobi: East African publishing House,1971), p.33.

³⁸ Men Only, Aug. 1985, Vol. 1 No. 12.

³⁹ Seidenberg, op.cit. p.166.

⁴⁰ Colonial Times, 7/4/1945, p.1.

⁴¹ F.Carter, "The Kenya Government and the Press 1906-1960", Hadithi 2 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1970), P.244.

⁴² Colonial Times, 19/5.1945, p.21.

⁴³ Ibid. 19/1/1946, p.1.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 22/12/1945, p.7.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 9/2/1946, p.1.

⁴⁷ The events of the tussle between Vidyarthi and the Government in Kenya have been discussed by Seidenberg op.cit. pp.139-144.

⁴⁸ Carter, op.cit. p.243.

⁴⁹ Ibid. pp.244-245.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Singh, op.cit. pp.133-134.

⁵² Carter, op.cit. p.244.

⁵³ Oral Interview Report, Vidyarthi op.cit.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

An examination of the antecedents of the Arya Samaj movement in Kenya illustrates on one hand, the response of a socio-religious group to an alien situation and on the other, the efforts of the Arya Samajists to preserve their cultural identity and elements, a main characteristic of Indian religious groupings and castes soon after the Indians settled in Kenya. Cut off from their cultural roots in India; faced by challenges of the rapidly growing Christian influence and rivalry from orthodox Hindu sects, whose followers were already in Kenya, the Arya Samaj immigrants had to strive hard for the thrival of their faith. At first, Arya Samajists held regular meetings in private houses in Nairobi, only to realize later that a formal organization was necessary for effective propagation of the Arya Samaj creed in the new environment. Starting in Nairobi in 1903, the Arya Samaj rapidly grew in other towns of Kenya with the increase of its followers, migrating mainly from Punjab, north India. However, Nairobi did not lose its place as a centre of Arya Samaj activities in East Africa and in 1920 it became the headquarters of the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa (the supreme council of Arya Samaj churches).

Like other Indian religious groupings in Kenya, the Arya Samaj was confronted by a colonial situation, specially designed to enhance racial segregation and colour bar. The Kenya Government's efforts in the provision of social amenities then were tailored in favour of the politically dominant group : the Europeans. Thus the followers of Arya Samaj in such conditions could not hope to obtain educational facilities for their children. Arya Samaj endeavoured to provide educational facilities, particularly for girls. Arya Samaj girls' schools proliferated in various urban centers where Arya Samaj branches existed and were in vogue among most Indians especially in the early decades of this century, when communal and sectarian schools were few and far between.

The activities of the Arya Samaj movement however, were not confined to the educational field. Religiously, attempts were made, mainly by Arya Samaj Nairobi, to seek converts among non-Hindus such as Africans but with little fruition. The colonial rule which engendered racial segregation policies and the stereotype notions that developed therein between the races (Indians and Africans) drew a sharp wedge socially and religiously between Africans and Indians that rendered the efforts of Arya Samaj to seek African converts fruitless. Thus regardless of the Arya Samaj's ideal of being open to all people, their race, creed and station in life notwithstanding, its members have been exclusively Indians over the years.

As times and circumstances kept on changing, new developments were noticeable in Arya Samaj's structures and activities. A number of things were modified much in keeping with the politically, socially and religiously dynamic environment in Kenya. After independence, the *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa, created in 1920 to oversee Arya Samaj activities in East Africa, confined its area of jurisdiction to Kenya. An *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* was created in Tanzania and in Uganda Arya Samaj ceased to exist following the expulsion of all Indians from that country in 1972 by president Idi Amin Dada.

The Hindi language, although prominent as a unifying force among Arya Samajists, its use diminished, especially in Arya Samaj schools. Majority of the young people could speak not read or write it. Thus it has become increasingly necessary to produce the basic Arya Samaj literature either in English or Kiswahili, in order to cater for such groups that are not familiar with Hindi.

Whereas other activities of Arya Samaj such as the conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism have been in a low ebb in Kenya, its welfare and philanthropic activities have continued to be its focus. The setting up of the Dayanand Home for destitute children epitomized this commitment. Various branches of Arya Samaj in Kenya over the years have extended assistance to students in form of school fees; hospital bills and money or materials to victims of calamities, such

as drought, fire and violence.

As other Hindu socio-religious organizations, the Arya Samaj played a significant role in the formation of the Hindu Council of Kenya. All branches of Arya Samaj in various towns became member organizations of the H.C.K. As a non-political organization, the H.C.K. became the mouthpiece and a representative of Hindu organizations, particularly in giving material and financial assistance to victims of calamity and assists in migration problems that face Hindus. On the other hand, the creation of the H.C.K. marked the opening of a new chapter in the improvement of cooperation and harmony among Hindu socio-religious organizations in Kenya.

On the political plane, the shock waves of the 1915 prosecution against Arya Samaj Mombasa officials created a tendency in Arya Samaj to avoid confrontation with political authority. It was no wonder therefore, that on the mere mention of the 1915 incident, majority of my respondents repeatedly said that Arya Samaj is purely a non-political body and always loyal to authority. However, some individuals either from an Arya Samaj background or from the rank and file of Arya Samaj came to the political limelight in Kenya and more so in the colonial period. Gidhari Lal Vidyarthi, who rose from a staunch Arya Samaj background, though later did not take much involvement with the movement, constantly

criticized the colonial rule's racial discrimination policies in the 1940s through the press media. This criticism earned him the wrath of the colonial Government and he was sent to jail several times.

Generally, the Arya Samaj as most Hindu religious organizations in Kenya has exclusively appealed to Indians, and particularly those of Hindu descent. Its watchword of being open to all people regardless of race, religion and caste has been more rhetoric than real. Its relatively popular physical facilities, social amenities and cultural festivals continue to be in vogue among Hindus in Kenya. The changing times and circumstances, have curtailed the militancy which characterized Arya Samaj movement in both India and Kenya. Its approach to various issues has been changing in a manner that made the movement adoptive to the local situation than just emphasizing Dayanand's reform programme, which was more relevant to the contemporary situation than the situation in Kenya. Issues such as conversion to Hinduism and protection of cows from slaughter, which were important to Dayanand's programme, have not been more central to Arya Samaj in Kenya than the provision of educational facilities, which the local situation demanded.

Beneath and intertwined with Arya Samajists' socio-religious philosophy lie what could be said to govern their economic and professional attainment. The main

objective of Arya Samaj as enshrined in its commandments is to work for the wellbeing of humanity: physically, socially and spiritually. Attaining economic prowess and professional excellence is ideally the goal of every Samajist in order to enable them play their role in advancing that objective. Generous giving for the cause of the movement has been a requirement for every member of the *Arya Pariwar*. In their earnings, personal interests are required to be subordinate to societal needs as the tenth commandment stipulates.

As the case is to majority Christian churches where devotees' offerings and tithes are utilized for church functions and putting up of physical structures, so has been the case in the Arya Samaj. Temples , prayer halls, schools , orphanages and commercial premises such as Vedic House in Nairobi were erected through personal donations and offerings. Infact, regular contributions financially and materially have been and are more or less synonymous with membership in Arya Samaj (of course subject to subscribing to other norms of the movement).

Since majority of its members cut cross-sectionally through economic activities and professions of good financial earnings, the Arya Samaj, particularly in Nairobi, has been able to finance a number of projects which at times require colossal sums of money such as Vedic House and the Arya Samaj complex in Parklands which embraces a nursery school, primary school, a high school and

a magnificent multi-purpose hall. The constitution of the Arya Samaj membership ranges from small shopkeepers (*dukawallahs*), wholesalers to prominent industrialists and professionals. A number of lawyers, medical doctors and University lectures form part of the Arya Samaj membership. Such diverse professional groups not only contribute materially and financially to Arya Samaj but also put elitist skills at its disposal.

The Arya Samajists have had an unbroken history in Kenya of nearly a century now. Wherever they have lived their religious beliefs and allegiance to the founder of the movement Swami Dayanand Saraswati have tended to knit them together. Perhaps few Hindu socio-religious groups in this country express more consistent openness to people of other creeds and religious persuasion than the Arya Samajists.

In a number of ways, the Arya Samaj could provide a forum for integration, particularly between Kenyans of African and those of Asian descent. Its attempt to seek converts among Africans ; its non-racial educational and health institutions; the liberal approach to religious issues which excludes excessive ritualism and idol worship vis-a-vis other Hindu sects and above all the universal appeal of the ideas of its founder could easily attract any outsider. Regularly this author witnessed occasions in the Arya Samaj Prayer Hall in Nairobi where

African Students from the University of Nairobi and schools in the city take part in prayers and rituals carried out in the weekly meeting. At such times they freely fraternize with the members of Arya samaj and always invited to their communal lunch. Personally, I interacted quite a lot with members of Arya Samaj in their homes, temples or prayer halls, business premises and offices, of course to my surprise on account of the prevalent view that Hindus constitute a closed and socially repulsive community. However, integration, particularly between different groups would not appear over a short time and just by interaction between small groups of the communities involved. The process is gradual and requires readiness in both will and effort on both racial groups, for it is common knowledge that it takes two or more groups of people to integrate.

Furthermore, knowledge and information about the social religious norms and customs of the various Kenyan racial groups and particularly Indians need to be availed to everybody. This can either help in dispelling the normally exaggerated popular notions about them or create a rational understanding that could account for their behaviour. Thus, the importance of this study on Arya Samaj is not so much in just filling a knowledge lacuna as in helping to some extent to clear some racial prejudice and mark a step towards inter-racial integration. Some such studies as the cause of the anti-Indian attitude in the country, the difference among the various Hindu socio-religious organizations, which more or less seem

alike *prima facie*, and the evaluation of the factors conditioning the behaviour of Indians in post-colonial Kenya will be quite illuminating. Those remain in my view monumental areas awaiting the services of scholars: historians and social scientists alike.

In a word, Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, as his followers refer to him commonly, did not lead any army, amass any wealth nor claim any divine revelation or status, a trait in vogue among contemporary *Sanyasis*, however, he established a society : Arya Samaj, whose main objective was to revive what he believed was true Hinduism: Vedic Hinduism. His emphasis on socio-religious reform programmes as the dire need of the contemporary Hindu society attracted a great following from the lower caste people and women, who were mainly victims of the oppressive *Brahminical* order. His religious posture as a rational theist found easy acceptance among the western educated Indians. Later, his movement was established by his followers outside India : Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mauritius, South Africa, North America, South America, Fiji, Australia and the United Kingdom. Thus proved wrong the prophecy of J. N. Farquahar, a Christian missionary and scholar who intensely studied Hinduism and Dayanand's contemporary who spelt doom for the movement in its formative years:

...there is no risk involved in prophesying that the Samaj will not have great history. In the very sources of its present strength there is that which will inevitably lead to its decline.¹

In Kenya, the Arya Samaj started with vigour and revival spirit among Indian immigrants. In recent years its membership dwindled following the mass Indian exodus after independence in 1963, which came mainly as a result of the fears caused by Indian expulsion from Uganda in 1972, British immigration policy geared towards limiting immigration of Indians to Britain and an overwhelming urge to look for better life elsewhere.

Although numerically weak vis-a-vis the yester years apt are the words of Cynthia Salvadori, an Anglo-Italian anthropologist on Indian cultural institutions in Kenya writing in 1989:

The Vedic revival movement (Arya Samaj) in Kenya may have lost many of its members; it does not seem to have lost any of its spirits.²

In the final analysis, the history of Arya Samaj in Kenya, 1903-1978, was one full of challenges. By the efforts of its followers, the movement was established

in an alien environment, highly polarized by colonialism and racism. These two ingredients of imperialism were often malignant to its policies and programmes. In the post-colonial era, the unfolding social, religious, economic and political norms pushed it, as they did to other Indian socio-religious organizations, to the verge of collapse. Majority of its members emigrated for greener pastures elsewhere. The future of Arya Samaj seemed no less exacting and as challenging as its past. It dependent not only on the efforts of its followers but also the conduciveness of the local situation for the existence of the Indian minority, who constitute the great majority of its followers.

NOTES

¹ J. N. Farquahar, Modern Religious Movements in India (Delhi: Devendra Jain, 1967), p.127.

² C. Salvadori, Through Open Doors: A View of Asian Cultures in Kenya (Nairobi: Kenways, 1989), p.125.

APPENDIX I

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (PRINCIPLES) OF ARYA SAMAJ

The ten commandments of Arya Samaj were formulated by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, its founder. At first they were twenty eight and later reduced to ten perhaps for precision and clarity. They (the commandments) uphold monotheism, infallibility of the Vedas, the commitment of Arya Samaj in the improvement of spiritual and social plight of humanity and dissemination of true knowledge. All through, the principles reflect the ideals, beliefs and teachings of Dayanand. They are a clear anti-thesis of the Hindu orthodox socio-religious environment that he strove to reform into what he believed was a pure Hindu society, where polytheism, excessive ritualism, *Brahmanical* dominance and oppression of women and low caste people were unheard of. The principles are as follows:-

1. **God, His Characteristics:** The Primordial Root-the Eternal Unseen Sustainer-of all true knowledge and of objects made known by true knowledge-any of all these-is the Supreme God.
2. **His attributes and Worship:** God is personification of Existence, Just, Benevolent, Unborn, Endless, and Infinite, Unchangeable, Beginningless,

Incomparable, Support of All, Lord of All, All-pervading, Omniscient, and Controller of all from within, Undecaying, Imperishable, Fearless, Eternal, Holy and Maker of the Universe. To Him alone is worship due.

3. **His Word, the Veda:** The Veda is the Scripture of all true knowledge. It is the paramount duty of every Arya to learn and teach The Veda, to hear it, read and recite it to others.
4. **Truth:** We should ever be ready to embrace truth and to forsake untruth.
5. **Righteousness-**All acts should be done in accordance with Dharma after deliberating what is right and wrong.
6. **Benevolence:** The Prime object of the Arya Samaj-the Vedic Church-is to do good to the world, that is, to promote physical, spiritual and social good to every sentient being.
7. **Love and Justice:** Our conduct towards all should be guided by Love, Righteousness and Justice.
8. **Nescience and Science:** We should dispel "avidya"-nescience, and

promote "vidya"-science, spiritual and physical.

9. **Individualism and Altruism:** No one should be contented with promoting his good only; on the contrary, he should look for his good in promoting the good of all .

10. **Subordination and Liberty:** All men should subordinate themselves to the laws of society calculated to promote the well-being of all; they should be free in regard to the laws promoting individual well-being.

SOURCE: V.D. Sharma (ed), Vaidic Prayer (Nairobi: Colour print , 1987), p.85.

"	5000	Air ticket to widow- Kamalan Devi
"	175 per month for 6 months	Widow-Manohar Devi
19.12.73	5000 per month	Pension-pandit Satya Pal Jee
"	1000	-Sudesh Gautama
20.3.74	5,000	Donated to freedom from Hunger Walk
25.9.74	35,925	Donated to 41 African and 29 Indian students in Arya Samaj schools
"	2,650	Hospital bill-Jayanti Lal Chauhan
"	1,356	Air ticket-Harbans Singh
"	300 per month for 6 months	-Monahor Devi
"	4,658	-Jaswinder Kani

185

1.11.74	501	Assistance to Mathare Welfare Association
"	7,000	Assistance for further studies in UK - Vinod Kapoor
"	1,000	- R.K. Sharma
"	400 per month for one year	- Raj Ghai
"	12,000 annually	To the A.P.S.E.A for the Dayanand Home.
14.5.75	2,000	Air ticket -Mr.Ghai
2.7.75	Not shown	Air ticket -Gular Singh Raja Ram to London
27.8.75	"	Air ticket -Daropti

Sood to Bombay.

16.10.75	5,000	-Rajindra Sharma and family
"	"	- Manohardevi
"	800 for the year 1976	- Ndondo
14.6.76	5,000	- Vinay Kumar
"	1,000	Fees for his children - James Ngigi
"	2,000	-Gitau
"	2,000	Donated to Freedom from Hunger Walk
2.9.76	Not shown	Air ticket to London - G.H. Brar
15.6.76	10,000	Donation to Freedom From Hunger Walk and Nairobi Relief Fund
24.8.77	8,000	Air ticket - Vinay Kumar
"	500	- Family of the late Insp. Kimani

"	450	School Fees - Peter M. Njagi of Gatanga Secondary school
3. 2.78	1000	School Fees - Henry N. Njagi of Nyeri high School
"	750	School Fees - Eunice Wanjiku
"	5000	Air ticket to London Pratrapp Singh and family
21.11.79	5000	Humanitarian assistance - Usha
11.3.83	500 per month from 1.1.83	-Amratsaria Ram

SOURCE: Funds approved for welfare activities by the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi in Minutes File No. 11 of the *Antrang Sabha* of Arya Samaj Nairobi 1973-1984.

ARYAN CLUB
P.O.BOX 42178
NAIROBI

BHAGINI SAMAJ
P.O.BOX 14864
NAIROBI

BHARTIYA SWAYAMSEVAK
SANGH
P.O.BOX 40204
NAIROBI

CUTCHI MADHAPUR PATEL GNATI MANDAL
P.O.BOX 46768
NAIROBI

DEEN BANDHU SAMAJ
P.O. BOX 49125
NAIROBI

E.A. SATSANG MANDAL

P.O.BOX 42371

NAIROBI

E.A. RAMGARHIA BOARD

P.O.BOX 40845

NAIROBI

E.A. NAMDHARI SANGAT

P.O.BOX 11308

NAIROBI

EAST AFRICAN RAJPUT LEAGUE

P.O.BOX 31568

NAIROBI

GAYATRI PARIWAR

P.O.BOX 18384

NAIROBI

GEETA SOCIETY

P.O.BOX 48825

NAIROBI

GUJAR SUTHAR GNATI MANDAL

P.O.BOX 47397

NAIROBI

GURUDWARA RAILWAYS LANDIES

P.O.BOX 40703

NAIROBI

KALA NIKETAN SHISHUKUNJ

P.O.BOX 42590

NAIROBI

KANBIS SPORTS CLUB

P.O.BOX 41861

NAIROBI

KATHIAWAD JANSARI MANDAL

P.O.BOX 14179

NAIROBI

KATHIAWAD KADWA PATIDAR

GNATI MANDAL

P.O.BOX 61790

NAIROBI

KENYA PRAGATI MANDAL

P.O.BOX 49259

NAIROBI.

KENYA BRAHMA SABHA

P.O.BOX 46314

NAIROBI

LAMBACHIA GNATI MANDAL

P.O.BOX 43893

NAIROBI

LOHANA MAHAJAN MANDAL.

P.O.BOX 49335

NAIROBI

LOHANA MAHILA MANDAL

P.O.BOX 34737

NAIROBI

LOHANA YOUTH LEAGUE

P.O.BOX 40335

NAIROBI

MAHARASHTRA MANDAL

P.O.BOX 45452

NAIROBI

NAIROBI RAJPUT DHOBI

P.O.BOX 76531

NAIROBI

NAIROBI RAJPUT DHOBI

P.O.BOX 76531

NAIROBI

NARI VRUND

P.O.BOX 41596

NAIROBI

NAVNAT VANIK MAHAJAN MANDAL

P.O.BOX 40638

NAIROBI

OSHWAL YOUTH LEAGUE

P.O.BOX 42394

NAIROBI

PATEL BROTHERHOOD

P.O.BOX 40134

NAIROBI

PATTNI BROTHERHOOD

P.O.BOX 11321

NAIROBI

RAM MANDIR

P.O.BOX 31750

NAIROBI

SHREE SANATAN DHARMA SABHA

P.O.BOX 40032

NAIROBI

SHREE SANATAN DHARMA

STREE SABHA

P.O.BOX 40032

NAIROBI

SHREE NAIROBI LUHAR

GNATI MANDAL

P.O.BOX 43821

NAIROBI

SHREE CUTCHI SATSANG
SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE
P.O.BOX 40812
NAIROBI

SHREE CUTCHI GUJRATI HINDU UNION
P.O.BOX 40204
NAIROBI

SHREE SORATHIA PRAJAPATI
GNATI MANDAL
P.O.BOX 42632
NAIROBI

SHREE CUTCHI LEVA PATEL SAMAJ
P.O.BOX 47749
NAIROBI

SRI GURU SINGH SABHA

P.O.BOX 40486

NAIROBI

STHANAKVASI JAIN MANDAL

P.O.BOX 46469

NAIROBI

STREE NIKETAN

P.O.BOX 34971

NAIROBI

STREE SATSANG MANDAL

P.O.BOX 49941

NAIROBI

SURAT DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

P.O.BOX 41991

NAIROBI

SWAMINARAYAN SIDDHANT

SAJJIVAN MANDAL

P.O.BOX 46488

NAIROBI

VANIK LADIES CLUB

P.O.BOX 48472

NAIROBI

VISA OSHWAL COMMUNITY

P.O.BOX 40638

NAIROBI

WANZA UNION

P.O.BOX 46455

NAIROBI

WEDNESDAY ART CLUB

P.O.BOX 45429

NAIROBI

SOURCE: List of members from the H.C.K offices in Ngara, Nairobi.

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5. RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BRIEF HISTORY

(I) MEN

Bhardwaj, S.S. was interviewed on 13/3/1993 in his clinic in Kisumu. Bhardwaj was born in 1915 in Punjab, India. He studied for a degree in Medicine in Punjab University and later obtained a diploma in Eye Surgery in Madras. He migrated to Kenya in 1939 on Government Service. He retired in 1960 and started his private clinic. He is a member of Arya Samaj Kisumu. His information on the activities of Arya Samaj over the years was significant.

Blacknurst, David was interviewed on 4/12/1992 from 2.15 - 4.00 P.M. in the Theosophical Society Nairobi Lodge, Parklands. Born in England, he came to

Kenya as an architect. He has been a member of the Theosophical Society for the last 20 years. His information on the difference between the Theosophical Society and Hindu socio-religious groups such as Arya Samaj was significant.

Kapila, Baldev was interviewed on Thursday 26/11/1992 between 9 - 12.00 noon in Vedic House, Nairobi. He was born in 1912 in Nairobi. His father was Mathura Dass, a cashier in the Uganda Railway and founder member of Arya Samaj Nairobi. He is a prominent member of Arya Samaj Nairobi and his information on the foundation of Arya Samaj and its activities was quite illuminating.

Magon, Ravi was interviewed on 2/3/1993 at his clinic along Digo Road in Mombasa. He was born in Nairobi. He is a dentist by profession and the current president of Arya Samaj Mombasa and gave some information on the activities of Arya Samaj in Mombasa.

Patel, Motilal C. was interviewed on 4/12/1992 in the Theosophical Society Nairobi Lodge in Parklands. He was born in 27/12/1914 in India. Professionally, trained as a lawyer he left the bar to join business. He retired from business in 1978. He came to Kenya in 1942 and was once a member of Arya Samaj. Currently he is a member of the Theosophical Society, Nairobi. His

comparison of the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society on account of having been a member of both at some time helped to clarify a few issues involving the two organizations to this researcher.

Patel, Vinubhai Ambalal, was interviewed on 8/12/1992 from 10.00 - 12.20 P.M. in his clinic in Nakuru town. He was born in Marigat, Baringo district in 1942. He is a medical doctor and the current chairman of the Hindu Council of Kenya, Nakuru Branch. He is a member of Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Nakuru. His information was significant in shedding light on the activities of the H.C.K.

Putra, Joban Satyavrat Vithalji was interviewed on 14/3/1993 in his house in Kisumu. Born in 1928 in Kisumu, Putra was educated in Kisumu High School between 1935-42 and joined Indian Government School Nairobi in 1944. After his education, he joined his father's business in the Nyanza Printing Works, the pioneer in printing and bookselling in Kisumu. He is a member of Arya Samaj Kisumu and well versed with its activities over the years.

Ramesh Rana was interviewed on 13/3/1993 in his house in Arya Nursery School Kisumu, along Mosque Road. Born in 1958 in Uttar Pradesh in the district of Paurigadhwar, he came to East Africa in 1979 and joined Arya Samaj Dar es Salaam as a priest. He was educated in Tankara and specialized in Vedic

literature and currently is the priest of Arya Samaj Kisumu. I was able to approach most members of his congregation through him.

Saini, Pritam Singh was interviewed on Sunday 13/12/1992 between 4.30 to 7.00 P.M. in Maharishi Dayanand Bhavan (Hall) in Parklands, Nairobi. He was born in Punjab, India and came to Kenya in 1937 as worker in the Post Office. He retired from Government service in 1969. He is a member of Arya Samaj Nairobi. He was the Chairman of the Hindu Council of Kenya in 1983 and the president of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa from 1979 to 1983. He was a valuable source of the activities of Arya Samaj in Nairobi and its involvement with H.C.K.

Sharma, Amrit Bhushan was interviewed on 24/1/1993 in Maharishi Dayanand Bhavan in Parklands, Nairobi. He was born in Kenya in 1922. After his early education in Kenya he went to Britain for higher education. He became a teacher in 1946. He is a son of the late Bishendass Rallaram Sharma, the secretary of Arya Samaj Mombasa in 1914 who was convicted by the colonial Government and sentenced to death. He is a member of Arya Samaj Nairobi. Much information was gathered from him about his father and his involvement with Arya Samaj in Mombasa.

Sharma, Desh Bandhu was interviewed on Thursday 12/2/1993 between 2.30 - 4.00 P.M. in Vedic House Nairobi. He was born in Nairobi in 1929. He got his early education in Kenya and went to Britain for a degree in Mechanical Engineering. On his return from Britain he joined his father's business dealing with the manufacture of biscuits and textiles. He is the son of Lalchand Sharma, one of the Arya Samaj members convicted by the colonial Government and sentenced to death. He was a main source of data about his father and the events that led to his imprisonment during the first world war. His father's autobiography was a useful source as an eye witness account of the conflict between Arya Samaj in Mombasa and the military authority during the first world war.

Sharma, Jaidev Bhardwaj was interviewed on 24/1/1993 in Maharishi Dayanand Bhavan in Parklands, Nairobi. He was born in Nairobi in 1906. He received his early education in Arya School Punjab, after which he came to Kenya to work in the railway in 1927. Retired in 1952 and entered private business. He is a son of Baishaki Ram, one of the pioneer members of Arya Samaj Nairobi. He has served Arya Samaj Nairobi in different capacities over the years. He was a wealthy source of information on Arya Samaj Nairobi.

Shoor, P.S. was interviewed on 9/12/1992 in his shop in Nakuru. He is the

current chairman of Arya Samaj Nakuru.

Varma, Arya Muni was interviewed on 28/2/1993 in Arya Samaj Yajnashalla Mombasa between 10.30 - 12.00 noon. He was born in 1901 in Jullunder and is one of the oldest members of Arya Samaj in Kenya currently. He obtained his education in India. He came to Kenya in 1927 as a teacher in Arya Girls School in Nairobi. He was a teacher for 31 years. He was a prominent source of data about the development of Arya Samaj and its activities in Kenya from 1920s.

Varma, R.S. was interviewed on 21/1/1993 in Arya Girls Secondary School, Ngara, Nairobi. He was born in 1934 in India and came to Kenya in 1954 as a teacher. He taught in Nairobi Indian Government school (now Jamhuri High School) until his retirement in 1989. He is the current secretary of *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha* East Africa, a supreme council of Arya Samaj Churches in East Africa.

Ved Pal was interviewed for four days consecutively : 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th, March 1993 at Arya Samaj temple, Mombasa. He was born on 10/1/1933 in Yogiwalla village in the district of Muzzafargarh in modern day Pakistan. His family migrated to India in 1948 during the partition of 1947. He was educated in Haryana High School and later in the Punjab University. He is a teacher and

priest by profession. He has visited many countries for Arya Samaj missionary work such as Mauritius, Fiji, United States of America, Britain, South Africa and currently is a priest in Arya Samaj Mombasa.

Vidyarthi, Kul Bushan was interviewed twice. First on 2/2/1993 and 5/8/1993 in Colour Print, a printing press along Kirinyaga Road, Nairobi. He was born on 1/7/1939 in Nairobi Kenya. He got his early education in Nairobi Indian Government school (now Jamhuri High school) and later in Menegai High school, Nakuru. Later, he joined family business of the printing industry. He is the son of G.L. Vidyarthi and he was a prominent source of information about his father.

(II) WOMEN

Dharmadhikary, Vasudha Vasant was interviewed on 25/11/1992. She was born in India. She is a teacher by profession. She taught for sometime in Kikuyu Secondary school before she joined the Kenya Institute of Education as an officer who oversees the syllabus and teaching of Hindu Religious Education in Kenyan schools.

Indu, Madan was interviewed on 2/3/1993 in Arya Primary school Mombasa. She was born and educated in India. She is the secretary of the Women (Manushi) organization of Arya Samaj Mombasa.

Kotecha, Bhanumati interviewed on 14/3/1993 in Kisumu. She was born in 1923 in India and was brought to Kenya at the age of three. She received her education in Arya Girls School, Kisumu and later joined the Maha Vidyalaya Baroda, India. She is a retired teacher and member of Arya Samaj Kisumu.

Manjula, T. Pujara was interviewed on 1/3/1993 in Arya primary school Mombasa. She was born in 1938. She was educated in Mombasa. Currently she is the headmistress of Arya primary school, Mombasa.

Shah, Usha was interviewed on 27/11/1992 at the offices of the Hindu Council of Kenya in Ngara, Nairobi. She was born in India and came to Kenya in 1938. She was educated in Arya Girls, Nairobi. She is the current chairlady of the Hindu Council of Kenya and she was the main source of data on the foundation and activities of the H.C.K.