CHAPTER - 2

STATUS AND IDENTITY OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN MADAGASCAR (1945-2005)

The present chapter deals with status and identity of Indians in Madagascar. The Indian community in Madagascar provides a fascinating case study as they constitute only two percent of the total population of Madagascar and control more than fifty percent of the economy. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part will give a brief background of Madagascar’s geography, economy and society. It will also discuss the French colonial rule and the present political scenario. The image of Indian diaspora under the French colonial rule and the economic life of Indian diaspora is discussed in the second part. The question of Assimilation and identity is taken up in the third part while the current socio-political and economic status is discussed in the fourth part.

2.1 A Brief Background of Madagascar’s Economy, Society and Polity

2.1.1 Geographical Background

The Democratic Republic of Madagascar comprises the island of Madagascar, the fourth largest island in the world, and several much smaller offshore islands. Madagascar lies 390 km from the east African Mainland across the Mozambique Channel. It extends 1,600 km from north to south and is up to 570 km wide. The whole territory covers an area of 587,041 sq km. Geologically, the main island is basically composed of crystalline rock, which forms the central highlands that rise abruptly from the narrow eastern coastal strip and descend gradually to the wide plains of the west coast.¹

Topographically, Madagascar can be divided into six fairly distinct regions. Antisiranana province in the north is virtually isolated by the islands highest peak, Mt Tsaratanana, rising to 2800m above sea level. Tropical crops can be grown in its fertile valleys, and the natural harbour of Antisiranana is an important naval base. Another rich agricultural region lies in the north-west, where a series of valleys converge on the port of Mahajanga. To the south-west along the coastal plains lies a well-watered region where there are large animal herds and crops of rice, cotton and tobacco. The southernmost province, Toliary

(Tulear), contains most of Madagascar's known mineral deposits, as well as extensive cattle herds, despite the almost total lack of rainfall. In contrast, the hot and humid climate of east coast favours the cultivation of island's most valuable tropical crops - coffee, vanilla, cloves, and sugar cane. Although this coast lacks shelters anchorages, it is the site of Madagascar's most important commercial port, Toamasina. Behind its coral beaches a continuous chain of lagoons, some of which are connected by the Pangalanes Canal, provides a partially navigable internal waterway. The island's mountainous hinterland is a densely populated region of extensive rice culture. Despite its relative inaccessibility, this region is Madagascar's administrative and cultural centre, the focal point being the capital city of Antananarivo.

Climatic conditions vary from tropical conditions on the east and north-west coasts to the hotness and dryness of the west coast, the extreme aridity of the south and the temperate zone in the central highlands. Forests have survived only in some areas of abundant rainfall, and elsewhere the land has been eroded by over-grazing and slash-and-burn farming methods. Most of the island is savannah-steppe, and much of the interior is covered with laterite. Except in drought-ridden south, rivers are numerous and flow generally westward, but many are interspersed by rapids and waterfalls, and few are navigable except for short distances.

2.1.2 Madagascar's Economy

Over the years, successive French colonial and independence era governments have sought to modernize Madagascar's economy. Despite such efforts, the majority of Malagasy today continued to earn their livelihoods in ways fundamentally unchanged from those of their ancestors--small-scale farms supporting traditional irrigated rice cultivation, dry land farming of cassava and other foods, zebu cattle herding, or the raising of cash crops.

The first modern land use projects were established by French settlers or Creole immigrants from the Mascarene Islands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They introduced cash crops such as coffee, sugarcane, vanilla, cloves, and sisal for export.

\[\text{Ibid}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
They also built small-scale mines to exploit the island's graphite, chromite, and uranium resources. To facilitate the processing and marketing of these commodities, the immigrants established a number of financial and commercial enterprises and built a small, modern railroad system\(^4\). They then brought some Malagasy into this modern sector of the economy, either as wage labourers and sharecroppers on the foreign-owned plantations, or as low-level employees in the civil service or business enterprises. The foreign owners and managers, however, retained almost all of the benefits from these operations.\(^5\)

After independence the Tsiranana regime did little to change the French domination of the modern sector of the economy, despite increasing outrage at this continued economic dependence. This anger, together with growing concern over an unequal distribution of wealth that left the southern and western parts of the island in relative poverty, caused the ouster of Tsiranana in 1972 and a shift in economic policy. The new military regime led by Ramanantsoa cut most ties with France and began to Malagachize the economy.\(^6\) Slow progress toward this goal, however, helped to precipitate the end of the Ramanantsoa regime in mid 1975. Only with the rise of Ratsiraka to the presidency later that year did the takeover of formerly French-dominated enterprises begin in earnest.\(^7\)

Ratsiraka's policy of "revolution from above" went beyond confiscating or buying out foreign firms and turning them over to Malagasy ownership; he intended to socialize the economy by nationalizing major enterprises. The state acquired majority or minority ownership in nearly all large financial, transportation, marketing, mining, and manufacturing enterprises. Firms left under private control were required to buy and sell at state-controlled prices, and the state closely monitored the repatriation of profits. In the rural sector, Ratsiraka aimed to establish local farming cooperatives.\(^8\) Almost as important as this institutional reform was the regime's intention, announced in an economic plan for the 1978-80 period, to increase dramatically the level of government

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\(^6\) Ibid

\(^7\) Ibid, p.20.

capital investment in all sectors of the economy in order to improve the availability of goods and services to all.

By the start of the 1980s, however, Ratsiraka's attempt to fashion viable socialist institutions and to stimulate the economy through increased investment had failed to improve economic production and welfare. Economic growth throughout the 1970s had not kept pace with the expanding population. Despite the availability of significant agricultural and mineral resources, the economy was less productive than at the start of the decade when the average per capita income was already among the lowest in the world. The only apparent effect of the enhanced level of investment, which reached all-time highs in the 1978-80 period, was to put the country deeply in debt to foreign creditors and, therefore, pave the way for a series of structural adjustment agreements signed with the IMF and the World Bank during the 1980s and the early 1990s. Such agreements were necessary because as a 1993 World Bank study pointed out, between 1971 and 1991 the per capita income of Malagasy dropped 40 percent; to return to its 1971 level by 2003, Madagascar would require a 6 percent annual growth rate.

The government of ousted President Marc Ravalomanana was aggressively seeking foreign investment and is tackling many of the obstacles to such investment, including combating corruption, reforming land-ownership laws, encouraging study of American and European business techniques, and active pursuit of foreign investors. President Ravalomanana rose to prominence through his agro-foods TIKO company, and is known for attempting to apply many of the lessons learnt in the world of business to running the government. Some recent concerns have arisen about the conflict of interest between his policies and the activities of his firms. Most notable among them the preferential treatment for rice imports initiated by the government in late 2004 when responding to a production shortfall in the country.

Following the 2002 political crisis, the government attempted to set a new course and build confidence, in coordination with international financial institution and donors.

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9 www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Madagascar-ECONOMY.html
Madagascar developed a recovery plan in collaboration with the private sector and donors and presented it at a "Friends of Madagascar" conference organized by the World Bank in Paris in July 2002. Donor countries demonstrated their confidence in the new government by pledging $1 billion in assistance over five years. The Malagasy Government identified road infrastructure as its principle priority and underlined its commitment to public-private partnership by establishing a joint public-private sector steering committee.\(^{11}\)

The Madagascar-U.S. Business Council was formed as collaboration between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Malagasian artisan producers in Madagascar in 2002. The U.S.-Madagascar Business Council was formed in the United States in May 2003, and the two organisations continue to explore ways to work for the benefit of both groups.\(^{12}\)

Today, Madagascar relies heavily upon assistance from members of the European Union and international agencies.

2.1.3 Madagascar's Society

2.1.3.1 Population

There are many competing theories about the origin of the Malagasy population and the time of its arrival on the island.\(^{13}\) The debate so far proved inconclusive, and has acquired political overtones. The population, language and culture are a mix in which Indonesian and African elements predominate with some Indian and Arab influences. The Malagasy language, spoken throughout the island, is largely Malayo-Polynesian, and linguistic analysis suggests that it came from the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago separating from the original some 1500 to 2000 year ago.\(^{14}\) There are two versions of the subsequent journey to Madagascar and settlement of the island. The first, which stresses the underlying unity of the population, argues that the proto-Malagasy migrated to the island over a long period of time, following a coastal route along India, across the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula and down the east coast of Africa, settling for


varying periods along the way. According to this theory, the elements of the Malagasy mix arrived on the island at the same time, already blended.

The second theory stresses the diversity of island's population and argues that those common elements that do exist were developed on the island from the interaction of different groups arriving at different times. The Malayo-Polynesian arrived first and made their way to the plateaux conquering and absorbing the few indigenous groups they encountered. Later immigration and the slave trade brought the Africans, while the much less important traces of Indian and Arab influence are also result of separate migrations. According to this theory differences in appearance, dialect and custom represent original differences that have been only imperfectly assimilated into a 'Malagasy' culture. More recently, attempts have been made to combine the two theories, giving most weight to the first. Competing theories do point to the combination of unity and diversity of Madagascar's population and their competition to the degree to which unity and diversity are political constructs.\textsuperscript{15}

The population of Madagascar, which was enumerated at 12,092,157 at the census of August 1993, by mid 2003 the population had increased to 16,441,000 according to official estimates.\textsuperscript{16} Today it is around 20,042,551.\textsuperscript{17} The principal ethnic groups of Madagascar are shown in the Table 2.1

From the table, one can derive that the dominant ethnic groups are Merina, Betsimisaraka and Betsileo, who inhabit the most densely populated central provinces of Antananarivo and Fianarantsoa, are of the Asian-Pacific origin. Population density ranges from 30 inhabitants per sq km on the central plateaux to 2 per sq km along much of the west coast. Although continuous migrations, improved means of communication and a marked cultural unity have, to some extent, broken down geographical and tribal barriers, traditional ethnic antagonisms – notably between the Merina and the Cotiers (tribes living in the peripheral areas) – remain close to the surface.\textsuperscript{18} French nationals are around 15000, however their number is fast decreasing. A very important community in

\textsuperscript{15} Covell, Mureen. 1987. \textit{op.cit.} p.11-12.
\textsuperscript{16} Thompson, Virginia.2005.\textit{op.cit.} www.europaworld.com
\textsuperscript{17} http://encarta.msn.com/fact 631504807/madagascar_facts_and_figures.html
\textsuperscript{18} www.europaworld.com

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Madagascar, which controls more than fifty percent of the economy, is Indian community. It constitutes only two percent of the total population.

2.1.3.2 Language

The Malagasy Language is of Malayo - Polynesian origin and is generally spoken throughout the island. Madagascar is a Francophone country, and French is spoken among the educated population of this former French colony. English, although still rare, is becoming more widely spoken, and in 2003, the government began a pilot project of introducing the teaching of English into the primary grades of 44 schools, with hopes of taking the project nationwide. Many Peace Corps volunteers are serving to further this effort and train teachers. In the first Constitution of 1958, Malagasy and French were named the official languages of the Malagasy Republic.\(^\text{19}\)

No official languages were recorded in the Constitution of 1992. Instead, Malagasy was named the national language; however, many sources still claimed that Malagasy and French were official languages, as they were \textit{de facto}. In April 2000, a citizen brought a legal case on the grounds that the publication of official documents in the French language only was unconstitutional. The High Constitutional Court observed in its decision that, in the absence of a language law, French still had the character of an official language.\(^\text{20}\)

In the Constitution of 2007, Malagasy remains the national language while official languages are reintroduced: Malagasy, French, and English. The motivation for the inclusion of English is partly to improve relations with the neighbouring countries where English is used and to encourage foreign direct investment.\(^\text{21}\)

2.1.3.3 Religion

Approximately 50% of the country's population practice traditional religion, which tends to emphasize links between the living and the dead. The Merina in the highlands particularly tend to hold tightly to this practice. They believe that deads join their ancestors in the ranks of divinity and that ancestors are intensely concerned with the fate

\(^{19}\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madagascar

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
of their living descendants. The Merina and Betsileo reburial practice of famadihana, or "turning over the dead", celebrates this spiritual communion. In this ritual, relatives' remains are removed from the family tomb, rewrapped in new silk shrouds, and returned to the tomb following festive ceremonies in their honour where sometimes the bodies are lifted and carried high above the celebrant's heads with singing and dancing before returning them to the tomb.

About 45% of the Malagasy are Christian, divided almost evenly between Catholics and Protestants. Many incorporate the cult of the dead with their other religious beliefs and bless their dead at church before proceeding with the traditional burial rites. They also may invite a pastor to attend a famadihana. Many of the Christian churches are influential in politics. The best example of this is the Malagasy Council of Churches (FFKM) comprising the four oldest and most prominent Christian denominations (Roman Catholic, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, Lutheran and Anglican)

Islam in Madagascar constitutes about 7% of the population. The Muslim traders who first brought Islam in the 10th century had a deep influence on the west coast. For example, many Malagasy converted to Islam and the Malagasy language was, for the first time, transcribed into an alphabet, based on the Arabic alphabet, called Sorabe. Muslims are concentrated in the provinces of Mahajanga and Antsiranana (Diego Suarez). Muslims are divided between those of Malagasy ethnicity, Indians, Pakistanis and Comorians. The number of mosque in the south-east region has increased from 10 to 50 in the last ten years. Recently, several tribes in Madagascar have been converting to Islam. One particular occasion is the Intimor tribe of the southeast, of which 17,500 converted en-masse.

2.1.4 A Brief History

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Madagascar were a period of multiple attempts at state-building, increased interaction among different political units in the island, and growing contact between these units and the European dominated

22 Kent. R. 1970. op. cit., p.4-6.
24 Ibid.
25 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madagascar
international economic and political system. The processes were inter-related. Internal factors were an important element in state-building but the desire to profit from growing international trade also played a role in the development first of Sakalava and Betsimisaraka federations on the west and east coasts, and later of the Betsileo and Merina monarchies in the interior of Madagascar. 26

This trade became important in the mid-eighteenth century with the introduction of sugar production in Reunion and the development of the plantation economy of the Mascarenes and, while it included some agricultural commodities, it increasingly took the form of the exchange of slaves taken in raids on neighboring groups for a range of goods, including weapons. As a result, participation in and domination of the trade became a matter of political as well as economic survival for the Malagasy groups involved. 27 Connections with European powers, especially Britain and France, were used both in the competition among political units on the island and by aspiring dominant groups within societies. The outside power’s interests in the island varied with their changing economic and strategic interests in the area until the end of the century, when it was caught in the overall scramble for African possessions. Madagascar was annexed by the French in 1896. 28

Of the various states that developed in pre-colonial Madagascar, the Merina Empire, whose capital was Antananarivo, came to dominate 29. Although studies of other groups make it clear that the processes of centralization, stratification, extraction and ideological manipulation that were involved in the creation of the Merina monarchy also occurred in these units, it was the Merina rulers who developed a form of organization that most closely resembled that of a modern state. 30 More specifically, the consolidation of the monarchy involved the transfer of power and legitimacy from local units to the centre, the development of a stratification system whose upper levels owed their position to their relationships with the monarchy, and a attempt to control other sources of power in the society. The specific changes all contributed to the separation of state from society.

28 Thompson, Virginia. op. cit. www.europaworld.com
The Pre-monarchical Merina society was divided into four endogamous castes: andriana, or nobels, hova, or commoners, and two slave castes, the mainy and the andevo. The creation of a centralized state both strengthened and complicated the existing system of stratification. Internal and external trade increased as the monarchy extended its control to the coast, and large fortunes developed, particularly among those who were able to use political power to secure monopolies of trade in various commodities. Many came andriana families, but a class of wealthy hova emerged, and joined the andriana in sharing in— and fighting over— political power. A series of Palace coups in the 1860s shifted actual control of the empire from the monarch to this group. Access to the resources created by the increased trade and the growing powers of the state were not limited to the groups at the top. A commercial class also developed, and middle-level state officials used booty from the perennial military campaigns, opportunities for bribery, and the retention of tax money and fines to ensure that public service, still formally unremunerated, at least did not impoverish them. One result was a growing corruption that was impossible for the rulers in Antananarivo to control, especially since they too engaged in it on a larger scale.

The latter half of the nineteenth century saw the intensification of an island-wide system of interaction, in which the Merina attempted to extend its boundaries, the other groups of the island either resisted or were absorbed, and foreign powers came to play an increasingly important role in the politics of the island. The Merina state had early developed a 'British connection' to counterbalance the more insistent pressure of the French, and since 1817 British officers had helped train the imperial army, members of the London Missionary Society had established an educational system, and a treaty with Britain had recognized the Merina claim to control the island. The most dramatic incident in the developing importance of foreign alliances was the 1869 baptism of Queen, Prime Minister, and much of the royal court into protestant Christianity. This conversion was accompanied by a series of other changes that included the adoption of

32 Covell, Mureen. op.cit., p.4.
34 Ibid. p.34.
‘cabinet government’ with formal ministries and the drafting of a written legal code. A major goal of the changes was to give the kingdom an aura of international respectability that would identify it with other nation-states protected by international law and distinguish it from colonizable ‘savages’. The conversion to Christianity had internal advantages as well. The missionary school system was already closely linked to the monarchy and a major source of its bureaucrats; the adoption of Protestantism as a state religion made possible an even tighter control of the system. However, the strategy also had its costs. Internationally, it aligned the Merina Empire with the British against the French and made the international survival of the state dependent on British goodwill. Internally the change deepened the division of the elite into those identified with the British connection, those who favoured ties with the French and those who rejected such a radical abandonment of the traditional bases of the monarchy. The change also alienated the Catholics in the population and weakened the monarchy’s claim to legitimacy as the summit of a system of traditional ceremonies and the crucial link between the population and the sphere of the sacred.

The Merina empire never achieved its ambition of controlling the whole island. At its height it controlled, in addition to the central province of Imerina, Betsileo territory as far south as Ambalavo, and most of the territory between the plateaux and the east coast. It also controlled the port of Mahajanga and a corridor leading from Imerina to the port, and maintained garrisons at other west, or the diverse groups of the south. Under pressure from the Merina, the Sakava and the other coastal groups developed a countervailing ‘French connection’ that often involved trading recognition of a French protectorate for weapons and other supplies.

The French had claimed jurisdiction over all or part of the island since the beginning of the century, and these claims were pressed with growing insistence under the Third Republic in response to the development of imperialist competition in Europe. A first

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38 Cambell, G. op.cit, p.213-214.
39 Covell, Maureen. op.cit, p.17.
Franco-Malagasy war in 1883-5 ended with important Malagasy concessions\textsuperscript{40}, including an agreement to pay the French government an indemnity of ten million Francs, and after 1885, Merina internal and external politics were dominated by attempts to prevent total subjugation. The weakness and divisions of the Merina elite contributed to the demise of the Merina state, but to a large degree this state and the other states and societies of Madagascar were simply caught in the wave of late nineteenth-century imperialism. Reliance on British protection proved in vain; in 1890 Britain and France signed a treaty exchanging French recognition of British control over Zanzibar for British acceptance of the French claim to Madagascar.\textsuperscript{41} In 1895 the French embarked on another war of conquest, occupied Antananarivo, and declared a protectorate. In 1896 the Merina monarchy was abolished, the Queen was exiled, and a formal law of annexation added Madagascar to France’s colonies.\textsuperscript{42}

2.1.4.1 The Period of French Occupation

The goals of the French colonizers included the destruction of the power of the ‘Merina oligarchy’, the development of a profitable economy, and the location or creation of a group of political intermediaries loyal to the colonial regime. The pursuit of these goals often involved conflicting policies and met with only partial success. The first priority was the dismantling of the Merina state and the destruction of the bases of its elites. The French took over the summit of the state, dissolved the army and reconstituted the administration under French direction\textsuperscript{43}. The economic bases of the oligarchy were undermined by the abolition of slavery and the distribution of land confiscated from opponents of the conquest to former slaves. Measures requiring the use of French in the schools reduced the importance of the Protestant education system, which used Malagasy and English. The economic goals of the colonial power led to the introduction of forced labour, and the seizure of land for distribution to settlers and commercial companies, policies that destroyed any favourable impression created by the abolition of slavery. The first Governor-General, Gallieni, attempted to redress the regional imbalance in education by establishing secondary schools in coastal cities, but his successor closed them as an economic measure. Subsequent institutions such as the medical school at Befelatanana

\textsuperscript{40} Church, R. J. H. \textit{op.cit}, p.453.
\textsuperscript{41} Covell, Mureen. \textit{op.cit}, p.5.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, p.18.
\textsuperscript{43} Kottak, C.P. 1980. \textit{op.cit.}, pp.33-34.
and the Ecole Le Myre de Vilers, established to train Malagasy auxiliaries for the medical service and the administration, were located in Antananarivo.\textsuperscript{44} As a result, the state education system reinforced, rather than counteracted, the regional imbalance of the existing system.

Politically, the French at first attempted to follow what Gallieni called the \textit{politique des races}, a policy of governing the territory through the traditional institutions of each group. This policy met with considerable resistance since local rulers often refused to be turned into subordinates in the French administration system.\textsuperscript{45} In the end, most local authorities were removed and either replaced with more malleable substitutes, or their positions were simply abolished and a policy of direct rule instituted with, at the lower levels of the administration, Merina and to a lesser degree Betsilo officials\textsuperscript{46}. These policies had the effect of exacerbating existing divisions without necessarily having the favorable results the French wanted. The colonizers warned the Malagasy of the dangers of Merina domination, but the concrete result of their policies was a perpetuation of the differences in access to education and state position that modernized the domination and extended it to the whole island.\textsuperscript{47} It was not until after the 1947 rebellion that the French were willing to invest significant resources in the development of regional elites.

\section*{2.1.4.2 Building a Colonial Economy}

French economic policy was designed to make Madagascar a profitable colony for France overall but especially for the two groups most interested in the colonization of the island, the large commercial companies and prospective settlers, mainly from Reunion. A prohibitive tariff ended trade with former partners such as Britain and United States and, at the time of independence in 1960, nearly 75 percent of Madagascar’s trade was with the Franc zone.\textsuperscript{48} A system of monopolies and oligopolies, linked with formal ties of investment in each other and by informal social ties, took over the economy. The Haveraise, which has a monopoly of shipping to and from the island, also had a dominant interest in the two major banks. Three commercial companies, the Marsellaise, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Larson, P.M.\textit{op.cit.}, p.105.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Covell, Maureen. 1987. \textit{op.cit.}, p.19.
\end{itemize}

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Lyonnaise, and the Societe de l'Emyme handled the wholesale end of the export-import trade. Their business practices were to earn them a title of 'the three crocodiles of the island'. Indian and Chinese middlemen formed the link between the producer and the companies. The profits of the system came from trade rather than production, and it was largely based on the control of credit facilities.49

At the bottom of the system, the peasants were often permanently in debt. In agricultural policy the French never decided whether the products whose exports was to provide the basis of the system should be produced by large plantations, small – and – medium- scale settlers, or by the Malagasy themselves50. After the conquest large blocs of land, especially along the east and north coasts were expropriated and granted as larger concessions to the commercial companies and in smaller units to settlers. The concessions never did produce on the scale planned. Some were never exploited and others were abandoned when agricultural depressions led to lesser degree by the companies, since their profits depended on a supply of cheap Malagasy labour, a supply that was contingent on restricting the opportunities to make money elsewhere51.

Infact, the whole system depended on the ability of the colonial bureaucracy to get labour out of an unwilling population. The importance of the issue and the difficulties encountered meant that more ordinances regulating labour were passed in Madagascar than in any other French colony.52 The most direct method of dealing with the problem was forced labour, instituted in 1897 and retained until 1946. Technically the labour was to be used for 'works of general interest' but often, through various semi-legal or illegal arrangements, it was used to provide settlers and plantation managers with unpaid workers. A poll tax and taxes on houses and cattle were also imposed, in order to 'liberate' a work-force by creating a need for money. Famine in the south and food deficits in areas of expropriation and cash crop production also drove people to seek

employment outside their regions. French economic policy not only created a classic, dominated and dependent colonial economy in Madagascar, it also created a variety of economic regions. The east and north coasts were regions of cash crop production with food deficits. The south was increasingly impoverished and served as a pool of unskilled labour that migrated all over the island, but particularly to the plantations of the north and the ports of Antseranana and Toamasina. By the 1950s between 25 percent and 50 percent of its active male population was outside the region, depending on the time of year and local circumstances the plateau were also a labour reserve, but of educated labour for the lower levels of the colonial administration. They furnished some rice for the food deficits areas, but in general neither agriculture nor industry received much attention. The plateau’s higher standard of living came from administrative salaries and services provided to the European community of Antananarivo. The west was most isolated regions, and was also undeveloped, but not as impoverished as the south.

Another result of the imposition of the colonial system was the introduction of the new bases of division and complication of old patterns of stratification. In rural areas, the French administration followed a variety of policies designed to identify and reward local intermediaries, usually grouped under the general term of notable. Their privileges were not always great, but even being appointed to organize rather than being obliged to participate in a forced labour group had its rewards. The significance of notable status became even greater after 1947 when the colonial administration began to expend more resources on this group. Agricultural ‘development’ policies singled them out, and educational opportunities and posts in the administration went to their children. In areas like the southeastern coast, a class of Malagasy planters developed as did a class of small-scale merchants.

The situation on the plateau was more complicated. Merina adriana and hova had collectively lost power but maintained it on an individual basis as they continued in or moved into administrative and commercial opportunities. Wealthier families lost the part

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55 Ibid., p.23.
56 Leys, C. *op.cit.*,p.23.
of their wealth that was in the form of slaves, but via the sharecropping system were able to maintain much of the essence of this source of wealth. Several maintained and added to their position by moving into small-scale commerce and liberal professions such as pharmacy and medicine⁵⁹. Freed slaves usually still economically dependent and the introduction of forced labour and heavy taxes only increased this dependency. Individual mainty and andevo did move up in the system as local authorities and agents at lower levels of the administration, but if anything the difference between a freemen and former slave grew during the colonial period as members of free castes moved into cities and continued to benefit from the restricted educational opportunities.⁶⁰

By the time of independence, Madagascar had gained the reputation of being a ‘docile’ colony. However, an examination of the political history of the colonial period shows a continuing resistance that culminated in the revolt of 1947, and a continued countervailing repression. It was this repression and in particular the trauma of 1947 that were responsible for the docility of 1958. Armed resistance to the imposition of colonial rule occurred throughout the island. The revolt of the menalamba, whose goal was the replacement of the new foreign rulers with a purified Merina monarchy, lasted from 1895-1897.⁶¹ The south was not ‘pacified’ until 1904. After attempts at primary resistance had been defeated, anti-colonial movements continued, but in what Munslow terms ‘unequal but parallel’ fashion, and with little contact with each other ⁶² At the village level there was both tacit and overt resistance to intrusions of state power, while in the cities, and particularly among the educated, there were demands first for inclusion in the state and later for the return of state power to Malagasy hands. The two sets of activity did not connect in any real sense until 1947, when their interactions gave the revolt much of its force and complexity.⁶³

The colonial period was also punctuated by sporadic peasant revolts and open resistance to specific laws and administrative acts: Land surveys that were seen as preludes to expropriation, tax collection in times of famine, abusive individual administrators. These revolts occurred in isolation from each other and, given the balance of forces, were easily

⁶⁰ ibid.
⁶² ibid.
⁶³ Covell, Maureen. op.cit., p.22.
controlled. The French brought in series of laws designed to deal with the problem: the *indigenat*, pre-publication censorship of newspapers in languages other than French that included a blanket interdiction of all discussion of local politics; and the banning of meetings other than family and traditional gatherings. In general, any activity likely to have a 'disturbing' effect on public opinion was forbidden.64

The tension, however, was building up. It culminated into a major revolt in 1947 by the armed groups of Malagasies. They attacked French administrative centers, French-owned plantations and Malagasies considered to be collaborators of the French regime along the east coast and in parts of the eastern plateaux. It was December 1948 before the revolt was completely repressed, and by then over 50,000 people had died, either as a direct result of the fighting or from hunger and exposure as the inhabitants of whole villages fled into the eastern forest to escape the danger. The repression was severe, and in many parts of the coast the state of siege was not lifted until 1956. In 1958, Madagascar was given the option of joining the French community. But it opted for independence. In 1960, Madagascar finally gained independence from the colonial rule of France.

2.1.5 Independence and After

Madagascar's first President, Philibert Tsiranana, was elected when his Social Democratic Party gained power at independence in 1960 and was re-elected without opposition in March 1972. However, he resigned only 2 months later in response to massive antigovernment demonstrations. The unrest continued, and Tsiranana's successor, Gen. Gabriel Ramanantsoa, resigned on February 5, 1975, handing over executive power to Lt. Col. Richard Ratsimandrava, who was assassinated 6 days later. A provisional military directorate then ruled until a new government was formed in June 1975, under Didier Ratsiraka.65

During the 16 subsequent years of President Ratsiraka's rule, Madagascar continued under a government committed to revolutionary socialism based on the 1975 Constitution establishing a highly centralized state. During this period a strategy of nationalization of private enterprises, centralization of the economy and "Malagasization" of the education

64 Keswani, D.G. 1980. *op.cit.*, p.34.
system crippled the economy, leaving traces even today of a highly centralized economic system and a high level of illiteracy. National elections in 1982 and 1989 returned Ratsiraka for a second and third 7-year presidential term. For much of this period, only limited and restrained political opposition was tolerated, with no direct criticism of the president permitted in the press.\textsuperscript{66}

With an easing of restrictions on political expression, beginning in the late 1980s, the Ratsiraka regime came under increasing pressure to make fundamental changes. In response to a deteriorating economy, Ratsiraka relaxed socialist economic policies and instituted some Liberal, private-sector reforms. These, along with political reforms like the elimination of press censorship in 1989 and the formation of more political parties in 1990, were insufficient to placate a growing opposition movement known as Hery Velona ("Active Forces").\textsuperscript{67} A number of already existing political parties and their leaders, among them Albert Zafy and Manandafy Rakotonirina, anchored this movement which was especially strong in Antananarivo and the surrounding high plateau.

In response to largely peaceful mass demonstrations and crippling general strikes, Ratsiraka replaced his prime minister in August 1991 but suffered an irreparable setback soon thereafter when his troops fired on peaceful demonstrators marching on Iavoloha, the suburban presidential palace, killing more than 30.\textsuperscript{68}

In an increasingly weakened position, Ratsiraka acceded to negotiations on the formation of a transitional government. The resulting "Panorama Convention" of October 31, 1991, stripped Ratsiraka of nearly all of his powers, created interim institutions, and set an 18-month timetable for completing a transition to a new form of constitutional government. The High Constitutional Court was retained as the ultimate judicial arbiter of the process.\textsuperscript{69}

In March 1992, a widely representative National Forum organized by the FFKM (Malagasy Christian Council of Churches) drafted a new Constitution. Troops guarding the proceedings clashed with pro-Ratsiraka "federalists" who tried to disrupt the forum in

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, p.227.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
protest of draft constitutional provisions preventing the incumbent president from running again. The text of the new Constitution was put to a nationwide referendum in August 1992\textsuperscript{70} and approved by a wide margin, despite efforts by federalists to disrupt balloting in several coastal areas.

Presidential elections were held on November 25, 1992, after the High Constitutional Court had ruled, over Hery Velona objections, that Ratsiraka could become a candidate. Runoff elections were held in February 1993, and the leader of the Hery Velona movement, Albert Zafy, defeated Ratsiraka. Zafy was sworn in as President on March 27, 1993\textsuperscript{71}. After President Zafy's impeachment by the National Assembly in 1996 and the short quasi-presidency of Norbert Ratsirahonana, the 1997 elections once again pitted Zafy and Ratsiraka, with Ratsiraka this time emerging victorious. A National Assembly dominated by members of President Ratsiraka's political party AREMA subsequently passed the 1998 Constitution, which considerably strengthened the presidency.

In December 2001, a presidential election was held in which both major candidates claimed victory. The Ministry of the Interior declared incumbent Ratsiraka of the AREMA (Association for the Rebirth of Madagascar) party victorious. Marc Ravalomanana contested the results and claimed victory. A political crisis followed in which Ratsiraka supporters cut major transport routes from the primary port city to the capital city, a stronghold of Ravalomanana support. Sporadic violence and considerable economic disruption continued until July 2002 when Ratsiraka and several of his prominent supporters fled to exile in France. In addition to political differences, ethnic differences played a role in the crisis and continue to play a role in politics. Ratsiraka is from the coastal Betsimisaraka tribe and Ravalomanana comes from the highland Merina tribe.\textsuperscript{72}

After the end of the 2002 political crisis, President Ravalomanana began many reform projects, forcefully advocating "rapid and durable development" and the launching of a battle against corruption. December 2002 legislative elections gave his newly formed TIM (Tiako-I-Madagasikara) (I Love Madagascar) Party a commanding majority in the

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
National Assembly. November 2003 municipal elections were conducted freely, returning a majority of supporters of the president, but also significant numbers of independent and regional opposition figures.  

Tension since was generally associated with elections. A presidential election took place in December 2006 with some protests over worsening standards of living, despite a government drive to eradicate poverty. Calls by a retired army general in November 2006 for Ravalomanana to step down were said to have been 'misinterpreted' as a coup attempt.

2009 Malagasy Protests

The latest, and ongoing, spate of violence pitted then-President Marc Ravalomanana against Andry Rajoelina, former mayor of the capital, Antananarivo. Since the power tussle started on 26 January, more than 100 lives had been lost. Rajoelina mobilized his supporters to take to the streets of Antananarivo to demand Ravalomanana's ousting on the grounds of his alleged "autocratic" style of government. Ravalomanana resigned on 17 March.  

The European Union, amongst other international entities, has refused to recognize the new government, due to it being installed by force. The African Union, which proceeded to suspend Madagascar's membership on 20 March and the Southern Africa Development Community both criticized the forced resignation of Ravalomanana. United Nations Secretary- General Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson said he is "gravely concerned about the evolving developments in Madagascar".

2.2 Indian Diaspora under French Rule

Medieval Arab sources speak of colonies of south Asian merchants that flourished along the Indian Ocean littoral. From the 9th century onwards, traders from India frequented the coasts of Oman, Socotra and Aden. The southwest Indian Ocean islands were also mentioned by 11th century writers such as Al-Biruni under names like Al-Wakwak and

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73 Ibid.
74 http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE52K0IN20090321
75 Ibid.
Kumair, but how and when the first Hindu and Muslim traders from India arrived off these shores is unclear. Travel accounts from the 1600s note the existence of commercial contacts between western Indian ports and Madagascar, and recent archaeological excavations have uncovered jewels and pearls believed to have originated from Cambay in Gujarat. Pirate captures of Mughal shipping led to the dissemination of Indian treasures and the offloading of Indian shiphands at their various island ports of call, but it is with the colonization of the region by European settlers from the 17th century onwards that the first recorded migration of Indian labour to the southwest Indian Ocean occurs.

Unlike the Mascarene and Seychelles island groups where most Indians arrived as slaves or indentured labourers, the Indian presence in modern Madagascar is predominantly the result of free immigration. Many came as artisans or skilled workers and shifted to trade after reaching their destination. A significant number were migrants who had already spent time in the Mascarenes or elsewhere in the region. This was migration driven by the search for opportunities, rather than forced mobilization or an escape from desperate socio-economic conditions. These small agglomerations of individual adventures escaped the official record until well into the 20th century. Although they are tiny minorities on their respective islands of settlement, the overseas Indians of Madagascar have an economic influence which far outweighs their numbers.

French accounts of Madagascar and Anjouan reveal that small trading communities were already present on these islands by the late 18th century. In 1775, Mayeur noted that Indians of Surat traded with northwestern Madagascar and also with Imerina (Fianarantsoa) Dumaine found a well-established settlement of Indians in Manjuga, with their own mosque, when he visited in 1792. He asserted that Surat merchants sent two large ships loaded with textiles to Madagascar each year, which they traded for tortoiseshell, silver, slaves and other goods. Other sources cite the organization of caravans by Indian merchants to trade with Tananarive, within Madagascar itself.

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81 *Ibid*
By the mid-19th century, British and American traders were taking advantage of the presence of resident Indian merchants to establish profitable commercial voyages themselves. One of the best sources for this period is the account of an English merchant, J.S. Leigh, who spent several months in Majunga during 1837-39 and described his social and business interactions with Muslim Banians. In 1870 there were around fifty Indians residing at Manjunga and a similar number at Mayotte (formerly part of the Comoros). The establishments of sugar plantations on the latter islands were employed in sugar production rather than in commercial activities.

2.2.1 Image of Indians in the Colonial rule

The colonial literature in the form of administrative reports presents a certain image of Indians. For French colonisers, Indians were the subjects of rival country England. Indians were suspected in many ways. Indian Muslims were often suspected of collaboration with the Arabs. They saw Indians sometimes as people of the country and sometimes as foreigners. Indians were tossed between their foreigner status, as British subjects, and their resident situation in Madagascar.

Thus, French viewed Indians with suspicion. Their links with British India led General Joseph Simon Gelliieni to attribute the insurrection of 1898-99 in the north-west to the Indians, Comorians and other Muslims, perhaps acting with support from England.

Many French accounts recognized the trading zeal of Indian merchants. According to one such accounts, Indians were 'sober, industrious, economical, clever traders....they monopolize trade. Their trading tactics include buying low price rice and reselling it at an expensive rate later. They are parasite and nothing more'.

This ambiguous attitude of French regarding Indian community must be understood in the context of social and political relations. They had just subdued an island whose political unity was far from being achieved. The Merinas of central kingdom had expanded their territory, but the coastal regions were areas of rebellion and resistance,

83 Ibid.
85 Lal, Brij V. et al. op.cit.,p.277.
which the French faced for many years. They had to promptly identify allies, to assess loyalties, to find auxiliaries to the colony project. Yet, the French mistrusted English and Muslims in general. The Indians, as British subjects and many of them Muslims, were considered as enemies, competitors, scapegoats and were often talked of by the colonizers to the Malagasy as Foreign body of exploiters.

Notwithstanding, the negative view about the Indians, the French colonial administration also recognized the special place that Indians had in the development of the country. Indians, due to their hard work and remarkable resistance to climate, were considered very helpful in continuous flow of goods into the remotest villages. They acted as agents of distribution. Indians were considered as race having varied skills.

Indians on their part were neutral and pragmatic. Their primary concern was their business. Therefore, they were always on the side of power. They could be blamed only for getting rounds with financial laws; otherwise Indian community maintained a low profile and never engaged in any revolutionary activities against the government.

By the end of the 19th century, some 300 Indians had settled along the northern, eastern and western coasts of Madagascar and controlled the retail trade in several towns. 87

Many personalities of Indian community were recognized as loyal servants of the administration. Their goodwill was rewarded from time to time. In 1948, Fusul Cassam Chennai was made Chevalier of the order of the state of Anjouan. In 1949, he was made officer de l ‘Etoile de la Grande Comore. 88

2.2.2 Economic Life of Indian diaspora under French colonial rule

As has been mentioned earlier that Madagascar represents a special case because this is one of few countries where Indians came as independent workers, without contract, free and spontaneous way to conduct business. Indians in Madagascar came as traders, most of them coming from Gujarat Bombay belt of India and from a caste that is famous in India for its commercial and trading skills - the Banias. Trade and shop-keeping became

the principal occupations of the Indians. The majority of the Indians, both Hindu and Muslims, took to trade, commerce and shop-keeping, which continued to be the pursuits of their descendents.

The People of Indian Origin (PIOs), being mostly traders, are heavily concentrated in towns and small trading settlement. A high degree of urbanization forms an important characteristic of the Indian population. This Indian Urban pattern, which stands out conspicuously against the rural African background and which is in marked contrast to the social pattern of the Indians in British Guyana, West Indies, Fiji Islands and to a lesser extent in South Africa, is the result of certain restrictions imposed on the economic activities of the Indian settlers and is consequently founded on the economic factors. Unlike the European settlers and natives, the Indians have been precluded since the early days of their settlement, from acquiring extensive land rights. Deprived of any opening in the agricultural sector, they turned more to the urban and commercial enterprises. Such commercial leanings, favoured and sustained by the circumstances that did not allow the Indians to own and acquire cultivable land on an extensive scale. However, nothing could prevent them from maintaining commercial transactions with the natives living in rural areas.

2.2.2.1 Trade and Commercial Methods and Networks

Indian merchants used to travel in caravans, carrying goods for exchange. Earlier barter system was used. Indian textiles were exchanged for Gold. Gold was the most sought after exchange commodity, as the demand for gold was quite high in the Indian market. Indian ships used to come on mainly west coast and very rarely on the east coast. Boats and ships of all sizes were used for carrying commercial vessels. Ships were downloaded on the bay of Majunga. After that, Indian merchants took them in interior in order to exchange them with a costly item. Even the goods from the French ships on the bay of Majunga were taken in to the interiors up to two hundred kilometres by the Indian Merchants. According to Dr. Catat, Indians were responsible for supplying goods up to Antaloatra. With Industrial revolution European markets were flooded with factory

made goods and textiles. At that time, Indian merchants, who acclimatized easily, became the agent of distribution. They supplied the goods in the interior of the country. This is how Indian merchants monopolised trade in Madagascar.

Grandidier has made some observations about how Indians established their trade networks in Madagascar. He called this a chain migration, whereby, first one merchant would come and establish an agency and then he would call his sons and other people from his clan or his village of origin. He was responsible for their acts in Madagascar. According to Grandidier, Indians controls most of the retail trading. They had remarkable trading capacity. They sold their goods at a price lower than that of smaller European traders, as they did not lead a luxurious life. They fed on rice, work barefoot and sleep under the stars. They are grouped into ‘brotherhood’. Some of the Indian trading houses by 1905 came at the same level as European Trading Houses.92

2.2.2.2 Gold

If one asks a question what attracted Indians in this distant and isolated island of Madagascar, the answer would be gold. It was gold that attracted the Indian merchant class. Gold has always been in great demand in India and Indian traders always wanted to make gold as one of the items in the barter system. Earlier, textiles from India were exchanged with gold. According to geographer J.P. Raisons, sometimes Indians acquired gold in exchange of weapons around the present Dabolava.93

Gradually, the trade in gold came entirely in the hands of Indians. It became quite a lucrative trade. Indians shipped most of the gold to Bombay where sometimes they used to get a price much higher than the price in Europe. The principle markets where gold was bought were Morovoay or Mahajamba, and Madirovalo,

2.2.2.3 Development of the Colony and the Indian Work Force

Indian labourers were recruited to work on construction of Railways and Road networks. In 1896-97 labourers from India were recruited to work on construction of road in East Madagascar and then in 1901 for railways. However, most of them left after the

92 Ibid
93 Ibid, p.144
completion of contract. In 1899, Moonsamy, a Tamil immigrant, asked for assistance to leave Madagascar and return to India, and around the same time a request was made to British consul at Tamatave to send Bibi Nageea – born on Mauritius to Indian parents – and her children back to Mauritius as deck passengers. There were many deaths and desertion and survivors were repatriated. In 1901 around 5000 Indians were recruited from Pondicherry. Two-thirds died within few months and those who survived the harsh conditions were repatriated. It was a fiasco and it seemed difficult to repeat the experience.

The next attempt took place in 1902. It happened with the initiative of the administrator-mayor of Majunga and the head of the Khoja community – Nathoo Premji. However, they met with same fate. Many died due to malaria and deadly fever. They died in large numbers and survivors returned.

Thus, labourers recruited from India do not constitute the present population of PIOs in Madagascar.

2.3 Assimilation and Identity

The PIOs in Madagascar appear as a homogenous group from outside. They never assimilated with the native Malagasies nor even tried to. This could be because Indians considered their culture as superior. However, within them there are veritable mosaics of socio-cultural groups and appear as a much diversified heterogenous groups. Among the Muslims who constitute the majority, there are four sects- the Bohras, Khojas, Ismailis and Sunnis are the poorest. Among the Hindus, there are the Sonis (Goldsmiths) who constitute the largest number, the Lohanas or Baniyas and a small number of Brahmins.

2.3.1 Social Structure of PIOs

In Madagascar, the Indian community is distributed into five socio religious groups

Muslims are divided into two: Sias and Sunnis

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96 *Ibid*.
There are three groups of Shiaa

- Khoja ithna asheri: believers to the twelve imams
- Khoja ismaili: followers of Agha khan
- Bohras Daoodi believers to the seven imams or ‘Ismail’ with difference about succession of the representative of imams

Sunni Muslims

- There is one group of Sunni Muslims, with specification of geographic origin (Surti, Sindhi or Kutchi) or of their ancient work group in India, the jati (the sunni “khumbar” were Hindu Potters before becoming Muslims)
- One group of Hindu religion
  They are divided into following sub castes
  - The Brahmins: caste of priests and holders of religious knowledge. However, today Brahmins are also engaged in business
  - Wania: The caste of traders. Wania are further subdivided into Shahs, Lohanaa, and Sonis (Jewllers)
  - Dargee: the caste tailors
  - Soutar: Carpenters
  - Khumbar: caste of potters, most of those who came to Madagascar were converted to Sunni Islam
  - Motchi: The caste of cobblers

Muslims in Madagascar are all Gujarati speaking Indians having their original home in the coastal belt of Western India. Among these four sects: Bohras, Khojas, Ismailis and Sunnis, it is the Ismaili Khojas who predominates. The followers of H.H. Agha Khan, the Ismaili Khojas were originally Hindu traders living in the upper Sind area of the north-west India. Their immigration in considerable strength from Kutch, Surat and Bombay since the 19th century, led to a steady and respectable swelling of Khoja population. Possibly more than any other Indian group, the ismaili Khojas produce an increasing number of well-educated young men and women who fit easily into modern society. They are indeed, the most thoroughly modernized, the female members of the sect wearing western dress.98

All these Muslim Sects have their own mosque in almost all important Malagasy towns. They have separate places of worship.

Similarly, Hindus constitutes Sonnis (Goldsmiths), Lohana and few Brahmins. However, Hindus do not maintain separate places of worship. In Tananarive, there is only one temple, where Hindus from all caste come together and worship. 99

2.3.2 Social designation of Indians in Malagasy society: Nomenclature – Karana and other terms

All People of Indian Origin are called as ‘Karana’ in Madagascar. Although the term more specifically denotes Indian Muslims, the Hindus and Muslims are together known as karana.

The term ‘Karana’ has a pejorative meaning reflecting the negative feeling often developed towards them. Sometimes, Hindus are called as ‘Baniyas’ to distinguish them from Muslim trading class.

The origin of the term ‘karana’ is ambiguous. In Bengali, Karani or Kirani terms were designated to English knowing secretaries. Karana or Karany is also referred to Quran (Quaran is pronounced as ‘Kurani’ in Swahili).

Sometimes PIOs are also designated by names of their nationality – Indians and Pakistanis or ‘Indo-Pakistani’ or ‘Indo-Malagasy’.

2.3.3 Protection of Identity

Unlike Britain, France has always followed the policy of assimilation in their colonies. French ruled their colonies as extension of their empire. Under this policy the subject population was to be fully acculturated in the mainstream French culture in terms of language and culture. French influence is clearly seen in its ex-colonies. However, Indian community in Madagascar is an exception. PIOs in Madagascar have retained their identity, through strict marriage laws, practice of religion, rituals and Festivals. Language, food and tastes also points to rejection of any kind of assimilation by the Indian community with the Malagasy society and culture.

2.3.3.1 Marriage

Marriage is strictly endogamous in nature. Indians marry within their community. Hindus, with the march of time, tended to grow less particular about the observance of the traditional Indian caste system. The intermarriages among the Gujarati Hindu community is quite common. The Indian community of Madagascar, particularly the more advanced sections of it, appears to have developed a modern outlook on caste by overcoming the prejudices usually associated with it. Caste seems to have less hold on the Hindus in Madagascar than on other countries like South Africa. The reasons are not far to seek. According to Hariprasad Chattopadhyaya, the Brahmins are usually ascribed a conservative social outlook and are looked upon as mighty props supporting the structure of orthodox caste system. The grip of caste tends to be feeble where the Brahmins are scarce. There are very few Brahmins in Madagascar. Again, the Indian traders cannot avoid social contact with the customers of different religious faiths in connection with their trade. Such a social contacts arising out of trade relations and commercial transactions necessitated participation in social entertainments and dinner parties. Rigid caste system has thus tended to breakdown among the Indians in Madagascar.

Notwithstanding the above statement, marriage with Muslim or a Malagasy is not allowed. The Gujarati Hindu community is liberal to the extent of marriage within the Gujarati Hindu community.

However, among Muslims, Bohras can marry only to Bohras not to Khojas or Ismaili and vice versa. They have followed this rule religiously. Though there are incidents of inter-caste marriage and also marriage between a Hindu and a Muslim, yet such marriages are not encouraged. This limitation on marriage has led poorer section to remain either unmarried or to take a Malagasy wife. Children born from such union are not given same status and are considered as half caste. The distant attitude toward the half caste children reveal how exclusive is their identity, grounded on a set of norms based on race, religion and culture. Half castes are not recognised as Indians. They suffer a lot because of this situation.

\[100\] Ibid.
Marriageable age is very low. It is between eighteen and twenty one. Among Muslims, girls are sometimes married between the ages of fourteen- sixteen. This is because parents want to arrange marriage of their children themselves. This is one of the ways how Indian community maintains its social exclusiveness.

Due to this social exclusiveness, matrimonial choice is restricted for all Indian families, and call upon international community networks. One of them is formed by East-African countries and United Kingdom, especially for Shias communities {Bohras, Khojas ithna Asheri and khoja Ismailli] but they are sometimes cautious, because they experience the cultural differences with English – speaking families living in East- African countries, . So they use another network formed by Reunion and Mauritius islands and France.

2.3.3.2 Rituals, Religious Festivals

In general, it has been seen that the attitude of Indian immigrants towards their religion is favourable since immigration. One of the possible explanations may be that religion acts as a psychological connection with the home country in an alien society. Another change one observes is that the Indian immigrants tend to look at the religion more as ideology than as a set of strict dogmas and prescriptions. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily result in a decrease in religious observation and practice. Most Indian families have a place of worship at their homes. They also visit temples, churches, mosques and gurudwaras and participate in all forms of religious activity. One can support the hypothesis that religious activity among Indian emigrants has not declined as a result of immigration. On the contrary, there is a greater religious consciousness and a need to practice religious rituals individually as well as communally101.

The social life of Indians in Madagascar revolves largely around Mosques and Temples. Majority of Indians in Madagascar are Muslims. They are extremely religious. Despite French Policy of ‘Assimilation’, Indian community in Madagascar has been able to maintain strong religious identity. Conversion to Christianity is not practiced and is also looked down upon. Unlike, Indians in other French colonies (for example: Reunion-where Indians have converted into Christianity, have taken French ways of life, have even changed their names), Indians in Madagascar strongly uphold their religious

identity. Maintaining this identity has remained and today also is a challenge among the Indian Community.

Rituals followed by Indian settlers are same as followed in India. The marriage, birth of a child, death rituals etc. are exactly same as followed in India. Malagasies are not allowed to participate in the rituals. Marriage is an expensive business. Dowry system prevails, though it is condemned by the younger generation. Death ritual is unchanged, though simplified.

All religious festivals are celebrated especially ID, Navaratri and Diwali. Malagasies are never invited. Indians maintain exclusiveness while celebrating these festivals. Festivals are celebrated with much pomp and fair. Indian community gathers at one place and then all the ceremonies are performed together.

2.3.3.3 Language, Food and Taste

Gujarati is the first language of Indian community of Madagascar. It is strictly spoken at home. Children are educated in the French medium but they are not allowed to speak in French or Malagasy at home. Indians, in general, speak three languages: Gujarati, Malagasy and French. Children pick up Malagasy from their Malagasy servants. Women too learn Malagasy while working with Malagasy servants. Growing up in French culture, Gujarati is still the first language of the Indian community. In fact, some old Gujarati words that may have disappeared from the language in India are still in their vocabulary. This strict adherence to Gujarati language shows Indian community’s strong desire to maintain ethnic identity. Similarly with food, Gujarati food is served. Almost all Hindu families are pure vegetarian and children are also forced to follow it.

2.3.3.4 Education

Education was up till now sadly absent among the Indian community in Madagascar. They are many reasons for this lack of education among the Indian Community. One of the most important reasons is the strong desire of maintaining ethnic identity and resisting any kind of intermingling with the native population. Most girls are married by the time they are 16 or 17 and hardly even finish their schooling so that parents can

control their choice of grooms and will ensure their marriage within the Indian community. After marriage girls are expected to take up household chores and help their husbands in business. As for boys, after completing their schools they look after family shops or business. They are not expected to take up government jobs. Therefore, higher education is not considered essential.

The present generation, however, is concerned about the education of their children. The problem is that they would like their children to study in a French medium school. Good schools are in the capital, Tananarive. Those living in coastal areas are deprived of good education. Very few parents, who could afford used to send their children to France for higher education but now many parents are sending them to India, especially to Bangalore. Families also try to control peer group of the younger ones. Earlier, children were not encouraged to make friends with Malagasies. Now in many families children are allowed to make friends with Malagasies, however, they are not allowed to bring them home.

This phobia of losing ethnic identity, according to Jagat K. Motwani, as is generated in some closed minds, is very harmful, occupationally, socially and psychologically. It psycho-socially paralyzes especially those who are "cultural paranoids", ethnically closed” and “rock rigid”. When a parent becomes paranoid of the host culture and lives in a self-imposed ethnic island, he creates an un-navigable gulf between him and his children who are exposed to the outside world. This ethnic inter-generational conflict within the family produces a severe strain on ethnicity. It generates ethnic guilt on the part of children and ethnic anger on the part of parents.

Thus, Indians in Madagascar live like a clan, keeping all Indian customs; marrying always only amongst their own community and many went back to India to get married so the group become bigger.

2.4 Current Economic and Socio-Political Status of Indian Diaspora

2.4.1 Economic Status

Indians in Madagascar came as traders, most of them coming from Gujarat Bombay belt of India and from a caste that is famous in India for its commercial and trading skills –

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103 Motwani, Jagat k. 1993. 'Migration and Ethnicity' in Motwani, Jagat K. et.al. op.cit.,p.58.
the Banias. The economic importance of PIOs in Madagascar far outweighs their number. According to the L.M. Singhvi’s Report on Indian Diaspora, Indians in Madagascar controls around 50-60% of the economy.\textsuperscript{104} When French left Madagascar, the vacuum was filled by the Karana business houses in the economic field. They are present everywhere. They got hold of Madagascar’s foreign trade. Karanas have made their mark in almost every economic activity – Commercial transport sector, textile companies, Retail sector (between 50-60% of the retail business in Madagascar is controlled by Karanas and almost 90% of the gold shops in Madagascar are owned by Indians).

Despite adverse government policies, PIOs are big owners of Land and real estate in some of the main towns of Madagascar. Malagasies always feared that the PIOs, being much richer than they are, would monopolize all lands. Land (residence) and Decent are the two criteria for Malagasy identity. Under Merina monarchy, it was strictly forbidden to sell any part of Malagasy land to foreigners. During colonial period also, the land was not allowed to be sold to anyone other than Malagasy and French people. But derogations were possible and it benefitted Indians. They used all possible means – legal, illegal to get hold of land. As early as 1920s the colonial government was alarmed by Karanas monopolizing land on west coast. In the 1950s they owned 80% of real estate in Majunga, 75% in Diego –Surez and almost three quarters of the new buildings of Morombe were owned by PIOs.\textsuperscript{105} This alarmed the Malagasy government and since independence subsequent governments have been making land laws harder and harder. However, Indians continue to occupy lands by entering into joint ventures with a member of their community having Malagasy nationality or with the Malagasy political elite interested in business. Thus, Indian businessmen continue to dominate in real estate sector.

Another sector where Indians have made their mark is banking sector. Since colonial times, Indian merchants acted as lenders not only in the urban areas but also in rural side. They acted in almost similar way as moneylenders of India did during colonial period – lending money to poor peasants and taking away their land in case of non repayment. It was possible for the Indian merchants to lend money as they amassed huge capital from their commercial trade. However, this made the PIOs quite unpopular among native

\textsuperscript{104} [www.indiandiaspora.nic.in]  
Malagasy. PIOs are seen as exploiters and at times they become obvious targets of anger of peasants. Although the role of Karanas as money lenders has declined substantially, they continue to do so even today.

Retail Trade is stronghold of Indians in Madagascar. This sector is almost wholly controlled by Indians. They are spread all over Madagascar. One can easily find a shop or a restaurant owned by an Indian anywhere in Madagascar. Even in the remotest area there will be an Indian shop. Among the Hindu PIOs, the soni caste is the most dominant one. They are Jewellers. Almost 90 percent of Gold shops in all major cities of Madagascar are owned by them. One can find in the capital city- Antananarivo- gold streets full of Indian shops.

Even in trade and commerce Indians have made their presence felt. PIOs being clever merchants always made a good rapport with those in Power. This quality made them successful during the Merina rule and also under French Colonial Empire. They made a very good intermediary and played this role in the commercial networks for some big French companies supported by French banks. When French left Madagascar, as mentioned earlier, the vacuum was filled by the Karana business houses. They got hold of Madagascar's foreign trade. They made huge investment in the foreign trade sector. Huge investments from PIOs gave a major boost to Madagascar's export in Vanilla, coffee, sugarcane, clove, cocoa, and livestock products. Madagascar's sources of growth are tourism, textile and light manufacturing exports (notably through the EPZs); agricultural products; and mining. Madagascar is the world's leading producer of vanilla and accounts for about half the world's export market. Several major projects are underway in the mining and oil and gas sectors that, if successful, will give a significant boost to the Malagasy economy. Indians have made huge investments in all these projects.

Thus, PIOs in Madagascar have played and continue to play a major role in Malagasy economy

2.4.2 Socio-Political Status

As against the high economic status, the socio-political status of Indians in Madagascar is quite low. Indians maintain a very low political profile. Indians have always been viewed with suspicion by not only those who were in power but also by Malagasy people.
Despite living for generations, there has been a reluctance on the part of government in power to give them Malagasy nationality. At the time of colonization, some communities, like Khoja ismailies (followers of Agha Khan) were encouraged to ask for the French nationality.

At the time of independence of Madagascar in 1960, one thousand Indians had French nationality. During the first fifteen years, the country gave 255 naturalizations, out of which hundred were Indians. Indians are discriminated while giving nationality as against other foreigners. Although living for many generations, many PIOs have been denied Malagasy citizenship. They need residence permit. They are considered as foreigners and laws on the foreigners regulates their community activities, prohibiting certain professions to them and the acquisition of immovable without prior approval of the public authorities.

There are around 1000 stateless in Madagascar. The US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor reported about the stateless Indians. In 2007, it reported that 'An arcane system of citizenship laws and procedures has resulted in a pool of stateless persons in the minority Muslim community, many of whom have lived in country for generations. Citizenship is transmitted through blood; birth on Malagasy soil does not transmit citizenship. Children born to a Malagasy mother and non-Malagasy father must be declared by a certain age or risk losing eligibility for citizenship. Some members of Indian origin who failed to register for Malagasy or Indian citizenship following India’s independence in 1947 were no longer eligible for either.

Lack of citizenship restricts PIOs to actively engage in political activities of Madagascar. Majority of them do not vote. Very few have managed to get political posts. In 2002, legislative elections, two persons of Indian origin were elected as deputies to the 160 member national Assembly.

Social and cultural exclusiveness practiced by PIOs and their high economic status has made them a hated community. PIOs are seen as exploiters and are victim to any political and civil rest in the country.

106 www.indiandiaspora.nic.in
Anti Indian Riots

The riots of 1987, which made many PIOs to leave the country, started in Antisirabe. PIOs reside in large numbers in Antisirabe, and controlled most of the economic activity. They run most of the larger enterprises and Industry and are therefore the most important employers. However, the Malagasy employees felt that they were being illtreated by their owners. Therefore, an anti Indian feeling started burning. An incident triggered the riot. A Malagasy bought an ice cream from an Indian shop. There was some argument between them and the owner of the shop spat at him. The news went throughout the city. One political party was interested in intensifying a dispute between the Malagasy and PIOs. Then, a well organized riot exploded. Indian business men were attacked. Their stores and houses were burnt. The riots also spread to other cities. In Toliara, on the west Coast, several stores were burnt and damaged. The houses of all the PIOs were attacked. Several Indians were made to flee the country.

There was another riot in Antisirabe in 1994. The riots of January 27th, 1994, which burst in Antsirabè, following a procession of high-school pupils. The Indian families flee towards Tananarive where they take refuge. Many of their properties were freely taken by unruly mobs. Even the lives of Indians were also indiscriminately attempted.

Similarly during Political crisis of 2002, Indians were attacked. In 2002 during national election there was discord between the Ratsiraka and Ravalomanana. Ravalomanana declared himself president. In response, Ratsiraka declared martial law in Antananarivo. Pro-Ratsiraka forces began a systematic campaign targeting the infrastructure of Antananarivo by destroying a bridge at Fatihita. Roadblocks were erected, severely reducing the flow of goods and persons both in and out of the capital with severe economic and serious humanitarian consequences for the entire country. The Ravalomanana Government decided to use force to dismantle the blockade and seize control of the whole country and Ratsiraka left for France. This led to ethnic strife in many parts of Madagascar. Indians were also targeted. The US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and labor, had reported that there were several high profile killings of ‘karana’ during this time; however, these killings appeared to have been more of criminal pursuits rather than political motives.

\[108\] Mondediplo.com/1997/03/01madagascar
\[109\] Ibid
In a recent political crisis on January 26th, 2009, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, to protest against the rule of President Marc Ravalomanana by supporters of his rival Andre Rajoelina, opposition leader and mayor of the capital, Antananarivo. Unrest was sparked at a Rajoelina political rally on 24 January, after calls for a general strike and an end to Ravalomanana's growing "authoritarianism". Rajoelina had also been accusing the government of miss-spending public funds and suppressing press freedom. Demonstrations turned violent on 26 January, when anti-government protesters took to the streets, setting fire to state-owned television and radio stations in an apparent response to the government's previous closure of the mayor's private television station. According to figures released by the Malagasy Ministry of health, 82 people lost their lives and 321 were injured. Mob also looted and burnt many Indian shops in the capital. Police remained the silent spectator.

Kidnapping is also one of the major problems that Indians are facing. The younger ones are most vulnerable. Most of the victims are freed after payment of heavy ransom, around thousands of dollars. However, there are incidents, though few in number where victims are also killed. The social exclusiveness of Indians and refusal to adopt Malagasy culture has been looked with suspicion. Isolated incidents of violence and abuse occur on regular basis.

2.5 Conclusion

The small Indian community of Madagascar is conspicuous by its economic importance. Unlike other countries in the South West Indian Ocean, where most Indians arrived as slaves or indentured labourers, Indians in Madagascar arrived as free traders. Even French accounts reveal that small trading communities were already present on the island by the late 18th century. French viewed Indians with suspicion. Indians, on their part, were neutral and pragmatic. Their primary concern was their business. Therefore, they were always on the side of power. The Indian Community continued to grow and prosper at such a rate that today it controls more than 50% of the country's economy. However, socially and politically, the Indian community maintains a very low profile and never engaged in any kind of revolutionary activities against the government. Nevertheless, the Indian community in Madagascar has been able to retain its identity. They resist any kind

110 http://search.us.reuters.com/query/?q=madagascar&st=70&s=US
of intermingling with the native population. Marriage is strictly endogamous. Rituals and festivals are strictly like those followed in India. Even in language, Gujarati is the first language of the Indian community in Madagascar. French and Malagasy is only a language for business. However, this economic prosperity and social exclusiveness has developed hatred in the minds of Malagasies against the Indian community. As a result, whenever there is political or social tension in the country, Indian Shops are looted and homes are burnt. Despite this, there is no willingness on the part of Indians to return to their homelands. For some, India is a strange and distant land and for others ‘it is easier to make money in Madagascar’!
TABLE 2.1
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PRINCIPAL ETHNIC GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Groups</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merina</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsimisaraka</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsileo</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsimihety</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakalava</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antaisaka</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://encarta.msn.com/fact_631504807/madagascar_facts_and_figures.html