

## **Effects of the Post-independent Political Environment on Hindu-Christian Relations in Kenya**

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**Abstract**

This research covers the post-colonial period of Kenya's history and examines the Hindu-Christian relations during this time. There are certain events which occurred during this period (particularly in the demographic and political spheres) which have in one way or the other influenced or shaped this (Hindu-Christian) relationship. The paper is guided by Abraham Husserl's comment that no religion is an island in itself. The key objectives are as follows: to establish the background to Kenya's post-colonial political environment, to examine current trends in post-independent Hindu-Christian relations, to find out the key political events and their impact on Hindu-Christian relations in post-independent Kenya; to determine the effects of these politically motivated events on Hindu-Christian relations in the post-independence era; and to find out measures that can be taken to counter the negative effects of these events on the Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya. The study assumed a descriptive survey design. Data was collected using literary search and oral interviews conducted through key informants. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. The main argument presented in this paper is that Hindu-Christian relationship in post-colonial Kenya has, to a large extent, been shaped by the post-colonial political environment. However, there are also some underlying factors which also need to be addressed if a lasting and genuinely well-intended and mutually enriching relationship between Hindus and Christians is to be achieved in this country.

**Key words**

One-party democracy, multi-party democracy, satyagraha, caste system.

**1 Introduction**

It is evident that Kenya's political independence in 1963 came after a prolonged freedom struggle against the colonial government. This struggle was spearheaded by the Mau Mau fighters who buttressed the emergence and realization of African nationalism in this country. There were, however, some Asians (including some Hindus) who supported Kenya's struggle for political independence (Salvadori 1989: 305).

African consciousness was, however, instrumental in determining the structure and style of political administration in the independent Kenya. According to Galia Sabar (2002), the period immediately following the attainment of independence was predominantly characterized by a major drive to Africanize all institutions in the country because the instruments of government were now in the hands of Africans and it was felt that the same (process of Africanisation) should be extended to other areas of public and private life in Kenya. The post-independent political environment in Kenya was, especially in its initial stages, dominated by the drive towards africanising all the key national institutions.

**2 Background to Kenya's post-independent political environment**

Kenya, upon gaining her independence from Great Britain in 1963, was ruled by Jomo Kenyatta, the founding president of the nation. Kenyatta's rule ended with his death in 1978, and President Daniel arap Moi ascended to power. Both Kenyatta and Moi are criticized for doing little or nothing to deal with the problem of tribalism in Kenya; a problem that has continued to affect this country up to the present time (Patel 2011). It is lamentable that tribalism is a vice that has spread to even within the auspices of religious institutions such as churches and temples.

Upon independence, Kenya adopted an American-styled multiparty democracy under the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) and Kenya African National Union (KANU). In 1969, the country was, transformed into a *de facto* one-party state and KANU became the sole legal party in Kenya. This move was ostensibly aimed at uniting Kenyans since multi-party democracy was

viewed as potentiating inter-ethnic squabbles. It was the fear of the Kenyatta-Moi regime, that multi-party democracy could heighten inter-racial and inter-tribal animosity within the country, hence the reason for its disbandment. The Kenyan people, however, became even more ethnically divided during the entire period of the one-party political system, something that has created a favourable political atmosphere for ethnically-instigated inter-communal chaos that often erupt during and around the time of the General Elections. In 1991, however, President Moi submitted to internal and external pressure for political liberalization to reinstate multi-party democracy. Religious leaders were among the leading figures who actively lobbied for the restoration of multi-party democracy in post-colonial Kenya. The second multi-party democracy general elections were held in 1992 whereby the ethnically polarized opposition parties failed to dislodge KANU from power. The same feat was to be repeated in the 1997 General Elections. The ruling party KANU led by president Moi won the presidency in the two national elections which were marred by violence and malpractice. President Moi stepped down in December 2002, following a constitutional amendment –one that limited the presidential term to only ten years. During the same year, presidential elections were held and Mwai Kibaki, a former vice president, won the General Election and his party, National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), formed the government. The KANU candidate Uhuru Kenyatta was second and became the Official Opposition Leader. In a surprising twist of fate, Uhuru was later to succeed Kibaki as president during the 2013 General Elections. He has also won a reelection in the just concluded 2017 General Election. It was during Kibaki's regime, however, that the process of redrafting Kenya's national constitution gained momentum.

There was widespread suspicion, however, that the president and his cronies were trying to influence the process so as to realize a constitution that could favour their vested interests. The NARC government, thus, became increasingly unpopular as the constitutional review exercise progressed.

Kibaki's NARC coalition split in 2005 over the constitutional review process where government defectors joined with KANU to form a new opposition coalition, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). This coalition, which was later transformed into a political party, defeated the government's draft constitution in a popular referendum, held in November 2005 (World Fact book, 2008).

In the 2007 general election, president Kibaki and his newly formed coalition party, Party for National Unity (PNU) was bided against the ODM candidate Raila Odinga. Mwai Kibaki won the fiercely contested election but there were claims of massive vote rigging which led to widespread violence. There was fear that the violence could lead to a political crisis and the international community was compelled to intervene so as to prevent the situation from getting worse. A team, led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan was dispatched into the country to oversee the interparty negotiations between the key political players, in the hope of solving the crisis. Through the efforts of this team, a negotiated deal was finally signed by the two principle political leaders, President Mwai Kinaki of PNU and Mr. Raila Odinga, of ODM, who became the Prime Minister. The two came together to form the grand coalition government that was mandated to run the government until the next general elections, that were held on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2013.

In 2010, the country, for a second time, conducted a national referendum on the proposed new constitution, which had since undergone major amendments. Unlike 2005 when the draft was defeated, the second attempt proved fruitful and the new constitution was overwhelmingly passed by Kenyans. The 2010 draft, unlike the government-supported 2005 version, was viewed by majority of the Kenyan citizens as generally reflecting the will of the people, hence the

overwhelming support it elicited. One of the most significant outcome of the new constitutional dispensation is the provision for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Under this provision, all Kenyans, despite their racial, political or religious affiliations, are to enjoy certain universally accepted human rights. These basic human rights include freedom of association as well as freedom of worship.

Among the requirements stated in the new constitution is the establishment of various public institutions and the reformation of other existing ones –a move aimed at introducing a more transparent approach in the operations of state machinery. In line with this requirement, various institutions were created especially the Supreme Court (SC) and the Constitutional Implementation Commission (CIC). Some of the existing public institutions that were reformed to render them more effective in service delivery include the police force, which is now headed by an Inspector-General (previously it was run by a Police Commissioner), and the Elections body, which is now the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). It is important to note here that the election malpractices that led to the 2007 violence were largely blamed on the partiality of the then electoral body, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). In the just concluded 2017 General Elections, there were claims, mainly the opposition coalition National Super Alliance (NASA), that the IEBC was compromised to release erroneous election results, though the Kenyan government and most national and international observers have already applauded this year's election as being largely free, fair and credible.

It is estimated that about 1000 people lost their lives while nearly 600,000 were displaced from their homes, as a result of the 2007 post-election violence. Among those affected by this phase of political violence were some Kenyan Hindus. Six suspects were charged at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for orchestrating crimes against humanity. The six include Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, who later became President and Deputy President respectively. Others are Hussein Ali, Henry Kosgey, Francis Muthaura and Joshua Arap Sang. All the suspects have since been acquitted (BBC website, 8/11/16). While the cases were in progress, the government made various unsuccessful attempts to have the criminal proceedings against the president and his deputy dropped or the court sessions relocated to within East Africa, a move that elicited some significant support from the African Union Heads of State (BBC Web, 2013). That effort did not bear any fruits and the cases against the six Kenyans proceeded without any interruptions. All the cases were later dropped for varying reasons, principal of which were lack of sufficient evidence and sudden withdrawal of witnesses.

### **3 Major Post-colonial political events**

There are various major post-colonial political events that have had some bearing on the life of Asian immigrants in Kenya. Salvadori (1989) writes that in 1968, the government issued a decree that all persons living in Kenya by the eve of the Independence Day were to be issued with Kenyan citizenship, if they so wished. This meant that even Indian nationals were at liberty to take up Kenyan citizenship as long as they fulfilled the stipulated conditions. Some dual citizenship was disallowed, hence most Asians decided to retain their Indian citizenship.

In 1978, another occurrence was witnessed when the trade restriction law was enacted that barred non-citizens from operating in rural towns. This affected Asian business people in two ways. First, most of them had opted to retain Indian citizenship rather than seize the 1968 government offer for Kenyan citizenship (Salvadori, 1989: 12). They preferred to possess dual citizenship, which the Kenyan government refused to endorse. Given a choice between their motherland India and Kenya,

most of them opted to remain Indian citizens. Secondly, most Asians were itinerant business people who had traversed the length and width of interior Kenya in search of business opportunities. When the government thus decreed that trade licenses would no longer be issued to non-citizens – ostensibly to encourage and protect native business entrepreneurship –the Asians were the most affected (Salvadori, 1989: 12). This resulted into the mass exodus of Asians from Kenya into the United Kingdom (UK) especially towards the close of 1968. This event caused a big reduction in the number of Asians in Kenya –who had been estimated in 1962 to top 200 000, to about 70 000 by the 1969 Kenya National census (CBS, National Census, 1969). By the year 2003, the total Asian population in Kenya was estimated at 100 000, while the total population for the whole country was estimated at 34 000 000 people (CBS website, 23/10/08).

It is clear that those Asians who left the country were doing so out of fear for their future in Kenya. These fears however appear to be farfetched since those Asians who remained in Kenya explored more opportunities for doing business which has made them to prosper. This occurrence, nevertheless, is one of the post-independent events that has affected Hindu-Christian relations in the period and forms a key part of this study.

#### **4 Trends in Kenyan Hindu-Christian Relations**

At individual level, hindu-christian relations in Kenya is beginning to make some useful progress towards a mutually enriching experience. As a result, there are more inter-religious marriages witnessed tofay than in previous years. More Hindu youth are now attending school in Christian-sponsored schools. In similar manner, African Christian youth continue to enroll in Hindu-sponsored schools.

The social platforms such as whatsapp, facebook, tweeter etc are increasingly providing significant space for people to interact more freely without due regard to each other's tribal, racial, political or religious background.

Moreover, globalization has brought a completely new orientation in the way people exchange ideas. There are no longer territorial confinements as was the case in the pre-technology society of yester years. Globalisation has, thus, enhanced multi-cultural and multi-religious organization within society. Nowadays, the possibility that your next neighbor could belong to a different religion is becoming a normal occurrence. More and more people are able to move and settle in any part of the country, and indeed of the world, in pursuit of such interests as marriage, trade, education, employment, entertainment, sports and tourism.

The above-mentioned forums provide enormous opportunity for people of different religious background to meet or interact with one another in a more free and undeterred way. There are, however, some aspects that still limit the success of Hindu-Christian inter-faith dialogue efforts. The issue of denominationalism in Christianity and the caste system in Hinduism are among the repellent practices that lie on the way to ultimate fruitful Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya. also the issue of historical injustices remains largely unresolved. Thus, the new concstitution in Kenya may be explicit on the universality of individual freedoms. But, until definite steps are taken to address historical injustices, African Christians will continue to hold hindus in mistrust and vice-versa. Both sides have been victims and culprits of these historical injustices. Hindus have in numerous occasions been subjected to acts of violence and confiscation of property in the hands of African individuals as well as state apparatus. African Christians have also suffered discrimination and oppression in the hands of some exploitative Hindu employers.

Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya are also hampered by the inactiveness of initiatives at organizational level. More needs to be done by such umbrella bodies as the National Council of Churches (NCCCK) and the Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK) to boost inter-faith interactions between members of the Christian and Hindu communities in Kenya.

In conclusion, the political atmosphere in post-independent Kenya has to a large extent affected the inter-faith relationship between Hindus and Christians in this country. There are, however, other factors that call for equal attention in addressing the issue of inter-religious and inter-cultural hostilities between Hindus and Christians in this country. The issue of denominationalism, and operation of the caste system are some of the practices that each of the parties concerned must be willing to confront.

## **5 Effects of post-colonial political environment on Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya**

This section is based on responses contained in the questionnaires where respondents were requested to select from a provided list, factors that they believe have had an effect on the relationship between Hindus and Christians in post-independent Kenya. The respondents were required to select one factor from the provided list, which they considered to be the most affecting factor. The following were among the most cited factors.

### **5.1 Attainment of Kenya's Independence in 1963**

As shown in Table 5 (above) two hundred and twenty respondents picked Kenya's attainment of independence in 1963 to be a major factor affecting the Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya. Various reasons were given for this choice, as discussed below.

#### **5.1.1 Perpetuation of Colonial Paternalistic Mentality**

During the oppressive European colonial rule, the people of Kenya had been divided into three distinct groups on the basis of race. The White community, consisting of the British settlers, was considered to be the highest ranked people, while the Indians belonged to the second class. The Africans, who were the natives and by far the majority, were always considered to be the lowest class in society. This kind of categorization was reflected in terms of accessibility to certain socio-economic and political opportunities or services. For example, Africans were excluded from certain public places such as schools and Churches. They were always assigned the lowest positions at the workplace and, for those who were lucky to secure a superior rank, they were remunerated differentially from colleagues belonging to the other races. Indians on the other hand were often treated more kindly by the colonial government, obviously as a veiled tactic to create hostility between Africans and Indians so as to make it easier for the colonialists to perpetuate their oppressive regime.

When independence was declared in December, 1963, the hostility that rested among some African communities turned into envy as they saw some Indians taking up opportunities that came with the attainment of independence. Some Africans were also aware of the fact that the Asians had received preferential treatment during the colonial era. The fact that some Asians had worked alongside the colonialists and even supported the British army against Mau Mau during the struggle for independence, also made some Africans develop a non-accommodating attitude towards Indians in general. On their part, most Asians were not sure of what the new political dispensation heralded for them and therefore chose to leave the country. It is possible that some of the Indians also continued to consider Africans as belonging to a lower social stratum and hence made no effort to establish a more enriching relationship with them.



### **5.1.2 Kenyatta's Presidency**

In 1964, Kenyatta was elected as the first president of Kenya. To many in the white and Asian communities, the fact that almost unrestricted power was now in the hands of a politician widely held responsible for Mau Mau violence, seemed too much to bear. They feared that Kenyatta would embark on a revenge mission, targeting the two alien communities.

Contrary to this widely held belief, Kenyatta surprised his critics by making his rule to be even-handed in relation to the African, Asian and European communities. His approach involved all Kenyans in the government regardless of their ethnicity or race. Some Asians were among the highly ranked officers to serve in his government.

Kenyatta also developed a successful free-market economy that was open to foreign investment a move that endeared him to the Indian community. The Kenyan constitution was also favourable to Hindu spiritual interests because it guaranteed freedom of worship.

### **5.1.3 Adoption of the Single party Political System**

At independence in 1963, the Kenyan constitution allowed for multi-party democracy and at the dawn of independence, there were two leading parties; Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). By 1964, however, Kenya became a one-party state, when opposition leaders from (KADU) agreed to end multi-party factionalism and collaborate with KANU.

Out of the 2324 respondents who returned their filled questionnaires, 120 of them stated that the one-party political system contributed to further deterioration of Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya. The following reasons were advanced for this choice.

The single-party politics began during Kenyatta's reign, and the system had its worst effect on Kenyans during Moi's rule. The system, due to the immense powers it had placed on the office of the president, encouraged the repression of opposition politics and any attempt to openly challenge or criticize the president was met with dire consequences. As a result of this, there was a lot of misrule and soon the country started experiencing economic hardships. This was largely due to the widespread corruption and embezzlement of public resources by government officers and other public officials serving during both Kenyatta's and Moi's regimes.

It was because of this economic decline, that most Kenyans were reduced to abject poverty. Despite this apparent state of general economic decline, the Indians appeared to flourish in their business entrepreneurship. They were doing well economically amidst the abject poverty facing the majority of Africans. This created the impression among Africans, that Asians were either directly benefiting from the government of the day -in return for politically-motivated favours, or were merely gaining from the confusion and infighting that was the norm of the one-party political system to irregularly amass wealth for themselves.

The Hindu community was deemed to be silent on the political oppression that was being perpetuated by the single-party politics, particularly during Moi's era –when anti-government protests reached their climax. There was still some suspicion among anti-government forces that some Asian tycoons were using their immense wealth to render support to Moi's regime so as to protect their business interests. Some prominent Hindu followers were also known to engage in

corrupt dealings that made the government to lose a lot of money. Such individuals operated with a lot of protection from powerful people within Moi's government.

There appears, however, to be a general trend of non-involvement that is characteristic of Hindu (and indeed generally speaking, of Asian) response to political issues. Hindus are slow to speak out on issues they deem might be divisive in nature, and politics is one such an issue. It may hence, be unfair to conclude that by failing to comment on the political ills that face the Kenyan society, the Hindus are guilty of abating oppression in this country. This silence may be a tactical move meant to safeguard their business interests.

### **5.2 The death of Pio Gama Pinto**

Pio Gama Pinto was a prominent politician and a leading KANU party official. He had been one of the leading voices in the anti-colonialism struggle in Kenya and was one of the political leaders rounded up and imprisoned during the famous Operation Anvil of 1954. He was arrested alongside Jomo Kenyatta and other vocal anti-colonialism crusaders. At independence, Pinto started working for KANU. As a trained journalist he helped to set up KANU's newspaper Sauti ya KANU. In 1963 he became an elected member of the legislative council and a year later was nominated as a specially elected member of the House of Representatives, a position he held until his death. 180 of the respondents selected the death of Pio Gama Pinto in 1965, at the hands of an assassin, as among the contributing factors that have negatively impacted on the relationship between Hindus and Christians in post-independent Kenya. When his assassination was reported in 1965, the whole country was in shock. For, he was shot in the driveway to his compound as he waited for the gate to be opened. He was in the company of one of his daughters at the time of his death. Up to date, it has not been known who was behind the killing, nor the person who executed the killing. Though a Goan, Pinto's death sent shock waves within the Asian community in general, most of whom were left wondering what to make of the whole scenario.

Hindus did not perceive this incident as being targeted at members of their larger (Asian) community; It, nevertheless, served to create an atmosphere of suspicion and discontent among most Hindus in regard to relations with Africans. This is particularly so because the late Pinto worked closely with the African establishment which created the impression that his killers were from within that establishment. The arrest of Kisilu Mutua as the key suspect and his subsequent prosecution and imprisonment further gave credence to the idea that an African was involved. Hindus, being part of the larger Asian community, could not merely ignore the fact that the person who had fallen was an Asian. This created the impression that the Asian community was vulnerable, since they are an immigrant community, hence most of them decided to approach the issue of relationship with Africans with some precaution.

### **5.3 Jomo Kenyatta's Africanisation Policy**

In 1968, the government issued a ban on dual citizenship and declared that everyone who was in Kenya by the eve of independence in 1963 was a *bona vide* Kenyan citizen and was free to seek and be granted the said citizenship. This may have appeared an easy declaration, but for most Hindus, it came at a time when it was completely unwelcome. Most Hindu immigrants at that time were still holding Indian citizenship (some also held British citizenship). Hence, this declaration required them to choose between retaining Indian (or British) citizenship and forfeiting their Kenyan citizenship. Those holding non-Kenyan citizenship but wished to become Kenyan citizens were issued with a deadline. They were required to surrender their other citizenry and take up the Kenyan one. This was a trying moment for the Hindus who preferred to retain their current citizenship



(Indian or British), than taking up the Kenyan citizenship. Hence most of the Hindus were holding either the Indian or British citizenship (Nazareth, 1981).

In 1969, President Jomo Kenyatta's regime promulgated the Trade Licensing Act, where most Non-citizen Hindu traders had their licences revoked. According to the Act, all non-citizen business operators were not allowed to operate in rural towns and centres. Since most Hindus held either the Indian or British citizenship the Kenyatta's government encouraged the development of indigenous African entrepreneurship and pursued a policy of 'Africanization'. As a result, many Hindus were compelled to sell their businesses to Africans.

There was a massive exodus of Hindus, as well as other Asians, who migrated mostly to the United Kingdom (UK). Some Hindus, however, remained in Kenya after managing to find African partners. Some of them gave up their British citizenship in order to remain in the country and ensured their businesses continued.

Three hundred and forty respondents picked Kenyatta's Africanisation policy as a major factor affecting Hindu-Christian relationships in post-independent Kenya. According to the explanation given, the Africanisation policy had two contrasting effects on the Hindu-Christian relations in this country. First, it generated a sense of deep loss for those Hindus who had sold off their business and left the country. Even those who had to look for a local partner in order to keep their business afloat did so under compulsion rather than on their own volition. The majority of Hindus, moreover, shared the fear that the Africanisation policy was targeted at driving them out of Kenya. They thus, repelled the idea of cultivating close relationships with the Africans, since such a move could bring them into contact with the beneficiaries of what they considered to be an unjust policy.

Some Hindus (Hindus included) who read good intentions into the act, however, decided to work within its confines and sought partnership with Africans, some of whom were Christians. Thus, the Africanisation policy acted as a vehicle through which the Hindu-Christian relationship became enriched. But this is only as far as business interactions are concerned, since there are no indications that such partnerships ever went beyond the business interests into the social life of the involved parties. In most cases, such business partnerships and alliances were only designed for the Asians' convenience.

#### **5.4 The Attempted coup de tat in Kenya in 1982**

At midnight on 1 August, 1982 a group of men from the Kenya Air Force under the command of Hezekiah Ochuka took control of the Voice of Kenya, which at the time was the only broadcasting station in the country. They went on and announced, over the national radio station, that they had overthrown President Moi's government. This state of affairs lasted for only a few hours because the forces loyal to the president fought back the coup plotters. For a few days, the country was turned into a state of chaos and uncertainty. President Moi later announced over the television that the renegade soldiers had been overcome and that his government was still in full control of the country. A state of uncertainty had, however, been witnessed throughout the country because there was widespread looting of Asian shops, businesses and houses, particularly in the city of Nairobi. There were also reports about some Asian women having been sexually assaulted by African men in their homes. It is estimated that almost 500 shops, including 50 African ones, were looted. By the time President Moi regained full charge over the country, a lot of damage had already been done.

Out of the 2324 respondents as shown in Table 5, 300 respondents were convinced that the foiled coup was one of the major factors that negatively affected Hindu-Christian relations in post-independent Kenya.

Some respondents opined that, this incident demonstrated the kind of resentment for members of the Asian community that resides within the hearts of many Africans. The deep loss to which the Asians, some of whom were Hindus, were subjected further damaged the already weakened relationship between Hindus and Christians within the country. It also assisted in fostering an attitude of suspicion towards Africans among the Hindu immigrants.

### **5.5 Reversion to Multi-party Democracy**

By the early 1990s, the struggle for the restoration of multi-party democracy in Kenya reached its climax when Pro-democracy politicians exerted much pressure on President Moi to allow a repeal of the constitution and allow the reinstatement of the multi-party political system. This eventually happened in 1991 and the country held its first multi-party elections in December 1992.

One hundred and forty of the respondents identified the restoration of multi-party democracy in Kenya as one of the factors that has contributed to the positive state of Hindu-Christian relations in post-independent Kenya.

Among the reasons advanced include the fact that in the 1990s, the Kenyan economy registered a drastic decline thus subjecting many Kenyans to severe poverty. Competition for scarce resources became a common feature as evidenced by the frequent outbreak of inter-ethnic violence, particularly after the 1992 and 1997 general elections. Although corruption was rampant amid all this hardship, the Indian business people were still prosperous. A few of the Asians had also suffered from the economic decline, but the majority of them were still thriving. This gave some politicians an opportunity to start a campaign aimed at arousing hostile perceptions towards the Asian community among the Africans. The fact that this did not succeed is evidence that Hindu-Christian relations have a basis for operation. The fact that Kenyans of African ethnicity were not lured by the anti-Asian crusaders is clear evidence that both Africans and Asians are willing to work together in the development of this country. It also presupposes the willingness on the part of both parties to cultivate a favourable atmosphere for peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and inter-religious tolerance.

### **5.6 The 2007/8 Post-election Violence in Kenya**

The 2007 elections in Kenya were precipitated by the outbreak of violence, the magnitude of which had never been witnessed in the country. Even the global community was shocked at the mere scale of that violence. Some people lost their lives, others lost their property and many suffered great physical and psychological pain through fighting and rape. Some Asians, fearing for their lives, were forced to leave the country. Some of them crossed the border back into Uganda and Tanzania and lived with friends and relatives. Others moved to India, and some to the United Kingdom.

One hundred and sixty four (164) of the respondents identified this as a major factor affecting Hindu-Christian relations in post-independent Kenya which brought to the fore the deep ethnically-instigated divisions within the Kenyan society, thus portraying Kenya as a non-cohesive society. The purported violence served to drive the various communities further apart and negatively affected the Hindu-Christian relations. The 164 respondents, however, also, advanced the view that the violence provided a suitable opportunity for Kenyans to work towards achieving national

cohesion. The outcome of this violence served as a living example of what can happen when people live in an antagonistic relationship. This experience has motivated various groups of people to engage in meaningful negotiations aimed at creating greater understanding and tolerance among their members.

Not all Asian businesses were exclusively targeted in the 2007/8 post-election violence in Kenya. Because only a few suffered losses merely as Hindus since they happened to be on the firing line of the perpetrators of the violence, just as was the case with other non-Asian victims. There is no evidence yet to suggest that Asians who were affected by the violence were singled out simply because they happened to be members of a particular community.

### **5.7 Economic Factors**

One hundred and seventy respondents selected economic factors as a major contributing force to the nature and state of Hindu-Christian relations in post-independent Kenya.

When the Indians migrated from India to Kenya, the motivating factor was a desire to exploit the economic opportunities that were rapidly opening up in the region as a result of the building of the Uganda Railway. The initial immigrants according to Zahid Rajan (2011), were poor and were trying to make use of their skills in their quest for economic self-advancement. Driven by the strong urge to transform their economic status, the Indian community -though a minority group-quickly acquired wealth and became prosperous. They soon became economically powerful, a trait they maintain even at present.

The thriving Indians soon founded businesses, made considerable profits and set the pace for business entrepreneurship in this country. And, as their businesses continued to grow, they hired Kenyans of African ethnicity to work for them.

Many African Kenyans resent persons of Asian descent for their affluence, reluctance to employ blacks, particularly in management positions. But those who are employed in Asian shops and factories often complain of suffering from mistreatment, poor working conditions and meager wages at the hands of some Asian business operators. Some African Kenyans claim that Asians have taken up their jobs and commercial opportunities - an issue that often comes up during hard economic times.

The involvement of some Asians in corrupt practices with government officials further fuels popular resentment. Politicians sometimes take advantage of these popular prejudices by attacking Asian citizens, accusing them of exploiting and usurping the natural inheritance of African citizens.

This scenario provides an environment that does not encourage the establishment of cordial relationships between Hindus and Christians.

The mere fact that Asians are employers, business partners or professional colleagues with African citizens is, however, an indicator of the enormous but hitherto unexploited opportunities for Hindus and Christians to engage in inter-faith dialogue and cultivate mutually enriching relationships.

### **5.8 Religio-cultural Factors**

One hundred and seventy respondents identified religio-cultural background as among the key factors affecting Hindu-Christian relations in this country. Among the religio-cultural factors that were stated included religious and cultural traditions of both groups. Some respondents opined that the religious traditions of both Hinduism and Christianity have various differences while some also indicated that the two religions have many aspects they share in common especially their cultural traditions.

Some African Kenyans resent persons of Asian descent for their reluctance to assimilate African culture, despite their closer affinity and African cultural proximity.

Today, the community in Kenya is perceived as culturally seclusive. Their African critics often express dismay at the apparent lack of engagement, among the Asians, given the many challenges in Kenya

### **6. Conclusion**

This paper focused on the various politically-motivated factors that have influenced the Hindu-Christian relations in post-independent Kenya. These include: the attainment of Kenya's independence, the economic system, the religio-cultural background, the 1982 coup attempt, the 2007/8 post-election violence as well as anti-Asian policies promulgated by the post-colonial government. These factors were shown to have adversely affected the Hindu-Christian relations during the post-independence period in Kenya. They have also played a big role in creating an environment in which, on the one hand, Hindus became disillusioned about their African identity, while on the other, Christians (particularly those of African ethnicity) developed a hostile attitude towards the Hindus and other Asians in general. Despite their negative impact on Hindu-Christian relations in Kenya, however, the above mentioned factors also served as platforms through which Hindu-Christian relations became mutually enriching. The question that arises is whether Hindus of Indian ethnicity have been able, despite these various challenges that came their way, to appreciate their Kenyan (African) identity –so as to perceive themselves as an integral part of the Kenyan society. The fact that two Asians are among the members of the national assembly who retained their seats in the just concluded 2017 general elections in Kenya is perhaps a pointer to the changing trends in the whole issue of Indian integration of Indian nationals into the Kenyan political system. Moreover, the government of Kenya, in the prelude to the 2017 general elections acceded to a proposal by the Asian community in Kenya to accord them formal recognition as an ethnic community. This means that Kenyan Indians who have always been categorized as 'others' in previous national censuses, can now be classified as a separate tribe and they become Kenya's 44th ethnic community (New York Times).

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