RESEARCH ARTICLE

INDIAN COMMUNITY IN KENYA AND NATIVE STANCE TOWARDS THEM.

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
	India and Kenya share a closer bilateral relation due to presence of large number of Indian Diaspora in Kenya. Nearly about 75,000 people of Indian origin including Indian passport holders settle in Kenya. The Indian population in Kenya consists of several communities like Punjabi, Guajarati and also people from Southern India and they have been instrumental in advancing industrial growth and investment in Eastern African region. The existence of Indian diaspora in Kenya can be traced back to British colonial empire when the British government in order to enlarge their colonial empire brought large number of Indians to build roads, bridges and other infrastructural projects in Kenya. After a lot of hardships and struggles, Indian community in Kenya formed itself as a middle class business group in the country. Most of the Indians became traders, artisans, lower level administrators and professionals like engineers, doctors and so forth. Over the time, Indian community in Kenya increased their contacts and linkages and made their mark in the field of business and achieved greater economic success in comparison to native Kenyans. This produced tensions and resentment among Kenyan Africans and they soon began to create troubles for Indian diaspora. Amidst this situation, Indian community in Kenya travelled to other industrialized nations like U.S.A, U.K. for stable life and better opportunities. The Indian Diaspora in Kenya still remains as an integral part of industrial development in the country, but they are not able to gain a meaningful political presence in the region.

Introduction:-

In Kenyan territory, there has been presence of one of the largest and longest established Indian populations in the world outside India and both India and Kenya share a closer bilateral relation due to existence of large number of Indian community in Kenya. Nearly about 75,000 people of Indian origin including Indian passport holders settle in Kenya. The Indian population in Kenya consists of several communities like Punjabi, Guajarati, people from Southern India and they have been instrumental in advancing industrial growth and investment in Eastern African region.

The existence of Indian diaspora in Kenya can be traced back to British colonial empire when the British government in order to enlarge their colonial empire brought large number of Indians to build roads, bridges and other infrastructural projects in Kenya. After a lot of hardships and struggles, Indian community in Kenya formed itself as a middle class business group in Kenya. Most of the Indians became traders, artisans, lower level administrators and increasing number of professionals like engineers, doctors and so forth. Over the time, Indian community in Kenya increased their contacts and linkages and made their mark in the field of business and achieved greater economic success in comparison to native Kenyans. This produced tensions and resentment among Kenyans

Africans and they soon began to create troubles for Indian diaspora. Amidst this situation, Indian community in Kenya travelled to other industrialized nations like U.S.A, U.K. for stable life and better opportunities. The Indian Diaspora in Kenya still remains an integral part of industrial development in the country, but they are not able to gain a meaningful political presence in the region. They are still considered by native Africans as an interloper, a "muhindi" even a kind of economic colonialist. This paper focuses on the evolution of Indian diaspora on the African continent, featuring the recent trends of diasporic activities in Kenya. The paper also explores native resentment towards Indian diaspora in Kenya and how Indian community rises above the challenges and achieved success in business.

Understanding Indian Diaspora:-
The term diaspora means the dispersion of a people away from their homeland, but they have a memory, vision or myth associated with their homeland. Although within a few generations, the diaspora begins to engage with the proximate, adopted homeland, but still they consider the country of origin as distant civilization homeland, maintaining a close connection to their country of origin. The U.S. State Department defines diaspora as consisting of people who dispersed voluntarily or involuntarily, across socio-cultural boundaries and at least one political border, they have collective memory and myth about the homeland , committed to keeping the homeland alive through symbolic and direct action , the presence of the issue of return, though not necessarily a commitment to do so and a diasporic consciousness and associated identity expressed in diaspora community media, creation of diaspora associations or organizations, and online participation(Plaza and Dilip, 2011). Diaspora seeks to restore links to their homeland through various ways like inviting relatives or guest from the homeland, sends remittances to their homeland and so forth.

India uses three categories of definitions for diaspora: nonresident Indian (NRI), person of Indian origin (PIO), and overseas citizenship of India (Plaza and Dilip, 2011).We can notice two main 'waves' in the history of emigration from India and it has largely been driven by economic reasons. The first occurred during British rule when Indian indentured labourers, traders and 'free' migrants left South Asia for colonies in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean. The second took place under an independent India, with Indians migrating for work, business and study in North America, Europe and the Gulf States (Jen, 2011). The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (HLC), formed in 2000 to survey the global Indian diaspora, views globally displaced non-resident Indians (NRIs) and persons of Indian origin (PIOs) as a cosmopolitan community (Jen, 2011).

A bulk of Indian diaspora can be found in African countries. The strong and vibrant Indian community in Kenya and other parts of Africa has given many areas of its capital an unmistakable Indian flavor. The Indian communities in Africa have earned a reputation for setting up successful businesses and industrial units and provide job opportunities for local people. However, for a variety of reasons, these communities are not so well integrated within the political and cultural milieu of their host countries. The following section explores these reasons.

Origin and Reasons of Migration:-
The littoral zone of Indian Ocean has created numerous opportunities for trade between Africans of Swahili coast and Indian merchandisers of western India. Due to their enthusiasm and expertise in business skills, Indian merchants became active in trade for transfer of ivory, skins, tropical raisins and spices to eastern Africa for three centuries. The closeness of eastern African region and India's western coast culminated long association between India and east Africa. Sanjukta Benarjee in her article "India-East Africa ties: Future trajectories" indicates a topographic similarity between parts of eastern Africa and western India which resulted in India's exploration on Africa's soil (Jen, 2011). According to the onshore aeromagnetic data and study of the topography of the ocean, during the Lower Palaeozoic era, there was tight configuration of Africa, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka and Antarctica. The mid Jurassic period witnessed dextral transition between Eastern and Western Gondwana, resulting in oceans being created and India breaking away from the African landmass, making a U-turn and rapidly moving to northwards (Sanjukta, 2009)

India's exploration on African soil especially in East Africa commenced ahead of European colonialism. There was centuries of intensive, seasonal circular migration between Western seaports of the Indian subcontinent mainly Bharuch, Surat and Bombay in India; Karachi in Pakistan and ports along the Zanzibarian coastline in Indian Ocean (Sanjukta, 2009). There is evidence of Indian merchants carried out their trade through the Indian Ocean during ancient days of Babylon. In the 15th century, Indian merchants in particular Gujrati traders dominated Indian Ocean spice trade through voyage to Africa between November and March and homecoming between April and October.

Though trade was prevalent all year, monsoon season restricted trading activities. In the 16th century, the Portuguese brought a large number of Asian workers from their Goanese colony in order to build Fort Jesus, marking the beginning of relationship (Jen, 2011). By the mid-nineteenth century, trading communities of Indian sub continent consisting Hindu Banias, Bhatiyas and Lohanas, Sunni Memons and Baluchis and Shia Boharas, Isthanasteries and Ismaili Khoja perused trading activities first with the Omani, then the Portuguese and later British empires (Rashmi , 2009). Although there were numerous mentions of Indian associations in Africa, historians largely overlooked India's early contacts with Africa.

It was only in the 19th century when Europeans entered the scenario, there was recognition of Indians presence in East Africa. British rulers colonized East African regions like Kenya and Uganda and they imported around 34,000 Indian indentured labourers to east Africa. It was believed that from Uganda to Mombasa, every stationmaster, rail-guard, engine driver, and coolie was an Indian (Jen, 2011). Indian indentured labourers consisted of Sikh military employees, Punjabi Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. They were recruited as labourers in the construction of the Mombasa-Kampala railway line, which was to transport goods for British colonial interest. Of these Indian indentured labourers, 2,493 dies, some 28 being dragged away by lions and 6,454 were seriously injured. While many returned, around 6,700 chose to stay back for better opportunities in business (Aman, 2013).

Under British presence, there was also subsequent migration of independent Sikhs, Roman Catholic Goans, Oshwal Jains, Zoroastrian Parsis, Shia and Sunni Muslims for depressing economic conditions in India as the commercial prospects were very favourable in Kenya and other east African regions (Sanjukta, 2009). Thus, a large number of Hindu caste communities along with their families arrived in East Africa as railway labourers, traders, craftsmen, clerics and professionals from Gujarat, the Punjab, Kathiawar, Kutch, Maharashtra and Goa. This enlarged the South Asian population in British East African territories from 6000 in 1887 to 366 000 by the close of British rule and they together emerged as the economic middle tier that facilitated the entry of imperial trade, commerce and governance in east Africa (Jen, 2011).

Indians lived in Kenya intented to see themselves as whole Indian community and less inclusive of Hindu Muslim identities. They had altered many of their distingushing marks and behaviour which had characterised them as caste and sects at home. There was absence of caste and secte based discrimination among Indian community in Kenya. Indians lived in an environment which did not encourage orthodox Brahmin practices "partly because large numbers of the Indians were not even Hindu and social contact in a trading world could not be avoided and partly because the need for dealing with Europeans and Africans forced everbody who could enter an elaborate system of entertainment, in which drinking and dinner practices broke all othodox Brahmin rules" (Jen, 2011).

Concentration on Business:-
 The British administration visualized East Africa as the 'America of Hindu" and assisted Indian immigration to Kenya and other East African regions (Jen, 2011). "It was entirely through Indian merchants we are able to build up the influence that resulted in our position in East Africa", remarked by British explorer John Kirk (Stephen, 1956). The British administration considered Indians as more efficient than native Africans. Indians were referred as 'coolies' during that period. By 1905, a British colonial estimated, 80 percent of business in Kenya belonged to Indians (Sana, 2011)

Meanwhile, the British administration used Kenya as settler's colony due to favourable climatic conditions in parts of the country. Kenyan highlands were seen as suitable for European settlement which facilitated white immigration from South Africa and Europe into Kenya (James, 2013). These settler demanded Kenya to be treated as White man's colony. The British Empire introduced a three tiered hierarchical system among white colonizers, Indians and Africans and placed Indians in between them. The common view of Kenyan society during that period was that European dominated politically, Indians formed a kind of commercial middle class and Africans constituted a working class and undeveloped peasantry (James, 2013).

The colonial administration refused to give equal treatments to Indians which they facilitated to European settlers. Although most of the Asians of Indian origins came from village background, none of them took agriculture as source of livelihood. The reason behind this was that under land policy of British rule which was framed for the welfare of indigenous people, Indians did not have exclusive land rights which were issued only to Europeans and Africans. Thus, by 1910 Indians were obligated to invest in commercial enterprises. On the other hand, Africans were encouraged to work and supply cheap labour to European settlers who are settled in fertile White Highlands.

To some extent, Indians negotiated their own passage and employment and became integral part of Kenyan society. They opened shops or dukas and were called dukawallahs. They established themselves as petty merchants. The Indian migrants were more prominent in infrastructural development. Most of these Indians were traders, artisans, or lower professionals, occupying the middle position between black and white in the colonial hierarchy. They lived in their own large communities, segregated from both the Africans and the English. They were the essential instrument of British rule over the indigenous population, and had greater contact with the Africans than did the British (Sana, 2011). The Indians gained control over retail and wholesale trade, cotton ginning, coffee and sugar processing and other segments of commerce over time. They also occupied lower and middle grade health services and other sectors like railways but were unable to rise to higher position. At the same time, they invested in education and many private schools were established. Moreover, a large number of Indians qualified as lawyers, doctors, teachers and engineers even before Kenya got independence. When anti colonial movement began in Kenya, the people of Indian origin played an important role in anti colonial struggle with individuals . A.M. Jeevanjee, Pio Gama Pinto and Makhan Single played genuine roles in the struggle for freedom. Makhan Singh along with Fred Kubai were founders of labour movements in Kenya and formed the East Africa Trade Union Congress. Jeevanjee who along with M.A. Desai sought eqaul rights for all people of Kenya. Despite contribution of Indians, their visible success in the economic arena caused tensions between them and natives (Stephen, 1956).

Native Stance towards Indian Community:-
Indians' relative affluence had created resentment among the local African population. The origin of antipathy of natives towards Indian diaspora can be traced back to colonial history of Kenya.

Before advent of colonialism in Kenya, the country had been inhabited by 40 different tribes (Salim, 1971). Kenyan society had been characterized by enmity between different ethnicities for power and prestige which is still prevalent even today. After colonial rule, the British authorities made use of the situation and hierarchically ranked the races and communities. The animosity among European settlers, Asians and native Africans had been exacerbated by colonial state, constructed cultural and ethnic difference. The divide and rule policy segregated Indian community from native Africans (Sanjukta, 2009). British imperial power to further their colonial interest projected Indian community as a money-grabbing, inward-looking middleman, contemptuous of African culture and subservient to European mannerisms (Anke, 2010)

On the other hand, Indians in Kenya received favours from colonial poewers in non agricultural sectors. Soon they began to view themselves culturally and ethnically superior than Africans , keeping their separate cultural values intact. They lived in their own large communities, segregated from both the Africans and the English. Many Indians even considered themselves as sub –imperialists from 1910-1919 and did not mix up with other native communities in Kenya. Cultural and religious difference between Indians and Africans played a major role behind the isolation of Indian diaspora from indigenous communities of Kenya. Indians kept their cultural values alive and lived in exclusive communities, thus reinforcing an aura of superiority which was resented by Africans (Anke, 2010). Indians recruited black Africans as servants and their shops were frequented by the whites. Black Africans regarded Indians as collaborators with British rule. It still has a huge impact on public and social affairs.

Under British rule, Indians flourished better than natives and subsequently after independence they attracted nationalist African wrath towards them. In 1962, Indian population in Kenya has grown to over 175000 (Gaurav, 2011). When Kenya achieved independence in 1963, Indians were offered the choice of obtaining either British or Kenyan citizenship. Only about 10 percent of Indian population applied for Kenyan citizenship in the fear of losing business in a country which recently achieved independence and where there was large number of newly educated African middle class, constantly demanding for position and power. The rest of Indians did not take up Kenyan citizenship and opted what later turned out to be "devalued" British passports (Sanjukta, 2009). This increased suspicions towards Indians living in Kenya.

In the 1960s, when Kenyatta became president, he introduced policies of Africanisation to promote positions of indigenous Africans in key areas of economic and governmental activities. These policies seized control of Indian owned business thorough passing of legislations, restricting residence, trade activities and employment of non citizens. In 1969, Kenya paased Trade licensing Act by which Indians with British passport had their trade licenses revoked as part of their programme to promote African business (Nilanjana, 2008). Those Indians left in Kenya felt rising hostility among African masses, fearing of security of life. They began to seek resettlement and transferred money abroad. In the year 1972, in Uganda, neighboring country of Kenya Idi Amin came to power and he

announced that all Asians had to leave Uganda within 90 days as he accused them of taking jobs from native Africans. This Ugandan crisis had regional impact and saw thousands of Indians leaving Kenya to Europe and USA leading to decline of investment by Indian diaspora. The situation got worst after an unsuccessful coup occurred in Kenya in 1982. In the chaos, Indian shops were looted and Indian women were raped. By 1984, the number of Indians in Kenya decreased to an estimated 40,000 (Salim, 1971).

By 1990's, Indian communities in Kenya live an anxious life, protected by personal security. Most of the Indians concentrate in urban cities and trading settlements like Nairobi and Mombassa. The Indian identity is often centered on Hindu temples, sikh gurudwars and Muslim mosques (Sanjukta, 2009). In addition, due to their cultural difference with native Africans, Indians feel some kind of identity crisis in Kenya. According to African Kenyans, Indians live a sheltered life, refusing to assimilate with indigenous communities. Both Indians and Africans are equally contemptuous of their attitudes and cultural values, creating a mutual distance among them. Interracial marriages between Kenyan Africans and Indians still appear to be forbidden. Indians are often referred as Wahindis by black majority which connotes mean and exploitative business people. There also was incidence of Indians losing worth of Rs 500 crore of business after violence broke out during Kenyan election in December 2007.

After the end of Moi's era in Kenya, the earlier hostility between people of Indian origin and Africans has faded away. There is acknowledgment of Indians contribution to growth of Kenya's economy. Indian population in Kenya which contributed 35 percent of Kenya economy has remained 70,000 in 2005 and continues to grow (Nilanjana, 2008). There is presence of energetic and humors of Indian life on streets of Kenya. The malls and restaurants of Nairobi provide mouthwatering Indian cuisines like biryani, kababs, pulao, somosa, bringing cultural connection of India to Kenya. Popularization of Indian movies and songs also offer a greater Indian influence in the region. There has been a high regard among educated Kenyan natives for Indians who thrived Industrial production and development in Kenya. Rather than apprehensions, these native Africans have started to regard Indians as the "Jews of Kenya", admiring Indian success in business (Rashmi, 2009). Moreover, in 2013 when al-Shabab militants attacked Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Indian community and Africans came out to help each other and showed astonishing courage (James, 2013). It explained enhanced relations between Indian community and Africans in Kenya.

Conclusion:-
The large number of Indian diaspora overcome challenges and became instrumental in enhancing productivity in Kenya. Indian community is more engaged in economic activities and shows a passive disposition towards political issues and process of policy formulation in Kenya. Over the years, they have not willingly incorporate Kenyan culture and this apathy complicated the situation for diaspora to actively take part in the policy making process. Till 2009, 35 per cent of the Indians living in Kenya had not taken up Kenyan citizenship. However, the circumstances are altering in present times. On a positive note, a few people of Indian origin sought political office in 2011 election in Kenya. There should be more attempts from Indian diaspora to bring cultural and societal interaction which would lead diaspora playing an important role in the formulation and implementation of policy.

Diaspora, as a source of investment has been an important determinant of India- Africa Partnership. The implementation of economic reforms in India in early 1990's has increased economic influence of India and enlarged its bilateral engagement in trade and investment with various nations including Africa. Taking advantage of huge presence of Indian Community in Kenya, both India and Kenya can reinvent their terms of engagement. The presence of Indian diaspora can be used as an important link to enhance cooperation and mutual benefits between India and Kenya.

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