THE GUJARATIS OF FIJI, 1900-1945:
A STUDY OF AN INDIAN IMMIGRANT TRADER COMMUNITY

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of History)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 1978

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ABSTRACT

This study concerns the Gujaratis of Fiji who comprise an important trading community within the large Indian population but who have not received extensive attention from scholars. It covers a time-span of forty-five years, from the beginning of this century to the end of World War II. During this period, which characterizes the crucial formative phase of their settlement in Fiji, Gujaratis belonging to various castes and from diverse backgrounds came to Fiji where they gradually became a noticeable and important trader element within the predominantly agricultural Indian population. In the process, they also acquired a negative image which is comparable to that of the dukawalla (shopkeeper) in Africa.

Although other Indians were already residing in Fiji since 1879, as indentured laborers or as descendants of these laborers, Gujarati contacts with Fiji began after 1900. Lack of sea routes between Western India and Fiji, and the prohibition of recruitment of laborers for Fiji in Bombay Presidency, provided little incentive for travel between the two areas. Moreover, Gujaratis who wished to travel to Fiji could only do so through the two sanctioned emigration ports, Calcutta and Madras. Rather than venture into an unknown area, most Gujarati immigrants went to East Africa where mercantile communities originating from Western India were long established. Fiji simply did not offer lucrative prospects until isolated groups from Gujarat proved the contrary.

What caused Gujarati migration to Fiji? First of all, groups which found little fame and fortune in Africa began to turn to opportunities in other countries. Secondly, deteriorating conditions in Gujarat in the early twentieth century caused population movements to other parts of India and abroad. Failure of the monsoons, famines, reduction of landholdings among families, and the subsequent drop in agricultural productivity merely

hastened the process. Thirdly, as opportunities in urban centers, especially Bombay, became limited, more and more Gujaratis left India in search of opportunity to supplement meager resources at home. Fourthly, British colonial territories which contained powerful white communities soon began to restrict the entry of Indians which initiated the push toward new frontiers such as Fiji. By contrast, Fiji welcomed 'free' immigrants because of the skills which they introduced; it maintained an open door policy toward this category of migrants until 1930.

Gujarati penetration into Fiji was part of the movement of 'free' immigrants into the colony. The other two types of 'free' immigrants were Punjabis and 'returnees' (ex-indentured Indians who returned to Fiji after having been repatriated to India). Gujaratis came mainly to ply skills which they acquired in their homeland. Until 1920 isolated caste groupings carved out a particular area of operations in which they effectively utilized traditional caste skills. Most immigrants came for a stay of two years after which they had hoped to return to their homeland. However, this period was too short for the accumulation of large savings. The more important phase of Gujarati migration to Fiji took place after 1920. The breakdown of Fiji's isolation from the rest of the world in the 1920s and the extension of sea routes between Fiji and India facilitated movement between Gujarat and Fiji. The survival of the sugar industry and developing needs in the agricultural sugar belt of Fiji where the majority of Indians were residing opened new avenues for Gujaratis who had the aptitude to move with ease into entrepreneurial roles. Their tenacity in trade and commerce became more noticeable during the depression years when the arrival of more Gujarati immigrants made it difficult for local Indians to enter that sphere of activity. Consequently, in the 1930s, attitudes toward the unrestricted entry of Gujaratis changed in favor of stringent immigration controls.

In the final analysis, the Gujarati immigrants introduced a different

lifestyle and successfully maintained it. They also had the necessary expertise, the organizational know-how, and a considerable degree of group solidarity to assume roles which other Indians were incapable of doing. Though they did not adhere rigidly to the hierarchical social structure of their homeland, these immigrants were still linked to their respective jati nuclei in Gujarat through caste ideology and caste behavior. However, occupational specialization, based on the notion of pollution and purity, had little relevance in Fiji. A wide range of opportunities was available to all immigrants. Gujaratis settled mainly in urban areas because of their commercial orientation, and where their activities had the maximum potential for success. Their social life was built around the shop rather than around caste and religion, but the introduction of families in the 1930s obliged them to pay closer attention to the needs of the household, especially in the matter of religion. In effect, Gujaratis continued to exist as a marginal group within the Indian community; until 1945 they remained beyond the mainstream of Indian cultural, social, and political life in Fiji.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

Abstract ii

Table of Contents v

List of Tables vii

List of Maps viii

Abbreviations ix

Acknowledgements xiv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. 'FREE' IMMIGRATION TO FIJI UNTIL THE END OF INDENTURE (1900-1920) 19

III. FIJI AND INDIAN IMMIGRATION AFTER INDENTURE, 1921-1945 62

IV. THE GUJARATI EMIGRANTS TO FIJI AND THEIR SOCIAL BACKGROUND 119

V. THE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF THE GUJARATI COMMUNITY 174

VI. SOCIAL LIFE IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT 226

VII. THE ASSERTION OF THE GUJARATI IDENTITY 270

VIII. CONCLUSION 326

page

Notes

Chapter I 16

Chapter II 55

Chapter III 111

Chapter IV 168

Chapter V 222

Chapter VI 267

Chapter VII 322

Bibliography 339

Appendix 353

LIST OF TABLES

Table		page
3.1	Main Components of Indian Population	31
3.2	Racial Components of Fiji's Population, 1881-1946	84
3.3	Increase in Punjabi and Gujarati Immigration from 1911 to 1930	93
3.4	Indian Immigration between 1930 and 1938	104
4.1	Passport Applications by Area and Year, 1918-1920	130
4.2	Passport Applications by Area, Caste, and Occupation, 1916-1920	132
4.3	Passport Applications by Area and Year, 1928-1938	161
4.4	Passport Applications by Area, Caste, and Occupation, 1928-1938	163
5.1	Gujarati Business Registrations, 1924-1945 (Including Particulars of Operation, Location, Nature of Business)	210
6.1	Indian Business Registrations, 1924-1945 (Including Particulars of Operation for Each Cultural Group)	263

LIST OF MAPS

page

Gujarat before 1947 x

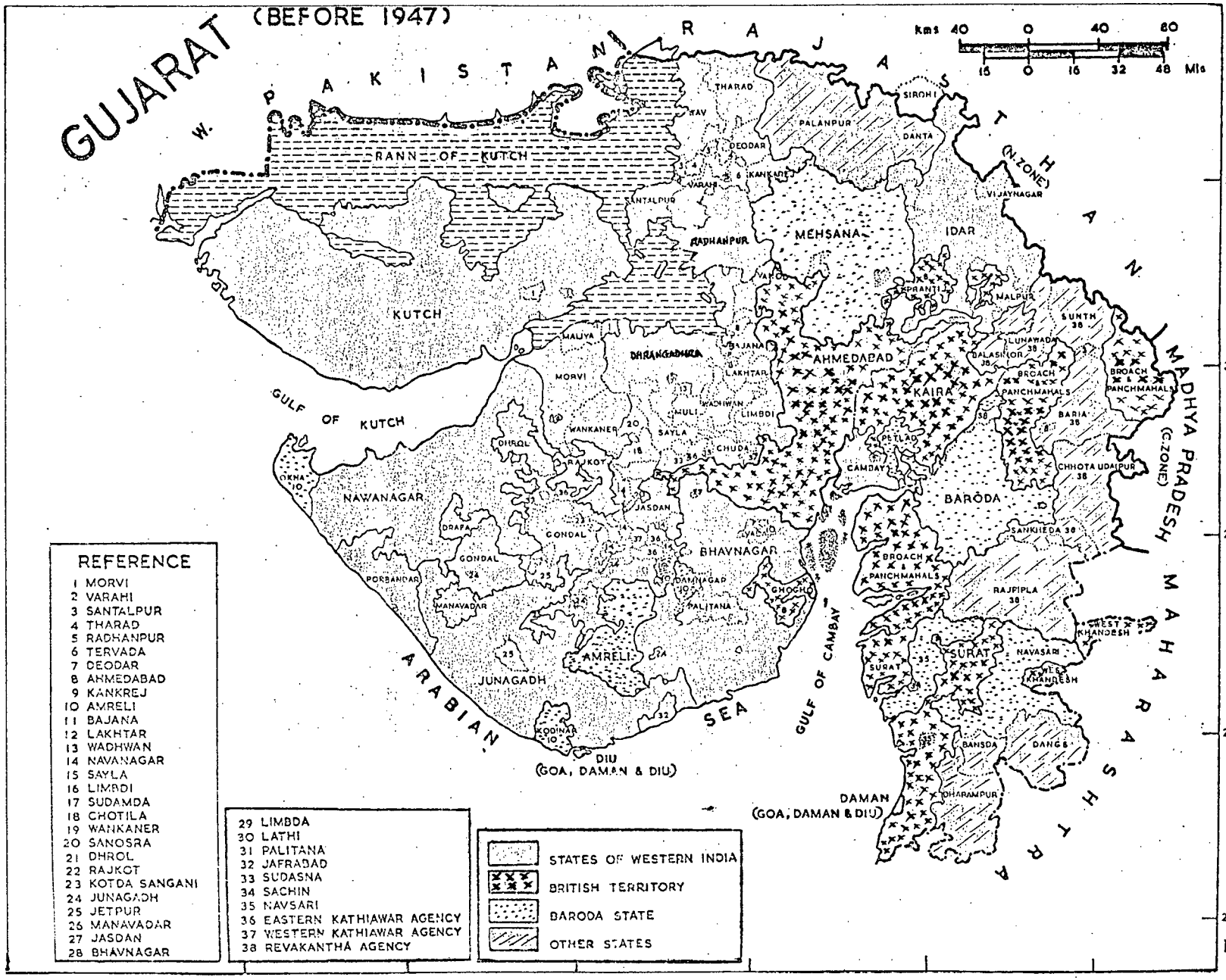
Gujarat--Administrative Divisions 1961 xi

The Fiji Islands xii

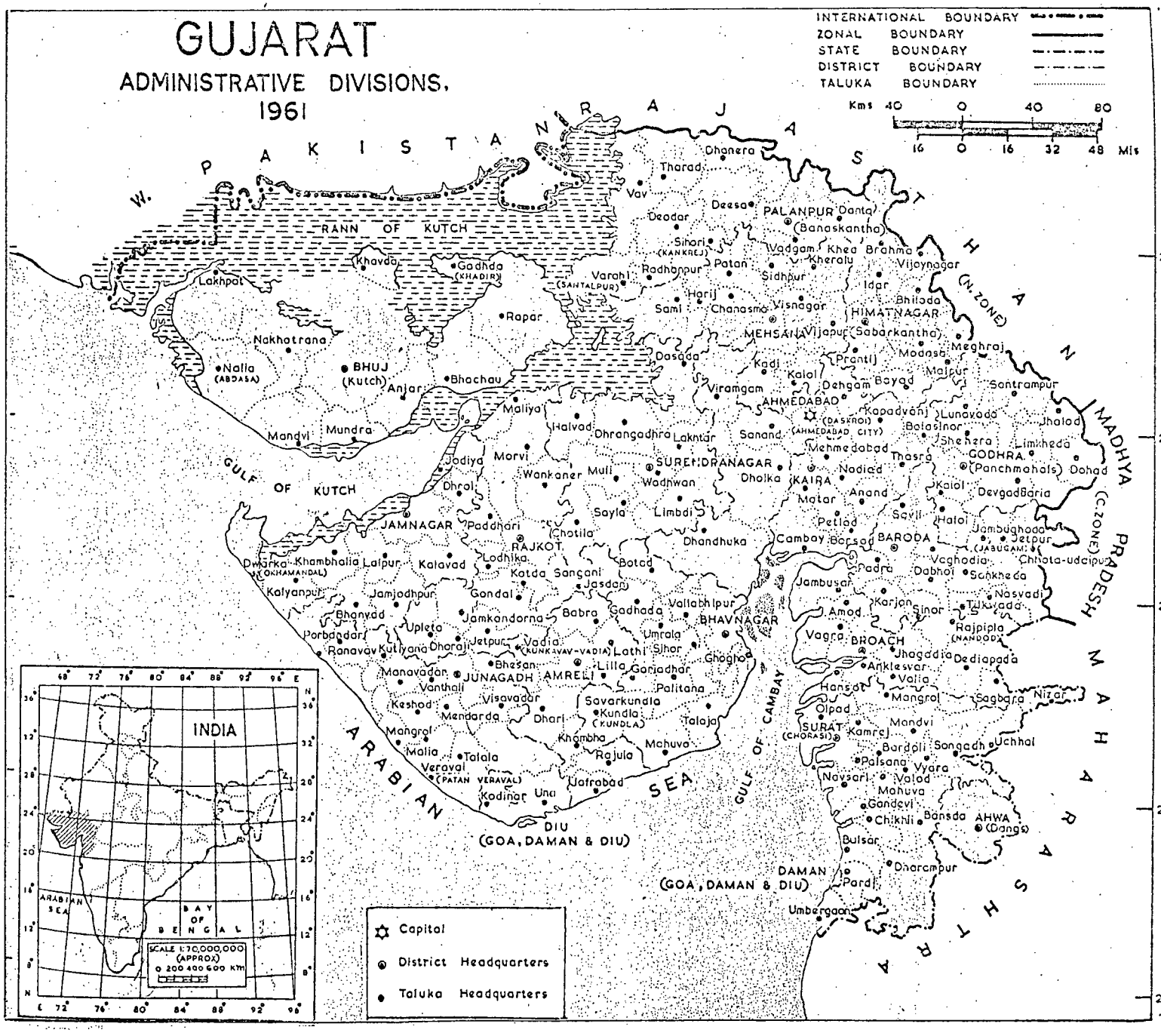
Suva City xiii

ABBREVIATIONS

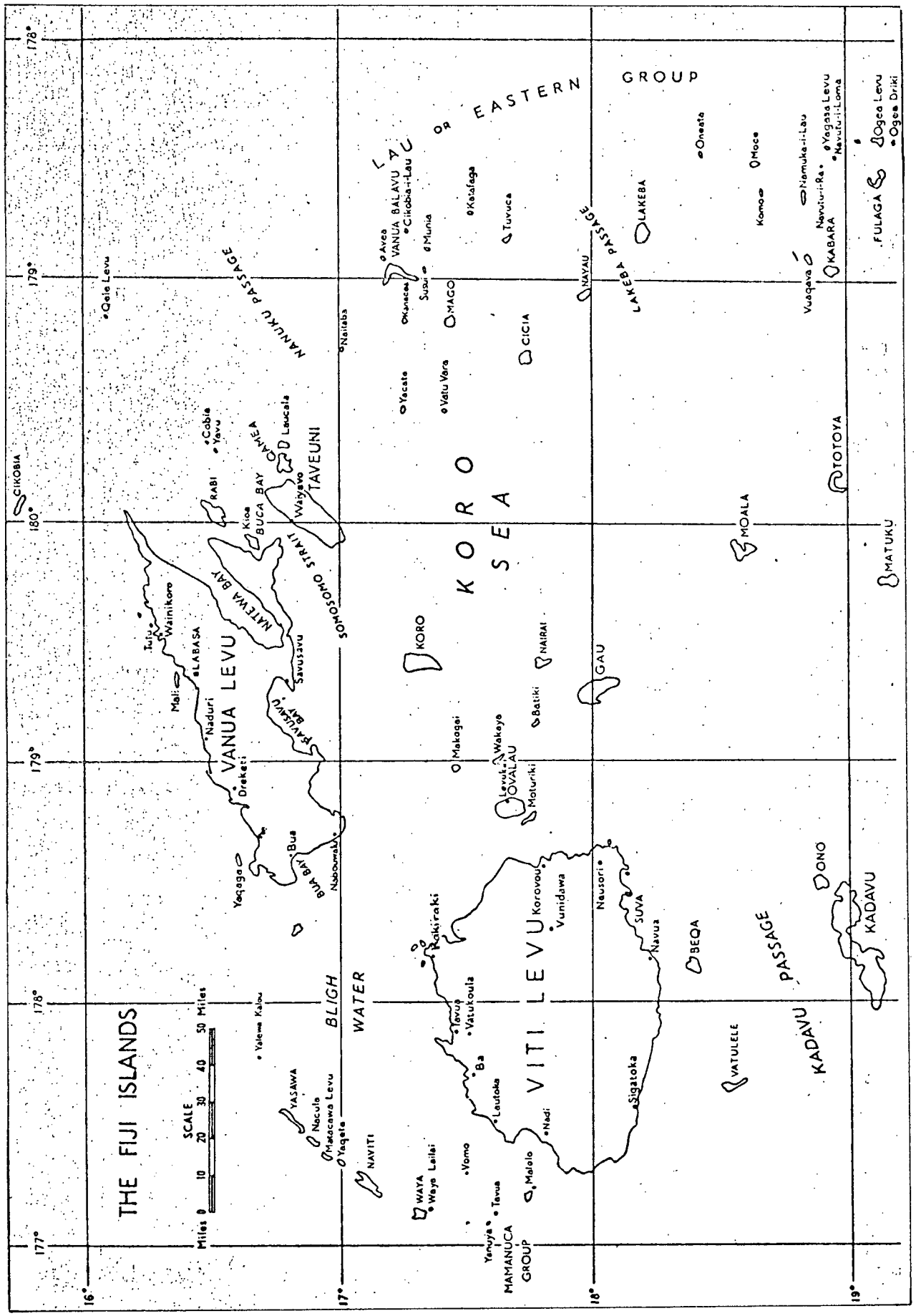
C.I.	Census of India
C. & I.	Commerce and Industry--Emigration Proceedings
C.O.	Colonial Office
C.P.	Council Paper (Fiji, Legislative Council)
C.S.	Colonial Secretary (Fiji)
C.S.O.	Colonial Secretary's Office (Fiji)
C.S.R.	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
E.H.L.(O.)	Education, Health and Land (Overseas) Emigration Proceedings
F.C.R.	Fiji, Census Report, 1911, 1921, 1936, 1946
F. & I.	Filed and Indexed Papers (Emigration Proceedings)
F.I.R.	Fiji, Immigration Report
H.E.O.	Huzur English Office
I.E.P.	India, Emigration Proceedings
I.O.	India Office
I.O.R.	India Office Records
J. & P.	Judicial and Public Department (India Office)
K.S.S. (KSS)	Kshatriya Seva Samaj (Fiji)
L. & O.	Lands and Overseas as part of Education, Health and Lands
M.G.A. (MGA)	Muslim Gujarati Association (Fiji)
M.L.C. (MLC)	Member of Legislative Council (Fiji)
P.P.	Parliamentary Paper (United Kingdom)
R.A.	Revenue and Agriculture (Emigration Proceedings)
R.A.C.	Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce (Emigration Proceedings)
R.S.I.A.	Report of the Secretary for Indian Affairs, Fiji
S.I.A.	Secretary/Secretariat for Indian Affairs, Fiji



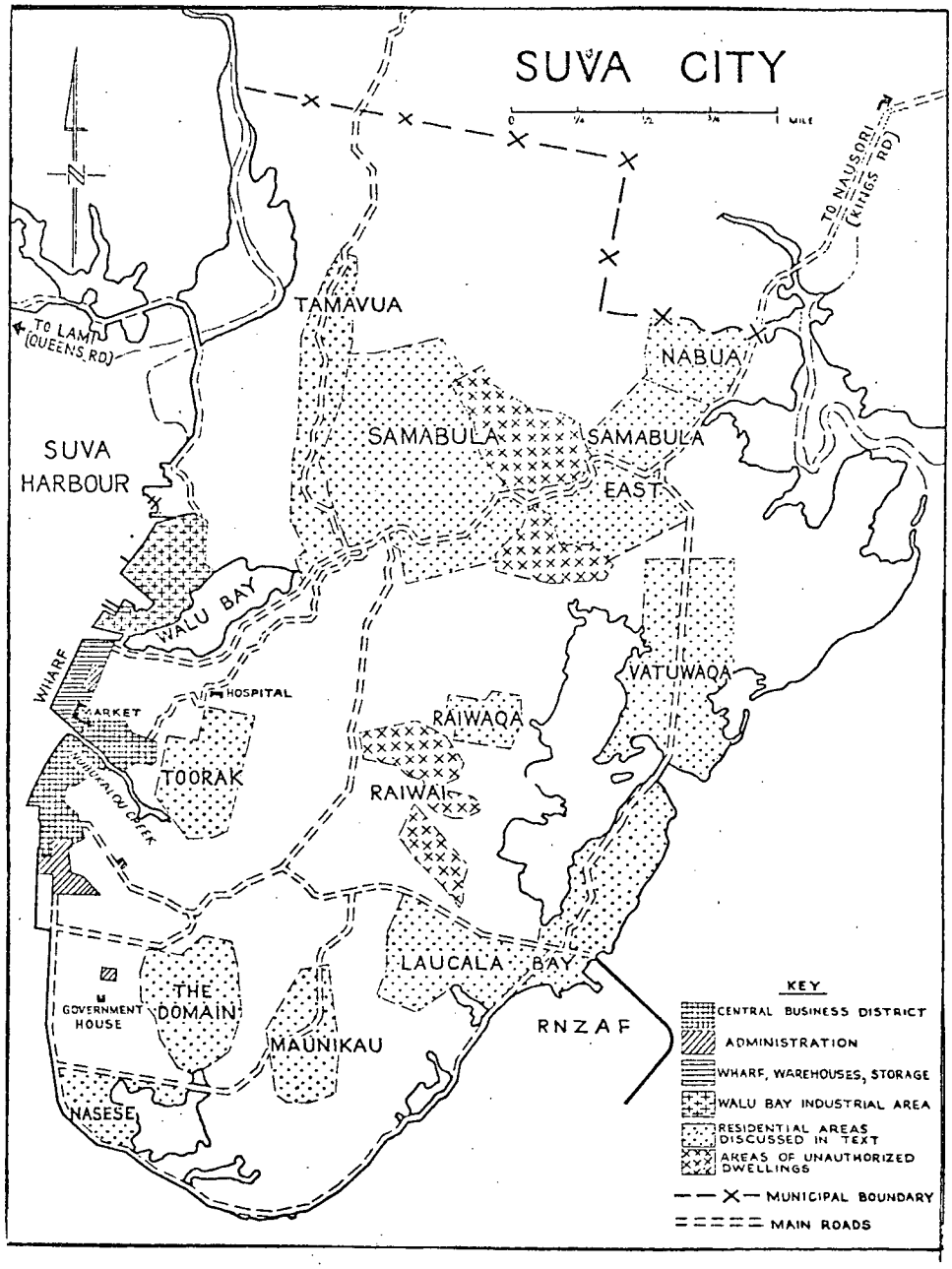
Source: Census of India 1961: Vol. V, Gujarat, Pt. 9: Census Atlas (Delhi: Manager of Government Publications, 1966), Map 2A.



Source: Census of India 1961: Vol. V, Gujarat, Pt. 9: Census Atlas (Delhi: Manager of Government Publications, 1966), Map 2B.



Source: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trends of the Colony of Fiji, C.P. 1/60, Map. 1.



Source: J. S. Whitelaw, "Suva, Capital of Fiji," South Pacific Bulletin (July 1964), p. 33.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is rare for a visitor to Fiji to leave without having some form of encounter with its leading Indian merchants and traders--the Gujaratis. Even the local residents--Indians, Fijians, Europeans, Chinese, etc.--rarely escape contact with the Gujarati community in the major urban centers; simply put, in Fiji, one does not remain oblivious to the presence of Gujaratis residing in the midst of other Indians and other races. Though the community is small in number, it is still very noticeable because of its concentration in urban areas and entrenchment in commercial activity. The visitor's most lasting impressions of Gujaratis are formed in the 'marketplace' atmosphere of the numerous Gujarati-operated shops and duty-free emporiums which offer attractive bargains. This encounter is essentially economic in nature and hardly differs from the type of relationship which exists between local residents and Gujaratis. In effect, the 'marketplace' relationship largely determines how one views the Gujarati presence in Fiji.

My own encounters with Gujaratis are by no means recent, and certainly of a varied nature. It was in Lautoka (Fiji), an important sugar center, that I had my initial contacts with that community. For many urban-based Indians, contact with Gujaratis on a regular basis was unavoidable, especially in the case of those who conducted business alongside Gujaratis and who also had them for neighbors. My father, Ramsamujh Prasad (1901-1966), who had established his roots in Lautoka in the late 1910s had witnessed both its development and the influx of many Gujarati immigrants. Indians with similar economic aspirations were quickly drawn together which made it easy for my father to cultivate a wide circle of Gujarati friends and acquaintances. Later when he moved to Suva he still displayed a liberality toward them, and established a rapport with that community, which was, perhaps, unique

for a person from a North Indian background. This relationship provided me with the first glimpses of immigrant Gujarati life and culture.

Growing up in Suva was for me a totally different experience from that in Lautoka. Suva lacked the Indian quality which was prevalent in other towns, and the relationship between Gujaratis and other Indians was formalized and, above all, economic. It was in Suva that I acquired a new perspective toward Gujaratis, and over a period of time developed prejudices which were as much a part of a different upbringing as they were an indication of changing attitudes among a younger generation of Indians whose sympathies and loyalties lay with Fiji. Thus when I commenced my research on the immigrant Gujarati community in 1973 I had many misgivings about my ability to complete the project, largely on account of the way I felt toward them. However, exposure to Gujarat, its rich history and culture, its interesting political development, the hospitality of its people, and the readiness with which Gujaratis accepted me (during my travels and stay there between December 1973 and February 1975) eventually led me to a better appreciation of the Gujarati presence in Fiji. Needless to say, this thesis would not have been completed had it not been for this transformation.

The debts which I have incurred for all the assistance received while completing the thesis are more than I can acknowledge. Though my father is not alive and cannot be thanked personally, I feel that the least I can do is to dedicate this thesis to his memory. It was his friendship with Gujaratis in Fiji which made it possible for me to move with relative ease within the community. To his Gujarati friends--in particular P. K. Bhindi, Devidas Fakir Morriswala, S. B. Desai, D. N. Patel, Narainji Sida--and other informants in Fiji (listed in my bibliography on pages 346-48), I owe my sincere gratitude for their cooperation and courtesy.

The Department of History at the University of British Columbia

provided financial help by way of two teaching assistantships during 1971-73. My research in England in November 1973 was financed through a special grant from the late Dr. Walter H. Gage. The research in India between December 1973 and March 1975 (including living expenses, travel from Canada to India) and the subsequent trip from India to Fiji were funded by the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. The University of British Columbia awarded me a Summer Research Scholarship in 1976 toward the completion of the dissertation.

I also wish to make special mention of my family and close friends for their hospitality, encouragement, kindness, and financial support which enabled me to complete my research in Fiji. Without aid from any Canadian source the research in Fiji was conducted under the most trying circumstances. In Lautoka Phyllis and Radha Naidu shared their simple abode with me, Rosabella, and Sonya. No less in importance were uncles and cousins for their generosity. My brother, Ashok, in Suva loaned me much of the money for travel and research expenses. My sisters, in-laws, and other relatives all helped in their own way. But for my wife, Rosabella, I would not have made it through the whole ordeal. She has faithfully acted as my personal secretary and typist throughout my graduate career. If she had not been the sole bread-earner for the better part of the period between November 1975 and August 1978, at the expense of her own academic interests, I could not have devoted full-time attention to this thesis. As for our daughter, Sonya, I can only hope that she will understand, one day, why it was sometimes necessary to turn the entire household into a study.

The research in England, India, and Fiji was facilitated by the cooperation of various archives and libraries (listed in my explanatory note to the bibliography on pages 339-40). Miss D. Keswani of the Indian National Archives took particular interest in my research, because of her

own work on Overseas Indians, and also provided letters of introduction to directors of archives in Gujarat and Maharashtra. In India and Fiji, senior government officials granted me permission to examine unclassified material and records which were not covered under the existing rules of accessibility.

In India, many people went out of their way to be helpful. The staff of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute in New Delhi was always obliging. Dr. R. K. Dharaiya, of the Department of History, University of Gujarat, acted as my "Indian supervisor" in accordance with the terms of my fellowship. Much advice and encouragement also came from Professor S. C. Misra and his colleagues in the Department of History at the M.S. University of Baroda. Others to whom I am indebted include Dr. Sureshbhai Joshi who struggled against time to give me a rudimentary knowledge of Gujarati, the Ramakrishnans for their constant concern for my family's health and welfare, Dr. R. D. Parikh who provided many leads to informants and much stimulating discussion on Gujarat, R. B. Desai who introduced me to the Khatris in Navsari, and the Pandhya family in Vallabh Vidyanagar for their assistance in the Charotar region. Dhawal S. Desai kindly acted as my interpreter and guide during my travels and fieldwork in South Gujarat and Saurashtra (Kathiawar). Nalin A. Pandhya assisted me with interviews in Vallabh Vidyanagar and Dharmaj. Almost all interviews were conducted in either English, or Hindi, or Gujarati without the use of a tape recorder.

Dr. Peter Harnetty directed this thesis and had the tedious task of reading the two drafts. His critical supervision, as well as the readiness with which he allowed me to express my ideas freely, made this thesis a reality. Among other South Asianists at the University of British Columbia, both Dr. John Wood and Dr. Fritz Lehmann always expressed interest in my research. Dr. Wood was particularly responsive to my problems and needs in

his capacity as Resident Director of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute in New Delhi in 1973-75. Finally, I also thank Dr. Edgar Wickberg and Dr. R. V. Kubicek for giving me a wider perspective to my training as a historian. Dr. Wickberg's work on Chinese migration provided much insight into the whole process of Asian immigration.

The responsibility for any oversight and error in presentation, interpretation, and judgement remains entirely mine.

Kamal K. Prasad

Vancouver, B.C.

October 1978

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The movement of Indians to other parts of the world antedates the establishment of any government-regulated emigration scheme. Trade provided the first impetus to this migration beyond India. The existence of a maritime and commercial connection between the western Indian seaboard and the southern coastal regions of East Africa from the first century A.D. reveals the extent to which Indian merchants had carried their trade to other parts of the world though permanent settlement was not their intention. The East African connection remained unabated, when first the Arabs and later the European powers, especially the Portuguese, vied for ascendancy in the extensive network of Indian Ocean trade from the fourteenth century onward. The main stimulus to Indian emigration from Western India occurred in the nineteenth century with a further revival of trade after the establishment of the Omani sultanate in Zanzibar, and with the advent of the British in East, South, and Central Africa. Another phase of Indian emigration began with European colonization of Ceylon, Burma and other parts of Southeast Asia. The earliest emigration, implying settlement, took place as a movement of Tamil laborers from the southern regions of the subcontinent to the Straits Settlements in the late eighteenth century. The heyday of Indian emigration began with the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1834 which provided the first great impetus to the movement of laborers under the indenture system.

Between the 1830s and the 1930s, that is until the end of the worldwide depression, about thirty million Indians migrated from India to the British possessions and colonies.[1] The various means and migratory schemes consisted of unassisted labor migration under the indenture system, intracontinental movement of plantation workers under the kangani or maistry system, assisted

immigration of 'specialists' (policemen, clerks, interpreters, priests, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and miscellaneous categories of skilled workers) under contract to various colonial governments, and unassisted intercontinental movement of unskilled workers. The years between 1834 and 1908 constitute the period of unrestricted indentured emigration, followed by increasing regulation until the abolition of the indenture system in 1920 and the enactment by the Government of India of the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 which placed strict controls on the emigration of unskilled laborers from India. Between 1923 and 1929 emigration continued while India still enjoyed the prosperity engendered by the wartime boom. After 1929, the dampening effect of the worldwide depression created a reverse migration of overseas Indians back to India and this continued unabated until the end of World War II. A new wave of emigration from India began after 1945 with the movement of ex-servicemen who had fought abroad with the allies. Students, skilled and unskilled workers, and professionals began to migrate more frequently as countries liberalized their immigration laws to permit the entry of nonwhite peoples. Political developments in Asia and Africa in the 1950s and 1960s produced new trends in Indian emigration with the creation of a shifting Indian population which went to countries willing to receive them.

The indenture system transported Indians mainly to the sugar producing tropical British colonies in the West Indies and the Pacific. This scheme also drew them to Africa to construct railroads. Perhaps the largest movement of Indians occurred under the kangani and maistry systems to Ceylon and Malaya. Because of the contiguity of these areas to India, large numbers of Indian laborers were not averse to spending short periods on the plantations in those colonies. With the emergence of immigrant communities beyond India, colonial governments soon required the services of 'specialist' immigrants to facilitate their administration of these communities residing within their jurisdiction. Pockets of Indian population which grew out of the government-

regulated immigration schemes soon attracted other Indians from various parts of India who travelled independently, without assistance from any government, in search of fortune. 'Unassisted' immigrants preferred areas which were easily accessible through existing sea routes and which already harbored sizeable communities of their countrymen. 'Unassisted' immigrants also ventured into other areas such as England and North America with which Indians had had very little contact but which still offered numerous opportunities for study, economic gain, and settlement. The recent exodus from Africa and the constant movement of Indians to other hospitable parts of the world merely indicates the increasing complexity and immensity of Indian emigration.

The establishment of immigrant communities outside India may be considered a significant part of the study of British imperial history but has been receiving the widespread attention of scholars from other disciplines. The experiences of Indian migrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has widened our understanding of Indian society and culture, and has increasingly presented new problems of research to social scientists in their study of plural societies and minority groups. Much of the existing literature on overseas Indians has centered on those parts of the world where they have already established a permanent pattern of settlement. Areas such as Mauritius, East and South Africa, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Malaya, England, and to some extent Canada have served as a laboratory for examining overseas Indian societies. Various scholars including C. Kondapi (1951),[2] I. M. Cumpston (1953),[3] Hilda Kuper (1960),[4] Usha Mahajani (1960),[5] Burton Benedict (1961),[6] Morton Klass (1961),[7] Adrian C. Mayer (1961),[8] K. L. Gillion (1962),[9] George Delf (1963),[10] Rashmi Desai (1963),[11] K. S. Sandhu (1967),[12] Barton Schwartz, ed. (1967),[13] Robert C. Gregory (1971),[14] and Hugh Tinker (1974)[15] and (1976),[16] have applied varied methodological approaches in the study of these migrant societies emerging either under the indenture and plantation systems (Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, and Malaya) or in the

'unindentured' areas (mainly South and East Africa). Themes which appear in the existing studies deal with the nature and structure of Indian emigration, economic exploitation under the plantation and indenture systems, caste as an organizing principle among overseas Indians, social organization among immigrant peasant societies, racial conflict in plural societies, minority groups and ethnic interaction on the political level, and the more recent Asian (Indian) problem around the world. Few of the mentioned works provide a systematic treatment of Indian traders who fell into the general category of nonlabor migration excluded in the indenture and kangani systems. This deficiency becomes apparent when examining the negligible literature on Indian traders in migrant societies. Rashmi Desai's work on Indian immigrants in Britain provides some insights into the role of Gujaratis in establishing Indian enterprise there. A few recent studies of Indians in East Africa by H. S. Morris (1968)[17] and J. S. Mangat (1969)[18] also show the significance of investigating Indian trader communities attracted to the host countries by the opportunities for trade and commercial exploitation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the movement of 'free' (as opposed to indentured) emigrants whose intention in leaving India was pursuit of opportunity and trade. More specifically the focus is on the Gujaratis of Fiji who comprise a trader community which has not been subjected to extensive scrutiny by scholars. This study embraces a time span of forty-five years, from the beginning of this century to the end of the Second World War. It is this period which characterizes the crucial formative phase of Gujarati immigration and settlement in Fiji. During this forty-five year span significant numbers of Gujaratis from various castes and diverse backgrounds came to Fiji and gradually became entrenched in their present role as a visible and important trader community within a predominantly agricultural Indian population. In the process they acquired a distinctive and persistent negative image comparable to the dukawalla (shopkeeper) in

Africa.

Fiji contains a large Indian population--in excess of fifty per cent of the entire population--consisting mainly of descendants of immigrants who came from diverse parts of India from 1879 either under the indenture system or as 'free' immigrants. Yet the diversity of the regional Indian cultures which is still apparent in Fiji's Indian community has been largely ignored or superficially treated. The common practice of treating Indians as one administrative unit has been carried over into research on Indians in Fiji without much effort to systematically analyze the regional components which went into the making of the immigrant society and culture. Accordingly, regional groups such as the Gujaratis and South Indians have been superficially mentioned or simply treated as part of the all-inclusive Indian category without much focus on their separate cultural identities, distinct from other Indians in terms of origins, social background, language, occupational orientation, and settlement characteristics. The standard approach by scholars to fit all Indians within the rigid framework of the 'indentured' area studies distorts our understanding of Fiji's Indian society. This approach will not suffice, just as the argument that the data on other Indian groups apart from indentured immigrants are incomplete cannot be taken seriously. The regional approach to South Asia has opened new areas of research and greatly enriched studies of India and its people.[19] Such an approach in the study of Indian immigrant societies is long overdue, especially in the case of Fiji.

Indians in Fiji first began to receive scholarly attention in the 1940s, but still with scanty mention of the Gujaratis who had become the predominant immigrants in the 1930s. John Wesley Coulter (1942)[20] in his pioneering study examined the Indian immigrants in terms of the threat which they presented to the indigenous Fijians. In his introductory panoramic description of the community he referred to Gujaratis as "Bombay tailors

busily plying their trade" (p. 1), and later as immigrants from Bombay Presidency who were merely "attracted to the islands by rumors of high wages and favorable economic conditions generally" (p. 79). Implicitly, the Gujaratis were also included in his disparaging remarks about "Asiatic shopkeepers" for their role in causing Indian indebtedness (p. 99). Coulter's subsequent work in 1967 was merely an elaboration of his earlier study which he now supplemented with new data, more maps, and numerous tables.[21] The background of "the economic and political rivalry between the native Melanesians and tens of thousands of Indian colonists who are out to possess the land" was consistent with his impressive title The Drama of Fiji. Gujaratis did not fare any better than they had done in earlier works. Coulter described them as "traders, shoemakers, barbers, laundrymen, and jewelers" who "emigrated because they could earn a better living in Fiji than in Gujerat" (p. 84). He also commented briefly on their standoffishness, their shrewdness, their profitable businesses, and also their ability to "combine to fight non-Gujerati competition" (p. 169). Coulter, of course, did not deviate from the standard and obvious remarks that have been made about other marginal communities such as the Marwaris in Bengal or the Jews in New York.

The official treatise on Fiji's Indian community was A. W. McMillan's pamphlet (1944)[22] which was intended for use by senior officers of the Government Service, but which was subsequently withdrawn from circulation in response to objections raised about its contents. McMillan classified the Indians into three groups: indentured laborers and their descendants; Gujarati traders and artisans; Punjabi farmers and dairymen. He included some faulty information about the Gujaratis or 'Bombaywallas' whom he described as only originating from a very small area near Surat. This observation contained the common misconception that all Gujaratis came from Surat without taking into account those who had originated in Kathiawar and

Central Gujarat. Nevertheless, McMillan's other observations about the lack of family immigration among the Gujaratis, the strong links which they maintained with their homeland, and their ability to move into 'untouchable' occupations which local Indians generally avoided, provided good insights into that community.

W. E. H. Stanner (1953)[23] did not specifically concentrate on Fiji but included it as part of his study of three British dependencies in the Southwest Pacific. In an otherwise competent and impressive work, Stanner did not conceal his bias against the Indians, perhaps relying too heavily on the official version of the community's development. He questioned the Fiji Indian war effort, commented on the Indian living conditions, and was certainly more sympathetic toward rural Indian farmers with their problems with debt and the fall in agricultural productivity. His scathing remarks on the "blatant tax evasion by Indian merchants" was perhaps directed toward the rapacious "Bombaywallas" who did not regard Fiji as a home but rather as a place in which to make money rapidly (p. 178). Stanner helped to reinforce the negative image of the Gujaratis which began to emerge in Fiji at that time generally.

The most important studies of Fiji Indians appeared in the 1960s. Adrian C. Mayer (1961)[24] concentrated on broadening the knowledge of Fiji Indian society by describing the rural part of it within the framework of the usual 'indentured' area studies. Mention of the Gujaratis was made mainly in his section on the economic activities which dominated the life of the settlements which he examined. Unfortunately, Mayer did not adequately cover the Gujarati impact on the rural scene. Rather the rural Gujarati shopkeeper merely provided the norm for comparing the non-Gujarati shopkeepers in the settlements (pp. 46-47). His other observations fell within the standard characterization of Gujaratis as a separate cultural group with a strong business orientation which maintained strong links with India, kept their

traditional occupations as tailors, shopkeepers, and jewelers, and readily combined to fight any non-Gujarati competitor. It seems that Mayer relied heavily on material which had already appeared in K. L. Gillion's doctoral dissertation in 1958.[25] The coverage of Gujaratis was even less in his short comprehensive history of the Fiji Indians (1963).[26] He included brief sketches of important personalities such as Manilal Doctor and A. D. Patel, but simply alluded to the growing influence of the India-born Gujaratis vis-à-vis the Fiji-born Indians with only a fleeting analysis of their position in the overall economic power structure in Fiji.

K. L. Gillion (1962)[27] has produced the most comprehensive work on the operation of the indenture system in Fiji. Its deficiencies were not so much errors in judgement and interpretation as the result of a concern to toe the official line, which is perhaps understandable if one took into account that the circumstances and times in colonial Fiji dictated such an approach. The merits of his study also become somewhat obscured by deficiencies in his treatment of nonlabor migration to Fiji. His chapter on 'free' immigrants comprises six pages (pp. 130-35). To delve into the reasons for this oversight would be mere speculation and Gillion cannot be faulted for not doing what he had not intended to do in the first place. Both his focus on the indenture system and the limited time span of his study precluded any scrutiny of emigration records which went beyond the perimeters of 'indentured' area studies. Gillion relied only on oral sources to provide a brief sketch of early Gujarati emigration without any use of emigration records in Bombay and Baroda for the period between 1916 and 1920. Hence, there are errors in his description of the origins of the Gujarati immigrants. Apart from a few names of the earliest immigrants and the dates of their arrival, supplemented by a brief sketch of the career of Manilal Doctor in another chapter, the Gujaratis are, once again, placed within the standard characterization as a group who maintained close ties with their homeland,

remitted money, were thrifty and hardworking, and possessed a strong sense of group loyalty (p. 134).

The rural dimension of Fiji's Indian population which provided the 'indentured' area framework for Mayer's and Gillion's works was obviously the most fertile field for further research. Barton M. Schwartz (1967)[28] examined the endogamous patterns of marriage and caste among a minute segment of the rural Indian population as part of a larger anthropological approach to the pan-Indian dimensions of caste in overseas communities. Although other cultural and linguistic categories such as Nepali, Punjabi, and Tamil are included in his analysis, the rural Gujarati shopkeeper is noticeably absent. This omission tends to leave gaps in his otherwise significant generalizations.

Two more recent studies of Fiji Indians serve as good illustrations of a broadening concern to place the Gujarati community within its proper perspective. I. S. Chauhan (1969)[29] in his yet unpublished doctoral dissertation on political processes among the Indians of Labasa (in Vanua Levu) threw new light on Gujarati "trader leadership" based on a system of important trade relationships which emerged between the trader in Labasa and the large wholesaling Gujarati outlets in Suva. Chauhan also provided valuable insights into the operation of the Gujarati shop and its role in the extension of a wide network of credit. He had, in effect, ventured into a new area which holds tremendous potential for future scholars, and which is certainly an important contribution to a fuller understanding of the Gujarati community.

The other study by Ahmed Ali (1977)[30] is the first of a two-part brief historical sketch of Indian immigrant society between 1879 and 1939. Although Ali deals with material already covered in other broader studies, he basically concentrates on the more salient features of Indian immigration and settlement--the indenture period, the changing character of immigrant society,

'free' immigration, and the strike of 1920. The section on 'free' immigration is centered on Punjabis and Gujaratis. The heavy reliance on the records in Fiji on 'free' immigration may have sufficed Ali's purpose to provide a cursory glance of Gujaratis and Punjabis and to lend more depth to the topic. But the records are incomplete, which, in effect, necessitates a profile of the Gujarati community with a strong official bent. This bias tends to reinforce other observations and generalizations of the author. Ali is correct in saying that Gujaratis added a new dimension to Fiji Indian society in terms of their specific economic role, but, he is off the mark when he states that they "came as entrepreneurs."[31] This generalization presupposes that Gujaratis were already engaged in entrepreneurial roles prior to their arrival in Fiji. It is actually an imprecise categorization because it bypasses some of the more relevant facts about the social background of the Gujarati immigrants as well as that of indentured immigrants which help explain why Gujaratis were more successful in assuming entrepreneurial roles in Fiji. His other statement that "it was their aim to monopolize this aspect of the economy" (meaning trade and commerce) is again based on a faulty premise. The Gujaratis were indeed noticeably entrenched in small-scale retail trade and in certain occupations, and in fact did acquire a monopoly of certain trades, but it does not necessarily follow that this was all part of a calculated design from the moment they had arrived in Fiji. The problem is more complex and definitely requires further elaboration and clarification as do his other observations in reference to Gujarati exclusiveness and clannishness, their closely-knit businesses and the tendency to undercut non-Gujarati business rivals, their frugality and thriftiness, and their leanings toward nationalist politics in India.

The image of the Gujaratis which emerges in the existing literature is by no means complete, and above all, certainly a negative one. There has been no attempt to explain the sociology of Gujarati immigration. What has

persisted is a skeleton without much meat. It will not suffice to compare Gujarati immigration to a chain reaction--namely, one immigrant called another; nor will it do to describe the Gujarati community in relation to that section of that community which traced its origins in Fiji to the indenture system. For the past forty years scholars have been consistently implying that had it not been for Gujaratis other Indians would have made more progress in the economic sphere. This interpretation is too simplistic and has generally obscured a proper evaluation of the role of the Gujarati within the Fiji Indian community.

This study of the Gujaratis in Fiji will form a contribution to the vast subject of Indian immigration generally. It will also help to identify significant changes in one segment of Indian society in a new environment. But its particular intention is to rectify gaps and glaring deficiencies in the treatment of Gujaratis in Fiji. This study focuses on such themes as the pattern and peak periods of Gujarati immigration, the origins of the migrants, their motives for leaving India, their settlement characteristics in relation to other Indians in Fiji, the social structure of the community, and their economic activities. It will also test the validity of a number of hypotheses: that Gujaratis came to Fiji with certain occupational expectations just as the failure of these expectations had precipitated their departure from India; that Gujaratis acquired an economic role in Fiji because they had an inherent ability to organize and to be organized; that the cultural cohesiveness and social organization of the community enabled it to respond effectively to the pressure of changing conditions in the new environment; that the Gujaratis merely existed <u>in</u> the host country but seldom displayed signs of belonging <u>to</u> it because of the strong and persistent sense of cultural continuity with their homeland.

The major sources of data used in this study can be broken down into three parts:

1. Archival and official material available in libraries and archives in England, India, and Fiji comprising official correspondence, government legislation and parliamentary debates, reports, official pronouncements, and policy statements. Of particular significance are: (a) Indian emigration proceedings and records in London and New Delhi; (b) passport registers in the Political Department records of the Government of Bombay and unclassified original passport applications (also in Bombay); (c) police files of the Huzur English Office in Baroda; (d) immigration and business records in Suva.

2. Interviews, first among Gujaratis with established links with Fiji, in Kathiawar (Saurashtra), Kheda (Kaira), Baroda, Navsari, Bilimora, Bulsar, Gandevi, Chikhli, and Bombay; second, among Gujaratis in Suva, Nausori, Nadi, Lautoka, and Ba (all in Fiji).[32] In India the interview technique was designed to obtain information mainly on the nature of the link with Fiji, dates and estimates of one's immediate family members who emigrated to Fiji, and reasons for emigrating to Fiji, whereas in Fiji the same technique yielded information on further estimates of a particular caste grouping, the group's perception of its early immigration and settlement, its reasons for settling in a particular locality, the response to economic opportunities and occupational preferences, the problems of maintaining cultural identity, attitudes toward other Indians and races, and the response to education and politics.

3. Published literature and other unpublished material on the general topic of Indians overseas which provided the background and conceptual framework of this study.

A brief historical background to the introduction of Indians through the indenture system is provided in Chapter II, so as to put the subsequent and main section on unassisted immigration, between 1900 and 1920, in its proper perspective. This chapter examines the nature of 'free' emigration from India to Fiji while focusing on these problems: who were the first 'free'

immigrants and why? What groups can be distinguished? When do Gujaratis and Punjabis fit into the pattern of unassisted emigration from India? It also attempts to determine the peak periods of unassisted immigration to Fiji in the light of favorable economic and political conditions, the presence of an established Indian community, and emigration policy in India and immigration policy in Fiji. The primary concern is with the contention that 'free' emigrants invariably followed not only in the wake of indentured laborers to Fiji, but also on account of certain expectations which motivated them to leave India.

Chapter III discusses Indian immigration in the postindenture period, between 1921 and 1945. There are three sections in this chapter: the first deals with the search for an alternative system of emigration from India to replace the indenture system; the second is concerned with the socio-economic conditions in Fiji which still attracted immigrants inspite of the failure to find an acceptable alternative to indentured laborers; and lastly the actual process of 'free' Indian immigration is examined, initially between a period of unlimited controls between 1921 and 1930, and later during the implementation of immigration restrictions between 1930 and 1940. This section on 'free' immigrants constitutes the most significant part with its emphasis on Gujaratis, and to some extent Punjabis, who had become the predominant force in emigration from India to Fiji. Both Chapters II and III provide the background through which Gujaratis are examined in fuller detail in subsequent chapters.

Chapter IV concentrates on the Gujarati immigrants and their social background. The main problems dealt with are the areas from where they originated in Gujarat, the principal emigrant groups and their position in Gujarati society, and their motivation in migrating. The analysis of the immigrants is carried in two parts: first during the indenture period until 1920; second after 1921 in the postindenture period.

Chapter V is about Gujarati settlement in Fiji from the time of their arrival until 1945. From the outset the pattern of Gujarati settlement had a strong correlation with their occupational and trading activities, but it was also linked to their preference for urban areas. The chapter focuses on the areas in Fiji which were preferred for settlement and also examines the factors involved in the choice of a particular locality in town. These factors include the Gujarati preoccupation with trade and commercial activity, the local demand for the traditional skills of certain Gujarati castes, better economic opportunities in urban areas, and political security. This chapter attempts to provide answers to the more pertinent issues: Where did each caste grouping settle eventually and what pattern of existence did they follow? Why is it that some Gujaratis only settled in those areas and towns with a large Indian population? Did they open up and exploit hinterland (as they had done in East Africa) or did they only restrict themselves to urban areas?

Chapter VI is essentially concerned with a discussion of Gujarati social life in Fiji. It begins with a brief comparison of Gujaratis with other Indian groups in an effort to show how the disruptive tendencies of the colonial environment on caste affected mainly those immigrants who came under the indenture system rather than the Gujaratis who maintained strong ties with their homeland. Second, this chapter grapples with the problem that, although Gujaratis were bound to a strong sense of caste ideology, they did not arrange themselves rigidly according to any hierarchical structure of their homeland. Third, the discussion centers on the Gujarati shop as the focal point in social and economic relationships, first within the immediate caste grouping, then between groups with similar economic interests, and finally with other Indians and races. Fourth, the chapter also shows that Gujaratis were concerned with the organization of family life only after the arrival of women and children at which point it became

necessary to maintain in-group solidarity and exclusiveness and stricter adherence to ritual paraphenalia.

Chapter VII deals with a number of topics relating to the Gujarati identity in Fiji. The first section analyzes their innovative role in the emergence of Indian enterprise and their negative image which arose from that capacity. The next section discusses the factors which prevented any Gujarati effort at integration into Fiji Indian society. These factors include their strong attachment for their homeland, their cultural chauvinism, their reluctance to bring families and to duplicate the Gujarati household, their business practices with a strong preference of business partners from their own castes, and the lack of a sense of isolation from Gujarat. The third section is about their struggles with problems in the new environment, especially those dealing with community cooperation, welfare associations, and education. The last part describes the Gujarati response to politics. This chapter attempts to explain how Gujaratis asserted their identity in Fiji in terms of the problems they confronted.

Finally, Chapter VIII provides a synopsis of relevant issues and their discussion in all the chapters. It also presents generalizations in regard to Gujarati immigration, settlement, life in the new environment, and their identity in the host country. The study will conclude with some general remarks about their progress since 1945 and their future status in Fiji.

NOTES

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[27]Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, cited in note 9 above.

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[31]The same generalization is found in Michael Ward, The Role of Investment in the Development of Fiji (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 43, n. 40.

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CHAPTER II

'FREE' IMMIGRATION TO FIJI UNTIL THE END OF INDENTURE (1900-1920)

The study of the Indian community in Fiji begins with the indenture system. Though indentured laborers formed the overwhelming bulk of the Indian migrants to Fiji until 1916, they were also joined by 'unassisted' or 'free' immigrants. These 'free' migrants first began to arrive in small numbers at the turn of the century but gradually became an important strain within the Indian population. 'Free' immigration was the inevitable outgrowth of indentured immigration. This chapter, then, is about 'free' immigration until the abolition of the indenture system in 1920. It focuses on the groups who came, their motivation, the conditions in Fiji which they encountered, and their response to the opportunities in the new land. Above all, it is about the Gujaratis who also came to Fiji from Western India and their specific place within the nascent 'free' immigrant society which emerged prior to 1920.

It is first necessary to provide a brief introduction to Fiji, its geographical and physical characteristics, its early history, its indigenous population, and its economic and political development prior to the arrival of the Indians. The Fiji Islands constitute an extensive archipelago scattered over a wide area between latitudes 15° and 20° south of the Equator with the 180th meridian passing longitudinally through the group.[1] The islands are centrally situated in the Northwest Pacific, to the northeast of Sydney (Australia) and to the north of Auckland (New Zealand), and surrounded by other island clusters including Tonga, New Hebrides, Samoa, and New Caledonia. There are in excess of 500 islands and islets in the Fiji archipelago of which 322 are suitable for habitation, and of which only 106 are inhabited.[2]

The larger islands are volcanic in origin and include Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni, and Kadavu (Kandavu). Viti Levu and Vanua Levu constitute 87 per cent of the total land area of 7,040 square miles. Both these islands have similar topographical features. While the coasts are fringed with fertile land, the interior is very mountainous forming a system of highlands and swiftly flowing rivers. The major river systems in Viti Levu have cut steep winding valleys in the interior, and have also built up the fertile plains and deltas which presently form the core areas of settlement and commercial agriculture. Vanua Levu, on the other hand, contains less extensive hill country, and proportionally smaller areas of rolling plains and flat land for agriculture.

Fiji does not enjoy climatic uniformity. The two large islands contain clearly defined climatic divisions: that of the windward wet zone in the southeast and the other of the leeward dry zone in the northwest. The rainfall is heaviest in the windward regions averaging over 120 inches annually. Hence, there is a sharp contrast in vegetation between the two climatic zones in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Except in those areas which are heavily cultivated, the windward side is covered with dense subtropical rain forest. By contrast, the dry zone contains patches of sparse forest in open grass and reed covered areas. Extensive mangrove swamps abound at mouths of the river systems, offering a natural ecological habitat to numerous forms of marine life as well as providing timber for fuel and house-building. The strong correlation between climate and agriculture is certainly evident in Fiji.

The original inhabitants, who alone bear the racial categorization of Fijian, are essentially of Melanesian stock but also reveal a Polynesian strain in the eastern parts of the Fiji group. There are no precise estimates of the Fijian population prior to concentrated contact with the Europeans in the nineteenth century. The population in the latter part of the nineteenth century had been placed at a low figure of 100,000 to a high of 300,000. But

like other island populations in the Pacific, the Fijians were subjected to the ravages of European diseases, alcohol, firearms, and intermittent warfare. The measles epidemic of 1875 reduced the population size considerably and when the first official census was taken in 1881, the Fijian population was placed at 114,748.

Traditional Fijian society possessed a rich cultural heritage punctuated with ceremony and tradition. It was founded on a complex system of land ownership based on customary tenure and communal ownership. The primary and largest social unit of Fijian society was the yavusa whose members comprised direct descendants of a legendary or deified ancestor. Patrilineal descendants of the founder formed lineages within the yavusa called the mataqali (matangali), further subdivided into smaller local units called the i tokatoka. Though the i tokatoka formed the main criterion for land ownership, it was the mataqali which was legitimized as the landholding unit by the British after 1874. Fundamental to the Fijian system of land ownership were the inalienable and equal rights of all the corporate members and future generations of the mataqali, a concept which still prevails.

The European discovery of, and contacts with, Fiji progressed through various stages. First came the explorers--Abel Tasman in 1643, James Cook in 1774, and William Bligh in 1789 and 1792--who either sighted or charted some of the islands. After the initial contacts, European mariners and navigators generally avoided the islands for two main reasons: the treacherous reefs which made navigation difficult and the formidable reputation of Fiji's inhabitants. The second stage began as a trading contact at the beginning of the nineteenth century when European vessels came first in search of sandalwood, and later for bêche-de-mer and coconut oil. Whalers also frequented parts of the island group. Trade linked Fiji to the important ports in the Orient, New England, and the Pacific generally. At this point the islands did not seem attractive to white settlement except to the

original 'birds of passage' who included beachcombers (whites turned native), survivors from wrecked vessels, castaways and other derelicts, and deserters from sandalwood ships.[3] As in the case of other areas, these types have since gained notoriety in history on account of the havoc which they created among island populations through their licentiousness, the traffic in firearms and alcohol, the introduction of diseases, and their disturbing role in local warfare as mercenaries to leading chiefs. The limited phase of European contact culminated with the arrival of missionaries in the 1830s who added further stresses and strains to Fijian society with their conflicting religious ideologies, although these influences were ultimately beneficial.

Permanent settlement did not occur until the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s knowledge of Fiji increased with a corresponding growth of foreign influence through the visit of naval vessels. Rumors of British annexation brought immigrants from Australia and New Zealand who came as traders, planters, and speculators in search of easy profits. The cotton boom of the 1860s attracted a new breed of planters who required large tracts of land with an assured labor supply. The intensity of land purchases from Fijians far exceeded the influx of white settlers who numbered anywhere from 1,200 to 2,000 by 1870. Large estates emerged on the smaller islands and then spread to the coastal regions of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, but mainly in the Rewa Delta in Viti Levu. The efforts of the planters to exploit Fiji's resources were supplemented by the establishment of trading houses in Levuka to provide a wide range of financial and mercantile services to the white community.

While the cotton trade was essential to the economic security of the growing community of planters and merchants, it had an adverse effect on the large-scale cultivation of other commercial crops. The cotton trade was also tied to the whole problem of law and order in Fiji because of the planter hunger for more land and the alarming traffic in Polynesian labor to augment

scarce Fijian labor. Both European settlers and Fijian chiefs desired some form of central authority to prevent a confrontation between whites and Fijians and to permit settlers to further their economic objectives.

The collaboration between an apprehensive white community and Fijian chiefs to form a stable government was undermined by one crisis after another. First, the planter community was ill-prepared, through a lack of agricultural diversification, for the collapse of the cotton trade in 1870 and the accompanying depression. Second, factional elements within the settler community continually vied for ascendancy under the government of Cakobau (Thakombau), a powerful chief who styled himself 'King.' Third, the Fijians remained as bystanders and watched in dismay while the faction-ridden and incompetent administrators and legislators led the government initially into bankruptcy and eventually toward anarchy. Finally, the collapse of Cakobau's government threatened the security of Britain's 'informal empire' in the Pacific, consequently precipitating British intervention in Fiji in 1874.[4] Britain's approach to the Fijian problem was an innovative exercise in indirect rule, in fact a forerunner of the experiment in Africa. From the outset, Fijian interests remained paramount and made an integral part of colonial policy by the first substantive governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (later Lord Stanmore), especially after a measles epidemic decimated the indigenous population. Gordon reduced the amount of land in European hands and restricted further land sales, thereby consolidating absolute Fijian control over their lands through native institutions. Moreover, he devised a system of native taxation and administration which reinforced the inherent link between Fijians and their traditional leaders, the chiefs. Above all, rather than acquiescing in the demands of settlers to tap Fijians as a labor force, Gordon's policy was aimed at protecting Fijian society from the evils of a money economy. Instead he proposed the introduction of indentured laborers from India, augmented by a scheme to expand the existing agricultural base of the economy

under the auspices of large-scale capitalism attracted from abroad.

Indentured Indian immigrants were introduced into Fiji as a means of supplying the labor requirements of plantations and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (hereafter, the C.S.R.), a large Australian capitalist concern which had been lured to Fiji to develop the sugar industry. The indenture system appeared as a logical sequence to the abolition of slavery and was designed as a convenient way to utilize cheap Indian labor to help develop the economies of British colonies. The system was introduced in Fiji along the lines of the immigration schemes of Trinidad and British Guiana. Recruited emigrants were given a free passage to Fiji to serve a contracted period of five years, and only entitled to repatriation without cost after remaining as indentured laborers for a further five years. A provision was also incorporated into the scheme to permit laborers who had served their period of indenture to remain in the colony as permanent residents. The first 481 indentured emigrants arrived from India in 1879.

Between 1879 and 1899, 18,853 indentured Indian laborers were introduced into Fiji. Taking into consideration 4,509 births, 4,278 deaths, and 5,991 departures (of laborers who had completed their term of indenture), and 2,275 new emigrants, the Indian population of Fiji was estimated to be 15,368 in 1900.[5] The overwhelming bulk of the migrants had come from the eastern parts of United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh) and Bihar. Some Punjabis had been recruited in the early years of the 1880s, and Nepalis were also despatched in the 1890s. In 1902, another emigration agency was opened in Madras and the first South Indian ('Madrassi') laborers arrived in 1903. There was virtually no recruiting in Bombay Presidency. The only known cases of recruiting there took place in Ahmedabad in 1883-84.[6] Again the figure was negligible. The main reason was that the Government of Bombay objected to recruiting for Fiji. Basically, the composition of the population was 'north-Indian' up until the arrival of laborers from Madras.

From 1900 onward, the number of Indians who had served their period of indenture but had opted to stay on plantations was becoming noticeable. Besides this group there were nonindentured emigrants who had come to Fiji on their own and not under any immigration scheme. Though the number was small, the estimates of the 'passenger' immigrants were given in the yearly immigration reports of Fiji. In 1900, 32 such arrivals were recorded and in 1901 the official estimate of Indians who came into Fiji direct from India or through the other colonies as passengers was estimated at 100.[7] Most of these immigrants were 'returnees' who had lived in Fiji as indentured laborers previously and had been repatriated to India, but now had decided to return to the colony. These immigrants entered Fiji without any difficulty provided that they complied with the normal emigration and health formalities in India as well as in Fiji.

The rise in the number of 'passenger' immigrants in 1901 can be attributed to the arrival of 20 Parsi artisans.[8] These Parsis represented the first batch of Gujarati artisans who came to Fiji. They had been induced to emigrate by Thomas Hughes, a recruiting agent of the C.S.R., who had been visiting India at the time. Since the Parsi artisans were residents of Bombay Presidency, where recruiting for Fiji was prohibited, and fell within the classification of laborers, Hughes had first to obtain permission for them to migrate. The Government of India did not raise any objection but the cooperation of the Government of Bengal had to be secured since all categories of emigrants to Fiji departed through the Port of Calcutta. However, the Government of Bengal saw no objection to the 20 Parsi artisans going to Fiji provided that they complied with normal health regulations at the point of disembarkation.[9]

By the end of 1907, approximately 300 of these 'passenger' emigrants had arrived in Fiji on emigrant steamers from Calcutta.[10] Yet the numerical strength of Indian immigrants who had arrived in Fiji under none of the

provisions of the Indian Immigration Ordinance of Fiji was placed at 1,000.[11] One reason for this increase was the establishment of a regular route between Calcutta and New Zealand which allowed Indians to travel on ships other than the emigrant steamers. Traffic between India and Australia must also have been on the increase, judging from the Indian Government's stipulation in 1904 to Indian students, merchants, and other travellers proceeding to Australia to arm themselves with passports to facilitate their entry.[12] Thus, the only plausible explanation for the discrepancy between the accountable 300 'passenger' immigrants and the estimated total number of immigrants not covered by the immigration ordinance in Fiji would be that Indians who went to other areas in the Pacific, such as New Zealand and Australia, were proceeding to Fiji in nonemigrant ships. Furthermore, it is difficult to say who they were. Information obtained orally as well as the existing research on that period has provided some insight into the origins of this category of immigrants. The Census Report of Fiji for the year 1911 has thrown some light on this problem also.

'Unassisted' immigration had already gained some momentum prior to 1905. Three types of 'free' immigrants had arrived at that stage. The largest single group comprised former indentured laborers who reemigrated to Fiji. They had welcomed repatriation in anticipation of establishing old ties and joining families. But conditions at home had changed during their absence. Some longed for the lax social milieu of Fiji inspite of their traumatic experiences under indenture; others were under pressure to share their meager savings with numerous relatives; many were simply rejected because of the shame which they brought upon their families.

Punjabis constituted another group. In 1904, 70 Punjabis came to Fiji after spending some time in New Caledonia first.[13] They were Jat Sikhs from Jullundur district who had gone to New Caledonia to seek their fortune. Faced with unfavorable conditions they decided to go to Fiji where they

did not make much headway either. The majority were finally repatriated to India via New Caledonia, but those who chose to remain for some time included Hazara Singh, Jaimal Tara Singh, and Thakur Singh. Many of the later Punjabi immigrants first heard about Fiji from other Punjabis who had travelled extensively in the Pacific. Punjabis who returned from their travels were instrumental in providing much publicity about the areas which they visited, including Fiji. The Punjabi immigrants were not very educated and came mainly from the agricultural sections of the population.

The third type was the Gujarati. Of course, the Parsis who arrived in 1901 would be included in this group. There were no other cases of Gujarati emigration to Fiji until 1904 when two Sonis, Chunilal Ganji and Virji Narshi, arrived from Calcutta.[14] Apparently, they had heard about Fiji in Natal and made arrangements through a number of influential Indians in Fiji to go there. Both Chunilal and Virji were from Porbandar in Kathiawar and were goldsmiths by trade. They proceeded to Fiji under the assumption that there was much money to be made among the Indians. In 1905, another Soni from Jamnagar, by the name of Lakhu Premji heard about Fiji and the large Indian population there. It is difficult to ascertain how he obtained this information but the source seemed to have been Chunilal or Virji. He arrived in 1905 and lived in the town of Navua for two years. But during this time he found the conditions in Fiji quite harsh and subsequently returned to his homeland.[15] These Gujarati immigrants, as in the case of the Punjabis, were not educated. They had been attracted to Fiji by the desire to ply their skills in making jewelry and to improve their economic status generally.

Punjabis and Gujaratis continued to arrive in Fiji between 1905 and 1910. Among the Gujaratis was another group of Sonis who came from Porbandar in 1908.[16] There were no official estimates. Between 1908 and 1909 another Gujarati caste grouping made some penetration into Fiji. In 1908, Narotam Karsandas arrived and he was followed by Motiram Narsey a year later.[17] Both

were from Navsari in Baroda State and belonged to the Khatri caste. Though they were weavers by caste, they made their living in Fiji as tailors. After 1910 both Narotam and Motiram established business concerns which enabled other members of their caste to come to Fiji. Only one other Gujarati caste category arrived before the decade was over. The only known case was Dullabh Kalyan, a Mochi (shoemaker) from Mahuva Taluka in Navsari, who arrived in 1910 and returned to India after a stay of over 2 years.[18]

The inward flow of 'free' migrants was affected by two important developments--one in India and the other in Fiji. In 1907 the Government of India made it mandatory for all Indians who wished to travel abroad "to provide themselves with passports."[19] This was intended to be a protective measure to induce Indians to procure the necessary travel documents before proceeding to such countries as Canada, South Africa, Rhodesia, Australia, and New Caledonia which had introduced stringent immigration rules governing the entry of Indians. Perhaps in anticipation of the influx of people who had formerly gone to those areas, the Government of Fiji brought the Indian Immigration Ordinance No. XVII of 1909 into effect. The Ordinance was specifically designed to stop the influx of undesirable persons who were destitute and would become "a charge on the colony" if they were not indentured.[20]

In spite of these measures, the number of 'free' emigrants who came after 1907, and before the first census was taken, had increased to a figure of approximately 1,600.[21] This was an increase of 600 for a three-year period, at an average annual rate of arrival of 200 immigrants of this type. Together with the immigrants who had completed their period of indenture, as well as those who were born in Fiji, they presented a very interesting profile in 1911.

Within this ten-year period the whole structure of the Indian community began to change. When the first census was taken in 1911, the population had

increased from 16,116 in 1900 to 40,286, of which 25,975 were listed as nonindentured.[22] Though Madras was opened as another emigration recruiting depot, Calcutta still remained the principal center from which most categories of emigrants came. In fact, Madras supplied no emigrants in 1904 and 1908. Moreover, 1907 and 1909 were lean years in which the recruitment of indentured emigrants had fallen well below a thousand for both ports.

The India-born immigrants, indentured and 'free,' originated mainly from United Provinces, Madras, Bengal, Central Provinces, Central India, Punjab, Rajputana, Bombay, and Nepal.[23] It must be assumed that the Gujaratis were included in the figures for Bombay Presidency because no separate category for them was provided. Numerically, they comprised a minute community--in the vicinity of 153 or less out of a total nonindentured population of 25,975.[24] Furthermore, only 39 Gujaratis can be accounted for if occupational categories are taken into consideration. These would include 21 goldsmiths and silversmiths, 12 tailors, and 6 bootmakers and saddlers. Goldsmiths were in great demand judging from the large amounts of gold jewelry which was being taken to India by repatriated Indians. Perhaps the others could be found in the commercial categories as hawkers and shopkeepers.

The Census revealed that farming still remained the main type of occupational activity for Indians. Out of a nonindentured population of 25,975 (16,000 males and 9,975 females), 10,357 were engaged in some form of agricultural activity. From 1905 to 1909, the Native Lands Ordinance permitted settlers to acquire leases up to a period of ninety-nine years subject to approval of the Governor's council. Freehold land also became available, and while the Ordinance was in effect about 20,184 acres of land were purchased by settlers (Indians and Europeans). This brought the area under freehold title up to 434,799 acres out of a total area of 4,581,000 acres.[25]

Agricultural activity was centered around the cultivation of rice, sugarcane, bananas, tobacco, maize, and beans. This was done according to

the climatic conditions of the districts where the nonindentured population had settled. Most of the Indian settlements emerged around the river basins and in the sugarcane growing areas, but basically on Viti Levu, the main island of the Fiji group. The major area of settlement in the other island--Vanua Levu--was Macuata (Mathuata). The location of sugar mills at Navua, Rewa, Labasa, Lautoka, Penang, and Ba was instrumental in attracting large pockets of Indian settlement. The largest mill was constructed in Lautoka in 1903 in response to the C.S.R.'s expanding operation in Fiji.

The commercial and industrial sectors of the population were drawn to the town areas adjacent to the mills. Six per cent of the adult male nonindentured population was engaged in some form of commercial venture. Others who did not have enough capital outlay for a store went into hawking, and there were as many hawkers as shopkeepers. At this stage Indians owned very few large-scale business concerns. Only 21 commercial concerns incorporating wholesale and retail business activity were in operation.[27] The largest number of shopkeepers emerged in Lautoka and Nadi where the 'free' population was quite prosperous.

In Suva, the capital of Fiji, there was a 'free' Indian population of 3,000 who were gradually replacing Polynesians as laborers.[28] English-speaking Indians were also congregated here and sought employment as shop assistants, municipal workers, and clerks in European firms. The town was controlled by Europeans financially and politically, but it offered numerous possibilities to Indian settlers. All 'unassisted' immigrants had their first contact with Fiji here. Merchants came here because of the port facilities; English-speaking Indians came because Suva was the seat of power and they formed the nucleus around which political activity was initiated; skilled and casual workers came to fulfil the various labor requirements of a growing community.

The sugar industry in the colony was experiencing a remarkable pace of

economic expansion. The operation of the C.S.R. had almost reached monopoly proportions, and the output of its mills in Fiji had reached 40 per cent of the company's combined operations in the South Pacific.[29] In an effort to minimize its capital outlay and maximize its profit-making capabilities, it initiated a program of decentralization of its monolithic estates into smaller holdings which were leased to private white planters. They, in turn, worked and managed the plantations with a smaller and less burdensome labor force. Land was made available on a smaller scale to a growing class of Indian tenant-farmers within the proximity of mills. Invariably, this would not only dictate the pattern of Indian settlement but would also guarantee a labor force to meet the requirements of the crushing season.

The economic expansion produced a corresponding rise in indentured immigration. Between 1910 and 1914, over 10,000 immigrants were introduced to work the estates.[30] A scheme of introducing 'free' emigrants had been contemplated but was abandoned because of uneasiness about the competitive capabilities of the 'free' immigrant.[31] Most planters were of the opinion that 'free' immigrants made bad laborers, but were basically apprehensive of the competition which Indians provided. This fear was well founded because by 1912 the Indian shopkeeper had completely undermined the European shopkeeper in the countryside.[32]

'Free' laborers would have been more acceptable but the Government of India was averse to any systematic emigration to Fiji for labor purposes other than the indenture system.[33] Apparently, some laborers from Surat had gone to Calcutta sometime in 1911 to volunteer for Fiji, raising the possibility of recruitment in Surat to provide some solution to Fiji's labor problems. The Indian Government made enquiries with the Government of Bombay which remained adamant about supplying excess labor to other countries when it did not consider Surat to be "a congested district."[34] The Bombay Government could not agree to the proposal on the ground that labor emigration was

"not conducive to the economic interest of the locality." Early in January 1912 all parties concerned--the India Office, the Colonial Office, and the Government of Fiji--were informed of the undesirability of permitting labor recruitment in Surat district.[35]

Though the Fiji Government directed most of its attention to the colony's labor requirements, it did make some effort to oversee the increasing flow of 'unassisted' emigrants. It did this in part to dictate the pattern of Indian settlement but also because of its concern over the native question.[36] However, the government seemed to realize that there was a need for a special class of Indians who could assist the authorities in tackling the administrative responsibilities of governing the nonindentured population. It introduced clerks and interpreters and, in 1912, recruited a contingent of Punjabi policemen from Hong Kong for the local force.[37]

The Indian community in Fiji generally lacked trained priests to attend to their religious needs. The majority of the population were Hindus belonging to a number of sects, but many Indians classified themselves as either Sanatani (that is, adherents of Sanatan Dharma, the more orthodox Hindu sect of Fiji) or Samaji (followers of Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj sect).[38] Muslims constituted just over a tenth of the population, belonging either to the Sunni or Shia sects. Among the Hindus, the Samajis were better organized and displayed a great degree of self-reliance in social matters. They were pioneers in the field of Indian education in Fiji. The Sanatanis, by contrast, were concerned with the tenets of religion; but their leader Totaram Sanadhya became the most forceful critic of the indenture system in Fiji before the arrival of Manilal Doctor.[39] Few Indians were attracted to Christianity, and the conversion rate by the three dominant groups--Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist--was marginal. In 1911, there were only 314 Indian Christians in Fiji.[40]

The authorities were aware of the religious needs of the Indians. In

April 1912, the Fiji Government wrote to the Government of India "to seek advice and assistance" in procuring "a few well educated Brahmin and Muhammadan priests to minister to the religious wants of the people."[41] It was not prepared to incur any liability "for the support of these priests," but added that their "co-religionists" in Fiji would support them. This request seemed confusing to the authorities in India who had very little information available on the ethnological composition of the Indians in Fiji. Accordingly, a few months later the Government of India wrote to the Fiji Government inquiring about the "caste of the Hindus and the sect of the Hindu priests required."[42] Few officials in Fiji had any such understanding of the Indian community and they were unable to take any definite action on the request from India.

There was a great need for religious teachers and the Fiji Government's interest in this field helped to publicize it. In 1913, the first Arya Samaji teacher, Swami Manoharanand Saraswati, arrived.[43] He had lived in Burma for some time and was aware of the need for trained Hindu priests in Fiji. Within four years of his arrival, the Arya Samaj movement made tremendous headway in the field of education. Under his guidance the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha was founded, and in 1917 the organization launched a Gurukul primary school on the western side of Viti Levu, quite close to the town of Lautoka.

Political activity among Indians coincided with the growing awareness of their religious needs. Until 1910 there was a marked absence of organized political activity. Leadership was provided by a few nonindentured Indians who acquired popularity through their expertise in English or their association with either of two main Hindu sects. This group included such personages as Peter Grant (a Christian), Totaram Sanadhya (a Sanatani Pandit), Babu Ram Singh and J. P. Maharaj (both Arya Samajis).[44] These influential Indians were based in Suva and were well versed in matters affecting Indians in the Colony. They moved into action in 1910 when an apprehensive European community attempted to introduce a literacy test for ratepayers who voted in

the Suva Municipal Council elections. Moreover, important events in India were also followed closely and influenced the actions of Indian leaders in Fiji. Indian newspapers which came to Fiji provided much coverage on the debate on the indenture system, especially after Gokhale introduced a motion in the Indian Legislature in 1912 which called for the abolishment of the system.[45]

This group gradually became the unofficial spokesmen of Indians in Fiji. But they lacked political or legal experience and the majority could not speak English--the language of the government. Consequently, they established contact with Gandhi and related their problems to him. Gandhi, who was in South Africa at this time, agreed to send a 'Hindustani' lawyer who could assist the Indians in Fiji. The difficulties of the Indians there also came to the notice of Manilal Doctor who had come to Gandhi to seek assistance and counsel about the possibility of setting up a practice in South Africa.[46] Manilal, a subject of Baroda State, was an articulate English-educated lawyer who had had considerable exposure to colonial politics and the problems of Indian laborers in the colonies. He had resided in Mauritius from 1907 to 1910 where he quickly became a leading advocate of Indian rights. Actually, Manilal harbored intentions of proceeding to Fiji where he wished to further his career in law and politics.[47] He became more resolute about Fiji when he read about Gokhale's and Malaviya's speeches against indentured labor in the Indian Opinion (of South Africa).[48]

Manilal Doctor arrived in Suva in September 1912 amid much fanfare. Within a short time he had made a lasting impact on the authorities. The retaliation was drastic and certainly motivated by fear that the Indian community would be influenced by events in India. The authorities introduced "a proposal to restrict the emigration of Indians introduced into Fiji otherwise than by indenture."[49] In late November 1912, the India Office wrote to the Colonial Office voicing its concern on this issue. The pending

visit of a deputation from India to inquire into the condition of laborers in Fiji prompted the India Office to stress the undesirability of making " "any drastic change in the Fiji legislation affecting Indians."[50] Fortunately, the Colonial Office agreed and, a few weeks later, cautioned the Fiji Government not "to proceed with the proposed ordinance."[51] Further action was not taken, but the hysteria behind its genesis revealed the Fiji Government's apprehension over any outside influence on immigrant affairs in the colony.

By 1914 the Indian population of Fiji had reached 51,605 of which 35,644 were nonindentured.[52] The indentured population had not shown any considerable increase--about 1,600 in a two-year period--and the figure would have been much lower if 6,595 indentured laborers had not been introduced. More Indians were gaining freedom from indenture and further recruitment to boost the diminishing number of indentured Indians was running into serious problems. Criticism of the system had reached a peak in India. In Fiji missionaries, and nonindentured Indians under the leadership of Manilal, became outspoken as well. At the end of 1913 two commissioners from India, James McNeil, I.C.S., and Lala Chiman Lal, arrived to examine the conditions of the laborers. Though their report pointed to the advantages of the system, they advocated changes which were long overdue--namely, better working and social conditions supplemented by increased medical and educational facilities.[53] Furthermore, the commencement of the war in 1914 forced the Government of India to suspend indentured emigration temporarily in order to concentrate on the war effort.

Between 1911 and 1914 nonindentured emigration increased steadily. The pattern had been established gradually. The economic expansion in Fiji and the growing needs of the Indian population generated conditions which attracted more 'unassisted' emigrants into the colony. The three types which have been mentioned previously continued to arrive. Punjabis came under the impression that work would be readily available. Those who were not content

returned to India or made some attempt to go elsewhere. Punjabis were known to have travelled as far as South America. One such country was Argentina where some emigration from Punjab had taken place directly. In 1912 a group of 45 Punjabis approached a well-placed European lawyer in Suva to make arrangements to get them to Argentina, but allegedly lost a large sum of money in the process through fraud.[54] This incident did not deter another group of about 20 Punjabis from coming to Fiji in 1914. By this stage an extensive network of contacts had been established through the visit of Punjabis to many parts of the world. Those who came to Fiji were first attracted to the possibilities there through information transmitted to them through fellow villagers who had gone to Australia and New Zealand.[55]

The Gujaratis had also established a network of contacts in the countries of the South Pacific. Travel to Australia and New Zealand was on the increase and news about the opportunities in Fiji filtered back to the villages from which the first Gujarati emigrants came. Sonis still constituted the largest single group to come into the colony. Between 1911 and 1914 the number of goldsmiths and silversmiths increased from 21 to 51 (which included Sonars who came from other parts of India as well).[56] The Khatris also found ample scope for their trade, and in 1911 Narotam Karsandas Khatri established the first Gujarati tailoring shop in Suva under the business name of Narotam. He was followed by Motiram Narsey who started his own business concern under the name of M. Narsey. Within a short time, other members of their caste began to arrive, including Gopal Anandji and Jagjiwan Bhukendas. Moreover, relatives and family members arrived to help in the management of the two businesses. Motiram was joined by his eldest son Jamnadas, and Narotam invited his cousin Tribhovan Ratanji to join him. By introducing relatives into their businesses, it was possible for them to leave these concerns in safe hands while making periodic visits to India.

Other groups followed in the wake of conditions created initially by

the Sonis, and later by the Khatris. Gujaratis of the occupational castes and cultivators from South Gujarat began to show interest in Fiji. In 1911 Nana Lakhman (sic) who was a Koli by caste, came to Fiji but returned to India in 1915.[57] This could have been an isolated incident because Kolis at this time, generally preferred going to New Zealand where they had started a small settlement in Auckland. Most of them were engaged in the fruit and vegetable business. Fiji was in close proximity to New Zealand, about a thousand miles northeast of the latter, and a direct shipping service, which linked the two, permitted movement of Gujaratis to either of these places. A year later the first Nav (barber) named Nathubhai arrived, and in 1914 Dahya Hansji, a Mochi (shoemaker) joined other Gujaratis living in Suva. All three groups mentioned were from South Gujarat--Nana Lakhman and Dahya came from the Navsari Division of Baroda State.[58]

Large-scale trading activity in Suva was still controlled by Europeans, although petty Indian shopkeepers had made substantial gains in other areas. The success of these shopkeepers could be attributed to their ability to manipulate conditions in the country areas to their advantage to a greater degree than their European counterparts. Those Indians who had dealt with European shopkeepers for a long time shifted their patronage to Indian shopkeepers quite readily. Many Indians still suffered from the stigma of their indentured or 'coolie' status--a position which they were reminded of in their dealings with Europeans generally. The 'overseer and coolie' relationship permeated many facets of the relationship between Europeans and Indians. Farmers who dealt with European shopkeepers complained of the treatment they received. The latter were often quite insensitive to the feelings of their customers, frequently using offensive terms to refer to their indentured status. These shopkeepers also bought the produce of Indian farmers quite cheaply and sold them to other Indians at exorbitant prices.[59] When Indian shopkeepers offered competition, they found little difficulty in attracting

a clientele. Many of these petty shopkeepers had risen from the ranks of the indentured laborers themselves and were not only known to the people they had dealings with but also offered better credit facilities. Moreover, the social relationship which developed in this case was less strained than that in which Indians had dealings with Europeans. Indian shopkeepers also made better arrangements for organizing the sale of essential grains and lentils which formed the staple diet of Indians.

The larger Indian commercial concerns--about 19 in number at the beginning of 1914 comprising both wholesale and retail business--[60] were smaller versions of the European firms based in Suva. There was a marked absence of an Indian trading class who possessed the capital as well as the expertise to offer any competition to these firms on a large scale. Within the existing group of Indian merchants were J. P. Maharaj and Ram Roop who, basically, were products of the indenture system. Again, these merchants simply filled the vacuum which existed between Indians and Europeans. The latter group encountered little threat from them, because they or their headquarters in Australia supplied the merchandise which in turn was sold to Indians. It was certainly a trade relation which Europeans controlled.

There was definitely a need for a class of merchants who could adequately perform an important function with the expanding community which was increasingly throwing off the shackles of indenture. Only one such merchant had the potential as well as the entrepreneurial skills to acquire this role. This was Veerappa Moothaiya Pillay who came to Fiji from Madras as an 'unassisted' emigrant prior to the war. Pillay's commercial link with Madras, together with his ability to move into the western area of Viti Levu where the majority of the South Indian population was located, made him an important factor on the economic scene. He set himself up as a general merchant and recruited skilled assistants from a commercial background, from Madras. V. M. Pillay was the first Indian merchant who imported goods on a

large scale from India. His exclusive concern for the needs of the Indian population served as an example for other Indian businessmen including Gujaratis. Both Appabhai Patel and M. N. Naidu, who came in 1914 and emerged as formidable merchants later, followed the pattern which Pillay had established.

Manilal's presence in Fiji received some publicity in Baroda where there was common knowledge of the large settlement of Indians in Fiji. Prior to Manilal only one other person from that region had attempted to come to Fiji. In 1908, Dahyabhai Shankerbhai Patel, from the village of Dharmaj in Petlad District, had applied for a passport to proceed to Fiji via Australia. Dahyabhai was a general merchant and commission agent in his village who was interested in opening an import and export agency in Fiji. Though Dahyabhai received his passport to travel to Fiji he emigrated to East Africa instead.[61] After Dahyabhai, nobody from the area, north of Baroda City, showed any interest in Fiji until Manilal went there. Late in 1913, Appabhai Lalubhai Patel, a primary school teacher from the village of Dharmaj, made plans to travel to Australia to seek his fortune. While in Baroda City he met Manilal's relatives who furnished him with a letter of introduction, in case he proceeded to Fiji. Appabhai reached Australia in early 1914 during midwinter and found the cold conditions unbearable. Coming from a strict vegetarian background, he was also taken aback by the sight of red meat displayed in a butchershop situated directly in front of the lodging house where he lived while in Sydney. He befriended some Punjabis who suggested that he should go to New Zealand where he could have the company of other Gujaratis. Appabhai proceeded to New Zealand but confronted similar conditions to those in Australia. His Gujarati friends then told him about the possibilities in Fiji. After spending a month in New Zealand, he boarded a steamer which was bound for Fiji. Upon his arrival in Suva he contacted Manilal who offered him employment as his clerk. Appabhai refused because he had designs of

opening his own business. He remained in Suva but economic necessity soon forced him to seek employment as a clerk in a bakery owned by Alfred Herick (commonly known to Indians in Suva as 'Alu Saheb'). Working as a clerk in Herick's bakery not only provided him an excellent opportunity to develop his business acumen but also brought him into contact with leading members of the Indian community. The Gujarati Sonis of Suva befriended him and affectionately nicknamed him 'Bapa.' J. P. Maharaj, whose business was close to Herick's bakery, became his close friend, a relationship which materialized into a major business partnership a few years later. Appabhai remained in Herick's employment for six months only after which he decided to open his own trading store, stocked with goods imported mainly from Calcutta. As his business grew, he turned to his homeland to recruit his relatives and friends--people whom he could trust--to help him turn his small business into a network of trading stores located in all the 'sugar towns' of Viti Levu.[62]

The nonindentured Indian population of Fiji increased rapidly between 1914 and 1917. At the end of 1914 it was 37,754 (71 per cent) out of a total Indian population of 53,356 and by the end of 1917 it had reached a figure of 52,091 (85 per cent) out of the total of 61,153.[63] The number of indentured laborers was rapidly declining, especially at a time when indentured migration suffered a series of setbacks. First, the Indian Government halted emigration temporarily in November 1914 but allowed its resumption early in 1915. During 1915 Fiji received the last large shipment of indentured laborers from both Calcutta and Madras. Then in March 1916 a motion was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council of India which advocated the abolition of indentured emigration. A year later the Indian Government enacted a special measure under the Defense of India Act to prohibit indentured emigration to the British Colonies so as to enable itself to attend to the labor requirements of the military campaign in Mesopotamia. Recruitment was suspended for

the duration of the war and for a two-year period thereafter. Fiji received its final batch of indentured emigrants in 1916.

None of these measures contained any provisions for the control of 'unassisted' emigration in which individuals left India under rules and regulations governing the issuance of passports. While the Government of India reviewed the whole question of emigration, its chief concern was with the control of the emigration of unskilled workers. But at the outbreak of the war it also took up the question of emigration under the passport system.

The system of passports was introduced in 1900 to enable Indian students in England to visit foreign countries.[64] Passports eventually replaced certificates of identity as valid proof that a person was a British subject or a British protected person of a Native State. Basically, they were intended to provide adequate identification and protection at a time when a number of countries introduced stringent immigration rules and regulations governing the entry of Asians. Between 1901 and 1904 the Governments of Cape Colony, South Rhodesia, and the Commonwealth of Australia had enacted measures to curtail unrestricted entry of various categories of Indians. The adverse conditions faced by Punjabi immigrants in New Caledonia and the decision of the Government of Canada in 1907 to restrict Asian immigration, soon obliged the Indian Government to formulate a uniform set of rules and regulations governing emigration through the passport system. The Indian Government first made it mandatory for all British Indian subjects or subjects of Native States who wished to travel to foreign countries to procure valid passports before their departure from India. Then in 1909 it imposed a time limit of five years on validity of all passports. Later, in 1916, the government also empowered its Local Governments and Agents to issue passports "without reference to the Government of India."[65] It had taken this step to facilitate the issuing of passports, thus enabling itself to concentrate on the problems of indentured emigration. By 1917 the passport system became a permanent

fixture of 'unassisted' emigration under the Defense of India (Passport) Rules.[66]

Increased 'free' emigration coincided with the Indian Government's moves to suspend indentured emigration. The formulation of clear-cut passport guidelines generally complied with the concern to provide adequate protection to Indians travelling abroad but also enabled the government to maintain vigilance over their movement. As a rule the authorities were hesitant to hamper the movement of Indians to other areas because they had no intention of interfering directly with the liberty of Indians wishing to leave without assistance from anybody. In the first place, 'unassisted' emigration was not plagued by the innumerable difficulties which indentured emigration presented. The experience of the Government of Bombay on 'unassisted' emigration spoke for itself. From Bombay there was considerable emigration to East Africa and Zanzibar which was confined to clerks and skilled artisans who moved to and fro quite freely, sometimes with their families, without any degree of supervision from the local government.[67] Secondly, there was general satisfaction with the record of the Crown Colonies on the question of 'free' immigration. The authorities acknowledged that colonies which imported Indian laborers under indenture had "never opposed the entrance of free Indian immigrants of the mercantile or other class," though the main preference was for cultivators and artisans.[68] Accordingly, a consistent policy was maintained toward 'free' emigration which still remained unchanged even when a new Emigration Bill to control emigration was introduced in the Indian Legislative Council in 1922.

After the abolition of the indenture system in 1920 the critics of emigration wanted controls on the movement of unskilled labor to prevent any revival of indentured emigration. By contrast, advocates of 'free' emigration thought that this rigid categorization covered a large number of persons such as clerks, who went around as assistants of merchants, and who would be

greatly inconvenienced if additions were made to the passport provisions. The government was not keen on placing restrictions on 'free' emigration because it would be "unjustifiable interference with the liberty of the subject," a point which was firmly reiterated during the debate on emigration in 1922.[69] Its stance was based on the simple premise that 'free' emigration presupposed a certain amount of "intelligence, money, and enterprise" which enabled the individual to decide for himself. Thus, the authorities consistently granted passports to all individuals who went through a process of initial scrutiny and satisfied certain conditions. They did not take into consideration the immigration policy of the countries for which they issued passports or advise the intending emigrants about the conditions prevailing in the colonies. The authorities only warned them of the risk they would incur of being refused admission if emigrants failed to fulfil the conditions in the immigration policy of the country in question.[70]

During World War I and after, Fiji still maintained an open-door policy "for the entry of all British subjects who desired either to travel or to settle down."[71] In this, Fiji was unique and stood in direct contrast to other British territories and possessions in the Pacific. Australia had already enacted measures restricting Asian immigration, and in 1914 New Zealand imposed a dictation test on persons desiring to enter the country. The authorities there brought the education test into effect to prevent any influx of "ex-indentured Indians and their descendants" from Fiji into New Zealand. In 1919 a written test was introduced which required an emigrant "to write out and sign in a European language an application submitted to him by the Collector of Customs at the port of arrival in the Dominion."[72]

Fiji's attitude toward unassisted emigration reflected a modification of its earlier position in 1912 when it attempted to restrict any other type of emigration except that of indentured laborers. The Government, being the official spokesman of the sugar interests, tried to impress upon the Indian

Government that the colony's prosperity was tied to the labor supply from India, and desired the resumption of emigration after the war. Indian attitudes, as a result of the agitation against indentured labor and inspite of the favorable criticisms of the McNeil-Chiman Lal Report, had hardened toward any form of emigration "based on fraudulent recruitment," which involved the "slavery of men," and "resulted in the prostitution of women."[73] Alternatives were sought, and the interested parties--the sugar concerns, the British Government, the Indian Government, and the Fiji Government--became embroiled in a series of maneuvers to devise some scheme that would satisfy all parties, including Indian public opinion. The focus was on the permanent settlement of Indians and the possibility of encouraging agricultural settlers with families.[74] The key in Fiji's bid for resumption of assisted emigration was to show how the condition of Indians was considerably better in Fiji than in India. The main concern was to convince Indian authorities that immigrants were being accorded "exactly the same legal, political and religious rights, privileges, and duties as are afforded to other inhabitants of whatever race."[75]

The increasing prosperity of Indians in Fiji was a crucial factor in the argument for the resumption of emigration. This was intricately related to 'unassisted' emigration because 'free' immigrants entered Fiji without any costs to the colony and made positive contributions to its economic development. The Fiji Government pointed to Indian business concerns which it claimed were thriving, and to the increased earning and purchasing power of 'free' Indians.which was now prompting "Indians of the mercantile class" to come to the colony.[76] It was simply in no position to place any restrictions on the entry of 'unassisted' immigrants in spite of previous efforts to that effect in 1912. Such a move could have brought serious repercussions and would have proved adverse to the government's intention to attract more Indian settlers. The Indian critics of the indenture system would have

certainly used the issue to justify their arguments against colonies which discriminated against Indians. The Indian Government, which had already developed a hardened attitude toward the resumption of indentured emigration, would have been very difficult to deal with during the deliberations on the scheme for permanent settlement of Indians in Fiji. Moreover, Fiji already had adequate measures to prevent the entry of undesirable immigrants; it would have jeopardized its chances of receiving more 'assisted' immigrants, if tighter measures, similar to those in Australia or New Zealand, were enacted to control the entry of other Indians.

A number of factors provided the impetus to 'free' emigration to Fiji after 1915. These include the reopening of the shipping routes between the Pacific and India; prohibitive measures in other British possessions and territories which restricted the entry of Indians and the absence of such laws in Fiji; dissatisfaction with conditions in India which forced an increasing number of repatriated ex-indentured emigrants to return to Fiji; revision of rules and procedures for issuing passports which placed the passport system under the jurisdiction of Local Governments in India and enabled intending travellers to obtain passports more readily; the hesitation on the part of the Indian Government to restrict emigration under the system of passports on the ground that this would be direct interference with the liberty of Indians wishing to leave without any assistance from anybody. Above all, the Government of Fiji, in its attempt to secure the resumption of assisted emigration from India, helped to publicize Fiji as an ideal place for settlement, and went to the extent of asking the Indian Government "to second men from the Indian public services" to work as clerks and interpreters in Fiji.[77]

The measures, and the subsequent ban, against indentured emigration had the effect of attracting Gujaratis, in particular, to Fiji. The arrival of these immigrants became more pronounced from 1916, although a few had arrived

prior to that. The push toward Fiji from Gujarat was still a preserve of the Sonis and, to a lesser extent, the Khatris, but other Gujarati caste groupings began to make their presence felt as well. From the Baroda Division of Baroda State the movement toward Fiji was still insignificant. Only one other Gujarati of the same caste as Appabhai came to Fiji between 1914 and 1916. This was Chimanbhai Patel from Bhadran, an important village of the Charotar area (present-day Kheda District), situated east of Baroda City. The majority of the Gujaratis were from the southern parts of British and Princely Gujarat. A few Kolis arrived in 1915 and joined the ranks of the Indian hawkers in Suva. The following year, no less than 124 Gujaratis made applications for passports in India to proceed to Fiji.[78] A few applications came from individuals who were intending to return to Fiji after a short visit to India. One such person was Gopal Anandji who had induced Ranchhod Bhagwan, another Khatri, to join him. Accompanying them were Motiram Narsey and his younger son Jivan. The largest contingent consisted of various agriculturalists who wished to work as cloth merchants, hawkers, and fruit and vegetable vendors in Fiji. Kolis, who fell into the general category of agricultural laborers, comprised a significant portion of this group. Seventeen Sonis from Porbandar, Junagadh, Navanagar, and Bhavnagar also applied for passports to travel to Fiji. There were only a few applications from persons belonging to the artisan castes--Dhobi (washerman), Mochi (shoemaker), and Darji (tailor).

Agriculturalists again constituted the largest single group of applicants in the following year--80 out of a total of 145 passport applications for Fiji.[79] The overwhelming majority were from South Gujarat--from Surat District in British Gujarat and from the Navsari Division of Baroda State. In 1917, the number of Sonis who wished to travel to Fiji doubled as well--the push being from Porbandar, Junagadh, and Jamnagar. There were 12 Khatri applicants but few applications from persons belonging to other artisan castes.

The only Mochi in the latter category was Dullabh Kalyan who had lived in Fiji from 1910 to 1913, but there were no Dhobis and Navs. For the first time, Muslim Gujaratis began to show interest in the area but the number was minute--2 out of the entire total.

For some Gujaratis, Fiji offered the means to circumvent immigration restrictions elsewhere. This was the tendency among the Kolis who generally had relatives in New Zealand but could not go there because of the literacy test. These immigrants came to Fiji with the hope of acquiring some knowledge of English before proceeding to New Zealand. Some Kolis and agriculturalists undertook the journey to Fiji only when their relatives or friends there agreed to provide financial assistance.[80] This group, as a whole, either became hawkers or performed some type of agricultural labor in Fiji.

Emigration among the Sonis and Khatris became more organized after 1916 and did not occur in the same manner as the haphazard movement of agricultural laborers. Between 1915 and 1917, the first Gujarati emigrants, who had come to Fiji before the war, had returned to their homeland and had given considerable publicity to the opportunities in Fiji. Others returned to rejoin their families. The immensity of the distance which the Sonis had to travel between Fiji and Gujarat convinced them that it would be financially less burdensome to take their families with them to Fiji. The presence of Chunilal Ganji in Porbandar in 1916 generated considerable interest in Fiji. Toward the end of 1916, he made plans to return with his wife and four-month old daughter. Jadavji Bhimji and his wife, and five other Sonis from Porbandar, accompanied him. In 1917, 32 of 40 Sonis who applied for passports were from Porbandar, including 3 families.[81] Manilal's wife, Jayakumari, and their infant son, were among the five or six families who went in 1917.[82] The Khatris also encouraged friends and relatives to go to Fiji where there was a good scope for tailors. Motiram Narsey, Gopal Anandji, and Narotam Karsandas were in Navsari in 1916 as well; they provided the impetus for

increasing Khatri emigration to Fiji. Narsey and Anandji returned to Fiji that year with 2 more Khatris, and in 1917 Narotam Karsandas returned accompanied by 11 other Khatris--friends and relatives--who intended to work for either the Narsey or Narotam business concerns. Chimanbhai Patel had also asked his brother Manibhai in Bhadran to join him.

The authorities in Fiji interpreted the influx of Gujaratis as an indication of the growing prosperity of Indians. They had noticed the movement of shopkeepers and hawkers to the western districts of Viti Levu. In the Immigration Report for 1917, the authorities drew particular attention to the more expensive manner in which the average Indian dressed himself and his family, and also to the increasing number of Indians who owned horses and vehicles. They were quite impressed with the inititative Indians had taken in developing the town of Namoli in Lautoka. Indians owned most of the trading stores there, and toward those areas of the town where the indigenous population resided they had acquired additional land on which they had built more business premises-- jewelers, bootmakers and tailors being represented as well. Some were also investing their savings in "vehicles (both horse-drawn and motor) which were running for hire and being patronized." Further, evidence of this prosperity, as witnessed by the authorities, was the great demand for goldsmiths and silversmiths. They certainly noticed the "increase in the number of the jeweller class" who were "visiting the Colony and carrying on their calling."[83] But the authorities failed to realize that the demand for Sonars could have been prompted by lack of banking facilities in the western areas or that many Indians were merely looking for alternative forms of investment from savings which they would otherwise bury.[84] Much to their surprise the official mind in India was less exuberant about the rosy picture of the Indians in Fiji.

The few years preceding the abolishment of indenture were critical for the future of 'free' emigration to Fiji. During this time Gujarati immigrants

continued to arrive steadily reaching a peak in 1918. The thrust was still from the agricultural districts of Navsari Division in Baroda State. The high number of prospective emigrants (218 in 1918) seeking passports for Fiji raised the bogey of indentured labor in Baroda State. The authorities there conducted a high-level inquiry into the entire process of emigration. They examined the factors which caused emigration and could not find any evidence of indentured emigration among the residents of Baroda State who went abroad. Their chief concern was to establish a "Bureau of Emigration" with some authority to regulate emigration from the State.[85] Though they had limited success in this matter, they, nevertheless, displayed a sentiment toward the question of indentured emigration which had become uniform throughout India. This sentiment was an inauspicious sign for Fiji.

The pattern of Gujarati emigration in 1919 was indicative of the impending crisis in Fiji. There was a considerable drop in passport applications from Gujaratis that year (almost by half from the previous year).[86] The agricultural class of Gujaratis seemed somewhat hesitant to leave India. The issue of passports had been halted temporarily in Baroda to enable the authorities there to establish the machinery for keeping a closer watch on the movement of Gujaratis from the laboring class whom the authorities believed were being recruited as indentured laborers in Fiji. Careful official scrutiny certainly acted as a deterrent. In addition, the Government of New Zealand introduced a more stringent literacy test which caused prospective emigrants to reconsider the wisdom of proceeding to Fiji where they had hoped to acquire some knowledge of English before going on to New Zealand. Those who went to Fiji generally recognized a demand for their skills. Perhaps this accounted for the rise in the number of applications from Gujaratis of the artisan and serving castes--washermen, bootmakers, barbers, carpenters, masons, and tailors. Khatris, for the first time, forged ahead of the Sonis who showed the biggest drop of all groups. They followed in the wake of the conditions

which their caste-fellows had created. Gopal Anandji, the Narsey family, and other Khatris who were operating tailoring shops encouraged friends and relatives to come as their businesses expanded. Family emigration was restricted to the more established and successful Gujaratis. Appabhai had now expanded his business and entered into a partnership with J. P. Maharaj and Chimanbhai Patel. He had returned to India in 1918, and in the following year made plans to take his wife, and several relatives, including two brothers-in-law from Nondhna in Broach, with him to Fiji.

The political stalemate between the Governments of India and Fiji over the indenture system became an important factor determining the flow of immigrants to Fiji. The Governments of India and Fiji reached an impasse over the type of Indian emigration scheme which would be agreeable to both sides. The scheme of 'aided' colonization as espoused by the Inter-Departmental Conference in London was rejected by both critics in India and the two major sugar companies in Fiji--the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and the Vancouver-Fiji Sugar Company.[87] Moreover, the official mind in India challenged the Fiji Government's characterization of Indian immigrants as being prosperous. Though officials agreed with the contention that Indians were doing exceedingly well in the colonies, they did not consider it "necessary for an Indian to go through the process of indenture in order to arrive at this favourable position."[88]

C. F. Andrews, who had become one of the most outspoken critics of indentured emigration, visited Fiji in 1917. He discovered that a large section of the agricultural population had remained unaffected by prosperity and was facing difficult times under the strain of rising prices. In a scathing report, which his critics accused of being highly biased and inaccurate, he showed how Indians had remained untouched by social and political progress in the colony. In 1919, Andrews reiterated his stand that "the Fiji Government cannot be expected to do full justice in larger

matters of Indian interest, because its financial prosperity is closely bound up with the interest of such a monopoly as the C.S.R."[89] Unfortunately for the Fiji Government's position, Andrew's assessment of the situation was accepted by the Colonial Office, the India Office, and the Indian Government. Later that year the Government of India recommended the discontinuance of 'assisted' emigration and concentrated on freeing "every Indian in Fiji from indenture."

The Government of Fiji, as well as the C.S.R., the major sugar concern, responded to this challenge in a number of ways. The Governor of the Colony tried to discredit Andrews, pointing to the biased nature of his report which "cast an unjust and unmerited slur not only upon the employers of labor and the Government but upon the European community of this Colony."[90] To the Colonial Office, he wrote: "The prosperity enjoyed by Indians who are not under indenture indicates that steady habits of industry and some knowledge of agriculture were acquired during the period of indenture. A system that can produce such results does not appear to merit undeserved condemnation."[91] But the overall response from England was not favorable. The Colonial Office, recognizing the need for change, sent a new Governor to Fiji who initiated the move toward the cancellation of all outstanding indentures. Toward the end of 1918 the Planter's Convention (in Fiji) passed a resolution supporting a system of immigration "which provides for absolute freedom on the part of the labourer and employer."[92] In August 1919 the Legislative Council of Fiji adopted a motion to cancel all indentures effective August 1, 1920. The new Governor laid the groundwork for an unofficial mission to visit India to argue, before the Indian public, Fiji's case for more Indian settlers. Fearing a boisterous challenge in the forthcoming session of the Indian Legislature, the Indian authorities expressed their misgivings about the unofficial mission which they believed would face a monumental task unless all outstanding indentures were cancelled on

December 31, 1919 (the date suggested by Andrews) and a system of 'free' emigration to Fiji under wholesome conditions established.[93] The Viceroy reiterated this position in his speech at the opening of the Imperial Legislative Council at Simla on September 3, 1919.

The unofficial mission from Fiji embarked for India in late 1919. The general mood in India was not one of accommodation but reflected opposition to any proposal from the mission unless the Fiji Government cancelled all indentures. At this time, Thomas Hughes, a high ranking official of the C.S.R., was in England on a separate mission to the Colonial Office to present his suggestions "for a new system of aiding Indians to settle elsewhere in the British Empire as colonists" and "promoting free colonization within the Empire."[94] The Colonial Office was definitely impressed by Hughes' constructive proposals which it felt could strengthen the Fiji mission's position in India provided that the Government of Fiji took the initiative in convincing all skeptics of its sincerity in improving the conditions of Indians in Fiji.

On January 3, 1920, the Indian Government issued a press communiqué containing the contents of a telegram from the Governor of Fiji to the Colonial Office. It ran as follows:

> January 2, 1920. On unanimous advice of the Executive Council and with the concurrence of Council of Planters and majority of elected members I have issued orders cancelling all indentures of East Indian labourers from this day.[95]

A week later another telegram arrived outlining the Fiji Government's plans to remove some of the political disabilities of the Indians there through the introduction of communal representation on an elective basis. The Fiji Government recognized the political expediency of deliberating with the Indian Government in an atmosphere of goodwill and reconciliation. However, it was denied this initiative when on January 15, 1920, discontentment over rising prices, and the demand for high wages, resulted in a strike followed

by extensive rioting, embroiling the Colony in labor disturbances for the next two years. The first strike lasted a month and it received extensive coverage in India, especially after the expulsion of the alleged ringleaders, including Manilal Doctor and his wife, from Fiji. The Indian indignation was best expressed by Gandhi who considered it "inadvisable to stimulate even 'free' emigration to Fiji."[96] Within a short time, the Indian press became very critical of the Fiji Government's handling of the situation, once again forcing the Government of India into reexamining its position on encouraging any form of emigration to Fiji.

Fiji was no longer assured of a labor supply unless an alternative scheme of emigration could be devised to replace the indenture system. But the abolition of the indenture system in 1920 had little effect on 'free' emigration from India. In fact, by this stage, 'free' Indians who came to Fiji without assistance from any government had become an important part of the immigrant community in Fiji. Though the indenture system had been in operation since 1879, 'passenger' or 'free' immigration first gained momentum after 1900. The inward flow was influenced by immigration restrictions in countries which had previously accepted Indians readily and by the lack of similar controls in Fiji. The main types of 'free' immigrants were ex-indentured laborers, who had been repatriated to India and who reemigrated to Fiji; Punjabis who came after encountering unfavorable conditions in other areas such as New Caledonia; and Gujaratis from a few caste groupings who came in search of opportunity or to ply their traditional skills.

The growth of the sugar industry in Fiji and the subsequent development of towns also acted as an incentive to 'free' immigration. Other inducements came from the changing structure of Indian immigrant society and from the need for a commercial class of Indians to perform an important function within the expanding community. Between 1910 and 1914, the economic expansion in Fiji and the growing needs of the Indian population continued to attract 'free'

immigrants, especially Gujaratis and Punjabis. Moreover, the administrative responsibilities of the government resulted in the introduction of another category of 'free' Indians to perform clerical duties. Furthermore, the lack of trained priests among the community led to the arrival of religious dignitaries with their conflicting ideologies. Indian leaders in Fiji lacked political and legal expertise which soon brought a Gujarati lawyer and other aspiring reformers who merely added to the strains and stresses within the community. The main incentives after 1917 came from Fiji's open-door policy toward 'free' immigration, the reopening of shipping routes between the Pacific and India, and the revision of passport rules in India which facilitated emigration under the passport system contrary to the general assumption that the Indian Government had no interest in unofficial emigration.

As for Gujarati emigration, it became more pronounced after 1916. Agricultural castes showed the most interest in Fiji but encountered considerable official surveillance in such areas as Baroda State. Only a few Gujarati caste groupings, such as Sonis and Khatris, had become established by 1920, but these groups were instrumental in laying the necessary groundwork through which other Gujaratis came to Fiji after 1920.

NOTES

[1]This introductory section on Fiji from p. 19 to p. 24 is based on the following sources: Sir Alan Burns, Fiji (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963); Colony of Fiji: A Handbook (Suva: Government Press, 1957); R. A. Derrick, A History of Fiji, Volume I (Suva: Government Stationery Department, 1946); R. A. Derrick, The Fiji Islands: A Geographical Handbook (Revised edition, Suva: Government Press, 1957); Peter France, The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969); J. D. Legge, Britain in Fiji, 1858-1880 (London: MacMillan & Co., 1958); Norma McArthur, Island Populations of the Pacific (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1961); R. Gerard Ward, Land Use and Population in Fiji, Overseas Research Publication No. 9 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965).

[2]There is no consensus on the exact number of islands in the Fiji group. The figures cited here are derived from Burns, Fiji, p. 16, and Derrick, Fiji Islands: Geographical Handbook, p. 3; but most sources have opted for the more conservative estimate of 300.

[3]The term "birds of passage" has been used here rather liberally, but it was originally drawn into the official lexicon in the early part of this century to describe Australian officials of the C.S.R. who had no permanent stake in the colony. Later, critics of the Colonial Civil Service extended the term to expatriated white officers who enjoyed generous benefits in contrast to local officers. See Ahmed Ali, "Fiji: The Arrival of Communal Franchise," Journal of Pacific Studies, Vol. I (1975), pp. 26-27.

[4]Britain's intervention in Fiji was neither a part of some grandiose imperial design nor a watershed in British expansion in the mid-Victorian period. It certainly was an act of political expediency, and meets the criteria of the 'Robinson-Gallagher thesis' of the 'informal empire' extending into the 'formal empire.' All the necessary conditions were present in Fiji: the labor traffic which posed the whole problem of law and order in the Pacific; the unchecked activities of whites which upset Britain's relationship with indigenous rulers; and the unstable conditions which jeopardized the interests of British commerce (here to mean trade between Fiji and other British areas of influence in the Pacific such as Australia and New Zealand). See J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," The Economic History Review, 2nd Series, Volume VI, No. 1 (August 1953), pp. 1-15; and Legge, Britain in Fiji, p. 133; see also J. W. Davidson and D. Scarr, eds., Pacific Island Portraits (Canberra: Australian National University, 1970) for a study of the rivalry between Cakobau and Ma'afu; Ethel Drus, "The Colonial Office and the Annexation of Fiji," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. 12 (1950), pp. 87-110; W. David McIntyre, The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865-1875 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967).

[5]Fiji Immigration Report (1900), Fiji Legislative Council Paper No. 28 of 1901, p. 13; hereafter referred to as F.I.R., C.P. by year and number.

[6]K. L. Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 49.

[7]F.I.R. (1901), C.P. 20/02, p. 14.

[8]India, Emigration Proceedings (hereafter I.E.P.), Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce (hereafter R.A.C.), March 1901, A. No. 12-15, File No. 24. "A" Proceedings (Printed Papers) are also available in the India Office Records, London.

[9]Under-Secretary, Government of Bengal, to Secretary, Government of India, No. 1365, Calcutta, March 14, 1901, I.E.P., R.A.C., March 1901, A. No. 13.

[10]This figure was calculated from the Fiji Immigration Reports, 1900 to 1907. These reports contain figures for 'passenger' immigrants from Calcutta only.

[11]F.I.R. (1907), C.P. 21/08, p. 28.

[12]Government of India Resolution No. 12-80-5, October 18, 1904, in Procedure Regarding Passports, Huzur English Office, Baroda, 145/70A; hereafter referred to as H.E.O.

[13]This information was obtained orally from Bakshi Singh Mal of Suva, Fiji; also, see Gillion, op. cit., p. 131.

[14]Gillion, p. 133, places 1906 as the year of their arrival. The general consensus of the Soni community of Suva is that the first two immigrants arrived in 1904. Interview with P. K. Bhindi, prominent Soni businessman and politician (April 25, 1975).

[15]Interview with Narainji Sida, grandson of Lakhu Premji Soni (August 8, 1975).

[16]Gillion, op. cit., p. 133.

[17]Interview with Jayantibhai Badshah, Navsari, Gujarat (July 28, 1974). Jayantibhai was born in Fiji in 1929. His family returned to Navsari in 1947 where he is now a prominent businessman.

[18]Dewan to Resident, Baroda, December 27, 1917, No. 1272, H.E.O. 145/16.

[19]Notification No. 1011, January 1, 1907, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/70A.

[20]F.I.R. (1909), C.P. 28/10, p. 26.

[21]Calculated from the Fiji Immigration Reports for 1908, 1909 and 1910.

[22]Fiji, Census Report (1911), C.P. 44/11, p. 32; hereafter referred to as F.C.R.

[23]F.C.R. (1911), p. 32.

[24]Ibid., p. 32. Other figures in this paragraph, and also in the next paragraph, are from the same source.

[25]S. A. Waiz, ed., Indians Abroad Directory, 1934 (2nd edition, Bombay: The Imperial Indian Citizenship Association, 1934), p. 206.

[26]F.I.R. (1911), C.P. 48/12, pp. 22-23.

[27]F.I.R. (1911), pp. 22-23.

[28]F.I.R. (1912), C.P. 29/13, p. 19.

[29]A. G. Lowndes, ed., South Pacific Enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), Appendix 11, pp. 435-37.

[30]Derived from the Fiji Immigration Reports between 1910 and 1914 inclusive. C.P. 22/11, C.P. 48/12, C.P. 29/13, C.P. 57/14, C.P. 20/15.

[31]Report on the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, Cd. 5194 (1910), Appendices, p. 60; hereafter referred to as Sanderson Committee Report.

[32]Fiji Times, April 18, 1912; also, cited in Gillion, p. 157.

[33]Telegram to Secretary of State for India, No. 280, October 11, 1911, I.E.P., Commerce and Industry (hereafter C. & I.), November 1911, A. No. 4-5.

[34]Government of Bombay to Government of India, No. 6480, November 4, 1911, I.E.P., C. & I., December 1911, A. No. 409.

[35]Proposal for labor recruitment in the Surat District, January 5, 1912, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1912. B. No. 22/23, No. 15.

[36]J. McNeill and Chiman Lal, Report on the Condition of Indian Immigrants in the Four Colonies: Trinidad, British Guiana or Demerara, Jamaica and Fiji, and in the Dutch Colony of Surinam or Dutch Guiana. Part II (Simla: Government Central Press, 1914), p. 262 (also known as the Red Report).

[37]Same source as n. 13.

[38]F.C.R. (1911) and (1921), C.P. 44/11, C.P. 2/22.

[39]See Totaram Sanadhya, Fiji Dvip men mere Ikkis Varsh (4th edition, Agra: Shiulal Agrawal & Co., 1973). In Hindi. ("My Twenty-one Years in Fiji").

[40]F.C.R. (1911), C.P. 44/11.

[41]Colonial Secretary's Office (hereafter C.S.O.) to Secretary, Government of India, Suva, April 18, 1912, 9004/1911, I.E.P., C. & I., August 1913, B. No. 37/38, File No. 75.

[42]Under Secretary, Government of India, to Colonial Secretary, Fiji dated Simla, June 22, 1912, No. 4794-75, I.E.P., C. & I., August 1913, B. No. 37/38, File No. 75.

[43]Sanadhya, op. cit., p. 35.

[44]Ibid., pp. 24-25; also, see Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 158.

[45]Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, Vol. 50, pp. 363-71, 392-96; also, see R. P. Patwardhanand and D. V. Ambekar, eds., Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Vol. I: Economic (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 349.

[46]Hiralal Gupta, Mauritius Aur Fiji Pravasi Bhartiyo ka Agranela Dr. M. Manilal (Bombay: Esquire Press Ltd., 1954), pp. 36-37. In Hindi. ("Dr. Manilal, Leader of Indian Migrants to Mauritius and Fiji"). See also Hugh Tinker, "Odd Man Out: The Loneliness of the Indian Colonial Politician--The Career of Manilal Doctor," The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, Vol. II, No. 2 (January 1974), p. 235.

[47]Tinker, "The Career of Manilal Doctor," p. 237.

[48]Gupta, op. cit., pp. 38-40.

[49]I.E.P., C. & I., January 1913, A. No. 1, File No. 5.

[50]India Office (hereafter I.O.) to Colonial Office (hereafter C.O.) dated London, November 22, 1912, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1913, A. No. 1, File No. 5.

[51]C.O. to Governor of Fiji, dated London, December 10, 1912, Fiji No. 320, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1913, A. No. 1, File No. 5.

[52]F.I.R. (1914), C.P. 20/15, p. 13.

[53]Red Report, Part II.

[54]Sanadhya, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

[55]Interview with B. S. Mal and other Sikhs in Suva, Fiji.

[56]F.I.R. (1913), C.P. 57/14, p. 15.

[57]Passports, No. 489 of 1918, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/22.

[58]Passports, No. 1020 of 1918, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/23.

[59]Sanadhya, op. cit., p. 28.

[60]F.I.R.(1913), p. 15.

[61]Interview with Chunilal M. Patel, Dharmaj (September 8, 1974).

[62]Interview with Ratilal A. Patel, youngest son of Appabhai, Ba, Fiji (June 16, 1975).

[63]F.I.R. (1914) and (1917), C.P. 20/15, C.P. 75/18.

[64]Information regarding Passports, etc., required for students, merchants and others going to foreign countries, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/5.

[65]Foreign and Political Department Telegram to Local Governments, Administrations and Political Orders, No. 792-G, dated May 10, 1916, I.E.P., C. & I., December 1916, B. No. 67.

[66]See Foreign and Political Department Papers relating to the Passport Rules issued under the Indian Passport Act (XXXIV of 1920), I.E.P., Revenue and Agriculture (hereafter R. & A.), March 1923, B. No. 12, File No. 35/12.

[67]General Department, Government of Bombay to Government of India, Bombay Castle, January 1917, Confidential No. 12, I.E.P., C. & I., March 1917, B. No. 5.

[68]Secretary of State (India Office--hereafter referred to as I.O.) to Governor General of India, August 10, 1917, Public No. 93, India Office Records (hereafter I.O.R.), London, Judicial and Public Department (hereafter J. & P.) 2396/1917.

[69]Extract from Legislative Council Debates, March 21, 1921, Vol. I, No. 13 in I.O.R., London, J. & P. 2396/1921, No. 53.

[70]First Assistant Resident to Minister of Baroda State, February 21, 1920, No. 2139, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/75.

[71]Secretary of State (I.O.) to Governor-General of India, August 10, 1917, Public No. 93, I.O.R., London, J. & P. 2396/1917.

[72]Passports--Rules and Regulations, Precedents and Procedures, No. 9760, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/71.

[73]Secretary of State (I.O.) to Governor-General of India, September 21, 1917, Public No. 117, I.O.R., London, J. & P. 3292/1917.

[74]"Note by James McNeill on Assisted Emigration," May 21, 1917, in Report on the Inter-Departmental Conference on Assisted Emigration from India, I.O.R., London, J. & P. 3120 A/1917.

[75]C.O. to I.O., July 26, 1917, No. 35794, Enclosure, Public No. 117, I.O.R., London, J. & P. 3292/1917.

[76]F.I.R. (1917), C.P. 75/18, p. 13.

[77]Extracts from Home Department, Establishment A Proceedings, June 1918, No. 195-199, I.E.P., C. & I., November 1918, No. 5, Filed and Indexed.

[78]Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 6 of 1912-1916, No. 7 of 1916, No. 8 of 1916-17.

[79]Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 8 of 1916-17, No. 9 of 1917-18; and Passports, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/8, 145/17.

[80]Only those who could raise their passage money, often incurring some amount of debt, were able to make the journey. This involved travel by train to Calcutta or Bombay. The route from Calcutta was direct, but ships from Bombay went only as far as New Zealand where immigrants faced additional expenses until they could find a ship to take them on to Fiji.

[81]Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 8 of 1916-17, No. 9 of 1917-18.

[82]Ibid.

[83]F.I.R. (1917), C.P. 75/18, p. 13.

[84]Position of Indians in the West Indies and Fiji, I.E.P., C & I., July 1917, B. No. 1.

[85]Dewan, Huzur Office, to Resident, June 10, 1917, No. 2817, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/75.

[86]Passports, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/25A, 145/25B; and Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 10 of 1918-1919, No. 11 of 1919, No. 12 of 1919-20.

[87]Acting Governor of Fiji to C.O., September 30, 1918, Fiji No. 352, in I.O.R., London, J. & P. 4522/1915.

[88]I.E.P., C. & I., July 1917, B. No. 1.

[89]C. F. Andrews, Fiji Indentured Labour: A Supplementary Statement (Calcutta: Modern Review, 1919), p. 11.

[90]Fiji Times, November 14, 1918; also, see Enclosure No. 11, Annex 2, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1920, A. No. 7.

[91]Governor of Fiji to C.O., February 27, 1918, No. 56, Enclosure No. 6, Annex 1, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1920, A. No. 7.

[92]Governor of Fiji to C.O., September 30, 1918, No. 352, Enclosure No. 8, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1920, A. No. 7.

[93]Notes, I.E.P., C. & I., January 1920, A. No. 13.

[94]Thomas Hughes to C.O., London, December 27, 1919, in I.E.P., C. & I., May 1920, A. No. 5.

[95]Press Communiqué, Delhi, January 3, 1920, No. 1, I.E.P., January 1920, C. & I., A. No. 32.

[96]Extract from Young India, March 3, 1920, I.E.P., C. & I., November 1920, No. 8.

CHAPTER III

FIJI AND INDIAN IMMIGRATION AFTER INDENTURE, 1921-1945

The abolition of the indenture system in 1920 was indicative of an increasing sensitivity on the part of the Government of India and the leading nationalists about the issue of emigration during a period of considerable political change. This sensitivity reflected a new awareness of the place and importance of India and Indians within the British Empire, certainly influenced by the Indian contribution to the war effort, Montagu's declaration in 1917 concerning reforms and a promise of dominion status, and the inclusion of an Indian representative in the Imperial War Cabinet. It made Indians feel that unless the stigma of 'coolieism' was removed permanently, India would always occupy an inferior status in its dealings with other parts of the British Empire, which would be inconsistent with its political objectives.[1]

The indenture system left a very bitter legacy because of the inhumane treatment of laborers. It created a general animosity toward colonial governments which had condoned many of the abuses in the system. Furthermore, it made Indians acutely aware of the unequal treatment of their countrymen in many parts of the British Empire in matters concerning the franchise, the administration of immigration laws, the right to own land and to trade under the same conditions as other settlers, and the claim to British citizenship.[2] Above all, it led to the decision to bring emigration under strict government control and to convince the rest of the British Empire that India was no longer prepared to condone emigration of Indians for labor purposes even as a temporary measure.

The attempt to attract Indian settlers to Fiji under an officially sanctioned system of emigration is discussed in the first section of this chapter. Subsequent sections of the chapter deal first with the socio-economic

conditions in Fiji which continued to attract Indian immigrants, and then with the kinds of migrants who came in the 1920s and 1930s. This chapter will show that it was not only the bitter legacy of the indenture system and the sensitivity of Indians on the emigration question, but also the Indian Government's perception of the situation in Fiji which thwarted any attempt to devise an alternative scheme of emigration to the indenture system. Though Indians no longer came to Fiji under an officially sanctioned system, 'unassisted' or 'free' immigrants continued to migrate to the colony. Factors such as the survival of the sugar industry, Fiji's lax immigration laws, increasing opportunities for economic advancement, and the breakdown of Fiji's isolation from the rest of the world are also examined in terms of their effect on Indian migration to Fiji after 1920. Another important concern of the chapter is the impact of Punjabi and Gujarati immigrants, especially the latter, on Indian society in Fiji. It will be shown that the exuberance which allowed this category of immigrants to enter Fiji at random in the 1920s was shortlived. Because these recent immigrants began to surpass local Indians in the economic sphere, immigration controls were quickly introduced to curtail their entry.

The labor troubles in Fiji and the impending racial crisis in Kenya in 1920 did little to change Indian attitudes toward emigration. The unofficial mission from Fiji, which came to conduct deliberations for renewed emigration to Fiji, soon discovered that the sentiments of both the Government of India and the leading nationalists on the emigration issue were identical. The Indian press was also hostile but the most scathing attacks came from Gandhi who was very vocal on the emigration issue throughout 1920.[3] The labor disturbances had evidently raised serious doubts about the future of Indians in Fiji.

The situation in Fiji appeared to be critical, as seen by the Fiji Government's response to the strike. The slump in the sugar industry and a

substantial rise in the cost of living caused considerable dissatisfaction among the predominantly agricultural Indian population, but also had put tremendous strains on wage earners who resided in the urban centers. In anticipation of large wage increases, employees of the Public Works Department and the Municipal Council went on strike in Suva. Later the strike spread to Nausori and Levuka and soon engulfed the sugar-growing areas in Rewa and Navua. Fortunately, the northwestern regions remained calm, perhaps due to the offer of the C.S.R. to pay an additional bonus for every ton of cane harvested. The strike lasted a month and presented the Fiji Government with its first major labor dispute.[4] Rather than treat it as such, the government was quick to associate it with Indian nationalist agitation and embarked on a 'pacification' program which included a show of force by naval vessels from New Zealand and Australia. The most alarming development was the polarization of races with animosities becoming quite apparent between Indians and Europeans. Native Fijians were recruited to augment the police force and the government also received considerable assistance from "loyal Indian British Subjects," under the leadership of Bhadri Maharaj and Peter Grant, to contain the dispute.

Reaction in India was particularly hostile. The Indian press was incensed over the riots and the treatment of the strike leaders, as were the leading nationalists. Gandhi was appalled by the treatment of Manilal and Jayakumari whom he regarded as an 'adopted daughter,' and certainly a political protege (after all, she had actively participated in his nascent satyagraha movement in Natal in 1913).[5] Even more disconcerting, especially to the Indian Government, was the Fiji Government's disparaging attitude toward strikers in a despatch to the Colonial Office in which it had depicted them as "an inferior class," (women, of course, were of the "lowest classes") in comparison with Indians "belonging to the north-western districts" who had not participated in the strike.[6]

Though suspicion and caution characterized the Indian Government's attitude toward the mission from Fiji, it was eventually left to the British Guiana and Fiji Emigration Committee of the Indian Legislative Council to consider and report on the emigration proposals for Fiji.[7] There were actually two emigration proposals before the Indian Government--that which had been presented by the Fiji mission and another by Thomas Hughes, a high-ranking official of the C.S.R. who came to India to offer his assistance to the mission.

The scheme of the Fiji deputation entailed a system of both free and assisted emigration which included the encouragement of Indian settlement, no restrictions on emigrants desiring to work under any particular employer, and no financial charge to the Indian treasury in operating the scheme. Above all, the colonial government agreed to bear half the cost of repatriation of an Indian desiring to return after a stay of three years and the entire cost after seven years. However, this scheme was not as comprehensive as that advocated by Hughes. In contrast, Hughes wished to restrict the recruitment of 'colonists' to Madras because religious objections to emigration were less there than in Northern India. He also felt that the labor requirements of the Assam tea estates could produce strong economic objections to emigration in Northern India.[8]

In a conscious effort to align official policy with the prevailing nationalist sentiment on emigration (Surendra Nath Banerjea was, after all, chairman of the Emigration Committee), the Indian Government adopted a tough stance against the deputation from Fiji. The Emigration Committee's report, released in March 1920, had urged the government to press for "political and economic equality" for Indians in Fiji and to send a deputation to Fiji "to test the scheme and especially to the question of the adequacy of wages."[9] Therefore, the Indian Government was not willing to settle for any assurance other than that "by ordinance with the approval of the Colonial Office that

the position of Indians in Fiji would be equal to that of any class of His Majesty's subjects."[10] Moreover, it was only prepared to sanction emigration if the report of the proposed deputation to Fiji proved to be satisfactory.

After consultation with the authorities at home, the mission from Fiji readily provided these guarantees which were as much the logical response to nationalist hostility in India as they were part of a calculated effort to convince Indian authorities of changes which were in store for the Indians in Fiji. Essentially the Fiji Government agreed to refrain from tampering with Indian rights or altering them to the detriment of that community; the Indians in Fiji would be entitled to the same trading and commercial privileges as the Europeans; there would be no modifications of the existing municipal rights; and the proposed political concessions, allowing two elected Indian representatives in the Legislative Council, would not be withdrawn. Later, in July 1920, it reiterated this pledge to the Colonial Office "to give the guarantee asked for (including the general guarantees by Ordinance)."[11]

Though the official mood in Fiji should have paved the way for the early resumption of emigration, the Government of India did very little to hasten the process. There was a certain degree of ambivalence in the manner in which the Indian authorities tackled the problem. While they welcomed the proposals for the new emigration schemes, they were far more perceptive to the demands of Indians who advocated a policy of caution. Hence, the official policy reflected the general Indian sentiment which contained a great distrust of colonial governments under the control of planters whose only concern was to secure an adequate supply of Indian laborers without attending to their material and psychological needs.

There was actually no immediate solution to the emigration question. Public opinion in India was still embittered by the Fiji Government's actions during the labor disturbances. Speculation about an exodus of Indians from Fiji to their homeland was also being widely publicized in India. At a time

when Indians in Fiji were feeling very apprehensive over their predicament, the Indian press and the Indian public concentrated on rights and privileges on the assumption that the eradication of disabilities would invariably lead to the betterment of the community there. The Indian Government also showed more concern for its public image rather than acting on the Fiji question at an opportune moment. Public indignation in India and the decision to wait for the report on the cost of living from Fiji were largely responsible for the delay in sending a deputation to Fiji.

In the meanwhile, the situation in Fiji continued to deteriorate after the disturbances. Faced with unemployment and poverty, many ex-indentured Indians began to consider repatriation to India as the only alternative to their predicament in the colony. There were actually 11,000 Indians who registered with the government for repatriation to India.[12] Disillusionment over the government's callous attitude during the disturbances merely intensified the desire for repatriation. The drift toward India began gradually in 1920 but by the end of the year 4,741 ex-indentured Indians had returned.[13] Adding to all the confusion was growing speculation about a mass exodus from Fiji which the Indian Government was now anxious to prevent.

Scrutiny of the report on the cost of living in Fiji quickly convinced Indian authorities of the serious economic grounds for dissatisfaction among the Indians there. The colonization scheme soon gave way to a more pressing need "to enquire into conditions and ascertain the causes of discontent."[14] The Indian Government could no longer evade any responsibility in this issue because Fiji actually had no alternatives to Indian immigration--proposals to employ Chinese laborers and to import surplus Tamil labor from Ceylon were rejected by the Colonial Office. Above all, it was also anxious to clear up an embarrassing situation which the nationalists at home were effectively using to their advantage.

Bad publicity surrounding the predicament of destitute repatriated

Indians in Calcutta provided additional incentive to prevent the threatened exodus from Fiji. In 1920, 6,544 immigrants returned to India from the colonies and in 1921 the figure doubled.[15] Over half the repatriates within this two-year period were from Fiji. Many returnees were experiencing numerous difficulties in readjusting to their old environment. Large numbers of repatriated immigrants were unable to find employment because of unfavorable economic conditions in India. After years of absence in the colonies some were also unable to revert to a traditional pattern of existence which they now found intolerable. Others who had returned to resume their old kinship ties in their villages were hard pressed to share their savings with their kinfolk. Those who returned as paupers or had little to offer were invariably ostracized. Uncomfortable and bitter in the old surroundings, many discontented repatriates drifted toward Calcutta with high expectations of returning to the colonies. In Calcutta, the authorities conducted a careful scrutiny of the repatriates who wished to leave India again. Those who had adequate funds and possessed the proper travel documents departed as 'passengers' to their destinations. The destitutes and the less fortunate were permitted to leave only after the governments of British Guiana and Fiji intervened on their behalf.[16]

All hopes of sending a deputation at an early date were shattered when the situation in Fiji erupted again. In February 1921, laborers in the sugar industry went on strike against the C.S.R. The strike started at Ba, soon engulfed all the sugar districts in northwestern Viti Levu, and subsequently spread to Labasa in Vanua Levu. Sugar mills in Navua and Nausori were not affected. It lasted six months until the end of August. Essentially, workers struck for higher wages and better living conditions.[17] The response from both the sugar company and the government was predictable. While the C.S.R. rebuffed claims for higher wages, though promising to provide "chief articles of food and clothing at the lowest possible cost," the Fiji

Government maintained its usual firm stance and deported strike-leaders, notably Sadhu Bashist Muni, a controversial social reformer, whom it accused of being "in collusion with non-cooperationists in India."[18]

If there was indeed no immediate solution to the emigration question, then this impasse stemmed from the fact that both governments were at loggerheads. The Fiji Government simply did not want Indian authorities to interfere in the domestic affairs of the colony, nor was it prepared to entertain any deputation associated with the nationalist movement in India.[19] On their part, the Indian authorities regarded this attitude as nothing short of a calculated effort by the Fiji Government to whitewash their conduct in suppressing the riots. While they were generally willing to comply with the wishes of the colonial government, they were also very sensitive to public opinion, especially at a time when the new emigration bill was being debated in the Indian Legislative Council. Nevertheless, the Government of India agreed to restrict itself to an inquiry "into the suitability of the Colony for settlement by Indians and the question of land grants for deserving Indian officers and men."[20]

The deputation to Fiji finally selected in December 1921, consisted of G. L. Corbett (former Deputy Secretary in the Department of Commerce and Industry), Venkatapathi Raju (a member of the Indian Legislative Council), Govind Sharma (a member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces), and Lieutenant Hissam-ud-din Khan who was to ascertain whether conditions in Fiji were suitable for the settlement of Indian soldiers. It arrived in early February 1922 and remained in the colony for about two months, visiting the principal cane-growing regions and other areas which had the potential for Indian settlement. From the outset the visit was marred by controversy which became more intense when the deputation released its interim recommendations. Sympathizing overtly with the Indian workers, the deputation expressed a deep sense of outrage at the C.S.R.'s reduction of

the daily wage of cane workers by 40 per cent.[21] First, it recommended the repatriation of every Indian who was "legally entitled to free passage to India" (in spite of the plight of repatriated immigrants in Calcutta). Second, the deputation called for a living wage for workers on the lines suggested by the Inter-Departmental Conference in London in 1917; priority to be given to unemployed Indians to work on the projected trunk road across Viti Levu; and better land provisions for Indians wishing to settle permanently.[22]

Unfortunately, the Fiji Government could do very little to allay the deputation's misgivings. There was little difficulty in agreeing to discharge all liabilities toward repatriation, but it balked at establishing a statutory minimum wage for workers in an effort to remain impartial in the dispute. Perhaps there was no precedence for such legislation in other British colonies. As for the C.S.R., it even rejected the deputation's advice to operate "without profit or even at a loss," which was a realistic suggestion considering the company's 'charitable' gesture toward New Zealand earlier; the company also accused the Indian members of being biased and "entirely unfit to conduct the enquiry," and protested vehemently to the Viceroy for fear of an adverse final report.[23] But the more serious development was the position adopted by the European community which was angered by the utterances of the Indian members of the deputation and by their visible display of sympathy toward the Indian workers. Many planters had experienced the crippling effects of the economic slump and could not maintain their estates without an adequate supply of agricultural laborers. Some planters had turned to the native Fijians who demanded high wages and sometimes proved to be erratic workers. Without adequate upkeep, choice farm lands were soon covered with dense vegetation. As the crisis intensified, numerous planters reacted by selling their livestock and, in extreme cases, sold a considerable portion of their landholdings to cover losses.

The sugar outlook continued to remain gloomy indeed, and the company's

lockout of its workers produced much anxiety over the possibility of the industry collapsing entirely. There was increasing bitterness toward the deputation and the entire Indian community. Both Europeans and native Fijians questioned the motives of Indians during a period of economic distress which affected all segments of the population. The local press was also very critical of the deputation, in effect articulating the growing opposition "to any renewal of immigration of Indians to Fiji with a view to extensive land settlement and to equality of political status of Indians and Europeans."[24] Obviously, this change of attitude seriously undermined the Fiji Government's proposals for renewed immigration.

It was the the general feeling of despondency among the Indian community which influenced the judgement of the deputation more than any other factor. The deputation completed its inquiry by the middle of March, but also delved into the causes of the discontent contrary to assurances given by the Indian Government. Its members discovered no signs of political agitation, concluding that Indians in Fiji had three major grievances: inadequate wages to maintain a decent standard of living; an unsatisfactory land policy with little provisions for permanent Indian settlement as agriculturalists; disproportionate or lack of political representation aggravated by the government's lethargy in providing even the promised communal seats in the Legislative Council.[25] Furthermore, the deputation did not favor the immigration of Indians as laborers and, above all, saw limited possibilities for Indian colonization. Realizing that repatriation would not be economical, it simply advised the Fiji Government "to provide for the settlement of the Indians" already in Fiji who had "gained experience of the local conditions."[26] Thus, the report to the Indian Government fell heavily against any resumption of sponsored emigration unless remedial measures were taken to eradicate the major disabilities of Indians in the colony. However, it was favorably inclined toward the settlement of Indian soldiers but regarded this a risky

undertaking because of the hostile European sentiment. Surprisingly, the deputation's comprehension of the economic issues in Fiji was very superficial; rather, it concentrated on the disabilities of Indians in Fiji to justify its opposition to renewed sponsored emigration from India.

In settling the Fiji question the Government of India adhered rigidly to the contention that the deputation had gone there "to examine the possibilities for Indian colonization" and "not to guarantee a labor supply."[27] In December 1922, it informed the authorities in Fiji of the decision not to reopen emigration unless the problems of wages, political status, and land settlement were resolved. This position was strongly reiterated in March 1923, but in return for concessions to the Indian community the Fiji Government demanded 10,000 new immigrants, excluding women and children, within a two-year period.[28] Rejection of the counter-proposal from Fiji was inevitable, in effect dashing all hopes for renewed sponsored emigration.

The fate of the entire emigration question was finally settled by the passage of the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 which placed stringent controls on the emigration of unskilled workers from India. Essentially, the Act reflected a dual concern to prevent the erratic movement of cheap Indian labor abroad and to force colonies which required Indian labor to liberalize legal rights for their Indian residents. It empowered the Indian Government to permit organized emigration, but only under terms and conditions to be reviewed by a standing emigration committee which was especially constituted from both houses of the Indian Legislature.[29] Thus the Act had a direct bearing on emigration to Mauritius, British Guiana, and Fiji. Fiji's attempt to attract Indian settlers under an officially sanctioned system of 'free' emigration was not successful. Emigration to Mauritius was resumed briefly in 1921 and terminated in the following year. By 1926 British Guiana remained the only colony to receive immigrants, but hardly any significant movement from India occurred. As for nonlabor emigration, the

government continued to maintain a policy of noninterference. The Act did not place restrictions on skilled artisans or 'free' emigration under the passport system.

The legislative controls placed upon labor emigration meant that Fiji could no longer rely on the two main areas--United Provinces and Madras--for fresh supplies of Indian migrants. These two areas had served as the major recruiting grounds during the indenture period but after 1920 there was a drastic shift in the pattern of migration. Throughout the 1920s the United Provinces witnessed a dramatic decline in migration overseas.[30] With the termination of indentured labor there was hardly any incentive or inducement to leave. By contrast, Madras and other areas of South India became the chief recruitment pool for seasonal labor, under the kangani system, for the neighboring countries of Ceylon, Burma, and Malaya. Moreover, Indian laborers adapted quite readily to the climatic and physical conditions in these regions and encountered less hostility and ill-treatment there than they had experienced in Fiji or other British colonies which had received indentured labor.

Judging from the uncertainty of the immediate postindenture years in Fiji, it is also difficult to understand the Fiji Government's relentless efforts to obtain fresh supplies of laborers from India. The economic situation in Fiji after 1920 was not conducive to any renewed large-scale Indian settlement. Gone was the optimism which grew out of the wartime boom based on the phenomenal growth of the sugar industry and on the inflated price of sugar. The abolition of indentured emigration from India in 1920 ensured the demise of the plantation system in Fiji and, in effect, shattered the dreams of the planter community. Uncertainty in the world sugar market led to a drop in sugar prices which offset the high profit levels, though not the importance of sugar, of the preceding war years for most growers in Fiji. The colony also witnessed an economic slump, accompanied by an acute

labor shortage, a decline in sugar production, a scarcity in essential commodities, and an alarming rise in the cost of living. The two major labor disturbances created much distrust between Indians and the other races which eventually led to growing opposition to any extensive Indian settlement in Fiji. Fortunately for the local Indian community, very little emigration from India took place which could have aggravated the situation. The Indian community was also entering a transitory phase, confronting numerous hurdles in the adopted homeland. Some of the main challenges were intricately related to the quest for political and social equality with other races, diversification into other types of occupation in addition to farming, and a growing desire for more land.

The Census of 1921 revealed new trends in the growth of the Indian population. The structure of the community was changing rapidly (see Table 3.1 below). Taking into consideration natural increase, deaths, new arrivals and departures between 1911 and 1916, while the indenture system was still in operation, departures through additional repatriation after 1916, and 'free' immigration, the Indian population was estimated at 60,634.

TABLE 3.1

MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE INDIAN POPULATION

	1911		1921	
India-born	29,063	72.14%	33,156	54.68%
Locally-born	11,069	27.48%	26,810	44.22%
Others	154	0.38%	668	1.10%
TOTAL	40,286		60,634	

Source: Fiji Census Reports, 1911 and 1921.

The small increase in the India-born group between 1911 and 1921 can be attributed to repatriation (10,017 out of 16,613 immigrants who came between 1911 and 1916 returned to India) and to the minor contribution through 'free' immigration.[31] There was also an uneven sex ratio in this group which indicated that it would be outnumbered eventually by the local component with its younger age factor and a more balanced sex ratio.

The India-born component continued to face depletion throughout the 1920s, primarily through repatriation. Up until 1925, nearly 52,000 were entitled to return to India at the expense of the Fiji Government.[32] The immediate postindenture figures for repatriation were quite high (about 4,000 per year) but began to level off to an annual rate of 1,000 until 1929.[33] By 1923, 24,665 of all Indians with repatriation rights had claimed their free passage to India, and by the end of 1929 the total figure rose to 39,806.[34] There was definitely a steady movement of the India-born toward India. Had it not been for a burst of immigration into Fiji prior to the depression, the numerical strength of this group would have shown further decline.

The community was still North Indian in character, judging from the birth places of the India-born. Over half traced their origins to the United Provinces and only a quarter to Madras Presidency. Other groupings included the Bengalis, Punjabis, Rajputs, and Gujaratis. There was a large group of Indians with no designated birthplace in India. Also noticeable was the decline in numbers of Bengalis, Punjabis, and Rajputs who may have left because of the prevailing unstable conditions, but the numerical strength of Gujaratis or persons with origins in Bombay Presidency had doubled, from 153 in 1911 to 324 in 1921.[35]

North and South Indians were divided along linguistic lines as well as on a sectarian basis. This was a by-product of the indenture period when there was very little interaction between the two groups. The only possible

semblance of unity was the common feeling of having originated in India. Religion could have acted as a unifying force (over 85 per cent of all Indians were Hindus), but there was growing polarization among the sectarian groups. The Sanatani and Arya Samaji comprised the dominant sects, the former paying more attention to a conservative ritualistic tradition. In contrast, the Southerners comprised a separate group with a distinct linguistic and ritualistic tradition. While the Northerners' main festivals were Ramlila, Holi, and Divali, the Southerners concentrated on the Mariamma festival.[36] Most minor groupings such as the Bengalis and Gujaratis fell into the general category of Hindus. Other significant religious groupings were the Christians, Sikhs, and Muslims.

The Indian community retained its dominant agricultural base in the postindenture period. The end of the estate system ensured the rise of the independent Indian farmer, as Europeans withdrew from the cultivation of sugarcane while turning to pastoral farming and coconut growing. Experiments in cocoa, tea, and rubber cultivation resulted in failure because of hurricanes, the acute shortage of labor, and an unprofitable return on investments. Planters who had leased estates from the C.S.R. relinquished their rights and moved out of the sugarcane districts. Furthermore, a major portion of all freehold land under European control became idle. Europeans still retained control of over 55 per cent of all freehold land in the colony but started leasing land to Indians.[37] Very little land of this type passed into the hands of Indians as direct ownership.

The absence of the indigenous population from any large-scale commercial farming, especially in the sugar industry, also assured the Indian's position as the dominant agriculturalist. The Fijian was the supreme landowner in Fiji, possessing recognized customary tenure over more than 80 per cent of all land.[38] Since the government was committed to a policy of preserving native land tenure, it virtually assured the permanence of Fijian

ownership of all land that was not freehold or under government control. The Fijian was tied to his village with complex communal obligations. His chief agricultural pursuit was the cultivation of foodcrops--coconut, yam, taro, banana, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, tapioca, pineapple, kava root (yaqona), etc.--for home consumption. The growth of bananas for export constituted the Fijian's only substantial commercial enterprise.[39] However, the Fijian was quickly becoming aware of the changes around him; he was extremely perceptive of the material benefits derived from the commercial economy of the towns. The drift to urban centers began gradually as villagers left at varying intervals to become wage earners in towns, on large farms, and in the sugar mills. Here they worked as casual and agricultural laborers, clerks, sailors, carpenters, boat builders, and domestic servants.

The withdrawal of European planters from the sugarcane districts left the C.S.R. as the largest single landowner associated with the sugar industry. The C.S.R. survived both the labor troubles and the fall in sugar prices. Moreover, its financial position remained intact despite the difficulties during the economic slump as exemplified by profits which rose steadily from £300,000 in 1919 to £400,000 in 1921.[40] By its own admission, the company in Fiji "enjoyed the most spectacular monetary success in its history between 1914 and 1924," providing 50 per cent of the total profits for the C.S.R.'s entire operations in the South Pacific.[41] It is interesting to note that when the C.S.R. in Fiji terminated its operations in 1923 as a subsidiary of the company in Australia, it "repaid the ordinary capital to the parent company," returned its fixed assets at almost a third of its original value of £3,500,000, and paid in excess of £1,000,000 to miscellaneous shareholders as premium and other cash benefits.[42] Additional benefits were realized through the transfer of surplus assets. The sugar company was certainly in a position to pay its Indian workers more without any substantial loss to the shareholders, but consistently maintained a policy of low wages which

some sources cited as a major cause of the rise of rural Indian indebtedness.[43] The Company's prime objective in the postindenture period was to stop the erosion in sugar output and to retain a high monetary return for its investment. Thus, it introduced the scheme of tenancy farming which virtually assured the survival of the sugar industry.

Two factors contributed to the consolidation of the company's position. One was the closure of its two competitors' mills in Penang and in Navua in 1922. The Penang operation passed into the hands of the C.S.R., and the Vancouver-Fiji Sugar Company's mill at Navua was dismantled. Moveable assets from the latter were transferred to the parent company in Vancouver and the land was sold to the Fiji Pastoral Company.[44] The failure of the Navua mill clearly indicated that the windward (wet) side of the main island was climatically unsuitable for sugarcane cultivation. The closure of the mill resulted in the movement of many residents to other areas. Those who remained turned to rice cultivation.

The other important factor was the C.S.R.'s decision to create a new class of tenant farmers on its estates. This innovation took place between 1923 and 1924. The company realized that 'independent' tenant farmers, under constant supervision to curtail erratic cultivation and land wastage, could provide enough sugarcane to sustain the industry. Large estates were divided into economically viable and manageable farms of about 11 acres (some farms were smaller) and leased to individual family units, based on the conviction that an individual (single) family farm of eight acres or more would provide an adequate means of livelihood.[45] There was little scope for agricultural diversification because of the company's policy of encouraging sugarcane cultivation only.[46] The company also recruited the services of another cane supplier. This type of farmer was the 'contractor' who was generally a leaseholder of non-C.S.R. lands (freehold, Crown, and native) but entered into a similar economic relationship with the company as the

tenant farmer.[47] Both contractors and tenant farmers emerged as the principal cane growers as the company withdrew from active farming.

The C.S.R. played an important role in shaping the pattern of Indian settlement in the postindenture period. The emphasis on single-unit farms led the rapid expansion of settlements on company lands contiguous to the 'sugar towns' but within the limits of the cane regions. Settlements were unlike the village units of India, consisting of scattered homesteads on farms with undefined boundaries. Houses were constructed on the least arable patches of land, in accordance with the company's instructions, to ensure maximum utilization of land for cane cultivation. These settlements lacked cohesiveness based on caste groupings. Authority stemmed mainly from the company which regulated the tenant's finances, provided technical assistance, and even advised on domestic and family matters.[48] The sense of isolation was overcome by cooperative cane harvesting and through contact with the towns linked by the company's tramlines.

While sugarcane cultivation provided the principal source of livelihood, rice growing provided an important avenue for diversification, especially in the wetter regions where cane growing was unsuccessful. During the indenture period rice growing had been initiated by 'free' (ex-indentured) Indians near plantations in the cane regions. The government had also provided incentives to rice growing. After 1920 the focus of rice growing shifted to the delta plains and flat-lands surrounding the towns of Navua and Nausori.[49] Here, it eventually became the main form of agricultural activity among Indian farmers, predominantly in Navua where the closure of the sugar mill necessitated this change-over. Rice proved to be a profitable crop because of the high consumption by Indians. Demand exceeded supply producing a heavy relaince on imported rice as well. To meet the high demand and consumption of the local crop, many farmers in the wetter regions turned exclusively to rice cultivation.

Mixed-crop farming was also becoming an important aspect of agricultural activity, including the cultivation of vegetables, root crops, maize, pulses, and tobacco. Some of these items were marketable commodities. Indians faced competition from Chinese farmers whose concentration on green vegetables enabled the latter to dominate the market in vegetables.[50] Cotton and pineapple growing offered attractive commercial possibilities but the area devoted to their cultivation was small. The British Cotton Growing Association had reported favorably on the quality of Fiji cotton, inducing Indian cotton growers to export small quantities of ginned and baled cotton to the United Kingdom under the guidance of the Fiji Government.[51] Commercial pineapple growing by Indian farmers for export to New Zealand was restricted to small farms near Suva. There was some interest from Canada in launching canning operations but this was only at an experimental stage in the 1920s. Cattle grazing and dairy farming constituted other forms of limited activity associated with the utilization of land. The possibilities for commercial ventures were limited since the better pastoral lands were in the hands of Europeans. Though Indians owned twenty of the twenty-two dairies which supplied milk to the Suva locality, these were small concerns operating on poor pastures in comparison to those receiving direct government assistance.[52]

The government was more keen on developing this as a European sphere of activity. Incentives were given to European ex-servicemen in the form of land grants and the establishment of a butter factory to develop this industry in the Tailevu area.[53] Livestock farming also attracted the attention of Indians but was dominated by Europeans at this stage. Indian farmers preferred grazing leases on sloping lands which were close to cane regions and often indulged in grazing cattle on unfenced European lands.

Apart from the dispersed pattern of Indian settlement in the cane

regions, there was a high concentration of settlers in the vicinity of the 'sugar towns' and districts on the leeward side of both islands. The towns of Navua and Nausori, and Suva the capital--all located on the windward side of Viti Levu--also attracted large pockets of Indian settlement. Ba in Viti Levu, and Macuata in Vanua Levu, emerged as the principal areas of Indian settlement of the cane regions. Suva, the capital of Fiji, had the largest concentration of urban dwellers. While the overwhelming bulk of Indians were rural dwellers on farms, only the commercial and industrial sections of the community resided in towns.

It was in the towns that occupational diversity could best be observed. According to the 1921 Census there were 854 persons involved in commercial activity including traders, merchants, shopkeepers, shop assistants, and restauranteurs.[54] Of the 3,179 persons in the 'industrial' category, tailors, barbers, cabmen, bootmakers, jewelers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, carpenters, furniture-makers, fitters, painters, drivers (locomotive), and blacksmiths constituted the largest groups.[55] Some of these groups such as tailors, goldsmiths and silversmiths, bootmakers, and barbers had a preponderance of Gujaratis. The total number of wage earners was estimated at 5,000, but figures declined steadily after 1921 as more Indians turned to farming.[56] Other peripheral groups that would be indicative of occupational mobility included booksellers, commission agents, wood vendors, photographers, masons, laundrymen (mostly Gujarati), printers, plumbers, butchers, lumbermen, and cinema operators. To many Indians an improved financial position meant more social status.

This was a period of limited education facilities for Indians. Of the 14,000 Indian children of school age in 1925 only 3,500 were receiving any form of formal education of whom about half were attending the small number (about 22) of government-assisted Indian schools.[57] There was an acute shortage of trained teachers. The situation was aggravated by cultural,

religious and linguistic differences, lack of government initiative, and the dispersed nature of the Indian population. The government, of course, blamed it on the inability of Indians to "combine for continued and organized constructive work."[58] This assessment contained an element of truth but there was a more sinister force in operation, namely, that the official mind in Fiji was not yet reconciled to any rapid development in Indian education. Moreover, the Government's expenditure on education went predominantly to the support and expansion of European and Fijian education. It was not until 1929 that a government-sponsored training center for Indian teachers was established.[59] The push for economic betterment, the aspiration toward better social status, the shift from manual labor, and the quest for political rights were all manifestations of the long and arduous march to advancement through various avenues.

Numerous factors contributed to the opening of avenues for advancement--the breakdown of the plantation system, the rapid growth of dispersed Indian settlements, the withdrawal of Europeans from active farming, the accessibility of land for farming, and the emergence of a consumer economy centered in the towns but catering to the requirements of an expanding agricultural hinterland. An expanding population added to the problems of administration. As the responsibilities of administration grew more complex, the government began to pay more attention to developing the existing network of communication lines in the colony. Until 1921 the colony lacked a unified system of roads linking all the towns to the capital in Suva. That year the government initiated a major road project across Viti Levu which was finally completed as a coastal road in the late 1930s, linking the capital to the northwestern sugar centers.[60] A good land transportation system facilitated the movement of capital, trade goods, and people in search of work and opportunity.

Throughout the 1920s Fiji's isolation from the outside world continued

to be broken. Regular steamer communication existed between the colony and Australia and New Zealand on a monthly basis transporting cargo, passengers, and mail. In addition, there were a number of cargo lines from Fiji and the United Kingdom on a two-monthly and quarterly basis, and a Royal Mail Line service to Vancouver via Honolulu on a two-monthly basis. The plying of 'repatriation' ships between India and Fiji assured contact with India. A regular passenger service between Bombay and Sydney after 1920 brought Western India closer to Fiji. Direct cable communication were established between Fiji and Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as well. By 1930 the network of steamer communication had extended immensely--there was now a regular route to the United Kingdom via the Panama Canal, and ships from San Francisco to Sydney called at Suva regularly.[61]

These communication networks consolidated trade links with other countries and provided a steady outlet for the colony's export commodities--sugar, bananas, and copra. Sugar was exported to the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Copra went to the United Kingdom and various foreign countries--the United States, France, and Germany. The banana export market was restricted to New Zealand. Fiji depended largely upon imports for its basic necessities; Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States were the principal suppliers. Imports from India were marginal (about 3 to 4 per cent of the total) consisting predominantly of Indian necessities--drapery, wheat, leather goods, jute bags, edible oils, grains, rice, and spices.[62]

In spite of expanding local communication networks which provided some semblance of linkage between the capital in Suva and the sugar centers, society in Fiji remained highly compartmentalized. There were three main racial groups linked to separate economic functions. These groups are shown in Table 3.2 (p. 84). Indians remained entrenched in the sugar industry; Fijians were traditionally rooted in their village agriculture; Europeans

TABLE 3.2

RACIAL COMPONENTS OF FIJI'S POPULATION, 1881-1946

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1936	1946
Chinese	*	*	*	305	910	1,751	2,874
%	-	-	-	0.2	0.6	0.9	1.1
European	2,671	2,036	2,459	3,707	3,878	4,028	4,594
%	2.1	1.7	2.0	2.6	2.5	2.0	1.8
Fijian	114,748	105,800	94,397	87,096	84,475	97,651	118,070
%	90.0	87.3	78.6	62.4	53.7	49.2	45.5
Indian	588	7,468	17,105	40,286	60,634	85,002	120,414
%	0.5	6.2	14.2	28.9	38.5	42.9	46.4
Part-European	711	1,076	1,516	2,401	2,781	4,574	6,142
%	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.7	1.8	2.3	2.3
Rotuman	2,452	2,219	2,230	2,176	2,235	2,816	3,313
%	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.3
Other Pacific Islanders	6,100	2,267	1,950	2,758	1,564	2,353	3,717
%	4.8	1.9	1.6	2.0	1.0	1.2	1.4
All others	156	314	467	812	789	204	514
%	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.2
TOTAL	127,486	121,180	120,124	139,541	157,266	198,379	259,638
TOTAL PERCENTAGE	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Included with 'All others'

Source: Fiji Census Report, 1946

controlled the flow of capital and displayed more economic diversity which strengthened their grip over Suva, the nucleus of all administrative and commercial activity. The colony contained all the major characteristics of a plural society.[63] Because of the peculiar distribution of the Fijians, the Indians, and the Europeans, each group lived in relative isolation from the other, with Suva and the 'sugar towns' providing the only points of contact. Each race also adhered to its own lifestyle based on different linguistic and cultural traditions. The Europeans and Fijians had more in common, both possessing a strong Christian tradition, than did either of these races with the Indians. The isolation of each group from the other was to some extent self-imposed--the 'European standoffishness,' the Indian belief that he was superior to the backward Fijian--but it was largely superimposed by the structure of the economy, by the physical and climatic conditions which dictated the pattern of land usage, and by the limitations on the accessibility of land.

Though Indians owned property and conducted business worth £300,000 in the early stages of the postindenture period,[64] the scope of their activities was marginal within the context of the entire economic life of the colony. Indians dominated agricultural activity as independent farmers, but their entry into retail and wholesale trade was modest because Europeans controlled the two major commercial concerns and branches, the two banks, the inter-island and overseas shipping houses, the sugar mills, and the capital to launch secondary industries in Suva after their departure from active farming. Moreover, Europeans dominated the political life of the colony which enhanced their economic position. Indians, on the other hand, remained on the periphery because of their strong agricultural background and their focus on sugar. Many lacked the capital, the entrepreneurial skills, and the foresight to enter a new sphere of economic activity. Land restrictions and lack of avenues for political participation also limited the scope of the

opportunities. Fifty years of indenture seemed to have instilled a feeling of defeat and an 'inferiority complex' which hampered any progress. Furthermore, leadership was lacking and came largely from India, while there was also a marked absence of a professional class of local Indians including doctors, lawyers, and teachers who could provide some semblance of leadership.[65] Some of the gaps, especially in the area of commercial activity, were filled by fresh streams of immigrants from India who provided some competition to European activity and to the growing number of small Chinese business concerns. These immigrants, especially from Gujarat, with their capacity to move easily into any form of commercial activity assured an Indian monopoly over the small retail and wholesele trade in the 'sugar towns.'

Immigrants who came to Fiji in the postindenture period could hardly be regarded as strangers to the islands. They consisted of Punjabis and Gujaratis who already comprised small but noticeable groupings within the Indian community. By 1921 there were already 324 Gujaratis and 449 Punjabis out of a total Indian population of 60,634 residing in the islands.[66] Yet they had already become an important part of the more prosperous class of Indians. The Gujaratis were business-oriented and were engaged in some form of commercial activity--shopkeeping, hawking, tailoring, bootmaking, laundering, and, most of all, in the jewelry business as wandering silversmiths and goldsmiths peddling their wares in the town bazaars and the isolated Indian settlements. Some went into farming and even worked as laborers on the government roadworks. Few Gujaratis became indentured laborers. The Punjabis were as enterprising and versatile as the Gujaratis. Displaying a flair for independence they were most reluctant to work as farm laborers. They made excellent policemen, but were renowned in Fiji as independent farmers whose perseverence and hard work helped to turn tracts of unproductive swampland into workable farms. Some revealed a natural

aptitude for commerce and moneylending, and encountered little difficulty in acquiring a share of the expanding land transportation business. Their tenacious work habits were admired and respected by the authorities.

The third type of immigrant was the 'specialist' who had little difficulty in peddling his skills, in most cases his knowledge of English, to either other Indians or the government. There was always a need for clerks, interpreters, petty officers, and general office workers to fill the lowest echelons of the civil service. The largely illiterate Indian population also needed its share of charlatans, quacks, teachers (mostly untrained), holy men (sadhus), ministers of religion, social reformers, opportunists, fortune-seekers, and men whose mere presence within the community provided some therapeutic consolation for all the bitterness of the indenture period. Many 'specialist' immigrants were highly admired for being 'self-made men' and made good 'bush-lawyers' (a common term in Fiji to describe a glib person whose knowledge and 'thespian'attributes enabled him to acquire a sizeable following to whom he acted as legal, domestic, and social advisor). They shaped as well as dictated the pattern of social and political behavior, and were both the object of envy and admiration because of their seemingly sophisticated and affluent lifestyle. These men formed the nucleus of the 'middle class' Indians who utilized their skills to acquire land, enter new business ventures, and aspire to a higher level of political participation. Some were regarded as agitators and highly detested by an apprehensive European community.

The fourth category was the 'returnee' who had previously claimed his repatriation right to India. In the initial years of the postindenture period this was the largest group of Indians to come to the colony. Many of these immigrants had been products of the indenture system whose links with Fiji had been suddenly severed by the termination of their contracts, by the abolition of the indenture system, and by the labor troubles. Some had been

born in Fiji and obliged to return to India with their parents. The majority had been eager to establish and resume old family ties, to spend their old age in their ancestral villages, and to die in the country of their birth. They had sought acceptance from their old friends and families only to be rejected and ostracized. Eventually, their wanderings had taken them to Calcutta where their pitiful condition had induced Indian and Fijian authorities to allow them to return to the colony. Because of their agricultural background and their previous experience in the colonial environment these immigrants found acceptance quite readily in Fiji. They helped to cushion the impact of repatriation and were seen as a possible labor pool for the sugar mills, for the expanding government road works, and in other miscellaneous capacities as general workers.

Gujarati and Punjabi immigration seemed to have been greatly influenced by a number of factors. The prime motivation emanated from the established pattern of contact with Fiji. Though the colony was not a highly attractive area for immigration--Gujaratis preferred going to East and South Africa whereas Punjabis drifted toward Canada and the United States[67]--it still contained sizeable communities of the two groups who were free to come and leave as they pleased without any interference from the local authorities. Moreover, the larger Indian community did not display any hostility toward their presence. Their acceptance within the larger group removed the feeling of social and cultural alienation, and indirectly offered some inducement for further migration to Fiji. In other words, Fiji was accepted as a safe area for domicile with ample opportunities for everybody. The members of their immediate groupings as well as the larger Indian community would not only welcome them but also patronize their businesses.

Fiji's lax immigration laws provided much inducement as well. Fiji had maintained a liberal policy toward 'free' immigration during the indenture period. The policy remained unaltered after 1920 allowing immigrants to

enter at random with a valid passport issued at the point of their origin. Unrestricted entry was permitted by the Immigration Ordinance of 1909, provided that the immigrants did not fall under the classification of destitute and undesirable. 'Free' immigration of this type was regarded as beneficial for the colony's development. Moreover, these immigrants, mostly Gujaratis and Punjabis, placed no burdens on the colony's treasury because of their financial independence. Though they were not the ideal immigrants, namely agriculturalists with families, for whom the government clamored so desperately, they seemed quite preferable at a time when European opposition to large-scale Indian settlement in Fiji was on the increase.

The main inducement came from the opportunities for economic advancement as well as from the knowledge that many Indians had undertaken successful business ventures in the islands. Though the colony possessed its share of peddlars, hawkers, bootmakers, jewelers, laundrymen, tailors, shopkeepers, and other businessmen, there was room for more immigrants who aspired to join the ranks of the petty entrepreneurs. Some of their skills were simply lacking within the larger agricultural Indian community. This vacuum simply enabled both Gujaratis and Punjabis to move with ease into an economic role for which they had ample skills and the perseverence for success.

Among the Gujaratis Appabhai Patel's flourishing business concerns in Lautoka, Ba, Sigatoka, and Nadi had become by 1920 the training ground for members of his caste from such diverse areas as Nondhna in Broach and Dharmaj in Kaira (Kheda) who came to Fiji as shop assistants. By the early 1920s the Khatris had monopolized the tailoring business in Suva. Other organized tailoring concerns had also emerged and began to match the two pioneering families for enticing immigrants from Navsari and the neighboring areas in South Gujarat. In 1919 one such concern had been initiated by Gangaram Hari, a Darji (tailor by caste) from Navsari. Some Khatris and Kolis were also attracted to the restaurant business catering to a growing demand for Indian

delicacies and sweetmeats. Indian restaurants (lodges) and miscellaneous categories of food vendors could be found throughout Suva and all the sugar towns. The Sonis had not yet institutionalized their activities, preferring to remain as wandering jewelers or hawkers. Some were now making an attempt at farming and shopkeeping. Whatever each group did, and no matter how small the concern was it acted as an incentive for others to follow, once stories of success and wealth had filtered to the villages in India.

An examination of passport applications from prospective Gujarati emigrants in 1920 and 1921 provides a good insight into the nature of Indian immigration to Fiji in the immediate postindenture period.[68] In 1920 agriculturalists from the Navsari Division of Baroda State were the largest category of passport applicants (23 out of a total of 40 from the state alone). From Bombay Presidency the main applicants were masons, carpenters, shoemakers, and hawkers (32 out of a total of 53). Soni and Khatri applicants were negligible. The following year Khatris regained their position as the dominant caste and occupational grouping to apply for passports to Fiji. There were 34 Khatri applications of which 28 originated in Navsari. Other significant groups were the Mochis (9) and the Sonis (6). Muslim Gujaratis began to show an increased awareness of Fiji (8 applications from Broach). Later, in 1928 and 1929, when emigration to Fiji was at its peak, Khatris emerged as the largest single caste grouping to make passport applications for Fiji (36 passports of a total of 213 issued).[69] There was also a larger representation of Gujarati caste groupings among the applicants who included Dhobis, Navs, Darjis, Mochis, all categories of Kanbis including Patidars, Sonis, Muslims (mostly barbers and cultivators), and miscellaneous 'Patel' categories listed as traders, shopkeepers, and vendors. Family immigration only took place among the Patidars, Sonis, and Khatris who were the more established Gujarati groups in the colony.

The Punjabis were similarly motivated as the Gujaratis but many came

to Fiji with the intention of proceeding eventually to New Zealand. The Agent-General of Immigration in Fiji was besieged by numerous requests from Punjabis desiring to travel to New Zealand for permission to land in the islands. But he felt compelled to warn the Protector of Emigrants in Calcutta that they were proceeding to Fiji without securing the adequate endorsement for New Zealand.[70] The majority came from three areas in the central and eastern districts of Punjab--Jullundur, Amritsar, and Ludhiana--but there is no precise estimation of their exact numbers. They were Jat Sikhs who were quick to grasp any opportunities for independent farming. In spite of their lack of education, they moved with ease into shopkeeping, also turned to moneylending, and grabbed a share of the land transport business in taxis. Prominent names among the group that came in 1922 include Shankar Singh, Moti Singh, Vazir Singh, Mehar Singh Pandri, and Mulcha Singh. A year later they were followed by Spooran Singh, Shanhan Singh, Battan Singh, and Phuman Singh, all of whom became prominent men among the Punjabi community, spearheading their economic advance and directing their religious activities which culminated in the construction of a Gurdwara in Samabula in 1924. The most prominent Punjabi business was P.S.V. Singh & Company, starting first at Suva, later branching to Nausori some twelve miles away, and then spreading to seven other areas.[71]

Most Indian emigrants followed three main routes originating in Calcutta and Bombay. The traditional route was through Calcutta which served as the principal port for despatching all indentured emigrants. Ships which were chartered to transport repatriated Indians from Fiji commenced their journey in Calcutta as well. It was a direct route which enabled cargo and passengers to reach Fiji in the shortest possible time. There was another direct route between Calcutta and Auckland, operated by the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand which permitted immigrants who had the necessary immigration clearance for New Zealand to stay there for a short period before

proceeding to Fiji. The more recent route consisted of a direct passenger service between Bombay and Sydney operated by the Peninsular and Orient Lines. Though it was not very popular with Gujarati immigrants initially, it totally eliminated the train trip to Calcutta. However, it necessitated a sojourn of two weeks in Sydney which added immensely to the cost of the entire journey.[72] The three routes from India provided some measure of choice, but the most frequented and popular one was through Calcutta on the chartered repatriation ships. This route removed the element of uncertainty prevalent in the others. Indians often used the other two routes to circumvent immigration laws if there was a possibility of doing so in Australia or New Zealand.

There is no precise assessment of the exact number of the four types of immigrants who entered the islands. Except for the year 1921, when 1,136 repatriated Indians reemigrated from Calcutta, the average annual inward flow can be estimated at no more than 200 until 1927.[73] The abolition of the indenture system had removed the necessity of maintaining a separate administrative machinery for compiling statistics and other pertinent information on Indian immigration. Census reports in India omitted total emigration figures, and authorities there were hard pressed to provide statistics without some form of international census cooperation.[74] In Fiji, it was not until the creation of a Secretariat for Indian Affairs in 1927 that information on immigration was again collected in a systematic manner.

Between 1927 and 1930, there was a sharp increase in immigration. During this three year period 2,544 immigrants entered the colony with the largest contingent arriving in 1928.[75] The authorities in Fiji had established a special immigration fund in 1927, with the approval and blessing of Europeans, to assist a select number of stranded repatriated families to reemigrate to Fiji. This experiment was initiated in 1928 when two steamers were chartered to transport the families. News of these direct sailings provided an impetus

to other categories of emigrants to come to Calcutta to secure a berth for the colony. Of the 783 immigrants who arrived in the second steamer 462 were Punjabis.[76] The scheme proved to be successful but was not repeated the following year. In 1930 the government decided to postpone the scheme of assisting repatriated families to Fiji. Early in the year a steamer had brought 827 immigrants of whom only 125 were returning repatriates; 360 Punjabis and 342 Gujaratis comprised the other immigrants who disembarked.[77]

Circumstances in Fiji now dictated the implementation of some effective measure to check the large influx of these two groups. The official estimate of the population in 1930 placed the Gujaratis at 1,200 and the Punjabis at 2,000.

TABLE 3.3

INCREASE IN GUJARATI AND PUNJABI IMMIGRATION FROM 1911 TO 1930

	1911	1921	1930
Gujarati	153*	324*	1,200
Punjabi	809	449	2,000

*Listed under Bombay

Source: Fiji Census Reports, 1911 and 1921.
Report of the Secretary for Indian Affairs, 1930.

The recent wave of immigration tilted heavily in favor of males, and few Punjabis and Gujaratis entered the colony as family units. Among the 360 Punjabis who had just arrived, there were only 2 females and 2 children. On the other hand, the Gujaratis had a higher rate of family migrants. Compared to the Punjabis, 282 Gujarati males entered the colony along with 25 females and 35 children.[78] These figures, which were basically the norm

for immigration of this type since 1927, disturbed not only the authorities who were trying to rectify the imbalance in the Indian sex ratio but also the locally born Indians who felt the dominance of the India-born component in almost all aspects of their life.

The need for a more restrictive immigration policy arose from a number of considerations. The colony was already experiencing the disruptive impact of the worldwide depression with a fall in sugar and copra prices. Fear of unemployment and the possibility of crop failures, as happened in 1929 when severe storms curtailed cotton yields from which cultivators never recovered, plagued the official mind. Moreover, the colony was not self-sufficient in food production. Subsequently, the situation was further aggravated by a sharp increase in the Indian population, by the complicated land issue with increasing Indian demand for more land utilization, and by the changing pattern of the colony's labor requirements. Though the position of Indians had generally changed from 'laborers to primary producers,' an increasing number of Indians were being drawn into the labor force as wage earners on the government road works, as farm workers in the sugar industry during the planting season, and as mill workers during the crushing season. But as wage earners they were competing with Fijians who now showed more inclination to leave their villages to work as casual laborers in the three port towns, as road workers for the government, and as artisans in the water-transport industry. Apprehensive of this urban drift, the government wished to minimize the possibility of any major competition between Fijians and Indians resulting not only from the pressure of increasing population but also from the limitations of the labor market.

There was another deepening concern. Throughout the 1920s the India-born segment of the Indian population continued to influence many aspects of Indian social and political life in Fiji. In politics the local Indians, largely through the influence of the Arya Samaj, still turned to India for

guidance. After the departure of Manilal there was no western-educated leader to mobilize support for unified action on any issue. The indenture system which had been the basis for concerted action before 1920 was no longer there to arouse the Indians. Issues were more localized now dealing mainly with problems of land usage, imposition of a poll tax, and representation in the legislative and municipal councils. The Indian Government tried to exert some influence by seeking the appointment of an Indian Agent but the concept of external interference in local affairs seemed unacceptable to the authorities in Fiji. However, the Fiji Government did create its own Secretariat for Indian Affairs in 1927 to guide policy on all matters concerning Indians.[79] Another prevailing view was that Indians should develop leadership patterns, derived from Indian models, and based on the panchayat system. Its chief advocate hoped that a body of local leadership would emerge, devoid of outside influence, which would eschew politics and concentrate on the social betterment of the community.[80] Unfortunately, these expectations did not materialize because Indians concentrated on their political status.

A small group of Indians, taking their cue from the opposition which the Indian Government had mounted earlier against communal representation in Fiji, began to make demands for a common electoral roll based on the equality of Fijians, Europeans, and Indians. To the authorities, as well as to many Europeans, this concept of equality seemed inconsistent with the low level of social progress which the Indians had achieved. They were particularly alarmed when Indians turned once again to nationalist politicians in India for guidance. When two Gujarati lawyers, S. B. Patel and A. D. Patel, arrived between 1928 and 1929 and immersed themselves immediately in the politics of associations and boycotts, official and other concerned observers regarded this as another aspect of outside influence which needed curtailment through tighter immigration controls. Europeans, of course, were more blatant in

their disgust over political developments in the colony and warned Indians to either "keep under" or "clear out."[81]

The political crisis, aggravated by the Indian boycott of the Legislative Council in November 1929, was just one aspect of the problem. By 1930 the Indian community was badly splintered by disputes between the Samajis and the Sanatanis who clashed over the tenets of religion and on social behavior. These cleavages emerged basically from the influence exerted by a more virulent breed of immigrants--teachers, priests, missionaries, politicians, and social reformers--who attempted to dictate the actions of a particular social and cultural group. Disputes arose, as one group sought to gain ascendancy over the other, on four main issues--education, social behavior politics, and economic disparity. The trouble first surfaced in 1924 when South Indians rejected Hindi as the medium of instruction for Indian education. In many of these disputes the (Arya) Samajis emerged as the main force to reckon with. They quarrelled bitterly with the Sanatanis whom they accused of conservatism, and dismissed as opponents of progress within the community. They also accused members of the Indian Reform League (formed in 1924 under the leadership of Indian Christians) of deviating from accepted social behavior by their public display of "dancing, liquor drinking and meat eating."[82] As each group aspired for ascendancy, it was the local Indians who found themselves pitted against the sophistication of the India-born politicians, the religious exponents, and the social reformers. Nowhere was this competition and confrontation more apparent than in the economic relationship between the two main segments of the community.

The authorities viewed with some apprehension the growing resentment among the local Indians against unchecked Gujarati and Punjabi immigration. The sharp increase in immigration corresponded with the upsurge in trading activity. Trading licences increased from 1,554 in 1928 to 1,900 in 1929.[83] In 1930 there were 1,004 Indians engaged in some form of shopkeeping.[84]

While Punjabis became prominent in farming, the land transport business, and in moneylending, the Gujaratis monopolized hawking, shopkeeping, tailoring, laundering, hairdressing, and jewelry manufacture. Punjabis and Gujaratis rarely employed locals. The latter group relied heavily on the available labor pool in their own villages in India to operate their concerns in Fiji returning regularly to their homeland to recruit assistants. Though the authorities believed that this group was performing a useful economic function in the colony by engaging in the untouchable professions which the local Indians seemed to avoid, they were also convinced that both Gujarati and Punjabi activities were detrimental to the development of local Indian enterprise.[85] Above all, these Indians were not permanent settlers but were only concerned with accumulating large savings to provide them with a comfortable lifestyle upon their return to their homeland. In addition to their economic power, they also had better access to services available to Indians. Even in such a simple matter as liquor permits the Gujaratis and Punjabis held 52 of the 87 permits issued to Indians.[86] Therefore, the authorities tended to sympathize with local Indians who pleaded with leaders in India to help curtail this type of immigration in order to alleviate the unemployment problem and to remove the 'obstacle' to their progress.[87]

In June 1930, the Fiji Government introduced the first of a series of controls on immigration. It requested the Government of India "to take steps to prevent the issue of a passport, or visa, valid for Fiji" to any male unless he was accompanied by his wife, or produced evidence that he was a bona fide resident of Fiji, or obtained the written consent of the Fiji Government.[88] This measure was designed to ameliorate the disproportionate sex ratio by checking the influx of unattached males and unmarried Punjabis who could become "a discontented element in the community" during "a time of economic depression." In May 1931 another directive was issued to encourage suitable family migration and to warn intending male immigrants,

without guaranteed employment and who would be unable to make a deposition of £50, of the dangers of admission being refused.[89] By this stage the government had decided that the colony was incapable of absorbing "many more Bombay trader-artisans" and the "batches of male Punjabis at the rate of 300 to 400 a year." As a corrective measure, the Secretary for Indian Affairs advocated the implementation of a fixed quota of 500 immigrants of all classes conditional upon an outward flow of 200 repatriates and on the improvement of economic conditions.[90]

These controls were incorporated into the Fiji Immigration Amendment Ordinance No. 5 of 1931 which empowered the Visiting Officer to the immigrant vessel to demand a deposit of £50 from any immigrant who could become "chargeable to the colony." The main stipulation to the Government of India was that "no single males or married males unaccompanied by their wives except bona fide residents of Fiji would be granted passports without reference to the Government of Fiji."[91] Important features of this Ordinance included a system of endoresements--Endorsement A permitted entry, within ten months, on payment of a deposit of £50 and Endorsement B without payment of the deposit. Category A included Indian males accompanied by their wives and children, whereas Category B applied only to wives travelling with their children to join husbands. Indians who were born in the colony and who turned eighteen before their departure, repatriated immigrants not absent over three years, and other legally domiciled Indians with property and a business and who possessed a valid passport issued in Fiji, were exempt from all these provisions. The Ordinance forbade the entry of prostitutes, convicted persons, lunatics, destitute and sick immigrants, stowaways, and other undesirable immigrants.

The imposition of these controls precipitated a protest from the Gujarati community and understandably so because of the predictable impact on Gujarati immigration. In his reply to 'M. Narsey and Company' which had instigated the protest, the Colonial Secretary acknowledged the important

economic role played by the 'Bombay community' but pointed to the high volume of male Gujaratis coming out for short periods. He expressed serious doubts about fresh opportunities for more immigrants during a period of acute depression. Furthermore, he reiterated the government's position on male immigration and requested members of the Gujarati community to promote family immigration.[92] Contrary to the community's apprehension, the Fiji Government was, generally, quite lenient in the application of these rules toward Gujarati immigrants. It realized that the considerable traffic between India and Fiji was inevitable, primarily due to the practice of merchants recruiting assistants for their business. The main concern was to curtail Punjabi immigration, a goal which it had partially accomplished in 1931. However, toward the end of 1931 the official policy was modified, thereby resulting in a firmer stand against the Gujaratis in an effort to break their monopoly over "certain classes of business" in which they excluded local Indians.

In November 1931 the Fiji Government provided further guidelines for the issue of Indian passports to Fiji. This new stipulation was intended to prevent the entry of "single men on family permits."[93] Abuses in the endorsement system were now becoming apparent. Immigration officials in Fiji encountered numerous immigrants who had received family permits, and who had undertaken to travel with their wives and children, but who arrived in the islands without their families. It occurred frequently in the case of young married immigrants who travelled alone because they were presently incapable of meeting the responsibilities of a 'Hindu householder.' This practice was also common among young Gujaratis who were married but who came to Fiji on family permits as dependents of other immigrants. The authorities merely desired that family permits be utilized for the purposes for which they were intended.

Between 1932 and 1935 additional measures were taken to eradicate serious loopholes which permitted individuals to circumvent the stipulations of the

Immigration Ordinance. The authorities were aware of a common practice among Gujaratis, who were unable to receive permits to travel to Fiji by the direct route, to proceed to Australia first. Here, they informed officials of their intention to proceed to Fiji, without producing evidence of entry being guaranteed, and were exempted from paying a deposit of £100 to the shipping firm involved, a concession given to immigrants proceeding to Fiji via Australia. Having overcome this major hurdle, and since there were no restrictions on movement between Australia and Fiji, it was, therefore, not difficult to travel to Fiji. In September 1932 the Government Emigration Agent for Fiji at Calcutta urged the Indian Government to prevent this type of emigration because the Fiji Government "was no longer prepared to grant unrestrictive entry to Fiji of Indians travelling via Australia."[94] As a result of this concern, the concession to save Indian immigrants from making a deposit of £100 in Australia was withdrawn. As of 1933 all Indians who were unable to produce proof of entry into Fiji were required to make the deposit.

In spite of immigration controls, the government was still committed to a policy of encouraging the entry of suitable families but it also felt the need to allow "Indians of good character" to settle in the colony. Gujarati immigrants fell into the latter category. Therefore, they were permitted to introduce a limited number of friends and relatives as partners on an undertaking to provide them with suitable employment, provided that such skilled laborers (for example, tailors and laundrymen) were "necessary to maintain in an efficient state certain essential trades."[95] In turn these new immigrants, once established, were encouraged to introduce their families as permanent settlers. Unfortunately, this policy had a serious flaw which resulted in a common abuse that the government was unable to rectify for a long time.

Many established Gujaratis who wished to return to India after a prolonged absence could recruit relatives or friends in India to manage their concerns

during their absence. They provided an undertaking that the new recruits would remain in Fiji only for the period of their absence to prevent any major disruptions in their business. Once the new immigrants arrived in Fiji, and remained for the period stipulated, there were no legal sanctions against them residing in Fiji permanently. In some cases, the person who intended to leave cancelled his travel arrangements just prior to the arrival of his replacement. Once his replacement had entered the colony he then proceeded to introduce another immigrant in a similar manner.[96] The practice was perfectly legal and served as an excellent means to circumvent the immigration restrictions.

Increasing incidences of infractions and abuses of the immigration rules coincided with the difficulties in obtaining passports and permits for Fiji. The passport authorities in India were only concerned with preventing the departure of agricultural laborers but once clearance was obtained from Fiji a passport was invariably issued. These abuses did not originate in India and were, actually, the product of the limitations in the immigration restrictions in Fiji. The Gujarati community also condoned and encouraged these abuses because of their ability to manipulate the rules to their advantage. Above all, the system permitted infractions because the government's policy favored Gujaratis over Punjabis. It was certainly this preference for one group over the other which presented many difficulties, especially in the case of caste groupings whose skills could not be absorbed.

The authorities in Fiji were able to detect the more flagrant breaches of the restrictions where the element of deception and fraud was fairly obvious. Cases of this nature involved immigrants who applied for entry to Fiji on the pretext of wanting to settle old debts or going to some other Pacific Island--Tonga, Rotuma, Tahiti--which clearly had stringent laws against Indian immigration.[97] It was evident that the varied nature of permit applications created many difficulties for maintaining constant

surveillance. As relatives and friends were usually willing to make the deposit of £50 and promised to provide employment, the authorities were always hard pressed to bend rules and make exceptions, especially in occupations such as bootmaking and hairdressing which offered little scope for additional immigrants. But no objections were raised, and no deposit requested, in the case of women who wished to travel alone. This lenient attitude toward female immigrants was intended to serve as an inducement, both to remove the prejudice against female migration to remote areas from India as well as to enable parents to allow their daughters to leave.

In 1935 the Fiji Government finally took a firmer stand against abuses of the immigration restrictions. It was anxious to control the inward flow of artisans who were already in abundance in Fiji, and who could cause problems of unemployment. Unconditional entry was no longer granted to Indians returning to Fiji after a visit to India. In the case of all India-born persons it decided that their passports would not be "valid for return to Fiji unless endorsed by the Passport Authorities in India."[98] Furthermore, all Indians departing from Fiji, and not in possession of a Fiji passport, who intended to return at some future date, required a permit with an endorsement from the Secretary of Indian Affairs that they would be "permitted to land in Fiji."[99] Implicit in this new system was the requirement for all returnees and intending emigrants to procure visas for Fiji from Indian passport authorities empowered to grant them. Essentially, there were two types of visas--one which required a deposit of £50 on landing as security for the return voyage to India, and the other requiring no deposit. For immigrants who wished to replace friends and relatives leaving Fiji for a short period an 'approval' was necessary to the effect that the Fiji Government would not object to "the issue of a passport ... subject to the Government of India being satisfied as to ... [their] ... character" and "conditional upon ... [replacement] ... leaving the colony on the return of ... [person

visiting India]."[100]

By this stage the government's policy had undergone considerable modification from encouragement of suitable family immigration to a firm conviction that strict controls should be imposed on the entry of persons who had no permanent stake in the colony. The depression of the early 1930s had already settled the debate over sponsored immigration which hovered over the official mind since the end of the indenture system. In 1934 the Immigration Fund to assist repatriated Indians to reemigrate to Fiji was permanently terminated. Only a few European planters still favored importation of cheap Indian labor because of the high labor costs at home and the losses incurred during the depression.[101] The conditions in Fiji simply did not permit such a large influx of Indians. The immigrants who came in the 1930s had surpassed local Indians in achievement and virtually assured the dominance of the India-born segment over the locally born. While the government sought to remedy this discrepancy, it was not until 1936 that a clear-cut policy emerged which favored the unrestricted entry and departure of three classes of Indians only--those born in Fiji, those who entered under indenture, and Indians with ten years continuous residence with established business interests and employment of a permanent nature.[102] By 1937 it had become apparent that locally born Indians would not tolerate any relaxation of the controls and demanded complete cessation of Indian immigration. There was every indication that the government would comply.

The record of immigration since 1930 accentuated the need for a more constructive policy to suit not only the economic conditions but also to placate certain interests who felt uncontrolled Indian immigration would be detrimental to the colony's progress (Table 3.4, p. 104). The peak period of immigration was 1930 when 1,013 persons arrived in the colony chiefly by the direct route. With the imposition of controls immigration fell sharply for a two-year period between 1931 and 1932. Thereafter, immigration

TABLE 3.4

INDIAN IMMIGRATION BETWEEN 1930 AND 1938

	Total	Gujarati	Punjabi
1930	1,013	n.a.	n.a.
1931	281	"	"
1932	209	"	"
1933	361	approx. 150 (42%)	"
1934	394*	160 (41%)	"
1935	551*	n.a.	"
1936	650	371 (57%)	132 (20%)
1937	151	n.a.	n.a.
1938	859	371 (40%)	"

*These figures differ in the two sources.

Source: Fiji, Report of Secretary of Indian Affairs, 1930-38.
Great Britain Colonial Reports: Fiji, 1930-38.

experienced an upward surge inspite of more controls. Between 1933 and 1935, inclusive, there was an average annual inward flow of 425. About fifty per cent of the immigrants who came by the direct route were Gujaratis. The introduction of the permit system in 1935 failed to curtail the influx, and in 1936 immigration figures showed another sharp increase. Because there was no direct steamer service between India and Fiji in 1937 the influx plunged to a low figure for the first time since 1932. Another dramatic rise in 1938 served to offset any relief from the low intake the previous year.

By 1936 Gujaratis and Punjabis comprised 22 per cent of the India-born component in a total Indian population of about 85,000 of whom 71 per cent were classified as Fiji-born and 28 per cent as India-born.[103] The Gujaratis represented the single cultural and linguistic group which witnessed the largest increase, from 1,200 in 1930 to 2,500 in 1935.[104] This increase, when examined within the context of the decline of the India-born segment, merely reinforced the position of the Gujaratis as a potent and noticeable element within the Indian population. The India-born population declined from 33,156 in 1921 to 24,145 in 1936, whereas the locally-born Indians increased by 125 per cent with a younger age scale (34,000 were 15 years or less in age) than the India-born which had a higher per centage of adult males as well as an obvious advantage over the locally born when it came to active participation in the work force.[105]

Because of the youthful character of the population and a more balanced. sex ratio (females constituted 43 per cent), only 25,190 Indians, overwhelmingly males, were actively engaged in the work force.[106] Two-thirds were agriculturalists cultivating sugarcane, rice, cotton, and tobacco. Indians grew 53 per cent of the sugarcane in 1934 and 97 per cent by 1939.[107] Of the remaining third the largest groups were engaged in sugar production (584), transport (583), and in commerce (1,003). Other categories included professionals (4 lawyers, 9 doctors, 175 teachers, 101 priests), personal

service (79 hotel and restaurant keepers, 112 barbers, 106 laundrymen), makers of textile and leather goods (327 tailors, 65 bootmakers), and metal workers (117 jewelers, 47 mechanics, 22 tin, brass and copper smiths).[108]

The India-born component was not only visible in agriculture but also in the artisan, commercial, and professional categories. The younger Fiji-born population showed a preference for nonagricultural professions which, perhaps, explains some of the friction arising from the attempt made by this group to move into the artisan and trade categories where there was a preponderance of Gujaratis. The Gujaratis, all belonging to different castes, were the leading jewelers, the barbers, the laundrymen, the bootmakers, the tailors, the shopkeepers (wholesale and retail), the hawkers, and the managers and proprietors of most Indian commercial concerns.

Tailors, predominantly Khatris, represented the largest group of Gujarati immigrants who arrived and institutionalized one particular form of activity located in all the towns. Among the 945 Gujarati passport applicants to Fiji between 1930 and 1938, there were 146 hawkers, traders, and shopkeepers (under a 'dubious' Patel category, perhaps, to bypass the checks on the emigration of agriculturalists). This group was distinct from the precise Patel categories of Patidar, Matia, and Kadva Kanbis who also moved into commercial activity. The main artisan groups were Dhobis, Navs, and Mochis who remained in their respective caste occupations. After 1931 Fiji seemed to offer limited scope for Soni immigrants but they were well entrenched in the jewelry business. Only a handful of Muslim Gujaratis applied for passports for Fiji (10 in 1930 and 19 in 1936 for an overall total of 45) consisting of barbers and cultivators who wished to engage in trade.[109]

The Gujarati concentration in commerce, the Punjabi in dairying and transport, alongside the activities of other Indian entrepreneurs, presented a display of affluence in the towns which could be interpreted as a visible sign of progress. This ostentatious display of wealth in the towns, coupled

with the prosperous appearance of Indian settlements dotted in the landscape though acres of sugarcane, led to a misconception that there was "practically no poverty" among the Indians. The appearance of prosperity was superficial, and deceptive, because there was a considerable dichotomy between the affluence of the towns and the simplicity of the rural settlements. These rural settlements epitomized years of hard work and frugality. Homes were usually constructed from wood and corrugated iron, and some houses were simple thatched huts which, in spite of the neat exterior surroundings contained the barest essentials to provide a simple lifestyle. Many farmers were burdened with debt arising from a conglomeration of factors--social obligations, low income, high land premiums, exorbitant rates of interest charged by shopkeepers and moneylenders, fraudulent practices of shopkeepers, legal fees, and the high cost of litigation.[110]

The rise in agricultural indebtedness was just one of the many problems which confronted Indians by 1940. Farmers were tied to the vicissitudes of the world sugar market and operated within an economic structure in which a single company now possessed a monopoly over sugar production. The inequitable economic system was compounded by the problems of land usage which resulted in increased speculation and trafficking of leases. These problems merely aggravated the complexity of other issues which affected Indians--the sectarian disputes and rivalries which merged with political issues, the acquisition of more political power to be on parity with other races, the quest for better education which was linked intricately to more remunerative jobs, and the demand for a fair share of the fruits of labor together with a plea for better accessibility to large tracts of unused land.

Administrative responsibilities also grew more burdensome. The colony's financial structure rested on the production of three crops, sugar, copra, and bananas, with very little attempt at agricultural diversification. The population was expanding rapidly with only two races entrenched in defined

economic roles--Europeans had the monopoly over capital and Indians grew sugarcane. Fijians were the largest landholders but they were still rooted to a communal system with a complex set of social and economic obligations. Though their contribution to the work force was marginal, and was far removed from the economic mainstream, there was growing administrative awareness of their social and material needs.

One response to the present conditions was the demand for tighter immigration restrictions. However, the Indian community was divided on this question. In 1937, the Young Indian Society comprising locally born Indians advocated the total prohibition of immigration, whereas another faction headed by A. D. Patel, as president of the Indian Association (formed in 1930 to safeguard Indian rights and interests), advocated removal of all restrictions. Immigration was a major issue in the elections of 1937 when local Indians challenged India-born candidates for political ascendancy in the three constituencies. The government was acutely aware of the strong sentiments expressed by the two factions. It appointed a committee that year to consider and report on the immigration problem. The committee's report of 1938 did not deviate from the government's present policy and recommended retention of the permit system as the most suitable way to control immigration.[111] It pressed for the establishment of a quota system which would rigidly regulate the inward flow of immigrants on a proportional basis--75 per cent agriculturalists, 15 per cent traders, and 10 per cent "special cases." But before any concrete action could be taken war broke out.

In 1940 the government deferred consideration of the quota system until after the war. During the war years a series of events involving Indians merely reinforced the sentiment against the relaxation of immigration controls. One was the formation of trade unions which resulted in another crisis in the sugar industry and the other was the failure on the part of the Indian

community to respond to the war effort. Whereas Fijians responded voluntarily to the military effort the Indian effort was marginal which some observers labelled as cowardice, especially in view of the economic benefits reaped by the Indian commercial classes as a result of the massive inflow of American currency.[112]

Fiji emerged from the war with another large population increase as well as a war debt of £3,000,000. The colony's post-war development plan was heavily oriented toward social services with little expenditure earmarked for its resources. In anticipation of another influx of immigrants in the post-war period, there was another plea for the restriction of immigration. In 1947 the Legislative Council of Fiji finally brought into law an ordinance to control immigration by the permit system. The ordinance was specially aimed at curbing the frequency of travel by Gujaratis between India and Fiji and restricted the period of absence from Fiji to 12 months. The measure brought to an end the uncertainties and limitations of the previous regulations which had permitted the entry of Indians under restrictive but liberal controls.

The emergence of the Gujaratis as the main immigrant group to Fiji is certainly one of the more interesting features of 'free' or the passport system of emigration from India. It was in part due to the abolition of the indentured system of emigration, and the inability to devise an alternative scheme acceptable to the Government of India, which severed Fiji from its traditional sources of migrants in the United Provinces and Madras. The survival of the sugar industry, the growth of 'sugar towns', and the recovery of Fiji's economy from the setbacks of the early 1920s all created new avenues for immigrants, especially Gujaratis, to come in increasing numbers to peddle their skills. The breakdown of Fiji's isolation from the rest of the world merely facilitated the movement of migrants to Fiji, and the establishment of communication networks internally enabled them to move to

other areas of Fiji.

Yet the same exuberance which had permitted the unrestricted entry of Indians since 1920 soon turned into dismay as the more enterprising breed of immigrants from India began to surpass local Indians economically and to infuse conflicts within the community especially in the matter of religion and politics. The Gujaratis, in particular, forged ahead in the commercial sphere more than any other group. The dampening effects of the worldwide depression merely aggravated the situation. Together with the strains and stresses introduced within the Indian community by the India-born component, these conditions generated a need for immigration restrictions especially at a time when the pervading influence of the Gujaratis had become noticeable. The government desired restrictions as part of their administrative responsibility not only to the indigenous Fijians but also to the local Indians who had more established roots with Fiji; the local Indians on their part also advocated controls to prevent the creeping influence of the India-born component from disrupting their progress in Fiji.

NOTES

[1]"Emigrant, India of Today, Volume V: Indian Emigration (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 33.

[2]K. M. Pannikar, An Introduction to the Study of the Problems of Greater India: The "Indian Emigrant" Prize Essay (Madras: T. K. Swaminathan, 1916), p. 39.

[3]See Gandhi's address to the Indian National Congress, and Resolution No. XXI, Report of the Indian National Congress (Nagpur, December 26-31, 1920).

[4]For a detailed version of the strike see Ahmed Ali, "Aspects of Fiji Indian History--1," pp. 1788-9.

[5]Young India, April 4, 1920, in Mahatma Gandhi on Indians Overseas (Bombay: Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas Research Centre, 1970), p. 125.

[6]Governor of Fiji to C.O., No. 66, March 12, 1920, Annex 2, Enclosure 10, I.O.R., London, Economic and Overseas Department, L/E/7/1182, File 78 of 1921.

[7]Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, Vol. 58 (1920), p. 664.

[8]Thomas Hughes to R. D. Ewbank, March 10, 1920, Notes, I.E.P., Commerce, May 1920, A. No. 5-11; also, see The Indian Year Book 1921 (Bombay and Calcutta: Bennett and Coleman and Company, Ltd., N.D.), p. 516.

[9]Further correspondence regarding Indians in Fiji, Proc. No. 21, Notes, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, No. 2-110, Filed and Indexed (hereafter F. & I.). Also, see "Emigrant," op. cit., p. 61.

[10]Government of India to Fiji Deputation, No. 2473-1, March 19, 1920, Pro. No. 21, Notes, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, No. 2-110, F. & I.

[11]Governor of Fiji to C.O., September 7, 1920, Annex, Enclosure No. 13, Pro. No. 21, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, No. 2-110, F. & I. This is the first time that the Fiji Government went on record guaranteeing rights for Indians in Fiji. This particular correspondence certainly superseded the "Salisbury Despatch" of 1875 as a pledge of rights.

[12]Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 365.

[13]Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 217.

[14]Viceroy to I.O., Tel. No. 103, January 27, 1921, Pro. No. 22, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, No. 2-110, F. & I.

[15]Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies during the Year 1921, I.E.P., R. & A., August 1922, B. Serial No. 1/2, No. 27/28, File No. 91/22.

[16]Of the 1,408 repatriates who reemigrated in 1921, 1,136 went to Fiji as 'free' settlers. See Report on Emigration from Calcutta, 1921.

[17]Enclosure 2 in Annex, Enclosure 5, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, B. No. 7, confidential. Also, see Ahmed Ali, "Aspects of Fiji Indian History--II," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XII, No. 43 (October, 1977), pp. 1821-24.

[18]Fiji Government Proclamation No. 3, March 29, 1921, Enclosure 4 in Annex, Enclosure 5, I.E.P., March 1922, B. No. 7.

[19]Telegram from Governor of Fiji, March 14, 1921, Pro. No. 28, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, No. 2-110, F. & I.

[20]Press Communique, Simla, June 27, 1921, Pro. No. 40, I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, No. 2-110, F. & I.

[21]Perhaps the sugar company was justified in reducing wages, after all there was a worldwide slump in the sugar market. However, its motives were questionable. Until 1920 it reaped tremendous benefits from highly inflated prices which reached a peak of ₹80 a ton. No doubt it was concerned about a possible decline in profits after 1920 when both the price of sugar and the production level in Fiji fell. In spite of these setbacks, the company's operations still showed "good profits." To argue that the C.S.R. made "good profits" solely at the expense of sugar workers in Fiji is certainly far-fetched. But, surely, it could have been more sensitive to the needs of the workers, especially when it had supplied raw sugar to New Zealand from Fiji, between 1914 and 1920, at prices "substantially lower than paid by United Kingdom, and much lower than the company could have obtained had it sold the Fiji raws (sic) elsewhere." During the dispute, the company's comparison of wages in Fiji with those in Java, where workers were paid "only few annas," inevitably made the deputation's sympathies for Indian workers more pronounced and extremely vocal. For further details of the company's operations during this period see J. M. Dixon, "The Structure of Sugar Markets"; A. C. Isaacs, "Sugar in New Zealand"; and J. M. Dixon, "The Rewards of Enterprise," in Lowndes, South Pacific Enterprise, pp. 57, 20, 298-300.

[22]Interim recommendations of the Indian Deputation, Annex, Enclosure No. 11, I.E.P., R. & A., November 1922, B. No. 1.

[23]See Annex 1, Enclosure No. 23, I.E.P., R. & A., November 1922, B. No. 1.

[24]Governor of Fiji to C.O., April 29, 1922, Annex in Enclosure No. 11, I.E.P., R. & A., November 1922, B. No. 1.

[25]B. V. Raju to Acting Colonial Secretary (hereafter C.S.), March 11, 1922, Enclosure 3 in Annex 3, Enclosure 23, I.E.P., R. & A., November 1922, B. No. 1. Also, see Government of India to I.O., March 13, 1923, Enclosure 14, I.E.P., R. & A., January 1923, B. No. 131.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Viceroy to C.S.R., March 18, 1922, I.E.P., May 1922, R. & A., Pro. No. 9-10, File No. 34 of 1922, No. 1-2, F. & I.

[28]Summary of Indian Position in Fiji, I.E.P., Education, Health and Lands (Overseas), November 1923, B. No. 168; hereafter referred to as I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.).

[29]Indian Emigration Act 1922 (Act VII of 1922), Ch. III, Section 10.

[30]Tinker, A New System of Slavery, pp. 374-75.

[31]Fiji: Handbook of the Colony (4th edition, Suva: H. R. Craigie, Acting Government Printer, 1936), p. 38; hereafter referred to as Fiji: Handbook (1936).

[32]Enclosure 4, I.E.P., E.H.L., (O.), November 1926, B. No. 98.

[33]Fiji: Handbook (1936), p. 43.

[34]Indians in Fiji, I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), July 1930, B. No. 173. Also, see Waiz, op. cit., p. 199; The Pacific Islands Year Book (5th "wartime" edition, Suva: Pacific Publications, Fiji, Ltd., 1944), p. 181.

[35]F.C.R. (1921), C.P. 2/22, Table 26.

[36]Mayer, Peasants in the Pacific, pp. 86-94.

[37]R. Gerard Ward, Land Use and Population in Fiji, p. 121.

[38]Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trends of the Colony of Fiji, 1959, C.P. 1/60, Table VI; hereafter referred to as Burns Commission Report.

[39]Great Britain Colonial Reports, No. 1259: Fiji, Report for 1924 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1925), p. 18.

[40]Appendix to Notes, Pro. No. 30, Serial No. 35, I.E.P., R. & A., August 1922, A. No. 1-35. Also, see C. F. Andrews, "Fiji: A Brief History of the Situation," in Indians Abroad, ed. S. A. Waiz (2nd edition, Bombay: Imperial Indian Citizenship Association, 1927), p. 562.

[41]Dixon, "The Rewards of Enterprise," in Lowndes, South Pacific Enterprise, p. 299.

[42]Ibid., p. 300.

[43]Coulter, Fiji: Little India, p. 98.

[44]E. T. Rogers, "Report on Tour of Inspection: Tamanua Estate," December 10, 1922, Fiji Papers, Archives Division of the B.C. Sugar Refining Company Limited, Vancouver. Also, see Robert Boyd, et al., B.C. Sugar (Vancouver, 1958), p. 27.

[45]A. G. Lowndes, "The Sugar Industry of Fiji," in Lowndes, South Pacific Enterprise, pp. 71-73. See also The Sugar Industry of Fiji: Report, Colonial No. 188 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), pp. 9, 16-17; hereafter referred to as Shephard Report.

[46]Coulter, Fiji: Little India, p. 72.

[47]Shephard Report, pp. 9, 17.

[48]Lowndes, "The Sugar Industry of Fiji," p. 73.

[49]Fiji, Report for 1924, pp. 12-13, R. Gerard Ward, Land Use and Population in Fiji, p. 167.

[50]R. Gerard Ward, op. cit., p. 181.

[51]Fiji, Report for 1924, p. 14.

[52]R. Gerard Ward, op. cit., p. 37.

[53]Fiji, Report for 1924, p. 15; R. Gerard Ward, op. cit., p. 38.

[54]F.C.R. (1921), Table 28.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Great Britain Colonial Report No. 1497: Fiji, Report for 1929. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930), p. 41.

[57]Fiji, Report on Education for the Year 1925, Council Paper M.P. 1550/26.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Fiji, Report for 1929, p. 34.

[60]Derrick, The Fiji Islands: Geographical Handbook, p. 176.

[61]Fiji, Report for 1929, pp. 23-24.

[62]Trade of Australia, Fiji and New Zealand, 1921 to 1930 (Ottawa, 1932), Table VII.

[63]There was evidence of a "plural society" situation by 1916 which was consolidated by different forms of political participation which the three races enjoyed. See Norman Meller and James Anthony, Fiji Goes to the Polls: The Crucial Legislative Council Elections of 1963 (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), p. 12.

[64]Kondapi, Indians Overseas, p. 356.

[65]Linden A. Mander, Some Dependent Peoples of the South Pacific (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1954), p. 425.

[66]F.C.R. (1921), Table 26, p. 162.

[67]Census of India 1921, Volume XVII, Baroda State, Part I: Report (Bombay, 1922), p. 96; hereafter referred to as C.I. 1921: Baroda State; G. Findlay Shiras, "Indian Migration" in International Migrations, Volume II: Interpretations, eds. G. Findlay Shiras and Walter F. Wilcox (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931), Table 269; S. R. Madhu, "Indians in America," Span, XV, 8 (September 1974), p. 13.

[68]Passports, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/30A, 145/31A, 145/31B; Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 12 of 1919-20, No. 13 of 1920-22. A more detailed analysis of Gujarati emigrants and their social background is provided in the next chapter.

[69]Passport Applications 1929-30, Government of Bombay, 65 boxes. The entire uncatalogued and unnumbered collection (1929-38), consisting of 330 boxes, is the property of the Government of India but lodged in the Maharashtra State (Bombay) Archives in Bombay.

[70]Agent-General of Immigration, Fiji, to the Protector of Emigrants, Calcutta, February 7, 1922, Immigration, Outward Letters, Fiji Labour Department, Suva, No. 83/79/22.

[71]Interview with Bakshi Singh Mal (Suva, October 23, 1975). An exhaustive study of Punjabi emigration to Fiji is still lacking.

[72]Maganlal Dahyabhai Gohil, "Pravashi Kshatriya Samaj Sandesh," Kshatriya Samaj Sandesh, Vol. XIII, No. 150-51 (October-November 1973), pp. 60-62. In Gujarati. ("News of Overseas Kshatriya Samaj").

[73]In 1924, there were only 125 immigrants by the direct route. See Fiji, Report for 1924, p. 23.

[74]Census of India 1931: Volume VIII, Bombay Presidency, Part I: General Report (Bombay, 1933), p. 75; hereafter referred to as C.I. 1931: Bombay Presidency.

[75]Fiji, Report for 1929, p. 53.

[76]Ibid.

[77]C.S., Fiji, to Government of India, No. 1120/6026/29, June 6, 1930, I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), December 1930, B. No. 47-56.

[78]I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), December 1930, B. No. 47-56.

[79]I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), July 1927, B. No. 57.

[80]See Stephen H. Roberts, Population Problems of the Pacific (London: George Routledge, 1927), pp. 307-14.

[81]Memorandum on Status of Indians in Fiji, October 22, 1929, Colonial Secretary's Office, Suva, 5286/29; hereafter referred to as C.S.O.

[82]Fiji Times, March 28, 1926; also, cited in Mayer, Indians in Fiji, p. 47.

[83]Fiji, Report for 1929, p. 52.

[84]Fiji, Report of the Secretary for Indian Affairs for 1930, C.P. 38/31, pp. 2-3; hereafter referred to as R.S.I.A.

[85]S.I.A. to C.S., September 17, 1931, S.I.A., Outwards letters, Fiji Labour Department, Suva, No. 519/413/31.

[86]S.I.A., Outward, Fiji Labour Department, Suva, No. 182/31.

[87]Appendix to Notes, I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), December 1930, Pro. No. 47-56.

[88]C.S., Fiji, to Government of India, No. 1120/6026/29, June 6, 1930, I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), December 1930, Pro. No. 47-56.

[89]Restrictions on the issue of Passports and Visas for Indians proceeding to Fiji, I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), November 1931, Pro. No. 40.

[90]S.I.A. to C.S., September 17, 1931, S.I.A., Outward Letters, Fiji Labour Department, No. 499/31.

[91]Revised procedure for the issue of Passports and Visas to Indians proceeding to Fiji, I.E.P., E.H.L., Lands and Overseas (hereafter L. & O.) 1933, No. 89.

[92]C.S. to M. Narsey & Co. (and others), F51/2, September 22, 1931, I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1933, No. 89.

[93]Issue of instructions to Passport Issuing Authorities, I.E.P., E.H.L., Overseas, 1932, B. No. 64-66.

[94]C.S. to Government of India, September 13, 1932, I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1932, No. 407.

[95]S.I.A., December 27, 1932, Fiji Labour Department, No. 373/33.

[96]Governor of Fiji to C.O., No. 78, April 14, 1937, Notes, Part I, Serial No. 14, I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1935, File 247, Serial No. 1-20.

[97]Fiji Labour Department, Indian Affairs, No. 534/497/31; also, see Fiji, S.I.A., General Correspondence, No. 169/36.

[98]Immigration Restrictions, Fiji, I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1935, File No. 247, Serial No. 1-20.

[99]Government of Fiji to Government of India, No. F34/21, November 14, 1935, Notes, Part I, Serial No. 4, I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1935, File No. 247.

[100]Fiji Labour Department, S.I.A., General Correspondence, No. 381/35.

[101]W. E. H. Stanner, South Seas in Transition, p. 247; Mayer, Indians in Fiji, p. 58.

[102]Notes, Part I, Serial No. 12, I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1935, File No. 247, Serial No. 1-20.

[103]F.C.R. (1936), C.P. 42/36, Table 12. The census report listed 94 Gujaratis only, whereas the R.S.I.A. for 1935 contained a much large figure of 2,500.

[104]R.S.I.A. (1935), C.P. 16/36. They now constituted about 3 per cent of the total Indian population in comparison with 0.5 per cent in 1921.

[105]F.C.R. (1936), Table 28.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Shepherd Report, p. 9; Great Britain Colonial Report No. 1719: Fiji, Report for 1934 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), p. 64.

[108]F.C.R. (1936), Table 28.

[109]Passport Applications, 1929-38, Government of Bombay, 330 boxes.

[110]Economic conditions of Indians resulting from the War, C.S.O., Suva, C/51/86; Shephard Report, pp. 16-19.

[111]Fiji, Report of the Commission Appointed to Consider and Report on Indian Immigration, C.P. 24/38.

[112]Stanner, op. cit., p. 252. This bias in Stanner's observation could have been less blatant if he had taken into consideration that businessmen from all racial groups, not just Indians, benefitted immensely from the wartime prosperity. However, it should be pointed out that the Indian war effort still remains as a blemish today.

CHAPTER IV

THE GUJARATI EMIGRANTS TO FIJI AND THEIR SOCIAL BACKGROUND

> Wealth makes it easier to withstand our misfortunes at home, but when our pockets are empty let us turn to the wealth of foreign lands.[1]

This proverbial saying among the Gujaratis seems to epitomize much of their attitude toward emigration and reveals why the concept was so readily accepted. But it only provides part of the answer to the whole process of Gujarati emigration to Fiji. Misfortunes and natural calamities are indeed important variables to consider when examining the migration of people from one area to another. In the case of the Gujaratis it is also necessary to examine the cultural environment which shaped the immigrant personality. After all immigration does not conjure up visions of the ordinary personality but rather a special type who not only has the psychological drive to escape adverse conditions at home but also the necessary fortitude to adapt to strange conditions elsewhere.

This chapter focuses on the social background of the Gujarati emigrants who went to Fiji between 1900 and 1945, that is, during the indenture period until 1920, and the period of free emigration from 1921. By examining the regions from which the migrants originated and the main emigrant castes, the chapter will show that Gujarati emigration was a complex process. The emigrants came from many places, ranging from Kathiawar in peninsular Gujarat to Bulsar in mainland Gujarat, and not just from any one single area. They did not comprise a <u>precise</u> representation of Gujarati society but a cross-section of groups throughout Gujarat who were conditioned by their own regional environments and who emigrated at different times.

Gujarati penetration into Fiji began twenty-five years after the introduction of the first indentured laborers in 1879. Prior to 1900 the

contact between Western India and Fiji remained insignificant because the main areas of recruitment for Fiji were Bihar and the eastern regions of present-day Uttar Pradesh. Some efforts were made to recruit laborers in the Gujarati districts of Bombay Presidency, especially in Ahmedabad in 1883-84, but the provincial government continually objected to any systematic recruiting for Fiji.[2] Besides, there were also no direct water routes between the Port of Bombay and Fiji which would have facilitated communication and provided some inducement for travel between the two areas. Until 1902, when Madras was opened as another emigration agency, Calcutta remained the only port from which travel to Fiji could be undertaken. Western India and Fiji thus remained isolated from each other. First, there was hardly any official inducement to indentured emigration from that part of India for Fiji. Second, there were no direct sea routes which could have permitted travel between the two areas. Moreover, the composition of the Indian population in Fiji, which remained North Indian in character both linguistically and culturally until the arrival of laborers from Madras, hardly provided any impetus to nonindentured emigration from Bombay Presidency.

Fiji's attraction for Gujaratis was in many respects different from the East African experience. Recent studies of Gujarat and Africa have shown the existence of vigorous maritime activity between the two areas which date as far back as the first century A.D. or even earlier.[3] There was considerable trade between the southern East African coastal regions and Cutch, Kathiawar, Gujarat, and Broach (all part of present-day Gujarat). This contact between the western Indian seaboard and the East African coast did not undergo much transformation even with the advent of strong maritime powers in the Indian Ocean--namely the Arabs and later the Portuguese. Under the Portuguese the northwestern ports of India became increasingly embroiled in slave trafficking.[4] In the nineteenth century this trade link received another impetus with the emergence of the Omani sultanate in

Zanzibar. The revival of trade created an influx of immigrants from Cutch, Gujarat, and the Konkan regions. Another phase of Indian penetration from Western India began with introduction of indentured laborers through Bombay and Karachi to construct the railway in Uganda. These laborers were predominantly Sikh in origin but they were soon followed by free emigrants from all the existing centers of the Indian Ocean trade. The existence of the old trade routes and the long tradition of maritime and commercial activity in the Indian Ocean provided a sense of continuity to the movement between Western India and East Africa. Furthermore, the establishment of various emigration agencies, including Broach, Surat, and Bombay, to supply laborers for East, South, and Central Africa offered considerable stimulus to Indian immigration.

Fiji did not offer the same commercial possibilities and opportunities which could be found in the link between East Africa and Western India. It was a relatively isolated area forming a triangular link with the more important British spheres of influence--Australia and New Zealand. Throughout the nineteenth century its importance was linked to the various commercial ventures--whaling, bêche-de-mer, cotton growing, and sugar--undertaken in the islands. None of these ventures, with the exception of sugarcane cultivation, brought the area into contact with India. This contact was established only after the annexation of the islands by the British in 1874. In 1879 the first Indian laborers arrived but the introduction of these immigrants did not precipitate an influx of the commercial types of Indians from Western India who had flocked to East Africa in pursuit of opportunities which arose from the opening of hinterland with the construction of the railway. From 1879 to 1900, or even later, there was a marked absence in Fiji of Indians who had come with the specific purpose of conducting trade. Fiji's isolation from India and the lack of established sea routes, except for the plying of direct immigrant ships from Calcutta,

offered hardly any inducement to Indians other than indentured laborers.

In 1901 the first large batch of Gujarati immigrants arrived. These immigrants were Parsi artisans who had been recruited in Bombay Presidency by Thomas Hughes, an official of the C.S.R., who was visiting India. As the Parsi artisans originated from an area where recruiting for Fiji was prohibited the permission of both the Government of India and the Government of Bengal had to be obtained before they could depart through the Port of Calcutta. In fact the immigration of the Parsi artisans represents the only case of Gujarati recruitment for Fiji after 1900 which was given official sanction. Moreover, the artisans could be best described as 'specialist' immigrants who became an important feature of Indian immigration at a later date.

The Parsis should rightfully be regarded as part of the Gujarati penetration into Fiji. They did not fall into the classification of traders but were listed as having come from Bombay. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to dispute their cultural and linguistic affinity to Gujarat. Despite their dispersal throughout Western India, and their concentration in Bombay City, Parsis have always regarded Surat or Navsari (formerly in Baroda State and now part of Gujarat) as their traditional homeland in India.[5]

The arrival of the Parsis was not followed by an influx of Gujaratis into Fiji. In fact, there were no more cases of Gujarati immigration until 1904. That year two Sonis (Sonars), Chunilal Ganji and Virji Narshi, arrived on board an immigrant steamer through the Port of Calcutta.[6] Both Chunilal and Virji came from Porbandar in Kathiawar but had first heard of Fiji in Natal. Being goldsmiths by profession, they were convinced that there would be a great demand for their skills among the Indians in Fiji. The next instance of Soni immigration, certainly an isolated case, occurred in 1905 when Lakhu Premji Soni arrived through Calcutta from Jamnagar (Nawanagar) in Kathiawar. After 1905 there was a lapse of three years

before more Sonis arrived from Porbandar. There are no definite estimates of numbers because of the paucity of documented evidence concerning free emigration. Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century there was neither a definite pattern nor a steady inflow of immigrants of the Soni caste from Kathiawar.

Between 1908 and 1909 another caste grouping, which would acquire the same importance and significance as the Soni caste, entered Fiji. In 1908 Narotam Karsandas arrived and was followed by Motiram Narsey a year later. Both were from the Navsari Division (located in southern Gujarat) of Baroda State and belonged to the Khatri caste.[7] Unlike the first two Sonis, Virji and Chunilal, who had first established contact with members of the Indian community located in Suva before emigrating, Narotam and Motiram were more daring in their venture for they had no preconceived notions of the area to which they were travelling. They seemed to have been entirely motivated by their belief that there would be a great demand for their tailoring skills. Their conviction of being readily accepted by the Indian community still placed them in the same category as the Sonis, but certainly epitomized the 'adventuring spirit' of Gujaratis which has been turned into a hackneyed expression by Gujarati scholars.[8] Travelling to Fiji at this time was more than a calculated risk. The pitfalls were innumerable--the problem of adaptation in a hostile and unfamiliar territory, the difficulties in communicating in a foreign language, the lack of funds to establish a business, and the ever-present possibility of being stranded without adequate means to return home. However, there were two major considerations that worked in favor of the Gujarati immigrants. One was the presence of a large Indian community which, perhaps through the feeling of having originated from a common homeland, would render assistance in times of difficulty. The second important factor centered on the close proximity of both Australia and New Zealand which imposed stringent immigration

restrictions governing the entry of Indians but still allowed them to enter provided they fulfilled certain conditions.

The insignificance of Gujarati immigration, and its infinitesimal impact on the Indian community in Fiji at this time, could be best illustrated by the fact that only one other caste category arrived before the decade was over. In 1910 Dullabh Kalyan, a Mochi (shoemaker) by caste, from Mahuva Taluka in Navsari went to Fiji but returned to India after two years.[9] This was definitely another solitary and isolated incidence of emigration from the southern part of Gujarat. Neither the presence of the two Khatris nor that of the single Mochi in Fiji produced a spontaneous outburst of emigration from their villages. The return of Dullabh Kalyan after a short stay merely brought into focus the difficulties and hardships incurred in migrating to a relatively unknown area, such as Fiji, which presented many formidable hurdles to even the most courageous immigrants. Another major problem was that the first Gujarati immigrants encountered much competition from other Indian craftsmen, artisans, and nonindentured Indians who were being drawn into some form of commercial activity. It seemed that the Sonis were the most successful Gujarati caste grouping who, in spite of the competition from Sonars from other parts of India, withstood the rigors of life in Fiji because of the large demand for gold jewelry by Indians being repatriated.

Another phase of Gujarati immigration occurred between 1910 and 1914, or until the suspension of shipping between India and the Pacific after the commencement of the war. During this time emigrants, especially from the southern parts of Gujarat, established a network of contacts in the countries of the South Pacific. Travel to Australia and New Zealand was on the increase. The possibilities in Fiji, arising from the expansion of the sugar industry, also seemed to attract Gujaratis of the artisan and cultivating castes. Fiji was near to New Zealand, about a thousand miles

northeast of the latter, and a direct shipping service which linked the two facilitated movement to either of these places. This route was becoming popular with Kolis, a caste of agricultural laborers, who generally preferred going to New Zealand where they had started a small settlement in Auckland. Most of them engaged in the fruit and vegetable business. The first documented case of Koli immigration to Fiji occurred in 1911 with the arrival of Nana Lakhman (sic) who came from the Navsari Division in Baroda State.[10] This could be cited as another isolated case but it can be ascertained from the subsequent trends in Gujarati emigration to the South Pacific, that Nana Lakhman had come to Fiji with the intention of proceeding to New Zealand, only to be thwarted by the imposition of a literacy test there, in 1914, on Indians desiring to enter the country. Eventually, he returned to India in 1915.

Those groups who came to Fiji were indeed attracted by the economic possibilities and through the information transmitted to them by fellow villagers who had gone to Australia and New Zealand. This triangular link among the three areas played a vital role in encouraging emigration on a moderate scale. In 1912 a Nav (barber by caste) named Nathubhai came to Fiji for a brief period, and in 1914 Dahya Hansji, another Mochi (bootmaker), joined the ranks of the small Gujarati community in Suva.[11] All these cases of emigration by the three minor castes--Koli, Mochi, and Nav--occurred from South Gujarat and indicated a general pattern that would be firmly established at a later date.

Only the two pioneering caste groupings found Fiji to be a lucrative field for their skills. The Sonis swelled in number from 21 in 1911 to 51 in 1914 (including Sonars who were from other parts of India).[12] The Khatris also discovered ample scope for their trade. In Suva, the expanding capital of Fiji, Narotam Karsandas launched the first Gujarati tailoring shop in 1911 under the business name of Narotam. His caste fellow and

friend, Motiram Narsey, immediately emulated Narotam by starting his own tailoring concern under the name of M. Narsey. Motiram displayed a very interesting aspect of Gujarati business acumen in Fiji. He was hesitant to embark on any business venture which was different from that of Narotam Karsandas. After all the latter had engaged in a risky undertaking in the face of difficult odds, considering the stiff competition he faced from the established European concerns. But his business proved to be profitable, enhancing his prestige immensely in the eyes of other Gujaratis. He successfully aspired toward a new level of social and economic expectations which, in turn, became the norm for other members of his caste. His caste fellow, Motiram, was certainly desirous of not being left behind, or for that matter outdone by Narotam who basically had the same tailoring skills, and consequently needed little inducement to enter business.

Both Narotam's and Motiram's business formed the nucleus through which other Khatris gained a foothold in Fiji. Relatives, family members, and friends, including Gopal Anandji, Jagjiwan Bhukendas, Motiram's eldest son Jamnadas, Narotam's cousin Tribohan Ratanji, arrived to assist in the management of the two tailoring shops.[13] Here, another characteristic Gujarati behavior became evident. By introducing relatives, it was possible to avoid the pitfalls of any major disruption in their businesses and to leave these concerns under reliable management while making periodic visits to India.

By 1910 it appeared that emigration to Fiji had become the preserve of two groups only--Sonis and Khatris who came from two distinct and separate culture zones of Gujarat. However, the arrival of Manilal Doctor in 1912, an English-trained lawyer of the Bania caste from Baroda City in Baroda State (in Central Gujarat), brought another secondary zone of Gujarat into contact with Fiji. Manilal was drawn to Fiji for a totally different reason than other Gujaratis. Though he was anxious to establish a law practice

there, his experience in Mauritius as a self-styled champion of Indian laborers gave him the ideal credentials for the 'Hindustani' lawyer whom Gandhi had agreed to provide to assist Fiji Indians with their difficulties.[14] Manilal was the first of three Gujarati lawyers who came through the connection between leaders in Fiji and Indian nationalist politicians.

Prior to 1912 little was known of Fiji in the Baroda area. The solitary instance of Dahyabhai Patel of Dharmaj (Petlad District) applying for a passport for Fiji in 1908 was inconsequential.[15] He went to Africa instead which seemed to indicate that Gujaratis, especially the Patidars of Central Gujarat, were still attracted to the possibilities in Africa and were reluctant to venture into an unknown area. Manilal was another isolated case of Gujarati emigration to Fiji from Central Gujarat, but it was certainly his presence there which attracted Appabhai.

Appabhai was a primary school teacher who was disenchanted with his poorly paid occupation and his inability to enhance his fortunes at home. Consequently, he resorted to emigration in search of the same wealth and prestige which many of his fellow villagers had found in Africa. Rather than following the well trodden route to Africa, Appabhai preferred the unknown frontier in the Pacific. Appabhai utilized the link between Australia and New Zealand to explore the prospects there (already described in an earlier chapter) without much success. Had it not been for his knowledge of Manilal in Fiji he could have conceivably returned to India. His decision to proceed to Fiji was actually motivated by his failures in Australia and New Zealand. He arrived in Fiji in 1914 where his perseverence and friendship with the Sonis, both Patidars and Sonis being strict vegetarians, prompted him to remain in Fiji. Appabhai was soon joined by Chimanbhai Patel, another Patidar from Bhadran (Petlad District), thus marking the initiation of a friendship that resulted in a business partnership through which other Patidars came.

The reopening of the shipping routes between the Pacific and India after 1915 initiated the most important phase of Gujarati immigration to Fiji until 1920. The emigration of Gujaratis became more pronounced from 1916 and received its chief impetus from a number of factors. First, the pioneering immigrants had returned home to their respective villages with favorable information about the prospects in Fiji. Second, the importance of Fiji also became significant as a result of prohibitive measures in other British possessions and territories which restricted the entry of Indians. Third, the Government of Fiji was beginning to publicize Fiji as an ideal place for Indian settlement and was hesitant to impose restrictive measures to curtail the entry of Indians. Fourth, the Government of India, which had already exerted increasing control over indentured emigration, did not consider it necessary to restrict emigration under the system of passports on the ground that this would be direct interference with the liberty of Indians who had the means to go abroad. Fifth, rules and procedures for issuing passports were revised to allow Provincial Governments in India to issue travel documents and passports to intending travellers more readily. All these developments, together with the ban against indentured emigration which had previously served as a deterrent to the agricultural castes, had a profound effect in promoting Gujarati emigration.

Sonis and Khatris dominated this phase of emigration which was more organized and did not occur in the same haphazard manner as the movement of the artisan castes and agricultural laborers. Between 1915 and 1917 the first Gujarati emigrants who had gone to Fiji before the war returned to their homeland to join their families, to secure help for their businesses, and to convince friends and relatives that there was ample opportunity for everyone. For the Sonis these periodic visits played an important function. They enabled family genealogists to compile and complete their histories, as well as plot the movement of families. These genealogical compilations

provided invaluable information to other members of the village who wished to emigrate to areas where their kinfolk were residing. These visits often proved to be costly because of the distance travelled. Sonis invariably had to pass through the Port of Calcutta while leaving India or returning to Kathiawar, which added immensely to the cost of travelling. When Chunilal Ganji returned to India in 1915 he decided that it would be, perhaps, less burdensome financially if Sonis could take their families with them to Fiji. Generally, those who had already spent over two years abroad, the normal period which most immigrants considered sufficient to enable them to make enough money to provide a comfortable standard of living at home, shared Chunilal's views on family emigration. The two-year period in Fiji was simply too short to accomplish any financial goal. Now the emigration of families was seen as an answer to the necessary and frequent, but expensive, visits to the homeland. Thus, when Chunilal decided to take his family with him at the end of 1916 he initiated a trend which other Sonis soon followed.

Khatri emigration also operated almost in the same manner as Soni emigration. Motiram Narsey, Gopal Anandji, and Narotam Karsandas--the pioneers to Fiji--were in Navsari in 1916.[16] Their business ventures, which appeared to be flourishing, generated considerable interest not only among their own caste grouping but among other castes as well. Khatris who wished to join their 'privileged' caste-fellows in Fiji were often directly recruited to meet the manpower requirements of the tailoring concerns there. It was evident that the three prominent Khatris dictated the pattern of Khatri emigration. The most active recruiter was Narotam Karsandas who returned to Fiji with 11 other new migrants in 1917.[17] Other groups from the same locality who hoped to emigrate were also given assurances of assistance from Khatris already resident in Fiji.

Between 1916 and 1920, 752 Gujaratis applied for passports in Bombay and Baroda to proceed to Fiji (see Table 4.1 on p. 130).

TABLE 4.1

PASSPORT APPLICATIONS BY AREA AND YEAR (1916-1920)

YEAR	AREA				
	Kathiawar	Baroda State	British Gujarat	Misc. Areas	Total
1916	19	49	56	-	124
1917	41	53	50	1	145
1918	17	51	160	-	228
1919	21	93	48	-	162
1920	2	57	34	-	93
TOTAL	100	303	348	1	752

Source: Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, 1912-1920. Emigration and Passport Files, Huzur English Office, Baroda, 1916-1920.

The British areas of Gujarat produced forty-six per cent of the prospective migrants, with Baroda State producing forty per cent, and Kathiawar thirteen per cent. Only forty-four per cent of all applicants were listed under a specific caste category. The majority did not specify their caste and were merely listed as cloth merchants, hawkers, and fruit and vegetable vendors. Within the last category were Kolis and the less significant grades of cultivators and agriculturalists who could not be included among the Kanbis. In Baroda State it was a common practice for the agriculturalists not to state their caste for fear of having their applications rejected. The authorities were very dubious of applications from agriculturalists whom they suspected of indenturing themselves in Fiji. This close scrutiny of

applicants also prompted other castes at the bottom of the social scale, including Untouchables, to list themselves in the commercial category, that is, as vendor or hawker, which carried with it some of the respectability which was generally accorded the Bania caste. Another way to avoid the scrutiny was to apply for a passport in Bombay City where application formalities were less rigid and passports easier to obtain.

Sonis and Khatris led other castes who hoped to emigrate to Fiji, being the two groups most likely to reach their destination. They were followed by Kanbis of all categories, Kolis, Sutars (carpenters), Lohars (blacksmiths), Mochis (shoemakers), Dhobis (washermen), Darjis (tailors by caste and different from Khatris), and Navs (Barbers). Applications from high caste Gujaratis were insignificant. Though two Brahmins could be found among the applicants, they obviously did not make the journey because the first Brahmin immigrant did not arrive until 1939. The Muslim applicants consisted mainly of Navs and agriculturalists. Groups found in the merchant, hawker, and vendor categories were Kolis and less singificant castes such as Dheds (in Gujarat to mean a conglomeration of the untouchable castes), Ghanchis (oilmen), and Macchis (fishermen). It would appear that most of the castes of a typical Gujarati village, with the exception of Brahmins and Bhangis (scavengers), were represented among the applicants (see Table 4.2 on p. 132).

The background of the emigrants reveals that they were drawn from two distinct culture zones of Gujarat. The two zones, Kathiawar and the southern part of mainland Gujarat, differed in physiographical features, in climate, in the distribution of population and their livelihood, in the historical and cultural traditions, in the system of government, and above all, in customs, manner of speech, and mode of dress.

Kathiawar consists of a wedged-shaped peninsula which juts into the Arabian Sea extending over a length of 200 miles and has an undulating surface interspersed with low mountain ranges. Its hilly terrains are

TABLE 4.2

PASSPORT APPLICATIONS BY AREA, CASTE AND OCCUPATION
1916-1920

REGION	CASTE											MISC. OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS		OTHERS		TOTAL
	BRAHMIN	SONI	BANIA	KANBI*	KHATRI	NAV	DARJI	SUTAR/ LOHAR	KOLI	DHOBI	MOCHI	CLOTH MERCHANT OR HAWKER	FRUIT AND VEGETABLE VENDOR	MUSLIM	—	
CUTCH												1				1
KATHIAWAR																
Bhavnagar		1														1
Junagadh		7		1												8
Navanagar		19						1								20
Porbandar		57					2					6		1	5	71
BARODA STATE																
Baroda Division			2	5												7
Navsari Division	2	1		5	54	4	6	27	21	5	8	131	23	6	3	296
BRITISH GUJARAT																
Ahmedabad																0
Broach				2								1		2		5
Kaira				1				5							1	7
Surat		5		27	8	7	5	15		15	13	196	35	2	8	336
TOTAL	2	90	2	41	62	11	13	48	21	20	21	335	58	11	17	752

*Includes Patidars

Source: Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, 1912-20. Emigration and Passport Files, Huzur English Office, Baroda, 1916-20.

located in the central portion of the peninsula with the southern mountain range running parallel with the coastal region. The whole region falls within the temperate climatic zone which, together with the varying nature of its soils, affected vegetation as well as agricultural productivity. The area is not particularly blessed by the monsoons. As a result, the rainfall is very uncertain and varies immensely across the peninsula. The areas most contiguous to mainland Gujarat has higher rainfall than other regions. Much of the peninsula, except the southern coastal areas and the northern parts which are closer to Cutch, falls within the 'Deccan trap' type of geological formation with soils ranging from medium black to sandy alluvium. The nature of the soils and the moderate rainfall necessitates a heavy reliance on irrigation.[18]

The relative isolation of Kathiawar from mainland Gujarat gave rise to a rich historical and cultural tradition. In spite of its isolation, this region was neither secluded from outside influence nor immune to attacks from invaders. Through the northern land routes, Kathiawar was very susceptible to migrations and contact with Sind, Punjab, and Rajputana (Rajasthan). Because of its long coastline, on which a number of principal towns were situated, namely Navanagar (Jamnagar), Porbandar, Veraval, and Bhavnagar, Kathiawar was drawn into the Indian Ocean trade by the commercial and maritime routes to East Africa and other countries.

The population density was affected by the climatic conditions, by the medium black soils in the interior, and by the unproductive soils on the coasts. The population was unevenly spread over 193 separate princely states, governed as a Political Agency of the Government of Bombay from 1822, and was only dense in those areas where the soils were the most fertile. The coastal regions were sparsely populated, perhaps indicative of the uncultivable nature of the soils and the recourse to other types of occupational activity. In spite of the vast land mass the population density

was 112 per square mile which was low in comparison with other areas of Gujarat.[19]

The more important castes were the Rajputs, the principal landowners and the ruling families in almost all the states; Kanbis, the leading agriculturalists; Kolis, who were also agriculturalists but formed the bulk of the 'floating' non-agricultural laboring population; Brahmins; Banias and Lohanas, who dominated the commerce and trade of the peninsula with the Memon and Khoja Muslims; and Rabaris, who were pastoral farmers.[20] There were, of course, other caste groupings which would be an essential part of a typical Gujarati community--Mochi, Darji, Nav, etc.

Agriculture constituted the main source of livelihood, although the inhabitants of the coastal regions were exclusively involved in trade and commerce. Pastoral farming was restricted to the hilly regions. The peninsula was renowned for a number of its cottage industries--embroidery and 'Bhandani' (tie-and-dye). However, these activities did not provide any great degree of self-sufficiency to the whole region. Owing to its weak agricultural base, resulting from a complicated system of land tenure and poor soils, and in spite of the strong tradition of maritime activity, which saw the constant movement of people to Africa and back, there was considerable migration to other parts of India.

Kathiawar possessed an eclectic tradition, best manifested in the activities of its dominant trading communities, which was conditioned by both Vaisnavism and Jainism. The impact of both these traditions was extremely profound which seemed to explain why Brahmins, who were the carriers of a more ancient and rigid tradition, occupied a less significant place in society. Vaisnavism, with its emphasis on gods with life-like qualities, seemed more appealing than the asceticism of the Vedas and was readily embraced, together with Jainism, by the trading castes.[21] Both Jainism and Vaisnavism, which made <u>ahimsa</u> and vegetarianism a trade-mark

among Banias, allowed a great degree of flexibility that enabled the trading castes to raise the acquisition of wealth above the Brahmanic injunctions against trade. Because of their wealth, their exemplary social conduct, and a highly disciplined lifestyle, which involved strict observance of religious rites and adherence to ahimsa and vegetarianism, the Gujarati Banias acquired a status comparable to the Brahmins. Jain Banias and traders had no religious edicts against travel abroad whereas Vaisnava traders restricted their activities to Kathiawar, other urban centers in Gujarat, and Bombay City. However, it should be stressed that where the economic factor superseded religious considerations Vaisnava Banias also went abroad.

The second zone can best be described as mainland or coastal Gujarat from the south bank of the Sabarmati on the extreme north to the Dangs in the south which incorporated both Central and South Gujarat. This zone has often been referred to as the plains of Gujarat through which the four principal rivers of Gujarat--the Sabarmati, the Mahi, the Narmada, and the Tapi--flow. The zone is remarkably flat consisting of a continuous fertile plain. The hilly terrain which covers the better part of Kathiawar is located westward toward the Vindhya Range, the Sapuda Range, and the Western Ghats. In spite of the regularity of the terrain, the zone contains a variety of soils, ranging from the unproductive coastal alluvium near the mouths of the rivers to the rich black soils of both the Gorada and Kali varieties in the interior. Comparatively, Central and South Gujarat had a stronger agricultural base than Kathiawar owing to rich soils and a higher rainfall. The southern regions have the highest rainfall in Gujarat, almost five times as much as Kathiawar. Thus, this zone possessed the necessary climatic and physical conditions to support a larger population than Kathiawar.[22]

Just as Kathiawar had never been immune from invaders from the north,

and other foreign influence from the strong commercial and maritime activity along its long coast-line, so Central and South Gujarat were susceptible to the influence of the Muslims, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Marathas, and the British.[23] Two of its ports--Cambay and Broach--were prominent in the link with Africa. Surat was a major commercial and maritime port under the British until it was superseded by Bombay in the nineteenth century. The area was politically and administratively divided into British Gujarat and Baroda State with other secondary states. British Gujarat consisted of the Ahmedabad, Kaira and Panch Mahals, Broach, and Surat Collectorates which were carved out of the former territories of the Muslim, the Gaikwar, and the Peshwa powers. The Gaikwar's territories were widely dispersed. Only two main administrative divisions were located in this zone--Baroda and Navsari which were separated by the British Collectorates of Surat and Broach. The less significant princely states were located toward the borders of Gujarat.

The high population density of this zone could be attributed to its rich soils, the abundant rainfall, and a uniform system of transportation and communication throughout Central and South Gujarat which linked the zone to the heart of a wider market system--first to Surat and then to Bombay City. The highest concentration of population was in Kaira and Surat, perhaps indicative of the high level of agricultural productivity and development in these centers.[24] The population density was, in fact, almost four times that in Kathiawar which also implied a higher level of land utilization.

The castes of the zone did not fall into a rigid social structure. As in Kathiawar, there was no strict adherence to the traditional varna categories.[25] In this part of Gujarat there has been constant reference to two classes of people--Kali-Paraj which referred to the darker or the aboriginal, often the earliest, inhabitants, and the Ujali Varna which embraced Brahmins, Rajputs, Kanbis, Bania, and craftsmen or all classes of people who worshipped Brahmanical gods and observed the corresponding customs

and rituals.[26] However, as a general rule, those groups who were the leading agriculturalists, the principal moneylenders and businessmen, or the predominant landowners occupied a very important position in the caste hierarchy.

In Central Gujarat, the Leva Kanbis or Patidars from Charotar had the reputation of being the most enterprising landowners and farmers who also claimed to be the original settlers of Gujarat.[27] They were followed by the Rajputs who, unlike their Kathiawar counterpart, tilled for the Patidars; the Brahmins, who were more noted for their administrative abilities than their priestly functions; Kōlis, both agriculturalists and laborers; the artisan castes and finally the untouchable castes.[28] Moreover, Kaira had a large Muslim population and southward toward Broach one encountered a larger Muslim population. The Muslims of Broach were prosperous landowners, agriculturalists, and general cultivators. The Sunni Bohrahs were prominent in business and trade.[29]

In South Gujarat, a number of Brahmin jatis enjoyed a very high economic and social position similar to that of Patidar in Central Gujarat. The Anavil Brahmins, commonly known as Desais, owned and occupied the most productive tracts of land. They formed the leading agricultural group. The Audich Brahmins of Surat District were prosperous landlords and cultivators also.[30] Among the non-Brahmins, the Kanbis--both Kadva and Matia--were very actively engaged in agriculture. The Matia jati acquired the reputation of being the most enterprising agriculturalists in the Jalalpor and Bardoli divisions of Surat. Kolis constituted another group with some agricultural affiliation, but they played a similar role here as they did in other regions of Gujarat. In South Gujarat, they formed the coastal-based population who were engaged in seafaring activity as well as in agriculture as laborers. Kacchia Patels were yet another agricultural group, reputed to be of Koli and Kanbi origin, who took to the growing and marketing of garden produce exclusively.[31] The Rajputs seemed to have lost their social significance, in addition to their

clan purity, in South Gujarat. The castes with Rajput appellation, or those which claimed to be of Kshatriya origin, were found among the artisan castes--Mochi, Khatri, and Darji. The artisan castes played a more significant economic role in South Gujarat than elsewhere. This could be attributed to the importance of Surat as a commercial and market center as well as the seat of the weaving industry (both silk and cotton). Surat, Billimora, Gandevi, Navsari, and Bulsar existed as important centers of either the shipbuilding industry or the handloom industry.[32] The non-Hindu groups comprised Muslims and Parsis whose impact on the local culture was hardly comparable to the Jain influence in Kathiawar.

While there were distinct differences in physical features, climatic conditions, demographic variations, fertility of the soils, and land utilization between the two zones, the cultural tradition was essentially the same. The impact of Vaisnavaism, which fell heavily under the influence of Jainism, was most profound in Kathiawar where its leading exponents, the Banias, occupied a high position in the social hierarchy, comparable to that of the Brahmins elsewhere. The Vaisnava-Jain influence diminished as it got closer to South Gujarat which was evident through the prolific consumption of meat and alcohol by certain artisan Hindu groups of Kshastriya origin, and by the existence of large tribal groups of the Kali-Paraj.

The linguistic difference was basically in speech. Kathiawari, with its musical and poetic quality, was the main dialect of the peninsula. Charotar had its own dialect which possessed a harsh and rustic quality and was spoken by the Patidars. The Surati dialect was confined to Southern Gujarat.

Central and South Gujarat did not enjoy the same extensive exposure to outside influence, in spite of a long coastline, as Kathiawar. Only two of its ports, Cambay and Broach, figured prominently in the ancient maritime and commercial link between Africa and Gujarat. Surat rose in prominence only

after the arrival of the British but was eventually superseded by Bombay as the commercial metropolis of Western India. The strong tradition of commercial and maritime activity which had generated the movement of capital and people to Africa was lacking in this zone. Apart from the Parsis and the seafaring Kolis, few people had any inclination to travel abroad. The movement of people occurred, foremost, internally toward Bombay in response to the misfortunes wrought by natural calamities, for example famines.[33] Overseas migration from this zone occurred basically as a nineteenth century phenomenon after the traders and commercial castes of Kathiawar had secured a sphere of influence in Africa in which other castes could operate, and certainly after the introduction of indentured labor which created new avenues and opportunities for the exploitation of Africa. The pattern of Gujarati migration to Fiji had remarkable similarities to the African case.

The Kathiawari Sonis who initiated Gujarati emigration to Fiji were inhabitants of the coastal areas or the regions most contiguous to the peninsula's coastline. They came from Navanagar (Jamnagar), Junagadh, Porbandar, and Bhavnagar, which represented 4 of the 11 major towns in Kathiawar.[34] All these towns had been profoundly influenced by the Vaisnava and Jain Bania traditions. The Banias not only dictated the economic life of these towns but also were noted for their philanthropy, contributing generously to the construction of temples. The combination of wealth and religion, which may appear like a dichotomy to an outside observer, gave rise to a highly disciplined moral code in which hard work, good habits, duty to one's family and society, attainment of wealth, and devotion to one's religion were elevated to the level of the most ideal behavior. The Banias, whether village shopkeepers or the leading financiers of the state, moneylenders or bankers, hawkers or merchants, jewelers or cloth-merchants, all aspired toward this ideal. Sonis were very much a part of this commercial, as well as the all-pervading Vaisnava, tradition.

Gujarati Sonis did not differ much from the Banias. Though Sonis who are goldsmiths and silversmiths can be specifically classified as craftsmen, they ranked next to the Gujarati Banias on the social scale.[34] As a class which maintain an affluent lifestyle, they have always revealed a preference for towns and large villages and have adhered rigidly to their hereditary occupation. Moreover, they are strict vegetarians and have adopted the traditional symbols, either the sacred thread or a basil bead necklace, in acknowledgement of their 'twice-born' status. The six Soni jatis (Maru, Gujar, Mewada, Shrimali, Tragal, and Parajia) observe strict endogamy and do not interdine.[35] In spite of the religious injunctions against travel among high caste Hindus, Sonis readily went abroad to seek their fortune. To soothe the caste sentiments against travel, Sonis like other high caste Gujarati Hindus performed purification rites and gave caste dinners upon their return.[36]

The Sonis who emigrated to Fiji belonged to the Parajia jati, one of the six endogamous Soni jatis. Their traditional occupation was that of goldsmith and silversmith except in Cutch where the Parajias have engaged in artisan occupations as stone masons or carpenters.[37] The Parajia jati has two major divisions--Patani and Girnara. The Patani division, being the larger, has been referred to as being synonymous with the Parajia jati. Girnara Sonis comprised that section of the jati who inhabited regions south of the Girnar mountains (this being the recognized natural line of demarcation used by the jati to identify each group).[38] The Girnara Sonis constitute the smaller section of the jati but were the most predominant Soni group to emigrate to Fiji.

The emigrants from Central Gujarat, that is from the Baroda Division of Baroda State, formed a minority group (see Table 4.2). They consisted of a Bania family from Baroda City and five Leva Kanbis (Patidars) from the village of Dharmaj in Charotar. Patidar emigration to Fiji had just commenced in

1919 and 1920 when Appabhai returned to India to secure the help of his in-laws (in Broach) and relatives from his own village to assist him in his business ventures in Lautoka, Nadi, Ba, and Sigatoka. The lack or absence of interest in Fiji could be attributed to the preference for Africa. Emigration among Patidars was a recent phenomenon, perhaps no earlier than 1900 when the Charotar area faced the brunt of a severe famine, failure of the monsoons, and a plague which precipitated a movement toward Africa through the traditional route from Kathiawar.[39]

Emigration from Broach was insignificant and inconsequential. Between 1916 and 1920, only 5 persons from this district migrated to Fiji--2 Leva Kanbis (Patidars), 1 cloth merchant, and 2 Muslim cultivators. Only two areas in Broach acquired any importance in the link between Fiji and Gujarat. The first was Nondhna from where the Hindu emigrants (Leva Kanbis) originated and Sitpan which became the center of Muslim emigration from Broach.

The two main areas of Gujarati emigration were definitely Navsari Division in Baroda State and Surat District in British India. Comparatively, Fiji played a minor role in the movement from those regions because of the preference for South and East Africa.[40] Nevertheless, the Surati (both Surat and Navsari) emigrants were still numerically the largest regional group to go to Fiji--632 passport applicants in all representing about 80 per cent of all Gujarati applicants (see Table 4.1). There seemed to be a significant cross-over from Navsari to Surat because of the difficulty in obtaining a passport in Baroda State. Persons from the agricultural castes confronted constant surveillance by the authorities who wished to prevent any recruitment under the indenture system in Fiji. Moreover, the Gaikwar was averse to his subjects emigrating to countries where the indenture system was still in operation.[41] In reality, the Navsari Division produced the largest contingent of all groups who wished to proceed to Fiji.

In South Gujarat there was considerable emphasis on group movement.

Emigrants who returned home for visits selected the members of their caste who would accompany them during their return voyage to Fiji. Nowhere was this aspect of emigration more visible than among the Khatris. The Khatris formed an artisan caste grouping which claimed to be of Kshatriya origin and wore the sacred thread of the twice-born as a symbol of their high status. They were predominantly located in the Navsari Division of Baroda State as well as in Bulsar, Chikhli, and Pardi in the Surat District.[42] Their traditional occupation has been the weaving of women's garments and other coarse cotton cloths for the local markets. In Surat City they prepared the gold and silver thread used in embroidering saris. They formed a cohesive community which has readily displayed an inclination to migrate both internally and abroad. Much like the other caste groupings who were attracted to Africa, they established links with Zanzibar after 1840, and later spread into South Africa. They also established communities in Burma and Hong Kong. Thus when the few members of their caste opened their businesses in Fiji, it seemed inevitable that others would follow. The Khatris who went to Fiji came overwhelmingly from Navsari City, but also from Gandevi, Chikhli, and Bulsar. In Navsari City they lived in a particular locality known as Khatriwad (which means "family of Khatris").

The Khatris have a very complex social organization of which very little is known or has been written.[43] The Khatris claim to be of Rajput origin, therefore of the Kshatriya <u>varna</u>. Official gazetteers have classified the Khatris of South Gujarat as belonging to the Brahma-Khatri division which is an imprecise categorization because Brahma-Khatris are considered to be writers and not weavers. Brahma-Khatris are also very strict vegetarians. Khatris in Fiji simply regarded themselves as belonging to the Gujarati division which could be a more precise classification for the Khatris in South Gujarat. Gujarati Khatris are best known for their expertise in silk and cotton weaving, their traditional occupation. They have also acquired a

notoriety for their consumption of alcohol and flesh. In the urban areas of Gujarat, and in Bombay, the Khatri community divided itself into two sections (Shethia and Karbhari) which denoted occupational specialization. The Shethias are the financiers and the managers of Khatri enterprise, and the Kharbharis form the labor force. Most Khatris in Fiji came from the ranks of the Kharbhari community.[44]

The status of the Khatris operates on two levels. First, there is the Rajput connection which placed Khatris within the Kshatriya varna. As a member of the 'twice-born' community they are entitled to wear the sacred thread, the acknowledged symbol of high status. On the second level there is the Brahmanical model of behavior which imposes rigid guidelines in diet, occupation, and in social and religious behavior. It is the Brahmanical model which has negated the Khatris' claim to high status. Their traditional occupation of weaving has virtually left them in a perpetual state of impurity and pollution. Weaving has been associated with untouchability because of the ancient practice of treating woven cloth with size made from bones.[45] Furthermore, the Khatris have been lax in their social behavior, permitting divorce and widow-remarriage. Moreover, they did not observe the restrictions regarding food. Unlike Vaisnava Hindus they maintained a non-vegetarian diet and displayed a tendency to drink excessively, a trait which they transported to Fiji. The Khatris have not displayed any considerable degree of 'sanskritization' to assert their 'twice-born' status.[46]

However, the position of the Khatris on the social scale has not been rigid. Occupational mobility, wealth, and even emigration enabled them to improve their standing in Gujarati society. Presently, weaving has become the preserve of Khatri women permitting men to pursue other sources of livelihood. In the urban areas, Khatris have increasingly turned to the lucrative tailoring business to meet the demand for the fashionable western style of clothing. In Bombay they have also entered the textile business.

Thus, Khatris have shown considerable diversity, both at home and in overseas countries.

The artisan jatis figured very prominently in Gujarati emigration. Though they have always played an important economic role in South Gujarat which contained some of the larger commercial and market centers, they were not adverse to travelling abroad. Africa was one of the first areas to attract the artisans who mainly flocked to Zanzibar after the emergence of the Omani Sultanate, and later to the East African coast after the introduction of indentured laborers through Bombay and Karachi. While Africa offered the most lucrative prospects, they also travelled to Southeast Asia and the Pacific, but only to those areas which harbored large Indian immigrant communities. Artisans came to Fiji after 1910 and for the same reasons which had driven them to other parts of the world.

The artisan jatis generally fall at the lower end of the Gujarati social scale, depending upon the level of 'purity' in the religious practices, and social behavior of a particular group. Almost all artisan jatis of South Gujarat could be distinguished by their Rajput appellation and by their claim to be of Kshatriya origin. Some have been accorded membership within the Ujali Varna, but only at the lower end for a number of reasons. First, the Rajputs have lost their clan purity in South Gujarat because of their intermarriage with the Bhils or tribal peoples who are ranked lower than the Sudra jatis. Second, the behavior of the artisan castes did not in any way reflect the high social ideals which characterized either the Jain-Vaisnava tradition of the Banias or the austerity of the Saivite Brahmins. Third, the Jain influence seemed to be the weakest in South Gujarat, which is certainly evident in the consumption of nonvegetarian foods and alcoholic beverages, a trait attributed to the strong influence of the Kali-Paraj.[47] The dominant factor which contributed to the low esteem of most artisan jatis has been their traditional occupational traits which denoted untouchability.

The few artisan groups, who normally occupied a higher position than Khatris in Gujarat, were numerically too small to become either a major factor in Gujarati emigration or a noticeable faction within the community in Fiji. The Darjis, that is the jati which is traditionally associated with tailoring, found themselves superseded by the Khatris who had acquired a good control of that profession before their arrival. Darjis have much in common with the Khatris, through their Rajput origins and the use of the common clan surnames. The various regional endogamous divisions neither interdined nor intermarried. They have been accorded a higher ritual status than the Khatris on account of their traditional calling which did not leave them in a state of impurity.

Lohars and Sutars (including Mistrys) were the other jatis who commanded a status similar to the Darjis in Gujarat. In Fiji they lacked the organizational strength and unity which in India had made them important members of village and town communities, whose skills were required by all segments of society. The traditional jajmani relationships which sustained village craftsmen were no longer viable in the colonial economy of Fiji. Moreover, these jatis were reluctant to follow their hereditary calling and found trade to be more lucrative.

Below the middle-level artisan jatis were the Navs and Dhobis, two important serving groups in Gujarat. Both immigrant groups were large enough to maintain their distinctive identities in Fiji. At home barbers attended to any caste except untouchables although this distinction would be quite untenable in towns. In a village a Nav's function or usefulness went beyond cutting hair. He was often utilized as the messenger of auspicious news and was an indispensable member of the bridegroom's entourage at weddings. Dhobis, on the other hand, have continued to remain an urban-based group because of the demand for their services among the more affluent. They rendered their services to anybody except untouchables, a distinction which was once again untenable in the colonial economy of Fiji. The structural organization and

social behavior of Navs and Dhobis did not differ from that of most artisan jatis. They commanded a lower status than other Gujarati artisan groups because the act of cutting hair or washing clothes left the barber or washerman in a state of impurity.

The last of the significant immigrant artisan groups was the Mochi whose occupation of shoemaking contained, perhaps, the most visible association with untouchability. They clearly serve as another example of a group which claimed Rajput origin, hence a jati of the Kshatriya varna, but had the social status of a Chamar (leather-worker), a term also used disparagingly or abusively in Fiji to refer to a person of low birth or status. In Gujarat all untouchable castes including leather workers are collectively known as Dheds. Nevertheless, Mochis have acquired the most status among the Dhed jatis because they work with dressed leather only and do not tan hide. More specifically, Mochis could be classified as shoemakers or bootmakers who refrain from cobbling shoes. Some Mochis have improved their status by becoming more religious and eschewing the use of flesh and liquor.[48] The Mochis in Fiji belonged exclusively to the Surati division which contained two factions--those who came from Bardoli, and another larger group which came from Surat.

Finally, there were the few obscure and insignificant jatis which slipped into the bottom of the Gujarati economic and social hierarchy in Fiji. They remained obscure because none of these minute groups was either visibly recognizable or engaged in its traditional occupation.

The artisan groups--Nav, Darji, Sutar, Dhobi, and Lohar--originated from the Khatri areas of the Navsari Division. In British Gujarat, the artisans came mainly from the city of Surat and also from the rural areas. The Surat contingent, especially in the case of Mochis and Dhobis, comprised the larger section of each group which had vast ramifications on caste behavior in Fiji when the Navsari and the Surat factions clashed on various

issues. The Navsari artisan groups were often the first among their caste to migrate to Fiji, perhaps on account of their contacts with the Khatri community. The Surat faction normally followed in the wake of conditions created by their counterpart from Navsari. Numerically Dhobis and Mochis formed the dominant emigrant castes among the artisans followed by Darjis and Navs. The Sutars and Lohars were a major group among passport applicants but their ability to emigrate or undertake the costly voyage to Fiji was doubtful.

The agricultural groups of Kanbi--especially Kadva and Matia--and Koli regarded Fiji only as a stepping-stone to New Zealand. In New Zealand there emerged a sizeable community of Kanbis and Kolis in Auckland where they opened grocery stores or sold garden produce. In reality, Fiji served a dual function for these groups. First, one could acquire some knowledge of English here to meet the requirements of the literary test in New Zealand. Second, Kanbis and Kolis often came to Fiji if their ventures in New Zealand failed. Moreover, Fiji did not prohibit Gujaratis from coming at will and residing in the islands. The Kolis were unevenly distributed throughout Gujarat, but the passport applicants came mainly from the rural areas of the Navsari division--from Viraval, Tavdi, Sagra, Kasbapur, Delavada, Kadipur, and Manikpur--incidentally, the same areas from which the hawkers and vegetable vendors originated. Again, emigration was a 'group affair' where batches of Kolis from a particular locality attempted to undertake their journey together mainly to minimize the cost of travel and to provide some measure of security to themselves since the majority were illiterate. Kolis have been described as a class of people belonging to the original tribal or pre-Aryan inhabitants of Gujarat.[49] They have also been linked to the traditional rulers of Gujarat, a classification which is hardly consistent with the later belief that Koli is the forebearer of the pejorative term 'coolie' which crept into the terminology of indentured emigration.[50] Owing to their

tribal or aboriginal origins, the Kolis were not initially considered part of the fourfold Hindu varna. It was their hypergamous links with the Rajput clans of Gujarat which provided Kolis the means to improve their social status. Even though Kolis laid claim to a definite Rajput tradition in their history, it had not won them a place within the ranks of the Ujali Varna, that is the 'twice-born' jatis of Gujarat. Today, it is generally agreed that Kolis are a rising jati, and certainly one which is above the Kali-Parag. One source has given them a status ranking equal to Darjis and Sutars.[51] The Kolis comprised the less prosperous landowners, agriculturalists, and laborers who readily moved in search of work. They also formed a part of the coastal-based population who either engaged in seafaring activity or worked as agricultural laborers. Since they were a mobile people at home, they quickly availed themselves of the opportunities which came through emigration. Those who went to Fiji came from an impoverished agricultural background and were driven to emigration through debt, natural calamities, the rise in the cost of living, and crop failures.[52] Furthermore, Kolis entered and left Fiji at random in the hope of residing in New Zealand eventually. In other words, their economic interest in Fiji was not as important as that of other groups. They did not undertake any major commercial activity, but were the most versatile Gujarati group in terms of their willingness to engage in any type of occupation, a characteristic for which they were also noted in Gujarat.

Another agricultural immigrant group from South Gujarat, who swelled the ranks of the 'Patel' contingent was the Kanbi. Kanbi has been the general term given to a cultivator in Gujarat, and was the name adopted by jatis of the Kali-Parag who attempted to elevate their status by following agricultural pursuits, abandoning the consumption of animal food, and emulating the ways of the Ujali Varna.[53] The Kanbi classification also included descendants of the original Gujar settlers who took to farming. The Kanbis are divided

along the lines of the traditional Hindu jatis in Gujarat. The nine Kanbi jatis are distributed unevenly throughout Gujarat. The two principal jatis, Leva and Kadva, are found in Kathiawar, Central Gujarat, and South Gujarat. The Matia jati can be found only in South Gujarat.

The Kanbis in South Gujarat, especially the Levas and Kadvas, were best acknowledged for their expertise in agriculture. In Surat the Leva jati, who came to be called Patidar at a later stage than the Levas of Central Gujarat, were just as prosperous as the Anavil Brahmins. The Matia Kanbis, one of the less known jatis, also acquired a reputation as enterprising agriculturalists in the Jalalpur and Bardoli divisions of Surat. Though their main occupation was agriculture, Kanbis increasingly turned to business and to employment in the government. Business, after all, has continuously been a highly preferred calling in Gujarat. Accordingly, Kanbis were not averse to commercial activity because wealth resulted in higher status. In many towns, Kanbis emerged as cloth merchants and dealers in grain. Some also turned to weaving, specializing in silk, although the occupation has some association with untouchability.[54] The Kanbi emigrants from South Gujarat consisted of Levas, Kadvas, and Matias. They originated from Surat City and from the neighboring agricultural districts of Bardoli, Jalalpur, and Chorasi. Inspite of their numerical size at home the Levas and Kadvas formed a smaller immigrant group than the Matias who produced some of the earliest Gujarati emigrants to Fiji, and who also figured prominently in Gujarati emigration to New Zealand. Collectively, the Kanbi contingent, both the Patidars from Charotar and Broach and the Kanbis of South Gujarat, formed about 6 per cent of all passport applicants to Fiji.

The dubious categories of cloth merchants, hawker, fruit, and vegetable vendor are difficult to decipher. As mentioned previously, these categories included castes wishing to avoid notoriety or exposure, the untouchable castes and those wishing to enhance their prospects of obtaining passports,

and Kolis who hoped to escape the scrutiny of authorities desiring to discourage emigration to countries where the indenture system was in operation. The majority of these applicants were basically field laborers from the cultivating class who had been affected by adverse conditions at home--by the failure of the monsoons, by the scarcity of food, and by the rise in prices between 1916 and 1920. Many field laborers found it difficult to earn a sufficient living to maintain their families under these conditions and resorted to emigration.

Surat produced the larger batch of the merchant and hawker categories because of the influx of laborers and cultivators to the city from Navsari where there were more formalities or difficulties in obtaining passports. Though many of these doubtful merchants and hawkers obtained passports to proceed to Fiji they were unable to raise the necessary funds to undertake the journey.[55] This journey would have led to much hardship and could have conceivably crippled many families with debt. Thus, their ability to emigrate was extremely doubtful in view of their limited resources.

The Muslims constituted another minor and insignificant group. They came mainly from Navsari and were either acquainted with the Khatris or hoped to secure their assistance after having reached Fiji. Barbers and cultivators seemed to be the only significant Muslim groups to emigrate to Fiji. The Gujarati Muslims were numerically insignificant in Fiji and never attained that level of wealth and power enjoyed by their counterparts in Africa.

The population census of 1921 in Fiji revealed that the Gujaratis formed a minute community among the Indians. Their numerical strength of 324 (out of the entire total of 60,634) did not correlate with the total number of passport applications in Gujarat. It was evident that less than half the applicants undertook the journey to Fiji. Gujarati castes which were visibly accounted for by the authorities in Fiji included goldsmiths, tailors (both the Khatris and Darjis), barbers, bootmakers, or other Gujaratis who

conducted some form of commercial activity.[56] The only trader of any significance and influence was Appabhai Patel. Their activities were basically related to caste but Gujaratis entered any activity which offered ample opportunity for making money without making any substantial investment such as tailoring, making jewelry, operating Indian restaurants, and hawking.

It should be stressed that only those castes or groups with established contacts in Fiji undertook the journey. First, there was the monetary consideration which eliminated those applicants, especially hawkers, and fruit and vegetable vendors, whom the passport authorities in India described as poor and illiterate and certainly not having the economic means to travel abroad. Second, there was the problem of distance which meant that the journey had to be undertaken in various stages. The delays and stoppages in different countries added immensely to the whole voyage. The most travelled route to Fiji was through Calcutta on direct vessels. Another route took the emigrant as far as Auckland in New Zealand, where there was a waiting period of a few weeks before the final voyage to Fiji on another ship. Alternatively, the emigrant could travel to Australia from Bombay. This new route from Bombay to Sydney was opened soon after the war. Except for the direct route from Calcutta the other routes presented numerous hurdles for the illiterate emigrants with questionable economic status.

Gujarati emigration after 1920 did not deviate in its essential features from the previous period. In 1921 there was an increase in passport applications for Fiji which could be attributed to the abolition of the indenture system. The abolition made the area more attractive and safer for Gujaratis. All the applicants came from the caste groups with established links in Fiji, with the exception of fruit or vegetable vendors who were conspicuously absent. There were 107 applicants including Khatris (34), Dhobis (10), Mochis (9), Darjis (7), and Muslims (10).[57] Of course, the unknown category of merchants, traders and hawkers still made their presence felt among the

applicants. From 1922 to 1927 it is hard to assess the types of emigrants, their background, and their exact number because of the paucity of records. The main source of information has been Gujaratis whose links with Fiji antedate 1920.

The prime motivation came from the established pattern of contact with Fiji and from a growing awareness that Fiji offered opportunities similar to East and South Africa. The indenture system, which acted as a deterrent to emigration from the agricultural areas, had been abolished in 1920 thereby enhancing the attractiveness of Fiji as a safe area for domicile. The opening of a new route from Bombay to Sydney brought Western India closer to Fiji and provided an alternative to the traditional route from Calcutta. Another incentive came from Fiji's liberal policy toward free emigration, and the absence of similar controls in India, which allowed people to travel freely without any interference from the authorities. The principal inducement was economic and came from the knowledge that many Indians, including Gujaratis, had undertaken successful business ventures in the islands. Moreover, the changing structure of the Indian community in Fiji, the growth and expansion of towns, the rise of Indians settlements after the emergence of independent farmers, and the development of communication networks allowing movement to the remoter areas of Fiji, all provided much stimulus for economic advancement. The Gujarati impact was most felt in the field of commercial activity. It was a field in which the local ex-indentured Indian population, with its strong agricultural base, obviously lacked the entrepreneurial skills to forestall the creeping influence of the Gujaratis.

The Gujaratis had already revealed a natural aptitude for commercial pursuits as well as a remarkable perseverance for success. Appabhai's flourishing business concerns in the 'sugar towns' of Ba, Lautoka, Sigatoka, and Nadi acted as the training ground for members of his caste, whose initiation into business was as store assistants and clerks. By the early 1920s

the Khatris had become one of the dominant groups of the Gujarati community in Suva where they monopolized the tailoring business. In just one centralized locality in Suva there were over 20 Khatris from the town of Navsari in Baroda State.[58] Because of the improvement in the communication and transport systems the Khatris had begun to disperse into all towns located in all the large centers of the Indian population. Some preferred to go into the restaurant business, as did the Kolis, catering to the increasing demand for Indian delicacies and sweetmeats. Indian restaurants (lodges) and miscellaneous categories of food vendors could be found throughout Suva and all the major towns. Few Sonis had institutionalized their activities, preferring to remain as wandering jewelers and hawkers. Some Sonis made an attempt at farming while others went into shopkeeping. Whatever each caste group did, and no matter how small that concern was, it acted as an incentive for others to follow once the stories of success and wealth had filtered back to their villages in India.

While Khatris and Sonis retained their position as the two major streams of the Gujarati community, and monopolized certain types of activity which became a permanent fixture of their particular caste in Fiji, other castes began to carve a 'sphere of influence' as well. These two groups soon felt the presence of the Patidars who from 1922 onward arrived in Fiji in growing numbers. The Patidars were the main emigrant group from Central Gujarat, chiefly from the area commonly known as Charotar which included portions of both British Gujarat and Baroda State. They also came from Nondhna in Broach. Patidars trace their ancestry to the original settlers of Gujarat and constitute a very prominent land owning and agricultural community in Kaira (Kheda) District in Central Gujarat. They began emigrating to other parts of the world later than most Gujarati groups. Natural calamities such as failure of the monsoons, famines, and plague forced Patidars to emigrate to Africa after 1900. Large-scale Patidar emigration to Fiji did not

antedate 1920.

The Patidar community is characterized by its extreme hierarchical structure based on lineage groups arranged in an ascending order of prestige and social standing (distinct from the concept of status which has been used to distinguish one jati or caste from another). On top of this hierarchical system are the 'kulin' Patidars (those who claim descent from the original families who enjoyed patidari rights) and at the bottom are placed the 'akulin' groups who have no lineage and whose use of the name Patidar is generally considered suspect by the 'kulin' Patidars. The 'kulin' Patidars are distinguished by such names as Desai and Amin which would be less commonly used than that of Patel.[59] They also differentiate themselves from the other section by a strict compliance with the Brahmanic ideals which include strict observance of religious rites, vegetarianism, and a ban against widow remarriage, and through marriage circles from which the low ranking Patidars are excluded by the refusal of the higher group to give daughters in marriage. The highest ranking Patidars came from the six original villages of Charotar--Dharmaj, Nadiad, Sojitra, Bhadran, Vasod, and Karamsad.[60]

All Patidars whether rich or poor, Patel, Desai, Amin, 'kulin,' or 'akulin' have an undisputed claim to status when compared to other jatis. As Patidars form the dominant jati in Central Gujarat, both economically and politically, they are accorded the highest status. Ritually, Patidars would fall into the same category as Banias, that is below the Brahmins but above the Kshatriya on the varna scale. In fact, the Patidars provide an excellent example of caste mobility. Their quest for a higher status first began with the attempt to remove the Shudra strain in their past by linking their tradition to that of the Kshatriyas. The Levas professed membership within the Kshatriya varna by claiming descent from the epic hero Ram. As they prospered under the British in the late nineteenth century they no longer laid stress on the Kshatriya model, but preferred to identify themselves with

the Vaishya varna which was considered higher than the Kshatriya varna in Gujarat. They supported their claim by arguing that agriculture was one of the acceptable callings of the Vaishya varna.[61] Both in their religious and social behavior they came closer in outlook to the Banias. The rise in status of the Leva jati did not affect all other Kanbis. In 1931 the Leva Kanbis (Patidars) in Central Gujarat obtained recognition as a separate jati, distinct from other Kanbi's who retained their generic name.[62] To the high status jati, more specifically the Patidar, the term Kanbi has now acquired a pejorative connotation. Some sources place the Patidars below Rajputs or other Kshatriya jatis, and even the Brahmins who are primarily utilized by Patidars as marriage priests cannot arrive at any 'Brahmanical consensus' regarding Patidar status.[63] Nevertheless, Patidars have always claimed a high position in caste hierarchy, have emulated the Vaisnava and Brahmanic ideals, especially the vegetarianism of the Banias, but have not adopted 'the sacred thread' as a formal mark of high status.

The wealth and affluence of Patidars derive from their extensive ownership of land and from agriculture. The sole emphasis on the acquisition of wealth has made Gujarat "the private property of the Patidar."[64] Their industriousness has also made Kaira (Kheda) the foremost agricultural district in Gujarat, which has also benefited from vigorous industrial development since 1947. However, the region has had an ample share of natural calamities--famines, failure of the monsoons, drought, plague, and floods--which strike Gujarat with regularity. Between 1899 and 1902 these calamities reduced the population of Kaira and caused a drastic movement of people to other parts of the country and abroad. Emigration and the subsequent entry into commercial pursuits, opened another source of wealth to those Patidars who did not possess extensive landholdings. The less well-to-do also turned to politics, education, and the professions for alternate sources of livelihood. The prosperous Patidars, of course, would still be the large

landowners from the prestigious six-village marriage circle who also established commercial interests outside their villages and abroad. This class has always measured its prosperity in terms of ornate buildings and lavish households, and paid the highest dowries to contract 'a good marriage' for their daughters.

Apparently, Appabhai Patel was entirely responsible for the influx of the Patidars through his regular visits to India. In 1922 he introduced the first batch of six immigrants whom he brought under contract to work for his concerns. From 1920 to 1934 he was personally instrumental in enabling 21 or more Patidars to enter Fiji, among whom could be ranked some of the leading traders of all the cities and towns of Fiji.[65] From this central group, and through subsequent additions from the arrival of families, friends, and relatives of those Patidars who eventually broke their ties with Appabhai to start their own businesses, emerged the fifty or so families who comprise the Patidar community of Fiji today.

The largest faction of the Patidar community originated from the village of Dharmaj, one of the six original villages of Charotar. Patidars from these six villages formed an exclusive marriage circle which gave them a very high status in the Patidar social hierarchy. Appabhai, who was from Dharmaj, was the first Patidar immigrant to Fiji; he commanded and was accorded a high respect from other members of his caste whom he assisted in emigrating to Fiji. As disputes shattered Appabhai's influence, the Dharmaj Patels were the first to break away from him. But as these disgruntled Patidars attempted to start their own businesses--C. J. Patel and Company and T. C. Dahyabhai and Company in Suva, C.P. Patel in Lautoka, Chimanbhai and Company in Sigatoka--they often tried to minimize their differences and competition with Appabhai who, after all, was still reputed to be the most influential Gujarati in Fiji.[66]

To lessen the impact of internal disputes of the rising business

expectations of his former associates Appabhai then turned to the Patidar community in Nondhna, in Broach, where his wife's relatives were residing. The six Patidars who came under contract in 1928 were all from Nondhna.[67] While the Dharmaj and Nondhna Patidars formed the nucleus of the community, others came from Karamsad and Bhadran in Petlad, Karkhadi in Baroda, Borsad and Nadiad in Kaira to fill the labor requirements of the emerging Patidar business community.

The phenomenal rise of Patidars as the leading Indian traders in the 'sugar towns' is certainly one of the most interesting features of Gujarati immigration. In Fiji, as in Africa, they entered the field of commerce at a later stage than other immigrant groups. They revealed a natural aptitude for commerce in which they were amazingly successful because of their hard work, perseverance, and frugality. Though the majority started as clerks, manual workers, and shop assistants they utilized this experience to open their own businesses within a very short time. In Fiji, Patidars measured their success in terms of their ability to become 'independent' traders after an initial period of apprenticeship in another concern. In Gujarat the wealth of Patidars came from cotton and tobacco but in Fiji they preferred shopkeeping which became their trademark in all the Indian centers. Soon they were accorded the same respect given to the Sonis. Being from a strong agricultural background, they understood the problems of farmers, extended much credit to them, and even gave advice in farming techniques.

The Patidars were not just the leading Indian shopkeepers of Fiji, but from their ranks arose two remarkable lawyers of considerable political influence whose impact on the politics of Fiji was profound. The first of the two lawyers, Shivabhai Bhailalbhai Patel of Sojitra, arrived in 1928. Eighteen months later, he was followed by Ambalal Dahyabhai Patel from the town of Nadiad.[68] Both lawyers came to fill the gap which was created by the departure of Manilal Doctor. Shivabhai professed to be a secretary of

Gandhi and had a great deal of exposure to Indian nationalist thought in India as well as in London where he studied law. He first heard of Fiji in Rangoon and was persuaded to go to Fiji by Pranjiwan Mehta, a close associate of Gandhi, to be spokesman and defender of Indian rights. Ambalal followed him through the similar channels and for the same purpose.

After the arrival of the Kachhia Patels in the 1920s, the social composition of the Gujarati community did not undergo any more fundamental change. The Kachhias, a caste of agriculturalists who can be regarded as a product of the hypergamous affiliation of Kolis with Kanbis, took to emigration later than other castes from South Gujarat. They showed a preference for New Zealand where they had already established a community by 1920.[69] Though they seemed to have totally bypassed Fiji in this period, it soon became a very desirable place in the 1920s because of the unlimited possibilities for commerce and trade. Between 1921 and 1925 few Kachhias emigrated to Fiji, about 10 in all, but by 1935 the community increased to 35 families.

The Kachhia emigrants were drawn from the six divisions of the jati found in South Gujarat. They came from Bhagwanpura and Kachhiawad in the Navsari Division of Baroda State. As a social grouping, Kachhias stood above the Kolis inspite of their strong affiliation with them, but they cannot be placed on the same level as the Kanbis. Their questionable status has been attributed to the fact that a section of the jati had converted to Islam which resulted in ritual pollution for the entire community.[70] Nevertheless, they attempted to elevate their social status by adopting 'Patel' as a surname and imitating the social behavior of Kanbis. They became strict vegetarians and also eschewed the consumption of alcohol.

Kachhias earned their livelihood as cultivators of garden produce but are also concerned with the cultivation of rice, cotton, peanuts, rye, and pulses. The less prosperous Kachhias turned to carpentering. But in Fiji, the Kachhias eschewed agriculture and preferred trade because it offered more

monetary returns for very little investment in the least possible time. Like the Patidars they also spread their tenacious hold over Indian trade in Suva, Lautoka, Ba, and other Indian centers. They went through various phases of commercial activity: first into hawking which attracted all Gujarati groups initially, then into shopkeeping which they learnt from the Patidars, and finally into the import and export business through indent houses which had formerly been the sole preserve of the European commercial firms. Most of all, they became prominent in trade, and acquired a good reputation in the sari and drapery business.

The depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s produced a large influx of Gujaratis to the islands. Within a short time they emerged as the main Indian immigrant group. The imposition of immigration controls did little to dampen their enthusiasm for Fiji. Many factors in India also provided a stimulus for persons wishing to travel to Fiji. One effect of the depression was that it forced emigrants in Africa to return to Gujarat only to confront difficult times there also. The money which they brought with them was channelled into land, the construction of homes, meeting social obligations, or freeing their heavily mortgaged properties from their creditors or money moneylenders. Very little of the money had any impact on the local economy of a particular locality. Those with additional cash reserves seemed well equipped to meet the exigencies of the situation but many families still found it difficult to maintain a decent standard of living. Population pressure, the increase in the size of families, and the reduction in the size of agricultural holdings loomed as the most serious problem.[71] Under these conditions money which had come in from Africa did not go a long way in supporting returning emigrants and their families. More and more Gujaratis who still had relatives residing abroad turned to them for material assistance but mainly to secure their help in going abroad.

The Gujaratis in Fiji met the demands placed on them by their caste

members in India in a very peculiar way. Many went into shopkeeping which explained the rapid growth of Gujarati enterprise in all the 'sugar towns' in a very short period. By taking the plunge into some form of commercial activity the Gujaratis displayed a new sense of identity in Fiji which was favorably accepted by the authorities. At the same time it provided them with an excellent shelter to get more members of their groups into Fiji on the ground that their skills were required for their enterprises to be successful. The more positive aspect of their accelerated entry into business in Fiji was that it obliged them to seriously consider bringing their families and to enable the less fortunate members of their communities to emigrate to Fiji where there were ample opportunities to earn a living. Thus the rapid growth of Gujarati businesses could be regarded as a counteraction against the imposition of immigration controls. This was definitely substantiated by the number of Gujaratis who came between 1928 and 1938.

From 1921 onward the Gujarati community increased quite rapidly (from 324 in 1921 to 1,200 in 1930, and then to 2,500 in 1935).[72] The largest increase took place between 1928 and 1938. During this period over 1,170 Gujaratis made passport applications for Fiji through the authorities in Bombay (see Table 4.3 on p. 161). This figure includes all applicants from Kathiawar (commonly known as the Western States Agency), Baroda State and British Gujarat, but excludes persons in Kathiawar and Baroda who made applications through authorities in their respective areas. The applicants through Bombay would not constitute a complete list of all Gujaratis who wished to emigrate to Fiji but it has provided sufficient insight into the nature of Gujarati emigration, the main areas of emigration, and the castes who went.

Throughout this period South Gujarat produced more emigrants to Fiji than all other areas and accounted for 1,039 (88.8 per cent) of all passport applications. Kathiawar, Central Gujarat, and Bombay City provided the rest

TABLE 4.3

PASSPORT APPLICATIONS BY AREA AND YEAR (1928-1938)

	Kathiawar (Western States Agency)	Baroda State	British Gujarat	Misc. Areas	Total
1928	-	32	47	-	79
1929	-	33	96	4	133
1930	1	71	116	7	195
1931	2	23	15	1	42
1932	3	9	26	6	44
1933	1	20	35	3	59
1934	-	27	46	1	74
1935	-	23	70	1	94
1936	-	56	112	1	169
1937	-	50	91	4	145
1938	-	46	89	1	136
TOTAL	7	390	744	29	1,170

Source: Passport Applications, Bombay, 1928-38.

of the applications. Districtwise the largest bloc of applicants came from Surat in British Gujarat and Navsari Division in Baroda State. It appears that there was very little fluctuation in the emigration patterns in two periods (that is, between 1916 and 1920, and between 1928 and 1938) where adequate records are available. The records conclusively demonstrate the consistent pattern of emigration from South Gujarat which established the norm for all of Gujarati emigration.

In terms of caste groupings, Khatris forged ahead of Sonis as the dominant emigrant group in the 1930s and had a slight numerical edge over them on an overall basis. The numerical edge was only visible in the Bombay records and would certainly be the case, in actuality, if Sonis did not come through the passport authorities in Kathiawar. It should be assumed that Sonis, who were not accounted for by the Bombay records, came and continued to come to Fiji but with a lesser consistency and frequency than they had done prior to 1930. The Patel contingent consisting of Patidars, Matia and Kadva Kanbis, and the Kachhias had made considerable gains but they were still less visible than the artisan castes of Nav, Darji, Mochi, Dhobi, Sutar, and Lohar. The trader, merchant, and hawker categories had declined significantly from the previous period (see Table 4.2, and Table 4.4 on p. 163) but not as much as the fruit and vegetable vendors who had virtually disappeared as an emigrant group. The capacity of Muslims to emigrate was almost the same as any single artisan group, but collectively they comprised only 5.4 per cent of all applicants.

There was not much change in the areas from which the applicants originated. Sonis continued their push from the traditional areas, namely from Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Porbandar, and Navanagar, but the majority came from the Viramgam division in Ahmedabad (British Gujarat) and Bombay, where many Kathiawari Sonis had settled. The shift to Ahmedabad could have meant that passports were too time-consuming or difficult to obtain through the

TABLE 4.4

PASSPORT APPLICATIONS BY AREA, CASTE AND OCCUPATION 1928-1938

REGION	CASTE*										MISC. OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS		OTHERS		TOTAL
	SONI	PATIDAR	KANBI	KACHHIA	KHATRI	NAV	DARJI	SUTAR/ LOHAR	DHOBI	MOCHI	TRADER MERCHANT OR HAWKER	FRUIT AND VEGETABLE VENDOR	MUSLIM	DEPENDENTS	
KATHIAWAR															
Bhavnagar	1														1
Junagadh	2														2
Navanagar	1														1
Porbandar	2						1								3
BARODA STATE															
Baroda Division		39				2				1					42
Navsari Division	1		21	37	134	14	7	11	6	12	30		7	68	348
BRITISH GUJARAT															
Ahmedabad	22														22
Broach		19							3		3		30	2	57
Kaira		10													10
Surat			49	1	73	35	52	6	71	38	140	5	26	159	655
MISC. AREAS	15				3		1		1		3		1	5	29
TOTAL	44	68	70	38	210	51	61	17	81	51	176	5	64	234	1,170

*Excluding Brahmins, Banias, and Kolis

Source: Passport Applications, Bombay, 1928-1938.

Kathiawar authorities thereby forcing emigrants to travel to the British areas to obtain their travel documents. Patidars still came from the Baroda Division of Baroda State (from Dharmaj, Karamsad, Bhadran, Sojitra in Petlad), from the Kaira Collectorate (mainly Nadiad and Borsad), and from the Broach Collectorate (predominantly from Nondhna) in British Gujarat.[73] The agricultural basin of South Gujarat, containing the Surat Collectorate and the Navsari Division of Baroda State, produced the Kanbis and Kachhias. The artisan castes each had two factions--one emanating from the Navsari Division and the other from Surat, but basically from the same areas as the Kanbis and Khatris. Navsari City was still the chief center of Khatri emigration with other adjacent Khatri areas (Gandevi in Navsari; Chikhli, Bulsar, and Surat City in Surat District) providing the rest. Sitpan in Broach and Navsari in South Gujarat continued to retain their significance as the Muslim centers of emigration. Finally, there was an absence of Brahmins from among the passport applicants between 1928 and 1938. The first known case of Brahmin emigration to Fiji actually occurred in 1939.[74]

Brahmin jatis in South Gujarat always enjoyed a very favorable social and economic position, and were not a major force in emigration. The Anavil Brahmins or Desais could be classified as the most prosperous landowning and agricultural group, found chiefly in Surat District and in the Navsari Division of Baroda State.[75] The Anavils who claimed descent from the original settlers of South Gujarat acquired much of their power and wealth under the Marathas. They yielded some of their enormous landholdings under British rule, and also turned to alternate sources of livelihood in the government service, in teaching, and in the professions. However, they retained the best lands and did not relinquish their tenacious control over agriculture. Their prosperous condition hardly acted as an incentive to emigration, but the less well-to-do were not averse to travelling abroad.

Anavils went primarily to Africa and Burma as school teachers and professionals. The few Anavil families who went to Fiji after 1939 came from a village near Navsari. Like other groups from a strong agricultural background, they eschewed agriculture and engaged in commerce and trade. They became very prominent in Fiji as newsagents and stationery dealers.

One of the most interesting features of Gujarati emigration in this period was the increase in family emigration which was evident emong the artisan groups and Khatris. The more prosperous and established groups such as the Patidars and Sonis had already started sending for their families, but few Khatris were inclined to bring their wives preferring, rather, to send for their male children and other male dependents who could fulfil the manpower requirements of their enterprises. Most artisan groups acted with motives similar to the Khatris. It was not uncommon to find emigrants in the family category who were minors, or married Gujaratis under the age of consent who came as dependents of other Gujaratis on family permits to bypass the restrictions against single male immigration.

Economic necessity and the desire to improve one's social status have been given by Gujaratis as their main reasons for emigrating.[76] Perhaps both these conditions are integrally related, given the cultural framework and social environment of the Gujaratis which generated the constant movement of people from one part of Gujarat to another, and from Gujarat to other parts of India, especially to Bombay. Emigration to foreign lands was merely another aspect of the type of movement that could be observed throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century which was definitely economically motivated.

The movement to Bombay was largely in response to the demand for labor but there were natural causes as well. Famines, the pressure of population, together with the existence of rapid modes of transportation brought many people to the urban centers in search of work.[77] Both the need for labor

for the industries in the urban centers and economic distress in rural areas were factors which had a deep bearing on the movement of people including the less prosperous agriculturalists, the poor artisan groups, and landless laborers who readily migrated in search of opportunity.

Population movement was quite noticeable and even the authorities acknowledged the various types of population movement which were economically motivated. There were basically five types of migration--temporary, to meet short-term demand for labor; casual, in which people moved from one village to another; periodic, where people migrated during the non-planting season and returned during the harvest; semi-permanent, where people resided in one area for employment purposes but made frequent visits to their ancestral village or towns; and permanent, where cultivators, predominantly, established permanent residence in a totally new locality.[78] All these categories definitely applied to the movement which took place to Bombay but it had considerable significance on migration abroad.

Toward the beginning of the twentieth century the economic opportunities in Bombay became extremely limited. By the 1920s the city's rapid industrial growth came to an abrupt halt.[79] Groups which had previously been attracted to Bombay turned to other outlets, in particular foreign lands which contained large Indian communities and were easily accessible by the sea routes. The push toward foreign lands was totally controlled by the economic conditions at home and abroad, by the special types of immigrants whose skills were required by the larger Indian community residing abroad, and by the legislative enactments in India and the areas which received Indian immigrants.

Thus Gujarati emigration to Fiji occurred under various conditions. It commenced slowly because of the preference for other areas where the chances of making money or earning a living within a limited time were greater. Fiji gained prominence only after certain Gujarati groups had carved out a

particular area in which their caste skills could be effectively utilized. Gujaratis had no designs of residing in Fiji permanently and for this reason came without their families. Their intention was a short-term period of residence which would last no more than two years. After having attained their goal of accumulating substantial savings Gujaratis returned home. However, conditions in Fiji, as well as in India, made further demands on the immigrants where it was not possible to stay for a short period or turn rich overnight. The plight of their families in India during the depression of the 1930s forced many Gujaratis in Fiji to establish an outlet, mainly business, which could allow other members of their group to come.

Gujarati emigration to Fiji was the product of a deep psychological drive to better one's self, a process which was already occurring in the movement of people from one area to another in India. The stimulus came from economic conditions at home which motivated them to migrate and from the incentives, such as the chance to acquire wealth and prestige, which the foreign countries offered. What began as isolated cases of emigration within a particular group soon became a group phenomenon when additional members of that group arrived to secure a monopoly of a particular trade or profession in the host country. Natural conditions resulting from floods, famines, population increase, and diminishing family resources merely enhanced the attractiveness of emigration.

NOTES

[1]Maganlal D. Gohil, "Pravasi Kshatriya Samaj Sandesh," Kshatriya Samaj Sandesh, Vol. XIV, No. 154 (June 1974), p. 33. In Gujarati. ("News of Overseas Kshatriya Samaj").

[2]Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 49.

[3]M. R. Majmudar, Cultural History of Gujarat (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), pp. 66-67; Gregory, India and East Africa, pp. 9-13; Mangat, Asians in East Africa, pp. 1-2.

[4]Gregory, op. cit., pp. 19-25.

[5]Gujarat State Gazetteers: Surat District (revised edition, Ahmedabad: Directorate of Government Printing, 1962), p. 286.

[6]Interviews with the Soni community in Suva, Fiji, between April and October 1975.

[7]Interview with Jayantibhai Badshah (July 28, 1974).

[8]The best example of this would be Majmudar, op. cit., p. 73.

[9]Issue of Passports to persons going abroad, H.E.O., Baroda, No. 1272, 145/16.

[10]Passports, No. 489, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/22. It was the renewal of his passport in 1918 which throws light on his earlier visit.

[11]See Passports, No. 1020, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/23.

[12]F.I.R. (1913), C.P. 57/14, p. 15.

[13]Interviews with the Khatri community in Navsari and Chikhli, Gujarat, between April and August, 1974 and in Fiji between April and October, 1975.

[14]See Gillion, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

[15]Passports, No. 149, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/5.

[16]Passports, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/8; Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 7 of 1916.

[17]Passports, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/8, 145/17; Passport Registers, Bombay, No. 8 of 1916-17, No. 9 of 1917-18.

[18]Census of India, 1961: Volume V, Gujarat, Part IX: Census Atlas (Delhi: Manager of Government Publications, 1966), pp. 8-15 (hereafter Gujarat Census Atlas); K. R. Dikshit, Geography of Gujarat (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1970), pp. 77-80.

[19]Dikshit, op. cit., p. 157, Majmudar, op. cit., p. 51. Also, see Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XV (New edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 178.

[20]Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XV, p. 177, Dikshit, op. cit., p. 150.

[21]Helen B. Lamb, "The Indian Merchant," in Traditional India: Structure and Change, ed. Milton Singer (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1959), p. 30.

[22]Gujarat Census Atlas, pp. 8-15.

[23]Majmudar, op. cit., pp. 65-71, R. D. Choksey, Economic Life in the Bombay Gujarat, 1800-1939 (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 31. For a more exhaustive study of the Portuguese penetration into Western India see M. N. Pearson, Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976).

[24]Gujarat Census Atlas, p. 20, Dikshit, op. cit., p. 159.

[25]The term caste has been used to refer to two traditional social groupings in Indian (Hindu) society: varna and jati. Varna specifically applies to the fourfold divisions of society, providing an ideological scheme which embraces all local hierarchies across India. The varna scheme includes Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras but excludes Untouchables. Within each varna are jatis or sub-castes which can be described as the functional level of the caste system. Each jati imposes a rigid code of conduct and obligations on its members. See M. N. Srinivas, Caste in Modern India (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 65.

[26]Majmudar, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

[27]R. E. Enthoven, The Tribes and Castes of Bombay, Vol. II (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1922), p. 123; also, see Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Vol. III, Kaira and Panch Mahals (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1879), p. 31.

[28]Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Vol. III, pp. 29-32; also, see David F. Pocock, Kanbi and Patidar: A Study of the Patidar Community of Gujarat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 26-51.

[29]Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency: Vol. IX, Part 2, Gujarat Population: Musalmans and Parsis (Bombay: Government Publications, 1899), pp. 24-34; Gujarat State Gazetteers: Broach District (revised edition, Ahmedabad: Directorate of Government Printing, 1961), pp. 173-75; also, see Choksey, op. cit., p. 59.

[30]Choksey, op. cit., p. 52.

[31]Enthoven, Tribes and Castes, Vol. II, p. 121.

[32]Majmudar, op. cit., pp. 76-86.

[33]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[34]Census of India, 1911: Vol. VII, Bombay, Part 1: Report (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1912), p. 303 (hereafter C.I. 1911: Bombay).

[35]C.I. 1911: Bombay, p. 303.

[36]Information obtained orally. The underlying implication in a caste dinner was that those who were being entertained were indirectly indicating their willingness to sit at the same table as the person who wished to avoid outcasting. High caste Hindus had strong religious objections against travel abroad which meant that an emigrant had to make amends for contravening the rules of his jati at some later date. Even Gandhi's foreign voyage had almost resulted in his expulsion from his jati. He avoided this measure through purification rites and a caste dinner thrown by his brother in his name. See M. K. Gandhi, An Autobiography or the The Story of My Experiments with Truth (2nd edition, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1972), p. 65.

[37]Census of India 1921, Vol. VIII: Bombay Presidency, Part 1: General Report (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1922), p. 303 (hereafter C.I. 1921: Bombay).

[38]This information was derived orally from the Soni community in Suva, Fiji.

[39]Pocock, op. cit., p. 83.

[40]Semi-Annual Report, 1921, Department of Statistics, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/75.

[41]Passport Rules and Regulations, H.E.O., Baroda, No. 460, 145/74A.

[42]Oral information obtained from Khatris in Navsari, Gujarat. Also, see Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency: Vol. IX, Part 1, Gujarat Population: Hindus (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1901), p. 270.

[43]The official gazetteers and ethnographic studies which were compiled under the British still remain as the main source of data on the Khatris. See Enthoven, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 204-208; C.I. 1911: Bombay, p. 270; R. V. Russel and Rai Bahadur Hiralal, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Province of India, Vol. III (London: Macmillan and Company, 1916),

[44]Information orally obtained from Khatris in Fiji.

[45]Pocock, op. cit., p. 31.

[46]'Sanskritization' is defined as the process entailing changes in caste ideology and ritual behavior which enable a jati to claim a higher place in the varna hierarchy. See M. N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 6.

[47]Majmudar, op. cit., p. 257.

[48]Enthoven, Tribes and Castes, Vol. III, p. 59.

[49]Majmudar, History of Gujarat, p. 35.

[50]Enthoven, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 243; also, see Tinker, A New System of Slavery, pp. 41-43.

[51]I. P. Desai, The Patterns of Migration and Occupation in a South Gujarat Village (Poona: Postgraduate and Research Institute, Deccan College, 1964), p. 98; Kuper, p. 248.

[52]Police Commissioner's Office, Confidential No. D161, October 10, 1918, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/71.

[53]Enthoven, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 128-35; also, see Pocock, p. 56; and Toothie, pp. 117.

[54]There is a tendency in Gujarat to categorize an occupation in terms of the status of the groups engaged in it. Weaving is basically an artisan occupation which was adopted by jatis of Rajput origin as well as by low caste groups. It is plausible that it was initially an occupation not held in high esteem but gradually attracted displaced and landless Rajput jatis who migrated from Central Gujarat. How Kanbis became involved in weaving is difficult to ascertain, except that it was an alternate source of livelihood apart from agriculture.

[55]H.E.O. to the Suba of Navsari, confidential m/1167, September 25, 1918, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/71.

[56]F.C.R. (1921), Table 28.

[57]Passport Registers, Bombay, No. 13 of 1920-22.

[58]Police Commissioner's Office, Confidential No. D161, October 10, 1918, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/71.

[59]Desais and Amins are merely high ranking and well-to-do Patidars who have linked their lineages to those Kanbis who were elevated to positions of importance to assist in the collection of revenue during Moghul and Maratha rule. Desais and Amins used their offices to emerge as a powerful land owning group. Both were superseded by the Patels during British rule,

but the prestige which accompanied their former titles are still an essential part of the Patidar system of hierarchy. For a more detailed discussion see Pocock, Kanbi and Patidar, pp. 57-62.

[60]See John R. Wood, The Political Integration of British and Princely Gujarat (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1972), p. 319.

[61]A. M. Shah and R. G. Shroff, "The Vahivanca Barots of Gujarat: A Caste of Genealogists and Mythographers" in Singer, Traditional India, p. 62.

[62]Pocock, op. cit., p. 61.

[63]Morris, Indians in Uganda, pp. 92-93; T. B. Naik, "Social Status in Gujarat," The Eastern Anthropologist, Vol X, No. 3 and 4 (March-August 1957), p. 173; Pocock, op. cit., p. 29; A. M. Shah and R. G. Shroff, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

[64]Pocock, op. cit., p. 53.

[65]This figure was compiled from the passport files and registers in Bombay and Baroda. Oral information obtained from Patidars in Dharmaj, Gujarat, and Ratilal A. Patel in Fiji has substantiated the figure.

[66]Appabhai Patel was one of the few Indian witnesses who testified before the commission appointed to investigate the cost of living in Fiji in 1922. See Fiji, Legislative Council Paper No. 71 of 1922.

[67]Passport Applications, 1928-38, Bombay, 330 boxes.

[68]I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1932, Serial No. 9, No. 276. Also, interview with S. B. Patel, Lautoka, Fiji (April 17, 1975).

[69]Interview with Dahyabhai N. Patel, prominent Kachhia businessman in Suva, Fiji, between October 1 and 15, 1975.

[70]Same source as n. 69 above.

[71]M. B. Desai, The Rural Economy of Gujarat (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 19.

[72]F.C.R. (1921), p. 162; R.S.I.A. (1935), C.P. 16/36, p. 1.

[73]Passport Applications, 1928-38, Bombay, 330 boxes.

[74]Interview with Shantilal B. Desai, Suva, Fiji (October 24, 1975).

[75]Gazetteer of Baroda State, Vol. I (Bombay: The Times Press, 1923), pp. 172-73.

[76]Oral information derived from all prominent Gujarati caste groups in Fiji.

[77]C.I. 1921: Bombay, p. 41.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Morris D. Morris, The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 61.

CHAPTER V

THE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF THE GUJARATI COMMUNITY

Gujarati settlement in Fiji had a definite correlation with trade, and was also linked to the Gujarati preference for urban areas. In this chapter the emphasis is on the towns and commercial centers which were preferred for settlement, and on the factors which strongly influenced the choice of a particular town. It will be shown that the Gujarati concern with trade, political and economic security, better opportunities in towns than in rural areas, and the demand for certain traditional skills of some Gujarati castes were the main factors involved in their preference for urban centers. Moreover, some Gujaratis only settled in areas which contained a large Indian population.

At the turn of the century a number of important developments affected the Indian community in Fiji. One was the shift in the focus of recruitment for indentured labor from the northern parts of India to Madras in the South. The second was the emergence of a 'free' community consisting predominantly of ex-indentured laborers who opted to remain in Fiji rather than be repatriated to their homeland. Other immigrants also arrived as 'passengers' at their own expense and swelled the ranks of 'free' Indians whose presence was becoming quite noticeable in the sugar-growing centers, in the vicinity of the 'sugar towns' where the mills were located, and in the areas contiguous to the capital of the colony--Suva. The concentration of the Indian population in the sugarcane regions, and the settlement patterns of those immigrants who wished to remain in Fiji, played an important role in the growth of market towns and centers where a commercial class of Indians, including Gujaratis, soon emerged to organize all phases of Indian economic activity.

Indians largely depended upon the sugar industry for their livelihood,

especially those who had been, and continued to be, associated with it as indentured laborers. The industry also sustained those who operated as independent farmers on lands obtained from the government, from the Europeans, or from the Fijians. The ability of the industry to absorb Indians in various capacities--as indentured laborers, as independent farmers, and as casual laborers--facilitated Indian settlement. However, there was still the problem of providing adequate land for a growing number of settlers. The major responsibility for acquiring land and allocating it for Indian usage fell upon the government which encountered mounting difficulties in fulfilling that obligation. The vast reservoir of land which lay beyond the sugarcane regions was inaccessible and unavailable for Indian settlement because of the hesitancy of the Fijian owners to dispose of large tracts of their land to Indians, and partly because of the government's wariness in fostering too great a contact between Indians and Fijians.[1] Hence the hinterland of Fiji remained beyond the scope of Indian settlement and the population found itself hedged within the more settled districts and towns.

The growth of towns, and invariably the emergence of Indian settlements, was closely linked to expansion of the sugar industry. Towns served as administrative posts as well as marketing and commercial centers. Fiji's towns, apart from Suva, emerged as an extension of the operations of sugar mills. The first major mill commenced operating in Penang (Rakiraki) in 1878 but in the 1880s three more mills were constructed in Nausori and Navua, on the windward and wetter regions of Viti Levu, and in Ba on the leeward and dry side. All the mills were situated on lands near large rivers, which indicated an absence of land transportation networks and a heavy reliance on water transportation. The next important development took place on the island of Vanua Levu in 1890 when another mill started operations in Labasa (Lambasa). The town had come into existence shortly after 1874 and functioned as an important administrative post. The mill-building activity culminated

in the construction by the C.S.R. of a sugar mill in Lautoka in 1903 which ranked as the largest in the South Pacific.[2]

The mill at Lautoka gave the C.S.R. a near monopoly of the sugar industry in Fiji. As the chief employer of Indian labor, the C.S.R. had a profound influence on the pattern of Indian settlement. Initially, the company was hesitant to settle 'free' Indians (ex-indentured and otherwise) on its estates. Perhaps it felt the settlement of Indians, other than through indenture, was not the company's responsibility. It was also reluctant to employ 'free' Indians because this policy would have meant making land provisions and payment of high wages, possibly resulting in an unnecessary drain on the company's financial resources. Consequently, many Indians moved to Navua where they easily obtained land from a rival sugar concern. The C.S.R.'s policy toward 'free' Indians gradually changed as a consequence of the decreasing supply of laborers. After the construction of the mill at Lautoka it began leasing land to 'free' Indians to grow sugarcane and other crops for their own consumption.

The new mill at Lautoka provided western Viti Levu with two mills and made the region extremely attractive for Indian settlement. Ba was the largest Indian population center but the development of Lautoka absorbed the surplus population that would have otherwise converged on Ba. Altogether, there were six major population centers in the sugar belt which derived their importance through their intricate link with the sugar industry. Rakiraki, Ba, and Lautoka emerged as the important mill centers. Two other towns, namely Nadi (Nandi) and Sigatoka (Singatoka), were also vital to the sugar industry. Both towns had been considered as possible sites for the mill which was finally constructed in Lautoka. These centers not only enabled an efficient system of supervision of the sugar industry but also served as convenient administrative posts. The 'free' Indian population resided mainly in Ba and Lautoka on the leeward side of Viti Levu, and in Navua and Nausori

on the windward side. Prior to the arrival of other 'free' (passenger) immigrants after 1900, there were already about ten thousand Indians residing in the more settled districts growing sugarcane and rice, and also cultivating bananas, maize, tobacco, lentils, and miscellaneous garden produce.[3] Settlement in Vanua Levu was not very extensive and basically restricted to districts contiguous to the mill in Labasa. Thus, by the time the first Gujarati immigrants arrived in 1904, other Indian groups were already firmly established in select districts and towns which had a strong Indian appearance and influence. These centers of Indian population had a profound bearing on the pattern of Gujarati settlement but initially it was Suva, the capital of Fiji, rather than the sugar towns which attracted the Gujarati immigrants.

Suva's origins and development were totally different from those of the sugar towns. The town came into existence shortly after 1877 when the government held land sales to attract more settlers from Australia. After further development, which included the construction of roads, public buildings and a wharf, Suva became the new capital and the center of government in 1882.[4] From its inception Suva was economically and politically dominated by Europeans who played an active role in directing and managing the affairs of the town in addition to their establishing the principal commercial establishments. Suva's importance as the main center of European settlement was made evident by the fact that it was not dependent upon indentured Indian labor or the sugar industry for its survival. While the towns of Lautoka, Nausori, Ba, and Labasa were basically market centers, highly dependent upon the operation of the sugar mills, Suva contained a diverse economy in which manufacturing and secondary industries, involving boat-building and coconut oil, soap, and biscuit production, were important to its existence. As the capital and entrepôt of Fiji, the town provided services and amenities which were simply lacking in the less developed sugar towns.

Though Europeans comprised the dominant group, an increasing number of

Indians and Chinese were attracted to the town. The Chinese established their roots after 1900 and were quickly drawn into trade and commerce.[5] The town offered numerous possibilities to Indian settlers also. Hawking was a major type of enterprise among Indians who aspired to enter the commercial world of Suva. Eventually, Indians went into shopkeeping, but on a very limited scale. In the late1880s numerous Indians came to Suva to obtain hawkers' licenses and travelled by boat to Rewa, Navua, and Ba to peddle their merchandise.[6] After 1900, Indian hawking and trading activity began to expand immensely. Their operations greatly alarmed the small European shopkeepers who had previously enjoyed a monopoly of trade in the remote regions which were not being serviced by the large European commercial houses of Suva.

Trade was not the only attraction. English-speaking Indians came to Suva because it was the seat of power. Moreover, there were increasing prospects of working in the lower echelons of the government service. Others came to seek employment as municipal workers, shop assistants, and clerks in European firms. Since the community in Suva was expanding, there was an acute need for a class of people, other than Europeans, to serve the various labor requirements. As pointed out earlier, Suva and its neighboring suburbs contained about 3,000 Indian residents by 1912 who were mostly replacing Polynesians as laborers.[7] Indians had gradually become an important element in the population of the town. It was definitely their presence here which served as a tremendous inducement to other minor groups, such as the Gujaratis, to remain in the colony.

All immigrant ships from India, as well as other vessels from Australia or New Zealand, stopped at Suva as their first port of call in Fiji. 'Free' immigrants, including Gujaratis who travelled on the regular immigrant vessels, were accorded the same treatment as indentured immigrants. It is almost certain that they were also taken to the island of Nukulau, a short distance from Suva by sea, to comply with various health regulations and

immigration formalities. Immigrants suspected of being carriers of any disease were placed under quarantine. Those who had undergone inspection, and declared free of disease, were allowed to proceed to Suva. Only from Suva could all 'passenger' immigrants go to other parts of Fiji.

The first two Soni immigrants, Chunilal Ganji and Virji Narshi, were extremely fortunate that influential members of the local Indian community such as Totaram Sanadhya and Peter Grant readily came to their aid upon their arrival in 1904 in Suva. It was certainly this promise of assistance which had first induced them to come to Fiji, and the readiness with which the Indian community accepted the Sonis definitely facilitated their adaptation to the new environment. Chunilal and Virji had both previously lived in Natal and could have conceivably expected similar conditions in Fiji. In Natal, there was a sizeable community of Gujaratis who engaged in various types of trading activity whereas Fiji had been virtually untouched by the Gujaratis. Virji and Chunilal must have been alarmed to discover that they were an isolated element within the Indian community. Moreover, they were unaware that other Gujarati-speaking Parsi immigrants had preceded them. There is also no evidence of contact, if any, between the two groups.[8]

For the first Gujarati immigrants, their initial difficulties arose from adaptation, and from the problems with language and communication. Their knowledge of English was limited to whatever they had acquired in Natal. Perhaps this was sufficient to enable them to move about a town dominated by Europeans. It is almost certain that in Natal they had been accustomed to living within an exclusive Gujarati enclave, because of the social and linguistic factor, but their skills as jewelers also brought them into contact with other Indian groups there. Through this exposure to other groups, they might have acquired some fluency in Hindi, otherwise they would have been at a total loss to communicate with the Indians in Suva. It is generally accepted that they had communicated from Natal with Peter Grant, a prominent

Indian Christian in Suva, to solicit his advice on the prospects for business in Fiji.[9] This communication appears to have taken place in either English or Hindi. It is also conceivable that Chunilal and Virji utilized the services of a scribe or a professional letter-writer to handle all their correspondence to and from Fiji. Whatever the case may have been, the language problem was indeed a major one which almost all Gujaratis encountered in Fiji. Language difficulties lengthened the process of adaptation and restricted mobility until a working knowledge of the local dialect of Hindustani could be acquired.

The two Sonis spent considerable time in the Rewa region, between Suva and Nausori, as guests of Totaram Sanadhya, an ex-indentured Indian and a well-known Sanatani priest in that area. Totaram perhaps welcomed them into his household because he must have been genuinely moved by the plight of Virji and Chunilal. Fortunately for the two Sonis, Totaram's hospitality eliminated their struggles with diet.[10] Both Gujaratis belonged to the Vaisnava sect and were strict vegetarians. Since they lacked the resources to set up a household, and were extremely conscious of their dietary restrictions, they did not object to living with a Brahmin. Totaram, after all, was not only a Hindu priest but also, like them, certainly a vegetarian. Above all, he was an influential member of the local Indian community who commanded a large following amongst the orthodox Hindus and was generally respected by other religious groups. In terms of their long-range objectives, the Gujarati Sonis found this association with Indian leaders to be financially advantageous. While they had Peter Grant to assist them in Suva, they gained rapid exposure to the Indians in all the areas where Totaram exerted any influence. In this manner they publicized their intention to conduct business as goldsmiths, simultaneously hoping to attract a sizeable clientele for their trade.

As Chunilal and Virji did not have sufficient capital to launch a

jewelry business in Suva, they adopted the business techniques of hawkers and travelled from settlement to settlement. Beyond Suva there were two important districts and centers of Indian population--Navua and Rewa--which were easily accessible. A prosperous class of 'free' Indians had emerged in Navua and Rewa, engaging in diverse forms of agriculture. These areas lacked institutionalized banking facilities and Indians generally found it convenient to convert their savings into gold jewelry. It was also a common practice to bury one's savings where the services of a Sonar were unavailable. Thus, the two Gujarati Sonis found their skills in much demand.

After a period of incessant work and constant travel, the two Sonis opened a small jewelry shop in Suva, in a locality which later became an integral part of the Indian commercial section. The store was modestly stocked and furnished with a minimum of essentials. It provided just a sufficient amount of work space for conducting business, and enough sleeping area for two during the night. The shop contained all the signs of frugality, with all the implements of their trade occupying a prominent area. There was hardly any space designated as a separate cooking area. The food was prepared on a small kerosene burner situated beside the Sonis as they worked. This attempt to combine the requirements of both work and home was a necessary inconvenience which Chunilal and Virji, like many Gujarati immigrants who came later, readily accepted. Material comforts were relinquished and set aside by the strong desire to attain wealth.[11]

Success came to Virji and Chunilal very slowly. As their business was restricted to Indians, they were highly dependent upon the goodwill of influential Indian leaders who commanded a large following because of their caste status, wealth, and knowledge of English. Unlike many Soni Gujaratis who came later, they had considerable expertise in making jewelry, a skill which they had probably developed in Natal, though they belonged to a caste where it was generally assumed every Soni was a goldsmith or silversmith by

profession. Their knowledge and experience in jewelry making, and their willingness to ply their skills beyond the outskirts of Suva, enabled them to compete with Sonars from other parts of India. By contrast, many Gujarati Sonis who followed Virji and Chunilal were untrained goldsmiths or silversmiths. Though they possessed a rudimentary knowledge of their caste occupation, their chances of survival in Fiji were marginal. They had one of two choices, either to learn their caste occupation through affiliation with an established Soni in Fiji or to enter some other form of activity which would still enable them to attain their goal of accumulating enough money to return to their homeland. Both choices had certain limitations. As jewelers they encountered stiff competition from other Sonars, including Virji and Chunilal, who were already well established within the Indian community. Going into an alternative occupation, such as farming or trading, had the same pitfalls. Farming required land, which was not in abundance, and trading was one area where other Indians had already made considerable gains. These choices had a profound bearing on further Soni settlement as well as on other subsequent Gujarati groups.

The first wave of Gujarati Sonis restricted their activities and movements to Suva and to other contiguous areas of Indian settlement. The absence of an adequate system of roads discouraged attempts to penetrate the sugarcane regions in the northwest where the overwhelming bulk of Indians resided. Because of the lack of a good land transportation system, travel within Fiji was still a risky undertaking for people who were unfamiliar with the country and ignorant of local conditions, the customs of the inhabitants, and the local dialect. Unlike the Indian hawkers, who travelled regularly to other towns by sea and up rivers, Sonis were reluctant, through fear and the lack of resources, to travel to areas where other Gujaratis had not ventured. Therefore, they preferred to peddle their skills in the 'safe' areas which had already been covered by Virji and Chunilal.

In the absence of families, all Sonis lived in clusters, often in overcrowded conditions, in a single dwelling which provided enough work space and shelter for everyone within each group. It seemed impractical for individual Sonis to establish separate workshops to produce jewelry for their customers. The more feasible solution was for the small operators to procure, on credit offered on generous terms, ready-made jewelry from the established Sonis to sell. The small operator was under no obligation to pay for all the jewelry that he took. He merely reimbursed his supplier from the proceeds of the merchandise which he sold, often returning any unsold items within a specified period. Those who lacked the skills and the initial capital outlay to make jewelry found this arrangement to be extremely practical and convenient. The profit margin was not very high but the Sonis who hawked on a regular basis were relieved from the tedious and time-consuming process of finishing their own products.

The hawker-Sonis travelled from settlement to settlement by any convenient mode of land transportation and by river boats. They moved in groups of two or three, carrying their jewelry in bundles slung across their shoulders. Normally, they travelled very lightly, carrying their merchandise and enough provisions to last for a day or so. They were extremely conscious of their dietary restrictions and always refused food cooked by other Indians. Moreover, they never slept in the settlements which they visited. The highlight of their constant movement was the weekly bazaar which took place in all the large settlements on Saturdays. The bazaar was an important social gathering where Sonars (including Gujarati Sonis) and hawkers congregated to display and sell their goods. Sonis made brisk sales during these bazaars. While the proceeds of the bazaar constituted the major portion of their sales for the entire week, they also regarded these weekly gatherings as important occasions to cultivate and consolidate the social relationship with their Indian customers.[12]

A few Sonis attempted to establish themselves beyond the outskirts of Suva but the sense of isolation together with the separation from other members of their caste, and the difficult conditions which they encountered, shattered their will to remain in Fiji. One such case was Lakhu Premji who had come to Fiji in 1905. Lakhu Premji resided and worked in Navua but like the other Indian hawkers who operated in that region, he was plagued by numerous problems. Business was very unstable because of the fluctuating fortunes of his Indian customers who were tied to the uncertain sugar industry of this region. The main problem arose from the atmosphere of hostility which existed between Indian hawkers and European shopkeepers who resented the presence of interlopers in an area which they regarded as their preserve.[13] Two years of frustration finally convinced Premji that his prospects in Fiji were indeed very limited. He returned to India in 1907.

The arrival of two Khatri immigrants, Narotam Karsandas and Motiram Narsey, between 1908 and 1909 merely added to ranks of the very small number of Gujaratis residing in Suva but did not result in any significant change in their pattern of settlement. The Khatris preferred to remain in Suva because they were favorably impressed by the economic and political conditions which they encountered. Not only did the town offer a sense of security, being the most developed of all the towns in Fiji, but it was also the center of commercial activity in the colony. The location of large European commercial firms in Suva, which dealt in textile products, appealed very strongly to the Khatris who were already familiar with that business in their homeland. Narotam and Motiram relied on their skills as tailors to secure employment in the drapery section of one of the European commercial houses.[14] The work provided a steady income and a good insight into business operations in Suva. Capitalizing on the need for experienced tailors, the two Khatris gradually raised enough capital to open their own tailoring shops. Unlike the Sonis, the Khatris did not hawk for a living.

There is little reliable information on the early settlement pattern of the pioneering Khatri immigrants. Indian settlement in Suva proper was probably not very extensive in 1910, and only restricted to areas which had been accessible. For Indians with limited resources who drifted into Suva, the obvious choice for residential purposes was Toorak, with its dilapidated appearance where cheap housing was readily available. Economic necessity might have also induced the early Gujarati immigrants to reside in Toorak. As a rule, the Khatris lived in close proximity to their businesses. They worked long hours and maintained their social distance from the other Gujarati groups, especially the Sonis, in spite of their close linguistic and cultural affinity. They also came into constant contact with other Indian groups but again, remained socially aloof. This isolation was possible because Khatris were not entirely dependent upon other Indians for their livelihood. Moreover, they displayed a strong sense of commitment to their work and to the management of their businesses. This routine was followed rigidly; but they became more aware of their social needs as other caste fellows arrived from India (see Chapter VI).

The Gujaratis displayed little inclination to move to other areas, even with the arrival of other Gujarati caste groupings after 1910. The community was still very small, as revealed by the first population census in 1911, which, to some extent, explains their tendency to congregate in one area. The immigrants from Bombay Presidency numbered 153, including Gujaratis although no separate tabulation for them was provided, in a total Indian population of 40,286. In terms of the occupational categories, Gujaratis could be found among the goldsmiths and silversmiths, tailors, and bootmakers residing in the islands.[15] The Gujarati community was increasing steadily from just a sprinkling of Sonis and Khatris to include other minor caste groups such as Kolis, Mochis, and Navs. In 1912, a Gujarati lawyer of the Bania caste came and in 1914 a Leva Kanbi arrived. The presence of these

minor castes did not have much impact on the settlement patterns of the community but the activities in which they engaged certainly revealed the possibilities for diversification into the other areas of Fiji.

In 1911 there were only 21 Indian Sonars (goldsmiths and silversmiths) in Fiji, and by 1914 this figure had increased to 51, largely through the influx of more Sonis from Gujarat.[16] The concentration of these Sonis in Suva produced a glut in the jewelry-making business. The market in gold jewelry in Suva was simply not large enough to sustain the expanding community of goldsmiths and silversmiths. There was little to gain by channelling all their resources into a single area. First, the Indian population of Suva was widely dispersed, and contained a weak economic base which could be attributed to a preponderance of laborers among the urban dwellers. Second, the wage earning population did not provide a fertile ground for the Sonis to practice their trade because the group, as a rule, had very little surplus cash to divert into gold jewelry. Third, the existence of reliable banking facilities--especially the commencement of a government savings bank in 1908--may have further weakened the reliance on gold jewelry as a safe form of investment. Confronted with the uncertainty of their profession in Suva, the Sonis turned to those 'sugar towns' which were rapidly attracting Indian hawkers, petty traders, and merchants.

The Khatris were not faced with the same dilemma as the Sonis. As tailors, they had found a lucrative market for their trade in Suva. Both Narotam's and Motiram's shops flourished because there was always a demand for good (and inexpensive) tailors who could undercut the more expensive European concerns. With proper management they operated profitably because they were patronized by all races in Suva. Thus, there was tremendous economic incentive for them to remain and operate within the confines of the municipality. Their shops were located not too far from each other in the business section of Suva, which could be best described as exclusively

European in appearance. The main European commercial houses, the banks, the Post Office, the Police Station, and miscellaneous commercial establishments were all located in this sector. The business sector gradually led southward toward the residential areas and to the government buildings, situated near large tracts of land reserved for sports and recreation purposes. A creek separated this business sector from another more congested sector which was an extension of the commercial community, but where the majority of the Chinese and Indian shops were located. In the northwesterly direction lay the waterfront where a wharf was constructed between 1913 and 1916. In the opposite direction, the town led up a hill toward Toorak, a residential area which was an European settlement originally, but which, by 1910, had attracted many Indians, Pacific Islanders, and mixed races of the laboring class. Compared to other residential areas, Toorak soon acquired a slum-like appearance because of its neglect by the municipal authorities after the departure of its European residents. Beyond Toorak, about two miles northward lay Samabula, an important Indian settlement from where much of their early social and political activities emanated.[17]

In comparison to the Sonis, who were urban dwellers but conducted business in the outlying rural Indian settlements, the Khatris restricted themselves to an urban area for both residential and occupational purposes. The Sonis took their business to their Indian customers, whereas Khatris were less dependent upon other Indians for their livelihood. The Khatris' preference for urban dwelling can be traced to their settlement characteristics in Gujarat. The Khatri areas of South Gujarat have easy access to the large urban centres, especially Surat and Navsari. Most Khatri immigrants to Fiji had constant exposure to urban centers, and were not adverse to travelling to these centers in search of work. Many had also worked as tailors in Bombay.[18] In Fiji they displayed a similar tendency and made Suva the focal point of all their activities. Furthermore, Khatris were extremely

sensitive to the political climate of the host country. They only felt secure in an area where law and order prevailed and where conditions were conducive to the successful operation of business ventures. The presence of Europeans in Suva, and their success in business, provided ample evidence of secure economic conditions in which Khatris could also function adequately. Their deep concern for physical safety certainly made Khatris less adventurous and more cautious than the Sonis who conducted business without much difficulty beyond the confines of the town. This concern for safety has often made Gujaratis the target of ridicule. It seems that the early immigrants were petrified by the warlike appearance of the native Fijians.[19]

The Gujarati tailoring business in Suva developed through various stages. In the initial phase the shops were operated as modestly as possible. The main investment consisted of a number of treadle-machines, depending upon the number of assistants who did the actual sewing. The machines were probably bought from either of the two major European firms which provided credit generously to ensure continuous business dealings with the tailors as their businesses expanded. The heavy reliance on European firms may explain why the tailoring shops were located near the European firms. Initially, these shops did not stock materials which were in much demand. These modest supplies were bought, as usual, from the European firms. Sometimes, the large tailoring shops acted as suppliers to other Khatri tailors who could not obtain credit elsewhere. The Narsey business concern underwent such a transition. In addition to being a tailoring shop, it became a retailer of clothing goods, and finally a wholesale outlet for all varieties of textile, products which it imported directly. The prime consideration was to sever the reliance on the European firms. The principal items of import were silk, laces, drill, khaki, calico, linen, prints, and miscellaneous dress materials.[20]

The two original Khatri tailoring concerns served as a shelter for other Khatri immigrants and became the nucleus around which a larger community grew.

Both Narotam and Motiram were active recruiters when they made periodic visits to India. The Narsey business was well organized and ran on a more secure basis than Narotam's which went through numerous managerial changes because of his frequent visits to India. Motiram Narsey relied upon his large family network to provide the necessary manpower. His own immediate family served in managerial capacities, whereas other Khatris performed much of the menial tasks. Managerial duties embraced a wide range of activities, and largely entailed the careful supervision of the everyday activities of the concern--meeting the customers, measuring them, delegating the sewing tasks, undertaking the fitting, and finally consolidating the sales. In the shop there was an actual barrier separating the owner or supervisor from his workers. The owner worked on a long counter where he supervised the cutting. In front of him, or to either side of him, were placed rows of machines where his workers performed the sewing tasks. His machine was normally set apart from the rest, in a position from where he could constantly supervise his workers. Only he had access to the area behind the counter where the money was kept.

The closely-knit Khatri community thrived in just one centralized locality of Suva. They maintained their distance from the Sonis who resided in another area much closer to Toorak, certainly indicative of a residential preference which was not different from that in India. All the Khatris lived in a number of households which were managed cooperatively in the absence of wives and womenfolk. Cooking and other household chores were shared and regulated in keeping with the long working hours in the shops. Indian eating-houses (lodges) eliminated some of the difficulties with diet.

The first Khatri family came in 1918 as part of the Narsey household. As distinct from individual male immigrants who entered Fiji at random, wives came only when husbands could afford to maintain their families in Fiji. Most Khatris preferred to keep their wives in India within the security of the joint-family system. The absence of womenfolk resulted in a preponderance

of males among the Khatri immigrants who lived in groups and clusters. The largest group of Khatris, numbering 22 altogether, in any single locality in Suva came from the town of Navsari in Baroda State.[21] Other Gujaratis from Navsari, and the neighboring areas, resided in the same locality in which the Khatris were located. Through this close regional association, all caste groupings were able to maintain a closer link with affairs at home. Gujaratis from Navsari preferred this arrangement because they could rely upon the most educated members within their social enclave for assistance in remitting money to relatives in India and handling their correspondence.

The Sonis and the Khatris in Suva were joined by other Gujarati caste groups from 1910 onward, but their small numbers did not enable them to maintain a separate and distinct sense of identity. Between 1910 and 1915, the immigration of the artisan castes was merely a trickle. Mochis were the first Gujarati artisan group in Fiji, followed by Navs and Dhobis. The pioneering Mochi and Nav immigrants returned to India shortly after their arrival, perhaps due to social ostracization by other Gujaratis on account of their untouchable occupations. Their sojourn in Suva was too brief to have any profound impact on the Gujarati community as a whole. The artisan groups came and departed at brief intervals without securing a firm base of operation. In 1914 there was only one Mochi, by the name of Dahya Hansji, who had established himself in Suva. Dahya maintained close links with those Gujarati immigrants who originated from the Navsari Division in Baroda. This meant that he resided within close proximity to or within the Khatri-dominated areas of the town. Dahya earned his livelihood as a hawker, carrying his trade from one settlement to another. He may have acquired this trait from the wandering Sonis with whom he maintained very little social contact. The Mochi community neither grew rapidly nor acquired the same significance as the Khatri and Soni components. However, as an immigrant group which had settled in Suva, the Mochis were certainly more visible than

the Navs who did not acquire a firm foothold into Fiji until after 1920. Their settlement pattern was strongly influenced by the presence of other immigrant Gujarati groups.

Other artisan castes of Dhobi, Darji, Sutar, and Lohars arrived between 1916 and 1920 when there was a growing awareness of Fiji among the artisan and agricultural groups in the southern parts of Gujarat. During this period Dhobis constituted one of the larger artisan groups to emigrate to Fiji, second only to the Mochis (see Table 4.2). The passport records in Bombay indicate that the emigration of Dhobis to Fiji did not antedate 1916. That year Kanji Okad, a washerman residing in Bombay, applied for a passport to travel to Fiji.[22] The Dhobis, like the Mochis, comprised a very small group within the Gujarati community settled in Suva. But unlike the Mochis, they were quite dependent upon other groups for their livelihood. An Indian laundry business was practically nonexistent which, in effect, made Dhobis definitely aware of the unlimited scope for their trade. However, the laundry business fell within the preserve of European enterprise. The Dhobis either sought employment in these concerns, or worked elsewhere until they accumulated sufficient capital to make a bid to dominate the laundry business.

Darjis, that is tailors by caste, also formed a very minute group within the Gujarati community. They fell into the same category as the Navs who were hardly noticeable as well. The only Darji of any importance was Gangaram Hari who emigrated to Fiji in 1919.[23] Shortly after his arrival in Suva Gangaram Hari established a tailoring shop which expanded very rapidly. It soon emerged as a major concern, matched only by the Narsey organization. Initially, the Darjis maintained close links with the Khatris as there was a heavy economic reliance upon the latter group. Darjis worked in the Khatri shops and were obliged to maintain good relations with them. This relationship was viable only as long as one group served the interests of the more dominant group. However, the major drawback was that it dampened Darji

immigration because there was no established Darji organization to provide shelter, or further incentives, to other caste fellows who wished to come. Gangaram, therefore, could not envisage the continuous dependence of Darjis on the Khatris. To him it seemed imperative to penetrate the economic sphere controlled by Khatris, but also in the locality where the Khatri influence was very profound. His actions caused great consternation among the Khatris. Moreover, Gangaram had effectively demonstrated that the preponderance of one caste in any particular profession did not prevent any other social group with adequate skills and resources to enter the same field.

Other castes--Sutars and Lohars--who are mentioned as passport applicants to Fiji, are not identifiable as separate and distinct immigrant groups in Fiji. They generally fall into the same elusive categories as the Kolis, cloth merchants and hawkers, and fruit and vegetable vendors. These groups existed on the periphery of the Gujarati social structure. Moreover, they all originated from South Gujarat and settled in the Khatri areas, and on the outskirts of the European-dominated commercial section of Suva where it merged with Toorak. Castes of obscure status in Gujarat preferred to retain their indistinguishable identity by maintaining a low profile. They hid behind the cloak of hawkers or small vendors. This trait set them apart from the Sonis or Khatris who maintained a distinct sense of identity.

Kolis were the predominant group among the elusive or obscure caste categories. They were extremely versatile and showed no marked preference for any particular occupation. They were known by other Gujarati groups to function comfortably in any capacity--tailor, or laborer, or cook, or laundryman.[24] As a group, they preferred to remain in Suva where work was abundant but also indicated a willingness to settle in any area where money could be made readily. It seems that their preference for Suva was intricately linked to their intention to migrate to New Zealand eventually. There was a community of Kolis in Auckland who maintained strong links with Kolis in Fiji

because of the direct shipping route between Suva and Auckland.

There were other minor groups in Suva whose importance far exceeded their numerical strength. Manilal Doctor, the Bania lawyer from Baroda City who arrived in 1912, could be placed within this classification. As a lawyer, a defender of Indian rights, and as a self-styled politician with extensive experience in Mauritius, Manilal acquired a sizeable following among Indians throughout Fiji. Though Suva served as a permanent base for his law practice and political activities, he travelled extensively throughout Fiji. Apparently, he felt more at ease among the local Indians than among his fellow Gujaratis. Both in terms of his long-range objectives and the nature of his work, he could not envisage himself in some economic role as the other Gujaratis who were simply preoccupied with financial gain. It is quite conceivable that he offended the sensitivity and decorum of the Sonis by his open association with a French woman who had accompanied him to Fiji.[25] Thus, rejected by other Gujaratis, he acquired and maintained a better rapport with other Indian groups who may have frowned on his morals but, at least, required his expertise in the law to further their rights. Manilal's main source of income was his legal practice; politics and journalism also formed important aspects of his life in Suva. Basically, he was quite spartan in his lifestyle, being both a strict vegetarian and a teetotaler, characteristics which were often put to the test by his Indian friends. His family was also among the first few Gujarati families to arrive in Fiji in 1917. Unlike other Gujaratis, Manilal perceived himself as part of the emerging 'free' Indian community which had a permanent interest in the adopted homeland. Manilal's career, and interest in Fiji, was finally upstaged by the labor unrest of the early 1920s.

The Gujarati Bania community did not expand beyond Manilal. The only other Gujarati immigrants who could be possibly classified in the category of Banias were the Parekh family who emigrated to Fiji in the 1930s. The Parekhs

belong to a caste which was originally classified as Bania. During Peshwa rule in Gujarat, one faction of that caste was recruited into the service of the Peshwas, in those areas where goldsmiths and silversmiths were scarce, to assist in the collection of revenue. The specific duty of Parekhs was to decide the difference between brass and silver during the collection of taxes. Over a period, Parekhs became brokers of gold. They now constitute a separate jati, known more specifically as Bania-Sonis who neither interdine nor intermarry with the Kathiawari Sonis.[26]

The Kanbi groups experienced a more protracted growth than many of the other factions. By 1915 there were only a few Matia and Leva Kanbis (Patidars) in Suva who had come there either directly from India, or through New Zealand. The versatile Leva Kanbis (Patidars) from Central Gujarat eschewed their traditional calling as agriculturalists, and turned to trading in Fiji. The Kanbis settled predominantly on Waimanu Road, situated north of the creek. This locality was essentially an extension of the Khatri area on Renwick Road. The cut-off point for the Khatri area was Cumming Street which merged with Renwick Road, creating a new thoroughfare called Waimanu Road which ran in a northerly direction. Cumming Street and Waimanu Road contained much of the non-European enterprises. A number of European businesses including a butcher and a bakery were located here, but the area abounded with Chinese cafes, greengrocers and merchants, and some Indian shops.

The settlement pattern of Kanbis and Patidars can be best illustrated through the exploits of Appabhai Patel, the first Gujarati merchant in Suva. Appabhai established a close association with the

Soni immigrants. He simply found the Kathiawari Vaisnava tradition and the strict vegetarianism of the Sonis to be more tolerable than the lifestyle (including the consumption of alcohol and meat) maintained by the Southern (Surati) Gujaratis. He also acquired a wide circle of Indian friends and consolidated his business contacts, the chief being a local Indian merchant named J. P. Maharaj. He shrewdly courted the friendship of J. P. Maharaj to soften the competition of his own business which he conducted on the opposite side of the street. It appears that both businesses flourished, in spite of the competition. Inititally, Appabhai stocked his shop with goods which he obtained locally on credit, but gradually he bagan to import the food items from India, through Calcutta.[27] The shop served as the place of busines, and, in the typical Gujarati fashion, was also utilized as a place of residence.

Both Appabhai Patel and J. P. Maharaj recognized the enormous possibilities of the large market offered by the expanding Indian population of Suva. Appabhai felt that with his shrewd business acumen, coupled with the resources and established name of a local trader, they could capture a major share of the market in Indian goods. Indeed, such a merger came into existence through the formation of A. J. C. Patel Bros (sic) in 1917 (the Patel family tradition is that this concern did not commence actual operations until 1918). The partnership was spearheaded by Appabhai Patel, Jagannath Maharaj, and Chimanbhai Patel, another Leva Kanbi (Patidar) from the village of Bhadran in Charotar. The management of the shop fell into the hands of Appabhai and Chimanbhai with Jagannath maintaining a somewhat passive role because of the concern for his own organization. The main source of revenue came from the trade in edible oils, especially ghee (clarified butter).

Expansion was curtailed since there was a lack of manpower to run the organization. Both Appabhai and Chimanbhai wished to secure assistance from their own villages in India. They could easily rely on other Gujaratis and local Indians to provide the more general needs, but they preferred members of their own caste to serve as shop assistants and in other managerial capacities. Chimanbhai had already called his brother Manibhai in 1917; in 1919 Appabhai returned to his village in Charotar to recruit more assistants. His wife and three fellow villagers from Dharmaj accompanied him to Fiji, and in early 1920 two relatives from the village of Nondhna in Broach joined him. Appabhai's fellow villagers and relatives were absorbed by the 'A. J. C.' organization as it expanded into other towns. By 1920 there were four subsidiary branches established in Lautoka, Nadi, Ba, and Sigatoka.[28] However, expansion produced many strains and squabbles over the management of the organization resulting in the dissolution of the partnership in 1920. Appabhai's recruitment practices and growing control may have contributed to the rift; he obtained sole control of the organization, emerging as the most formidable Gujarati trader in Fiji by concentrating mainly on the sale of saris, ghee, and miscellaneous food items. The failure of the partnership provided an important lesson to Gujaratis in general. It revealed the pitfalls and difficulties of business alliances between Gujaratis and other local Indians.

It is difficult to provide a precise assessment of the nature of Gujarati penetration into other areas of Fiji prior to 1920. Official business records, which provide an excellent insight into the development of Gujarati business enterprise and the main areas of operation, are nonexistent for the period up to 1924. Until that time all business concerns which were not limited liabilities, not a partnership, and operated under the proper surname of its sole owner, were not required by law to file particulars of operation. Though there were various categories of Indian enterprise located

in all the towns in Fiji, 7 Gujarati establishments were conducting business in Suva by 1920 or shortly thereafter (3 tailoring shops, 2 merchants, 1 bootmaker, and 1 confectioner).[29] There is little evidence of organized Gujarati business activity in other areas of Fiji until the establishment of branches of A. J. C. Patel Bros in Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, and Ba.

Though Suva was the most important urban center, and obviously the focal point of all Gujarati activity, Lautoka rapidly attracted Indian settlers also. Lautoka contained a large sugar mill and acquired further significance as the sugar industry expanded. Its importance increased with the construction of a wharf beside the mill, at the C.S.R.'s expense, which became the principal outlet for the colony's raw sugar. Official records mention that by 1910 there was a "very prosperous" community of Indians, including hawkers and shopkeepers, residing in Lautoka and Nadi.[30] Sonis rank as the first Gujarati group to be attracted to that area. Their entry into settlements and towns contiguous to Lautoka was facilitated by a network of railways, to transport sugarcane and passengers between towns, and by the development of wharf facilities in Lautoka which also increased travel by the water route between Suva and Lautoka.

Lautoka, as well as the other mill centers, had a somewhat different development from Suva. In Lautoka there was a distinct line of demarcation between the area which could specifically be designated as the property of the sugar company, and the area on the outskirts of the company's property which was moulded into the town. It is conceivable that the commercial section of Lautoka initially started as part of the company's domain, closer to where the wharf stands today. The main structure on the company's property was, of course, the mill, erected in a flat area interspersed with numerous railways. The next important structure was the wharf, reserved for the exclusive use of the vessels transporting sugar to various countries. Beside the company's wharf was a jetty used by the local insular vessels. Opposite the

jetty, large areas were set aside for residential purposes for the company's laborers.

The few commercial establishments, mostly European, conducted trade near the jetty. Among these stood a structure known as the 'Lal Dukan' where Appabhai opened the first branch of A. J. C. Patel Bros in Lautoka. The few European commercial concerns were located some distance from the jetty. This particular locality came to be known as Morristar (present day Vetari) after the large commercial firm (Morris Hedstrom Ltd.) which had also gained a footing there. Indians and Chinese who wished to do business in this locality may have had very limited accessibility because of the influence exerted by the major commercial firms and other small European shopkeepers.

The mill community was settled in distinct racial enclaves. Laborers who performed much of the manual tasks lived very close to the jetty. The Indian settlements, commonly referred to as 'lines,' were further removed from this area, almost contiguous to the cane fields. The company's European executives lived in the 'C.S.R. Compound,' divided into spacious residential plots situated on the more elevated lands which commanded an excellent view of the sea. A racial hierarchy manifested itself not only in the layout of the settlements but also in the amenities available to the Europeans, such as the utilization of extensive areas for recreation purposes.[31] There was a sense of physical isolation between the races, which carried deep social and economic implications.

As the Indian population expanded, and as a larger number of the indentured Indians became 'free' settlers either on company or government lands, their needs could not be fully accommodated by the type of economic activity which existed near the mill and the wharf. Indian and Chinese shopkeepers who recognized this vacuum, and could not encroach on the company's domain, began to build an economic community outside the company's boundaries, on lands purchased from the Fijians or the Government.

The new commercial settlement stretched over a large area. The major business section was built parallel to the railway, but separated from it by the main road which ran through the town. The new settlement derived its name from the village of Namoli whose inhabitants supplied much land on which the development had taken place. The wooden structures on the main road were constructed, almost uniformly, alongside each other. There were no distinct commercial quarters reserved for any social group. The whole town consisted of a conglomeration of Indian and Chinese shops which operated harmoniously, and catered to the needs of both the Indian farmers and Fijians from nearby villages. The town's importance was enhanced, first by the expansion in the sugar industry, and second by further Indian settlement in the district. Its function as a commercial center soon superseded, and surpassed, much of the business activity which took place by the waterfront near the mill.

Namoli's development and function were not very different from the other centers which grew on the outskirts of sugar mills. The town bore a great degree of similarity to towns such as Ba and Nausori in particular. The major section of these towns consisted of a long line of shops constructed on the main road. These shops included petty trading and grocery shops, small cloth shops, butchers, hairdressing salons, restaurants, and a few motor garages as the more affluent town dwellers switched from horsedrawn vehicles to motorcars. All the towns contained open bazaars where Indian farmers and villagers converged on Saturdays to sell their produce or to purchase fresh supplies.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date when Gujaratis first settled in 'sugar towns.' The presence of a commercial class of Indians, and the unlimited possibilities for trade, would have definitely served as an attraction for those Gujaratis in Suva who felt the pressure of competition in their particular trades. Jewelers, who relied primarily on the demand for their skills among the Indian section of the population, were the main group to face

fierce competition as other members of their caste came to Fiji, during the peak years of immigration between 1915 and 1920.

Various factors induced their penetration into the other towns. By 1917 the local authorities reported that jewelers were already visible among enterprising Indians who had acquired land from the Fijians of Namoli village in Lautoka to construct their business premises.[32] Bootmakers and tailors were also mentioned as part of this prolific business activity in Lautoka. The movement of Gujaratis into the sugar areas resulted from the favorable conditions generated by the expansion of the sugar industry, by the further settlement of Indians chiefly engaged in agriculture, by the growth of trade, and by the emergence of Lautoka as the major sugar port. This movement demonstrates an important aspect of the settlement patterns of Gujaratis--namely, that they only moved into those areas which were easily accessible from Suva and settled by other Indians, where law and order prevailed, and where the atmosphere was extremely favorable for trade.

Gujarati settlement in the 'sugar towns' progressed through various stages. The initial phase was a period of observation and limited business activity. Depending upon the nature of the person's trade, he merely visited the main areas where business was conducted, studied the purchasing habits in the shops and bazaars, and took particular note of the principal items of trade. Above all, he attempted to cultivate the friendship of the leading traders. Some time was also spent in the large establishments where much of the trading activity took place. Jewelers appeared on the scene first, followed by other groups between 1915 and 1920. The jewelers operated in the same fashion as hawkers, initially transporting ready-made jewelry from Suva to sell in bazaars and settlements, and after settling in the most attractive towns, manufacturing their own jewelry for sale. Lautoka, Ba, and Nadi became the preferred areas for settlement and conducting business, because of the presence of a large Indian population.[33] The Sonis travelled in groups,

mainly on the company's passenger train, covering a distance of 40 miles or more in a day. They maintained their social distance from their customers by refusing to either rest or dine wherever they conducted business. This mobility was possible as long as the Sonis did not burden themselves with the responsibilities of caring for their families, who in most cases were being maintained in India. Gradually, a few tailors moved to the 'sugar towns.' Their activities were very modest and basically restricted to sewing. Appabhai was the only Gujarati of any significance who had shifted his focus to these towns by 1920. Lautoka served as his principal base in the sugar district. His first trading shop was situated near the jetty, in an old building which he rented from a German firm. The main items of trade were ghee and saris.

The movement of Gujaratis to the 'sugar towns' can be best explained through their ability to effectively capitalize on the need for their skills. Part of this ability also rests on the recognition of certain groups within a certain community to serve their interests. Jewelers thrived on the demand for gold jewelry. Khatris filled the vacuum for skilled tailors. Kanbis, especially Appabhai of the Leva (Patidar) jati, recognized the need for merchants, in the predominantly Indian areas, who could easily undercut their rivals by dealing in select goods imported directly from India.

According to the 1921 census there were 324 Indians in Fiji who traced their origins to Bombay Presidency, and who could be actually classified as Gujaratis.[34] After all, Gujarat was part of Bombay Presidency, and the authorities in Fiji made no distinction between the cultural and linguistic groups who originated from there. For reasons of expediency, they merely followed the common practice of grouping Gujaratis under the political entity which had jurisdiction over them. It was a very common practice to refer to Gujaratis as 'Bombayahs.' To many Indians, the term had a distinct geographical and linguistic connotation and was applied specifically to Gujaratis to

distinguish them from other immigrant groups.

The Gujaratis in Fiji comprised a very minute community (0.53 per cent of the total Indian population), but in spite of this numerical imbalance, it was still visible in certain occupations, especially tailoring and the manufacture of jewelry. The community was overwhelmingly settled in the urban areas, with Suva being the predominant area of settlement. The Gujaratis preferred urban centers because of their skills and their excessive concern with some form of commercial activity. Their prime consideration was to make much money in the shortest possible time. Accordingly, they restricted their movement to areas which provided the greatest amount of security and possessed the appropriate conditions for trade. Their attitudes regarding the utilization of their skills in Fiji were shaped by their cultural upbringing, and they merely engaged in occupations which had a definite correlation with a particular caste. The most visible Gujarati caste groupings were goldsmiths, tailors (both Khatris and Darjis), barbers, bootmakers, and washermen.[35] The traditional occupational traits of these caste groupings provided the chief source of livelihood, but this tendency did not preclude Gujaratis from entering into any form of commercial activity which provided a quick monetary return, whether it involved manual labor, or hawking, or even operating a restaurant. As a rule, Gujaratis displayed little occupational versatility, resorting primarily to occupational skills acquired in their homeland.

After the abolition of the indenture system in 1920, Fiji's image as a safe area for domicile and business increased immensely. There was no fundamental change in the nature of Gujarati immigration, or in the social composition of the community. Khatris and Sonis continued to dominate Gujarati immigration and, therefore, retained their position as the two main social groups. After their arrival in Fiji they began to ease other Indian groups out of certain occupations which they subsequently monopolized. Those activities, namely the manufacture of jewelry and tailoring, became a trade

mark of their particular castes in Fiji. Sonis and Khatris were not the only groups to carve a 'sphere of influence.' The artisan castes of Mochi, Nav, and Dhobi also capitalized on the need for certain skills which were simply not emanating from the local Indian population. Moreover, these artisan groups were willing to perform certain tasks which had obvious connotations of untouchability, and which other Indians preferred to eschew.[36] Thus, these Gujaratis quickly moved to fill the vacuum created by the acute need for skilled Indian bootmakers and washermen. Of the nonartisan groups, the Kanbis made the most substantial gains. Though Kanbis were agriculturalists in their homeland, they concerned themselves exclusively with trade in Fiji. The Leva Kanbis (Patidars) surpassed other Gujarati groups in the field of trade. The influx of Patidars, who came primarily to fulfil the manpower requirements for Appabhai's expanding business, took place mainly in the 1920s and the early 1930s. Gradually, through their tenacity and their industriousness, they successfully penetrated the Indian retail trade in the sugar areas where their influence became very noticeable. Another agricultural group which made a successful bid to enter the commercial field, first as hawkers and then traders, were the Kachhia Patels. Altogether, the Patidars, other Kanbis, and the Kachhias emerged as the third major stream within the Gujarati community. Only a few minor castes arrived during the 1920s to give the Gujarati social composition its final shape.

Throughout the 1920s, each caste began to consolidate the gains which it had made in the early stages of settlement. A number of conditions aided this process tremendously. The ability of Gujaratis to move into certain occupations, which they turned into their exclusive preserve, was a contributing factor to their success. Second, the Gujaratis not only effectively displayed a natural aptitude for commercial pursuits, but they also conducted their activities with a higher degree of efficiency and success than other Indian groups who comprised their main competitors (see Table 6.1 on p. 263).

Third, they were extremely perceptive of the social and economic conditions which aided the organization of their enterprise. They realized that their foremost consideration was to organize their activities to produce the maximum monetary return in order to support their families, and to provide a comfortable living in their homeland one day. Thus, they adhered rigidly to a lifestyle where a definite emphasis was placed on economic gain. Moreover, they were willing to forego material comforts to attain their goal. Above all, they came from a cultural background which provided them with the necessary training for that purpose, where particular emphasis was placed on one's duty to caste and family above other considerations.

Expansion of Gujarati enterprise was inevitable. After 1920 Gujaratis strengthened their links with Fiji. Not only did they have a favorable impression of Fiji but also a firm conviction that the area was ideal for settlement with an abundance of opportunities for everyone. The labor troubles of the early 1920s did little to undermine this conviction because Gujaratis, who were primarily based in the urban areas, were not affected by the pressing problems of the workers in the sugar industry. Even the collapse of the talks between the Governments of India and Fiji, to resolve the issue of introducing a new scheme of Indian immigration after the abolition of the indenture system, had little effect on Gujarati immigration which basically derived its chief impetus from Fiji's liberal immigration policy, and from the lack of restrictions in India or any interference from authorities on the movement of people who utilized their own resources to travel abroad.

Gujarati enterprise expanded because the social and economic conditions in Fiji were ideal for trade and settlement. First, the overwhelming bulk of Indian population had a strong agricultural base and simply lacked the entrepreneurial skills to enter the commercial field with the same tenacity as Gujaratis. Second, the sugar industry survived the labor crisis through the creation of independent Indian farmers, which subsequently led to the rise

of dispersed Indian settlement throughout the sugarcane belt. Gujaratis exerted and extended their influence over areas where pockets of Indian populations emerged. Another great stimulus for economic diversification came from the improvements in land communications which facilitated access to the remote coastal regions and also linked all the 'sugar towns' to Suva.

Changes in the sugar industry accelerated the growth and extension of towns, and indirectly affected the pattern of Gujarati settlement as well. Towns expanded because of the pressures exerted by Indian settlements which emerged nearby on lands owned by either the sugar company, or the government, or some other agency. Settlements on company lands were geared to produce the maximum amount of sugarcane, thereby curtailing agricultural diversity and forcing a heavier reliance on towns for essential commodities and other necessities. Beyond the sugar areas, especially in the delta plains and flat-lands surrounding the towns of Navua and Nausori, there was considerable emphasis on rice growing. Mixed-crop farming, wherever it existed, included the cultivation of vegetables, root crops, maize, pulses, and tobacco. Commercial pineapple-growing by Indians for export was restricted to farms near Suva. Dairy farming was also restricted to the Suva locality. In spite of these visible signs of prolific agricultural activity, spread over a very vast area, the Indian population was hardly self-sufficient. This lack of self-sufficiency in food production accentuated the dependence on towns which, as market centers, not only supported the urban Indians (more than a third of the total Indian population in 1921),[37] but also provided necessities and other amenities to the agricultural hinterland.

The development in land communication networks permitted easier access to remote areas. Prior to 1921 Fiji lacked a uniform system of roads linking all the towns to the capital. Gravelled and metalled roads from Suva to the Rewa Valley, and along coastal areas of the sugarcane regions, permitted land travel with certain limitations. The sugar company operated a passenger train

service between Sigatoka and Tavua which ran through the sugarcane zone only. In areas where there were neither roads nor train service, the principal modes of communication were by rivers and bush tracks. In 1921 the government initiated a major road project across Viti Levu which underwent much modification as it progressed.[38] The final product was a coastal road (completed in the 1930s) which permitted complete accessibility to all major towns by motor traffic. A good system of roads induced the movement of Gujarati capital and commercial activity from Suva. Moreover, the direct link with Suva ended the isolation of the remote centers, and also facilitated the rapid movement of merchandise and supplies from Suva to other towns by land. Thus, changes in the structure of the sugar industry, the creation of farming settlements distributed throughout the cane region, the urban drift and the occupational diversity of the Indian population, and the construction of a major system of roads providing the necessary linkages with Suva resulted in the expansion of the 'sugar towns.' Together with the breakdown of the sense of isolation from the outside world, these factors greatly enhanced the scope of Gujarati immigration and settlement in Fiji.

Organized Gujarati enterprise which involved more than one person, therefore required by law to file particulars of operation, first commenced in Suva and then spread to other areas. This category excluded shopkeepers, tailors, and hawkers who operated individually and were not covered by the law governing partnerships in organized enterprise. In 1923 there were 7 established business concerns in Fiji which were subsequently registered with the government after the law came into effect the following year. With the exception of A. J. C. Patel Bros, which had branches in other 'sugar towns,' and H. T. Pala (a jeweler turned merchant) located in Labasa in Vanua Levu, all the others were based in Suva. Between 1924 and 1927, 6 more organized Gujarati businesses were established. Altogether, there were 13 such businesses in 1927 consisting of 6 tailoring shops, 2 bootmakers, 3 restaurants,

and 2 merchants.[39] The concentration of large concerns in Suva did not necessarily imply an absence of Gujarati enterprises in the other towns. It seems that some Gujarati shopkeepers, tailors, jewelers, and hawkers either lacked the capital to engage in any large scale commercial endeavor beyond Suva, or lacked the resources to undermine the influence of Appabhai in Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, and Ba, or simply preferred small business operations which could be managed individually and required no additional manpower as well as unnecessary expenditure.

The small Gujarati operator was just as successful as his more organized counterpart in the town. His influence had already permeated the 'sugar towns,' and he was also established in the larger settlements with easy access to the towns. His methods may have been less sophisticated, but he certainly possessed a keen perception of the market conditions, and the needs of his clientele within his own sphere of influence. The small shopkeeper or petty trader, whether in the settlement or town, was well stocked with all the staples such as rice, flour, sharps (a coarse by-product in the production of flour used exclusively in making chapatis), and edible oils. He also kept an ample supply of important items such as soap, kerosene, and matches. For the more affluent customers he also kept canned goods--fruit, fish, and meat--in addition to a small selection of ornaments, toys, and finished clothing products.[40] Tailors were another important commercial group among the small operators. They sewed for the less affluent class of people who could not afford more expensive clothing or ready-made clothes. There were essentially two types of tailors: one who stitched for male customers exclusively, and the other whose expertise in sewing ladies dresses and garments provided an extra source of income. The small tailor in the towns stocked clothes and materials which were fashionable with his customers. In the settlements he kept only a few bolts of cloth. Next came the jeweler who was already part of the established Indian community. In the towns the jeweler utilized a

sizeable portion of his household to manufacture jewelry and conduct his business. His influence also permeated the settlements within travelling distance. Of course, there were the usual collection of barbers, washermen, and bootmakers whose functions seemed to outweigh their small number. The artisan groups were basically an urban based segment of the important small-scale commercial community which existed beside organized Gujarati enterprise.

Apart from the records of registered businesses after 1923 there is no other complete and detailed record of Indian enterprise, the social composition of Indian groups engaged in commercial activity, or their main areas of operation. From the Census of 1921, it can be seen that as many as 854 Indians had some affiliation with trade and commerce in various capacities such as traders, merchants, shopkeepers, shop assistants, and restaurant operators.[41] By 1929 this figure had doubled, and the exact number of persons who actually engaged in any form of shopkeeping was 1,004.[42] This increase is indicative of the scope and intensity of Indian commercial enterprise. It also suggests that the commercial field was open to all categories of Indians who were not tied to agriculture and were seeking alternative sources of livelihood. The Gujaratis merely constituted one group who took advantage of the avenues in the commercial field, and the growth of Gujarati business activity is consistent with the overall expansion of Indian enterprise in Fiji.

A comprehensive assessment of Gujarati (and non-Gujarati) enterprise is only possible for the period after 1924. Business records contain sufficient information to permit analysis of the main types of business activity, the principal centers of operation, and the various castes who were engaged in each activity. In turn, the nature of Gujarati enterprise provides insight into the settlement patterns of the community. It should be stressed that there was a definite correlation between the expansion in Gujarati enterprise and the increase in the Gujarati population (largely through immigration after 1927). In 1924, when the Gujarati population was about 500, there were

7 established Gujarati businesses; in 1930 there were 24 businesses when the population was about 1,200; at the end of 1935, when the population had risen to 2,500, there were over 70 registered businesses in operation. The more spectacular phase of expansion took place after 1935; and by the end of the war there were about 300 registered Gujarati concerns out of an overall total of 600 Indian business registrations and changes.[43] It seems that during the depression years, when economic difficulties in India motivated people to go abroad, Gujaratis in Fiji turned increasingly to organized commercial activity to enable their caste fellows to join them. By institutionalizing their businesses, Gujaratis were certainly capable of providing a shelter for the less fortunate members of their castes who wished to emigrate to Fiji. Simultaneously, they could effectively counteract the stringent immigration controls on male immigration on the pretext that the skills of new immigrants were required to make their organizations function smoothly. The upsurge in business activity provided Gujaratis with a new sense of identity with Fiji which had deep implications on their settlement, as illustrated by Table 5.1 (on p. 210).

Suva was clearly the predominant center of Gujarati business activity in every category. Over 62 per cent of all organized businesses which were functioning, or had undergone some change, by the end of 1945 were located in Suva. Other centers, in order of importance, were Lautoka, Nadi, Ba, Nausori, and Rakiraki. Apart from Nausori, which was situated about 12 miles northeast of Suva, the other centers were located in the sugar belt of Viti Levu. Labasa was the only significant center in Vanua Levu which contained any organized Gujarati enterprise. Collectively the 'sugar towns' of Fiji contained only 35 per cent of all Gujarati activity, distributed unevenly over a very wide area. Whereas Suva contained every form of enterprise listed in the table the other towns possessed, at most, only the two main categories--trading and tailoring.

TABLE 5.1

GUJARATI BUSINESS REGISTRATIONS (1924-1945)
(including particulars of operation, location, nature of business)

	Suva	Lautoka	Ba	Nadi	Nausori	Sigatoka	Rakiraki	Tavua	Tailevu	Taveuni	Levuka	Labasa	Total
General Merchant	12	7	7	5	10	2	2	2	1	1		1	50
Jeweler/Merchant	2			4		2						2	10
Jeweler/Curio Vendor	16	4	1	3								1	25
Tailor/Draper	102	17	8	7	3		8	3		1	4		153
Restaurant/ Confectioner	5												5
Bootmaker	11	1		1									13
Laundryman	21	1											22
Barber	4												4
Film Distributor	4												4
Misc. Categories	10	1	1										12
TOTAL	187	31	17	20	13	4	10	5	1	2	4	4	298

Source: Business Records, Office of the Registrar-General, Suva, Fiji

More Gujaratis were involved in the tailoring and drapery business than in any other form of organized activity. Over 50 per cent of all business registrations listed in the table, including changes in ownership and addition of partners, consisted of the tailoring and drapery business. This category included the small tailoring shops in the 'sugar towns' as well as the large organizations in Suva. The main center of the tailoring and drapery business

was Suva. The large Gujarati organizations located there served in a number of capacities, as both importers of textile products and the largest suppliers to the small concerns outside Suva. They were also actively involved in the wholesale and retail trade in cloth. The other main centers where the tailoring and drapery business prevailed over other types of activity were Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, and Rakiraki. The shift to the 'sugar towns' took place after 1935 and increased in intensity during the war because of the construction of an air base in Nadi. The presence of a large military force in Fiji, with a strong purchasing power, provided tailors and drapers with the most profitable years of their operation.

Traders and merchants represented another important category in which there was a strong Gujarati influence. Persons in this category consisted essentially of the retail shopkeepers in the 'sugar towns,' and the importer and supplier in Suva who combined wholesale and retail trade. Gujarati trading activity originated in Suva and then spread to Nausori, Sigatoka, Lautoka, and Ba after 1930. In Vanua Levu, organized Gujarati traders emerged after 1936 with the creation of Nasea, a separate commercial center within Labasa.[44] As Table 5.1 indicates, there was only one registered Gujarati trader in Labasa among other small operators. On a comparative basis, there were more Gujarati merchants and traders in the northwestern sugar belt of Viti Levu than in Suva. What is equally apparent and surprising is that the town of Nausori contained as many traders and merchants as Suva. Nausori was neither a major town nor a large population center, containing only one fourth as much as the Indian population located in Suva proper. Though Nausori was a small town, it served a vast agricultural hinterland containing a large Indian population, whereas in Suva Indian merchants and traders were at a disadvantage because of the permeating influence of European commercial enterprise.

Business records reveal that the manufacture of jewelry did not

constitute an important part of institutionalized Gujarati enterprise. The 24 business registrations for jewelers and curio vendors, listed in the table, occurred after 1940. Prior to 1940 most jewelers who entered organized business combined their traditional function with that of merchant and trader. Jeweler-merchants were prevalent in Suva, Sigatoka, and Nadi in Viti Levu, and Labasa in Vanua Levu. Most of the jewelry concerns which emerged after 1940 did not specifically deal with the manufacture of gold jewelry which continued on a limited scale. The jewelry business now specialized in finished products and the more fashionable imported items, as well as in curio goods manufactured locally to meet the demand for souvenirs among the military personnel stationed in Suva.

On the periphery of the three predominant categories were the organized artisan businesses of bootmaking, hairdressing, and laundering. The bootmaking and leather business represented the first artisan activity on the commercial scene followed by the laundry business which experienced its most prolific growth during the 1930s. The operation of large 'hairdressing salons' among Gujaratis remained in its infancy. As expected, Suva ranked as the predominant center of almost all institutionalized artisan activity.

Gujaratis also dabbled in restaurants and confectioneries, in the construction industry, in real estate, in the transport business, in cycle shops and motor garages, and in the cinema business as theatre operators, as well as in the import and distribution of Indian films. Business records indicate that this combined category constituted less than 10 per cent of all organized Gujarati enterprise until 1945. As in the case of other categories, Suva served as the principal operational base. The preponderance of all major Gujarati enterprise in Suva is indicative of the pattern of settlement.

The most salient feature of Gujarati enterprise was that each caste was entrenched in a particular activity which it monopolized, as was the case in

Gujarat. From this observation it can be safely assumed that Khatris formed the most enterprising Gujarati group in Suva. They were also a powerful economic bloc among the Indian ratepayers and occupants of business premises.[45] Their persistent stranglehold over the tailoring and drapery business, and the unprecedented growth of that particular form of Gujarati enterprise, is consistent with the emergence of the Khatris as the dominant immigrant group after 1930. The Khatri community was, and still is, unevenly distributed throughout Fiji, but settled primarily in all the urban centers of Viti Levu. Vanua Levu contained a minute community of Khatris who had settled in Labasa after 1920.[46] A recent survey of the Khatri community has revealed a major shift in the population distribution, placing Labasa on the same level as Ba and Rakiraki.[47] As a rule Khatris displayed a marked preference for Suva over other areas, only moving to the 'sugar towns' after a few members of their caste (Jamnadas Bhagwan in Lautoka, and Narotam Narshi in Nadi) had successfully demonstrated that these towns held tremendous potential for tailors and drapers.

In Suva there was a noticeable concentration of Khatris in one particular area stretching from Renwick Road, running through the southern part of the town, into Cumming Street which veered in the westward direction. There were certain sections which contained monotonous rows of tailoring shops located in the bottom floor of double-storeyed wooden edifices. In marked contrast to this distinctive arrangement of closely packed shops stood the more ostentatious structures of the European commercial houses.[48] This line of demarcation between the Khatris and the other castes was less visible in the 'sugar towns' where all groups conducted business beside each other in closely arranged single-storeyed wooden structures strung along the main road. In these towns Khatris pursued their trade harmoniously with Chinese and other Indians alike. Inspite of a cluster of two or three Khatri shops which appeared occasionally, no particular locality was earmarked as their

exclusive preserve. The most distinctive features of Khatri settlement seemed to be the high density of inhabitants in any single establishment. During the day the tailoring shops were distinguishable by the rows of sewing machines situated in close proximity to each other, and at night by the numerous mosquito nets strung over any sleeping space.

In the trader and merchant category the most visible caste was definitely the Leva Kanbi (Patidar) who had become an important element of the urban Indian community between 1920 and 1935. Foremost in the Patidar economic hierarchy stood the formidable Appabhai concern which not only dictated the inward flow of Patidars into Fiji but also their pattern of settlement. The community first began as an extension of Appabhai's business, first in Suva, and then in the 'sugar towns' of Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, and Tavua. While Patidars remained part of Appabhai's operations the community remained compact and very closely-knit. It expanded rapidly when his assistants severed their association with Appabhai, launched their own concerns, and later called their families and relatives to assist in managing these businesses. The severance with Appabhai produced two rival Patidar traders in Suva by 1930--T. C. Dahyabhai and Company and C. J. Patel and Company.[49] The Dahyabhai organization later moved to Nausori and opened a subsidiary branch in Labasa leaving C. J. Patel as the sole competitor of Appabhai in Suva. Other Patidars also severed their links in Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, and Ba in the 1930s and established their own concerns. By 1945 Patidars had established themselves as a major bloc in the Gujarati merchant and trader category throughout Fiji. They controlled over 50 per cent of all existing trading establishments.

Other Kanbi groups merely took advantage of the conditions created by the Patidars. The pattern of settlement among the Matia and Kadva Kanbis did not differ markedly from that of the Patidars. Basically they moved into those areas where a vacuum was created by the movement of Patidars from the

southern parts of Viti Levu to the sugar regions. They also competed with Patidars in those 'sugar towns' where trading opportunities had unlimited potential for growth. The predominant centers of Matia and Kadva enterprise and settlement were Suva, Nausori, Lautoka, and Labasa. The two non-Patidar pioneering firms which had successfully captured a share of the trading business by 1930 were N. B. Patel and Company in Nausori (and Lautoka), and R. K. Patel and Company in Labasa.[50] Collectively Matia and Kadva Kanbis comprised a smaller community than the Patidars, but they were equally as versatile as their counterpart.

Kachhia Patels formed a notable non-Kanbi group in trade. They went originally into hawking and small-scale shopkeeping, and by 1935 had already settled in Suva, Ba, Lautoka, Nausori, and Rakiraki. Organized Kachhia enterprise initially started in Suva in 1938 and later spread to Ba and Lautoka.[51] The first Kachhia trader was C. K. Patel whose business on Waimanu Road established the norm for other Kachhias. Like other trading groups, Kachhias effectively combined the trade in food items with the drapery and sari business.

The peripheral trading groups consisted of Kolis and other minor Gujarati castes including Muslims whose entry into the commercial field occurred much later than the more established groups. The minor groups were mainly located in Suva, Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, and Rakiraki, that is in the same areas where the Kanbi groups were firmly entrenched. Many peripheral businesses could not survive the pressure of competition. Kolis were particularly susceptible to financial difficulties because of the vigorous competition, bad management, and too much reliance on credit.[52]

Traders and merchants were dictated in their settlement patterns by the same norms which controlled Khatri settlement. Traders travelled to and settled with their families in those areas where there was a high demand for their skills. There was a marked preference for urban centers which served

as distribution outlets for essential commodities, clothing, and food items for the large agricultural and rural population in the hinterland. Traders and merchants in those centers catered exclusively to the needs of the rural population which travelled regularly to the urban centers for supplies. They stocked all the important staples, grains, edible oils, spices, ready-made clothing and garments, and some items of luxury. Their shops were very much like the tailoring shops where every available space was used for displaying goods and conducting business. The trader's household operated differently from the Khatri household because of the clear division between the shop, the storage area, and the living quarters. Gujarati traders, especially Patidars, were more inclined than Khatris to bring their families to Fiji. They owned or rented premises in which ample space, normally a large spacious area at the back of the shop, was set aside to meet the requirements of family life. The small rural trader who operated in a less ornate structure, usually built with corrugated iron, lived in a similar way.

Business records reveal an important shift in the traditional occupation of Sonis. In the post-1920 period Sonis experienced a gradual decline in the demand for their skills. While Indians were being repatriated to India there was still a market for gold jewelry. As repatriation declined Sonis were forced to seek an alternate source of livelihood since they were denied a reliable outlet for their trade. By 1930 four Soni jeweler-merchants had emerged in Suva, Nadi, and Labasa.[53] Thereafter, more Sonis turned to trade, specializing in such items as ornaments, brassware, and household utensils. Apart from the few Soni jeweler-merchants in Suva, there was an obvious preference for the Indian-dominated sugar areas of northwest Viti Levu (see Table 5.1).

The overwhelming majority of the Sonis still plied their trade in the traditional manner. Few Sonis organized the business in gold jewelry along conventional lines, that is operating in a business premise which was totally

detached from the household. As usual Suva produced the first organized Soni jewelry establishments--Sundarjee and Sons in 1935; and S. P. Parekh and Brothers in 1939.[54] Sonis continued to operate from their households utilizing the frontal area, normally the verandah, as a workshop as well as for socializing. Business records do not provide an adequate assessment of the main centers of the Soni community. Though Suva is indicated as the chief center of the organized jewelry business, it did not contain the largest concentration of Sonis. Actually, the high number of jewelry businesses in Suva was a manifestation of the lucrative 'tourist' trade during the war. According to reliable oral sources, Sonis were mostly settled in Ba which was the largest Indian population center in Fiji. In the late 1930s there were at least 38 Soni families residing in Ba.[55] The war years witnessed a dramatic shift from Ba to Nadi because of economic developments in that area. Suva and Nadi became the beneficiaries of the population movement. Henceforth, Ba, Lautoka, and Sigatoka were relegated to secondary centers of the Soni population.

The artisan groups of Nav, Dhobi, and Mochi engaged in organized enterprise in Suva, Lautoka, and Nadi only. Like other Gujarati castes which originated from South Gujarat, they displayed an obvious preference for Suva for both residential and occupational purposes. The Mochis formed the first artisan caste to establish itself in the Indian section of the town, quite close to the Khatri areas. There were only 2 small registered Mochi concerns by 1925.[56] Much of the growth in the Mochi community, and business activity on Waimanu Road, materialized after 1930.

The Dhobis appeared on the commercial scene at the same time as the Mochis. The Dhobi community settled in the Indian residential sections of Toorak on Amy Street and Toorak Road. In the 1930s the community dispersed to other residential areas, located on the fringes of the town. The community needed to remain on the outer limits of the town because of the municipal

regulations, and the need for special areas to conduct laundering activities and to house large families who supplied the manpower. Caste considerations did not play as much of a role in the location of the laundry concerns as it did in India. Though Dhobis may have desired not to offend the sensibilities of other residents, they were readily accepted in the Indian localities where they resided. It is conceivable that they would have received a different response if they had decided to situate their businesses in European areas. There was very little mechanization in the Dhobi business in Fiji. The rigorous competition among Dhobis during the 1930s induced them to introduce business techniques from India, the chief being the usual pick-up and delivery service for their select Indian and European customers.

Navs comprised the smallest contingent of all the artisan groups located in Suva. Their entry into organized business occurred much later than other artisan castes, that is, after 1940. The first registered Nav business came into operation in 1942 on Cumming Street.[57] By 1945, 3 more shops were established within close proximity to each other. The Nav community contained 2 distinct Hindu and Muslim factions. The Muslim faction, which was in the minority, met little success in its endeavor to penetrate the Hindu stranglehold over Gujarati enterprise in Suva. Consequently, the Muslims moved to Nausori where they engaged in their traditional occupation on a small scale.[58]

Castes which were already firmly established in other categories could also be found in the restaurant business, in the cinema business, and in other miscellaneous categories. These businesses did not correlate with caste occupation but revealed a considerable degree of diversification among certain groups. Khatris displayed the highest level of diversification, but only in Suva. Though they monopolized the tailoring and drapery business, they initiated the Gujarati restaurant business, established agencies for distributing Indian films and operated the first Indian cinema, set up the first Indian textile import houses, and also entered the transport business. Their

introduction of Indian films to Fiji is consistent with their boast that Khatris were the main propagators of Indian culture in the islands.[59] Only one other caste professed any degree of occupational mobility. Kolis had already made some gains in trade but they also made a bold effort to enter the restaurant, tailoring, and laundry businesses in Suva.

There were a few peripheral castes in organized business. A minute community of Mistrys (carpenters) settled in Suva, Lautoka, and Ba where they established themselves as mechanics and operated motor garages. In the late 1930s Mistrys opened the first cycle shop in Suva.[60] A Ghanchi by the name of Rewabhai Ranchodbhai Parshotam was another late entrant in the commercial field. He engaged in a number of minor ventures in Cumming Street before entering into a partnership with a Chinese greengrocer in 1938. Generally, the level of participation in organized business by the minor and obscure castes was marginal and insignificant.

To find a single axiom to describe the pattern of Gujarati settlement in Fiji would be difficult. Axiomatic statements such as 'trade follows the railway' and 'trade follows the flag' are appropriate in examining the nature of Indian commercial penetration into East and South Africa, but do not apply to Fiji. Africa had an established link of antiquity with Western India which facilitated the movement of people and capital from one area to the other. Fiji lacked this contact with Western India which prevented any movement from that part of India until after 1900, when other Indian groups were already firmly established.

Gujarati settlement in Fiji was a protracted process because much of the stimuli found in Africa were absent in Fiji. Africa was a vast frontier where generations of Indians traded along the coast and participated actively in the caravan trade. With the extension of British influence in the late nineteenth century there followed a period of extensive railway building which attracted scores of other Indians who came because of the economic

opportunities. In marked contrast, Fiji offered no such financial attraction because it not only was an unknown frontier but also lacked a vast market for exploitation. The first Gujarati immigrants came as isolated cases of movement from Western India. The main attraction in Fiji was the presence of a large Indian population among whom the first Gujarati immigrants attempted to ply their traditional skills.

The initial phase of Gujarati settlement until 1920 was one in which various caste groupings attempted to carve a particular economic sphere of influence which was intricately related to caste occupations. In the second phase they attempted to consolidate these gains and were aided by a number of important factors. They encountered favorable political conditions and an acceptance of their traditional skills which were lacking in other Indian groups. Moreover, the social composition of the Indian population in which there was preponderance of agriculturalists gave the Gujaratis an obvious advantage over other groups in the commercial field. Within a span of forty years they became a potent force within the Indian commercial community because of their organizational expertise and the availability of a vast labor pool in their homeland.

The Gujaratis settled in urban areas because of their economic orientation, and because these areas afforded the maximum amount of security and numerous opportunities for conducting business. They lacked the pioneering spirit of their African counterparts and only ventured into areas where other Indian groups were already firmly established. As the Indian population moved in response to the favorable conditions generated by the expansion in the sugar industry, they were quickly followed by the Gujaratis.

The growth of enterprise was the main determinant in their settlement patterns. Gujaratis worked and settled in areas where they focused their activities. They did not move into the hinterland because they did not envisage themselves as permanent settlers. The prime consideration was trade,

and they channelled their resources as well as shaped their settlement patterns to that end.

NOTES

[1]Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 154.

[2]Alan Birch and J. F. Blaxland, "The Historical Background," in Lowndes, South Pacific Enterprise, p. 32.

[3]See F.I.R. (1901), C.P. 20/02.

[4]Derrick, Fiji: Geographical Handbook, p. 207. Also, see J. S. Whitelaw, "Suva, Capital of Fiji," South Pacific Bulletin (July 1964), pp. 33-37, 54.

[5]Alison Fong, A Chinese Community in Fiji (Suva: The South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974), p. 1.

[6]Gillion, op. cit., p. 137.

[7]F.I.R. (1912), C.P. 29/13, p. 19.

[8]This section on the Sonis up to p. 184 is based on oral sources.

[9]Information obtained orally from the Soni community in Suva; also, see Gillion, op. cit., p. 133.

[10]Oral information from the same Soni sources in Suva.

[11]Sonis did not intend to spend any longer than two years in Fiji. Since they anticipated a short sojourn in Fiji they felt that the concern for material comforts would distract them from their goal of accumulating as much wealth as possible during this two-year span.

[12]Interview with P. K. Bhindi, a prominent member of the Soni community in Suva (May 25, 1975).

[13]Totaram Sanadhya, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

[14]Oral information obtained from early Khatri immigrants who had worked for the Narsey concern.

[15]F.C.R. (1911), C.P. 44/12, Table 19.

[16]F.I.R. (1913), C.P. 57/14, p. 15.

[17]Derrick, Fiji: Geographical Handbook, p. 208; Gillion, op. cit.,

[18]Information obtained orally from members of the Khatri community in Suva, Lautoka, and Nadi.

[19]The older generation of Gujaratis in Fiji still recollect how they did not dare venture outdoors after nightfall.

[20]Interview with Jayantibhai Badshah, prominent Khatri businessman in Navsari, Gujarat (July 28, 1974).

[21]Police Commissioner's Office, Confidential No. D161, October 10, 1918, H.E.O. Baroda, 145/71.

[22]Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 6 of 1912-16.

[23]The Hari family tradition is that Gangaram arrived in Fiji in 1918. See The Fiji Times Centennial Supplement, September 4, 1969. However, the year 1918 does not correspond with the date of Gangaram's application for a passport to emigrate to Fiji. Passports 1918-1919, No. 2161, April 3, 1919, H.E.O., Baroda, 145/25A.

[24]Information obtained orally from Sonis, Patidars, Kanbis, Khatris, and other Gujarati castes.

[25]See Tinker, "The Career of Manilal Doctor," p. 237.

[26]Interview with Somabhai Parekh, Suva (October 23, 1975).

[27]Interview with Ratilal A. Patel, son of Appabhai, Ba, Fiji (June 16, 1975).

[28]Ibid.

[29]Information derived from Business Registers in Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[30]F.I.R. (1909), C.P. 28/10, p..29.

[31]Derrick, Fiji: Geographical Handbook, p. 210.

[32]F.I.R. (1917), C.P. 75/18, p. 13.

[33]F.C.R. (1921), C.P. 2/22, p. 156.

[34]Ibid., p. 162.

[35]Ibid., Table 28.

[36]McMillan, Indians in Fiji, p. 16. This pamphlet was intended for official use only, but was subsequently withdrawn from circulation because of the objections raised by the Indian members of the Legislative Council. A copy of this pamphlet is available for scrutiny in the Fiji National Archives.

[37]F.C.R. (1921), p. 156.

[38]Derrick, Fiji: Geographical Handbook, p. 176.

[39]Business registers between 1924 and 1928, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[40]See Adrian C. Mayer, Peasants in the Pacific, p. 47.

[41]F.C.R. (1921), Table 28.

[42]Fiji, Report for 1929, p. 52; also, see R.S.I.A. (1930), C.P. 38/31, p. 3.

[43]Business Registers, 1924-45, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[44]Chauhan, Leadership and Social Cleavages, p. 2.

[45]Statement of Indian Ratepayers and Occupiers, Exhibit Q. in C.P. 39/29, in I.E.P., E.H.L. (O), December 1929, B. No. 29-30.

[46]Chauhan, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

[47]Survey of Khatri community in Fiji, July 31, 1965 (Mimeograph) by courtesy of Maganlal Mohanlal Gandabhai, Suva, Fiji.

[48]Derrick, Fiji: Geographical Handbook, p. 210.

[49]Business Registers, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Information obtained orally from Patidar and Soni merchants who had extensive dealings with Kolis.

[53]Business Registers, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Information obtained orally from P. K. Bhindi, Suva (May 25, 1975).

[56]Business Registers, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[57]Business Registers, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

[58]Oral information obtained from Fakir Mohammed, son of Daudbhai who was one of the first Gujarati Muslim Navs in Fiji.

[59]Interview with Ramanlal Kapadia, prominent Khatri lawyer and member of the Fiji Senate, Suva (July 23, 1975).

[60]Business Registers, Registrar-General's Office, Suva, Fiji.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

Though Gujaratis may be classified as an integral part of the Indian society in Fiji, they formed a distinct 'cultural group' whose origins, emigration patterns, settlement, and occupational activity set them apart from other Indian groups. The more noticeable differences among the Gujaratis, Northerners (Hindustanis), Southerners (Madrassis), and Punjabis stemmed from the variations in language, dietary habits, manner of dress, names of individuals, level of caste consciousness and social stratification, and observance of religious rites and cultural practices. Despite their existence as a distinct 'cultural group' the Gujaratis still fell within the category of Hindus who comprised the overwhelming bulk of the Indian population, which further separated them from the Muslim component, another major cultural category with a different cultural and historical tradition. Whatever similarities Gujaratis shared with other regional groups were obscured because of inherent and more glaring differences which had a great impact on Gujarati social life in Fiji.

By comparing Gujaratis with other Indian groups in Fiji, it will be shown that they did not organize themselves according to any rigid hierarchical structure, although they were still bound to their respective caste ideology and jati nucleus at home. This chapter is also concerned with the shop around which Gujaratis built their social life in Fiji. No doubt the Gujarati shop was the focal point of all their activities, for it not only served as a place of business but also provided all the comforts of the home while the community remained essentially male in character. The Gujarati shop is examined as the focal point in social and economic relationships, first within the immediate caste grouping, then between Gujarati groups with similar economic interests, and finally with other Indians and other races.

Another concern of this chapter is the organization of family life after the arrival of families at which point Gujaratis made a concerted effort to maintain in-group solidarity and jati exclusiveness, in addition to a stricter adherence to ritual and religion.

As a group the Gujaratis came to Fiji as 'passenger' or 'free' immigrants at their own expense and not under any government-regulated immigration scheme. In comparison with the majority of Indians who came as indentured laborers, or were descendants of these laborers, the Gujaratis came specifically for the purposes of trade and commerce. Their settlement patterns revealed a marked preference for urban areas or towns where they conducted trade or engaged in occupations with strong commercial overtones. Other Indian groups were predominantly tied to agriculture and resided mainly in the sugarcane growing areas of Fiji. Gujaratis tended to live in clusters in select areas of the towns which was not only indicative of the type of commercial activity they engaged in but also reflected their preference for neighbors who shared a common dialect and similar cultural values. In marked contrast, most Indians who were engaged in agriculture lived in dispersed settlements which lacked cohesion or unity, and bore little resemblance to the densely-packed settlements of rural India. Because of their entry into Fiji as 'free' immigrants, their preference for urban dwelling, and their preoccupation with trade, the Gujaratis laid claims to a higher social and economic status than other Indian groups. Above all, they prided themselves on being 'free' immigrants and placed themselves above the stigma, as well as the inferior connotations, of indenture which characterized the bulk of the Indian population.

The differences which resulted from the classification of all Indians into two distinct immigrant categories, that is 'free' and 'indentured,' were compounded by the linguistic divisions. The Northern Indians, who

originated from Bihar and the eastern parts of present-day Uttar Pradesh spoke Hindi and were referred to as Hindustanis; they comprised the largest linguistic group. The Southerners (Madrassis) spoke either Tamil, the main southern Indian language in Fiji, or Telugu, or Malayalam, depending upon the area in South India from which the immigrants originated. Punjabi was another distinct linguistic category, spoken only by immigrants who came from Punjab and were largely Sikh in faith. Another important regional linguistic category was Gujarati which was spoken only by immigrants whose origins could be traced to Kathiawar, Baroda State, and British Gujarat in Bombay Presidency. The only language which could not be applied to any single regional group was Urdu which was essentially a manifestation of the attempt by Indian Muslims to revive and preserve Islamic culture in Fiji.

Apart from the diverse origins and languages of the Indian immigrants, other differences were apparent in outward appearance, especially in the mode of dress, in the diet of each group, and in the names of individuals. Regional variations in dress were more visible in the older generation and less in the Fiji-born. Generally, there was a tendency toward the western mode of dress among the menfolk, although some symbols of traditional attire such as the dhoti and turban were retained in the rural areas. The sari emerged as the universal dress for the womenfolk, but the most common attire of the rural areas was a bodice, petticoat, and a transparent veil which covered the head and was draped over the shoulders. This attire, which was perhaps Rajasthani in origin, was less cumbersome than the sari for rural Indian women to work in. Gujarati womenfolk eschewed this mode of dress because of its strong peasant connotations, and retained the sari which they wore in a different manner from other Indian women.

In diet there was, of course, the cultural taboo against the consumption of beef or pork among most Indians. Hindus regarded beef-eating as anathema in the same manner as Muslims viewed pork. As a rule Indians maintained a

combination of vegetarian and nonvegetarian diets. Fiji abounded with the vegetables and staples found in India. Indian spices and condiments were also readily available. The nonvegetarian diet consisted primarily of fowl, goat, fish, and mutton. Only the orthodox Brahmins among the Northern and Southern Indians, and Sonis and Kanbis among the Gujaratis, maintained a strict vegetarian diet.

There were certain foods which were mostly associated with, or linked to, one regional group. It became a common practice among Indians to refer to all Gujaratis as kitcharee (pulse and rice cooked together) which is a very common dish among that group. The early Gujarati immigrants, especially the Sonis, mainly subsisted on this particular dish because it was the easiest meal to prepare. Sonis cooked their kitcharee while they worked. As it was the only Gujarati meal visible to their Indian customers and friends, it soon became the object of ridicule and humor. South Indians were commonly called khatta pani (sour water) which referred to their strong preference for rasam (a thin lentil consommé heavily flavored with tamarind, an edible sour brown pulp obtained from the seed pod of a common tropical tree). Minor variations also occurred in the preparation of food. Southern Indian food was generally hotter than the Northern cuisine. Gujarati curries were not as spicy or hot as those prepared by the Southerners and Northerners. Some Gujarati groups such as the Sonis did not include garlic in the preparation of their food. Others eschewed onions because it was essentially regarded as a common ingredient in Muslim diet.[1]

Regional variations were also quite noticeable in names. Common surnames among South Indians included Naidu, Reddy, Pillay, and were distinguishable from Northern surnames such as Chand, Lal, Prasad, Sharma, and Singh. Gujarati nomenclature was extremely indicative of an individual's origins, his caste, and his occupational trait. Kanbis and Kolis usually added bhai as a suffix to their given names in addition to using Patel as a common surname.

Most Soni names contained the suffix ji, as in Pragji for example. The names of the artisan castes of South Gujarat revealed the Rajput origins of these groups. Among some Gujarati groups, there were certain names which indicated a person's affiliation with either a particular profession or a particular country. For example, the name Manilal Maganlal Doctor indicated that some member of his family had been associated with the medical profession. In fact, Manilal's father was a medical practitioner in the government's service in Khandesh. His father subsequently changed his surname from Shah (a common Bania name) to Doctor.[2] He was either well known or must have enjoyed a very high status within his own community because other members of his family also adopted the surname of Doctor. A Khatri family in Navsari which had strong links with Mauritius came to be known as Morriswala, a name which remained with them when they migrated to Fiji.[3]

The Indian community in Fiji did not represent an overall cross section of traditional society in India based on a hierarchy of castes. There was considerable diversity, both in terms of the areas from which the immigrants originated and also in the historical and cultural traditions which they transported to Fiji. Moreover, no single district in India provided emigrants who were a representative cross section of Indian society, including all the jatis of that area. The Indian immigrant community in Fiji was conditioned by the peculiarities of the indenture system and by the circumstances of haphazard settlement.

One of the first casualties in the evolution of the Fiji Indian society was the ideological context of caste. Fundamental precepts of caste such as hierarchy, commensality, endogamy, ritual purity and pollution, occupational specialization and exclusivity had little functional value in a social situation where there was no consensus of any single authority to control behavior and status. The diversity of the immigrants meant that the concepts of hierarchy and authority also varied. Since emigration (from India) was

largely a non-Brahmin phenomenon, most social groups in Fiji were not willing to maintain any rigid code of behavior through which one group could claim higher status over the other based on dogmatic hierarchical principles.

The indenture system, the journey from India, and life in a new environment struck at the root of caste structure. The whole ethos of the indenture system had been to provide cheap Indian labor and to guarantee the survival of the sugar industry in Fiji. Indians, irrespective of caste, formed the laboring and agricultural section of a population in which other racial groups had clearly defined economic roles. The most salient feature of this emigration scheme was that it ignored the historical experience of Indians residing within a highly stratified social structure and made them reassess their values.

The journey from India, and the conditions in the ships, weakened and reshaped restrictions concerning diet and contact. Segregation of groups based on prior social experience was not feasible and largely ignored. Ship-life encouraged social intercourse since recruits shared a common experience--they lived alongside each other, shared food, and were all journeying to the same place. Once in Fiji, the immigrants again confronted an absence of segregation and were assigned tasks which had no correlation with traditional occupation. In their attempt to create a new society most Indian immigrants were indifferent toward the preservation of traditional caste institutions. The social taboos regarding diet and pollution underwent change, and now dealt mainly with the avoidance of foods such as beef and pork, and occupations such as laundering and shoemaking. Moreover, there was a general lack of occupational specialization because the descendants of the laborers were not born into a rigid and fixed occupation. Status became nonascriptive and derived mainly from factors such as education, wealth, and political influence. Residence within the colony offered many possibilities for enhancing social and economic status. There was also a general shift from endogamy as the

major criterion for selecting marriage partners, but there was 'ethnic endogamy' or little intermarriage between different cultural groups, such as Northerners and Southerners, and between Indians and other racial groups. Existing notions of caste only remained valid within a limited context, but basically in ritual activities.

The disruptive tendencies of the colonial environment on caste rationalization affected immigrants who came mainly under the indenture system but had less impact on groups who maintained strong links with India. The Gujarati immigrants fell into the latter category. Because Gujaratis came as 'free' or 'passenger' immigrants, or were exclusively concerned with commercial pursuits they commanded a greater degree of economic security which enabled them to make frequent visits to their homeland. The frequency of these visits meant that Gujaratis were rigid in maintaining endogamous marriages, a distinctive jati identity, and a considerable degree of occupational exclusiveness. Gujarat has always been regarded as "pre-eminently a land of castes" which explains why Gujaratis have persistently exhibited a high level of caste consciousness. Studies of Indians in East and South Africa have shown that Gujaratis were able to retain segregation and selectivity in social relations with other communities because of linguistic affinity and cultural solidarity.[4] Membership within a jati was maintained and reinforced through frequent visits, exchange of gifts , remittance of money, and marriage ties. In instances where families joined or accompanied the immigrants Gujaratis made considerable effort to isolate their women from 'intimate cross caste' or interethnic contact. Moreover, Gujaratis were still extremely conscious of 'proper' and 'correct' behavior once they were outside India to enable them to resume normal relations within the local social system when they returned. Lapses in behavior, such as the neglect of domestic rituals, did not result in caste expulsion or ostracization because immigrants often made amends through purification rites, pilgrimages, and

visits to shrines and holy places upon their return.[5]

The joint family system provided another important link between the Gujarati immigrant and his kinfolk in India, and imposed certain obligations, as well as restrictions, which prevented him from deviating from 'correct' behavior. Almost all Gujarati immigrants initially left their families in the care of their kinfolk within the security of the joint family. Immigrants who were sponsored by relatives in Fiji often depended upon the joint resources for financial support, for their voyage, and for their upkeep during the initial stages. The immigrants also depended upon the strong feelings of 'jointness' for finding work. Later they could depend upon their ties to contract marriages if they needed brides. In turn, Gujarati immigrants fulfilled their obligations by replenishing the joint financial resources and repaying whatever debts they had incurred. Thus, the norms of the joint family counteracted the disruptive forces of life outside India. The values of the extended family unit obliged individuals to maintain their identity and the exclusiveness of their jatis.[6]

Gujaratis transported certain aspects of caste to the new environment, not as a calculated measure to create an exact replica of the society which they had left behind but basically to perpetuate the identity of their respective jatis. However, they made no conscious effort to organize themselves on hierarchical principles based on either the jati-ranking of the regions from which they originated or on the fourfold varna divisions. In Fiji, social stratification based on the gradation of 'high' and 'low' castes was not possible because no single area of Gujarat produced emigrants representative of all the castes in that area. The hierarchical system to which each immigrant had belonged in Gujarat had no universal application, even on the varna scale. Thus, the Gujarati immigrants could not maintain strict adherence to the terminology of caste hierarchy in Fiji. Ritually, each jati ranked itself within the context of the hierarchy of the region from

which it originated and was treated accordingly by other jatis. No close scrutiny of a jati's claim to a higher status was possible unless other jatis were aware of its activities in India. For example, the Khatris have always claimed 'twice-born' status because of their Rajput origins but are not accorded a high ritual status by either the Patidars or Sonis in Fiji, largely on account of their nonvegetarian diet and excessive liquor consumption.

The ideological context of caste, that is the accrued cultural values of a jati and concept of right or wrong behavior which prevailed within it, permeated the most important aspects of Gujarati immigrant life. Fundamentally, the notion of jati bound an individual to certain rules which determined his occupation, where he lived, whom he could marry, how he should worship, what he could eat, and with whom he could socialize. As long as the immigrant was absent from his homeland he made some conscious effort to abide by these rules because his ultimate aim was to return to his own village or society. He could deviate from some of these precepts concerning behavior, but he always had to bear in mind that his actions could affect all the members of his jati in the immigrant society. A general rule was to avoid any action that could jeopardize his position among his peers in the immigrant society, and that of his kinfolk at home.

Ritual status had little actual relevance because of the failure of the immigrants to transplant the religious sects and cults of Gujarat to Fiji. Status based on ritual purity or impurity, embodied in the concepts of jati and varna, was only important in a context which linked immigrants to their caste nucleus in Gujarat. While there was no rigid ritual demarcation between the 'pure' and 'impure' which was visibly recognizable, there was still tacit acknowledgement among all immigrants of the relative status of each group. The few Anavil Brahmin immigrants were automatically given the respect which accompanied their high jati-status, but they were not qualified

or trained to act in the capacity of priests for other Gujaratis. Brahmins were numerically too small and neither forceful enough to act as a gauge for social and ritual behavior nor could they formulate religious injunctions to prevent other Gujarati immigrants from aspiring toward a high status. After the Brahmins, came the Gujaratis of the 'twice-born' varnas or Ujali Varna, which included the Kathiawari Sonis, Patidars, Bania-Sonis, Kanbis, and the 'pure' agricultural and artisan jatis. Next came 'impure' and untouchable jatis whose traditional occupations, such as laundering and cutting hair, also accounted for their low ritual esteem in Fiji. At the bottom were the Gujarati Muslims who remained beyond the periphery of a social structure dominated by Gujarati Hindus. Though Muslims shared similar cultural characteristics, especially language, as other immigrants, there was still the major difference of religion which overrode all other considerations. The predominantly Hindu segment of the Gujarati community regarded the Muslims in the 'fanatical' manner in which most orthodox Gujarati Hindus viewed all nonvegetarian groups at home.

There was little rigidity in the manner in which the Gujarati immigrants organized themselves. Groups which enjoyed a high social status at home continued to do so in Fiji. However, the arrangement in the new environment was flexible enough to allow lower groups to ascend the social scale. Most groups elevated their status through the acquisition of wealth. Since all Gujarati groups had come to Fiji for that purpose, they were hesitant to establish social constraints which could limit the activities of any particular group. The opportunities which arose from trade offered numerous possibilities to all groups. In certain instances some Gujaratis utilized traditional skills to carve out a sphere of influence or to monopolize a certain type of activity such as tailoring, laundering, bootmaking, and the manufacture of jewelry. The pattern of behavior which most Gujaratis attempted to emulate was established by three main Gujarati groups--the Sonis,

the Patidars, and the Khatris. Their success in Fiji was largely due to their ability to excel in trade among a community which generally lacked organizational as well as entrepreneurial skills.

Sonis, Patidars, and Khatris enjoyed a privileged position within the community by virtue of their economic advancement and their monopoly of certain occupations and trades. The Sonis were the earliest Gujarati immigrants who followed their traditional calling of silversmith and goldsmith as long as there was a profitable demand for jewelry. They had a preference for urban dwelling, but went regularly to settlements, concentrating mainly on weekly bazaars to sell their finished products. There were basically two types of Sonis in Fiji--one had extensive experience working as a Soni in India before proceeding to Fiji; the other possessed little skill as a silversmith or goldsmith but learned the trade in Fiji. The most experienced Sonis manufactured gold jewelry and either sold it directly to their Indian customers or acted as suppliers to untrained Sonis who in turn hawked jewelry for a living. This occupational division did not affect the social status of either group because they both belonged to the same jati. Since Sonis persistently engaged in some form of commercial activity, which was consistent with their Vaisya standing, they were generally accorded a high esteem by other Indians, and referred to as Mahajan (equivalent to the Bania Seth). However, they still could not escape imputations cast upon their character and were often accused of dishonest practices. The common Gujarati saying that "a goldsmith steals gold even out of his sister's ornaments," which alludes to his dishonest practice of filching gold and mixing metal, aptly describes the universal sentiment against Sonis.[7]

The Sonis did not initially institutionalize their business in Fiji, preferring to operate from their households which served as a place of residence as well as a workshop. Their operations allowed them a great deal of mobility, and also a considerable degree of exposure to other Indian groups

through their regular trips into the rural areas to sell jewelry. Gradually, there was a shift from the jewelry business to shopkeeping. This shift gained momentum after 1920 and was accelerated by the glut in the jewelry business, by increasing competition among the Sonis, by better banking facilities, and by a drastic drop in repatriation which had previously been a major source of their income. As Sonis adapted to the change, many entered shopkeeping, combining the sale of ready-made and imported jewelry with either the local curio business, or with the grocery and drapery business, or with the sale of household utensils.

As a whole the Soni community of Fiji did not constitute a homogeneous social unit. In the first place, the Kathiawari Sonis differed from the Bania-Sonis who were from South Gujarat. Second, the Kathiawari Sonis were themselves divided into the Girnara Sonis and the Patani Sonis. The three types of Gujarati Sonis neither intermarried nor interdined. Moreover, since the Girnara Sonis closed their ranks against the Patani Sonis, the latter group was forced to resort to exogamous unions by taking non-Gujarati brides in Fiji. In terms of their occupational specialization, the Bania-Sonis from South Gujarat entered organized shopkeeping faster than their Kathiawari counterpart, in an attempt to capitalize on the increasing demand for the more fashionable imported gold jewelry and for local curios. They were held in the same esteem as other Gujarati goldsmiths and silversmiths.

Patidars occupied a position similar to that of Sonis within the immigrant Gujarati community, which could be attributed to their exemplary social behavior and their ability to excel in trade. Other Indian groups held the Patidars in high esteem referring to them as 'Mahajan' or 'Patel.' The Patidars were able to command this respect because they were better educated than other Gujarati groups. Moreover, they also came into close contact with other Indians as traders. As a group, the Patidars eschewed their traditional calling of agriculture and entered commerce because of the

lucrative returns. In Fiji, as in Africa, the colonial government made no effort to encourage Patidars to enter agriculture where they could have conceivably surpassed other Indian farming groups. While there was shortage of cultivable land, the Patidars had little inclination to follow their traditional calling. Starting as clerks, shop assistants, and apprentices in other concerns, they became the leading Indian merchants in all the 'sugar towns' of Fiji.

The Patidars rigidly maintained their jati identity and exclusiveness. As the African experience has shown, it was more important for them to be regarded as members of a particular jati than to be "either a Hindu or a Muslim or even a member of the Indian community."[8] This characterization could be applied to all the Gujaratis in Fiji. However, the Patidar community was small as compared to the Sonis and the Khatris, and it did not divide itself along the lines of highly competitive and hierarchical corporate circles found in Central Gujarat. Competition was minimized because all Patidars, except a few who were lawyers, were involved in trade. Newly acquired wealth was not used to gain prestige or status in Fiji. Instead, Patidars complied with the norms of their native villages to enhance their social position.

The Khatris also rose to a position of prominence within the Gujarati community. As the earliest immigrants from South Gujarat, they established a monopoly of the tailoring trade and also diversified into the sale of textile goods. Their function within the colonial economy certainly had little bearing on their former status as weavers in Gujarat. Their important economic role as the colony's leading tailors enabled them to improve their status and prestige immensely. Tailoring, unlike weaving, had no association with untouchability, and no longer tied Khatris to a social system in which status and prestige were determined by fixed occupational roles. Moreover, it was an occupation that they were already familiar with at home, and made

this newly acquired trait their speciality in Fiji. Khatris monopolized tailoring but they were free to move into other areas whenever opportunity arose. Their services were not just restricted to the Indian segment of the population, but extended to the Fijians and Europeans alike. It was only in the realm of ritual behavior that they encountered difficulty in elevating their status to be on a par with that of the Sonis and Patidars. Social stigmatization by the high status groups obliged Khatris to maintain a high level of organizational unity and clannishness which clearly differentiated them from other Gujaratis.

The opportunities available in trade, commerce, and the other areas generally enabled all Gujarati groups to follow an occupation which was most suited to their skills. The Kanbis, for example, were quick to follow the Patidars into trade. Like the Patidars, the Kanbis were collectively known as Patels in Fiji. The intrinsic qualities which separated one jati from the other were only known to the Kanbis themselves, but to other Indians the major difference between each group appeared to be geographical only. The Kanbis from South Gujarat were known as 'Surati' Patels whereas Patidars were referred to as 'Charotariya' Patels. They did not consider themselves different from the Patidars in Fiji and claimed a similar social status. In fact, they successfully emulated the Patidar model of social behavior and outlook. They were very religious, maintained strict vegetarianism, and adhered to the Vaisya tradition in the same manner as the Patidars. Moreover there were no religious injunctions, or a large body of Gujarati Brahmins in Fiji, to prevent Kanbis from aspiring toward a high status.

The artisan and service jatis also found ample scope for their skills, and were generally able to escape the social stigmatization which accompanied demeaning occupations at home. In Fiji the importance of Gujarati barbers and washermen resulted from their readiness to engage in their traditional occupations, which few Indians were willing to enter. While Gujarati barbers

faced some competition from other Indian barbers, the Dhobis did not encounter such a problem because no other organized Indian group entered the laundry business. The Dhobis played a very important role within the context of the colonial economy, especially in an area where there was a large demand for their skills. The untouchability which was associated with their profession lost much of its significance in the absence of those values which determined their inferior status at home. The Mochis were another group who constituted an indispensable element within the Indian community. Without them people would have been forced to turn to the European concerns for expensive imported footwear. Like the Dhobis, they moved into an economic sphere where there was an absence of other Indian groups. Thus, they gained much respect only in terms of their economic role in both the rural and urban areas, but socially their association with leather working did not carry the high esteem of those Gujaratis engaged in trade and less demeaning activities. Their occupation underwent some modification, and there was a shift toward organized business activity. Though the first Mochi immigrants could have conceivably worked as hawkers, they all eventually opened shoe-shops which specialized in the sale of locally manufactured sandals as well as the more expensive imported shoes.

Other groups, such as the Kolis, Ghanchis, and Macchis, who were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy in Gujarat, quickly availed themselves of the opportunities in Fiji to improve their status. The Kolis were willing to enter any form of commercial activity or occupation which enabled them to make a decent living. They made some gains in trade, and were equally enterprising in the restaurant, tailoring, and the laundry businesses. Moreover, in an attempt to improve their status they also adopted 'Patel' as their surname, but they still remained on the periphery of the Patel economic and social structure. The few Ghanchis (oil pressers) were mostly greengrocers. Wealth certainly improved their status and today they

have styled themselves as Banias without undergoing any considerable degree of 'sanskritization.'[9] Another group, that is the Macchis (fishermen), was mainly engaged in tailoring which continued to be one respectable profession through which all minor and untouchable jatis could maintain a low profile. Thus, while emigration provided an outlet for Gujaratis to acquire new prestige and to ascend the social scale, the pursuit of wealth in Fiji merely facilitated that process.

Rather than looking primarily at the complexities of varna and jati to comprehend Gujarati social life in Fiji, it is more fruitful to examine the dynamics of the Gujarati shop, which influenced all aspects of immigrant life, for that purpose. Once they were outside their homeland, most immigrants were only concerned with selecting the appropriate occupational activity to sustain themselves abroad and their families at home. Since Gujarati immigrants usually left their families behind, they were less concerned with the paraphernalia of maintaining a household together with the accompanying elaborate rituals which helped to sustain it. The Gujarati community was overwhelmingly dominated by males between the ages of twenty and thirty whose prime purpose was to make an adequate living in Fiji.[10] For this reason all Gujarati immigrants concentrated their efforts on the shop rather than the household which certainly would have been a major concern if the immigrants had brought their families with them. The Gujarati shop served as a place of business and was also utilized as a place of residence, providing the meager comforts of a household.

The Gujarati shop came to epitomize the pinnacle of caste solidarity and success in Fiji. Moreover, it enabled Gujaratis to follow acceptable occupational traits. There were three main types of Gujarati shops which incorporated the general merchandise business, the jewelry business, and tailoring. Other types of activity such as laundering, hairdressing, bootmaking, and shoemaking were organized along conventional business lines after

merchants, tailors, and jewelers were firmly established. Activities which required traditional skills were generally monopolized by groups who had the expertise to operate these businesses. Jewelry making and almost all the artisan businesses fell into that category. Trade was the preserve of Patidars, but there was still ample scope for other groups who could acquire the necessary capital to enter that field. Tailoring was another activity in which a number of groups were involved, but it was basically the preserve of Khatris. As a rule the Gujarati shop, especially those in the jewelry and the general merchandise businesses, catered only to the Indian segment of the population. The Gujarati jeweler depended totally upon an Indian clientele. Similarly, the Gujarati merchant sold drapery, spices, pulses, rice, edible oils, and utensils, that is almost everything which was a basic requirement in an Indian household. Other businesses such as tailoring, laundering, boot-making, and hairdressing did not entirely depend upon Indians in order to survive, but were oriented toward the entire population which included Fijians, Chinese, Europeans, and Pacific Islanders.

The Gujarati shop was initially an individual operation but expanded into either a joint family enterprise, involving various kinship arrangements, or a partnership between people of the same jati and village. As an immigrant was still a member of a joint family in India, he could not escape the responsibilities which members of his large family heaped upon him. A convenient way for him to fulfil his obligation was to invite his male family members to join him. These family members included sons, brothers, uncles, nephews, cousins, and even his wife's relatives. In many instances, Gujarati immigrants went one step further and established partnerships within the framework of community which included family, jati, and village. The partnership arrangements were always between people who were intimately known to each other. Thus, through the shop an individual not only saw the materialization of his desire to accumulate wealth, but he also used it as the channel

to discharge his obligation to a larger circle of people, primarily by providing a shelter through which his kinfolk could come to Fiji.[11]

A person had a number of motives for recruiting within his community. First, there were the manpower requirements while a business expanded. An enterprise such as the jewelry business did not require a large source of manpower to survive over a long period. Besides, Soni concerns were usually small or often not institutionalized to allow jewelers enough mobility to sell their merchandise without having to bother about the daily operation of a large shop. There were other enterprises which required a considerable amount of capital outlay as well as sufficient manpower to function smoothly. The tailoring, drapery, grocery, laundry, and bootmaking businesses fell into this category. Merchants and tailors all required shop assistants in their operations. So did a laundry concern where it would have been virtually impossible for one person to handle all the functions of collection, washing, drying, ironing, and delivery.

Another reason for recruiting family and friends of the same jati was to avoid the pitfalls of any major disruptions in the business through disputes, frequent journeys to India to visit the family, and fraud. Disputes over money were less likely to occur between shareholders who were related or belonged to the same jati. Moreover, disputes often led to recourse to the courts which resulted in a 'loss of face' within the community as well as having repercussions in Gujarat.

An immigrant also had to make journeys to India at regular intervals of two years. Many immigrants had married at a very early age and had often departed for Fiji without consummating their marriages. Duty, or the concept of dharma, demanded that they fulfil their obligations as a 'householder' (an important stage of social evolution in the life of a Hindu). Others returned to visit their families, often with the implicit purpose of further procreation since most visits invariably resulted in the birth of

another child. For some there were sick parents who were pining for their absent sons, and for others there were important events to attend to, such as the marriage of a brother or sister. These visits required a long absence from the business of about a year which meant that it had to be left in reliable hands. Khatri businesses, for example, were always changing hands. One partner would depart for India and transfer his share to another with the explicit understanding that he would reclaim his share in the business upon his return. After his reentry into the business another partner would leave, and in this manner the business would continue without any serious disruptions.

There was always the element of fraud which discouraged business alliances between people who had no common interests. Family members and people of the same jati were easier to supervise, and were less likely to cheat or abscond with a share of the proceeds. Some Gujaratis, especially the Patidars, took considerable pains to minimize the risk of fraud by usually forming business alliances with their salas (brothers-in-law). A common belief among Gujaratis is that a wife's brother is the most ideal business partner.[12] This belief is an important feature of the kinship system, certainly in the case of Patidars where an enormous dowry is paid to obtain a suitable husband for a girl. A Patidar who managed to arrange a highly desirable hypergamous marriage for his daughter felt obligated to provide gifts for her and her children during her lifetime. She did not reciprocate in kind but was expected to exert enough influence on her husband to take an active interest in the welfare of her brothers. If the husband went abroad he was duly influenced to invite his salas (brothers-in-law) to join him. In this manner the girl indirectly assisted her family by furthering the fortunes of her brothers. In turn her husband received business partners or assistants who had little incentive to cheat because it disrupted the brother-sister relationship and caused much hardship to their sister. No one is more dreaded in a Gujarati household than a vengeful sasu (mother-in-law).[13]

The desire to keep the wealth within the community was another motive for inward recruitment. By allocating shares to brothers, wives, sons, and other relatives, businessmen could reduce their taxes and expenses. Moreover, people from the same linguistic and cultural stock were more willing to work for lower wages than other Indians who would have certainly demanded higher wages. Besides, workers who belonged to the same village as the owners would not press for prompt payment of wages if business was slack. In some cases where the owner had assisted in paying for the passage of his workers he could conveniently stipulate the terms of the wage payment as well as secure the maximum amount of cooperation and work from them. The arrangement always seemed to work to the advantage of the shop owner.[14]

The owner of a shop or an independent businessman was a person of immense standing within his own immediate circle, and in the eyes of other Gujaratis. Every immigrant's ultimate goal was to set up his own concern after an initial period of apprenticeship elsewhere. An immigrant who became an independent businessman, whether he was a merchant, or tailor, or bootmaker, was in the words of other Gujaratis 'his own boss' who was envied for his success and highly respected. In other words, he represented the model to emulate and served as the measure through which other immigrants gauged their own success.

The shopkeeper's high standing within his own community depended upon the length of his residence in the colony, the size of his business, the number of people in his employment, his knowledge of the local conditions, and his important contacts within the business community. Aside from his wealth, these factors provided him with extra leverage in dealing with his own community. If he had resided in the colony for a long period and possessed extensive experience in local affairs, then he was expected to impart this knowledge to new immigrants who aspired to enter the same line of business. An established businessman was also hard pressed by his kinfolk and acquaintances for assistance in getting more people into Fiji. Large

businesses, such as that of Narsey and Appabhai, acted as sponsors of numerous immigrants who entered Fiji after 1930 when a restrictive immigration policy prevented random entry.

An established business was where most Gujaratis gained the experience and the skills to survive in the commercial field. Gujaratis who wished to become independent traders or businessmen took considerable pains to remain in the good graces of the more established traders. Any fresh entrant into business would first obtain the permission and blessing of the established trader before launching his separate concern. Appabhai's tenacious hold over Indian trade in Fiji serves to illustrate how other Gujaratis were hesitant to set up rival businesses without first seeking his approval. One merely placated his huge ego, promised not to undermine his influence, strengthened business relationships by obtaining credit from him initially, and even catered to the established trader's sense of importance by utilizing his contacts and business expertise to set up the new concern.[15]

The smooth operation of the Gujarati shop required a cheap source of labor derived from the owner's kinship and village ties in his homeland. Without this labor force Gujarati traders and businessmen would have encountered much difficulty in permeating the various spheres of commercial activity. Thus, along with the traders, shopkeepers, and merchants, there grew a separate class of Gujarati workers within the community who existed on another economic and functional level.

The existence of a less affluent class of Gujarati immigrants is contrary to the common belief that the Gujaratis as a group were prosperous.[16] Perhaps this assumption has resulted from the deep involvement of Gujaratis in commercial activity. Outward appearances tend to be misleading, and though Gujaratis were comparatively better off than other Indian groups because they lived in urban areas, were all employed or owned businesses, and were not affected by the vicissitudes of agriculture, there still emerged a

category of Gujarati immigrants who differed markedly from the more affluent independent traders and businessmen. It would be incorrect to assume that every Gujarati businessman in Fiji had turned rich overnight. Such an assumption obscures the truth that all immigrants had to work in some other capacity in order to acquire the skills or accumulate the necessary capital to enter business.

The Gujarati worker or shop assistant followed an excruciating regimen of work which was extremely monotonous, if not harsh. Though he was the backbone of the system which supported the Gujarati businessman, he shared little of the material benefits or profits. He was often at the mercy of his employer who was in most cases of the same jati and village. He worked long hours during the day, and this routine also extended into the weekends. Moreover, he was always prepared to work for remuneration which were certainly lower than wages paid in non-Gujarati business sectors. Sometimes, clothing, food, and lodging were provided by employers to supplement the low wages which usually went toward the repayment of expenses incurred in coming to Fiji and in supporting the family at home. The overriding concern to fulfil family obligations, and the desire to become an independent businessman, made the Gujarati worker live very frugally. He had no active social life and left the wealthier Gujarati to manage the affairs of the community; he lived under appalling and overcrowded conditions in a hostel type of arrangement; above all, he lived in a miserly fashion and sustained himself on a very meager diet to minimize his nominal expenses.

The daily routine of the worker revolved around the operation of the shop. No matter what the activity was, whether tailoring, or shopkeeping, or laundering, the worker's or the assistant's day began very early in the morning. In the laundry business, for example, most activity commenced before daybreak. The average day consisted of waking, performing all the necessary ablutions, praying, having a cup of hot milk or tea for breakfast, and then

rushing to the shop to prepare for business. If the worker slept in the shop, then his tasks involved in preparation were greatly facilitated. The shop usually contained all the necessary amenities, and if there were no bathing facilities a makeshift bathroom was often set up. There was always a small room at the back which served as a kitchen where all the cooking chores were performed. The rise of Gujarati restaurants eliminated both the inconvenience of cooking in the shop and the difficulties over diet. Those who were vegetarians continued to prepare their own food but many Gujarati workers, who could not afford to bring their families with them, relied on the Gujarati lodges for their meals. Breakfast was the least important of all meals because the primary concern was to prepare for business as early as possible.

The shop was cleaned, and even the pavement outside was thoroughly swept. Before the doors were opened for business, the owner burnt incense and recited prayers to Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of wealth. Work progressed until lunch which was normally taken before midday. During the regular lunch break when all businesses were required by law to shut down, Gujaratis continued to work behind closed doors, which meant that there was no prolonged break during the day. In the afternoon the only break was for tea which again was prepared and taken inside the shop. Unlike many business concerns which closed operations before dusk almost all Gujarati concerns continued to do business. At night the workers gradually departed to their rooms where they collectively prepared their meals, or to the lodges, or remained in the shop to cook and eat. Those who stayed at the shop normally took their meals after the doors were shut at night. After their meals, most workers returned to the shop to complete their allotted daily tasks Only then were bedrolls laid in any sleepable space and mosquito nets strung over them. After a brief period of relaxation interspersed with random conversation, or a card game, or letter writing, all activity ceased.

Social life was reduced to a minimum and mainly restricted to organized

sports on Sundays. Town ordinances prevented normal business activity on the Sabbath, but most Gujaratis regarded Sunday as a regular working day behind closed doors. Whatever little social activity immigrants indulged in was all crammed into one day. In the football season, there was the usual soccer match early in the morning between teams representing a particular locality. This was followed by work until the early afternoon when Gujaratis belonging to the same jati and village usually met to have a meal together as a way of consolidating their common bond. In the cricket season, sporting activity normally commenced in the late afternoon after all work was completed.

A third category of immigrants consisted of hawkers who preceded shopkeepers. Hawking was certainly the earliest form of commercial enterprise adopted by most immigrants. While shopkeeping may have been the ultimate goal, many Gujaratis preferred to remain in hawking because it simply required a license, very little capital outlay, and provided considerable mobility. The hawker's lifestyle was hardly any better or more glamorous than that of the shop assistant and ordinary worker, but he enjoyed a greater degree of independence than the average Gujarati who was intricately linked to the economics of the shop.

Gujaratis were involved in a wide range of hawking activity. Hawkers normally restricted their activities to the towns, but the more enterprising and adventurous went to any remote rural area where Indians resided. Sonis were the earliest Gujarati hawkers who went wherever there was ample demand for gold jewelry. Other types of hawkers who emerged later included the peanut vendor, the sweetmeat vendor, the vegetable vendor, and the ordinary street peddler whose pavement stall or push cart carried cheap household items, ornaments, cosmetics, clothes, hairpins, mirrors, handbags, and glass bangles.

The most interesting feature of Gujarati hawking was the creation of a credit system based on village and kinship ties. Hawkers usually bought their goods from the large establishments. A hawking jeweler, for example, obtained

the finished product from a more established jeweler on credit over an extended period. The kinship ties which bound the hawker to the established jeweler eliminated the constant pressure of rendering regular cash payments, and excessive hounding by the supplier. These ties also enabled the hawker to return any unsold merchandise without any major financial loss. Other Gujarati hawkers usually had a similar arrangement with their suppliers.

The hawker's fortunes fluctuated with the nature and quality of his merchandise, the fierce competition which he encountered from other hawkers, the amount of credit received from the supplier, the demand for his goods, and the location of his activity. Hawking was a daily operation, but the hawker was not bound to the same regimen as a worker in the shop. Though he was always situated in a choice location from where he conducted his sales, he was also attracted to crowds, large gatherings, and public events. The highlight of most hawking activity was the town bazaar every Saturday which attracted people from outlying areas. At the town bazaar rows of stall and open-air vendors competed with the regular hawkers for business of the townsfolk who converged there to buy fish and other seafoods, fowls and goats, cassava and taro root, fresh fruit and vegetables, yaqona (kava root), household supplies, condiments and spices, sweetmeat, and miscellaneous cooked delicacies. The bazaar was essentially an important social event where hawkers pitted their skills against each other, and consolidated their relationship over a wider circle of customers.

The emphasis on trade and commerce disrupted two important aspects of Gujarati social life. In the first place, the development of family life was immensely retarded because immigrants were content to leave their families at home. Secondly, the absence of families made immigrants reluctant to implant the religious cults and sects of their homeland, resulting in the neglect of the important rituals concerned with the household. Family life in Fiji was not a major consideration because many immigrants anticipated a

short-term stay of two years only.[17] Besides, the trauma involved in uprooting a family and transporting it to a totally alien social environment merely added to the difficulty of duplicating the Gujarati household in Fiji. An immigrant was content to leave his wife and children in the care of his joint family. In this manner he not only safeguarded his interests in the family resources and wealth, but also perpetuated his ties with his kinfolk and indirectly participated in the important domestic rites through his wife and children.

The desire to bring wives and families to Fiji was initially restricted to a few groups. Only those Gujaratis who resigned themselves to remain in Fiji beyond the anticipated two-year period, or those who were faced with the escalating costs of travel to India, or those who had accumulated enough wealth to establish a household, felt any compulsion to send for their families. Family emigration commenced very slowly. The first Gujarati women emigrants belonged to the Soni community from Kathiawar and arrived in Fiji in 1917.[18] The difficulties as well as the expenses involved in regular travel between Fiji and Kathiawar induced family emigration among the Sonis. Another reason was linked to the problems of diet. Sonis did not frequent the growing number of Gujarati eating establishments which mainly catered to a nonvegetarian clientele. Nor did they possess the same degree of fraternal solidarity as the Khatri to survive without their womenfolk. The dietary problem was, in fact, a strong inducement to other vegetarian groups, namely the Patidars and Kanbis, to bring their wives with them. Once there was a small community of Soni and Patel Gujarati women settled in Fiji, it served as an incentive to other Gujaratis to send for their families.

After 1930 the Government of Fiji increased its drive to promote family emigration, and shaped its immigration policy to prevent the growing influx of Gujarati males. In spite of official encouragement some groups, especially the Khatris, preferred to make regular lengthy trips to India which also

allowed them to introduce replacements for their businesses for the duration of their absence. It was not until 1947 that the Government enacted stringent measures to limit the period of absence to one year.[19] Harsh immigration laws finally forced many Gujaratis to accept the inevitability of family emigration.

Prior to the arrival of families almost all Gujaratis lived in fraternal communities in a dormitory type of household. The immigrants who formed a fraternal community were usually known to each other in India. They either had close kinship ties, or came from the same village, or belonged to the same jati, or did the same type of work at home. Single males in India were accustomed to sharing a room or sleeping together because of the conventional segregation of males and females. The rooms and houses which Gujaratis rented were quickly turned into dormitories, often resulting in much overcrowding. The shop served a similar function for Gujaratis who could not find sleeping space elsewhere. The sleeping rooms contained very little furniture, a few amenities such as an outdoor communal bathroom and toilet, and had just the minimum amount of space alloted for the kitchen. The sleeping room merely served the more immediate and practical needs of the occupants rather than catering to the standards of personal comfort and luxury.[20]

As families arrived the character of boarding rooms and houses gradually changed. A member of a fraternal community who sent for his wife persuaded other single males with whom he did not share any kinship or village ties to move into another fraternal community. Sometimes, males without any ties were allowed to remain but were normally requested to take their meals at a Gujarati lodge. The growth of family households forced single males to live under more overcrowded conditions, especially in Suva where immigrants were hesitant to reside too far from the location of their businesses. In the 'sugar towns' overcrowding was not such a pressing problem because many shops were attached to a large compound, a spacious storage area, and a small

house at the back. Indian merchants and traders who conducted business alongside the Gujaratis in the small towns, and maintained good relations with them, had no qualms about providing accommodation for single males who could not be absorbed by other Gujarati fraternal communities or households. A typical Gujarati household in Fiji was occupied by a number of families with very close kinship ties. The most common arrangement involved two or more brothers and their wives, and sometimes included cousins or uncles with their families. In addition to these multiple families there were other single male Gujaratis, usually very close relatives, who were also part of the household. The close kinship ties which bound the menfolk together facilitated the management of the household. The values of the joint family which had strongly permeated all aspects of Gujarati life in India still prevailed within the Gujarati household in Fiji. Though there were no rigid rules governing the management of the household, everyone cooperated to make it function smoothly. The maximum degree of authority rested on the head of the family who constituted the largest faction within the household and made a larger share of financial contributions to the upkeep.

The allocation of rooms or sleeping space in a family household depended upon need. A family consisting of the head, his wife, and children was entitled to a single room in the interests of providing some measure of privacy, whereas in a fraternal community a large group of single males occupied a room. A shortage of individual and private rooms often forced two small families to occupy a large room divided by a large curtain or some makeshift partition which did not afford much privacy. The male members of the household either slept in the living room, or in a communal reception room where all the guests were entertained, or in a spacious balcony overlooking the street, or in the corridor between rooms, or even in the kitchen if no other space was available. In the small towns, the large compound behind a shop contained a shed where the more daring Gujarati males slept in good

weather.

To preserve space the kitchen area remained as a by-product of the time when only single male Gujaratis managed the household. Unlike the spacious kitchens of Gujarati households in India, the kitchen in Fiji was relegated to an insignificant part of the house. It was sometimes located outside the house, but always beyond the view of visitors. The attempt to shelter the kitchen was perhaps a deliberate effort to prevent intruders or outsiders from casting eyes on their women.[21] Also sheltered from outside view was the area designated as the communal puja (prayer) room. Meals were taken in the kitchen in the usual Indian fashion with all the males partaking of the food first. The living room was turned into a dining area whenever guests were entertained, and it was also the most informal meeting place of all the occupants. This room contained the most ostentatious display of any affluence which the household enjoyed. It had more curtains, ornaments, framed pictures, furniture, and was always neater than the other rooms.

Menfolk were removed from the problems of managing the household because their activities mainly revolved around the shop. The management of the household was the preserve of women. They undertook the major responsibility for constructing family life around the values of their homeland. Their main chores included cooking, cleaning, and washing if they could not afford the luxury of a housegirl. They fulfilled the emotional and psychological needs of their men, cared for all the children of the household, perpetuated the important domestic rituals, and generally ensured the safety and health of all the inhabitants. The mobility which they had previously enjoyed at home, including daily visits to the temple, socializing readily with friends and relatives, and visiting the marketplace, was seriously curtailed because of their unfamiliarity with the local conditions and their inability to communicate in the local idiom. For this reason men often assisted in going to the market for vegetables and purchasing supplies.

While the Gujarati community remained exclusively male in character there was no need for the elaborate domestic rituals which were an essential part of the Vaisnava tradition of Gujarat. At home Gujaratis exhibited a high level of caste and religious consciousness, yet in Fiji they thought little of religion. In Gujarat religion had a strong correlation with the rigid system of social stratification, but in Fiji rituals dealing with occupational specialization and with the concept of 'pure' and 'impure' had a minimal degree of significance because immigrants were reluctant to arrange themselves according to the norms of their homeland. The majority of immigrants came from the artisan jatis to whom the only important domestic rituals were those concerned with events in a person's life cycle--birth, marriage, and death. Furthermore, the relative ease with which a person could travel between Fiji and Gujarat, coupled with the strong links which an immigrant maintained with his native village, meant that he could conceivably be present for the major domestic ceremonies. The frequency of visits also implied that an immigrant could postpone his religious obligations until his return.

There were other reasons for the absence of fervent religious activity among male Gujaratis before the arrival of families. The emphasis on trade and commerce made Gujaratis hesitant in transplanting the highly ritualistic sects of their homeland and in constructing the necessary temples to accommodate them. Moreover, they were not prepared to import and support a large body of competent experts and priests who were indispensable for maintaining these temples. Furthermore, they had no overpowering desire to introduce their own sects and cults because they could easily identify with the important Hindu sects, notably the orthodox Sanatam Dharma and the Arya Samaj sects, which were already flourishing in Fiji. Almost all Gujarati immigrants were either Saivites or embraced one of the many Vaisnava cults which meant that their worship of Siva or Vishnu, or one of the incarnations of either, could be incorporated into the practices and beliefs of the orthodox Sanatam Dharma.

Thus, the Gujaratis were not entirely removed from the mainstream of their religion because of the syncretic nature of Hinduism which survived in Fiji. Serious devotion to religious life in Fiji was available to any orthodox Hindu through various observances in the Hindu calendar, and by means of temple worship, pujas (ceremonial worship of major deities), and kathas (communal sacred readings and recitations). Another reason, similar to the African case, was that immigration regulations would have prevented priests, religious teachers, and mendicants from coming to Fiji as part of the sects and cults of Gujarat.[22] Gujaratis would have been extremely reluctant to unite to oppose immigration restrictions to satisfy their religious needs. Whatever solidarity they possessed was channelled into other activities than religion.

Ceremonial worship of the major deities and a common body of Sanskrit texts are integral aspects of the 'great tradition' of India, and also formed an important part of the highly devotional Hinduism of Gujarat. Gujaratis definitely encountered this aspect of their religion in Fiji. However, what they found lacking was a 'little tradition' imbedded in a highly ritualistic 'domestic religion' which included worship of village and household deities, nature and animal worship, worship of energy (Sakti) in its most common manifestation as a mother-goddess (mata), reverence of ancestors, and belief in omens and spirits.[23]

A 'domestic religion' did not emerge until after the arrival of Gujarati women and families. While Gujarati men had learned to safely ignore the cumbersome domestic rituals, women had a greater need for religion and the divine for the protection of their families in a seemingly hostile environment, and to shape family life according to the cultural values of their homeland. Women were not only stalwart custodians of Gujarati culture in Fiji but also its leading exponents in their role as the main religious teachers of their children. Rituals evolving around the important life-cycle events such as marriage and death developed very slowly because most Gujaratis returned

to India to marry or to die.[24] Only those rituals concerning birth seemed to have any relevance for the longest time. Even then the Kul Devi/Devta ceremonies concerning the entry of a child 'into the fold,' giving him or her the right of worship of the family god or goddess, were not performed until the child returned to India, or postponed until such time as a family had established an independent family god or goddess in Fiji.[25]

Religious festivals and holidays which occurred with regularity on the Hindu calendar were celebrated more frequently than the life-cycle events. The important festivals and holidays included Navratri (festival of nine nights) which preceded the Dasera festival of North India, Divali, Besatu Varsa or New Year (the day after Divali) when traders and businessmen opened new accounts, Raksabandan (a gift-giving occasion when females reinforced their ties with brothers), Holi, Janmastami (the birth of Krishna), Ram Navami (the birth of Ram), and Nagpanchami (cobra worship).[26] Holidays and festivals were occasions for communal worship which reinforced ties within the family and jati.

The third aspect of Gujarati life in Fiji, apart from the shop and the family, was the social relationships which developed within the community itself, and secondly between the community as a distinct 'cultural group' and other cultural groups and races. There were basically two phases in the evolution of these relationships. In the first stage, when the community was exclusively male in character, there was not only considerable interaction among Gujaratis but also a higher level of contact with other Indian groups. The second stage commenced with the arrival of women, which produced a more conscious effort to maintain and preserve Gujarati cultural values in Fiji. The presence of women necessitated a reevaluation of the male intercaste relationships. It produced a heightened degree of jati exclusiveness, mainly through strict observance of the rules for marriage and interdining. Moreover, it made the Gujarati male community highly protective of their womenfolk which

was reflected in a calculated effort to isolate women from intimate inter-caste, intergroup, and interracial contact.[27]

The main social relationships developed within the jati itself. In other words, the most intensive and intimate social interaction was among members who belonged to the same group or circle. When a Gujarati male first came to Fiji he depended upon a relative or a fellow villager for food, shelter, and assistance in finding work. Alternatively, he turned to other Gujaratis who were from the same district or region, and who shared common interests. For example, Gujaratis from South Gujarat, more specifically from Navsari, had a tendency to live in close proximity to each other in Suva, and readily sought each other's assistance in securing employment. Diet also played an important role in conditioning social relationships. Gujaratis with similar dietary habits had more interaction with each other than with other Gujaratis. The vegetarian Soni was certainly more inclined to interdine with the vegetarian Patidar in the lax social milieu of Fiji than he was with the nonvegetarian Khatri. Common economic pursuits also drew Gujaratis together. Groups engaged in tailoring were reliant and dependent upon each other for goods and credit. Traders and merchants displayed a similar tendency. On an overall basis an immigrant could establish social relationship with other Gujaratis as long as it was in the interests of his business, provided that his relationship with another Gujarati was 'proper' and 'correct' in accordance with the rules of conduct stipulated by his jati.

The entrenchment of various groups in a particular occupation, such as the 'Charotariya' Patels in trade and the Khatris in tailoring, was characterized by the rise in solidarity against outsiders. In other words, a Patidar was more inclined to assist another Patidar establish himself in trade, just as a Khatri was motivated by the strong sentiments of jati to aid another Khatri. In-group loyalty transcended social relationships established outside one's immediate circle, contrary to the common belief that all Gujaratis

possessed a uniform "strong sense of loyalty to one another."[28] It would be more precise to say that Gujaratis generally recognized that each group was in Fiji for a common purpose which mitigated the need for not creating artificial barriers to prevent any group from accomplishing its goal.

Another factor which produced in-group solidarity was the presence of women. As mentioned earlier, Gujaratis prevented their women from intimate social contact with any group other than within their immediate circle. In the process of protecting the sanctity of their households through their women they had to maintain a strict observance of the rules concerning interdining and intimate contact. Subsequently, social relationships which developed as a result of business associations were not extended to the household. For example, a Darji who had good relations with a Khatri would readily socialize with him provided that this association did not extend into matters of jati.[29] A common manner in which male Gujaratis cultivated their social relationships was to meet regularly at a lodge to fraternize over refreshments. Moreover, there were exceptions to the strict rules which governed socializing and interdining. Sonis and Patidars maintained good relations and often visited each other's homes. Another example of lax social behavior, certainly an isolated case, is provided by the relationship between the first Gujarati Brahmin immigrant and the Khatris in the town of Lautoka. Shantilal Desai, an Anavil Brahmin, lived with and worked for a Khatri family. His vegetarian meals were prepared by the Khatri women of the household, but in separate utensils.[30]

Social relationships between Gujaratis and other Indians were primarily restricted to males, and only between business associates or those who had come into contact with each other in the initial phase of Gujarati settlement. Sonis and Patidars who were highly dependent upon other Indians for their livelihood maintained a higher level of contact with them than did other Gujaratis. In fact, the first Soni marriage which was performed in Nadi in 1933 illustrates

the strong bond which grew between Sonis and other Indians. The bridegroom's party departed with much fanfare from Saru, an Indian settlement some eight miles from Lautoka, and travelled by horsedrawn carriages to Nadi.[31]

The relationship between females of different cultural groups, on the other hand, was basically one of avoidance. This lack of contact can be attributed to linguistic and cultural differences, but there was also the feeling of superiority which 'free' Indians, especially Gujaratis, felt over other Indians who had some association with the indenture system. Moreover, Gujarati women in Fiji refrained from intimate social contact with other Indian women because they were not willing to entertain people in their household other than members of their own immediate circle. It is highly plausible that Gujarati men had more contact than their women with other Indian women through their businesses. Clandestine relations of a sexual nature were common between single Gujarati men and Indian housegirls or women who worked for them, but liaisons between Gujarati women and other Indian males were nonexistent.[32]

Contact with other races was minimal. The Chinese were often regarded as competitors of small Gujarati traders in Suva and the 'sugar towns.' The relationship with the indigenous Fijians was one of total avoidance. Few Gujaratis traded in Fijian settlements and villages, and were prevented through various ordinances from conducting business in exclusively Fijian areas. The only contact took place in the towns and only within the confines of the Gujarati shop. Gujaratis had a better rapport with Europeans than they had with either the Fijians or the Chinese. They came into contact with Europeans mainly through the services they provided in the tailoring, laundry, and boot-making businesses. Gujaratis also encountered them through their business dealings with the European-controlled commercial houses, the banking institutions, and the shipping lines. Contact on the official level was restricted to the two major concerns of the Gujarati community--obtaining business

licenses and immigration permits. The European was indispensable to the Gujarati because of his powerful political and economic role in the colony.

Gujarati internal and external relationships indicated a considerable degree of social selectivity and segregation in intercaste, intergroup, and interethnic relations. In the absence of formal caste councils to regulate 'correct' and 'proper' behavior, immigrants relied on caste principles, such as intimate social contact and marriage only within one's immediate circle, to maintain in-group solidarity. Gujarati social life on this level was determined by a strong desire not to deviate too drastically from the norms of the homeland to permit the resumption of normal relations with the extended jati nucleus if a person desired to return home. The second level of relationship was linked to the Gujarati's preoccupation with trade and commerce. Again there was a tendency toward in-group solidarity based on common kinship ties, but only to the extent that it did not displace other Gujarati groups from pursuing their goal in Fiji. The common desire of all Gujaratis to enter the commercial field lessened the impact of cleavages arising from the attempt by each group to maintain its distinct jati identity.

Economic relations were essentially of three types: internal, or those which developed within the jati; intergroup, or those which developed between Gujaratis of different jatis; and external, or those which developed between Gujaratis as a distinct cultural group and other Indian groups. Internal economic relationships within the jati were very important and represented a facet of in-group solidarity. A Gujarati wishing to engage in some form of commercial activity always entered an area in which other members of his jati were firmly and visibly established. By not deviating into another area, a newcomer in business could rely on village and kinship ties to obtain credit and goods from the more established concerns. These relationships provide a good insight into the mechanics of Gujarati business. The dispersion of goods and credit from the importer/wholesaler/supplier/financier/merchant to

the shopkeeper/retailer/trader/borrower at the bottom ensured that wealth could be distributed widely within one's immediate circle and jati, that losses could be minimized, and that a person could visit India by returning his goods to the supplier or leaving the business in the care of a member of his jati rather than an outsider.

Intergroup relationships, that is between different jatis, were determined by similar economic goals as well as from the knowledge that all Gujaratis shared a common linguistic and cultural tradition. Relationships on this level were geared to lessen social cleavages and to stress values which provided some cohesion to the community. Gujaratis supported each other's business endeavors, participated as a group in articulating their objectives in the local Indian Chambers of Commerce, and were willing to be mobilized to collectively voice grievances on issues which affected the community such as gaining the franchise for subjects of the Princely States, seeking an extension of business hours, protesting immigration restrictions, and showing concern for the lack of educational facilities for Gujarati children.

External economic relations involved Gujaratis and other Indian groups. On one level there was the relationship between distinct cultural types, that is Gujarati and North Indian, Gujarati and South Indian, and Gujarati and Punjabi. Gujaratis merely comprised one of the various Indian groups involved in commerce, and formed relationships with them through common economic interests. The involvement of Gujaratis in commerce alongside other Indians did not result in a high degree of economic interdependence and cooperation. These relationships were characterized by stiff competition among various Indian groups to provide miscellaneous services to a large Indian community. The following table provides some insight into the areas in which each group was most entrenched (see p. 263).

There were few business partnerships between Gujaratis of different jatis or between Gujaratis and other Indian groups. Partnerships were

TABLE 6.1

INDIAN BUSINESS REGISTRATIONS (1924-1945)
(including particulars of operation for each cultural group)

	Gujarati	North Indian (a) Hindu	(b) Muslim	South Indian	Punjabi	Miscellaneous	Total
General Merchant	50	48	10	11	18		137
Cinema Operator/ Film Distributor	4	16		1		2	23
Butcher			10				10
Transport/Taxi	2	47	5		5	2	61
Construction	1	9				1	11
Photographer/ Camera Supplies		7				2	9
Auto Supplies/ Service Station		7				1	8
Jeweler/Curio Vendor	25	10					35
Jeweler/Merchant	10						10
Restaurant	5	1		3			9
Tailor/Draper	153	1	2				156
Laundry	22		1				23
Bootmaker	13						13
Miscellaneous	13	30	6	1	1	1	52
Cessations	24	16		3			43
TOTAL	322	192	34	19	24	9	600

Source: Business Records, Office of the Registrar-General, Suva, Fiji.

indicative of in-group solidarity and were formed, first and foremost, within one's immediate circle. Partnerships which involved Gujaratis of different jatis, or Indians from different cultural groups were not enduring relation-relationships. A classic case of an unsuccessful partnership between a Gujarati and a non-Gujarati was that between Appabhai Patel and J. P. Maharaj which terminated after four years. A plausible explanation for the lack of partnerships across group lines was the diversity of services which each group provided. More specifically, there was little incentive toward economic cooperation. Gujaratis were mainly engaged in tailoring, in the drapery business, in trade, in the manufacture of jewelry, in bootmaking, and in the laundry business, whereas other Indian groups were chiefly in trade, the transport and taxi business, and the operation of cinema houses.

The second level of external relations between Gujaratis and other Indians emanated from the Gujarati shop. It involved relationships which grew between the Gujarati in his role as trader/merchant/shopkeeper/moneylender/supplier of credit and the Indian in his capacity as farmer/borrower/customer/client/worker/debtor/utilizer of consumer goods. Relationships in this category depended upon the nature and size of the enterprise. Gujaratis with abundant capital and large concerns were able to extend their tenacious influence over a wider circle of customers through a liberal system of credit. Shopkeeper and client relationships were essentially of an enduring nature. A Gujarati shopkeeper or trader, whether Khatri or Soni or Patidar, made considerable efforts to maintain good relations with his regular customers. He knew them on a personal basis, provided extensive credit within reasonable bounds, refrained from constant and excessive hounding, accepted staggered rather than lump-sum payments on debt, and generally avoided alienating his customers at any cost. Customers thus felt obliged to attach themselves to their shop-keeper, sonar, tailor, dhobi, or any other Gujarati businessman not only in terms of their needs but also on a social basis.

Any break in the relationship usually required a strong justification. A customer who felt that a shopkeeper was inflating the figures in his account would confront the latter with his complaint. In the absence of proper accounts the customer would settle his debt begrudgingly, break his relationship, and take his business elsewhere. Alternatively, he would refrain from paying and face the risk of a settlement in court. However, the general rule was to avoid any confrontation with a customer which undermined either the business or the Gujarati shopkeeper's influence over his customer. By introducing a social element into his economic relationship with his predominant Indian customers, the Gujarati extended his tenacious hold over a wide range of economic activities in Fiji.

In the final analysis the Gujaratis did not organize themselves according to any rigid hierarchical structure. Though caste ideology linked immigrants to their respective jati nucleus, they were not obliged to adhere strictly to traditional occupations in a colonial environment such as Fiji's, where occupation specialization, with the notion of purity and pollution ingrained within, had little relevance. Groups engaged in traditional occupations because there was a need for their skills which other Indians lacked. Caste behavior was only important to the extent that it enabled an immigrant to resume normal relations with his caste-fellows upon his return.

Rather than concentrating on the paraphenalia of caste and religion, which are essentially inseparable, the Gujaratis built their social life around the shop. The Gujarati shop was the focal point of all their activities while the community remained essentially male in character. It not only served as the place of business but also provided the meager comforts of a home. Gujaratis worked, cooked, ate, slept, and socialized in the shop. Only after the arrival of women was there any desire to attend to the needs of the household. Religion was another sphere which was ignored but revived after the introduction of families.

As for social relationships they took place first within the immediate jati, and then extended to groups with similar interests. Whatever social intercourse existed with other Indians was upstaged by the need to maintain caste exclusiveness and in-group solidarity against outsiders. Social relationships had a deep correlation with economic relationships. On the one hand Gujaratis displayed a preference for neighbors who were drawn from the same cultural background, and on the other they also indicated a similar preference for economic partnerships with people like themselves. Economic relationships were only important insofar as they consolidated their base over a wider area.

In effect the cultural cohesiveness of the community enabled it to effectively respond to the pressures of changing conditions in a seemingly hostile environment. It provided them with a sense of continuity with their homeland in their attempt to assert their identity in Fiji.

NOTES

[1]Majmudar, Cultural History of Gujarat, p. 256.

[2]Interview with I. M. Doctor, youngest son of Manilal Doctor, Bombay (August 25, 1974).

[3]Interview with Devidas Fakir Morriswala, Khatri businessman, Nadi, Fiji (June 9, 1975).

[4]See in particular the articles by Agehananda Bharati, "Ideology and and Context of Caste among the Indians in East Africa"; Hilda Kuper, "Changes in Caste in the South African Indian"; H. S. Morris, "Caste among the Indians of Uganda," in Schwartz, Caste in Overseas Indian Communities, pp. 237-265, 267-282, 283-320.

[5]Morris, op. cit., p. 278.

[6]Interviews among the older generation of immigrants revealed that membership within a joint family system provided them with a definite sense of belonging. Also, see Rashmi Desai, Indian Immigrants in Britain (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 14-18; N. A. Thoothi, The Vaishnavas of Gujarat (Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Company, 1935), pp. 145-153.

[7]Govindbhai H. Desai, Hindu Families in Gujarat, being an Account of their Domestic, Social and Economic Life (Baroda: Baroda State Press, 1932), pp. 57-58.

[8]Morris, "Caste among the Indians of Uganda," p. 273.

[9]Interview with Ratilal Parshotam, Ghanchi businessman and landlord in Suva, Fiji (September 26, 1975).

[10]This age factor is calculated from the passport applications for Fiji in Bombay and Baroda.

[11]The information on the Gujarati shop and on the various aspects of family life, described between p. 243 and p. 254 was orally obtained.

[12]Morris, Indians in Uganda, p. 128.

[13]For a detailed discussion on the position of a housewife in a joint family household see Govindbhai Desai, op. cit., pp. 39-49.

[14]Inward recruitment in Fiji was not any different from other areas where there was a large concentration of Gujarati immigrants. See Rashmi Desai, Indian Immigrants in Britain, pp. 63-64.

[15]The role of the established trader in actively directing the pace of Gujarati enterprise was basically restricted to the Patidars.

[16]See Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 134; Ali, "Aspects of Fiji Indian History--1," pp. 1786-87.

[17]It was perhaps the African experience, of the constant and frequent travel between Africa and India, which created this false hope of accumulating a vast amount of money within a two-year period. Most immigrants did not foresee or anticipate different and difficult conditions in Fiji.

[18]Passport Registers, Political Department, Bombay, No. 8 of 1916-17, No. 9 of 1917-18.

[19]Ordinance No. 33 of 1947, Fiji Legislative Council Debates, 1947 (Suva: Government Printer, 1949), pp. 598-621.

[20]It would not be far from the truth to assume that in some cases the level of comfort which immigrants experienced in Fiji was greater than what they were accustomed to in India.

[21]See Pocock, Kanbi and Patidar, p. 10.

[22]See Morris, Indians in Uganda, p. 62.

[23]Majmudar, op. cit., pp. 221-46.

[24]The first marriage took place in 1933, about 30 years after the commencement of Gujarati emigration to Fiji. The lack of females of marriageable age within the community obliged males to seek brides in Gujarat.

[25]Every Vaisnava household in Gujarat has an ancestral family god or goddess which was tended by the womenfolk. The worship of the Kul Devi/Devta is merely an affirmation of the intimate family circle, that is the joint family which shares everything in common. For a detailed discussion see Thoothi, op. cit., pp. 144-45, 364.

[26]Govindbhai Desai, op. cit., pp. 363-81.

[27]The tendency to isolate their women was very strong among the Khatris. Interview with Devidas Fakir Morriswala, Nadi, Fiji (June 9, 1975).

[28]See Gillion, op. cit., p. 134.

[29]Interview with Ishwarlal Naraindas, Darji businessman in Lautoka, Fiji (August 10, 1975).

[30]Interview with Shantilal Bapubhai Desai, Anavil businessman in Suva, Fiji (October 23, 1975).

[31]Interview with Narainji Sida, Soni shopkeeper and landlord, Lautoka, Fiji (August 8, 1975).

[32]Information orally obtained from Devidas Morriswala, Nadi, Fiji.

CHAPTER VII

THE ASSERTION OF THE GUJARATI IDENTITY

Growth and diversification was as much a part of the history of Gujarati settlement in Fiji, as was their attempt to assert their identity in terms of their preoccupation with trade, their strong attachment for their homeland, and their response to the challenges of education and politics. In this chapter the Gujaratis' innovative role in the establishment and extension of Indian enterprise is examined with particular emphasis on the hypothesis that Gujaratis displayed a natural aptitude for trade and commerce on account of their inherent ability to organize and be organized. The chapter also grapples with the question of integration into the host society showing that Gujaratis maintained a high level of attachment for their homeland, consolidated through exclusiveness and in-group solidarity, cultural chauvinism, regular visits, and strong links with the jati nucleus at home. In other words, Gujaratis existed in the host country but rarely exhibited signs of belonging to it. Consequently, the absence of any strong attachment for Fiji had a deep impact on education and colonial politics, the two main concerns of the other Indians. The response to education, as it will be shown here, had little to do with social progress but, rather, reflected a fear of being 'left behind' as well as a desire to acquire as much education as was necessary to conduct good business. Political participation was based on a similar ethos. The final concern of this chapter is the lack of Gujarati participation in politics. The focus is on two important themes: first, Gujaratis did not mix politics with business; second, the urban-based trader community was far removed from problems of the average Indian in Fiji.

The term "Bombaywalla" or "Bombayah" is not only a cultural category but also a particular form of stereotyping of the Gujarati personality in

Fiji. It refers specifically to that category of Indians who came from Bombay Presidency and who were overwhelmingly of Gujarati origin, both culturally and linguistically. It has produced an image of the Gujarati which is not any different from that of the dukawalla in East Africa or the small-scale merchant on the Indian scene. The stereotype Gujarati conjures up visions of a rapacious, untrustworthy, conniving, miserly, self-centered, and selfish individual whose prime purpose in Fiji was to make a great deal of money before retiring to a comfortable lifestyle in India. This view of the Gujarati is certainly evident in the existing literature on the Indians in Fiji.[1] Moreover, it has consistently prevailed in the attitudes which many Indians and other races maintained toward the Gujarati, at a time when his contribution to the development of the colony was suspect. It is still apparent today in independent Fiji within the complex pattern of social and political relationships between different Indian groups, and between Indians and other races.

Though perceptions of a community and the attitudes toward it contribute to a definite image of that group, no other single factor contributed so much to the creation of a negative image than the visible presence and active participation of Gujaratis in every phase of trade and commerce in Fiji. In marked contrast to the overwhelming majority of Indians who were engaged in agriculture, the Gujaratis were solely concerned with commercial pursuits, largely monopolizing the small-scale wholesale and retail trade, but also engaging in occupations and business enterprises which relied on traditional skills transported from India. The economic success of the Gujaratis inevitably nurtured a negative image of that group which magnified when measured against the immense problems confronting the Indian community in its attempt to make a home in Fiji.

The development of the negative Gujarati image is essentially a post-1930 phenomenon when the community had become entrenched in certain trades

and occupations to the exclusion of other Indian groups. Between 1900 and 1920, Gujaratis had slowly become a noticeable element within the Indian commercial community. Their prosperity was publicized by the Fiji Government to attract Indian settlers to the colony. By 1930 they had acquired a tenacious hold on the tailoring, bootmaking, jewelry, and laundry businesses, and had also permeated other important categories of Indian commercial activity such as shopkeeping and hawking. Up to this period they were desirable immigrants since they were financially independent and made a positive contribution to the colony's development. Though they were not the ideal type of Indian settlers for Fiji, namely agriculturalists, they were not prevented or discouraged from coming.

After 1930 a marked change occurred in local and official attitudes toward the Gujaratis. Deteriorating economic conditions in Fiji during the worldwide depression caused much resentment at the seemingly prosperous position of the Gujaratis. Local Indians accused them of accentuating economic disparities within the community through their stranglehold over the Indian wholesale and retail trade, and by their practice of recruiting assistants abroad rather than from the ranks of the Indian community in Fiji. The official mind was aware of this strongly negative local sentiment against the Gujaratis. Authorities in Fiji were convinced of their essential role in the colony through their willingness to engage in 'untouchable' occupations which other Indians avoided, but they still viewed Gujaratis as a threat to local enterprise. Moreover, they also discovered from routine observation that the nature of Gujarati immigration was basically detrimental to the overall immigration policy of Fiji. Gujaratis were hesitant to introduce their families, and visited their homeland regularly without establishing any permanent attachment to Fiji which made them all the more undesirable as "colonists and settlers." The prevailing sentiments of the 1930s, and further evidence of the highly acquisitive nature of the Gujarati commercial

class during the war period, created an abhorrence of the Gujarati archetype. Unfortunately for the Gujaratis, this negative image clouded their relationships with other groups, in essence preventing a precise and an unbiased assessment of their role in the development of Indian enterprise.

It is the pluralistic character of Fiji's population, and the strong agricultural base of the Indian component, which places the Gujarati image within its proper perspective. Indians first came to Fiji to provide cheap labor in the sugar industry. They were of diverse origins, divided by cultural traits, language, and religious beliefs and practices, although they were treated as a homogeneous social and political entity by the authorities for administrative purposes. The Indian community remained primarily within the confines of the main sugar centers and acquired a distinctive rural character. The overwhelming bulk of Indians depended upon the sugar industry for a livelihood, but the growth of towns and market centers created opportunities which attracted a category of Indians who eschewed agriculture for alternative, easier, and more lucrative avenues to earn their livelihood.

One area which provided Indians with much prospect of improving their economic status was trade and commerce. However, the commercial sphere was dominated by the Europeans who were the administrative elite as well as the principal investors of capital in Fiji. The Indian entry into commerce was a haphazard process but was facilitated by the absence of enterprise among the indigenous Fijians whose communal social structure and demographic dispersion prevented them from active participation in the economic life of the colony. Indian participation in commercial activity was initially very marginal, consisting mainly of hawking and shopkeeping. Gradually, Indian enterprise overtook and surpassed small-scale European business activity in the rural areas but it could never match the intensity and scale of the large European commercial houses with abundant capital and whose operations were structurally linked to a larger economic framework within the South

Pacific. Though Indians made better arrangements for the sale of essential commodities in the rural areas, they were still tied to a trade network which the Europeans controlled.

Indian enterprise was initiated by people who were products of the indenture system and who did not belong to any specific trading caste from the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, its growth was greatly influenced by two factors--first, by a belief that agriculture was actually a demeaning activity which lowered the esteem of the Indian community as a whole; second, by the opportunity for quick financial success which had been amply demonstrated by the Europeans. The first Indianhhawkers and traders lacked the organizational and managerial expertise to make any major impact on the economic life ofethe colony. Above all, they did not display the essential entrepreneurial qualities of mobilizing capital and providing innovation to capture a larger share of the market.[2] They merely existed on the periphery and only satisfied local needs.

Perhaps it is more precise to say that the Indian community in Fiji possessed a strong agricultural base which did not provide a good training ground for entrepreneurial skills. The community was mainly concerned with status and prestige. Any gain in the commercial field was merely ancillary to a larger goal of raising its esteem in the eyes of the other races. The inconsistency of the community's status, or rather a lowering of status through indenture, and nonacceptance by the Europeans, especially in the case of those Indian immigrants who experienced the degrading aspects of indenture, may further explain why they were more intent on securing equality with Europeans through political means rather than aspiring to challenge the latter's economic dominance through the organization of capital. Perhaps, they lacked the 'creative personality' which some scholars describe as an essential ingredient in the development of entrepreneurial skills.[3] Another factor which acted to the detriment of Indian enterprise was the high

propensity among the Indian commercial class to consume any savings. Businesses often collapsed not only through incompetence and inexperience, but also through the extension of generous credit to friends and relatives, and the failure to maintain an efficient system of record keeping.[4] Even those traders who were successful channelled their excess savings into land which not only conferred social prestige but was also considered to be a more secure form of investment.

The community which grew within the background of indenture did not display any spectacular innovative qualities. Though local Indians, that is those who had been products of the indenture system, initiated commercial activity, it was a new breed of immigrants from India who provided further impetus to Indian enterprise. These immigrants comprising South Indians, Punjabis, and Gujaratis can be classified as "culturally marginal" groups, comparable to the Parsis in Western India and the Marwaris in Bengal who, because of their ambiguous position in society, moved without difficulty into an innovative role.[5] The example of the marginal groups elsewhere provides considerable insight into the position of Gujaratis in Fiji who certainly displayed the essential characteristics of 'marginality' because of their cultural subordination within a social system dominated by North Indians. They were well imbued with certain intrinsic qualities which facilitated their entry into economic activity.

The Gujarati immigrants came from a cultural and intellectual environment in which initiative and venturesomeness were highly valued. Contrary to the common belief that the Hindu value systems, especially the series of obligations contained within the concept of varna, inhibited occupational mobility and curtailed innovation, the society of Gujarat was not bound to a rigid, uniform, and unchanging hierarchical system. Rather, it varied fromoone region to another. Through changing political and social conditions, Gujarati society had witnessed much transformation in the

regional hierarchical structures which enabled high-caste Hindus to overcome the Brahmanic injunctions against the pursuit of wealth.[6] Furthermore, there was also a long-established maritime tradition which intensified commercial contact with Africa, and enabled individuals to go beyond the boundaries of traditional occupations to pursue diverse economic interests. Africa serves to illustrate the innovative Gujarati personality through the willingness on the part of individuals to emigrate and face the uncertainties of an alien environment for some future tangible reward. Fiji merely offered another opportunity to display qualities which had been amply demonstrated elsewhere.

In comparison to other Indian groups in Fiji, the Gujaratis displayed a strong sense of 'organizational rationality.' In the first place, traditional occupations instilled into individuals the capacity to work long hours, a quality which could be equated to a disciplined work ethic. Traditional occupations provided them with skills and the expertise to move into specific types of commercial activity such as bootmaking and laundering which other Indians had avoided. A second factor which contributed to their 'organizational rationality' was ascriptive membership within a jati, and within that the extended family structure. A strong sense of belonging to a particular community, which resulted from ascriptive membership within a jati, facilitated the movement into trade. Once a person had established himself in a specific trade and gradually demonstrated its profitability, then his endeavors were quickly imitated by other Gujaratis from his immediate circle. Gujaratis in Fiji have labelled this type of imitative entrepreneurship as a manifestation of the 'sheep mentality' or simply as "follow the leader in order to be successful in business."[7] Unquestionably, the imitative nature of Gujarati enterprise fostered a high degree of cooperation and enabled a person to draw upon his own immediate community's expertise, influence, and its financial resources in support of his endeavors or to expand his scale of operation. Furthermore, Gujarati enterprise also benefited through

correct endogamous marriages which consolidated linkages within a group. Correct marriages not only strengthened caste linkages but also provided new business alliances which permitted access to additional manpower and financial resources to expand existing operations and to plan for future diversification.

While factors of social organization such as caste ideology, traditional occupation, and cultural background all helped to facilitate entry into trade, they also acted indirectly to create a negative image of the Gujarati. The community had a tight social organization, with closely-knit groupings engaged in some form of commercial activity, which was often established strictly along the lines of jati with a strong traditional base. Caste ethos and the pervasive solidarity within each group influenced every aspect of the group's operations. The activities of the Khatris, for example, serve to illustrate how Gujaratis generally resorted to their own respective castes for credit, partners, assistants, managerial help, and workers to the exclusion of other Indians in Fiji. They consolidated their position by spreading their wealth within the community, mainly through their selective assistance and extension of credit to other members of their own group only. They rarely offered managerial assistance or their expertise to other Indians who wished to enter the tailoring business. They placed no hurdles before other members of their group but had no qualms about undercutting any competition which emanated from a different cultural group. Moreover, they kept their families in isolation in India and visited them at regular intervals. Even while they were absent from Fiji they perpetuated their businesses by selling their shares to friends and relatives of the same caste rather than to an outsider. Their sole purpose, and their only link to Fiji, appeared to be monetary, a characteristic which alienated them from the mainstream of Indian life in Fiji.

The Gujaratis certainly did not perceive themselves in any role other

than trade. It was the intention of most Gujaratis to establish themselves as independent businessmen, although the realities of business life in Fiji created a class of less affluent workers who depended upon the more established Gujaratis for their livelihood. Even bootmakers, washermen, and barbers who specifically relied upon traditional occupations, aspired to institutionalize their operations along modern business lines. Those who were agriculturalists at home, especially Kolis, Kanbis, and Patidars, were strongly attracted by opportunities of profiteering and money-making in trade. Perhaps the main factor which shaped the Gujaratis' perception of their role in Fiji was a desire to amass a large sum of money within the least possible time without having to establish any enduring attachment to Fiji. Thus they were most willing to cloak themselves in the garb of both opportunism and entrepreneurship. To many observers they were merely opportunists with a knack for making money, but in a broad sense they were indeed entrepreneurs because of the sense of direction which they gave to Indian enterprise through their organizational abilities.

Beyond their important role in providing structure to Indian enterprise, Gujaratis did not make any concerted effort at total integration into Indian society in Fiji. As indicated in earlier chapters, they comprised a distinct cultural group which differed from other Indians in origin, cultural background, dietary habits, customs, and language. They also came to Fiji as free and financially independent immigrants which immediately set them apart from most Indians who were the products of the indenture system. Moreover, Gujaratis did not initially anticipate a stay beyond two years, whereas the majority of Indians had already established permanent roots in Fiji. In their settlement patterns and in their social organization, the Gujaratis relied heavily on caste cooperation and traditional values to form a visible urban community in which closely-knit groups arranged themselves according to trade specialization in close proximity to each other. There

was actually an element of physical separation between Gujaratis and most Indians who were predominantly settled in rural areas. In effect, the size of the cultural groups, their diverse backgrounds and cultural traits, and settlement characteristics set them apart. Moreover, the various levels of adherence to traditional values and the intensity of the links with India widened the gulf between Gujaratis and local Indians. Above all, different economic expectations and varying outlook toward Fiji created very little scope for intimate social interaction and close cooperation.

The strong links with India help to explain why Gujaratis encountered considerable difficulty in merging with a community comprising essentially Indians born locally and who had veryllittle established ties with India. Granted that Indian values, especially in matters of religion, pervaded every aspect of immigrant life in Fiji, but for all practicalppurposes few locally born Indians maintained any close contact with the land of their ancestors.[8] Many had lost contact with their relatives as well as with the villages from which their parents or grandparents had emigrated. Local Indians were unable to identify with a lifestyle which was left behind on the journey to Fiji. Gujaratis, on the other hand, were more recent immigrants who came largely between 1927 and 1940 with very little or notintention of residing in Fiji permanently. To them Gujarat was, and would continue to be, their homeland (desh), whereas Fiji was nothing more than a foreign land (pradesh). This crucial distinction which the Gujaratis made explains why they were incapable of displaying any strong sense of loyalty to an area which hardly possessed any real cultural, emotional, and sentimental value.

Gujarati immigrants possessed a level of attachment to their homeland which is not found in other Indian cultural groups in Fiji. It went beyond the mere fact that they were born within a geographical entity called Gujarat; after all, any immigrant group will readily identify with the land from which it originated. In this case, there was an unwavering and

fundamental belief in the uniqueness of everything which was characteristically and distinctively Gujarati including land, people, historical tradition, religion, culture, livelihood, way of life, literature, and social institutions. There also seemed to have been a peculiar belief that whatever was Gujarati was superior and better than any quality found elsewhere. Even in present-day Gujarat people point to the industriousness of its inhabitants and to their high living standard as a manifestation of the unique Gujarati character.[9] Some stress its rich culture, which originated with the early Aryans and maintained its continuity for over three thousand years. Others lay a special claim to the role of Gujarat in shaping India's destiny. Important historic sites and ancient cities such as Dwarka, Somnath, Girinagar, and Ahmedabad are cited as a testament of Gujarat's rich heritage. Well-known and more recent prominent historical figures such as Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel are likewise venerated and honored as symbols of the Gujarati ideal both in intellect and action, and, above all, as the best representatives of their heritage which helped to shape modern India. No doubt much of this cultural chauvinism was transported to Fiji by the immigrantsaand is evident in the attitudes toward other Indians. Gujaratis boldly assert that they were highly instrumental in keeping Indian culture alive in Fiji through their introduction of Indian films, their control of the clothing business which enabled them to dictate fashions to their Indian customers, and through their strict observance of Hindu festivals as well as their patronage of Indian religious dignitaries who visited Fiji regularly.[10] However erroneous these beliefs may be isoonly incidental to the more important point of the Gujaratis being convinced of their superior heritage which seemingly contributed to their success and economic advancement in Fiji.

This attachment to the homeland was reinforced by a distinctive cultural identity and by the retention of those values and beliefs which

were inculcated into individuals since childhood. Their steadfast loyalties to family, caste, and village, and their compliance with the rules and obligations which governed their lives at home still provided a sense of continuity to actions and behavior abroad. Physical separation through emigration over a small time-span did not automatically obliterate traditional values, or their deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices, or their ingrained loyalties as well as other enduring social obligations. Rather, physical separation from their homeland made them more conscious of their identity, as an integral part of a large and complex social framework imbedded in the notion of family, caste, and village, to which they all ultimately hoped to return. By contrast, this attachment for their traditional homeland among other Indian groups was disrupted over a prolonged period of enforced absence through indenture and by an inability to travel regularly as the Gujaratis did.

Families provided an important link between immigrants and their homeland. In fact, everything that was of any significance remained in Gujarat. Very few immigrants travelled with their families, and were even less inclined to send for wives and children unless they had the resources to establish a separate household in Fiji. Immigrants who owned valuable assets at home and had a share in ancestral lands depended upon their families to safeguard their interests during their absence. Many also felt that wives and children were indispensable for maintaining ties with kinfolk. Obviously, immigrants could devote their energies to their activities in Fiji, and safely ignore important domestic rites and life cycle events, knowing full well they could rely on their families to represent them in matters of religion and ceremonial worship.[11]

Immigrants were generally reluctant to transport family life into Fiji because of the added responsibilities. Duplicating the Gujarati household in Fiji meant more than just providing material comfort to wives and

children. It entailed uprooting families who were well cared for within the joint family system. The process also involved a more conscious and time-consuming effort to shape family life according to the norms of the homeland, especially in the sphere of religion. Male immigrants could forego their religious obligations, or postpone them until such time as they returned home. Women, on the other hand, could not dispense with important domestic rituals which formed an integral part of their life cycle within the household and which they still regarded as a stabilizing force in the new household in Fiji.

Religion was another important factor which made Gujarati immigrants look toward their homeland for the fulfilment of certain obligations pertaining to life-cycle events. In the absence of families, of a rigid system of social stratification, and of a body of competent religious experts and priests, Gujaratis did not implant any of the cults and sects of Gujarat to fully satisfy their religious needs. Although they could identify with the two important Hindu sects which survived in Fiji, the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma, immigrants lacked a 'domestic religion' which meant that they made every effort to return to their village to attend major domestic ceremonies relating to birth, marriage, and death.

Immigrants also regarded their home base as a recruitment pool for marriage, business, and labor. The concept of endogamy bound Gujaratis to marry within their own jatis, more specifically within their own marriage circles. Since there were few Gujarati female immigrants of marriageable age, most single males turned to their homeland for brides. Marriage was not only a means of consolidating links with family and jati, but was also a convenient way of establishing new business alliances. While the young returned to marry, older immigrants looked toward their homeland as the only, and most ideal, place in which to die.

Business and recruitment practices of Gujaratis once again revealed an

orientation toward Gujarat. Most Gujarati businesses were joint family enterprises based on various partnership arrangements. Though these enterprises served the more immediate purpose of enabling individuals to satisfy their quest for wealth, they also served as an outlet for a wider circle of relatives and friends wishing to leave Gujarat. Gujaratis obviously preferred family members or people from the same village and caste as business partners because of common kinship, cultural, and linguistic bonds. Family members and friends were easier to regulate, less likely to cause any major business strife, and enabled a smooth business transition if some partners wished to return to Gujarat. All these factors encouraged exclusiveness and inhibited any tendency toward forming business partnerships with non-Gujaratis.

Gujarati exclusiveness, on the level of jati, was, in fact, a manifestation of group solidarity. The term Gujarati exclusiveness is not used here to imply that all Gujaratis acted in unison to debar all non-Gujaratis from their activities, but rather to show that each group within the community attempted to establish a distinct identity through the type of enterprise in which all members of that group were engaged and by the business practices pertaining to recruitment and the extension of credit which prevailed within. The customs and social behavior of its members as well as their attitudes and relationships toward other Gujaratis and other Indians also conditioned the identity of the group. For example, each Khatri knew that he belonged to a community of Khatris with whom his most basic loyalties lay. Each immigrant made every effort to further the objectives of his own immediate group. He lived near other Khatris, turned to them for any assistance in business, socialized with them, and resorted to the resources of his own community for labor and credit to set up his own business. Gujarati exclusiveness, therefore, perpetuated the established links with the home society and certainly prevented any strong economic and

social linkages beyond the community. In other words, Gujarati exclusiveness, which was unique among all Indian groups, made it difficult for an immigrant to lose his sense of identity.

There was, above all, no deep sense of isolation and alienation from Gujarat. Immigrants considered themselves as much a part of their communities at home as of the Gujarati society in Fiji, with far more emphasis placed on their membership within the former. As long as they maintained strong family ties, retained ownership of homes and ancestral lands, and fulfilled financial obligations through their regular remittances there was no conceivable way that immigrants could become isolated from the affairs of their homeland. Actually, they looked to these factors to facilitate the resumption of normal life in their villages if they desired to return home.

Constant communication between Fiji and Gujarat, and the actual possibility of returning home regularly, once again did not isolate immigrants from their homeland. Every immigrant group made some concerted effort to visit their families on a regular basis with the exception of the Sonis. A number of shipping lines operating out of Suva connected immigrants directly with India via Sydney and Auckland. Provided that fares could be raised, there were no major obstacles for anybody desiring to return home. Only the cost-conscious Sonis, and the obscure artisan groups who preferred to remain in the lax social milieu of Fiji, were hesitant to take advantage of the opportunities to visit their homeland regularly.

While these return visits often occurred at intervals of two years or even longer, regular correspondence with relatives and friends provided a cheaper means to maintain and reinforce contact with home. The volume of letters emanating from Gujarati sources in Fiji, and addressed to persons in Gujarat, was in excess of all other outgoing correspondence to India. Even the number of Gujarati magazines and newspapers which came into Fiji almost equalled that of incoming literature in other Indian languages.[12] Both the

high level of correspondence and the heavy flow of printed literature in Gujarati illustrate that, inspite of their physical isolation from affairs at home, immigrants displayed a persistent concern for the welfare of their families as well as an undiminishing interest in events which occurred during their absence.

The Gujarati community was essentially self-contained and self-sufficient, but somewhat isolated from the other Indian cultural groups and races. First, their settlement patterns were shaped by a desire to live in close proximity to each other. Second, the nature of Gujarati enterprise with its focus on the shop, and the characteristics of social organization which fostered exclusiveness, provided immigrants with adequate institutional mechanisms for the purposes of survival which did not create any need to go beyond the perimeters of community, village, family, and jati for satisfying basic wants. Of course, Gujaratis had to deal with other Indians and races, but only to the extent that this served the long term goal of furthering the community's fortunes.

As mentioned earlier (p. 248) the immigrants had very little time for external social relationships and social activity because of the rigidity of their work habits. Every effort was directed toward whatever activity the immigrants were engaged in to make it function smoothly and profitably. The success of a business often depended upon the degree of fraternal solidarity which existed among the partners and workers. The fraternal solidarity which operated within the confines of the shop also extended into other aspects of immigrant life. Small groups of Gujaratis who comprised a fraternal community lived, worked, cooked, ate, and slept together. When it came to social activity, Gujaratis looked toward their own intimate and immediate circle to engage in any little organized recreation which they had.

Since Gujaratis generally avoided forming business alliances with outside groups and races, they also had little need for social relationships

beyond their immediate community. Immigrants only dealt with the Chinese, Fijians, and Europeans on the business level but socially their relationship with other races was one of total avoidance. Relationships with other Indians were only visible among those Gujaratis, mostly traders, who had extensive dealing with Indians in the sugar towns and in the sugarcane regions where the overwhelming bulk of the Indian population resided. However, in Suva, where there was a lesser degree of reliance on Indians for business purposes, there was also a correspondingly low level of relationship between Gujaratis and other Indians.

It should be stressed that most enduring external relationships were formed when there was an absence of Gujarati women. Without their women, Gujarati men were more willing to enter into external relationships with other Indian businessmen whose operations were located nearby, and with those Indians who commanded much respect in the community. By associating with influential Indians, either a businessman, or a school teacher, or a priest, or a wealthy farmer, Gujaratis were simply demonstrating their ability to pick out individuals from among the larger society to serve their interests. When women began to arrive, Gujarati men became unwilling to display the same degree of flexibility in external relationships as they had done previously.

The presence of women hardened social barriers between Gujaratis and other Indians and reinforced the tendency on the part of the Gujaratis to become socially aloof. As they began to establish households in Fiji, they engaged in a heightened reaffirmation of cultural values which prevailed within the household in Gujarat. Women in Gujarat were automatically regarded as propagators of Gujarati culture, custodians of the 'domestic religion,' teachers of the young children, and the main driving force within the household. But their tasks in Fiji were complicated by their unfamiliarity with the local conditions, an absence of the security of the joint family, and the failure on the part of their men to perpetuate the important

domestic rites of Gujarat in Fiji. The malefolk made a greater effort not only to protect their women by isolating them within the sanctity of the household but also to strengthen their commitment to traditional values through heightened jati exclusiveness with strict observance of the rules for social conduct and relationships. The Gujarati household in Fiji virtually became a fortress in which only the in-group circle was made welcome and from which all other Gujarati groups and local Indians were excluded.

Family emigration or the arrival of women and children were not popular with the Gujarati community as a whole. Some groups were forced by mitigating circumstances to accept family emigration more readily than other groups and after 1947, when the Government of Fiji finally limited the period of absence from Fiji to one year, Gujaratis begrudgingly accepted their predicament that they could no longer take lengthy trips to India or that it would be financially less burdensome to bring their wives and families to Fiji. However, in 1930 when the first of the immigration restrictions against single males had come into effect the incidences of families arriving in Fiji had increased, but there were still ways and means to circumvent the immigration restrictions to enable Gujarati males to come to Fiji in considerable numbers. After 1930, only those Gujaratis who had experienced difficulty in surviving without their women were in favor of family emigration. Small and obscure jatis including Kolis, Navs, Mochis, and Dhobis, which lacked the resources to make frequent trips to India, had one of two choices: either to bring their wives or seek concubinage locally. Patidars, of course, had dietary problems which meant that women were essential to their survival and welfare. Sonis had the furthest distance to travel to India which is why they were more willing to accept family emigration. However, Khatris, who possessed the highest level of fraternal solidarity among all the Gujarati groups in Fiji, were the least motivated to send for their women. Once again, only established Khatri businessmen and those who had lived in Fiji for a

long time or had adequate resources to maintain a household seriously considered bringing their wives and children.

The misgivings of many Gujaratis that family emigration would actually result in a drastic break from the homeland were unfounded. Family emigration, however unpopular it may have been, was generally beneficial to the community. Through their management of the household, Gujarati women enabled their men to enjoy a way of life which they were accustomed to at home. Moreover, they helped their men to retain their cultural identity and to make them equally responsible for the preservation of traditional values without relinquishing their committment to commercial pursuits. As already mentioned,the household became the bastion of Gujarati culture in Fiji. Above all, the presence of Gujarati women made it easier for men to deviate from the security of the fraternal in-group in order to move to the remoter areas of Fiji to conduct business. With the arrival of their families, Gujaratis were more willing to make a greater degree of economic committment to Fiji by diversifying into other areas, especially in the late 1920s and 1930s, to accommodate relatives who came in addition to wives and children. Family emigration also put the community in a better light with the authorities, who wanted the Gujaratis to establish firmer and permanent links with Fiji.

The arrival of women after 1930 provided the community with a new sense of direction which was also strongly influenced by other internal and external factors. The community experienced a remarkable phase of business expansion which remained unabated throughout the 1930s despite the depression. This business expansion may have resulted from the realization that Fiji was a safe area for settlement, but it was also generated by increasing opportunities and changing conditions within Fiji. The upsurge in business activity created an impression that the community had finally made a deeper commitment to Fiji. In reality this committment to Fiji could hardly be regarded as

an attempt to establish permanent links. It was, at most, an attempt at accommodating the pressing problems confronting the community. The expansion of Gujarati enterprise perhaps occurred initially as an effort to absorb the influx of additional immigrants during the depression years, but became an effective buffer against the stringent immigration controls imposed by the authorities to stop this influx. By diversifying into other areas of Fiji and by expanding the scope of their activities, Gujaratis could make a convincing case for further recruitment of reliable assistants with the necessary skills to operate their expanding concerns.

Inevitably, the problems deriving from the consequences of family emigration and from the intensification of commercial activity had deep implications for Gujarati settlement, as did the diversification into other areas of Fiji and the growth in the size of the community lead to a need for better organization among most groups to maintain some sense of direction. When the community was entirely composed of males it was easier to exercise some control through the operation of the tightly-knit fraternal groups and through the kinship arrangements which existed within the shop. A growing community needed more than the established cultural mechanisms for exercising control, especially when it came to specific issues such as providing relief to the less fortunate members within a particular group and seeking facilities for the education of Gujarati children. Wanting a better deal from the authorities both on the question of immigration restrictions and the granting of political rights to Gujaratis from Princely States merely accentuated the problems of leadership. The prime consideration was to cushion the impact of life in Fiji so that traditional values could be preserved.

The type of solidarity which prevailed within the fraternal communities was transferred to the Gujarati welfare associations which emerged in the 1930s. Each group resorted to an organizational framework which was

identical to that which functioned on a larger scale at home within the context of jati, village, and family. There was hardly any effort by Gujaratis to form one single association to provide miscellaneous services and to organize cultural activities for the community on a collective basis. Almost all the Gujarati associations in Fiji operated as an extension of the Samajs and Mandals within the regional societies in Gujarat. Therefore, they provided services and activities which were no different from those at home. These associations also reflected the internal structure of the community in that each group sought to debar other groups from its social and cultural activities, often through a constitution setting out the objectives of the association and limiting membership to a specific jati.[13]

On one level each group regarded its association as a unifying force which held a particular community together culturally, provided avenues for exercising leadership through elders and established businessmen in the management of the community's affairs, and simultaneously made all the members aware of the difficulties which could be rectified through community effort. The associations also limited differences within the community, contained internal disputes, and established a correct standard for social behavior. Furthermore, they extended assistance to the less fortunate members through the establishment of a common fund, and provided funds for purposes of educating the children of the poorer members. However, these associations did not function as a formal caste council regulating behavior through formal edicts; they attempted to keep members within caste rules by withholding important services from anyone who deviated from the norm. Once a Gujarati accepted any form of assistance from his association he was under constant obligation to abide by its rules and regulations.

On a second level each group regarded its association as a forum for articulating the aims and objectives of that group in the economic and political sphere. Here the main concern was to see that there were no

barriers to prevent its members from conducting business in a legal and peaceful manner. Secondly, each group also wanted to ensure that it received an equitable treatment from the authorities, both in terms of legal and political rights and the availability of immigration permits and business licenses. Leadership within this level often rested on individuals who were established businessmen, had contact with the legal networks, were familiar with the apparatus of the government, and were better educated than other Gujaratis or had some fluency in other languages spoken in Fiji, especially English, to be able to provide that vital link with the authorities and other business groups. It was also on this level that Gujaratis found some scope for unified action. Many of the difficulties and problems which plagued each group affected the community as a whole, particularly in the denial of political rights to Gujarati subjects of Princely States, in the imposition of immigration controls which discriminated against the community, and in the acute lack of adequate facilities for the education of Gujarati children.

The main Gujarati associations in the 1930s were the Muslim Gujarati Association, the Kshatriya Seva Samaj, and the Dharmaj Patel Mandal. Other associations which were formed later included the Bardoli Jila Samaj and the Surat Jila Samaj of the Mochis, a quasi-formal council of the Kacchia Patels, and the Kesari Girnara Soni Seva Samaj. Muslim Gujaratis claim that their association preceded other organizations and was as old as the Muslim League of Fiji. However, this assertion is erroneous and misleading because the League was formed in 1919 at a time when very few Muslim Gujaratis had come to Fiji. The Muslim Gujarati Association (MGA) was in a strict sense a welfare association which united all Gujaratis who professed the Islamic faith. Its main function was to assist members financially by providing scholarships to children whose parents could not afford to educate them; it also played an important role in recruiting qualified Maulvis from Surat

to attend to the religious needs of the community. Whenever the opportunity arose the MGA acted as a mediator in the settlement of internal disputes.[14]

The largest and most structured Gujarati association was the Kshatriya Seva Samaj (KSS) which was dominated by the Navsari faction with its headquarters in Suva, the seat of Khatri business activity. The KSS acted as an important link between Khatris in Fiji and the regional community in South Gujarat, and was basically an extension of the Samaj at home. Its primary concern was with the social welfare of the community. Though it purported not to act as panch, in which caste rules are binding and enforced, the Samaj did set the tone for proper caste behavior. The KSS could not enforce caste edicts because there were no legal means to enforce them, but it delegated considerable responsibility to elders and the more established members to mediate in large disputes and bring about an amicable settlement. At times the Samaj was called upon to arrange suitable partners for prospective husbands and brides in Fiji, and was actually instrumental in staging the first Khatri marriage in Suva in 1947.[15] Today, the Khatri association has become fragmented into splinter groups which operate without any directive from Suva. Each town with a large Khatri population has its own association.

Mochis came from different parts of South Gujarat, namely Bardoli and Surat, forming two factional groups which were often at odds with each other, thereby creating a need for two separate associations. The more established Mochis from Bardoli wanted to adhere strictly to the rules of their home association in order to devote more time to affairs in Gujarat than in Fiji. The Surat faction desired more autonomy from external control and worked toward the betterment of the community in Fiji, particularly in the sphere of education. Internal disputes plagued the Mochis until the late 1960s when the quarrelling factions finally agreed to unite in a single association.[16]

The Dharmaj Patel Mandal was the only important organization among the Patel groups. It was restricted to those Patidars who belonged to the village of Dharmaj in Kaira (Kheda). Since almost all Dharmaj Patels were traders, their association was not particularly concerned about the social welfare of the community. The level of affluence which they enjoyed did not necessitate such an orientation. Education was the primary concern of the Dharmaj Patel Mandal, and because of this focus the Patels consistently maintained a higher degree of literacy than other Gujarati groups in Fiji. The first high school graduates in the Gujarati community emerged from ranks of the Dharmaj Patels.[17]

The associations of the 1930s established the pattern for other Gujarati groups which lacked a formal organization for the purpose of bringing people together to discuss common issues. The Sonis, for example, did not form an organization until 1943. Apparently, the community was closely knit and very self-sufficient which may explain the lack of any overriding concern to unite formally to attend to needs of the community. The Sonis were in a type of business where there had been little contact with the machinery of the government, but the gradual change to institutionalized business activity led to a higher set of expectations. The community had stood by while other groups were consolidating their economic position, gaining political recognition, and availing themselves of existing educational facilities in Fiji. But when they observed the progress made by the other groups, they were actually gripped by "a fear of being left behind" and quickly attempted to rectify the situation. The Kesari Girnara Soni Samaj of Fiji, which came into existence in 1943, placed a very high priority on the education of Soni children, both in Fiji and in India, because the community was the least educated of all the Gujarati groups. Much emphasis was placed on the creation of a special fund to provide financial assistance to poorer Sonis for educational purposes. Initially, the association derived its main support from the

western region of Viti Levu, where most of the Sonis were residing, but gradually internal politicking as well as the growing influence of Soni leaders in Suva produced a shift to the capital. The activities of the Samaj were restricted to Sonis who belonged to the Girnara division of the Parajia jati. Patanis Sonis, who were in the minority, were excluded from participating in the association, perhaps for the simple reason that they had married locally out of caste.[18]

The pre-1930 Gujarati society placed a low priority on education because its energies were being totally channelled into commerce. In marked contrast to other Indian cultural groups from an agricultural background which regarded education as the means to a better standard of living through occupations providing higher incomes, the Gujaratis enjoyed more economic self-sufficiency through their entrenchment in trade and had little need for education when there was actually an absence of families. Only few Gujaratis, notably Appabhai Patel, showed any concern for education, but largely participated in the efforts of existing Indian educational organizations. The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of the Arya Samaj, for example, which operated a Gurukul near Lautoka, provided ample scope for those few enlightened Gujaratis who wished to demonstrate their concern for education.

Gujarati attitudes toward education in Fiji were not a product of apathy, but rather, conditioned through need and desirability. Few immigrants had achieved much academic distinction and, at most, had received formal schooling up to a maximum of four years at home. Immigrants from Baroda State, particularly from Central Gujarat, were better educated than most immigrants who came from areas directly controlled by the British in South Gujarat. The better educated Gujaratis were more inclined to show concern for the education of their children than the less educated immigrants who often regarded the shop as the ideal school for their children. Many immigrants had their formal schooling interrupted because of obligations to

their families, but readily accepted their predicament because they were not deficient in traditional skills for earning a livelihood. Some also felt that as long as a rudimentary education made a person a better social being then it was not necessary to go beyond that level. To others education merely meant acquiring basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic for conducting business.

The response to education in the 1930s was inevitable, and in keeping with the community's awareness of pressing social needs in a period of economic and political transition. Rapid gains in trade had absorbed much of the pressures exerted by an accelerated growth in the Gujarati population. By 1932 the community had also acquired full voting rights as had other Indians, but the big political issue of 'common roll' had little bearing on their newly acquired economic importance. Up to this point the Gujaratis had found very little reason for unified action on any pressing issues. Once the franchise was acquired, largely through the efforts of two English-trained Gujarati lawyers, the immigrants fell back into the usual pattern of leadership on the level of caste. At a time when local Indians were taking advantage of opportunities in education to create new avenues for leadership, Gujaratis were lagging behind owing to their overwhelming concern with trade. They still relied heavily on other local Indian political brokers with enough expertise in the language and machinery of the government to satisfy their limited needs without having to look within their own ranks for versatile and highly educated leaders.

The eventual realization of a need for educated leadership was one of the factors contributing to the desirability of education. Another was the presence of children of school age who could not be accommodated in the existing educational facilities for Indians operated by the government, by independent Indian organizations, and by Christian missions. Competition for entry into the good schools was extremely rigorous and there was constant

pressure on parents to convert their children to Christianity as a prerequisite for admission into Christian schools. Gujaratis abhorred this kind of pressure and were extremely bitter about their generous financial contributions to various schools without reaping any substantial benefit. The interest in education received its biggest impetus from a fear that unless the community seriously attended to its educational deficiencies and needs, Gujarati children would have much to lose in the long run.

Education, rather than politics, became a rallying point for the community. The Gujaratis of Lautoka took the initiative in this area. It was largely through the efforts of the Gujarati Cricket Club that a hall, named after the patriarch of the Narsey family in Fiji, was built for social and educational purposes. In 1941 Narsey Hall served as the temporary quarters for the Natabua Indian High School. In Suva, a similar movement to tackle the problem of education was also brewing, but it was not until 1945 that any definite measures were taken in that direction. Early that year a group of prominent Gujarati businessmen under the leadership of Jamnadas Narsey met to discuss the lack of educational facilities for their children in the existing schools. They pledged funds for the construction of a hall for educational and social purposes, and formed a committee to solicit funds within the community through various means. All agreed that the hall would be called Gandhi Hall. Within a span of twelve months the sum of £12,000 was raised through contributions from Gujaratis in Suva and Nausori, and through the proceeds of an Indian play produced by the Gujarati-Nav-Yuvak Natak Mandali. In February 1946 the Gandhi Hall Trust Board was formed to manage finances for purchasing suitable land for the construction of the hall or a building to house a school and library. Inability to find appropriate land, which met the criteria of the Education Department, prolonged the difficulties of establishing a school. Finally, in 1952, after six years of frustration and delay, a Gujarati businessman acted on his own

initiative to purchase some property on which a dilapidated school was already standing and transferred it to the Gandhi Hall Trust Board. The culmination of the drive for education was the formation of the Gujarat Education Society of Fiji in 1952 to manage the school.[19] Though a detailed analysis of the Society is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that three large modern schools stand today as testimony to the community's effort to acquire an active voice in providing shape and structure to any form of institutionalized education available to Gujarati children.

Thus, the community's approach to education was very parochial, though in keeping with the prevailing trend in the social, economic, and political development of Fiji. The fragmentation of the 'plural society' which was so visible in the economic and political life of Fiji was also prevalent in the educational system. Education was organized on a racial basis. Until 1930 its development lay primarily in the hands of Christian missions and communal organizations. Segregationist attitudes within the population, certainly among the Europeans and Fijians, were not conducive to the growth of an integrated school system. Even when the government acquired better control of education policy after 1930, it still maintained the existing racial divisions within its schools. As for mixed education on the secondary level, it was first provided by the Catholic Mission in the 1930s.

The fragmentation within the entire educational system was also visible in the growth of Indian schools. Arya Samajists were the leading exponents of Indian education, but sectarian and cultural disputes within the community added to the complexity of the problem. Each group wanted an education policy which incorporated the cultural and political aspirations of that group. Sanatanis wanted an equal voice with the Samajis, and demonstrated their intentions through the construction of a school in 1931 with the

government's approval. The South Indians and the Muslims articulated similar aspirations through their respective communal organizations, the Then Ikya Sanmarga Sangam and the Muslim League.[20]

The Gujaratis, on their part, merely reflected what was happening elsewhere. Just as each race and each cultural group aspired to a direct voice in the type of education it really wanted, so did the Gujaratis respond to the challenge of education in a communal fashion which was well entrenched within Fiji's society. Therefore, they cannot be faulted for resorting to their own resources to satisfy a parochial need, which was to guarantee the availability of education to their children. As a group whose main concern was trade, they were not concerned with the social rewards and prestige, which other Indian groups saw in a higher education, but mostly favored a practical form of primary education which suited the needs of children who could be later drawn into the family enterprise. They simply wanted to ensure that their children would not be denied education. Moreover, they wanted it to be readily available so that parents could educate their children to the best of their ability, and only for the duration where it provided them with a rudimentary knowledge to participate in business.

Yet for all the concern which the Gujaratis displayed over the education question, they remained oblivious to issues of a political nature, except to gain the same political rights as other Indians. While the education question demonstrated that they were indeed capable of uniting for a common purpose, however communal their aspirations were, their record in politics was dismal. Without any reservation, it can be stated that the majority of Gujarati immigrants had no interest in the politics of Fiji, nor did they endeavor to participate actively on the community level. For the better part, serious Gujarati participation in politics until 1945, or even later, was restricted to a few English-trained lawyers who came through nationalist channels in India, and whose involvement was well within the context of

Indian political activity in Fiji.

It is tempting to simply label their political apathy in Fiji as a product of their social aloofness and heavy commercialism, an attitude which is still prevalent today. The popular opinion of the Gujaratis is that they are economically motivated, socially aloof, and politically alienated.[21] Though there is a considerable degree of truth in this assertion, the reasons for their political apathy must be found in other causes also--in Fiji's political structure and the level of participation enjoyed by the Gujaratis, in their role as traders, in their belief that politics and business were incompatible, and in their own perception of their position. There is no one single reason for their lack of active participation, but rather a combination of interrelated factors which can provide an adequate explanation.

Each of the three main racial groups of Fiji was drawn into politics at different times and enjoyed a different form of political participation in the Legislative Council.[22] The first Legislative Council of 1875 consisted entirely of Europeans--four official members, including the Governor, and four unofficial members nominated from the ranks of planters and merchants. The next important constitutional change took place in 1904, when the Council was expanded to ten official members and eight unofficial members, including six elected Europeans and two nominated Fijians. Though Indians had been in Fiji since 1879, they still had no direct representation. Their interests were voiced by the agent-general for immigration. No further change took place until 1916 when Indians finally secured some concessions through the allocation of one of twelve nominated seats. Unlike the Europeans, who not only enjoyed economic supremacy but also had elected representation since 1904, Indians only acquired elected representation in 1929. However, they had more success on the municipal level. Until 1914 Indian ratepayers had the same voting rights as other ratepayers, but in 1915 a literacy test in English eliminated a considerable number of non-European

voters from the electoral roll. In 1929 the elective principle was removed from municipal politics and replaced by a system of nomination which still allowed the possibility of Indian interests being voiced.

Indian political activity commenced at the turn of the century and primarily dealt with the difficulties in obtaining land, but began in all earnestness after 1910 in an attempt to secure direct representation. Though only provided with token representation in 1916, Indians continued to petition, demonstrate, and protest to secure a better deal. Their political awareness was heightened by an increasing dissatisfaction with their economic position as well as by a desire for equal treatment. Indian concerns from the beginning, if they did not deal with land or political rights, focused on education, poverty, indebtedness, marriage laws, discriminatory ordinances, and repatriation.[23] Indians were not hesitant to press for favorable concessions at various intervals. In 1929 Indian males over twenty-one years of age who fulfilled income, residency, literacy, and nationality qualifications were given the franchise to elect three representatives on a strictly communal roll. In 1937 they were given two additional nominated seats in a reconstituted Legislative Council in which they finally gained parity with other races. Ideally, Indians preferred equal representation based on a common roll which was consistently rejected by the Government, the Europeans, and the Fijians for fear that it might lead to the domination of one race (meaning Indians) over the others.

The overall Indian response was more complex than it appeared to be, and was compounded by many issues. Though Indians were treated as a single administrative unit, they often did not act with the same degree of unity as the other races. First of all, they were separated by glaring cultural and linguistic differences. Then again, there was the problem of acute cleavages in leadership when each cultural group attempted to move into dominant positions in the era of expanding political reforms. The common roll issue

further accentuated the differences within the community, forcing it to rely basically on leadership which emanated from India. Immigration created another thorny problem which caused divisions within the community. One section, consisting of locally born Indians, wanted restrictions and the other, which would face the brunt of these controls, wanted a preservation of the status quo in which Indians could come and go as they pleased. These issues reveal the complexity and scope of Indian participation in the political affairs of Fiji, but they also illustrate how each group within the Indian community responded differently to any specific problem.

The level of Gujarati participation in politics was extremely marginal. It was restricted to individuals who had strong links with nationalists in India or those who dabbled in politics to improve business prospects through the additional clientele which it brought. Evidently, the bulk of the Gujaratis preferred to remain beyond the periphery of politics and were content to cultivate their interest in the economic sphere. While they were highly nationalistic in their views towards British rule in India, they readily accepted the British presence in Fiji because it provided peace and security which, in turn, contributed to their economic prosperity. The Gujaratis had little interest in gaining political power because of their minority position among other Indian groups who were already active in politics, and on account of their privileged position as traders which provided them with little incentive to spurn British rule in Fiji.

The Gujarati position was somewhat hypocritical. The concern for the nationalist struggle in India and the identification with its popular heroes such as Tilak, Bose, Gandhi, and Nehru did not permeate their thinking toward political issues in Fiji. If they were indeed conscious of a concern over events in Fiji, then they did not overtly flaunt their views. Rather they chose to remain apolitical by donning the garb of a 'meek, mild, and humble' trader who had no place in colonial politics. Moreover, they were

also very insensitive to the complex issues which confronted the Indian community in its quest to carve a home in Fiji. As free immigrants, Gujaratis enjoyed more economic security. Therefore, they could neither identify with the problems of the average farmer who was tied to the vicissitudes of the sugar industry nor could they be concerned about such issues as rights, equality, rural indebtedness, marriage laws, discrimination, repatriation, and the common roll. Gujarati traders who had actually contributed to rural indebtedness could hardly be expected to undermine their own position by agitating for better conditions for farmers. There was also a sinister aspect to their thinking which made them fear any large concession to Indians in the political sphere, particularly to that group which opposed unrestricted immigration. They were content to remain inactive and to depend upon the goodwill of the authorities until such time as they felt the threat of other groups, or experienced a compelling desire to exercise the voting rights which they finally acquired in 1932.

In all fairness, however, it should be stated that the Gujarati disinterest in politics was not entirely of their own making. Firstly, a large number of immigrants came from Princely States in India where they were removed from the prevailing trends in nationalist agitation. Many, therefore, lacked first hand knowledge in organizational politics to be able to discuss complex issues on a public level, and certainly never acquired the sophistication of their counterparts in British Gujarat to directly participate in large-scale agitation anywhere. Secondly, franchise qualifications in the elections of 1927 disqualified subjects of Princely States from voting, in addition to those Gujaratis who were illiterate in any of the six qualifying languages for electors.[24] Amendments to the constitution in 1932 finally granted the franchise to Gujaratis from Princely States, and above all, made Gujarati a qualifying language. Thirdly, Gujaratis were incapable of effectively participating through two main existing channels of political

activity--the press and public meetings. They neither owned a press in Fiji, nor were they sufficiently fluent in Hindi to digest and keep abreast of important issues debated in the vernacular press. Public meetings, often held in Hindi and English, were time-consuming events which were not suited for workers, businessmen, and traders whose rigid regimen in the shop left very little energy for outside activity. Fourthly, as already mentioned, a number of political issues tended to alienate Gujaratis, especially the immigration question which dealt with the eventual curtailment of unrestricted movement into Fiji, and the sectarian dispute which pitted the Sanatanis against the Samajis. Gujaratis became extremely dismayed when the Sanatani and Samaji squabbles, together with their attempts to outdo each other on the secular plane, acquired a new dimension through religion. Their attitude can be best exemplified through the refusal of A. D. Patel, one of two Gujarati lawyers in Fiji, to defend Vishnu Deo, a prominent Samaji, in a criminal suit initiated by the government to prosecute the latter for the publication of an outrageous article lambasting orthodox Hinduism and other religions. Lastly, the normal vehicles of political expression were not parties, with a broad base and cross-cultural links, but individuals with general community prestige within a particular group only. The most concrete example is that of the Samaji leaders who instead of epousing a national point of view, that is, one acceptable to all groups, emphasized sectarian and other differences to muster support for themselves. The individualistic character of Indian political expression and the tendency to advance a particular ideology, at the expense of others, isolated groups which lacked any effective and reliable channels to lay their position before the colonial authorities. Few local Indian leaders were interested in assisting Gujaratis acquire the vote. If the Gujarati community had not taken the initiative by petitioning the authorities in 1929 with the assistance of a Gujarati lawyer, they would have continued to remain without the franchise.

The lack of Gujarati participation in politics can also be seen as a weakness in the nature and objectives of Indian organizations. Until the late 1920s Indian organizations never offered a forum for exchanging views on common problems in Fiji. There was neither any large-scale cross-cultural support for any single organization nor was there a mutual exchange of ideas from one organization to another. These organizations were led by businessmen, religious leaders, and other Indians with some expertise in English whose purpose in joining them was essentially to secure recognition from the authorities by tacitly collaborating with them. In a period of political change, which increased in intensity after 1930, collaboration with the authorities was a ticket to the Legislative Council or to an influential advisory position on local boards and committees. Collaboration for political gain or higher status jobs was hardly a major consideration for Gujaratis who, through their economic security, did not require politically oriented organizations to further their limited goals. Thus, Gujarati contribution to Fiji's politics can only be fully appreciated on the individual level. This scrutiny entails an evaluation of the activities of Manilal Doctor during the indenture period, S. B. Patel and A. D. Patel after 1928, and the limited participation in politics by such Gujaratis as Appabhai Patel.

Manilal's influence on Fiji's political affairs was very significant at a time when Indians did not have any institutionalized channels to voice their grievances effectively. His background, experience, and education had provided him with the appropriate tools to plunge into the center of political activity upon his arrival in Fiji in 1912. Manilal came from a well-to-do Bania family in Baroda which had amassed and lost a fortune in the cotton boom in Western India during the American Civil War. As a child Manilal was frail and sickly which spurred him to academic excellence but made him somewhat of a recluse with a knack of alienating friends and family

alike. From an early stage in his life he abided by the dictum: "friends are the thieves of time." He had an extremely volatile personality, and when his sense of reasoning went awry he was most uncompromising. Always considered an unconventional person and a rebel, he was never afraid to challenge established norms of behavior such that he was ostracized by his family before his departure for England in 1905.[25] Manilal was very averse to failure, often reacting in a peculiar manner as exemplified by his total dissociation from his legal surname of Shah when he once failed his matriculation examinations. Yet his whole life seems to have been plagued by a series of failures in Mauritius, in Fiji, and elsewhere.

His political orientation seemed to have been greatly influenced by the events in his life as well as through his association with Aurobindo Ghosh who was his teacher in Baroda, with V. D. Savarkar whom he befriended in England, and with Mahatma Gandhi under whose political tutelage Manilal gained entry into colonial politics, first in Mauritius and later in Fiji. In 1912 Manilal married Jayakumari, daughter of Gandhi's close friend Dr. Pranjiwan Mehta, and a budding freedom fighter with established credentials as a satyagrahi in South Africa, who would once again display her defiance of authority during the labor strifes of 1920 in Fiji.

Manilal had his initial taste of colonial politics in Mauritius where he went in 1907 as an emissary of Gandhi to assist Indians. He was constantly at odds with established authority in his capacity as a champion of the under-dog, mainly through his defense of poor Indians in petty cases. In court he won an important concession to appear before the bench in both traditional Indian and European garb. This was merely one in a series of legal confrontations with the European-dominated judiciary. Journalism provided a further outlet for Manilal to publicize his concern for Indian laborers and farmers. Like his brother in Baroda who ran the Navgujarat, he also operated a newspaper which he used as a forum to denounce the

indenture system and to challenge the European hegemony in Mauritius. In social and public affairs, he aligned himself with the Arya Samaj to provide Indians with a sense of pride in their heritage through religious teachings, public prayer meetings, and educational activities.[26] Yet for all his public service Manilal had, by the end of 1910, little inclination to remain in Mauritius permanently, perhaps due to the failure of his newspaper and an adverse judgement in a civil suit which he launched against a European newspaper editor. Another reason was the constant harassment by the powerful European community, with numerous attempts to bar him from the practice of law.

After spending brief periods in India, England, and South Africa, Manilal proceeded to Fiji (without his pregnant wife whom he left under the care of Gandhi) via Mauritius, where he attached himself to a French woman, arriving in September 1912. Though his presence was greeted with much fanfare, Manilal's liaison with a white woman scandalized the European community and, to say the least, embarrassed his Indian hosts. Once again Manilal had openly flouted conventional behavior. One can only wonder whether he had merely succumbed to his baser instincts or had deliberately acquired a female companion to deliver a calculated and devious shock treatment to the white community in Fiji. In any case, the brash and brazen newcomer was most unlike the average Gujarati immigrant who entered Fiji. By the time Manilal left in 1920, or, rather, was unceremoniously deported, he and his wife (who had finally joined him in 1917) had altered the character of Indian politics in Fiji.

Confrontation with colonial authorities became a trademark with Manilal, and in Fiji he doggedly set out on a suicidal path similar to that which he had charted in Mauritius. His main source of support was in the southern side of Viti Levu; he was extremely popular in Suva among the working class element whom he often represented in court for little or no financial gain.

To familiarize himself with the evils of the indenture system he travelled extensively throughout Fiji and soon gained popular appeal among the Indians. Gradually, under his tutelage and leadership, the Indian community came closer to politics than under any previous leader.

As a lawyer, politician, and journalist Manilal launched an attack on the indenture system, working toward its abolition by publicizing its evils. He wrote letters and articles to nationalists and newspapers in India. His crusade in Fiji covered a wide range of activities, including social reform and the eradication of discrimination against Indians. He also advocated more immigration to Fiji by a wealthier class of Indians. But he was at his best in the political arena, especially in his opposition to the government's efforts to curtail non-European representation on the municipal level and his agitation for Indian representation in the Legislative Council. Moreover, Manilal successfully mobilized local Indian opinion through his Indian Imperial Association, formerly the British Indian Association of Fiji, and a short-lived monthly journal which was published in both Hindi and English.

Because of his efforts to move into a position of power, Manilal was detested by the European settler community which was apprehensive of any encroachment by Indians in the political domain and of Manilal's tirade against the indenture system. Certain sections of the Indian community, with vested interests and hoping for status jobs for their families in the government, were also alarmed at Manilal's seemingly radical and agitational approach to politics. Some Indians obviously felt that collaboration was the quickest path to success as opposed to confrontation which only produced quick retaliation and blacklisting by the government. In addition, the Fiji Government viewed his activities suspiciously and embarked on a calculated move, though sometimes not overtly, to keep Manilal beyond the grasp of effective political power. Of course, the authorities were convinced that there was a definite correlation between events in India and Manilal's mode of

operation in Fiji. In 1912, shortly after Manilal's arrival, the government attempted to introduce a measure to prevent the immigration of Indians into Fiji, except through indenture, in order to curtail Indian nationalist agitation among Fiji's Indian community. The main device which it used to contain Manilal's growing influence was through the manipulation of existing divisions within the Indian community and through a draconian move to utilize collaborationist Indians--moderate Indian Christians and Arya Samajis--as a buffer against him. In 1916 the government disqualified Manilal, in spite of popular support, from a nominated seat in the Legislative Council on the pretext that he was only a 'British-protected person' and not a British subject. Instead it chose Bhadri Maharaj, a relatively unknown political figure, for the seat.

Bhadri Maharaj exhibited all the qualities of a good collaborator. He was an ex-indentured laborer who was listed in the records as a Kshatriya but was treated by Indians as a Brahmin.[27] He was also a prominent and moderate Arya Samaji who had taken a Muslim woman for his wife. Furthermore, he was a prosperous landowner and shopkeeper who was well spoken of by the Europeans. Though not an educated man himself, and lacking fluency in English, he strongly favored education. On numerous occasions he demonstrated his willingness to assist the government.

Through its choice of Bhadri Maharaj, the government polarized the existing divisions within the Indian community, as some scholars have already noted.[28] As the supreme broker of power, it had driven home an important message: that only moderate and collaborationist Indians would be included in the privileged circle of politics in Fiji. It had, in effect, maneuvered Indian Christians and Arya Samajis into a position of dominance over other groups, later watching in dismay as sectarian groups vied for power in the 1920s. On the other hand, another group led by Manilal moved closer to an extreme position against the government, laying the groundwork

for the explosive labor troubles in 1920.

The strike occurred shortly after the abolition of the indenture system during a period of acute economic distress and rising expectations among wage-earners in Suva. It involved employees of the Public Works Department and the Municipal Council, later spreading to other parts of southern Viti Levu. Rather than treating it as a labor dispute, and indeed it was the first of a series of disputes confronting the authorities, the government interpreted it as the sinister work of Manilal and his wife.[29] Both were deeply implicated in organizing the strike and mobilizing support for it. Manilal's wife Jayakumari, in particular, was in the forefront using her training as a satyagrahi organizing Indian women, heading a deputation to the Governor, pressuring husbands not to resume work, and encouraging women to set an example by giving up luxury items. The strike was, above all, an important test of Indian unity and provided common cause for the government to divide the community once more.

Convinced of a political conspiracy, the government's retaliation in the ensuing rioting was swift and precise. Its actions entailed a 'pacification' program which included a show of naval vessels from Australia and New Zealand, the fortification of strategic points, a ban on meetings, and restrictions on movement. Together with exhortations of 'loyal Indians' to rally to its side the government also interned Manilal and his family on the ground that he was "dangerous to the peace and good order of the colony."[30] Furthermore, its propaganda machinery went into operation, castigating Manilal as "the worst enemy of Indian progress in Fiji," and blaming him for its inability to grant the franchise to Indians. In spite of wide support for Manilal through petitions, the government refused to rescind the order for his internment. As a last vindictive gesture it attempted to discredit him by publicizing his two-faced attitude toward the indenture system: he had employed two indentured immigrants, while himself condemning the

indenture system as degrading and inhuman. The fact that Manilal had collected compensation ('blood money' as he called it) upon the cancellation of their indentures merely provided more ammunition for his critics to ridicule him.[31]

Manilal suffered his ordeal on a tiny island off Suva, but not without protest. First, he voiced his resentment at having to live alongside Germans who were being accommodated at public expense on the island to save them from the hostility of ex-servicemen. Second, he was extremely bitter at being made a victim of circumstances, for after all he was not even present in Suva when the rioting occurred. Third, he vented his scorn for the Indian Christians of Suva for strike-breaking and acting as agents provocateurs, attempting to infiltrate the jailed strikers in order to implicate Jayakumari so that they might receive lenient treatment in court.[32] Next, he took the European community to task for all the threats, abuse, and indignities he had suffered at their hands. He saved his final venom for the Fiji Government, uttering in defiance, though certainly an indication of the erratic state of his mind: "God save the Fiji Government from the retribution due to their underlings or their exploiters the capitalists." By this stage he had been reduced to a pathetic state, his spirit completely broken as was his will to remain in Fiji. Like his mentor Gandhi, Manilal was now convinced that the true place of every Indian was India otherwise they would "be swallowed up like the rest of the world in the abysmal chaos of capitalism or imperialism."[33]

Most Fiji Indians today are ignorant of Manilal's significant role in local politics in the 1910s. He is often mentioned in books, journals, and scholarly articles, but is only remembered by an older generation of Indians. No statues have been erected in his name as is the case in Mauritius; no schools have been named after him; and there is no visible reminder that such a man lived in Fiji. The Gujarati community behaves as

if it has never heard of him, and rightly so because Manilal's appeal had been to other Indians. He was unlike most Gujarati immigrants in Fiji, even later encouraging his sons not to behave like 'Gujaratis.' Other Indians, to whose uplift he had dedicated himself, have since bypassed him for other heroes with more appeal--Tilak, Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru. For all his idiosyncrasies, Manilal should be elevated to a special position in the history of Indians in Fiji. He was, above all, the first in a small line of leaders ranging from Sadhu Bashisth Muni, who was a contemporary of Manilal, to James Anthony, a controversial trade unionist and labor leader in the late 1950s, who genuinely cared for the common laborer and gave him a sense of dignity. Manilal's wife is equally important for her role in mobilizing Indian women as an effective pressure group for the first time since 1879.

The departure of Manilal in 1920, left a vacuum in Indian leadership which was not filled until the Congress hierarchy in India decided to send another suitably trained lawyer, and one who was acceptable to Gandhi. Understandably, the excitement of nationalist politics in India was far more attractive than epousing the nationalist cause in some distant British colony. Most educated Indians would have considered service in Fiji as a form of banishment; few would have had the courage or the fortitude to face a hostile colonial government which was carrying on a campaign to nullify any influence from India. One candidate for the precarious job was Shivabhai Bhailalbhai Patel, who had all the credentials for assuming the role in Fiji which Gandhi had envisaged.

Shivabhai was from the village of Sojitra in Charotar and a Patidar of the exclusive and prestigious six-village circle to which Appabhai and most Leva Patels in Fiji belonged. He possessed none of the flamboyance of Manilal, not from an abhorrence of agitational politics but from his training and background. Though it is difficult to put together a complete profile of

Shivabhai's life, owing to his self-imposed silence, it is generally accepted that he had worked his way into the Congress hierarchy. His interest in nationalist politics began in earnest in England where he studied law. Upon his return to India he immersed himself in Congress politics, gradually becoming one of the many secretaries to Gandhi. It is also speculated that he quickly fell from grace for some inexplicable reason.[34] Eventually he went to Rangoon to pursue his legal career until the long arm of the Congress inner circle singled him out to go to Fiji in response to a request from Indian leaders there for a lawyer to direct their fight for political rights. Shivabhai agreed to go for a trial period and arrived in Fiji in 1928.[35]

From the outset, Shivabhai (or S. B. as he is commonly known in Fiji) infused a distinctive style, or rather his own personal touch, into Fiji's politics. It was low-keyed with no public lambasting of the government, and revealed a determination to penetrate the privileged inner circle of Indian leadership in order to act covertly as a power broker among the various factions from within. This style was in keeping with his training as a disciplined worker within the Congress. Like Manilal, he was not above suspicion and was placed under surveillance by the government which actually implicated him in the Indian demand for a franchise based on common roll. In 1929 Shivabhai was joined by Ambalal Dahyabhai Patel, another Patidar from the village of Pij in Charotar, a highly articulate English-trained lawyer who did not disguise his intentions of moving into the inner circle of politics. Both located themselves in the two important centers of Indian population--Shivabhai in Lautoka and Ambalal in Ba.

Because the most pressing political problems were the common roll issue and the upcoming elections of 1929, Ambalal attempted to strengthen his appeal as an Indian spokesman. Capitalizing on the omission of Gujarati as a qualifying language for electors, he made an appeal to the Gujarati

community to petition the government for redress. With the bravado which was to become his trademark throughout his career in law and politics, Ambalal told the government, though inaccurately, that Gujarati was the recognized official language of Bombay Presidency, simultaneously urging its recognition in Fiji to enable the community to participate in the affairs of the Colony.[36] It was not just a matter of rights but also a question of the community's important economic contribution to the colony's development. Ambalal was certainly consolidating his position as a leading aspirant for power, but to many Indians it seemed that he was merely furthering the political fortunes of the Gujaratis at their expense. Meanwhile, he was also caught between two rival factions vying to form a local Indian National Congress; one faction elected him president of the Fiji Indian National Congress based in Lautoka. Later in 1929, the astute Shivabhai brought the two factions together because the divisions were detracting from the bigger issue of the common roll.

The common roll issue had been looming since 1924, when the Government of India asked the Fiji Government for a common franchise for Europeans and Indians which might give the latter an equitable share of representation. In 1929 Indians adopted the common roll as their major political platform; Shivabhai's rôle in formulating their demands is particularly significant. The events of 1929 provided the only occasion on which Shivabhai appeared in public to rally Indians behind the issue--this was S.B. the nationalist at his best. In August of 1929 he addressed a meeting of Indians in Lautoka "to petition the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking an immediate extension of ... [the] ... principle of common roll with or without equal franchise, recently granted to Indians in Kenya."[37] The following month, just prior to the first sitting of the Legislative Council, a Round Table Conference was held at Lautoka in which Shivabhai was again a dominant figure. The resolutions requested the Indian Members of the Legislative

Council (MLCs) to protest against the present franchise. They also reflected other important concerns of politically conscious Indians: the introduction of a common franchise, the removal of discrimination from schools, the granting of long leases to Indian farmers on native land, the appointment of an agent of the Government of India to safeguard Indian interests, and the spread of education.[38] When the Indian MLCs took their seats in the Council on October 25, Shivabhai accompanied them as an advisor and observer. Perhaps he was also present on November 5 when the Indians presented a motion asking for more equitable political rights and a common franchise. The motion was resoundingly defeated resulting in the resignation of the Indian members in protest.

Once again Indians found themselves outside the inner circle of power, but this time through choice. In spite of the government's adamant position, and its adherence to the principle that neither Indians nor Fijians could participate on equal terms with the European community, the Indians under Shivabhai's and Ambalal's guidance replied with petitions and resolutions. The Indian slogan became: noncooperation within the council but cooperation outside, best articulated by Shivabhai who told the government that a franchise based on racial lines "implied the inferiority of ... [the] ... Indian community."[39] The rejection of Indian demands was as much a major set-back for the common roll issue as it was a personal defeat for Shivabhai. He had attempted to elevate Indian aspirations to a high level, perhaps indicative of his training as a nationalist in India. But his appeal was limited to a small circle of Indians who thrived in the exciting arena of countless resolutions and petitions, maybe because it provided a glimpse of what their brethren in India were doing. Unfortunately, this select group of Indians asked for the same rights and privileges as the Europeans which were rejected just as the moderate demands of the early nationalists in India for the same rights as Englishmen were dismissed. Poor Shivabhai must have

languished in dismay while the Indians remained excluded politically, and even more so as squabbling and disarrayed factions aggravated the delicate situation. It is not difficult to see why he withdrew from active politics.

The demand for common roll and the unity theme which Shivabhai and Ambalal helped to formulate to bring Indians together under one banner began to disintegrate in the 1930s. Sectarian disputes between the Samajis and the Sanatanis, ideological differences among politicized Indians over the most desirable type of representation, and personal ambitions and rivalries obliterated the euphoria of 1929 when Indians first elected their representatives to articulate their demands for equal rights. The Samaji and Sanatini disputes were not only religious but also had deep political overtones. In spite of their small numerical strength, the Samajis were well organized, and displayed a higher level of awareness of political and social issues, apart from being the leading advocates of Indian education. In contrast, the Sanatanis only began to effectively organize in the early 1930s, but their encroachment into the political domain together with their willingness to cooperate with the government ran afoul of the Samajis. Muslims were similarly resented by the Samajis, largely for their demand for separate representation as well as for their unwillingness to support the common roll. Personal ambitions, though superseded by the common roll issue, were also beginning to permeate Indian politics as witnessed by Vishnu Deo's attempt to maneuver himself, as the undisputed leader of the Samajis, into the Council again.

Essentially there were two Indian factions vying for power--the supporters of common roll whom the government depicted as extremists and "non-cooperationists," and the less politicized Indian groups like the Sanatinis and Muslims who were willing to work within the existing framework because it could lead to further guarantees by the government to safeguard their interests. At the head of the predominant group was Vishnu Deo who

joined forces with A. D. Patel in the newly constituted Indian Association of Fiji. It was formed in Suva in 1930 and incorporated all the aims and objectives of previous organizations.[40] The Indian Association was strongly backed by businessmen, educated Indians, and prominent Samajis. But unity within the Association was fragile, firstly, because A.D. Patel had declined to defend Vishnu Deo when the government successfully prosecuted and fined him for the publication of 'obscene' literature, and secondly, because some Indians within the Association, including Vishnu Deo, were willing to compromise on the common roll issue by the end of 1933.

Compromise sapped Indian leadership of its unity, but it determined which Indian and what group would serve in the Legislative Council in the elections slated for 1937. Moreover, compromise allowed a new breed of local leaders to challenge India-born leaders like A.D. Patel, and to divert attention to other pressing concerns such as indebtedness among farmers and the need for immigration controls to stop the influx of Gujarati and Punjabi immigrants. While the upcoming leaders generally acknowledged common roll and equality of status for Indians as a desired goal, they felt that it obscured other problems which were more relevant to the community.

Advocates of immigration controls ran into stiff opposition from A. D. Patel and the Indian Association. The Indian Association with its unity theme and focus on equality for all Indians understandably opposed immigration restrictions, but it was also anxious not to alienate progressive Gujarati businessmen who could be tapped for funds to support its activities. For A.D. Patel, the Association's president, the immigration question constituted a larger threat which he, as a Gujarati, was quick to recognize. There were a conglomeration of factors involved in the decision to impose controls including a desire to check nationalist influence emanating from India and to lessen Gujarati influence over Indian enterprise. But Ambalal regarded these controls as discriminatory for they were only directed toward

the Gujarati and Punjabi communities.[41] Furthermore, he was convinced that Gujaratis were being selected as scapegoats for the colony's social and economic ills, or to obscure the more insidious aspects of the strict immigration policy. Accordingly, he voiced his objections to the government and its Immigration Committee, elicited the support of various nationalist organizations in India to put pressure on the Fiji Government through the Indian authorities, and contested a seat in the 1937 elections on the immigration issue. Unfortunately for A. D. Patel, the sentiment against unrestricted immigration among locally born Indians was very high and this actually contributed to his defeat.

It seems that Patel had once more projected a disagreeable image which characterized him as a champion of Gujarati rights, much to the detriment of his desire to set himself as a spokesman for all Indians. Perhaps there were other forces in operation which contributed to his defeat. One theory is that A. D. Patel's loss at the polls was the work of Vishnu Deo and the Samajis who had not forgotten Patel's failure to defend the Samaji leader during the height of the sectarian controversies.[42] Another view places some blame on Appabhai who, in fact, had backed Patel's opponent much to the chagrin of the Patidar community in Fiji.[43] Patel's defeat can be simply attributed to the lack of an effective operational base through religious, sports, and other community organizations with large support to project himself onto the national scene. His appeal was only to those Indians who could raise themselves above parochial intersts as well as to those Gujaratis and other apprehensive India-born residents who epitomized him as the best safeguard against immigration controls.

The elections of 1937 provided an important lesson to aspiring leaders from the sugarcane belt: that enough community support could not be mustered without the backing of the farmers. A. D. Patel's platform, with its emphasis on unrestricted immigration, privileges, and rights had little

relevance to farmers whose primary concerns in the late 1930s were obtaining relief from growing indebtedness in addition to securing long-term leases on land, and receiving an equitable price for their sugarcane. Having little credibility with the only cane growers' union, the Kisan Sangh, and rebuffed by its Samaji dominated leadership, Ambalal gravitated toward Nadi, the South Indian stronghold where he effectively exploited the prevailing parochialism and cleavages between Northern and Southern Indians to help form a rival union, the Akhil Fiji Krishak Maha Sangh (All-Fiji Farmers' Association) in 1941.[44] Just as he had capitalized on the immigration issue to appear as a defender of Gujarati interests, he had once again made an appeal to a specific linguistic and cultural group to further his personal career. Yet in doing so he was merely following the pattern of leadership already established within the Indian community. This time he conveniently manipulated traditional Indian symbols through his association with Swami Rudranand, a religious dignitary of the Ramakrishna Mission, to enhance his credibility among farmers. Gradually, Ambalal had pivoted from one style of leadership to another, but each was marred by controversy.

The events of the early 1940s were an indication of the difficult period confronting the Indian community. Two crucial developments--the insignificant active role of Indians in the war effort and a major crisis in the sugar industry involving rival unions--strained race relations and accentuated social and political cleavages within the Indian community. These developments not only entrenched the personal brand of leadership that would persist for a long time but also seriously damaged the community's prestige in the eyes of the other races. In effect, they had a direct bearing on the type of immigration policy which was implemented in 1947. The lack of zeal in the war effort can be attributed to the attempt by Indian leaders to push the fight for equality, in many respects representing a miniature version of the noncooperation effort in India. But the

industrial disputes in 1943 had wider ramifications, resulting in crop destruction by farmers while rival unions attempted to separately maneuver for a better bargaining position. These disputes bore some similarity to the disturbances of the early 1920s, namely in the manner in which Indians responded to the exigencies of the moment and in the treatment of certain strike leaders. In this case, A. D. Patel and Swami Rudranand of the Ramakrishna Mission, both actively involved in the South Indian-dominated Maha Sangh, were placed under house arrest with a serious curtailment of their activities. The crisis of 1943 had finally catapulted A. D. Patel into the national limelight, turning him into a formidable figure in the politics of sugar for many years.

Other Gujaratis were less intensely involved in politics, but they did display a capacity to be drawn on a limited scale to the side of a specific group which epoused a particular course of action or ideology. It is difficult to comment on their level of participation during Manilal's time. An awareness of their economic position in the late 1920s, together with the granting of the franchise to Gujaratis in 1932, drew them closer to issues of a political nature. However, they were hardly overt in their political attitudes, but could be mobilized, nevertheless, to support individual power brokers or leaders in their quest for political office. On the other hand, they could also be tapped for funds to finance certain activities of socio-political organizations. Gujarati support often went to power brokers like Vishnu Deo who served as an accountant for numerous Indian business concerns and helped to establish many Gujarati businesses by doing the necessary paperwork. Vishnu Deo was a highly respected religious dignitary with extensive networks within the community whom Gujaratis conveniently utilized to further their business ends. He enjoyed a special relationship with the government which recognized him as a person of immense influence and prestige. Moreover, he could be expected to

safeguard the Gujarati position during the implementation of immigration controls. Organizations without a parochial and sectarian outlook, such as the Indian Association or the Indian Chamber of Commerce, also afforded Gujaratis a more secure form of protection over their feelings of insecurity. These organizations purported to represent the interests of all Indians, displayed more egalitarian tendencies, and did not single out any particular group as scapegoat for all the economic and social ills confronting the Indian community. In the final analysis, Gujarati participation in Fiji's political events continued to remain very marginal and was essentially restricted to individuals with extensive business linkages, or with a high level of exposure to western education, or with legal expertise, or with an inclination and natural aptitude for politics.

Thus by 1945 the Gujaratis had become a visible and important element in the Indian community. Their contribution to the organization of Indian enterprise and the sense of direction which they gave it, cannot be disputed. The cultural environment which had nurtured their organizational skills had adequately prepared them to assume entrepreneurial roles in Fiji. Though they were not entrepreneurs traditionally, they were preoccupied with commercial pursuits since trade afforded them the best opportunity to amass as much wealth as possible before returning home. The lack of entrepreneurial skills among the large agricultural Indian population made it easier for them to acquire that role. However, their entrenchment in trade gave them a negative image which has continuously plagued the community and made it difficult for them to carve a permanent niche in the new land.

The negative image of Gujaratis was accentuated by a persistent sense of continuity with the homeland. To the immigrants in Fiji, Gujarat was, and would always be, desh (homeland) whereas Fiji was nothing more than pradesh (a foreign land). Gujarati cultural mechanisms such as caste and to some extent religion, as well as the factors of social organization,

including traditional occupation, ascriptive community membership, and in-group business solidarity, reinforced links with the homeland. For these reasons they also displayed a higher degree of cultural chauvinism than other Indian groups.

As the community expanded so did the scale of problems which it confronted. Family emigration and business expansion produced a corresponding need for institutionalized structural mechanisms to deal with these problems. The growth of welfare associations was partly a response to the challenge to provide the community with some sense of direction, but it was also a product of the need to organize the activities of the community on a collective basis. On the one level it was a means through which leadership could be exercised, and on the other it provided a forum through which external relations could be regulated, especially in the dealings with the government. Welfare associations also met the challenge of providing education to Gujarati children. The Gujarati response to education occurred much later than that of other Indian groups. Whereas other Indians placed a high premium on an English education as a means to ascend the social and economic scale, Gujaratis only saw it as a means to equip their children with the basic essentials for conducting good business. Finally, in the sphere of politics the Gujarati response was marginal. This was consistent with their belief that politics was bad for business. By not associating themselves with the current trends within the political life of Fiji, they inevitably reinforced the negative image which grew from their association with trade.

NOTES

[1]A good example of this attitude can be found in Stanner, South Seas in Transition, p. 178. Stanner is exceedingly harsh on Indians generally, perhaps from an attempt to adhere to the "official point of view" too closely.

[2]See E. W. Nafziger, "Indian Entrepreneurship: A Survey," in Entrepreneurship and Economic Development, ed. Peter Kilby (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 313.

[3]E. E. Hagen provides an excellent discussion on the concept of the "withdrawal of status respect." See his "How Economic Growth Begins: A Theory of Social Change," in Kilby, op. cit., pp. 123-37, also expounded at length in his On the Theory of Social Change: How Economic Growth Begins (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1962).

[4]The contrast between Gujarati and other Indian shopkeepers is discussed in more detail in Mayer, Peasants in the Pacific, pp. 46-47.

[5]Though there are a number of exploratory works on "culturally marginal" groups, the main source of reference was Bert F. Hoselitz, "A Sociological Approach to Economic Development," in Development and Society: The Dynamics of Economic Change, ed. David E. Novack and Robert Lekachman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p. 157.

[6]See Nafziger, pp. 302-304; Milton Singer, "Introduction: The Modernization of Occupational Cultures in South Asia," in Entrepreneurship and Modernization of Occupational Cultures in South Asia, ed. Milton Singer (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 1973), p. 14; Phiroze B. Medhora, "Entrepreneurship in India," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. LXXX, No. 4 (September 1965), p. 567.

[7]Information obtained through interviews with Khatri tailors and Patidar traders.

[8]The volume of correspondence between Fiji and Gujarat was higher than that between Fiji and other parts of India.

[9]Majmudar, Cultural History of Gujarat, is an excellent representation of Gujarati chauvinism; see also K. M. Munshi, Gujarat and its Literature from Earliest Times to 1852 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1967), Introduction.

[10]This attitude is certainly prevalent within the Khatri community, but to a lesser degree in other groups.

[11]Interviews provided much of the source material for pp. 281-294.

[12]A. W. McMillan, Notes on the Indians in Fiji, p. 3.

[13]All groups interviewed were unwilling to provide copies of their constitutions, perhaps to prevent them from "falling into the wrong hands."

[14]Interview with Fakir Mohammad, a prominent Muslim Gujarati Nav in Suva (September 26, 1975).

[15]Interviews with Khatris in Suva, Nadi, and Lautoka between May and October 1975

[16]Interview with Parbhu Dayal, a Mochi by jati but qualified accountant by profession in Suva (October 26, 1975).

[17]Interview with Raojibhai Khodabhai Patel, a Patidar businessman and well-known civic politician, Suva (September 26, 1975).

[18]Information orally obtained from Sonis in Suva, in particular P. K. Bhindi and Arjun Jiwa (a Patani Soni).

[19]Souvenir Magazine of the Gujarat Education Society of Fiji, 1952-1966 (Suva: Gujarat Education Society, 1966), pp. 33-37.

[20]See Mayer, Indians in Fiji, p. 59; Gillion, Fiji Indian Migrants, p. 150.

[21]Interview with Parmanand Singh, an ex-MLC and a well-known political figure who was a chief advocate of immigration controls in the 1930s, Lautoka (June 6, 1975).

[22]See Meller and Anthony, Fiji Goes to the Polls, pp. 3-19.

[23]Indians in Fiji, I.E.P., E.H.L. (O), A. No. 5-15; also, see Memorandum on Status of Indians in Fiji, October 1929, C.S.O., Suva, No. 5286/29.

[24]Fiji Letters Patent dated Fabruary 9, 1929; also, see The Fiji Times, April 9, 1929.

[25]Personal details of Manilal's life were obtained from his youngest son, I. M. Doctor and his nephew Maganlal Narotam Das in Bombay in August 1974. A copy of "Manilal--Career" (Typescript, n.d.), kindly provided by his son, outlined the important events in his life in Mauritius and Fiji, especially the strike of 1920 (see Appendix). The "History Sheet of Manilal Maganlal Shah alias M. M. Doctor" contained in I.E.P., R. & A., August 1921, No. 13, Filed and Indexed, is an important official source material. Published sources for Manilal are Tinker, "The Career of Manilal Doctor"; Gillion, op. cit., pp. 158-162; and Gupta, Mauritius Aur Fiji Pravasi Bharliyo Ka Agranela.

[26]Gupta, op. cit., p. 23.

[27]I.E.P., C. & I., April 1917, B. No. 12/13; Gillion (p. 162) classifies him as a Brahmin without mentioning his Kshatriya origins as contained in the official records.

[28]See in particular Mayer, Indians in Fiji, p.. 31.

[29]I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, Enclosure 7, Annex 3, No. 2-110, Filed and Indexed.

[30]Ibid.

[31]I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, Enclosure 14, No. 2-110, Filed and Indexed.

[32]"Manilal--Career" (Typescript, n.d.), provided by I. M. Doctor. See Appendix.

[33]I.E.P., R. & A., March 1922, Enclosure 7, Annex 3, No. 2-110. Filed and Indexed.

[34]See "The Man Nobody Knows," The Fiji Nation Newsmagazine, Vol. I, No. 7, (August 1969), pp. 9-10.

[35]Interview with S. B. Patel, Lautoka (April 7, 1975). Other sources of information on Shivabhai were his acquaintances from Dharmaj, in particular H. M. Patel (I.C.S. retired), an important political figure in Kheda (Kaira); and P. C. Shah and C. F. Shah, ed., Charotar Sarvasangrah, Part 2: General Information (Nadiad: Lokmat Prakasana, 1954), p. 807. In Gujarati.

[36]A. D. Patel and others to Governor of Fiji, April 10, 1929, C.S.O., Suva, No. 1978/29.

[37]I.E.P., E.H.L. (O.), February 1931, B. 42-43.

[38]I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O. 1932, Serial No. 15, File No. 276.

[39]I.E.P., E.H.L., L. & O., 1932, Serial No. 9, Enclosure 1, File No. 276.

[40]Indian Association of Fiji, 1930-1961 (Suva, 1961), p. 7.

[41]I.E.P., E.H.L. L. & O. 1935, Part 1, Serial No. 1-20, File No. 247.

[42]This view is prevalent among the Patidars in Fiji.

[43]Interview with Motibhai Ranchodbhai Patel who came to Fiji in 1922 to work for Appabhai, Dharmaj, Gujarat (September 8, 1974). This view is also held by Appabhai's son, Ratilal, who lives in Ba, Fiji. Appabhai perhaps

had good reasons for supporting Ambalal's opponent. He was facing increasing competition from other Patidar traders who were diminishing his influence as the foremost Gujarati trader in Fiji. This factor sheds some light on his support of the candidate who advocated immigration restrictions. However, it should be noted that he had been strongly influenced by Vishnu Deo to back Ambalal's opponent.

[44]Information orally obtained from members of the South Indian community in Fiji.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Gujarati contacts with Fiji do not antedate 1900 although by that stage there was already a community of Indians residing in the colony either as indentured laborers or as 'free' settlers who were the products of the indenture system. Fiji's main sources of emigrants were the United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh) and later, from the early years of the twentieth century, Madras. Bombay Presidency, which contained both British and Princely Gujarat, was not a sanctioned area for recruitment. The lack of direct sea routes between Bombay and Fiji left little incentive for travel between the two areas and kept Fiji beyond the pale of Gujarati penetration. Even for the most daring adventurer, travel to Fiji was only possible through the two sanctioned emigration ports, Calcutta and Madras, with the former being the main port of embarkation. Only those Gujaratis who could travel by train across the great expanse of the Indian landmass from Bombay to Calcutta and then incur additional expenses, not to mention the hardships during the voyage to Fiji on emigrant ships, could conceivably hope to make it to Fiji. Moreover, Gujaratis were not inclined to travel to unknown areas when the traditional contact with East Africa offered more tangible rewards and where mercantile communities of Gujaratis had long existed. The composition of Fiji's Indian population with its North Indian linguistic and cultural base simply did not provide an attractive field for emigration until isolated groups of Gujaratis proved the contrary in the early decades of this century.

Gujarati penetration into Fiji began as the isolated movement of certain groups who were either thwarted by the African experience or were looking to other countries than Africa to seek their fortunes. Deteriorating conditions in Gujarat in the early twentieth century with the failure of monsoons, the ravages of famines, the reduction in the size of landholdings among families,

and the subsequent drop in agricultural productivity also caused population movements to other parts of India and abroad. As opportunities in the urban centers, first Surat and then Bombay, became very limited in the late 1910s, Gujaratis increasingly looked to opportunities in foreign lands to supplement their meager resources at home. But the actual process of this type of migration was more complex than it seemed. It is important to remember that Gujaratis only went to those British areas of influence which were willing to receive them and which were safe for domicile. From 1900 onward many British colonial territories which harbored powerful white communities began to impose stringent controls on the entry of Indians. As areas of 'free' emigration no longer became accessible the push was toward new frontiers.

Until 1930, Fiji maintained an open door policy toward 'free' immigrants except for a brief attempt to restrict the entry of any Indians who did not come as indentured laborers. In this, Fiji remained unique and in marked contrast to Australia and New Zealand which had by 1920 virtually eliminated the possibility of a large influx of Indians. In the case of New Zealand, these restrictive measures were perhaps in response to the fear of hordes of ex-indentured laborers from Fiji arriving at its shores. Fiji welcomed 'free' Indian migrants because they introduced skills which were lacking among the Indian community.

'Free' immigration first gained momentum after 1900. The three main types of 'free' immigrants were ex-indentured laborers who had been repatriated to India and who reemigrated to Fiji; Punjabis who came to Fiji after experiencing difficulties in other areas of the Pacific or were merely using Fiji as a convenient stopping-point in their travels elsewhere, and Gujaratis who also came either in search of opportunity or because Fiji did not have those immigration restrictions which were curtailing their entry into other countries. Though Fiji was relatively isolated from the rest of the world at the turn of the century, it still offered numerous possibilities

to 'free' immigrants. The presence of a large Indian community, though consisting mainly of indentured laborers who had been in Fiji since 1879, served as an attraction to other Indians who wished to come to the colony without assistance from any government. The growth of the sugar industry and the subsequent development of towns widened the scope of economic opportunities which were available to Indians, and created a need for a commercial class of Indians to perform an important function within the expanding immigrant society. While many 'free' immigrants came to pursue a new life in Fiji as independent farmers, or in some other capacity as clerks, interpreters, and skilled laborers, or even as social reformers, religious dignitaries, and politicians, the Gujaratis came mainly to ply skills which they had acquired in their homeland.

After World War I, Fiji's open-door policy continued to attract 'free' immigrants. The reopening of shipping routes between India and the Pacific, and the revision of passport rules in India facilitated the movement of people out of India. By 1920, when the indentured system of emigration was totally abolished, with limited possibility for any other type of officially sanctioned scheme of emigration from India, the passport system had become a permanent fixture of 'free' emigration. The passage of the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 now made it difficult for the laboring class of Indians to leave India but it still allowed other Indians, who had the resources, to emigrate without any interference from the authorities. Except for a brief period of surveillance over emigrants from Baroda State, there were few restraints placed on Gujarati travel as long as individuals fulfilled certain requirements and showed that they were capable of supporting themselves abroad through independent means.

Though much of the incentive to migrate came from economic conditions at home and abroad, from the knowledge that Fiji was a safe area for domicile, from legislative enactments in India which permitted movement abroad, and

from Fiji's liberal immigration policy, Gujarati emigration to Fiji was essentially a process of self-betterment. This process was already visible in the movement of people in India from one area to another. The push toward Fiji was simply an extension of what was happening in Gujarat as people left their villages to earn their livelihood elsewhere. Other factors such as floods, famines, failure of the monsoons, pressure of population, and diminishing family landholdings or resources merely accentuated the desire to turn to the wealth of foreign lands.

Fiji gained prominence among Gujaratis as a safe area for settlement only after certain caste groupings had carved out a particular area of influence in which their caste skills could be effectively utilized. In the initial phase of their penetration, between 1900 and 1920, isolated groups of Gujaratis established a base of operations through which other members of their castes were able to enter. First came the Sonis, later the Khatris, followed by a few artisan and agricultural castes. Toward 1920 agricultural castes showed the most interest in Fiji but were deterred from coming because of official surveillance over their movement to areas which had received indentured laborers. By that stage only the Khatris and the Sonis had gained a firm foothold in Fiji. Moreover, few groups came with the intention of residing in the colony permanently; almost all came without their families although some Gujaratis sent for their families after they were firmly established. Most Gujarati immigrants came for a short-term period of residence lasting no more than two years. They intended to return to their homeland after having accumulated as much wealth as possible. Unfortunately, and contrary to their expectations, few Gujaratis turned rich overnight--the two-year period was too short in which to amass a large sum of money.

Until 1920 Gujarati settlement in Fiji progressed very slowly. Unlike Africa, where generations of Indians traded along the coast and were also prominent in the caravan trade, Fiji was still an unknown frontier which

lacked a vast market for exploitation. This was certainly a period of observation and limited economic activity in which most Gujarati immigrants attempted to carve out specific areas of operation which were intricately related to caste occupations. Gujarati immigrants had an obvious advantage over other Indians who either lacked these skills or were hesitant to display them. Furthermore, they also encountered favorable political conditions and ready acceptance of their traditional skills or whatever activity they engaged in. But what really acted in their favor was the social composition of the Indian population in which there was a preponderance of agriculturalists and which gave the Gujaratis an obvious advantage over other groups, especially in the commercial field.

The more important phase of Gujarati migration to Fiji occurred after 1920. Because of the abolition of the indenture system which severed Fiji from its usual sources of migrants, and the inability to devise another officially sanctioned system of emigration acceptable to the Government of India, Gujaratis gradually became an important and visible group within the India-born component of Fiji's Indian population. In fact, they became the main immigrant group to Fiji after 1930. Their growing influence over Indian enterprise was becoming noticeable. Far from being just one of the many groups in the commercial sphere, they had now become a major trading element within the urban-based community and were also beginning to extend their influence over the 'sugar towns.' What had begun as isolated cases of emigration to Fiji turned into a group phenomenon. As additional members of most groups arrived in increasing numbers, Gujaratis were able to secure a monopoly of certain trades and businesses. The presence of a large Indian community and common knowledge of successful business ventures by other Gujaratis served as a major factor in attracting more immigrants.

The upsurge in Gujarati migration to Fiji in the 1920s can be also attributed to the breakdown of the colony's isolation from the rest of the

world. The extension of sea routes between India and the Pacific facilitated and increased movement between Fiji and Gujarat. The survival of the sugar industry in Fiji, as well as the breakdown of monolithic sugar estates into workable farms in the sugar belt, created new needs in the hinterland among a growing agricultural population. As these needs developed, especially after Fiji's economy recovered from the setbacks of the early 1920s, Gujaratis moved with ease into entrepreneurial roles to provide outlets for trade goods from the urban centers for utilization in the agricultural belt where the overwhelming majority of Indians were residing. By 1930 they had become a potent force within the Indian commercial community, largely through their organizational expertise and the availability of a vast labor pool in their homeland. In almost every 'sugar town' of Fiji they emerged as a formidable commercial group surpassing other Indian groups in whatever activity they were engaged in, whether shopkeeping, or laundering, or shoemaking, or tailoring. Their tenacity in the commercial sphere became all the more visible during the depression years when Gujaratis expanded their businesses in response to pressures from unfortunate family and caste members at home who wished to emigrate to Fiji. This vigorous burst of commercial activity made it very difficult for other Indians to enter commerce or trade.

After 1930 attitudes toward the unrestricted entry of Gujaratis began to change. In the first place, these migrants had quickly surpassed local Indians in the economic sphere and were also contributing to stresses within the Indian community. Secondly, the dampening effects of the worldwide depression accentuated economic disparities within that community as well. The push for immigration controls arose not only from the desire to check the economic power of the India-born component within the Indian population but also from a need to curtail the pervading influence of the Gujaratis. The Fiji Government saw controls as part of its administrative responsibilities to Fijians and local Indians with established roots with Fiji. Local Indians

advocated controls against unrestricted immigration because they saw Gujaratis as opportunists who had no permanent stake in the country and who were merely retarding the progress of other groups. Other races saw controls as the best means to curtail external political interference which could conceivably disrupt race relations or the balance of power in Fiji. The sentiment against unrestricted Gujarati immigration led eventually to more stringent controls which virtually eliminated the type of influx which had occurred during the depression years.

What, then, was the Gujarati impact on Fiji and on Fiji's Indian society? This study has attempted to answer this question with reference to the most crucial phase of their settlement until 1945 by which time they had established their ascendancy over Indian commercial enterprise. Their contribution to the organization of Indian enterprise, and the sense of direction which they gave it, is difficult to dispute. But they also introduced a different lifestyle and successfully maintained it. Gujaratis came to Fiji with certain occupational expectations and quickly acquired an economic role because of their inherent ability to organize and be organized. Between 1900 and 1920 they made every effort to gain a firm foothold. Though numerically insignificant and limited in their activities during this phase, their traditional skills still gave them an obvious advantage over other Indians who were mostly tied to agriculture and who either lacked the entrepreneurial expertise or the organizational ability to move into the commercial sphere. After 1920 Gujaratis became more active and noticeable in the commercial field and by 1945 had become an important and visible trading element in the Indian community. These immigrants moved into economic roles with relative ease largely on account of their ability to pick the right place, the right time, and the right people to serve their interests. But it went beyond that. They had the necessary expertise, the organizational know-how, and the degree of group solidarity to assume roles which other Indians were

incapable of doing. It must be stressed, once again, that the social composition of the Indian population with its strong agricultural base gave the Gujaratis an edge over other groups in the commercial field.

Gujarati immigrants settled predominantly in urban areas because of their economic orientation. These areas afforded maximum security and numerous opportunities for trade and commerce. They did not display as much versatility as their African counterparts who played an important part in opening up the hinterland. In Fiji, they only ventured into areas which were safe for settlement and where other Indians were long established. As pockets of Indian communities emerged around 'sugar towns,' in response to the expansion in the sugar industry, they quickly attracted Gujaratis who always encountered a demand for their skills. Most Indians were rooted to the land from which they derived their main source of livelihood; by contrast, the Gujaratis were more mobile with the ability to move from one area of Fiji to another quite readily in order to further their interests. However, they mainly worked and settled in areas where Gujarati enterprise had the maximum potential for success and expansion. They did not move into the hinterland of Fiji in any large measure especially in areas where there were few Indian settlers because permanent settlement was not their prime consideration. Their focus on trade made them channel their resources as well as shape their settlement patterns to that end.

The community also responded effectively to changing conditions in the new environment. Though they did not adhere rigidly to the social hierarchical structure of their homeland, Gujaratis still retained a considerable degree of cultural cohesiveness within their social organization. In the first place, Gujaratis were not forced to follow traditional occupations in the lax social climate of Fiji. Secondly, occupational specialization, tied to the notion of pollution and purity, had little relevance because a wide range of opportunities were available to all immigrants. Thirdly, groups

which engaged in traditional occupations were readily accepted without social stigmatization. Certain skills were badly needed, certainly in shoemaking and laundering which were activities which most Indians avoided. Caste ideology still linked immigrants to their respective jati nucleus, and caste behavior was only important to the extent that it enabled Gujaratis to resume normal relations with caste-fellows during visits to the homeland.

Gujarati social life was built around the shop rather than around caste and religion. Essentially, the community remained male in character; therefore, the shop was the focal point of all economic and social activities. It was a place of business but also provided all the meager comforts of a home. Because of the absence of women and families, Gujaratis cooked, ate, slept, and conducted their social activities within the confines of the shop. While the community retained its male character there was also no need to pay close attention to the religion of Gujarat which was only revived after the arrival of families.

Immigration controls in the 1930s did little to dampen Gujarati ingenuity or enterprise, although in the long run these controls affected the composition of the community. The introduction of families in the 1930s obliged immigrants to pay closer attention to the needs and paraphenalia of the household. In fact, the establishment of households made it necessary to maintain a greater degree of exclusiveness against outsiders and, above all, fostered more awareness of the culture of Gujarat. Women had a greater need for security and traditional cultural symbols, ingrained in caste and religion, in the seemingly hostile environment of Fiji. Consequently, strong links with the homeland through religion, caste ideology, and social exclusiveness did not produce any enduring attachment for Fiji. In effect, Gujaratis, with the exception of a few individuals, continued to remain beyond the mainstream of Indian social and cultural life, although most Gujaratis in Fiji today readily boast that they were indeed instrumental in keeping

Indian culture alive.

Gujarati social relationships took place first within the immediate social group and then extended to other Gujaratis with similar economic interests. Relationships with other Indian groups and other races were kept to a minimum. Though there was considerable degree of social interaction between Gujaratis and other Indians prior to the arrival of women, it began to diminish after families arrived. The emergence of the Gujarati household produced more caste exclusiveness and in-group solidarity against outsiders. Social relationships thus had a strong correlation with economic activities. Gujaratis overtly displayed a preference for neighbors drawn from the same cultural background just as they indicated a similar preference for economic relations with people like themselves. Economic relationships with other Indians and other races were only important to the extent that it enabled Gujaratis to widen their base of operations.

Thus there is much validity in the assertion that Gujaratis merely existed _in_ the host country without displaying signs of belonging _to_ it. If, indeed, the Gujaratis had little or no strong attachment for Fiji, then this characteristic was accentuated by the persistent sense of continuity with the homeland. To these immigrants Fiji was nothing more than a 'foreign land' (_pradesh_) where money was to be made. By contrast, they always regarded Gujarat as their homeland (_desh_) to which most immigrants hoped to return after accumulating enough savings. Gujarati cultural mechanisms such as caste and religion, together with factors of social organization which included ascriptive membership within a particular group, occupation, in-group solidarity, and caste exclusiveness, reinforced ties with Gujarat. In effect, Gujaratis displayed a high level of consciousness for their regional culture which also contributed to a more noticeable degree of cultural chauvinism than among other Indian groups.

The negative image of the community, which became more pronounced after

1930, was largely due to the visible presence and active participation of Gujaratis in every phase of trade and commerce in Fiji. Unlike the overwhelming bulk of the Indian population, Gujarati immigrants were solely concerned with commercial pursuits; by 1930 they had acquired firm control of the bootmaking, tailoring, laundering, and jewelry businesses. They had also become a noticeable element in the small-scale wholesale and retail trade of Fiji. The seemingly prosperous condition of the Gujaratis caused much resentment among local Indians who accused them of accentuating economic disparities within the community. Through their regular visits to their homeland, they recruited relatives and friends as assistants for their businesses rather than from the growing 'labor market' in Fiji. Unquestionably, these immigrants made a valuable contribution to the organization of Indian commercial enterprise but, in doing so, they could not avoid the hostile and negative sentiment directed against their community.

Their negative image also evolved from the manner in which Gujaratis resorted to their own resources to deal with the problems which they confronted in Fiji. The welfare associations which emerged in the 1930s functioned as an extension of the regional associations in Gujarat, both in structure and in orientation. These associations in Fiji emerged in response to the challenge to provide a particular group with some sense of direction in Fiji, as well as from the need to organize the activities of the community on a collective basis. While these associations provided a forum for exercising leadership, and regulating internal behavior and external relations, they also attended to the more important cultural and social needs of the community, especially on the question of providing education for Gujarati children.

Gujarati response to education occurred at a slower pace than that of other Indians. In marked contrast to other Indians who regarded education as a necessary prerequisite for a higher economic and social status,

Gujaratis saw little need for education that went beyond the acquisition of rudimentary skills for entering the business world of Fiji. In other words, education was necessary only to the extent that it prepared their children for initiation into the family enterprise at some later date. They also wished to guarantee the availability of education to their children, but under their own auspices and funded through the community's own resources. Finally, in spite of the concern for education which demonstrated that Gujaratis could unite for a common purpose, they had no interest in the politics of Fiji except to acquire the same voting rights as other Indians. Their political apathy can be traced to their heavy commercialism and the inability to identify with the complex issues which confronted the Indian community in Fiji. Because of their privileged economic position as a trading group, they saw no reason to spurn British rule which, after all, provided the peace and security which contributed to their prosperity. Above all, they abided by the precept that politics and business were incompatible. Thus by remaining economically motivated, socially aloof, and politically alienated, Gujaratis inevitably reinforced their negative image and continued to exist as a marginal group within the Indian community.

This study has focused on the crucial formative phase of Gujarati settlement until 1945. Between 1900 and 1920 isolated groups of Gujaratis established a base of operations which enabled other Gujaratis to come. Though they were not significant in the initial phase of settlement, they became a visible and powerful commercial urban-based community in the 1930s. By 1945 they had established their ascendancy over Indian commercial enterprise. Their success in the economic sphere has become even more pronounced and noticeable since World War II. Today Indian commercial life in Fiji is still dominated by Gujaratis whose entrenchment in the lucrative 'duty-free' tourist trade has adequately demonstrated the community's ability to adapt to changing conditions. It is encouraging to note that Gujaratis

have now made a greater degree of commitment to Fiji. The immigration controls of 1947 initiated that process and obliged the community to make the difficult decision to construct family life in Fiji. Moreover, a new generation of Gujaratis, who trace their origins in Fiji to the late 1940s and early 1950s, has emerged to assert a Gujarati identity totally different from that of their predecessors. The new generation has shown a higher level of awareness for their future economic and political status in Fiji. Old attachments to the homeland have given way to new ideals. What remains in the future, especially in a developing country such as Fiji, is yet to be seen. To avoid a fate similar to that of their counterparts in Africa, will be indeed a difficult task.

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The research for this thesis was conducted in England, India, Fiji and Canada between November 1973 and October 1975. In England, only the material in the India Office Library and Records was examined. The brief investigation of the resources there, comprising secondary works on Indian emigration, published and printed reports by private individuals, (India) Emigration Proceedings ("A"--Printed Papers up to 1931), and Judicial and Public Department files on Indian emigration, provided an excellent introduction to the topic of Indian emigration in general. The same work, if carried out in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, would have taken a longer period of time than the month spent in London. Additional records in the Emigration Proceedings, in particular "B" Proceedings and Filed Papers and Manuscript Proceedings, were consulted in New Delhi. This work was time-consuming and done at various intervals during the fourteen-month period spent in India.

The overwhelming bulk of the research in India was carried out in Gujarat and Bombay. The holdings on South Asia in the Hansa Mehta Library, M.S. University of Baroda, were invaluable and saved unnecessary travel to other research centers. Gazetteers for Bombay Presidency and the Census of India for the early decades of the twentieth century were consulted there, as well as secondary works on emigration. The main archival work at the Baroda Record Office in Baroda entailed examination of the Huzur English Office files on emigration from Baroda State. It is important to note that the emigration and passport records are listed under the Police Department. There is very little material under the short-lived Emigration Bureau which was formed in the late 1910s to regulate emigration from that area. The work in Baroda was supplemented by examination of emigration records in the Bombay (Maharashtra State) Archives in Bombay. Passport Registers and (original) Passport Applications were the main sources consulted. The registers do not go beyond 1921 which leaves a gap for the period until 1928. The Passport Applications provided data for the period commencing 1928 until 1938. This collection is the property of the Government of India, but no effort has been made to transfer it to the archives in New Delhi. Thus, permission to consult this bulky collection (330 boxes) was obtained from the Maharashtra State authorities. In Bombay, the library of the Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas Research Centre, of the Shri Brihad Bharatiya Samaj, also contains useful material on Gandhi and Overseas Indians. Interviews in Rajkot, Dharmaj, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Baroda, Surat, Gandevi, Chikhli, and Navsari (all in Gujarat), and Bombay City provided part of the oral information for the thesis. A list of informants is provided in Section VI of the bibliography.

The final collection of unpublished official records were consulted in the National Archives of Fiji and in the Registrar-General's Office in Suva, Fiji. The immigration records in the archives are incomplete for the period after 1920, and the available material was consulted under the Colonial Secretary's Office, the Labour Department, and Secretariat for Indian Affairs. In addition, the Legislative Council Papers, the Immigration Reports, and other published official sources were examined there. The Business Registers are also available to the public for consultation upon payment of a fee. However, special permission was obtained from both the Solicitor-General and the Registrar-General to examine this collection without a fee. The other part of the work in Fiji entailed interviews in Suva, Nausori, Ba, Lautoka, and Nadi.

The South Asia collection in the Library of the University of British Columbia was also useful and frequently consulted. The material on microfilm and microfiche was invaluable in verifying data collected from published and printed official sources elsewhere. In Vancouver, the Fiji Papers in the Archives Division of B.C. Sugar Refining Company were examined as well. This small and incomplete collection is a minor but significant contribution to existing records on the sugar industry in Fiji.

This section has been arranged under the following headings:

I UNPUBLISHED OFFICIAL RECORDS (A to C)

A. Fiji

1. National Archives of Fiji, Suva.

2. Registrar-General's Office, Government Buildings, Suva.

B. United Kingdom.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office--India Office Records, London.

C. India.

1. Gujarat State Archives--Baroda Record Office, Baroda.

2. Maharashtra State (Bombay) Archives-- Records of the Government of Bombay, Bombay.

3. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

II UNPUBLISHED PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Archives Division, B.C. Sugar Refining Company, Vancouver.

III PUBLISHED OFFICIAL AND PRINTED SOURCES (A to D)

A. Government of Fiji.

B. Government of India.

C. Government of United Kingdom.

D. Other Official Publications.

IV PUBLISHED AND OTHER UNOFFICIAL SOURCES

V NEWSPAPERS

VI ORAL INFORMATION

This was derived through interviews in:

A. Gujarat

B. Fiji

VII DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

VIII SECONDARY WORKS

I. UNPUBLISHED OFFICIAL RECORDS

A. Fiji

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V. R. Boal (Rajkot)

Dhawal Desai (Baroda and Degam)

I. P. Desai (Surat)

R. B. Desai (Navsari)

Shantibhai Desai (Baroda)

I. M. Doctor (Bombay)

Harkisandas Kapadia (Navsari)

Mulchand B. Kapadia (Chikhli)

Ragunath Narotam (Chikhli)

Maganlal Narotamdas (Bombay)

Mohan Narsey (Navsari)

A. V. Pandhya (Vallabh Vidyanagar)

Nalin A. Pandhya (Vallabh Vidyanagar)

R. D. Parikh (Baroda)

Ambalal P. Patel (Baroda)

Bhailalbhai Patel (Vallabh Vidyanagar)

Chunibhai M. Patel (Dharmaj)

Dajibhai V. Patel (Dharmaj)

H. M. Patel (Vallabh Vidyanagar)

Jivanbhai V. Patel (Navsari)

Latika K. Patel (Baroda)

Mohanlal M. Patel (Bombay)

Motibhai R. Patel (Dharmaj)

Ramaben Patel (Baroda)

Shuttish A. Patel (Bombay)

Ranchodbhai (Navsari)

J. M. Raval (Vallabh Vidyanagar)

M. K. Zaveri (Vallabh Vidyanagar)

B. Fiji

Venilal Ambaram (Lautoka)

Amarsi Bagia (Lautoka)

P. K. Bhindi (Suva)

Parbu Dayal (Suva)

S. B. Desai (Suva)

Govind Ganda (Lautoka)

Maganlal Gandabhai (Suva)

Nanubhai Haribhai (Suva)

Dalichand Hiralal (Lautoka)

Bhanabhai Jagjiwan (Lautoka)

Amratlal Jina (Suva)

Ramanlal Jina (Lautoka)

Arjun Jiwa (Suva)

Maneklal Jiwanbhai (Lautoka)

Bhagwanji P. Jogia (Suva)

Ramanlal Kapadia (Suva)

Bakshi Singh Mal (Suva)

Ramesh Mistry (Lautoka)

Fakir Mohammad (Suva)

Kantilal Morarji (Nadi)

Venilal Morris (Suva)

Devidas Fakir Morriswala((Nadi)

Ramji Motiram (Lautoka)

Bhimji Mulji (Lautoka)

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I. Andrew Narsey (Suva)

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Dahyabhai N. Patel (Suva)

Jairam V. Patel (Lautoka)

Ishwarlal P. Patel (Suva)

Kesabbhai B. Patel (Lautoka)

Khusalbhai N. Patel (Nausori)

Motibhai R. Patel (Nausori)

Raojibhai K. Patel (Suva)

Ratilal A. Patel (Ba)

S. B. Patel (Lautoka)

Sundarji Premji (Lautoka)

Deoji Punja (Lautoka)

Ratilal Raghunath (Lautoka)

P. M. Raniga (Suva)

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APPENDIX

MANILAL - CAREER.

Born. 29.7.1881 B.A. 1901 (passed) B.A.LL.B. 1903 M.A. 1904 Baroda College and Government Law School; (Bombay) passed Final Bar Examination 1906 (London) New York, Boston 1907 Mauritius 1907-1911. South Africa twice with Ghandi Ji 1911: again, 1912 Fiji 1912-1920 New-Zealand, 1920 and 1921 Ceylon, 1921 1922 India, Madras, Salem, Cochin, Rangonn, Gaya, Cawnpore Bolshevic Conspiracy case Fyzabad, Pratabgarh, (Kisans' cases) Lucknow, (Kakori Train Robbery) etc. 1921-1927 Aden 1927-1948 - 1950

In England, Member Indian Home Rule Society; wrote articles to London Dailies, The "Indian Sociologist" attended meetings of social Democratic Federation, The "Positivist Society; The Aristotelian Society etc, wrote London letters for the "United Burma", sent contributions to the Light of Reason".

The "Hindustani" (Mauritius) was started and run; attended Indian National Congress 1910 and 1911 as delegate from Mauritius; wrote series of articles on "Indentured Labour" for the "Modern Review" the "Indian Review" the East and West etc. giving interviews to Editors of the "Statesman" the "Bengalee" "Amrita Bazar Patrika" etc.

SERVICES rendered to Countrymen.

Indentured Labour in Mauritius.

Mauritius; 1907 to 1911, there used to be the "Double cut system" i.e, our countrymen were made to lose two days wages for on day's absence.

On sugar estates etc. This was abolished in or about 1909; appeared in cases of the poor Labourers unjustly victimized by the system and abuses of authority by the Planters, the Police and the Court people. On getting legal proofs, writing to British M.P.s and publicists; questions were asked in Parliament by Joseph King Col., Wedgool, Benspoor and others.

There were conspiracies to trap me and to get me arrested by invitations to attedn religious gathering of Indians and requested to visit as guest on estates. Once a man was sent to stay on my premises to note my habits and betray me. A party of C.I.D. Police had entered the Compound of my Bungalow one night expecting me in and they had to go away as I was not in; another time suspecting that I had secretly gone to some plantation a party from the estate concerned went to hunt for me; There were designs on my life.

In 1909 I gave evidence before the Royal Commission and substantiated the grievances and actual disabilities of Indian's in matters of Marriage, Inheritance and Succession and protecting of social and religious rights: the Commission recommended the main things I was fighting for.

Lord Saunderson's Committee recommended stoppage of Labour from India, not on the ground of ill-treatment but on the score of over-population, the density being over 600 per square mile in Mauritius

Any way, my prupose was served as I had found mere representations and writing in Newspapers of Mauritius of discussion and controversies uselwss- even harmful personally.

I realised that the best thing to do was to enlighten Indian Leaders and the Public, to act in the matter.

In England Labour M.P.s were helpful and sympathetic. In 1920 Lahour in Fiji was asked to do one hour more daily on the roads, when every thing was dear: Potatos selling at 6 pence a pound; the Indian Labourers went on strike, which spread to the Sugar and other plantations.

I was away in another part of the Colony - my wife had taken leadership of the women and the strike had ansolutely remained peaceful for 2 months.

Mixed blood and Christian - called Indians having received western schooling depending for their jobs on white employers and white clerks were enrolled as special constables; some of them acting as agents provocateurs, actually spread a false rumour that Mr. Manilal was arrested and one woman from a women's gathering who spoke to a white constable about their right to hold the meeting was hit on the forehead with the baton-blood came out: when Indian men saw this they picked up firewood sticks, they could lay their hands upon, and beat the white special constable and his colleagues who had come to reinforce him. Machine-guns and armoured cars came. The Police surrounded.

On my return journey from Rakiraki (Londoni) by sea in the Rewa River channel residing on the sides gave bits of information of the happenings at Suva and Rewa. The white military people were mobilized and pontoons, bridges and passage connections were controlled by them after striking terror amongst Indians brutally assaulting them breaking and searching houses for "Manilal in hiding": I passed a night of anxiety in the tenement of "Dudh Maharaj" on a small island in the wide basin of the Rewa River awaiting the morning steamlaunch to take me to Suva to avoid pontoon bridges for the land road. Though advised not to move, for the sake of my wife and my first son Madhusudane and the other 6 months baby Lalitamohans I had to risk my own life and safety and arrived on the scene as soon as practicable if only to protect them from the blind fury of the white people.

Indians Christians and touts went to the prison and were allowed to talk to the 200 men and about 25 women arrested by the Police and they said "put all the blame on Mrs.Manilal, we will be able to get you released on bail and even acquitted or punished lightly". It is a great satisfaction to me that the poor labouring class Indians and the women replied "Mr. & Mrs.Manilal have made sacrifices for us and we will not falsely implicate them, even if we be killed". The Governor issued an order to each of us prohibiting our stay or entry in the districts where we could have existed, after a certain date. This was about Easter time. We were offered accommodation on a little island, where Germans wanting to return to their businesses in Fiji were accommodated to save them from violence which was demonstrated by the British returned soldiers and sailors who had been financed by jealous British shop-keeprs who had taken hold of the trade of Germans interned in Australia during the War.

Incidently before the Governor's order a J.P. planter called Witherow had written a letter in the daily press that if Government did not do anything to Mr. and Mrs. Manilal the planters were prepared to take the law in their own hands.

All the drivers were Indians and they had decided to stop their cars during the reign of terror (before my departure) and had agreed among themselves to lift me in their cars and take me home or to the jails or anywhere else I wanted to go to save me from the white peopl mob violence.

One morning the Mullah of the Mosque came to me and gave a messa from Indians that they had definite information of the intention of European soldiers to raid my bungalow and commit violence on us. Indi were prepared to protect us by surrounding my house, sticks in ha breaking the curfew order and the law about assemblies. I replied to the Mullah (he was allowed to move as free ffom suspicion in his capac of a religious preacher) that I did not want 200 of my countrymen to be Machinegunned as sticks would be of no avail. What was destined by God will happen. "We shall bear it".

The actual details of these events have been published in contemporary journals of India, specially in the "Tribune" of Lahore and in a book called "FIJI MEN AMRITSAR" (Hindi) written by Pandit Banarasi dasa Chaturvedi in 1920-21. The Vernacular press in all parts of India publishe articles and translations. Mr. C.F.Andrewes wrote in the "Modern Review" that the work done by Mrs. Manilal ought to be poetized and sung in"Garbas by the women of Gujerat.

Gandhiji himself had, when Reuter's telegrams were flashing news of the happenings in Fiji every two or three days held a meeting of the Imperial Citizenship Association in Bombay, having justice Sir N.G. Chandavarker as President.

Refer "Manilal" in

WHO'S IMPORTANT IN LAW

In the

BIOGRAPHICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE WORLD

published in NEW YORK for 1946 and 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950