

Translated Studies Series (5)

INDIANS IN SUDAN



Written by:

Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohammed Ahmed

Translated by:

Ahmed Gumaa Siddiek Mohammed

Second Edition 2025 AD

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جميع حقوق الطبع محفوظة للناشر والمؤلف

لا يسمح بإعادة إصدار هذا الكتاب أو أي جزء منه أو تخزينه كنسخة إلكترونية أو نقله بأي شكل من الأشكال دون إذن خطي مسبق من المؤلف والناشر

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قال تعالى:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ
شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتُمْ
إِنِ اللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

(سورة الحجرات: الآية 13)

INDIANS IN SUDAN



Dedication

- *To the souls of Professor Abdel-Ghaffar Mohamed Ali, Professor Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, and Uncle Al-Sir Bashir. We ask Allah mercy, and peace for souls in his last resorts*
- *To my dear brother Kamal Mohamed Noor, a man whom Allah has chosen to fulfill the needs of others.*
- *To my friends and loved ones inside Sudan and abroad, who stood and supported me.*
- *To my dear Dr. Anil Kumar and his extended family.*
- *To all Indians in Sudan and around the world.*

I dedicate this book

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I also express my deep gratitude to Professor Anil Kumar, President of the Indian Community in Sudan, Dr. Awad Ahmed Hussein Shabba, Professor Awad Ibrahim Awad, and Dr. Musadek Al-Makki from the Department of Arabic Language at Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari University.

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and Studies on Red Sea Basin Countries in Sudan, and Dr. An'am Mohamed Othman Al-Kabashi, Professor of Ottoman History at the University of Khartoum, for their significant contributions in providing me with valuable and useful information.

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The Author

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Forward

1

My heartfelt congratulations to my brother and fellow villager from Al-Hijailij, the Junaid Sugar Factory in the Al-Jazeera State, and from the (Hilla) Al-Qalaa neighborhood in Omdurman, Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Al-Azhari University - Sudan, and Director of the Centre for Research and Studies of Red Sea Basin Countries, for this valuable new book in its approach and subject matter. The book is distinguished by a wealth of new and excellent information about Indians in Sudan, dating back to the arrival of the first Indian in this country via the historic and strategic Port of Suakin around 1850. It is important to emphasize that the historical, civilizational, and cultural relations between the two peoples are older than that.

This book, upon my review, presents a comprehensive and engaging narrative about the history of Indians in Sudan. It also traces their presence in various states and cities, such as Suakin, Port Sudan, Kassala, Al-Qadarif, Al-Damer, Omdurman, Kosti, and Al-Obeid. To emphasize the significant and widespread presence of Indians in many Sudanese cities, there were a number of them in Juba and Wau in South Sudan before separation, including the Balani family and the Kamlish Doshi family, who were involved in the trade of fabrics and perfumes in South Sudan.

To reinforce the extended Sudanese-Indian relations and facilitate communication between the Indian community and all Sudanese, as well as others inside and outside Sudan, I worked as the President of the Indian

School and Community in Sudan to introduce Arabic as a core subject for students. I also aimed for Indian students to learn about their host country, Sudan, through educational trips to various Sudanese cities such as Al-Fasher, Damazin, and Khartoum.

We provided a comprehensive cultural program in those cities that included Indian dances and traditional clothing to promote cultural exchange between the two countries. We were honoured to be guests of the governor in each state. The trip to Al-Fasher in the Darfur region was facilitated by direct support from the Sudanese government, while the journey to Damazin in the Blue Nile State was by a tourist bus with support and supervision from the Blue Nile State government.

The Indian community in Sudan has also had annual participations with African and Arab-Asian communities through the Sudanese Global People's Friendship Council in various activities and events.

In this book about Indians, Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq has made a tremendous effort and, with the grace of Allah, succeeded in gathering an abundance of excellent information. He was able to document it and support it with images, enticing readers and browsers to delve into it eagerly. At the same time, the book is structured in a way that makes it easy to digest and understand the wealth of information it contains. We take pride in narrating and explaining it to others. Additionally, the book is characterized by its simple language, making it accessible and easy to understand for all levels.

The book highlights the distinctiveness of Indians in Sudan, a fact confirmed by everyone who has interacted with Indians in this hospitable country. The uniqueness and distinction of Indians, compared to other communities in Sudan, stem from their integration with the Sudanese people in various cities and towns. There are significant similarities be-

tween the two nations in many areas, such as traditional foods, clothing styles like saris and henna, the preferred red color in weddings, and various perfumes like sandalwood and myrrh.

Additionally, the common attire of the jalabiya and the thobe reflects cultural ties. Most importantly, there is a shared sense of taste, generosity, support in times of hardship, and mutual assistance, along with reciprocal visits during all occasions and communal iftars during Ramadan. This bond has extended to marriages between Sudanese and Indian women in both India and Sudan.

As a result, the relationship between the two peoples has strengthened significantly, leading to continuous interactions at the Sudanese-Indian People's Friendship Council. Indian films have also played an important role in the emotional and cultural connection between the two nations. Notable films that remain etched in the hearts of Sudanese people include "Tisri Manzil," "Janwar," and "For My Children," which explore the cultural ties between Sudan and India.

What further illustrates and confirms the love of Indians for their country, Sudan, across all ages, is that my grandchildren, (Rohan), specifically (Pranav), who is nine years old, and his sister (Sanvi), who is six, often say, "Grandpa, we want to go back to Sudan." This reflects an innate affection for Sudan and its people.

Among the Sudanese cities, that hold historical significance for me is Al-Obeid in the Kordofan region, which I visited specifically because my wife (Chandrika) was born there. Her father, (Ratilal Puthlal), was one of the most important merchants in the city. He was among the traders who donated 1,500 Sudanese pounds for the famine in Greece in 1940, which was one of the largest donations at that time, according to the document cited by Professor Hatim in his book.

I must say that I learned about this during my travels, and it is something I take pride in, along with all my family members, both inside Sudan and abroad.

Thanks to my brother, Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed, whom we consider a source of pride for us in the Al-Qalaa neighborhood of Omdurman and for Al-Azhari University, from which he graduated and progressed until he attained the rank of professor in 2020. He earned his Ph.D in history in 2010 at a young age, which reflects his diligence, perseverance, and skills.

His diverse publications, including books and scholarly papers, indicate his success and excellence in his academic journey, for which we pray that Allah grants him, continued success and prosperity.

Dr. Anil Kumar Shuttal Mehtani

Consultant Urologist

President of the Indian Community in Sudan

India - April 17, 2025

Forward

2

To the Book “Indians in Sudan: Celebrating the Emergence of a New Generation of Social Historians in Sudan”. Professor Hatm Al-Siddiq Mohammad Ahmed kindly gifted me an electronic copy of his book titled “Indians in Sudan” and honored me by asking me to write an introduction for it, for which I am grateful.

I found immense pleasure in reading this invaluable and innovative work. Its language is direct and easy, flowing smoothly in a captivating manner that encourages the reader to continue until they find themselves having completed the book in a short time. The author’s style combines rigorous scientific language with direct communication, merging the dryness of information with engaging presentation.

Before I delve into reviewing the book, I would like to point out that the publication of this book—along with the author’s previous works in the same vein—indicates the emergence of a new generation of historians in a field that has not received sufficient attention from previous and contemporary historians: social history.

Without undermining the significant efforts and achievements of earlier historians such as Maki Shabika, Yusuf Fadl Hassan, Mohammed Ibrahim Abu Salim, Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, and their students like Hassan Maki, Abdullah Ali Ibrahim, Ali Saleh Karar, Fadwa Abdul Rahman Ali Taha, Ahmed Ibrahim Abu Shouk, and others not mentioned, the book “Indians in Sudan” heralds a new dawn in historical studies in Sudan in an unprecedented manner. While there have been previous attempts to

write social history, such as the works of Katib Ashoona and the “Tabqqat Wad Dief Allah,” these were followed by only a few writings from Sudanese historians like Abdullah Ali Ibrahim and Jaafar Mirghani, with Bashir Ibrahim Bashir preceding them in his writings about Ezab. All these were scattered attempts focused on specific periods, places, or limited groups, lacking comprehensive coverage over extended timeframes that consider the spatial and temporal spread within a historical context of diverse social relations, especially with non-Sudanese.

The studies by Sudanese historians mentioned-though few-often focused on issues related to Sudanese people rather than others. Foreign historians such as Burckhardt, Shone O’Fahey, Espolding, and Kremer have also made significant contributions; however, their studies were limited to specific periods of Sudanese kingdoms before or concurrent with the advent of Anglo-Egyptian rule.

The book we are discussing, “Indians in Sudan,” addresses an extensive Sudanese period from before the Turkish-Egyptian rule, through the Mahdist era, the Anglo-Egyptian rule, and into the post-independence period, extending to the present day. Throughout these eras, Indians have had a presence in various forms and under different historical circumstances, playing diverse roles. Although they arrived as soldiers during the colonial period, they were primarily merchants in most of those times. In all these periods, they made significant contributions to Sudan, participating in social and cultural activities and providing valuable services in teaching, medicine, agriculture, and railway engineering. The book vividly highlights all of this, tracing it with astonishing details supported by rare images that enhance the narrative, description, and analysis, breaking the monotony of academic writing.

The importance of the book lies in its attention to a group closely connected to Sudan’s internal history and its relations with India, both an-

cient and modern. It thus fills a gap that has not been thoroughly addressed in writing, which has only received fleeting references. This book gives Indians their due, not just from the writings and testimonies of Sudanese but also from the voices of the Indians themselves about their experiences in Sudan as a community and homeland. Many Indians who settled in Sudan for over a century lived together and intermarried with Sudanese people, and unlike many other foreigners, they became Sudanese by naturalization. The book illustrates how this came about due to similarities in social customs and traditions, and above all, mutual acceptance and values of tolerance from both sides.

The book details the presence of Indians in Sudanese cities such as Suakin, Port Sudan, Kassala, Al-Qadarif, Kosti, Al-Obeid, Madani, Dongola, and Shendi—well-known as crossroads for continental and global trade, with their bustling markets. However, the focal point of Indian presence is Omdurman. In my opinion, this is not surprising, as Omdurman is a “popular” city where various ethnicities have mingled for a long time, coupled with its large market since the Mahdist period.

It is noteworthy that the book does not address the fact that Indians have little presence in Khartoum, aside from a few in the upscale “Nemra Etnain” neighborhood and in the “Foreign Market” (Mirza shops). I believe this is due to Khartoum’s nature as a colonial, class-based city unsuitable for habitation and coexistence, especially since its foreign market was dominated by European companies and agents, and its neighborhoods are relatively modern. Omdurman, in contrast, has a large population with deep-rooted traditions, especially in social events, making its market a popular destination for buyers from western and northern Sudan. Shops specializing in perfumes and fabrics—key areas of Indian merchants—are frequented by residents of Omdurman and others seeking supplies for such occasions.

The book is rich with information that few know about the presence of Indians in Sudan. For example, it mentions the presence of Indian elephants during Gordon's rule and even after the British entered Sudan in 1898. It confirms and documents information about the Blue Nile Bridge, its import from India, and the Neem and Mango trees. The book also discusses the political relations between India and Sudan and how the independence movement in Sudan was influenced by the Indian National Congress and figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, noting that the Sudanese Graduates Conference was named after the Indian National Congress. Interestingly, it mentions that Osman Ishaq named his daughter Kamala after Nehru's wife out of admiration for him. Additionally, the book references the application of laws implemented in India to establish legislation in Sudan.

I do not wish to summarize the book here, but as an introduction, I aim to provide glimpses of the rich information and documentation contained in the book, clarifying the relationships between Sudanese and Indians on one hand, and between Sudan and India on the other—historically, socially, economically, culturally, politically, and diplomatically—illuminating the spiritual connections between the two countries and peoples as reflected in names, clothing, films, and means of transportation such as “rickshaws” and “tuktuks.” Their contributions to the scientific field are also evident, as many secondary schools—when education was conducted in English—had Indian teachers, and some of the prominent professors of economics, political science, and sociology at the University of Khartoum in the 1960s and 1970s were Indians.

As I mentioned—and for all the reasons above—I reiterate that this book is unique in its kind and field, opening a wide and new horizon in the realm of social history, which we urgently need in this difficult time that Sudan is experiencing to understand ourselves and to know who our true friends are. The book serves as a lesson in the methodology and

approaches of studying social history, as well as in collecting, presenting, and analyzing information and data.

While the images themselves represent social history, the author also engaged in direct interviews with Indians and Sudanese, gathering oral histories, and utilized documents and archival collections from the National Archives (such as Mahdist documents). The author referred to sources often overlooked by Sudanese historians, including documentaries, social magazines, newspapers, and social media sites.

The author organized all this information, following the dedication and acknowledgments (including thanks to those who assisted in providing information, including academics from various specialties and fields, as well as individuals from diverse professions and backgrounds) into three chapters, concluding with a summary: the first about “The History of Indians in Sudan”; the second about “Indians in Sudanese Cities”; and the third about “Cultural and Civilizational Commonalities between Sudan and India.”

This book is a commendable achievement for the author and is indispensable for anyone wanting to know an important aspect of social history in Sudan, especially regarding the presence of Indians in Sudan and the relationship between Sudan and India.

Professor Idris Salem Al-Hassan

April 23, 2025

Forward

3

The book *Indians in Sudan* represents a significant contribution to the field of historical and social studies in Sudan. It seeks to restore recognition to a migrant group that has actively participated in shaping the economic, cultural, and social fabric of the country, yet has not received adequate attention from researchers and historians until recently.

Indians in Sudan are not merely a transient foreign community; they are an integral group with deep roots in their presence and intertwined relationships with local communities. This is a reality that the author of this book, historian Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed Abu Zaid, successfully documents and analyzes using a language that combines historical narrative with sociological insights.

The book is distinguished by its rich informational content and accurate documentation of the successive Indian migrations to Sudan, from the medieval period to contemporary decades. The author excels in tracing the threads of cultural and commercial communication through maritime routes that connected Sudanese ports with Indian ports via the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and Indian Ocean. Here, the sea is not a geographical barrier but rather an open bridge across the centuries, carrying goods, ideas, people, and complex relationships.

The material in this book is the result of extensive field and historical research supported by oral testimonies, rare photographs, and documented interviews. This gives it significant archival value and establishes it as a pioneering reference in its field.

Researchers in migration studies, port history, and cultural interaction in East Africa and the Indian subcontinent should regard this book as a model for studying silent migrations and documenting the marginalized in the national historical narrative. This narrative has often overlooked groups that do not speak through political channels, yet they express themselves through the languages of economy, culture, and daily civility.

The beauty of this book lies not only in its abundant content but also in its deep human sensibility, which is evident in the author's respect for his subjects and his quiet effort to fairly represent a hybrid identity with multiple affiliations. This identity has firmly established itself in various Sudanese cities, from Suakin and Port Sudan to Omdurman, Kassala, Berber, Atbara, and beyond. This introduction may not do full justice to the book, but it serves as an open invitation for researchers and readers to engage with it thoughtfully, reflect deeply on its arguments, and draw inspiration from its methodological approach.

In this context, we congratulate the accomplished and prolific author, our dear colleague, the Arab historian Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed Abu Zaid, on this significant scholarly and cultural achievement. We appreciate the effort invested in documenting this important part of Sudan's social and cultural history.

Dr. Abdunasser Said Mohamed Al-Battati

Academic Researcher – Hadhramaut

April 16, 2025

Forward

4

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, who said in His glorious scripture: “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.” [Quran 49:13]. Peace and blessings be upon the trustworthy Messenger of Allah, and upon his family and companions.

I have reviewed the book by Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed, Director of the Red Sea Basin Research and Studies Centre (Sudan) and a renowned historian, titled *Indians in Sudan*. To my knowledge, this is the first historical work addressing the history of Indians in Sudan and their spread across most Sudanese cities since ancient times.

I have found that this work is not merely a historical account of abstract facts; rather, it offers a profound and accurate analysis of Indian cultures and their influences and interactions with Sudanese cultures.

As I flip through the pages of this captivating book, a collection of beautiful memories comes to mind, particularly those I shared with some members of the Indian community in Kassala, my birthplace. This community was an integral part of our daily lives, adding a vibrant cultural diversity to the city with their shops filled with an array of spices, herbs, traditional Indian products, and fabrics.

Among my fondest memories are our daily encounters in Kassala market with many Indian brothers, including Mahendra, Heshu, and Ami, who were prominent traders known for their kindness and humor. The interaction between them and the local community was not limited to the markets; it extended to all social occasions.

The Indian community in Kassala was a source of pride and admiration, known for their significant contributions to social work. They were responsible for feeding the animals at the Kassala Zoo and consistently provided food and medical support to the city's Psychiatric Hospital.

These memories have left a lasting impression on my heart as I wandered through that lush park. It is well known that the Indians in Kassala are among the most disciplined and law-abiding communities, with not a single report recorded by the police or traffic authorities against any member of the Indian community.

I know that Indians in all cities of Sudan are rich in achievements that deserve celebration and documentation. Although the Indian community in Sudan is one of the smallest in the country, it plays a prominent and influential role in various aspects of life, making its presence noticeable and impactful within Sudanese society. They have become an integral part of the shared history, cultural diversity, and the strength of human connections.

This book, which is before me, consists of 151 pages of medium size and was published by Arithiria Publishing and Distribution (Sudan) in 2025, in its first edition. The book includes introductions, three chapters, and a conclusion.

In the first chapter, titled "The History of Indians in Sudan," the author discusses the historical presence of Indians in Sudan and how they arrived in the country, starting from trade and migration. He notes that

many Indians came to Sudan through the cultural interactions established by ancient trade routes.

The second chapter is titled “Indians in Sudanese Cities,” where the author examines the Indian presence in Sudanese cities such as Omdurman, Kassala, Madani, and others. He explores how the Indian community has adapted to Sudanese society, established businesses, and played a role in the economic life of these areas. Additionally, the chapter discusses their impact on the social and cultural fabric of the regions in which they live..

The third chapter focuses on “Cultural Commonalities Between India and Sudan.” In this chapter, the author reviews the cultural shared practices between India and Sudan, including social customs, celebrations, and traditional dishes. He also discusses how Indian culture has influenced Sudanese culture through cultural and artistic exchanges, such as music, dance, and clothing.

The author concludes with a summary of the key points and findings discussed in the book. One of the most notable observations is that the Indian community in Sudan is among the best groups in terms of solidarity with their Sudanese counterparts, feeling at home and earning the love and sympathy of the Sudanese people. Over time, they have become an integral part of Sudanese society.

Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq has included several appendices containing previous interviews with leaders of the Indian community in Sudan, enhancing the academic and scientific content of the book. These appendices provide readers with a deeper understanding of the history of the Indian community and their interactions with Sudanese society. The book also includes a collection of historical and social documents and photographs that support its content.

Indeed, this book provides a comprehensive insight into the Indian experience in Sudan and highlights the diverse contributions of Indians in various fields. It emphasizes the importance of this diversity for a deeper understanding of the tolerant Sudanese society and offers profound insights into the ongoing impact of India-Sudan relations in modern history.

The book takes us on a journey through time to explore the influence of the Indian community on Sudan's cultural and economic trajectory. Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed, with his extensive research expertise, presents a cohesive narrative of the many Indian-Sudanese relationships. He provides important historical information that contributes to valuable perspectives on identity, belonging, and peaceful coexistence between the two brotherly nations, emphasizing the significance of understanding our shared heritage in building a bright and prosperous future.

Congratulations to the esteemed reader of this book, which is an important addition to the library of cultural and historical studies. Congratulations to Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq on this new and unique work! The creativity in writing and scientific research is a significant achievement, reflecting the efforts and dedication he puts forth. We look forward to more valuable publications from him.

Dr. Salah Al-Toum Ibrahim

Centre for Research and Studies on Red Sea Basin

Countries - Kassala City, Sudan

April 19, 2025

Forward

5

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon our master Muhammad and upon his family and companions.

This book is new in its subject, cohesive in its structure and sequence, well-crafted in its narrative, and its language is smooth and accessible. The author, Professor Hatem Al-Siddiq, is an expert in the fields of research and inquiry, playing a pioneering role in filling historical gaps in Sudan's history by addressing important topics that have not received adequate scholarly attention.

What I would like to highlight in this "Introduction," without delving into a detailed presentation of the book's content, is a discussion of some new ideas that emerged during my conversations with the author while reading the manuscript. One of the most commendable aspects of the author is that he has created a wonderful dialogical system with specialists and interested parties regarding the subjects of his studies, resembling a small scientific workshop that has produced important and intriguing ideas suitable for various research topics.

In this context, I will touch upon the theme of communication between civilizational groups in the ancient world, its means, and its political, economic, social, and cultural impacts. One of the topics discussed on the margins of this book is the Sudanese-Indian relations, particularly during the period coinciding with the establishment of the Kingdom of Kush and its capital, Kerma, in the third millennium BC.

It is worth noting an entry point that we have not verified, which is that the name “Kush” in Indian culture refers to a character from Hindu mythology, and there are regions in Sudan that bear this name. Additionally, there are several geographical names that are similar between the two countries.

The common denominator between the two nations is, in its clearest form, the significance of cattle in the religious and economic life of both civilizations. There are narratives suggesting that the founders of the Kerma civilization, one of the oldest and most important civilizations in the Nile Valley, around 2500-1500 BCE, were a group of cattle herders. Cattle represented a fundamental part of the economy, religious beliefs, and cultural identity. They also played a significant role in determining social status in Kerma.

Clearly, cattle held significant religious importance in Kushite civilization, as they were used in funerary rituals and sacrifices associated with deities, evidenced by the vast number of cattle remains found in the Eastern Dufuf burial sites. Some aspects of the reverence for cattle continue to exist in Sudanese culture. Conversely, in Indian civilization, cattle have historically held a prestigious religious status, particularly in the teachings of Hinduism, which emphasize the veneration and protection of the goddess Kamadhenu (the celestial cow). Various laws, prohibitions, and rituals respect its sanctity, and cattle remain an important economic resource in India.

Returning to the beginning, this book is one of the important works that addresses an uncharted topic in Sudanese studies and international and civilizational relations among peoples that have communicated through ancient trade routes across oceans and seas, and from there to land routes—from the Indian Ocean to the Arabian Gulf and from there to the Red Sea and Sudan’s ports, which received Indian goods and com-

munities, establishing cultural, economic, and social ties since ancient times until now.

On another note, some studies indicate that Kushite migrations occurred from the Nile Valley to southern Arabia via the Red Sea since the Stone Age, possibly continuing to India along the same trade routes, as suggested by some historical records. This area is ripe for study and exploration, and we also need a parallel study of the Sudanese presence in India to complete the aspects of this distinctive research. This study, as mentioned, opens new avenues in various fields and scientific disciplines.

Dr. Awad Shaba

Center for Research and Studies

on the Red Sea Basin Countries

Dongola, April 24, 2025

Forward

6

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the most honorable of God's creations, our Master Muhammad, upon whom be the best prayers and the most complete peace. It has been a pleasure and an honor for me to review this valuable work by my dear friend, Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohamed Ahmed, and I am privileged to present this distinguished book in its subject and content.

At the outset, it is essential to emphasize that historical studies hold profound intellectual, political, and educational significance. They serve as effective tools in the consciousness of peoples and nations, enabling them to overcome the mistakes of the past, draw lessons from historical experiences, and build more mature and profound future visions.

The importance of this book stems from its examination of the Indian community in Sudan, recognized as one of the most prominent ethnic groups with a significant presence in urban areas, particularly in economic, cultural, and social fields. The author adheres to the methodological techniques established in historical research, utilizing a diverse array of sources, which enhances the credibility of the events presented in the book. Additionally, the use of images in constructing the historical narrative highlights the researcher's ability to employ integrated methodologies that enrich knowledge and achieve an element of intrigue.

In reading this work, we perceive the profound impact of historical experience in shaping the consciousness of communities and societies, as well as their relentless pursuit of identity, rootedness in cultural particularities, and the enhancement of Sudanese cultural self-identity, especially in light of the contemporary challenges and conflicts.

One of the notable aspects of this book is its exploration of the manifestations of cultural communication between Sudan and India since the Meroitic period. It highlights the mutual cultural and social interactions, exemplified by ritual similarities such as marriage, the exchange of historical goods imported from India, like sandalwood, incense, and aromatic scents. This underscores the continuity of civilizational relationships throughout the ages.

This work is situated within the framework of formative writing aimed at creating a long-term cultural and social transformation from a historical perspective. It transcends superficial facts to delve into meanings and essence, while simultaneously highlighting the ability of Sudanese communities to coexist and practice tolerance, despite differing religious beliefs and external characteristics. Ultimately, it underscores that the core of humanity and its values remain the highest connection among people.

Indeed, writing in social history is a challenging task, undertaken by only a few researchers due to the strenuous effort required to gather narratives, manuscripts, and scattered sources, and to examine them carefully to extract the essence of ideas and meanings. Those who recognize this difficulty and appreciate the extent of this effort will undoubtedly perceive the value of this book and give it the recognition it deserves.

We ask Allah for success and guidance, for He is the best guardian and helper.

Ustaz Khalid Babiker Mohamed Ibrahim

Researcher at the Centre for Research and Studies on

Red Sea Basin Countries - Sudan

April 15, 2025

Introduction

Observers of the relations between the African continent and India, particularly with East Africa, note that these relationships are ancient and deeply rooted, with a profound historical extension throughout the ages. The cultural and human interactions have contributed to enhancing trade exchanges between these regions. Due to the commercial boom and the abundance of various goods in East Africa and the Indian subcontinent, trade voyages between the two sides became active, utilizing large merchant ships such as dhows, safar, ghunja, baqarah, and lunjah, in search of goods available in those areas.

This commercial activity led to the settlement of large numbers of Indians along the coasts overlooking the Red Sea, including Sudanese ports. Among the most notable goods that the African ports along the Red Sea were famous for including ostrich feathers, elephant tusks, and gold, while the African ports received many Indian products, such as spices, perfumes, cotton garments, swords, and other items.

Sudan has historically witnessed successive migrations of various population groups from both within and outside the African continent, including African and Arab groups coming from the Arabian Peninsula, as well as from East Asia and Europe. This is a result of its distinctive geographic location and the abundance of its resources and wealth, making it an attractive destination for trade and settlement. The Indian community is among the most significant of these incoming groups to Sudan, noted for its prominence in the profession of trade, which is one of the oldest crafts practiced by humanity.

The migration of Indians to Sudan continued throughout various historical periods, beginning with the Funj Kingdom (1504–1821), then during the Turkish-Egyptian rule (1821–1885), and also during the

Mahdist state (1885–1898). At that time, the city of Suakin was the most important trade outlet for the Mahdist state, until Khalifa Abdullah issued an order to prohibit trade with Ethiopia, Suakin, and Egypt.

Following Britain's control over the Red Sea coasts, particularly the port of Suakin, it relied on Indian forces to defend it against attacks from Mahdist troops led by Prince Osman Digna in eastern Sudan. As battles intensified and Britain feared the fall of the city, more Indian troops were brought in to strengthen the defenses. Indeed, those forces were able to repel the repeated attacks, and their presence continued until the city was fully secured through the construction of a large wall and several forts and fortifications, after which those troops were returned to their homeland.

Among the reasons that encouraged Indians to settle in Sudan throughout different eras are the characteristics of tolerance and acceptance of others, which are prominent traits of the Sudanese personality. As a result, a number of Indians established themselves in several Sudanese cities, most notably: Suakin, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gadarif, Wad Madani, Hasahisa, Damir, and Omdurman, which has historically housed the largest concentration of the Indian community. Over time, individuals from this community, who were born and settled in Sudan, became Sudanese by birth. The estimated number of Indians in Sudan is around four thousand, working in various fields, primarily in trade, medicine, electrical appliance maintenance, barbering, and others.

The full integration of Sudanese Indians into the society they lived in is commendable, as they actively participated in its cultural, civilizational, and social movements. The cultural and social proximity between the two peoples facilitated this integration, allowing them to establish good relationships with local residents and partake in various occasions, making them an inseparable part of the social fabric.

Among the prominent Indian figures known to the author and with whom he interacted closely for more than ten years is Dr. Anil Kumar, a urologist who previously worked at the University of Bahr El Ghazal and then at Bahri University. He served as the director of Ibn Sina, Omdurman, and Khartoum Educational Hospitals. Dr. Anil dedicated his life to serving others, and his home in the Al-Qala area was open to everyone.

Members of the Indian community in Sudan are characterized by their solidarity and honesty in their dealings, especially in the commercial realm. They became a sought-after destination for citizens looking for quality and reliable goods at reasonable prices in cities like Omdurman, Kassala, Damir, Port Sudan, Gadarif, and others.

Following the outbreak of war in Sudan on April 15, 2023, a significant number of Indians left the country, much like many Sudanese, out of fear for their lives and their families. They hold onto the hope of returning once again to their second homeland, despite the devastation it has suffered.

In this book, we highlight one of the active social segments in Sudan. The first chapter is dedicated to the history of Indians in Sudan, while the second chapter focuses on their presence in various Sudanese cities, emphasizing their roles and professions since their arrival to the present day. The third chapter explores the cultural, civilizational, and social similarities between the Sudanese and Indian communities in multiple aspects.

Chapter One

The History of Indians and Sudan

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The History of Indians and Sudan

Sudan is distinguished by its strategic location, situated in the north-eastern part of the African continent and overlooking the Red Sea, which is considered an important and strategic passage for global trade.

(1) The Sudanese-Indian relations are deeply rooted in history, and it can be said that these relations began during the Meroitic civilization in Sudan, which had ancient trade connections with Indian civilization across the Red Sea. (2) Sudanese-Indian relations are longstanding, dating back to when Indian traders discovered trade routes across the Red Sea to the East African coast, primarily through the trade of spices, incense, and textiles.

Indian traders and their ships that reached East Africa and the Red Sea were mentioned in the Greek book written in Alexandria around 60 AD, titled *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. (3) The Red Sea played an important role in connecting Sudan to the outside world through foreign trade and facilitated the linking of Sudan with East Asia, becoming a bridge between the East and the West. Indian goods arrived in Sudan via the ports of Suakin and Ayoub on the Red Sea, and were then transported by trade caravans to other inland Sudanese cities. (4)

Indian goods have continuously been present in Sudanese markets and cities since Indian traders arrived in the country. Traveler Burckhardt noted that during his visit to Shendi, he observed many types of fabrics in the local market, which were imported in from India. Indian textiles were among the finest, worn exclusively by the aristocracy in Shendi, Sinnar, and Kordofan. In addition to the diblan and shash, which were types of Indian cotton fabric, there were also various kinds of Indian

perfumes and silks. Traders in Shendi were the sole suppliers of these products. Besides perfumes and textiles, traders in Shendi imported beads, sumit, and amber from India, selling them in regions such as Darfur, Dar Salih, and Burgu lands. (5)

Shendi had a large market that operated throughout the week, along with a weekly market. Currency such as the Spanish dollar, damour, and corn were traded there. Camels and slaves were purchased using the Spanish riyals, which was recognized as the official currency in the city's market. Among the Spanish reals, traders preferred the coin bearing the name "Carlos IV," referring to it as "the riyal of Abu Rabaa." (6)

Among the goods that Shendi's market was famous for were spices and sandalwood, which were imported from India, as well as kohl, German swords, and leather goods that came from Sinnar and Kordofan. Additionally, beads were imported from Genoa and Venice in Italy, while soap was brought in from Egypt, and salt and gold from Ethiopia. Horses were sourced from Dongola. The shops in the market were small buildings with roofs made of matting and palm fronds, and the market attracted a large number of Arabs and some residents from North, Central, and East Africa.(7)

In addition to Shendi, Sinnar, the capital of the Funj, was also an economically thriving city where traders worked diligently to bring goods from Egypt, Hijaz, and India. From India, Sinnar received soap, spices, perfumes, and luxurious cotton textiles. Traders focused on Indian products due to their high quality, leading to the emergence of commercial hubs in Berber, Shendi, and Fazughli, facilitating the flow of imports and exports in these cities8) .)

Among the goods and products known in the Sennar state and other Islamic kingdoms in Sudan, such as the Fur, Tagali, and Masbats, were

weapons like swords and spears, various types of fabrics, perfumes, and sandalwood. It was said that the windows of Sultan Badi's palace in Sinnar were made of Indian sandalwood, indicating the smooth flow of Indian goods into the Sennar market. There was significant demand for these products among kings, regional rulers, traders, the elite, and the general public in Sinnar and other Sennar cities.



The Ruins of Sultan Badi II's Palace (Abu Daqn) in Sinna

Indians in Suakin

The port of Suakin flourished as a commercial port after the destruction and collapse of the port of Ezab in the Halayeb triangle during the eighth century AH (14th century AD). The history of Suakin's establishment predates its commercial activity for which it became famous. Suakin was considered one of the oldest ports on the Red Sea, contributing to global trade and the transport of goods from the 15th century BC to the 19th century AD.

Ramses II, who ruled Egypt from 1415 to 1329 BC, used Suakin as a commercial base for his trading fleet that frequented the ports of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It was also noted that Ptolemy Philadelphus established Suakin as a storage site for elephant tusks that were traded during that time, and Suakin thrived as a major commercial centre during the Ptolemaic period. (9)

The port of Badhi was one of the most important Sudanese ports on the Red Sea, known for its commercial prosperity, through which various Sudanese products were exported. It was a hub for traders coming from the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf, India, and East Asia.(10)

In addition to the commercial roles of the ports of Suakin and Badi, there was also the port of Ayoub, which emerged in the 4th century AH (10th century AD). This port received goods from Yemen, India, China, and Zanzibar. Suakin was heavily relied upon by Sudanese traders due to its central location, familiarity among merchants, and its reputation as a safe harbour. Furthermore, Suakin was connected to various routes leading to major Sudanese cities, enhancing its significance in trade.

1. Suakin to Shendi Road.
2. Direct Suakin to Sinnar Road.

3. Suakin to Damar Road.
4. Suakin to Shendi via the Atbara River.
5. Suakin to Sinnar via Taka to the Atbara River, then to Dinder, and finally to Sinnar.
6. Suakin to Shendi, then to Sinnar via the Nile.

All of these roads, along with others, played an important role in the movement of both domestic and foreign trade.(11) Through these routes, incoming groups from Arab, Levantine, European, and Indian backgrounds entered Sudan. Notably, these roads connect the port of Suakin, the primary commercial port in Sudan on the Red Sea, with significant Sudanese cities deep within the country.



Al-Shanawi Agency in Suakin in 1881

The establishment of a British consulate in Zanzibar in 1841 encouraged several Indians to come to East Africa, as they felt a sense of security and safety after the signing of a trade agreement between Britain

and Sultan Sayyid Saeed of Zanzibar in 1839. This agreement granted British subjects numerous advantages, including the right to buy, sell, and lease properties and lands.

Suakin was the first Sudanese city to receive Indian merchants, with trader (Lushan Emerson) being the first Indian to settle in Suakin, arriving via a commercial sailing ship in 1866. In 1877, a number of Indians arrived in Suakin from the port of Massawa.(12) With the commercial revival and the movement of goods, the population of Suakin increased to eight thousand people, including Egyptians, Romans, Indians, French, and some local groups. (13) The number of Indians in Sudan increased over time as they settled in several Sudanese cities following Suakin, including Kassala, Port Sudan, Al-Qadarif, Wad Medani, Omdurman, Damar, and Berber.(14)

Among the Indian states from which these groups came was Kerala, which has a large number of Muslims and Christians, and Gujarat, from which most Indian traders originated. The predominant religions of the Indians who arrived in Sudan were Hinduism and Sikhism (from Punjab). Despite the sectarian differences, the Indians in Sudan share more common Indian roots than religious beliefs, according to Dr. Anil Kumar, the head of the Indian community in Sudan.(15)

The Indian groups that arrived in Sudan and settled there came from the Indian state of Gujarat, known for its commercial activity. The favorable economic conditions in Sudan at that time, along with excellent trade relationships with Sudanese people, motivated Indians to come. The Indian immigrants engaged in selling fabrics and perfumes, and they found a welcoming environment, eventually becoming Sudanese by birth.(16)

The cities of Sennar State and other kingdoms were significant destinations for many foreigners seeking agricultural and animal products that

distinguished the state. This contributed to a substantial revival of its commercial cities due to the security and stability that characterized the sultanate, as well as the abundance of products. This environment attracted a large number of foreign traders from Egypt, Ethiopia, Darfur, Hijaz, Yemen, India, Syria, Palestine, Turkey, Armenia, Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, Germany, and Portugal, collectively referred to as “Al-Khawajat.” They received special treatment from the Funj sultans.(17)

During the Egyptian Khedivate, the capital Khartoum became acquainted with Indian elephants brought in by General Gordon Pasha. These elephants, depicted in the image in front of the German consulate in Khartoum, were imported to combat the slave trade in South Sudan. They were domesticated elephants, and several trainers were brought along to oversee and care for them.



Indian Elephants in Khartoum

A group of six or seven elephants was brought from India by Samuel Baker, transported from Suakin to Khartoum via Berber. Baker’s goal

in importing these elephants was to tame and domesticate them in South Sudan. They were later moved from Khartoum to Kawa on the White Nile, but they were not heard of afterward.(18)

The Indian elephants made a significant presence in the capital Khartoum, with several of them being photographed in front of the German consulate by Austrian explorer Buchta. This illustrates a part of the historical connection between the two countries, which has continued to this day. Moreover, Sudanese-Indian relations date back much further, as evidenced by:

Trade Communication: The commercial interaction between Indian and Sudanese traders across the Red Sea has existed since ancient times.

Diversity of Sudanese Goods: The significance and variety of Sudanese products encouraged an increase in this trade communication.

Demand for Indian Goods: The Sudanese people's interest in Indian merchandise contributed to its presence in Sudanese markets.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 for international maritime navigation contributed to the revitalization of seaports along the Red Sea. As a result, Suakin became one of the largest maritime ports on the Red Sea, attracting Indian traders. Khedive Ismail sought to develop the port by constructing new houses, building several factories, and establishing a hospital. Through this port, the exchange of Sudanese goods flourished during the Turkish era, including gum Arabic, elephant tusks, beeswax, and spices. Additionally, goods from East Asia, India, and China, such as paper and cotton textiles, began to appear. The city's population increased, and traders from various regions of the world, including the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Yemen, Armenia, and India, arrived in Suakin.

In Suakin, several international companies operated, including the English East India Company, the Khedive Company, and the Italian shipping company Rabattino. The Khedive aimed to connect Suakin with production areas in the Sudanese interior through a railway. However, the Ethiopian-Egyptian War and the outbreak of the Mahdist Revolution in Sudan thwarted this project and hindered urban development in the city.(19)

Among the Indian traders who introduced Indian fabric to Suakin was Abdullah Al-Kani, after whom the fabric, known as “Al-Kani,” was named. This material was used to create many distinctive garments.

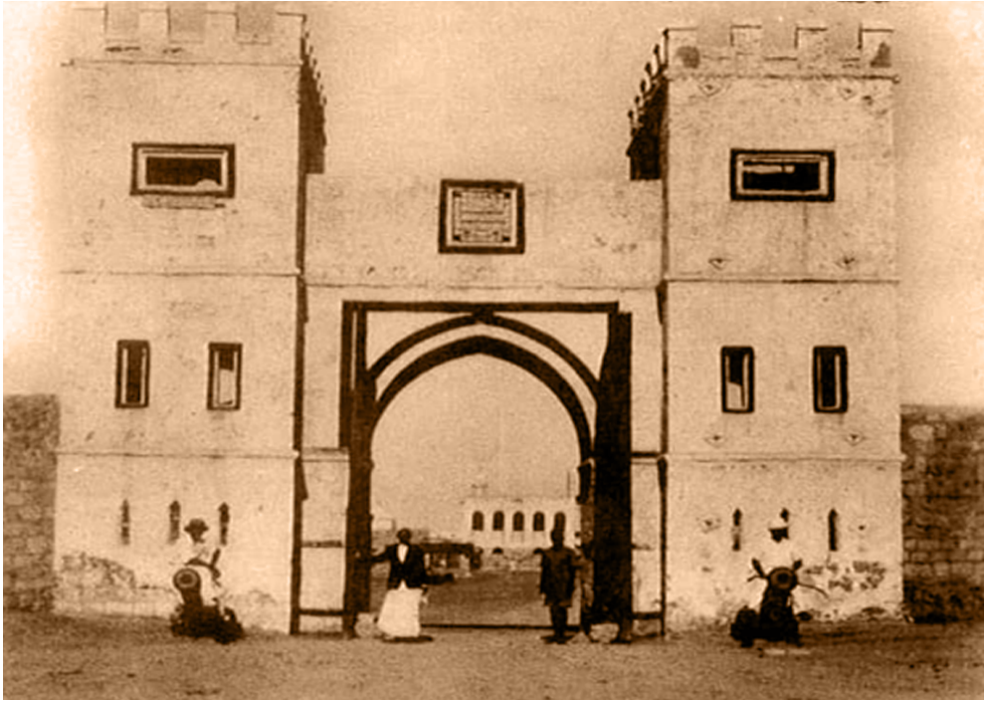
A number of Muslim Indians lived in Suakin and intermarried with the Beja, including the Al-Ghulam Fajo, Al-Rujkhan, and Al-Zuhur families. Among the Indian traders who arrived in Suakin in 1881 were Lawson and Sundarji, who stayed as guests of Mohamed Bey Al-Shanawi. Lawson engaged in trade and became one of the city’s prominent merchants until the British occupation of Sudan in 1898. After that, the influx of Indians to Suakin increased, and they began to compete with local and foreign traders. As a result, Suakin thrived commercially. Some of the most famous Indian traders in Suakin during the 19th century included:

- Lawson
- Sundarji
- Bobo Namsand
- Ramji Samji
- Dardahal Makanji
- Mowgis
- Band Ali

The Indian traders remained in the city and became an integral part of its commercial and cultural components, even after the establishment of the Port of Port Sudan. They were the last to leave Suakin for the new port after the government closed Suakin to navigation. The last Indian trader to stay in Suakin was Harksendas Khusal.(20)



Gordon Gate: Seaside of Suakin



Kitchener Gate: Land side of Suakin

Gates of Suakin Island:

During the era of the Pashawiya and the Egyptian Khedivate in Sudan, several European consuls in Khartoum engaged in various types of trade, including the slave trade, which emerged around 1860 and became one of the most profitable. They traded in gold, ivory, gum arabic, senna, hides, live animals, and more. These goods were sourced from different regions of Sudan and then exported via the Port of Suakin or overland to Egypt and from there to Europe.

As a result, the economic conditions for these consuls flourished. They also imported a variety of products from India, Europe, Egypt, and the Maghreb into Sudan. India served as the primary market for Sudanese goods, which were known for their quality.

Indians at the Port of Aqiq

Indian traders in Suakin played a vital role in revitalizing and driving the trade at the port by acting as agents for several British merchants. There was no direct trade between Sudan and the European continent before the arrival of Croatian, Serbian, and Greek traders. As a result, all Sudanese products were received through British and Indian traders, with no taxes imposed on these goods. The products were transported via small ships to larger vessels in the Red Sea before being exported to Egypt, India, and Europe. Notably, a shipment of elephant tusks took six weeks to travel from Khartoum to Suakin before reaching European markets.(21)

Port of Aqiq was one of the important ports that served as a hub for the export and import of various goods across the Red Sea, in addition to the Port of Suakin. This port exported corn, millet, honey, ghee, birds, ostrich feathers, gum Arabic, shells, turtles, elephants, ivory, and gold.

It also imported perfumes from India, such as musk, amber, camphor, and sandalwood, as well as luxury clothing and fabrics like Indian shash (men's garment), Indian futa (women's garment), Bengali karb, Spanish damour, and woven silk. Additionally, it imported foodstuffs such as Syrian rice, spices, and the high-quality "Mahalawi" dates from Basra in Iraq.

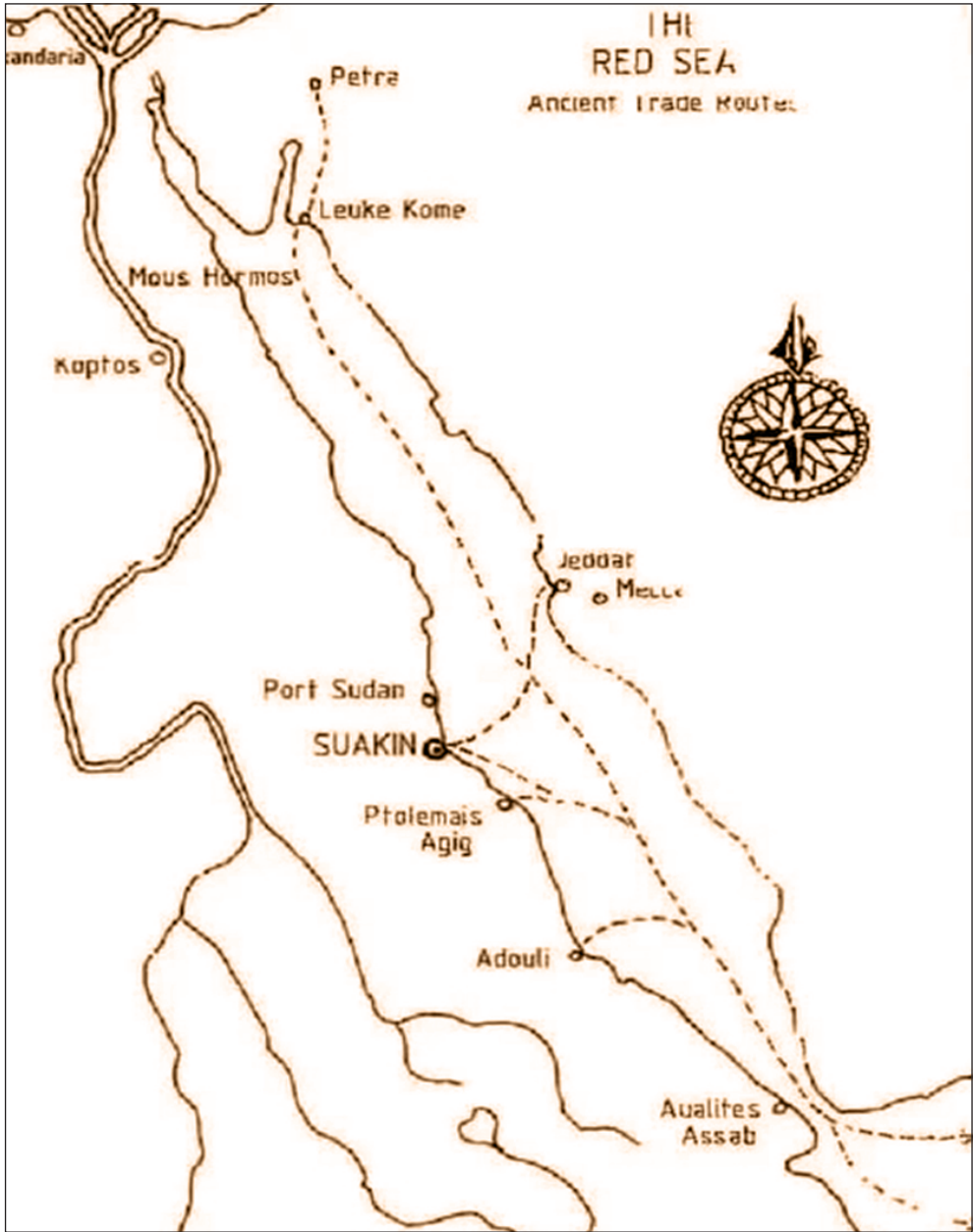
As a result of this vibrant trade, the port experienced significant economic, social, and cultural activity.(22)

Many large sailing ships docked at the port, the most famous of which was the "Ghanja Suakin," owned by Mohamed Bey Al-Shanawi. This ship was destroyed at Ras Asis, one of the docks at the Port of Aqiq. Other notable ships included the "Qamari" and the "Shadhili," also

owned by Mohamed Bey Al-Shanawi, as well as the “Waqif,” which was used for racing.

Additionally, there were ships like the “Mahrousa,” “Al-Mutawakkil,” and the “Ghanja Shah Bandar” from India. Boat races were held in both Suakin and the island of Bakiai in Aqiq. Among the famous skippers who traveled between the ports of the Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, and Indian Ocean were:

- Ali Dakla
- Mohamed Bahrai
- Saleh Bahrai and others. (23)



Ports of Suakin and Aqiq on the Red Sea

Indian Forces in Suakin

After the decisive victories of Prince Osman Digna in eastern Sudan, Britain requested Turkey to help protect the Red Sea ports. They also promised to send the Indian fleet to safeguard these ports, particularly Suakin. On November 16, the warship **H.M. Ranger** arrived in Suakin, which was met with great relief by the local population. Later that month, another British naval ship, **H.M. Woodlark**, arrived, followed by a warboat named **Coquette**. At the same time, military reinforcements were sent from Egypt under the command of Harrington. The city was visited by General Sartorius aboard the ship **S.S. Eldorado**, accompanied by his wife and adopted daughter. His wife later authored a book titled “**Three Months in the Sudan**,” where she recorded her observations about the besieged city, including details about Al-Shanawi’s agency and the Egyptian soldiers who were exhausted by hunger while guarding the city’s gate.

She also spoke about Mr. Qandeel, one of the leaders of the Urabi Revolution in Egypt, who was exiled to Suakin after the revolution’s failure. Additionally, she mentioned the mutiny of the **Bashibazouk** soldiers in Suakin, who refused to participate in military drills. General Sartorius ordered them to comply, and they ultimately followed his commands. The military reinforcements brought to Suakin helped the city remain resilient despite the ongoing attacks from Prince Osman Digna and his forces. (24)

In a report about the Indian forces in Suakin, Prince Osman Digna wrote to Khalifa Abdullah informing him of the arrival of these troops in Suakin and Tokar. After some time, through his intelligence reports, he learned that those forces would be withdrawn from Suakin due to an outbreak of diseases among them. The illnesses also affected their horses, resulting in a significant number of deaths.

Despite Osman Digna's efforts to identify the type and cause of the disease affecting the Indian troops, he was unable to obtain any conclusive information.(25) The objective of the British administration in bringing those forces was to assist in eliminating Prince Osman Digna.



Indian Forces in Suakin 1884



Camp of English and Indian Forces in Suakin



Two English soldiers in Suakin, with the port and some buildings of the city behind them.



Indian Forces in the City of Suakin



Indian forces in Suakin in their official uniforms.



Buildings of the City of Suakin



British and Indian forces in Suakin 1884



Suakin in the 1920

From the accompanying images of the Indian forces in Suakin, we notice that these troops were characterized by high discipline and distinctive uniforms. They effectively executed military orders and worked to protect Suakin from the continuous attacks launched by Prince Osman Digna, who aimed to establish control over the city.

Indians during the Khedivial and Mahdist Periods in Sudan

During the Egyptian Khedivial period in Sudan, Indian goods reached the city of Khartoum via Suakin, including cotton textiles and perfumes. These products were very popular among the city's residents. Indian goods of various types were well received by the inhabitants of Khartoum, the capital, and other cities for several reasons, including: (26)

- The regular arrival of these goods in the markets of Khartoum and other cities.
- The variety and quality of Indian products.
- Perfumes and Indian fabrics were in high demand among the people of Khartoum at that time.
- Economic prosperity and trade activity with Egypt and West Africa encouraged the arrival of Indian merchants and goods to Khartoum.

During the time of Khalifa Abdullah, ten men came to the Mahdist state, including seven Indians and three from Bukhara. Khalifa Abdullah honored them, but later became preoccupied with other matters, despite insisting that they attend the five daily prayers in the mosque like the other Ansar in Omdurman. Due to the neglect from the Khalifa and their need for money, some resorted to begging.

Among the three from Bukhara was a man named Muhammad al-Amin, who informed Khalifa Abdullah of his knowledge of printing and copying techniques. As a result, Khalifa Abdullah benefited from him at the lithographic press and assigned him a salary of five riyals. Among the Indians was a man named Kamal al-Din, who was said to be skilled in deceit. Knowing that Khalifa Abdullah needed gunpowder, he offered

to provide this material and convinced the Khalifa, who gave him a large amount of money. However, after some time, it became clear that he had deceived Khalifa Abdullah.

In response, the Khalifa gathered all the Indians in Omdurman, including Kamal al-Din, and requested that they return to their homeland after providing them with a letter allowing them to promote the Mahdist cause in India. On the designated day of their departure via Suakin, the Khalifa came out to bid them farewell outside Omdurman.(27)

From the above, we find that the movement of Indians to Sudan occurred in small groups seeking to settle in the country. However, traders formed the largest group that reached Suakin, where they engaged in transporting goods and merchandise between Sudan and India, and vice versa. The influx of Indians to Sudan significantly increased with the arrival of British occupation in Sudan.

Indians in Sudan During the English Rule

After the English forces took control of Sudan in 1898, an intelligence report was prepared by the Egyptian army's Sardar for the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs. This report listed foreign nationals in Sudan who remained in the country after the fall of Khartoum, including a notable number of Armenians, Syrians, Indians, Italians, Cypriots, and Greeks.(28)

The new administration in Sudan made use of Indians in various roles, such as technicians, engineers, and workers in the construction of the railway. Their contributions also extended to agriculture and forestry through the introduction of certain forest trees and improved seeds, which significantly enhanced many Sudanese crops.(29)

Additionally, the British government in Sudan sought the assistance of an Indian expert named (Sukumar Sen) to conduct the first Sudanese elections in 1953. He was accompanied by several members, including three Sudanese, one Egyptian, and two British and American members. The Sukumar Sen Commission successfully completed its mission after travelling extensively throughout Sudan, and the elections were conducted smoothly, yielding favorable results.(30)

Through tracking the various stages of Indian migration to Sudan, we find that several key factors contributed to the continuation of this migration. These included:

- 1. Desire for Defense:** The British government aimed to defend the city of Suakin after it fell to the forces of Prince Osman Digna.

2. **Trade:** Commerce was a primary motivator that encouraged Indians to come to and settle in Sudan.
3. **Agriculture:** Following the British occupation in 1898, the British sought to attract a number of Indians to work in agricultural projects in the country.

These factors collectively facilitated the ongoing migration of Indians to Sudan.

Sudanese-Indian Relations after Independence

Sudanese-Indian relations have witnessed significant development in various fields both before and after independence. In the political and legal arenas, the General Graduates' Conference in Sudan was influenced by the Indian National Congress and its leader, Gandhi. In the legal domain, British rule established Sudanese law modeled after Indian laws, which were modified to suit the Sudanese context and political landscape. The Indian Election Commission supported the first parliamentary elections held in Sudan in 1953. Additionally, the Sudanese Election Commission, formed in 1957, benefited from Indian legal frameworks.

Financial assistance was also provided by India to contribute to the construction of various buildings in Sudan. Furthermore, India offered direct support to the Sudanese committee formed in February 1954 to facilitate compensation payments, which successfully concluded its work in 1955. (31)

In April 1955, Sudanese President Ismail al-Azhari and several companions made a stop in India while en route to Bandung to attend the first Asian Relations Conference. (32) Among the historical visits during the 1950s was that of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who was welcomed by several leaders, including Mr. Ali al-Mirghani and Mr. Abd al-Rahman. He was received at the Gardens of Al-Muqran during a tea ceremony, followed by a special dinner in his honor at the Republican Palace. (33)

After independence, Sudanese-Indian relations developed further under the first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. In recognition of this

growing relationship, Ismail al-Azhari, the first Prime Minister of Sudan, donated £100,000 from the Sudanese people to India. This donation was used to build a military science academy named after Sudan in the city of Pune, symbolizing the Sudanese-Indian relationship. The building features Sudan's name at its entrance in both Hindi and English, and it stands as an architectural marvel in Pune.



Sudan Building in India



Sudan Building in India

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Chapter Two

**Indians
in Sudanese Cities**

Chapter Two

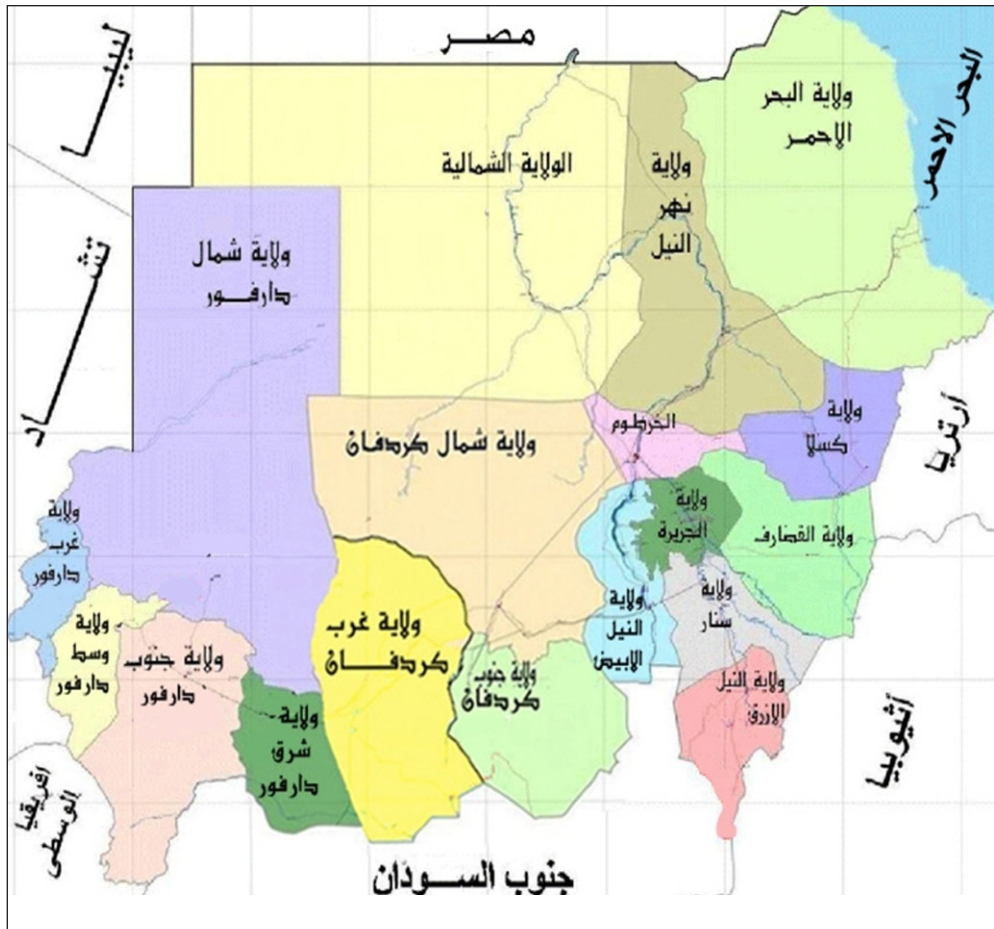
Indians in Sudanese Cities

The emergence of cities is a phenomenon closely associated with the development of social and economic activity during a specific historical period. Sudanese cities developed during the Turkish era due to political and economic factors. They also experienced significant development during the dual rule, where they took on diverse roles and relied on the infrastructure introduced by British rule. The growth of an economy based on the export of cash crops led to the emergence of a modern production sector in agriculture, albeit on a limited scale. This, in turn, contributed to the development of markets as a hub of economic activity, which became the backbone of the development of modern cities in Sudan, where Indians became one of the most important components. Modern transportation, particularly the railway, played a crucial role, with cities such as Atbara, Port Sudan, Khartoum North, Senar Junction, and Kosti being notable examples.

Indian groups that migrated to Sudan settled in various cities across the country, with the eastern cities of Suakin, Port Sudan, and Al-Qadarif being the primary choices for residence and settlement. This selection was based on several reasons, including:

- The commercial significance of these cities.
- The ability to connect with the outside world through maritime routes across the Red Sea.
- The ease of transporting and receiving various goods through Sudanese ports.

- The establishment of commercial agencies for Indian traders in both Suakin and Port Sudan.
- The welcoming attitude of the Beja community towards Indians and other nationalities that migrated to their regions.



Map of Sudanese States and Sudanese Citite

Indians in Port Sudan

Many officials at the beginning of the 20th century argued that the port of Suakin was unsuitable for Sudan and its economic development. There was a growing inclination to create a new Sudanese port in a suitable natural harbor to meet the anticipated economic growth in Sudan. Prominent proponents of this view included Watson, Kitchener, and Wingate. However, Suakin still had its supporters.

The division of opinion was evident, with some preferring to maintain and develop Suakin to accommodate the expected increase in ship sizes and trade traffic. Others opposed any efforts to develop it, not merely for the sake of opposition, but out of concern for the dangers posed by coral growth in the channel connecting the harbour to the sea. This opposition also had political motives related to developing Sudan independently from Egypt.

In 1904, Mr. Kendi was tasked with selecting a site for Suakin and providing a report on the funds needed to develop the port and remove obstacles and coral reefs. In his report, he indicated that Suakin was unsuitable even if some improvements were made. He pointed to the Sheikh Barghout area as an alternative to Suakin and was enthusiastic about establishing a new port at that location, equipping it modernly and preparing it technically to accommodate maritime traffic and the flow of Sudanese foreign trade.

He visited the site from both land and sea, noting its suitability for the planned city, without limitations regarding the availability of fresh water in the wells between the coastline and the low hills. Thus, by raising this issue, Kendi effectively retired Suakin after ten centuries of service as a port. Wingate visited Sheikh Barghout Harbour and agreed with Kendi's perspective. He traveled to Cairo and recommended a technical

study of Sheikh Barghout Harbour. He insisted on his request until instructions were issued to form a four-member technical committee for study and research to prepare the necessary report.

The committee arrived on the Sudanese coast in August 1904, but its members could not reach a unified opinion. This led to harsh criticism from Kendi, who insisted in his address to the Governor-General in October 1904 on the necessity of advancing the project for Sheikh Barghout Harbour and transforming it into a major port for Sudan. The government responded to his recommendations and began gathering all the technical details necessary to start construction of Port Sudan in early 1905.

The conflict between the two cities began on the very first day the foundation stone for the new port at Sheikh Barghout was laid in 1906, just before the basic constructions in Port Sudan were completed and it officially opened in 1909. Traders and those involved in navigation started directing part of their activities to Port Sudan, sending representatives to manage their growing interests there alongside the development and expansion of construction efforts. This means that Port Sudan began to compete with Suakin effectively, especially after the railway line was extended to it in May 1906, allowing it to actively receive ships and serve trade.

By doing so, Port Sudan captured a significant portion of Sudan's foreign maritime trade through the Red Sea. The struggle continued from 1906 to 1922, during which all facilities were placed in the new port under government supervision, while Suakin received only neglect and no positive efforts were made, as there was a policy of not retaining it functionally, at least. The residents of Suakin and its immediate hinterland fought a bitter struggle to keep it operational for trade and ship reception until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

The lack of water in Port Sudan during its early years allowed Suakin to continue its activities until 1922. The flow of water to Port Sudan from the Arba'at area later enabled the government to tighten the grip on Suakin and limit ship access. As a result, the owners and residents of Suakin reluctantly moved in groups to Port Sudan under the pressure of these circumstances. Additionally, the increasing size of ships led to the complete decline of Suakin and the gradual development of Port Sudan, which initially progressed slowly since economic plans were only implemented to a limited extent, especially during the period from 1906 to 1924.

Subsequently, plans were completed for the construction and operation of the Sennar Dam, the cultivation of cotton in the Gezira region, and the extension of railway lines to most areas. This led to a surge in the volume of exports passing through Port Sudan to global markets, with its share exceeding 90% for both imports and exports.

Port Sudan is considered the first coastal city in Sudan on the Red Sea following the decline of the commercial and cultural role of Suakin. After the establishment and opening of Port Sudan (1900-1909), groups of locals and traders from Suakin moved to the new port. Over time, Port Sudan secured its position among the important and strategic ports along the Red Sea, becoming a hub for traders and those seeking wealth from both inside and outside Sudan.(1)

The presence of Indians in Port Sudan dates back to 1912. Among the families that settled in the city were the Jateesh Jitu family, owners of the “Dirham” stores, the Santo family of watchmakers and their son Kishore, as well as the Talal, Mong, and Sanji families. These groups engaged in trade and integrated into the city’s community, with some converting to Islam.

There was a special club for Indians in Port Sudan, and they often wear traditional Sudanese attire, such as the jalabiya for men and the thobe for women. Some Indians were members of the Al-Arab Football Club, such as Monog, and they reside in the central and outskirts areas of Port Sudan.

Later, the Jateesh family moved to Omdurman, where Jateesh engaged in trade at the city's market. A writer interviewed him about the role and contributions of Indians in the city and their relationship with the Omdurman community.

By tracing the history of the Indian presence in the Sudanese coastal cities of Suakin and Port Sudan, it can be said that this presence significantly contributed to the commercial openness of these ports to global markets in East Asia and Europe, as well as to other Red Sea ports. This was largely due to the goods that Indian traders exported abroad, which facilitated the flow of various products between Sudanese and global ports, allowing these products to secure their place among international commodities over time.

Among the prominent Indian figures who visited Port Sudan was the Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi in 1935, while en route to visit Britain. His boat stopped at the Sudanese coastal city, where he was welcomed by several members of the Indian community residing there. Later, Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru also stopped in Port Sudan, highlighting the city's significance to Indian leaders and their appreciation for the Indian groups that settled there. (2) It can be said that Port Sudan inherited the glory of Suakin and became the second city for Indians who had settled in Suakin before the English decided to exclude it from the list of active and thriving ports on the Red Sea.



A Group of Indians on the Coast of Port Sudan



Map of Sudanese Cities and Towns

Indians in Kassala

The city of Kassala in eastern Sudan served as the second station for Indians after Suakin. It is a border city with Eritrea, and due to its strategic location and historical commercial role, it became a destination for Indians and other population groups throughout the ages. (3)

Indians arrived in Kassala on camelback, with their presence dating back to 1918. They came to the city from Suakin for trade, as commerce was thriving there, particularly border trade, and there were no obstacles to importing goods from Britain. The Indian community in Kassala began with a small number but expanded over time, reaching 55 families. During the British rule, a specific area for Indian residents was designated in Kassala, known as “Indian Quarter.” (4)



Map of Kassala State



Italian Fort in Kassala

The Indian community in all Sudanese cities has been characterized by a peaceful disposition, avoiding violence, as evidenced by police records throughout their long history. Over time, Indians in Kassala and other Sudanese cities have become an integral part of Sudanese society, sharing in both joys and challenges. In Kassala, they participate in official state celebrations and welcome prominent visitors, contributing their artistic heritage during national events.

According to the 1993 census, the Indian population in Kassala was 236 individuals. The second and third generations of Indians in Kassala obtained Sudanese citizenship in accordance with Sudanese nationality law. Notably, despite acquiring Sudanese citizenship, they retain their Indian passports, which facilitate their entry into their homeland and allow them to travel internationally. At the same time, their Sudanese citizenship and passport enable them to own homes and businesses and establish their identity within Sudan. (5)

The Indian traders in Kassala have inherited their shops for decades. Over time, the Indian Quarter has seen groups of Sudanese move in, as Indians sold their homes when they left the city for the capital, Khartoum, or abroad to places like India and Britain.(6) Most members of the Indian community in Kassala belong to the middle class, with a few from lower classes. However, they interact equally, and there are no significant social classes or disparities as seen in their homeland. Marriages between different classes occur in Kassala, which is rare in India. While there are no clear tribal groups among the Indians in Kassala, there are class distinctions based on professions, such as goldsmiths, traders, and barbers.

Most Indians in Kassala work in sewing, hairdressing, and cloth trading in the city market.(7) Notable traders include Ramesh, Mandra, Bart, Shweelal, and Blaj. There is a neighborhood named after them, located near Kassala Market, which is one of the largest markets in the city.

Galkesh Blaj, the owner of a barbershop in the city centre, is one of the most famous barbers in Kassala. His clientele includes both Indians and Sudanese, and over time, he has become the barber for notable figures and officials in the city. Galkesh enjoys traditional Sudanese dishes, such as molokhia and zalabia, and he drinks “sharbot,” a traditional Sudanese beverage served during Eid al-Adha. He also listens to Sudanese music and has memorized many songs.(8)



Ramesh: Cloth Trader in Kassala

Ramesh, a cloth trader in Kassala, shares that he was born and educated in the city. His father settled in Kassala in 1932. Despite this, Ramesh maintains a connection with India, visiting occasionally, but he eagerly anticipates returning to his home in Kassala, where he feels most at ease. Ramesh has several friends in Kassala, and when he invites them over, he takes care to serve traditional Sudanese food. Rahul, who is 24 years old, mentions that he has many Sudanese friends and enjoys their food. Although his family adheres to Hinduism and traditionally refrains from eating meat, Rahul partakes in it just like his Sudanese friends.(9)

Among the Indians who succeeded in opening the first modern studio in Kassala during the 1950s was Brimshan Amrishi. In the gold trade, individuals like Joukards and Takarchi made their mark, while Mandra and his sons worked in barbering and radio repair. Gandhi Pharmacy in the city was owned by an Indian named Ishwant.

The Indian community in Kassala also had a cultural troupe that participated in public events and a volleyball team. The Indians of Kassala were referred to as “Al-Bunyan,” a name that originated during World War II when a military unit from the Allies, consisting of members from the Buna tribe in India, was stationed in the railway area. Over time, due to the blending of cultures, many young Indian men married Sudanese women. (10)

Mandra, who has a good reputation among the patrons of Kassala Market, notes that the Indians in the city have integrated into the local community. According to him, the number of Indians in Sudan reached 60,000 during the 1970s, but this number has declined due to several factors, including:

- Economic stagnation.
- Nationalization of companies by President Nimeiri.
- Economic deterioration in the country.(11)

The Indian community in Kassala has contributed to charitable activities in the city through direct support by providing financial and material assistance to those in need. Additionally, they engage in indirect contributions through their behaviours as a group that values goodwill and seeks to present a positive example.(12) The president of the Indian community in Kassala, Bart Shulal Barni, states that the first groups of Indians arrived in Sudan through Suakin, then moved to Tokar and finally reached Kassala in 1918. Initially, there were 150 Indians from 50 families in the city, but their number grew to 400 before many returned to India.

The Indian school in Kassala was opened in 1955, bringing several teachers from India to teach four Indian languages across four classes. The school later expanded to include secondary education. Additional-

ly, there is a UNESCO school for higher secondary education. Indian students wishing to continue their studies can either enroll at the University of Khartoum or travel abroad.(13)

Among the pioneers of the scouting movement in Kassala during President Nimeiri's era was the scout leader Mahendra Kiso, who led the Indian school's scouts, along with another individual named Kank. Kassala was one of the first Sudanese cities to embrace the scouting movement.(14)

The first group of Indians who arrived in Kassala settled in an area to the south of the city's military garrison, in a large square courtyard with entrances on the north and south sides. These doors were locked at night, and there were guards for protection. The first family to live in the city was the Dukran Histranj family. One of the most notable Indian traders was Rasklal Duraj, who was among the earliest traders supplying various products and served as an agent for Mobil Oil.(15)

Relationship of Indians with Sayyid Hassan al-Mirghani

During World War I, Kassala faced a treacherous attack from Italian forces, which captured the city. In this difficult time, a group of Indians sought refuge with Sayyid Hassan al-Mirghani, who provided them with adequate protection through his mosque and the homes of the Khatmiyya order. Subsequently, a larger number of Indians entered Kassala with Indian troops sent to Sudan to liberate the city from Italian and Axis forces. These Indian troops fought under the banner of the Allies and successfully liberated Kassala.(16)

The contribution of the Indian forces to the liberation of Kassala fostered a special bond between the Khatmiyya and the Indians in the city, a relationship that continues to this day. Additionally, Indians in Kassala contributed to the local economy by supplying perfumes such as sirtia, muhalabia, sandalwood, and rivoedour, as well as Indian clothing.







*The Three Images of Sayyid Hassan al-Mirghani Mosque
and Tomb in Kassala*



Area Where Indians Burn Their Dead in Kassala

Indians in Berber

Berber, also known as Al-Mukhayrif, was one of the important commercial cities in Sudan. Its geographic location significantly contributed to its commercial prominence, as trade caravans arrived from Suakin, Egypt, Darfur, and Sennar. Through trade and the movement of goods, Berber gained fame, with its caravans heading towards Suakin loaded with various commodities. However, Berber's commercial status deteriorated after the emergence of the Shaiqiya sheikhdom and its direct conflict with the Abdallab. The resulting tensions greatly affected the trade activities in the city. (17)



Berber 1875-1886

Berber gained significant fame due to its commercial role, overshadowing larger cities in Sudan such as Al-Fasher and Sennar because of its economic importance.

Traveler Burckhardt noted that Berber was inhabited by the Merfab tribe, the Ababda, and some Bashari and Danagla. The Merfab claim their origins trace back to the Arabian Peninsula, while Burckhardt believed they were from eastern Sudan. They were ruled by a king referred to as “the Mak,” and after the Funj dynasty gained control over the area, leadership in Berber shifted to the Tamasieh family. The king of Sennar appointed the Mak in Berber from the Tamasieh family, which was the ruling family there. Additionally, the king of Sennar would send a delegation every four to five years to Berber to collect taxes in the form of gold and horses for the benefit of the Sennar kingdom.(19)

The kings of Berber imposed taxes on outsiders and were strict about this to cover the tribute paid to the king of Sennar. Additionally, certain taxes were levied on tribe members, although the wealthy and powerful were often exempted. Some ambitious members of the ruling family would impose taxes on the caravans passing through Berber to curry favour with the kings of Sennar, hoping to eventually become the king of Berber. (20). Burckhardt noted that when he observed Berber, it was an organized city, with its houses resembling those found in Upper Egypt.(21)

Trade in Berber:

Most of the residents of Berber engaged in agriculture and trade, making the city a crucial link between Suakin and the internal Sennar cities, such as Sennar, Arbaji, Al-Halfaya, Shendi, and the cities of Dongola and Drao in Egypt. Berber flourished due to the passage of caravans arriving from Sennar and Darfur through Egypt, as well as from Suakin to the inland cities.

In the Berber market, currencies like the Spanish riyal and the damur were commonly used, alongside sorghum, which was often traded for cheaper goods.(22)

Trade Preferences and Caravan Dynamics in Berber

Traders coming from Egypt preferred the Berber market despite the high prices of goods, mainly due to its relative proximity to Egypt and the ease of completing buying and selling transactions. Large numbers of caravans would frequently depart from Berber heading towards Drao in Egypt.

The residents of Upper Egypt referred to the commercial caravans coming from Berber as “Sennar caravans,” reflecting their unfamiliarity with Sudan and its internal cities. In Berber, the Ababda tribe, known for their knowledge of the desert and internal routes, played a crucial role. Members of the Ababda tribe would guard the trading caravans and act as guides, earning money for their services.(23)

The Trade Caravans Coming to Berber

The commercial caravans arriving in Berber came from five main regions:

- Drao in Egypt: Considered one of the most important sources of trade caravans.
- Dongola: Another significant contributor to the trade network.
- Shendi: A key area supplying goods to Berber.
- Taka in Eastern Sudan: Contributing to the diversity of products in the market.
- Suakin: Facilitating trade with various commodities flowing into Berber.(24)

Taxes in Berber:

The kings of Berber imposed taxes on commercial caravans, known as “transit taxes,” applied to the passage of goods. The Mak of Berber required each trader coming from Egypt to pay five pieces of damur. Additionally, a travelling individual would pay one piece of damur to the Mak, another to the tax collectors associated with the Mak, and a third to the leaders of the Bashari, who were regarded as the lords of the desert, thus necessitating their tribute. The Mak of Berber did not impose a specific tax on caravans coming from Sennar, as these were considered caravans exiting the sultanate. (25) However, he would not refuse small gifts from the traders.

Popular Goods in the Berber Market

In the Berber market, several goods were in high demand, including:

- **Ivory:** A highly valued commodity.
- **Ostrich Feathers:** Sought after for various uses.
- **Leather:** An important product exported to global markets via the port of Suakin.

Additionally, the market welcomed Indian goods, which included:

- **Fabrics:** Various types of cloth.
- **Silk:** Luxurious and sought after.
- **Perfumes:** Popular among traders and consumers alike.
- **Spices:** Essential for culinary uses and trade.



Nile Valley State

Indians in Berber

According to Ismail Ahmed Mohammed Abdullah, a resident of Berber, Indians were among the groups that settled in the city during the time of the Egyptian Pashas and Khedivate. They engaged in various fields, including the trade of fabrics, spices, perfumes, and goldsmithing. Some also served in military roles alongside English forces, while others held government positions in the city.

The Indian traders were known for their good relations with the local population and successfully introduced modern trade practices. This interaction allowed the people of Berber to learn contemporary trading methods. Indian traders brought goods directly from India to the Berber market, which were then transported to other cities such as Khartoum and regions in Western Sudan. As the city's prominence declined, some Indians relocated to other cities, including Port Sudan, Omdurman, and Kassala.(26)

Indians in Berber: Insights and Historical Context

According to Bakri Youssef Mohammed, a resident of Berber, during his discussions with locals about the Indian community and their history in the city, it was noted that Indians were primarily involved in the trade of fabrics. They lived in the Al-Munidra area and Block 4 in Berber. Over time, many moved to Atbara, Al-Damer, and Omdurman. The Indians were well-integrated with the local population, and people still remember them fondly.(27)

In a conversation with Dr. Anam Mohammed Othman, a professor of Ottoman history at the University of Khartoum and also a Berber native, he mentioned that some residents claimed there were no Indian traders in the city. However, he suggested the presence of Indians in

Berber during the Sennar state and the Pasha and Khedivate periods for several reasons:

Economic Importance: Berber was a vital commercial hub during the Sennar and Khedivate periods.

Trade Connections: The city had strong commercial ties with Suakin, Sennar, and Western Sudan.

Indian Goods: There was a significant presence of Indian products in the Berber market and other Sudanese markets.

Diverse Traders: Various groups of traders from different nationalities existed throughout the Sennar state and later during the Khedivate.





The Indian shops in Berber have suffered from neglect over time, reflecting a decline in their once-thriving presence.



The market in Berber displays some new buildings, indicating ongoing development amidst the historical backdrop of the area.

Indians in Atbara

During the Turkish era, Atbara was a small village known as Al-Dakhlah, serving as an entry point to the east after crossing the Atbara River. Pilgrim caravans would cross the river on their way to Berber and then to Suakin. The name “Atbara” only emerged in the late Mahdist period, particularly notable during the Battle of Al-Nakhila between Mahmoud wad Ahmed and Kitchener.

The railway line reached Atbara in July 1898, shortly after the Battle of Al-Nakhila, and a temporary wooden bridge was constructed to transport materials for extending the line to Khartoum. Following the Battle of Atbara, an advanced workshop was established for assembling war barges for the invading army.

This led to Atbara’s transformation from a small administrative point into a significant military camp, housing around 16,000 troops. Its importance grew further when the railway workshops and headquarters were permanently moved there from Wadi Halfa in 1906. This relocation brought not only the railway facilities but also the legacy of Wadi Halfa to Atbara. The choice of Atbara was strategic, given its advantageous location and significance.

Modern Development of Atbara

Since 1906 and beyond, the characteristics of modern Atbara began to emerge more prominently, as it was definitively chosen as a major transportation city. The government planned and organized the city, dividing it into residential blocks after selling land to local residents. This development led to an increase in population density, with a significant portion of the inhabitants being railway workers or employees.

Atbara eventually became the sixth largest city in Sudan, with notable tribes such as the Ja'aliyyin and the Robatab settling there. Following its designation as a transportation hub, other tribes including the Mahas, Danagla, and Shwaiqah, along with various other Sudanese tribes, migrated to Atbara, contributing to its growth as one of the largest cities in Sudan.

The Indian Community in Atbara

Atbara has been home to several Indians who worked in various professions, including barbering and trade. Notable figures include:

- **Shatra Borg Ramji:** A well-known barber in the city.
- **Shantlal:** A prominent trader in the local market.
- **Diro Jala Shah:** One of the most skilled and famous fabric traders in Atbara, working in the southwestern part of the market (al-Suq al-Taht).

Diro was a proponent of local industry, offering high-quality Sudanese fabrics such as poplin for school uniforms, dooby fabrics, and blankets. He also sold imported fabrics renowned for their quality and beauty. His wife and daughters worked alongside him in the store, becoming some of the first women in Atbara to engage in trade, earning great respect from the local community.

The people of Atbara developed a fondness for Indian cinema, which helped strengthen the ties between Sudanese and Indian cultures. They would sing Indian songs and remember the names of films shown in the city's cinema, much like other Sudanese cities that celebrated these films. Some movies that remain memorable to Sudanese audiences include:

Indian Cinema Favorites

Some of the Indian films that resonated with Sudanese audiences included:

- **For My Children**
- **Singam**
- **Tasri Manzel**
- **The Flame and Janwar**

Additionally, many Sudanese families named their daughters after Indian names, such as **Sapna**.(28)

Diro: A Symbol of Sudanese-Indian Friendship

Diro Jala Shah was a prominent figure in Atbara, epitomizing the friendship between Indian and Sudanese communities. He held a special place in the hearts of the local residents, participating in their celebrations and mourning. Diro was known for his kindness, often checking on his neighbors, offering condolences during funerals, and celebrating various occasions together.

Remarkably, throughout his more than fifty years of running his shop in Atbara, he never sold a coffin; instead, he distributed them for free to those in need. After the passing of his wife and the marriages of his daughters, Diro decided to move to Omdurman in 2012 to spend his remaining years among his fellow countrymen, where he was honored as their leader.

Atbara also recognized him as one of its loyal sons. The memory of this kind man, who left an indelible mark on the city and its market, continues to be cherished by its people.(29)

Farewell to Diro: A Memorable Tribute

The farewell of the Atbara trader Diro was a remarkable day in the city. Students from the Al-Afaq Al-Awsa Institute (for individuals with special needs) organized a procession led by music from the Bagpipe Music. They presented a collection of gifts to their dear friend. Most shops in the market closed their doors to participate in this grand celebration, reflecting the deep respect and affection the community had for him.(30)



Diro family



Mr. Diro

Indians in Damer

Damer is the capital of the Nile River State and was historically the capital of the Northern Province. With a rich history, it is one of the significant commercial cities in northern Sudan, connected to Suakin by a trade route through Berber. The city is closely associated with the Majzoub family, who are prominent figures in the area.

Indians began arriving in Damer in 1930, with the **Arun Kumar Maganlal** family being one of the most distinguished Indian families in the city, engaged in the trade of fabrics and perfumes. At one point, the Indian community in Damer was among the largest in Sudan. However, due to various factors, many members migrated to the capital, leaving only two families remaining in Damer.

The Indian groups in Damer integrated into the local community, participating in both celebrations and mourning events.(31) One of the revered figures in Damer, respected by the Indians, was Sheikh Al-Majdoub, to whom they showed great esteem and respect.(32)

The Indian Community in Damer

The Indians in Damer succeeded in establishing a significant presence among the local population and in surrounding areas, becoming an essential part of the social, cultural, and civilizational fabric of the community. This status was highlighted by the words of Professor Mu'asab Al-Sawi regarding **Harish Maganlal**, who passed away in 2022. He noted, "One of the icons of Damer, the honorable Indian trader and wonderful human being, Harish Maganlal, has departed to eternity."

The Maganlal family excelled in the trade of fabrics, perfumes, and lace. In addition to them, the **Barouri** family operated nearby in the main market, known for their unique and rare products imported from

India. Their offerings included various types of fabrics, spices, Indian rice and barley, as well as high-quality Indian teas like Sunflower and Peacock brands.

Among the Indian women who contributed to the education sector in Damer and Atbara was **Ustaza Warsha**, who initially worked in schools before transitioning to the Indian school in Omdurman.(33)



Harish Maganlal



Ustaza Warsha

Indian Affiliation and Contributions in Damer

The Indian community in Damer was divided between two clubs: **Al-Sahm Club** and the **Northern Association**. They shared a strong friendship with the late Professor Ahmad Said, a prominent figure in the Northern Association, and maintained a spiritual connection with Sheikh Al-Majdoub.

During various occasions, they generously donated tea, sugar, rice, and money, showing their commitment to the community. They were proactive in supporting health and educational facilities in the city and played a significant role in the construction of the Damer Stadium. Additionally, they regularly contributed to the upkeep of the shrine and provided perfumes.

The Indians of Damer also maintained roots and connections with their counterparts in Port Sudan, Kassala, and Omdurman, fostering a broader network among the Indian diaspora in Sudan.(34)



The Shrine of Sheikh Al-Majdoub

The Indians in Damer have successfully integrated into Sudanese society, becoming an integral part of the community. This integration could be reflected in their regular visits to Sheikh Al-Majdoub's shrine every Friday. Their sense of belonging and patriotism is evident in the strong bonds they have formed with the local population.

The expressions of love and appreciation from this group towards the people of Damer are a testament to their harmonious coexistence and deep-rooted connections within the community. This mutual respect and shared cultural practices highlight the enduring relationship between the Indian community and the residents



Brij Kumar

Brij Kumar: A Musical Legacy

In a television interview, **Brij Kumar**, a resident of Damer's Block 5, reminisced about his days singing as member of choir with the renowned artist **Majdoub Onsa**. He fondly recalled the time when Majdoub would perform his beautiful songs in Damer before moving to the capital.

In addition to Majdoub Onsa, the city also recognized other talented artists, including **Abdullah Al-Baiyo**, who contributed to the vibrant musical scene in Damer. These artists played a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape of the community and fostering a love for music among its residents.

The Kreet Family: A Part of Damer's Fabric

The **Kreet family** is one of the longstanding Indian families in Damer, originally from the state of Gujarat, India. Kreet himself was born in Kassala in 1942 and holds Sudanese citizenship, as do all his family members. They moved to Damer in 1968.

Kreet has four children and has been actively involved in trade within the city. He participates in both the joys and sorrows of the local community and has a special affection for Sheikh Al-Majdoub, visiting his

shrine every Friday. During these visits, he generously distributes sweets to the visitors.

Kreet is also the owner of **Taj Mahal**, one of the oldest and most prestigious shops in the city, further solidifying the family's integral role in the local economy and community life.

The Kreet Family and Their Integration in Damer

The Kreet family is deeply intertwined with the life and culture of Damer. One of Kreet's sons, Yanish, married a Sudanese woman from the Rashida tribe after converting to Islam. Initially, this decision faced resistance from his father, but eventually, Kreet agreed to the marriage.(35)

Yanish began his educational journey in the local kindergarten and progressed through the Sudanese public school system, ultimately graduating from university. He is a passionate supporter of the **Al-Rabita Club** and has a deep admiration for several Sudanese artists, including **Mohamed Wardi, Kamal Trobosh, and Majdoub Onsa**. His enthusiasm for music is so intense that he sometimes participates in traditional celebrations by enduring whippings with "Albutan" and enjoys chewing **tobacco** (sa'aout).(36)

This rich blend of cultural practices and personal stories illustrates the Kreet family's significant role in the social tapestry of Damer.

A Story of Generosity from the Kreet Family

One of the anecdotes that merchant **Kreet** shares about the generosity of Sudanese people, particularly those from the **Al-Alyab** area near Damer, highlights a memorable encounter. An Indian traveller riding a motorcycle headed towards Damer was warmly welcomed by the locals, who demonstrated exceptional hospitality by slaughtering a sheep in his honor. This act of kindness brought great joy to the traveller.

When he met the Kreet family in Damer, he remarked, “I am neither a minister nor an official; I came as a tourist. Is it really true that Sudanese people are like this?” This story illustrates the deep-rooted values of generosity and nobility among the people of Al-Alyab and Sudan in general, leaving a lasting impression on the visiting Indian. Such experiences reinforce the cultural significance of hospitality in Sudanese society (37)



Kreet Kart

ليس الله الرضا الرضا
 تاريخ الهند والهند في والند امر
 كريت كانت قولا لبراس حوش
 تاريخ الميلاد ١١ يناير ١٩٤٤ في بيت نخضه
 ابيها اسم السواد في قفله الدم A+
 المهنة ماجستير في الهندسة
 تاجر ملابس وعطفر
 ا عرفت بالامر ا ك في بيتها في العلم ١٩٦٨
 عرفت بالعرفه عيلة وبالحيل كذلك في بيتها في العلم ١٩٦٨
 و ٢٢ طراح = عتي ١٠ من الأبياء من ٢٠ ميا برهم
 عتي ٢١ ولد ١٠ من بيتها في العلم ١٩٦٨
 في قفله في بيتها
 شاك واحد من الرضا وقال صياها وعيا في بيتها
 وطبعها صله وهم غير وقت قفله كثير يعمل
 وقال من للمارون قال ليه الا قفله ان عتي في بيتها
 وقال ما يري ان عتي اسلم ا قفله ٢١ من ا قفله
 لك بيت ان قفله في بيتها
 من البيه ان عتي ا قفله من البيه ان عتي ا قفله
 كلو حقه وانك له ا قفله من البيه ان عتي ا قفله

Statement by Kreet: The Story of Yanish's Conversion to Islam and Marriage

Kreet shares the story of his son Yanish, who married a Sudanese woman from the Rashida tribe after embracing Islam. This narrative highlights the journey of Yanish as he navigated his faith and cultural integration through marriage, reflecting the deep connections between the Indian community and Sudanese society.

The Business and Family Life of Yanish

The Yanish family specialized in the trade of clothing, perfumes, incense, and wedding supplies. Despite Kreet's Hindu background, he proudly displays a sign in their shop that reads, "There is no God but Allah," reflecting their embrace of Islamic values.

Yanish converted to Islam and married a Sudanese woman from Shendi, with whom he has a son and a daughter. His mother actively reminds his wife about prayer times, emphasizing the importance of faith in their daily lives.

While maintaining the traditional business model of their shop, Yanish has also introduced modern activities such as currency exchange, blending the old with the new and adapting to the changing economic landscape. This approach underscores the family's commitment to both their heritage and their integration into Sudanese society.(38)



A Glimpse of the Old Damer Market

Indians in Wad Madani

Wad Madani is one of the historic cities of Sudan, founded by Sheikh Muhammad Madani Al-Sunni in 1489 AD, well before the establishment of the Funj Sultanate. During the English colonial period, the city was organized, and the first section emerged as one of the most important and distinctive neighborhoods in the city. This neighborhood is located directly west of the large market and extends in a rectangular strip to the west until Freedom Street. It is bounded to the north by the Blue Nile and to the south by the railway.

Among the early families and groups that settled in this neighborhood was the Al-Bushi family, known for their generosity towards the city and its people. The neighborhood also saw the settlement of several foreign traders, including Indians, Levantines, Greeks, and Moroccans. This area is commonly referred to as the Traders' Quarter. The neighborhood is characterized by buildings made of red brick and cement, with wide and well-planned streets. It features several mosques, parks, public gardens, schools, hotels, sports clubs, cinemas, political parties, and Christian churches. Notable neighborhoods within this section include Al-Busayliya and Al-Bayriya.(39)



Government Headquarters Building in Wad Madani



Map of Wad Madani Neighborhood: The First Section

The First Section of Wad Madani, where the Indian community settled alongside other groups of traders, is recognized as one of the most important and distinctive neighborhoods in the city. This area is notable for its many essential facilities, including cinemas, political party offices, hotels, and schools, all of which contribute to its vibrant community life. The neighborhood's well-planned and wide streets are characteristic of modern urban design.

Among the trades practiced by the Indians in Wad Madani was the sale of fabrics, with **Harkandas** being a prominent figure as the head of the Indian community and a pioneer in this trade. Others included **Lala**, known for selling and repairing radios, assisted by his son **Bafol**, who converted to Islam and took the name of **Abdullah**. Additionally, **Bano**, another Indian trader, gained fame for selling and repairing watches. (40)

The Indian School in Wad Madani

The Indian school in Wad Madani was located in the Indian Alley near the **Shadu** Bakery in the First Section. Many young people in Wad Madani spoke Hindi, influenced by the Indian films shown in the city's cinema at that time. The groups of Indians who settled in the city primarily originated from the **Gujarat** state in India.

In addition to the fabric trade, Indians in Wad Madani practiced various professions, including:

Girdlal Galbakan and his sons **Ramesh** and **Shaskant**, who engaged in the trade of automobile spare parts.

Harkandas Khushal, who specialized in Indian fabric (Dumoria) and owned an aluminum factory for household utensils.

Dr. Kreet, an eye specialist at the **Al-Walideen Hospital** in Wad Madani.

Jmanadas Wasnagi, who had a son named **Bresh** who moved to Omdurman to work in bicycle trading.

Kantlal, whose son **Nano** worked with **Qatar Airways**.

These contributions highlight the diverse economic activities and cultural exchanges that occurred within the community.

The Indian Community in Wad Madani

Among the Indians in Wad Madani was **Farjalal (Jo)**, who had children named **Bubat**, **Rabit**, and **Nitin**, and he was a dentist. They all immigrated to the United States, along with **Dr. Hasmoor**, an eye specialist.

Another notable figure was **Kishore**, who settled in Juba, South Sudan. **Amritlal**, known as the “Pashkati,” was responsible for performing calculations for the Indians in the city. He had a son named **Ramesh Barbola Galbai**, who traded in fabrics. His sons included **Kaushik**, who owns a spare parts shop in Khartoum, and **Kiran**, an engineer residing in Pune, India.

Additionally, **Dr. Anil Kumar** was another Indian who moved from Wad Madani to Omdurman. **Shaskant**, who also relocated to Omdurman, became the owner of a perfume shop in the Omdurman market. Notably, despite not being a Muslim, he fasted during the month of Ramadan for thirty years.

These stories illustrate the resilience and adaptability of the Indian community from Wad Madani, displaying their diverse contributions and the cultural connections they maintained even after migrating. (41)



Indian Personalities from Wad Madani

Indians in Omdurman

Omdurman is situated on the western bank of the White Nile and extends along the river. Historically, Omdurman was closely linked to the Mahdist revolution and state, as the Mahdi chose it as the capital of his emerging state, replacing Khartoum, which was the capital of the Turkish rule established by **Othman Bek Jarkas** in 1824. The capital was moved from Wad Madani to Omdurman during this transition.

During the Anglo-Egyptian rule, Omdurman was considered the national capital of Sudan, while Khartoum served as the political capital, and Khartoum North (Bahri) became the industrial capital. Omdurman's character is distinctly African, reflected in its features and the continuous migrations from western Sudan and West Africa. The city experienced significant migrations during the Mahdist state, especially when **Khalifa Abdullah** forcibly relocated people from western Sudan to Omdurman to balance power between western tribes and others following his struggles with the Ashraf. Omdurman also became the largest centre for the Mahdist forces.

There is a theory suggesting that the name "Omdurman" originated from a small settlement located west of the Nile, opposite the confluence of the two Niles. This area had traders from western Sudan during the Turkish rule, who would pass through to Khartoum, effectively making Omdurman a stopover for traders heading to the capital. Consequently, the name became well-known among traders travelling from the west to Khartoum for commerce.

Origins of the Name "Omdurman"

The name "Omdurman" is believed to date back to the time of the Funj Sultanate, indicating that it was known during the Mahdist period as

well. The flourishing and expansion of the city were closely tied to the Mahdist state. One theory suggests that the name refers to a woman from the Funj, or the daughter of one of the Funj kings, who lived in what is now Omdurman. She had a son named **Darman** and a house made of reeds surrounded by a large wall, leading people to call her “**Um Darman**” (Mother of Darman). Thus, the name became associated with the area we now know as Omdurman.

It is said that the remnants of her home were still visible until recently in the **Bayt al-Mal** neighborhood in Omdurman. When the Mahdi planned to conquer Khartoum, he moved his forces toward Omdurman and camped in the **Abu Saad** area, naming his camp “**Al-Buq’a**” (the spot). This name was used by the Mahdi for areas where he camped, symbolizing a blessing.

After liberating Khartoum, the Mahdi chose Omdurman as the capital of his state, and the city’s characteristics began to take shape. Tribes migrated to Omdurman out of admiration for the Mahdi, to join him, or out of fear of **Khalifa Abdullah**. This migration played a significant role in shaping the demographic and cultural landscape of Omdurman.

The Burial of the Mahdi and the Development of Omdurman

After his death, the Mahdi was buried in his room, which later became a dome containing his remains. People settled around the dome, building their homes from movable materials such as reeds, hides, and branches. The city transformed from a small military camp located north of Abu Saad into a city with distinct features and characteristics. The Mahdi’s supporters referred to Omdurman with names such as “**Aman al-Kha’if**” (Safety for the frightened) and “**Al-Dar al-Ma’mun**” (The Trusted Abode). Many names for Omdurman appeared in letters and correspondence from the Mahdi and Khalifa Abdullah, including:

the City of Safety, Centre of Guidance, House of Prosperity, and the City of the Mahdi.

After Khalifa Abdullah took power, he worked to display the true face of the city. He changed the architectural style and continued to expand the city, leading to the emergence of red brick buildings that replaced the earlier structures made of reeds and hides by 1885. Khalifa Abdullah built the **Bayt al-Mal** (House of Wealth) and the well-known prison called **Al-Sayar** (the Women's Prison of Omdurman). He constructed the ground floor of his house using durable materials brought from Khartoum.

Omdurman expanded to cover an area of six miles in length and two miles in width, stretching north and south between the Omdurman fort and the Nile opposite Shambat. Most residents settled along the Nile banks, and the old neighborhoods of Omdurman were established along the strip parallel to the Nile, such as **Abu Rof**, **Al-Mulazimin**, and **Bayt al-Mal**. The Abu Rof neighborhood is named after the leader of the Rufa'a tribe, **Al-Mardi Abu Rof**, whose tribe inhabited this area. The Al-Mulazimin neighborhood was where the **Mulazimiyya** troops were stationed (known as the old and new Mulazimiyya). The Bayt al-Mal neighborhood is where the treasury of the Mahdist state was built.

The Population Growth and Development of Omdurman

The population of Omdurman was relatively small before 1889, prior to the migration of tribes from western Sudan to the city. With the increase in migration to Omdurman, Khalifa Abdullah sought to plan and organize the city. The Mahdi's dome became one of the most important landmarks of Omdurman and is often used to describe the city, especially since it is located in its heart.

To the west of the dome lies the Omdurman market, situated at the back of the neighborhoods. During Khalifa Abdullah's reign, gallows were erected in this market due to the large gatherings of people, where anyone who opposed Khalifa Abdullah's views was executed by hanging. Important institutions, such as the **Bayt al-Mal** (House of Wealth), **Bayt al-Amana** (House of Trust), and the prison, were established in the **Al-Buq'a** neighborhood.

The fort (*tābiyah*) is located at the southern edge of Omdurman and was built by **General Gordon Pasha** to fortify the city against the Mahdist attack. After the Mahdi took control of Khartoum and established the Mahdist state, the fort was converted into a camp for the jihadist forces and was named **Al-Karih**.

The Development of Omdurman: A Hasty Beginning

There is an opinion that Omdurman was established in the midst of war and in a hurried manner, without proper planning. The initial homes were makeshift structures, with narrow streets laid out in a chaotic fashion. This disorganization prompted Khalifa Abdullah to attempt to plan the city and widen its streets. However, this effort did not succeed in older neighborhoods like **Abu Rof**, **Maki**, and **Wadi Aru**, which developed without any planning.

As a result, these areas retained their original chaotic layout, reflecting the city's rapid growth and the challenges of urban organization during a tumultuous period.

Neighborhoods Near Omdurman Market:

Several neighborhoods are located near Omdurman Market, including:

1. Shuhada Neighborhood (Martyrs' Neighborhood):

The name “Shuhada” refers to the martyrs of the **Battle of Karari** and the **Battle of Abu Talih**, whose graves are located in this neighborhood.

2. Jewish Neighborhood:

Sometimes referred to as **Brambles Neighborhood** or **Saints Neighborhood**, this area historically housed Jews who migrated to Sudan long ago. It is located in the southeastern part of the market, bordered to the south by **Al-Arda Street**, to the west by **Sheikh Dafa Allah Street** (or **Mission Street**), and to the east by **Al-Mawarda Street**.

3. Masalama Neighborhood:

Another nearby neighborhood that adds to the diverse urban landscape of Omdurman.

These neighborhoods illustrate the rich cultural and historical tapestry of Omdurman, reflecting the various communities that have settled in the area over time.

Al-Masalama Neighborhood

Al-Masalama is one of the older neighborhoods in Omdurman, also known as **Muslimaniya**. It is located to the north of Omdurman Market, bordered to the north by **Al-Omda Neighborhood**, to the east by **Kari Street** and **Al-Rakabiyya Neighborhood**, and to the west by **Al-Shanqeeti Street**.

Al-Bousta Neighborhood:

Al-Bousta neighborhood is situated within Omdurman Market and is historically linked to the British entry into Sudan, marked by the establishment of the famous **Post office Building** in the market in 1900. Located in the southwestern part of Omdurman Market, **Al-Arda Street** serves as the southern boundary of this neighborhood. These neighborhoods reflect the historical significance and urban development of Omdurman, displaying the various social and cultural influences in the area.

Al-Arab Neighborhood:

Hai Al-Arab neighborhood is located in the northwestern part of Omdurman Market, extending north to **Al-Mazhahir Neighborhood**. To the south, it borders Omdurman Market and **Al-Shanqeeti Street**, while the industrial area lies to the west.

The neighborhood is named “Al-Arab” due to the settlement of various Arab tribes in the area, including groups from the **Kababish** and **Baggara** tribes. It is believed to have existed since the days of the **Funj Sultanate**, with many traders arriving for commerce and trade in goods.

While water sources attracted populations to neighborhoods like **Abu Rof**, **Mulazimiyya**, and **Bayt al-Mal**, Al-Arab was known for its numerous underground wells, which encouraged the settlement of tribes such as the **Kawarta**, **Kanoz**, **Shaiqiya**, as well as some **Levantines** and **Copts**.

Historical Significance of Omdurman

The history and development of Omdurman are closely tied to the **Mahdist Revolution**, which established it as the capital of the Mahdist state under **Imam Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi**. After his death, **Khalifa**

Indians in Omdurman:

Omdurman is the largest settlement of Indians in Sudan. Various groups of Indians came to the city for trade and settled there, including those arriving from eastern Sudan, Wad Madani, Damer, Kassala, Kosti, Atbara, and other cities that witnessed the presence of Indian communities. In 1955, a number of Indians arrived in the city, just a year before Sudan's independence. The Indians found in Omdurman a suitable place due to its tranquility, social cohesion, and openness to others. They settled in many of the old neighborhoods of Omdurman, such as Al-Qalaa, Wad Aru, Al-Malazmin, Al-Souq, Al-Shuhada, Bayt Al-Mal, Wad Nubawi, and other old neighborhoods. There is even a street in Omdurman named after their spiritual leader, Mahatma Gandhi (Doctors' Street).

Indians in Sudan celebrate various religious occasions, including Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha for Muslims, and Christmas for Christians. There are also celebrations like Nowruz and Ghadir Khum among Shia Indians, as well as Diwali, Ram Tumi, and the Sacred Bond Festival (Rajha Bandhan) among Hindu Indians. Most Indians in Sudan share similar wedding rituals, such as the couple circling the sacred fire or the bride standing on a stone.(43)

After a large number of Indians arrived in Omdurman, they integrated into the community, with many obtaining Sudanese citizenship. One of the most notable Indians in the city is Dr. Anil Kumar, named after the Nile River by his father in honor of this great river. Dr. Anil studied medicine at Alexandria University and later specialized in China. He is a multifaceted personality in Sudan, serving as a member of the Sudanese Olympic Committee, a member of the Sudanese Popular Friendship Council, and a member of Al-Hilal Sports Club. Additionally, Dr. Anil is a professor at the College of Medicine at Bahri University.(44)



Anil Kumar: President of the Indian Community in Sudan

Dr. Anil Kumar is well-known to the writer as a humble and simple person who loves everyone and is loved by all. He was the top graduate of the Sudanese Certificate in 1967 from Comboni School and was born in Sudan. His home in Al-Qalaa neighborhood in Omdurman is always open to family, friends, and neighbors, and he frequently inquires about their well-being.

One notable aspect of Dr. Anil is that he dedicates an hour of his valuable time each day at home to meet with neighbors and relatives who need medical assistance, offering his help free of charge. He is also willing to visit them in their homes at any time. Dr. Anil and his family are considered significant figures in the Al-Qalaa neighborhood, embodying many beautiful and admirable values as a Sudanese citizen.



Anil Kumar



Indians in Omdurman Market:

Omdurman Market is one of the oldest markets in the city and has been fulfilling its role since the Mahdist state. Various goods have historically flowed into the market from both within and outside Sudan. Sudanese people from different cities visit Omdurman for shopping, and the market has gained international fame due to the presence of a diverse range of ethnicities from around the world.

In Omdurman Market, Indian traders play a significant role, many of whom have obtained Sudanese citizenship. Notable among these traders are Artilal, Ramji Samji, and Cizada Levy, among others, who have been involved in the perfume and textile business for many years.(45)





Indians in Omdurman Market

The Indian Club in Omdurman

The Indian Club in Omdurman was a gift from the Sudanese government to the Indian community in honor of the visit of Indian Vice President Zakir Husain in 1963. A piece of land was allocated for the club near the radio and television buildings in Omdurman, where the club's headquarters was established. After the National Salvation Revolution in 1989, the club's building was confiscated for security reasons. The community was then given an alternative piece of land along the road connecting Wadi Street and Al-Shanqeeti Street in Omdurman, near Omdurman Grand Park, where the current club headquarters was built.(46)

The Indian Club in Omdurman serves as a comprehensive social club where Indians from various neighborhoods gather for different social occasions. It also provides facilities for sports like volleyball and table tennis, among others.



Zakir Hussien



The Indian Club in Omdurman is a vibrant centre for the Indian community, hosting various social events and celebrations. It serves as a gathering place for Indians from different neighborhoods to come together and share in each other's joys.

Celebrations of the Indian Community in Omdurman:





Group of Indian Women in Omdurman

The presence of Indian women in Omdurman adds to the cultural tapestry of the community, participating actively in social gatherings and events.

A Glimpse of the Indian Embassy Celebrations in Khartoum:

On August 12, 2022, the Indian Embassy and the Indian community in Khartoum celebrated the event “Har Ghar Tiranga” at the Indian Friendship Club. The event began with the lighting of the traditional lamp by the Indian Ambassador, Mr. Bawa Sid Mubarak, and members of the embassy. Approximately 600 Indian citizens and people of Indian origin, along with several friends, attended the event. Indian flags were distributed during the celebration, and many Indians from various Sudanese states participated.

The celebration featured a number of Indian songs, along with traditional Indian dishes. Additionally, there was an exhibition of Indian handicrafts, groceries, and clothing materials, adding a festive atmosphere to the celebration of Indian culture in Sudan.(47)







The Indian School in Omdurman:

The Indian School in Omdurman was established in 1951 through donations from members of the Indian community, located near the home of the leader Ismail al-Azhari. It serves students of Sudanese origin only. The school follows the Sudanese curriculum under the supervision of the Sudanese Ministry of Education.

The teaching staff comprises English, Indian, Sudanese, and Eritrean teachers, especially during its early years in 1951. In addition to the curriculum, students are taught Indian customs and traditions, along with Arabic and English languages. One of the notable teachers proficient in Arabic at the school is Ms. Varsha Kriti Kumar. In addition to the school in Omdurman, there are Indian schools in Port Sudan and Kassala.(48)



The Foundation Stone of the Indian School in Omdurman (1951)



The Indian School in Omdurman was inaugurated in 1951, marking an important milestone for the Indian community in Sudan. The foundation stone symbolizes the commitment of the Indian diaspora to education and cultural preservation. This school has played a vital role in providing quality education to students of Indian descent while also integrating Sudanese educational standards.



Buildings and Students of the Indian School in Omdurman



Students and Teachers at the Indian School in Omdurman

In a television interview, Ms. Varsha, the principal of the Indian School in Omdurman, discussed the school's activities. She mentioned that students learn various activities and Indian culture, celebrating Indian Independence Day annually at the Indian Embassy. Ms. Varsha also highlighted that the school is co-educational. She has progressed from being a teacher to deputy principal, and now serves as the school principal. Additionally, she teaches several subjects, including mathematics in Hindi and specialized Arabic language classes.



Indian Students at the Indian School in Omdurman

In Omdurman, there is a crematorium located in the western part of the city, which is one of the traditional cremation sites that uses wood for the process. The facility consists of a large courtyard with a funeral burning room.

As urban development has expanded in that area, the crematorium has become surrounded by buildings. Despite this, the local residents respect the beliefs of the Indians who come to carry out the cremation of their deceased.(49)

Sudanese-Indian Relations in Omdurman:

One of the strong friendships between a Sudanese family and an Indian family is the relationship between the Hussein Mustafa family, represented by brothers Mohamed and Al-Sir Hussein, and the Amichand Seth family, represented by brothers Farjalal and Subakshand Mohish. Ms. Hanadi Al-Sir Hussein elaborated on this relationship, noting that it began in the early 1960s when her uncle Mohamed Hussein met the two brothers, Farjalal Amichand Seth (the elder) and Subakshand Amichand (the younger), in Omdurman Market.

They worked together in the textile trade, and by the early 1970s, their commercial collaboration transformed into a partnership under the name “Imad Trading Company.” This partnership was accompanied by familial ties that have continued to flourish over the years without interruption.

Continuation of Sudanese-Indian Relations

During the 1980s, Mohamed Hussein started his own business. In the 1990s, Al-Sir Hussein, Mohamed’s brother, entered the ready-made clothing manufacturing sector in partnership with the Seth family through the Dina Ready-Made Garments Factory. This collaboration continued until 2010, after which each family member pursued their own ventures.

Despite this, the relationship between the two families remained strong, with continued interaction during various occasions. Notably, in 1983, Mohamed Hussein travelled to India to attend the wedding of Bhandis,

the eldest son of Subakshand. The accompanying photos illustrate the joy and satisfaction of the Indian family with Mohamed Hussein and his wife's presence at their son's wedding, highlighting the deep bond between the two families.(50)

Continuation of the Bond Between the Families

The relationship between the Hussein and Seth families extended further, with the Hussein family's farms in the village of Al-Jaaliyeen in Faki Hashim becoming open to the Seth family and other Indians visiting from within and outside Sudan. Subakshand and his wife even made a visit to the home of Haja Bat El-Muna, the mother of Mohamed and Al-Sir Hussein, in Al-Jaaliyeen.

This friendship was widely discussed in Omdunbawi, showcasing how the bonds of friendship, brotherhood, love, and genuine connection transcend all considerations. The two families have set an admirable example of Sudanese-Indian relations in Omdurman.

Despite the passing of key figures in this relationship—Mohamed Hussein, Al-Sir Hussein, Subakshand, and Farjalal—the legacy of their friendship remains alive in the hearts of their descendants, who hold this bond in high regard. Currently, Mohish travels between the UAE, India, and the United States, while Subakshand's children also move between India, London, and the United States. Until the outbreak of war in Khartoum on April 15, 2023, Subakshand's children were actively engaged in their businesses in Khartoum, which spanned London and India.(51)

A Lasting Bond

These lines narrate the enduring relationship between two families, forged through friendship and evolving commercial collaboration over time. Despite the passing of most of the founders of this bond, their

legacy remains deeply etched in the hearts of those who experienced it. The photographs serve as a testament to the rich history and the essence of this relationship, preserving its warmth and significance for future generations.



Subakshand Amichand Seth



Mohamed Hussein Mustafa



Mohish Amichand Seth



Al-Sir Hussein Mustafa



Al-Sir Hussein on the Right with His Brother Mohamed Hussein and Their Children with the Amichand Family at Their Home in Omdunbawi

This image captures a moment of connection between the Hussein brothers and the Amichand family, reflecting the strong ties and shared history between the two families in the Omdunbawi neighborhood.



Wedding of Bendis, Son of Subakshand in India

In this cherished moment captured during the wedding ceremony, Mohamed Hussein and his wife are positioned on the right side of the image. Farjalal stands on the far right, with Mohamed Hussein beside him, and Subakshand is on the left. This gathering reflects the strong familial ties and joyous celebration shared among the families.



Farjalal and the Husseins

In the image, Farjalal is positioned on the right, followed by Mohamed Hussein, who is standing next to Subakshand on the left. This arrangement highlights the close relationship between the families during this significant occasion.



Mohamed Hussein Blessing the Groom, Bendis

In this memorable moment, Mohamed Hussein is seen blessing the groom, Bendis, on his wedding day in India. This gesture symbolizes the strong bonds of friendship and family, marking a significant milestone in Bendis's life.



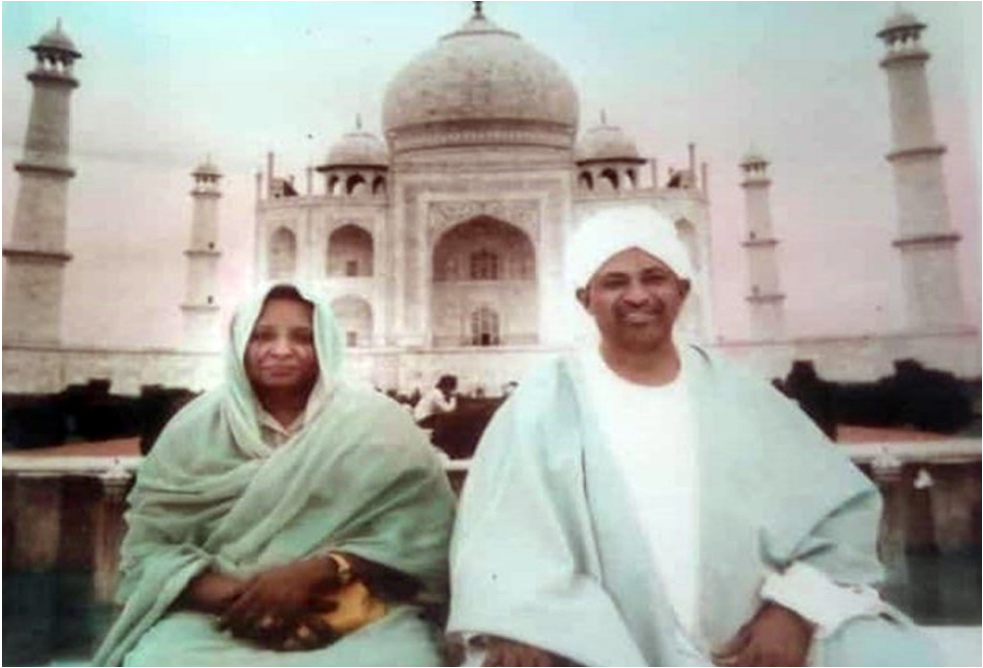
Barfoula and Sanju's Visit

Barfoula, Subakshand's wife, along with her son Sanju, is visiting Haja Bat El-Muna, the mother of Mohamed and Al-Sir Hussein, in the village of Al-Jaliyeen in Faki Hashim, north of Khartoum Bahri. This visit highlights the continued connection and warmth between the families, fostering cherished relationships across generations.



Mohish Amichand, Mohamed Hussein, and His Wife at the Taj Mahal

In this memorable photo, Mohish Amichand is joined by Mohamed Hussein and his wife in front of the iconic Taj Mahal. This landmark serves as a backdrop for their friendship, symbolizing shared experiences and cultural connections during their visit to India.



*Mohamed Hussein and His Wife at the Taj Mahal, India
(July 28, 1983)*

In this cherished photograph taken on July 28, 1983, Mohamed Hussein and his wife pose in front of the magnificent Taj Mahal. This iconic site not only represents a beautiful backdrop for their memories but also highlights the significance of their journey to India.

Madame Seema and Sudanese-Indian Products:

Madame Seema, originally Seema Denis Asilal of Indian descent, has secured a prominent place among the women of Omdurman. She arrived in Sudan in 1985 and initially lived in the historic neighborhood of Al-Shuhada. After thirteen years, she moved to Wad Nubawi (Al-Doma).

At first, she worked in the trade of beauty products and the production of Sudanese perfumes. However, she later shifted to making and selling “Abri” (a traditional sweet beverage), which is the official drink during

Ramadan in Sudanese households, including many Sudanese living abroad. Seema learned how to make this beverage from her neighbor and began marketing it in 1991. Her product quickly became in demand among grocery store owners in the city, and she also sells it from her home to those interested.

Madame Seema and Her Beverage Production

What stands out about Madame Seema's production of the sweet beverage is that she makes "Abri" year-round, with demand increasing during Ramadan. Due to the high interest in this drink, she introduced other beverages such as "white Abri" and "Roqaq," which are traditional Ramadan drinks and foods.

In response to the growing popularity of her products, she also added a selection of dried Indian foods made from "Kabakbiya," as well as "Asida" and "Malah Al-Naimiya." Madame Seema describes "Abri" as one of the most delightful beverages, claiming that there is nothing like it in India. She expresses her love for this drink, enjoys eating Asida, and wears the Sudanese thobe, considering herself Sudanese by origin and Indian by nationality.(52)

Madame Seema's Influence and Product Range

Ustaza Hanadi Al-Sir describes Madame Seema as a cheerful Indian woman who interacts excellently with everyone. She notes that Madame Seema had a daughter studying at Idris Girls' School in Omdurman. Alongside Madame Seema, another Indian woman named Madame Rama gained fame in Omdurman for selling women's clothing, but Madame Seema's reputation was larger.

According to Ustaza Hanadi, Madame Seema initially sold hair oils, creams, and Indian henna. She later expanded her offerings to include Indian saris, which became highly sought after by the women of Om-

durman. The demand for her products surged, and she began designing Sudanese “Jertiq” dresses, a traditional attire associated with the wedding night, which is significant for most Sudanese families.

Madame Seema honed her skills in designing wedding attire for couples, achieving a high level of elegance and beauty. She reached a professional standard in design that appealed to all social classes in Khartoum. Additionally, she incorporated Indian accessories into her clothing designs, creating a new dimension in promoting and spreading her products, which greatly increased their popularity. Among the noteworthy additions to her product line are Indian sweets, renowned for their quality and irresistible taste.(53)

Madame Seema’s Success and Cultural Fusion

Through the engaging narrative of Ustaẓa Hanadi, it becomes clear that Madame Seema has successfully attracted many customers with her diverse and high-quality products, which are characterized by their delightful flavors. She has effectively blended Sudanese and Indian offerings, exemplified by the traditional Sudanese drink “Abri” and high-quality Indian sweets.

Madame Seema has also shown remarkable willingness to fulfill all customer requests, making her a favoured choice among many residents of Omdurman and Khartoum. Her experience serves as a vibrant example of Sudanese-Indian cultural and civilizational exchange, highlighting the harmonious connection between the two countries.

Indians in Al-Qadarif

Al-Qadarif is located in eastern Sudan and is one of the border states with Ethiopia. It is considered one of the richest cities in Sudan, known for its rain-fed and mechanized agriculture. Groups of Banyan Indians have settled in this city and engaged in trade.(54)

Dr. Qism Al-Sayed Hamza Ahmed, a professor of modern history at Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari University, notes that several Indians in Al-Qadarif worked in commerce, particularly in fabric and perfume trading. When comparing them to the Copts in the city, it is evident that the Copts have engaged in various professions, particularly in agriculture.

Dr. Hamza explains that Indians did not enter the agricultural sector in Al-Qadarif for several reasons:

Difficulty of Life: Agricultural projects outside the city present significant challenges.

Time Commitment: Agriculture requires individuals to stay longer for supervision and management.

Risk and Investment: Agriculture involves more risks and requires substantial investment compared to trade.

Prominent Indian Figures in Al-Qadarif

One notable Indian figure in Al-Qadarif is Mukesh, who was involved in the fabric trade before moving to Khartoum fifteen years ago. He opened retail shops in both Omdurman Market and Libya Market.

In Al-Qadarif, neighborhoods such as Al-Nasr and Deem Al-Nour are closely associated with the Indian community, being some of the city's most significant areas due to their proximity to the market.

Among the Sudanese who worked with the Indians in Al-Qadarif Market is Yusuf Mahmoud Ibrahim. He mastered the fabric trade through his experience with the Indian merchants, gaining substantial expertise in fabric sales and inventory management. Yusuf became well-known for his ability to assist in inventorying the shops that dealt in fabrics, a skill he developed while working alongside the Indian community.(55)



Map of Qadarif State

Indians in Kosti

Kosti is the largest city in White Nile State and is considered one of the newest cities in Sudan, having been established in the early 20th century, specifically in 1902. The story of Kosti begins with its location along the White Nile, where a Greek trader named Kosti Papis, who was part of the Zenuba trading community on the eastern shore, purchased a piece of land around 1900 from Sheikh Hamad, the leader of the Al-Jama'a branch in the area.

He built a shelter and a shed to facilitate the transit of gum producers and some crops to the Zenuba market, allowing him to purchase their goods directly at that location. Initially, the dock for boats navigating the White Nile was situated at Zenuba, but English engineers discovered that the western shore, especially the area where Kosti established his shelter, was more suitable as a port than the eastern side. As a result, the port moved there, leading to increased activity and the arrival of more traders who built homes around the new port.

Since the area did not have a name before, the locals began referring to it as Kosti, after the Greek trader, and the port became widely known by that name.

Development of Kosti

The main government centres in the area included Jadid west of Kosti and Zenuba east of Kosti. The director of the White Nile State decided to move the government centre to the new port in Kosti. As a result, the government headquarters was relocated from Jadid to Kosti, and the centre and port were named "Jadid." However, the locals continued to use the name Kosti despite threats of punishment, leading the government to officially adopt Kosti as the name for the southern centre.

Along with the move of the government centre from Jadid to Koṣṭi, the Zenuba centre was relocated to Al-Jabalain to maintain distances between the two centres and their authorities.

Koṣṭi's growth was slow and typical, with its trade being primarily local in distribution and marketing. However, in 1911, the Anglo-Egyptian government constructed a bridge and extended the railway from Senar towards Al-Obeid. This development significantly boosted Koṣṭi's commercial activities, as it became a major trading hub. The extensive trade previously conducted in Al-Duwaim, which served as the river port for the overland route to Kordofan and Darfur, naturally shifted to Koṣṭi due to the new railway connection. This link provided faster, more secure, and cost-effective transportation for goods between Koṣṭi, Kordofan, and Khartoum.

Transformation of Koṣṭi into a Commercial Centre

Before the railway, Koṣṭi was little more than a village. However, the establishment of the railway transformed it into a bustling commercial centre, attracting traders and capital from all over. Koṣṭi became a vital transportation hub, linking the east, west, and south via the Nile boats.

The construction of the bridge brought organized labor to Koṣṭi, notably from the "Radeef" soldiers—those discharged from the army but retained for emergencies. These soldiers, along with some supervising officers, were sent to work and settle in Koṣṭi and its surroundings, forming the initial social nucleus of the city. The original inhabitants, such as the Al-Abiysab and Daghim tribes, continued to live in their villages outside Koṣṭi.

Koṣṭi's land belongs to the Al-Abiysab chieftaincy, a branch of the Al-Jama tribe, which is headed by the family of the chief Abu Kalam. Sheikh Hamad, who sold the land to the Greek trader Koṣṭi, played a

significant role in the area's early development. This blend of new settlers and indigenous communities contributed to Kosti's rapid growth and social evolution.

Impact of the Jebel Awliya Dam on Kosti

By the late 1930s, the construction of the Jebel Awliya Dam led to a rise in water levels, resulting in the flooding of the old Kosti market and some neighborhoods. This disaster provided a unique opportunity to redesign the city, which included a new market, entire neighborhoods, and government facilities. The city underwent a significant renewal, expanding and developing in the process.

The benefits of the dam extended far beyond urban redevelopment. Kosti became the northern port for southern trade as the river transport headquarters shifted from Khartoum to Kosti due to the dam. During World War II, Kosti served as a distribution center for tea and coffee from Kenya and Uganda throughout Sudan.

Perhaps the most significant economic impact of the dam was the transformation of the surrounding region into a major agricultural area. Numerous small individual projects sprang up, allowing Kosti's economy to surpass that of many other cities in Sudan. This agricultural boom, combined with its strategic location, solidified Kosti's role as a vital economic hub in the country.



Kosti in 1916

Kosti in 1916

A number of Indians lived in Kosti, particularly in the Al-Mareeb neighborhood, which is close to the city market. Among them was the Kamanani family, from which came Tijus Brown Chandra. He mentioned that his great-grandfather, Bob Talal, arrived in Kosti in 1925. Tijus noted that the Indian community was large and engaged in trade, operating their own school. However, with the changing nature of life in the city, many Indians preferred to return to their homeland.

Now, Tijus lives with his small family, which includes three children, their grandmother, and his wife. They maintain contact with Sudanese families in the neighborhood. Tijus runs a fabric shop in Kosti, which has become a popular destination for customers looking to buy Indian fabrics and ropes. Among his humanitarian efforts, Tijus provides food and water to the poor in the city, guided by the Indian wisdom that says, “Give, and God will give you.”

In 2011, Tijus sponsored the pilgrimage of one of his workers to the Holy House in Mecca. The number of Indians in Kosti has significantly declined; there were once 25 families, but now only one family remains. This reflects the deep connection of the Indians who lived in Kosti, as evidenced by one Indian who, despite having to travel back to India, requested that his ashes be scattered in Kosti, where he spent the happiest years of his life.(56)

The Indians in North Kordofan State

North Kordofan is one of the states located in the central region of Sudan, known for its agricultural activities. It is home to several important cities, including:

- **Al-Obeid**: The capital of the state.
- **Um Rawaba**
- **Nuhud**
- **Bara**
- **Ghabish**
- **Abu Zabad**
- **Al-Rahad Abu Dukhna**
- **Jabra Sheikh**

These cities play a significant role in the social and economic landscape of the region.



North Kordofan State

Indians in Al-Obeid

Al-Obeid is one of the most important commercial cities in Sudan and has hosted a number of Indians who have become integral members of the community. The presence of Indians in Al-Obeid dates back to the period of the Egyptian Pashas and Khedive rule in Sudan.

In 1940, when a fundraising campaign was launched to assist impoverished Greece, Indian merchants in Al-Obeid, alongside their Sudanese counterparts in the city of Bara, contributed a total of 126,000 pounds. The amount donated by the Indians was 13,000 pounds, detailed as follows:

- **Klemenji Hashmand:** 5 pounds
- **Jardham Lanrahi:** 5 pounds
- **Ratlal Yuba Talal:** 1,500 pounds
- **Ratlal Morarji:** 750 pounds
- **Morji Jafraj:** 750 pounds

Total: 13,000 Sudanese pounds

This act of generosity reflects the strong ties and sense of community among the Indian merchants in Al-Obeid.

Indians in Al-Obeid

Dr. Yosryia Moussa Ahmed, a professor of modern history at Bahri University and a resident of Al-Obeid, shared insights about the Indian community in the city. She noted that Indians were pioneers in trade, particularly in textiles and perfumes, and they lived in the Al-Quba neighborhood, which is close to the city market.

Dr. Yosryia mentioned that her father worked with the Indians in Al-Obeid in the transportation of goods, owning a cart that allowed him to move these products. She also highlighted that one Indian trader gifted his building to the Orthodox Church, while another part of the same building was given to some Jews who were in the city before they left.

Among the products sold by Indians to the local population were cotton textiles, such as “forad” and women’s garments like the “zarq,” which was well-known in Sudan. Over time, Indian traders became dominant in the western market of Al-Obeid.

Regarding their relationship with the local community, Dr. Yosryia emphasized that it was a positive one, with Indians participating in both celebrations and mourning events. She recalled her father telling her that there were also Indians in Kadugli, in South Kordofan, indicating the widespread presence of Indians in various Sudanese states and towns.

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اعلان

تبرعات و باراء لمساعدة اليونان

الشيخ محمد عثمان احمد يس	٢٠٠	الشيخ محمد حسن يس	٢٠٠
عبدالله معروف	٢٥٠	محمد صالح التركي	٢٥٠
مكي كنان	٢	محمد مدني	٢٥٠
الخواجا باياروس بابادوبولس	١٥	محمد احمد حسين	٥٠
الشيخ الطاهر علي	١	صديق العوض	١٠٠
د. بابتيريس	٥٠٠	مهدى الوائلي	٢٠٠
د. شاهر مكي اسماعيل	٢٥٠	عبد الرحمن حسب النبي	١
د. د. الله بود السيد	٥٠٠	عبد ابراهيم الهم	٢٠٠
د. محمد عثمان الطائفة	١	إشير محمد جابر	٥٠٠
الشيخ باياروس	٥٠٠	سيد احمد قريش	١
د. إشير احمد يس	١	جعفر سيد الله قريش	٥٠٠
الشيخ محمد	٢٠٠	عبد الفكي	٥٠٠
عبد الله بن علي	٢٠٠	الماسي معروف	٢٥٠
عبد الرحمن بن علي	٥٠٠	احمد معروف	٥٠٠
عبد الرزاق الكرداوي	١	عمر احمد يس	١
د. حسين احمد	٥٠٠	ابراهيم اسماعيل	٢٥٠
عبد الرحمن الكرار	١	حسين محمد يعقوب	٢٠٠
الحاج خليل	٢٥٠	عبد الرحمن سيد احمد قريش	٥٠٠
الطيب مدني	٢٥٠	محمد افندي ناصر	٥٠٠
د. محمد معروف	٥٠٠	عطية الله افندي الهادي	٥٠٠
د. مكي معروف	٥٠٠	مبارك افندي بنانه	٥٠٠
الشيخ اذلي الشيخ الرج	١٥٠٠	عبد الجليل افندي مر الحليم	٥٠٠
د. محمود الحاج سيد احمد	١	الشيخ القاسم شداد	٢٠٠
عبد احمد حاج الور	٢٠٠	د. الطاهر شداد	٢
عبد الرحمن عبدالله	٢	عبد الله افندي العريني	١
د. يس عبد الرحمن	١	الشيخ يحيى حسب النبي	١٥٠
مرحوم حاج الور	١٥٠	د. مالك حسين النبي	٢٥٠
حسن احمد حسين	٢٥٠		

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التصالح

شمارتا و عنوانا الطراف

١٠ في الاماين

تساع لكل من

محلنا بالايض لسناك

مقاي ٢٠٠ في ٢٠ طقات

١٤٠ و در نيات

بقرات و جميع

الاسيرات

فرع الكيسو

استعد لثمة طلائك

انصل بحسن عبدالرحمن مكارم

بالايض

A list of donations from the cities of Bara and Al-Abyad to assist Greece in 1940, including five Indians who donated a total of 13,000 pounds.

Donations from Al-Obeid and Bara to Assist Greece in 1940

In 1940, the cities of Al-Obeid and Bara contributed significantly to aid impoverished Greece. Five Indian merchants donated a total of 13,000 pounds. Here are the details of their contributions:

- Klemenji Hashmand: 5 pounds
- Jardham Lanrahi: 5 pounds
- Ratlal Yuba Talal: 1,500 pounds
- Ratlal Morarji: 750 pounds
- Morji Jafraj: 750 pounds

Total from Indian merchants: 13,000 Sudanese pounds

Indian Community in Other Cities of Kordofan

In other cities within the Kordofan region, Indians were dedicated to fulfilling the needs of those areas by sending a representative to visit traders in the city of Nuhud. This representative would then arrange for the necessary supplies of fabrics and perfumes. This information was provided by Professor Awad Ibrahim Awad, based on insights from Abdul Moniem Youssef Al-Khadr, a trader in the Nuhud market.

Nuhud is one of the oldest cities in Sudan, historically recognized for its agricultural excellence. It was home to the first agricultural produce market established in Sudan in 1917 and later became the largest market for gum Arabic in the world. The city also hosted many foreign communities, including Egyptians, Indians, Armenians, Levantines, Greeks, and English.

Transliterated Refeinces

- (1) *Osman Mohamed Wada'a, Tarikh Madinat Sawakin, (b.t), (b.d), p. 10.*
- (2) *Liqa'ma'a Al-Safir Al-Hindi Bil-Khartoum Ravindr Prasad Jiswal ma'a Wakalat Sudan Lil-Anba', tam nashruhu 'ala Mawqi' Al-Nilin Al-Iliktroni bi-tarikh 16/10/2018.*
- (3) *Majallat Africa Qartuna, Al-'Adad Al-Thani 'Ashar, Abriil 2014, p. 21.*
- (4) *Louay Muhammad Othman, Al-Jaliya Al-Hindiya fi Kessala wa Dauruha fi Al-'Amal Al-Tatawwu'i, Majallat Al-D studies Al-Sudaniya, Maj 13, Al-'Adad 2, Mars 2007, p. 122.*
- (5) *Al-Marja' Nafsuh, p. 122-123.*
- (6) *Alawiya Mukhtar, Hunud Al-Sudan Abna' Balad, Al-Arabi Al-Jadid, 19 Abriil 2025, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk>*
- (7) *Louay Muhammad Othman, Marja' Sabiq, p. 124-125.*
- (8) *Alawiya Mukhtar, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (9) *Al-Marja' Nafsuh*
- (10) *Abdul Aziz Al-Nour, Tarikh Al-Hunud bi-Kessala, Sahifat Al-Tahrir, 19 Yuliu 2024.*
- (11) *Alawiya Mukhtar, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (12) *Louay Muhammad Othman, Marja' Sabiq, p. 134-135.*
- (13) *Hassan Abu Rish, Al-Hunud fi Kessala, Mawqi' Al-Nilin, 4/12/2014, <https://www.alnilin.com/1204951.htm>*

- (14) Hashim Muhammad Ali Al-Amin, *Tarikh Al-Kashafa bi-Al-Sudan wa Kessala, Maqal Manshur bi-Sahifat Abdul Aziz Al-Nour Aziz bi-Facebook*, 24 Yanuar 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ZAIouTgNa/>
- (15) Abdul Aziz Al-Nour, *Marja' Sabiq*.
- (16) Omar Al-Nour, *Quwat Difaa Al-Sudan (1925-1954)*, Sharikat Mataabi' Al-Sudan Lil-'Amal, Al-Khartoum, 2016, p. 105.
- (17) Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, *Buhuth fi Tarikh Al-Sudan, (Al-Aradi – Al-'Ulama – Al-Khilafa - Barbir – Ala Al-Mirghani)*, Dar Al-Jil, Beirut, 1992, p. 18-19.
- (18) Taj Al-Sir Osman Al-Hajj, *Marja' Sabiq*, p. 81.
- (19) John Lewis Burckhardt, *Rahalat Burckhardt fi Bilad Al-Nuba wa Al-Sudan (1784-1817)*, Kunuz Lil-Nashr wa Al-Tawzi', Cairo, 2012, p. 188.
- (20) John Lewis Burckhardt, *Marja' Sabiq*, p. 188-189.
- (21) *Al-Masar Nafsuh*, p. 189.
- (22) *Al-Masar Nafsuh*, p. 200.
- (23) *Al-Masar Nafsuh*, p. 202.
- (24) Naseem Maqar, *Al-Ruhal Al-Ajanib fi Al-Sudan, (1730-1851)*, Markaz Al-Dirasat Al-Sudaniya, Cairo, 1995, p. 51.
- (25) John Lewis Burckhardt, *Marja' Sabiq*, p. 202.
- (26) Ismail Ahmed Muhammad Abdullah, *Na'ib Al-Amin Al-'Am Lil-Majlis Al-A'la Lil-Islah Al-Idari, Wilayat Nahr Al-Nil, Ifada hawl Al-Hunud fi Madinat Barbir, tam al-tawasul ma'a Al-Astadh*

- Youssef Muhammad Abdullah lil-tahadduth 'an Al-Hunud fi Madinat Barbir, 9 Abriil 2025.*
- (27) *Bakri Youssef Muhammad, min Muwaṭini Barbir wa ya'mal bi-Jami'at Al-Zaeem Al-Azhari, Ifada hawl Al-Hunud fi Madinat Barbir bi-tarikh 9 Abriil 2025.*
- (28) *Ibrahim Sembai, fi Ramuz Al-Attabra wa Al-Jaliya Al-Hindiya, Attabra Mubashar, 7 Abriil 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16SDJPCuX9/>*
- (29) *Al-Marja' Nafsuh.*
- (30) *Abbas Izzat, Al-Mansi 2, Attabra, 25 Novembar 2014, <http://www.sudacon.net/2014/11/2.html?m=1>*
- (31) *Film Tوثيقي 'an Ziyarat Al-Ra'is Nehru lil-Sudan fi Fatra Al-Khaminat, Televisiyon Al-Sudan 2018.*
- (32) *Muqabala ajraha Al-Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad Hamad, ma'a Arun Kumar Mqanal Netobay fi Matjarahu bi-Suq Al-Damer, fi Yawm Al-Ahad 13/11/2016.*
- (33) *Mus'ab Al-Sawi, Wada'a Ayyqona Al-Damer.. Hirish Mqnal, Safhat Al-Damer 'ala Al-Facebook, 20 Mars 2022, <https://www.facebook.com>*
- (34) *Al-Marja' Nafsuh.*
- (35) *Ifada maktuba bikhatt Kreet Kanat, min Sukani Al-Damer, bi-tarikh 20 Abriil 2025.*
- (36) *Bakri Al-Madini, Hunud Al-Damer - Hayat Zandqi, Akhbar Al-Balad, 5 Abriil 2025, <https://albaldnews.net>*
- (37) *Qreet Kanat, Marja' Sabiq.*

- (38) *Bakri Al-Madani, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (39) *Muhannad Faruq Muhammad Ahmad, Abdul Aziz Hassan Fadl Al-Basir, Madinat Wad Madani (Dirasa Tarikhiyya fi Al-Tatawwur Al-Siyasi wa Al-Iqtisadi wa Al-Ijtima'i) 1504-1989, Majallat Al-Qulzam lil-Dirasat Al-Tawthiqiyya, Majallat Ilmiya Dawliya Muhkama, Al-'Adad 12, Dhul-Hijja 1443H / Yuliu 2022, p. 134.*
- (40) *Omar Sa'id Al-Nour, Mashahir Al-Madina (8), Maqal Manshur 'ala Safhat Wad Madani bil-Shabaka Al-'Ankabutiyya, <https://www.wadmadani.com>*
- (41) *Mu'id, Al-Jaliya Al-Hindiya fi Suq Wad Madani, Maqal Manshur 'ala Al-Shabaka Al-'Ankabutiyya, 15 Mars 2017, <https://wadmedanii.blogspot.com>*
- (42) *Sahifat Al-Rai Al-'Am, 2/1/2010.*
- (43) *Mawqi' Ain, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (44) *Sahifat Barbir, Sahifa Iliktroniya Shamilah, 4 Yanuar 2015.*
- (45) *Osman Sawar Al-Dahab, Ahya'a Um Durman Al-'Ariqa, Matba'at Afaaq Lil-Tiba'a wa Al-Nashr, Um Durman, (b.t), p. 172.*
- (46) *Mawqi' Ain, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (47) *Al-Jaliya Al-Hindiya Tahtafil Bi-Hadath "Har Gar Tiranga" fi Al-Khartoum, Safhat Al-Safara Al-Hindiya 'ala Al-Facebook.*
- (48) *Kayfa Shaklat Al-Mu'taqadat Al-Hindiya Fada'aha Al-Ijtima'i bi-Al-Sudan, Maqal Manshur bi-Mansat A'in, 26 Mai 2022.*
- (49) *Sahifat Barbir, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (50) *Hanadi Al-Sir Al-Hussein, Al-'Alaqa Bayna Usrat Fajalal wa Usrat Al-Hussein, Ifada bi-tarikh 9 Abriil 2025.*

- (51) *Al-Masar Nafsuh.*
- (52) *Nihal Sadiq, Sima Hindiya Tabii Al-Hilu Mur bi-Um Durman, Sahifat Akhir Lahdha, 30/5/2013.*
- (53) *Hanadi Al-Sir, Marja' Sabiq.*
- (54) *Salah Al-Din Mustafa, Madinat Al-Qadarif, Sahifat Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 4/7/2015.*
- (55) *Qism Al-Sayyid Hamza Ahmad, Ifada lil-Katib hawl Al-Hunud fi Madinat Al-Qadarif, bi-tarikh 5 Abriil 2025.*
- (56) *Abdul Wahab Jum'a, fi Diyaafat Akhar Usrat Hindiya fi Kosti, Al-Rakuba, 17 Novembar 2011, <https://www.alrakoba.net/346381/%D9%81%D9%8A>*
- (57) *Yasria Moussa Ahmad, Ifada lil-Katib hawl Al-Hunud fi Madinat Al-Abyad, bi-tarikh 7 Abriil 2025.*
- (58) *Ifada min Abdul Moniem Youssef Al-Khadr 'abra Al-Brofesor Awad Ibrahim Awad 'an Al-Hunud fi Al-Nuhud bi-tarikh 8 Abriil 2025.*

Chapter Three

Cultural and Civilizational Commonalities between Sudan and India

Chapter Three

Cultural and Civilizational Commonalities between Sudan and India

There are many relationships and commonalities between Sudan and India, which are reflected in wedding rituals, clothing, perfumes, spices, incense, and various types of jewelry.

We can go further by examining the systems of succession to the throne among the people of Kira in India, where they follow the Umayyad system, the same system practiced in ancient Sudanese kingdoms and several other African kingdoms.

In agriculture, both Indians and Sudanese use plowing tools and engage in animal husbandry. Additionally, there is a pentatonic musical ladder used in Indian songs, and the Dravidians in India use a tambura that resembles the Sudanese tambour.(1)

Wedding Rituals among Indians:

Indian weddings in Sudan are characterized by their traditional nature. When the family of a girl finds a young man of good character, they visit his family to propose marriage. Once the young man's family confirms the girl's good character, the wedding preparations commence.

The bride's family begins preparing their daughter for marriage as soon as she reaches the age of fifteen, gathering all the necessary items for the wedding, including clothing, jewelry, and perfumes.(2)

Remarks by the Indian Community Leader in Sudan:

Shandu Lal, the head of the Indian community in Sudan, spoke about the success of Indian projects in the country, attributing it to thorough reviews and continuous monitoring. Regarding marriages between Sudanese and Indians, he mentioned that over 20 such unions occurred in 2018.

The University of Khartoum named one of its lecture halls after him, and he donated a collection of books to both the College of Arts at the University of Khartoum and Al-Ahfad University for Women, acknowledging the significant support he and his family received from Al-Ahfad.

He noted that the first Indian to arrive in Khartoum came in 1898 as part of the British forces that entered the country and helped dismantle the Mahdist state. Subsequently, Indians moved to Omdurman.

As for the Indian population in Sudan in 2018, he reported that there were about 4,000 Indians distributed between Port Sudan, Al-Qadarif, and Al-Damer. He also mentioned that Indians who had lived in Sudan and moved to other countries, such as the United States, still celebrate Sudanese holidays and traditions. Those who settled in the UK continue to request their families send them products like abri (halawa mur) and cheese, among other Sudanese goods.(3)

Indian Influence on Sudanese Culture

Indian groups that migrated to Sudan for trade or permanent settlement have significantly influenced Sudanese culture since ancient times. This influence is evident in the clothing of women and men from the Beja

tribes, where fashion experts have linked the traditional wrap worn by women in the East to the Indian **sari**. Additionally, the Beja and Sudanese women adorn themselves with various accessories, such as **hajl** (nose rings) and **zomam** (nose ornaments), found in several regions of Sudan.

Moreover, Indian perfumes like **mahlabia**, **sartiya**, **sandal**, and **sandalwood** are integral to many Sudanese fragrance compositions. In the world of football, an Indian-origin player, **Mimi Shah**, played for the Sudanese club Al-Hilal during the 1960s, highlighting the impact of Indian culture in Sudanese sports as well.



Mimi Shah, the Indian-origin player

Indian Influence on Sudanese Fashion:

1. Mimi Shah

Mimi Shah, the Indian-origin player, is a notable figure in Sudanese football, having played for Al-Hilal.

2. Fashion Similarities

There is a remarkable similarity between Sudanese and Indian fashion, particularly in women's clothing, which is renowned for its beauty and vibrant colors. Women in both countries share a passion for decorative accessories, including:

- **Chains**
- **Nose rings (zomam)**
- **Earrings**
- **Necklaces**
- **Bracelets**

3. The Sari

Many Sudanese groups have adopted the Indian **sari**, which has been present in Sudan since early times and has become a part of their cultural identity.

4. Traditional Attire

Both Sudanese and Indian men wear traditional garments such as **jilbab** and **turban** (imama). Additionally, garments like **qanji** and **damur**—types of fabric—are associated with the Indian community in Sudan and remain well known in the country to this day. This fusion of styles illustrates the deep cultural connections between India and Sudan, enriching the fashion landscape of both nations.

Traditional Sudanese and Indian Attire: A Comparison

Gandhi is often depicted in his traditional Indian attire, which reflects his cultural identity and principles of simplicity.

Two young men from the Beja community in Eastern Sudan are also shown in their traditional clothing, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the region.

This comparison not only emphasizes the aesthetic similarities in traditional clothing but also reflects the deeper cultural ties that transcend geographical boundaries.



Gandhi



Akeer Al-Damer

There is a striking similarity between the traditional attire worn by Sudanese poet **Akeer Al-Damer** and Indian leader **Mahatma Gandhi**. One of the notable aspects is the form of the **turban** (imama) that both figures wear.



Gandhi



Beja Youth in Traditional Dress



Sudanese Girls



Indian Girls

Nose Rings in Indian and Sudanese Culture

Nose Rings (Zomam):

Sudanese and Indian women have worn nose rings since ancient times, and it has become a characteristic of beauty in both countries. Despite a decline in popularity, the nose ring has made a comeback in our current era.



Indian Girl Wearing a Nose Ring

1. Indian Girl Wearing a Nose Ring

A young Indian girl wearing a nose ring, showcasing this traditional adornment that signifies beauty and cultural identity.

2. Sudanese Girl Wearing a Nose Ring

A young Sudanese girl also adorned with a nose ring, reflecting the shared cultural practice and its significance in Sudanese beauty standards.

This similarity highlights the cultural connections between the two regions and the enduring appeal of this accessory.



Sudanese Girl wearing a Nose Ring

Cultural Adornments: Anklets and Fragrances

1. Anklets (Khalqal)

Anklets, known as **hajl** in Sudan, have been recognized in ancient Sudanese and Indian civilizations as decorative items for women. They are typically made from materials like gold, silver, and copper and are worn around the ankles.

A popular Sudanese song celebrates the anklet with the lyrics:

“Hajl in the leg, my beloved, take me with you.”

2. Fragrances

Indian perfumes play a significant role in many Sudanese fragrances, with scents like **sandalwood**, **mahlabia**, **sartiya**, and **sandal** being particularly popular. These Indian fragrances have found a place in Sudanese culture, complementing the beauty and scent of Sudanese women.

3. Shared Cultural Elements

Dr. Anil Kumar, the head of the Indian community in Sudan, emphasizes that there are many shared cultural elements between the two peoples, reflecting the deep connections and influences that exist between Sudan and India.

Cultural Parallels Between Sudanese and Indian Traditions

1. Sari Dress

The **sari** worn by Sudanese and Indian women showcases a similar style, emphasizing beauty and cultural identity in both societies.

2. Family Bonds and Tolerance

Both cultures value **family ties**, **tolerance**, and **acceptance of others**, reflecting a shared commitment to community and harmony.

3. Marriage Customs

Marriage traditions among both peoples exhibit unique practices while also sharing several commonalities, highlighting the importance of familial and social connections.

4. Henna Traditions

Henna is significant for brides in both cultures. The Indian bride typically uses **red henna**, whereas the Sudanese bride uses **black henna**, each with its own cultural significance and aesthetic.

5. Music

There is a notable similarity in the **music** of both countries, particularly in rhythm and performance style. Indian Sufi music and folk dances share similarities with Sudanese traditions. Common musical instru-

ments include the **rabab** and the **oud**, further illustrating the cultural connections.(6)

These shared elements underscore the rich tapestry of influences between Sudan and India, enhancing their cultural heritage.

Wedding Traditions: Sudanese and Indian Brides

1. Traditional Attire

Both the Sudanese and Indian brides wear a **red dress** on their wedding night, known as **Jirtig** in Sudan and celebrated in Indian culture as well. This vibrant color symbolizes joy and celebration.

2. Gold Adornments

A common tradition for both brides is to adorn themselves with **gold jewelry** on their wedding day. This practice highlights the significance of gold as a symbol of wealth, beauty, and prosperity in both cultures.

These shared customs reflect the deep cultural ties between Sudanese and Indian wedding traditions, emphasizing the importance of celebration and adornment in marital ceremonies.



Nubian Qithar

Researcher Oshiak Mohamed states that the Beja people have been influenced by Indian traders who have been arriving at the ports of the Sudanese Red Sea since ancient times. Indian traders are among the oldest merchants in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. The Beja have adopted Indian clothing, perfumes, and various spices, particularly ginger, which is associated with coffee among the people of East Sudan.

With the increasing arrival of Indian traders, different fabrics reached Beja land, leading to the adoption of garments such as the sidari, shawl (shaqit), and the jubbah worn by leaders and dignitaries. The Beja also learned to wear the sarbadub from the Indians.

As for Beja women, they adorned themselves with Indian jewelry, as well as shoes and perfumes that came from India and Yemen. These

perfumes were mixed with “wadak” to create a substance known as “mor,” which women used to apply to their hair.

Indian Influence on Beja Culture

1. Historical Trade Relations

According to researcher **Oshik Mohamed**, Indian traders have been among the oldest merchants in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. Their long-standing trade interactions have significantly influenced the Beja people.

2. Fashion and Fabrics

The Beja have adopted various elements of **Indian fashion**, including

- **Sidiris** (traditional garments)
- **Shawls (Shaquit)**
- **Jubbas**, worn by leaders and elders

With the influx of Indian traders, various fabrics also reached the Beja regions, enriching their traditional attire.

3. Jewelry and Accessories

Beja women adorned themselves with **Indian jewelry**, along with shoes and perfumes imported from India and Yemen.

4. Fragrances

The Beja women utilized a unique blend of Indian perfumes mixed with **wood oil**, known as **Mour**. This fragrant oil was commonly used as a hair treatment, highlighting the integration of Indian scents into local beauty practices.

These influences reflect the deep cultural exchanges that have enriched Beja traditions through their historical connections with Indian traders.

Linguistic Similarities: Beja and Hindi

There are notable similarities between the **Beja language** and **Hindi**, particularly in certain vocabulary. Here are some comparable terms:

Beja Language	Hindi Language	Meaning
كدر جيقا	Kadr Jiga	Where did you come from?
اودر الو	Awda Aw	Come here
قيل	Qibil	Beautiful or handsome (7)

These linguistic parallels reflect the historical interactions and cultural exchanges between the Beja people and Indian traders, illustrating how language evolves through contact and shared experiences.



Beja boy



Beja Girl



Indain Girl

Shared Names Between Sudanese and Indian Cultures

Through examining names and their meanings, we find several that are shared between the Sudanese and Indian peoples. One notable example is:

Kamala

- **Origin:** The name **Kamala** is of Indian origin and was borne by the Indian activist Kamala Nehru, wife of Jawaharlal Nehru and mother of Indira Gandhi, India's former Prime Minister.
- The name Kamala is of Indian origin and was borne by the Indian activist Kamala, the wife of Jawaharlal Nehru, and mother of Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India. The name was also given to the artist Kamala Ishaq, who was awarded the Prince Claus Award. She was born in Omdurman in 1939, and her father admired Nehru's experience in India and the Indian National Congress, naming her after the publication of the book "Kamala and No More To."(8)

This example illustrates how cultural exchanges and admiration for influential figures can lead to shared names across different societies.



Kamala Ishag

The Name “Anil”

The name Anil was given to Dr. Anil Kumar, the head of the Indian community in Sudan, by his father as a tribute to the Nile River, which is significant in Sudanese culture. The name “Nile” is indeed present in Sudan, highlighting the connection between the name and the region’s geography.



Anil Kumar

Anil Kumar is the head of the Indian community in Sudan. His name reflects a cultural connection to India, and he has played a significant role in fostering relations between the Indian and Sudanese communities. Anil Kumar's leadership highlights the presence and influence of the Indian diaspora in Sudan.

Indian Names in Sudanese Culture

In Sudan, many names are directly related to India, reflecting cultural connections. Some of these names include “**Al-Hindi**,” “**Hindi**,” and “**Hindia**.”

Notable Figures:

Sharif Yusuf Al-Hindi: A prominent Sudanese leader associated with India. His name is believed to have originated from his Indian nurse in Mecca.

Cultural Significance:

The name **Hindia** is also common among Sudanese girls and women, highlighting the enduring influence of Indian culture in Sudanese society. These names not only signify heritage but also celebrate the historical ties between the two regions.



Sharif Yusuf Al-Hindi

Sharif Yusuf Al-Hindi is a notable figure in Sudanese history, recognized for his leadership and contributions. His name is linked to India, as it is believed to have come from his Indian nurse in Mecca. This connection underscores the cultural ties and influences between Sudan and India, exemplifying how personal histories can reflect broader intercultural relationships.

Names with Indian Influence in Sudan

Gandhi

The name **Gandhi** has gained popularity in Sudan, likely linked to the Indian activist **Mahatma Gandhi**. This reflects the admiration for his principles and philosophies.

Anusha Dandekar

Among Indian artists born in Khartoum in 1982 is **Anusha Dandekar**, whose roots trace back to Pune, India. She has acted in Bollywood and received numerous awards in the film industry.(9)

Sapna

The name **Sapna** became well known in Sudan during the 1970s, largely due to Indian films.(10) The movie “**Janwar**”, featuring the beautiful actress **Rachna**, played a significant role in popularizing the name among Sudanese youth, making it one of the most common names during that period.(11)

Seema

The name **Seema** is shared between girls in both countries, meaning “sign” or “mark.” In Indian culture, it signifies a kind-hearted girl, emphasizing the positive connotations associated with the name.

These names illustrate the cultural exchange between India and Sudan, displaying how cinema and influential figures have shaped naming trends in Sudan.



Anusha Dandekar

Cultural Connections in Music and Botany

Music

In the realm of music, Taj Al-Sir Al-Hassan wrote and the versatile artist Abdel Karim Al-Kabili sang about the deep resonance of Indian culture, referencing “the voice of Tagore and the profound echo of India.” This showcases the influence of Indian artistic expressions on Sudanese music.

Shared Botanical Heritage

Several plants illustrate the botanical connections between India and Sudan:

Indian Mango

Tamarind

Henna

Neem Tree: The neem tree was introduced to Sudan from India, known locally as (Al-Marjousa). It arrived during the British colonial period in 1914. One of the most famous neem trees in Sudan, Nima, was brought from India as part of an agricultural experiment at the Agricultural Research Centre in Shambat, Khartoum North. Following the success of this initiative, neem trees spread throughout Sudan.

These elements reflect the deep-rooted connections between the two cultures, highlighting both artistic and agricultural exchanges¹².)

Meroitic and Hindi Languages

In the field of linguistics, there is a notable similarity between **Meroitic** and **Hindi**.

Key Features of Meroitic:

- **Complex Language:** Meroitic is considered a complex language.
- **Phonetic Nature:** It is a phonetic language, meaning it primarily represents sounds.
- **Unique Symbols:** Meroitic includes twenty-three distinct symbols that resemble Indian script.
- **Syllabic Writing:** The language is written using a syllabic system, similar to how many Indian languages are structured. (13)

These connections highlight the historical and cultural exchanges that may have occurred between the regions, reflecting shared linguistic characteristics.



Old Hindi Text



Meroitic Text

Colonial History

Both Sudan and India experienced British colonial rule, which primarily focused on exploiting the natural resources and wealth of these countries.

Agricultural Products

Both countries are known for cultivating a variety of agricultural products, with two of the most significant being:

- **Cotton**
- **Groundnuts (Peanuts)**

These crops have become major cash crops in both Sudan and India.

Livestock Wealth

Both Sudan and India boast a rich diversity of livestock, positioning them as advanced countries in this sector on a global scale. The abundance of livestock contributes significantly to the economies and cultural practices of both nations.

These shared experiences and resources highlight the interconnectedness of Sudan and India, influenced by their colonial past and agricultural richness.

Separation and Formation of New Nations

Both Sudan and India underwent processes of separation that led to the formation of new states. Notable examples include:

- Sudan: The separation of South Sudan, resulting in the establishment of the Republic of South Sudan.
- India: The separations of Pakistan and Bangladesh from India.

Neighboring Countries

Both nations share borders with multiple neighboring countries:

Sudan is bordered by:

- Egypt
- Libya
- Chad
- Central African Republic
- South Sudan
- Ethiopia
- Eritrea
- **India is bordered by:**

- Pakistan
- China
- Nepal
- Bhutan
- Bangladesh
- Myanmar

This geographic context highlights the strategic importance of both countries in their respective regions, as well as their complex relationships with neighboring nations.

Demographic Composition

Both Sudan and India are characterized by diverse and varied demographic compositions, with multiple ethnic groups and cultures coexisting within their borders.

Cultural and Civilizational Diversity

The vast geographical areas of both countries contribute to their rich cultural and civilizational diversity, resulting in a wide array of traditions, languages, and customs.

Common Means of Transportation

In both countries, certain modes of transportation have become essential for daily travel:

- Rickshaws: Widely used for short-distance travel.
- Tuktuks: Popular for their maneuverability in urban areas.
- Large Buses (TATA): Serve as a primary means of public transport for longer distances.

These commonalities in transportation reflect the shared needs of urban and rural populations in both Sudan and India, facilitating movement and commerce.

Blue Nile Bridge:

The **Blue Nile Bridge**, constructed between 1907 and 1909 and inaugurated in 1910, is one of the oldest bridges in Sudan, following the **Atbara Bridge**, which was built in 1898.

Names

The bridge is known by several names, including:

- **Bahri Bridge**
- **University Bridge**

Geographic Importance

The bridge connects **Khartoum Bahri** and **Khartoum**, linking the eastern and western banks of the Blue Nile. Its construction significantly increased the attractiveness of Khartoum Bahri, leading to a rise in population and land prices in the area.

Historical Context

There are differing opinions about the bridge's origins:

- Some suggest that it was previously used in India before being dismantled and sent to Sudan.
- Another view holds that it was built by the British company **Cleveland Bridges** at a cost of £250,000 (approximately \$325,000).

The materials for the bridge were transported via the **Port of Alexandria** to Khartoum Bahri by train. The construction was overseen by the English engineer **George Amblet**, and the bridge features a **Bascule** design, allowing it to lift for river navigation. Initially, it could be opened from Khartoum Bahri to facilitate the passage of ships, but this practice has since been permanently discontinued.(14)



*Stages of Building the Blue Nile Bridge
Aerial View of the Bridge after Completion*





Blue Nile Bridge from Inside



Blue Nile Bridge from outside

Charitable Works by Indians in Sudan:

Indians in Sudan engage in numerous charitable activities to support their fellow citizens. Some of these initiatives include:

- **Support for Mental Health Patients:** Assistance is provided at **Al-Tijani Al-Mahi Hospital** for mental health patients.
- **Elderly Care:** Contributions to the **Elderly Home in Khartoum Bahri**, the **Elderly Women’s Home in Sgana**, and the **Girls’ Home for Orphans** near **Al-Mayqouma**. This support has continued for over fifty years. (15)

Personal Testimony

The writer witnessed the charitable efforts of **Dr. Anil Kumar**, the head of the Indian community in Omdurman. As a doctor, he welcomed patients from the **Al-Qal’a neighborhood** into his home daily, checking on their well-being and providing assistance as needed. Dr. Anil maintained close relationships with many community members, including **Sulaiman Abd Al-Hamid** and his brother **Yasir**, as well as **Aunt Fatima** and various neighbors.

He also treated patients in his private clinic in **Om Budda, Block 11**, charging nominal fees suitable for local residents. Dr. Anil actively participated in community celebrations and sorrows, earning a reputation as a beloved brother and friend to all.

Indians and the War in Sudan:

Following the outbreak of war in Khartoum on April 15, 2023, many Indians decided to leave Sudan via King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, facilitated by evacuation operations conducted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This group followed four previous groups that had already evacuated. From Jeddah, they were transported to the city of Bangalore in India, with a total of 1,184 Indian nationals successfully leaving Sudan. (16)

Indian Government's Rescue Efforts

Simultaneously, the Indian government announced a rescue operation for Indian nationals trapped in Sudan due to the conflict, named **Operation Kaveri**. (17) The Indian Ministry of External Affairs stated that two **C-130J** aircraft from the Indian Air Force were on standby in Jeddah. Additionally, an Indian Navy team arrived in Port Sudan to assist with the evacuation efforts. (18)







Indians at King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah on April 30, 2023, following the outbreak of war in Sudan. This information was reported by Al Arabiya on April 30, 2023.

Indians at King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah

On April 30, 2023, following the outbreak of war in Sudan on April 15, a number of Indians were seen at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah waiting to be transported back to their country. This was part of the evacuation efforts for Indian nationals.

Celebration of Successful Evacuation

After the successful evacuation of Indians residing in Khartoum, the Indian embassy held a congratulatory event at the Indian School in Port Sudan on May 21, 2023. This event was organized to recognize the support and contributions of the local community in facilitating **Operation Kaveri**.

The ceremony was attended by:

- **Dr. Anil Kumar**, the head of the Indian community in Sudan.
- **Hansmukh**, the head of the Indian community in Port Sudan.
- Several other community members.

During the event, the head of the community expressed gratitude to the residents of Port Sudan for their significant role and contributions to the evacuation process.(19)



Among the Indian travelers present during the outbreak of war on April 15, 2023, in Khartoum was Hajikin, an Indian explorer who documented his journey from Sudan to Ethiopia. His accounts provide valuable insights into the experiences of those who faced the crisis.



Hajikin stands in front of a burnt tank in the capital, Khartoum, during the outbreak of war in April 2023. His documentation of this moment captures the intensity and impact of the conflict on the city.



Hajikin is seen near an armored vehicle in the capital, Khartoum, during the outbreak of war in April 2023. This scene highlights the military presence and the tumultuous environment during the conflict.

Helana and the Dream of Returning to Sudan:

Helana Kushi, born in Omdurman, comes from a family with roots in Sudan. She currently lives near the Nile Street in Omdurman and expresses a deep longing for her homeland. Helana misses Sudanese dishes like **assida**, **molokhia**, and **zalabia**, as well as familiar places such as Nile Street, **Shambat Bridge**, and her home.

She studied medical laboratories at the University of Science and Technology in Omdurman and fondly recalls her time in Sudan as some of the best days of her life. When asked whether she would prefer to live in Sudan or India, she answered without hesitation that she would choose Sudan. Helana eagerly awaits the end of the war so she can return to Sudan and reunite with her family and friends in Omdurman.

She admires several qualities in Sudanese people, particularly their sense of humor, and holds them in high regard. Her love for Sudan and its people has grown from her experiences living among them.(21)



Helana Kushik



A Glimpse of the Celebration

In a statement to the author, **Dr. Anil Kumar**, a former director of **Khartoum Teaching Hospital**, described the extensive damage inflicted upon the hospital after the war in Khartoum. He mentioned that he worked there as a general physician in the Urology Department for five years, then served as the medical director for three years, followed by a year as a consultant in urology, and finally as the general director for nearly three years. He is well acquainted with all the details regarding the teaching hospital, which encompasses various specialties.

Dr. Kumar noted that the destruction of the hospital, particularly in the southern section, represents a significant loss. The hospital's proximity to the railway station in Khartoum made it a destination for patients from various regions of Sudan and neighboring countries. Additionally, the teaching hospital includes a **Forensic Medicine** department located on Doctor's Street. The total number of staff at the hospital reached approximately three thousand, including doctors, nurses, and support staff.(22)

The hospital has trained tens of thousands of doctors, interns, and residents across various specialties. Additionally, there is a team of specialists, and the nursing department was responsible for training and graduating nurses. Dr. Anil Kumar participated in teaching these students, with the duration of the nursing program being three years.(23)

Transliterated Refeinces

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- (2) *Sahifat Barbir, Masfaha 'Ala Al-Facebook, Raji' Sabiq.*
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- (17) *Kāvīrī: Nahr Yaqa' Fī Al-Hind Wa Yu'ad Min Aṭwal Al-Anhār Bil-Bilād Ḥayth Yablugh Ṭūluh 765 Km Wa Yuqaddar Ḥawd Al-Nahr Biḥawāli 81155, Wikipedia.*
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Conclusion

The Indian communities that have come to Sudan since ancient times have contributed significantly by bringing their commercial expertise and knowledge related to spices, incense, and perfumes to Sudanese society. This has had a profound impact on enriching Sudanese culture and enhancing its commercial diversity. Thanks to the generosity and hospitality of the Sudanese people, these communities found a second home in Sudan, where the first generation settled, making Sudan the primary homeland for subsequent generations.

The commercial exchange allowed the Indians to closely familiarize themselves with the Sudanese people, finding them to be a generous and noble people, which encouraged them to coexist and integrate into Sudanese society, to the point that many of them became Sudanese by birth and affiliation.

It can be said that there are common links between the Sudanese and Indian peoples, including ethnic diversity, tolerance, and good treatment of others—traits that facilitated the integration of the Indian community into various cities of Sudan.

Today, the Indian community is one of the most prominent groups distinguished by their spirit of solidarity and support for their Sudanese brothers, feeling a deep sense of belonging to the homeland. This has earned them love and respect from Sudanese people, making them an integral part of the cohesive social fabric.

Through this work, we have reached several important conclusions, the most notable of which are:

- Commercial activity has attracted a large number of Indians to Sudan.
- The tolerance of Sudanese society and its acceptance of others has helped the Indian community settle and integrate into the society.
- Indian culture has had a clear impact on Sudanese culture, evident in the adoption of the Sudanese dress from India, as well as the spread of Indian perfumes, silk, and garments.
- Indian community members have integrated into Sudanese cities such as Omdurman, Al-Damer, Kassala, Al-Qadarif, and Madani, participating in various social events, both joyous and mournful.
- Indians are characterized by honesty in dealings and mutual respect, which has granted them a distinguished status within Sudanese society.

Thus, it is clear that the Indian community has played an active role in building bridges of understanding and cooperation between the two peoples, establishing a model to be emulated in peaceful coexistence and cultural diversity.

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Eighth: Films, Recorded Materials, and Television Coverage:

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- *Al Arabiya Channel, coverage of the evacuation of Indian nationals from Sudan via Saudi Arabia to India, April 30, 2023.*
- *Al Arabiya Channel, previously referenced.*
- *Muhammad Al-Murtada Hamid, “The Indian Influence and Its Impact on Sudanese Sentiment,” s+plus, July 26, 2024.*

Appendices

Appendix (1)

Interview with Dr. Anil Kumar and Mr. Osman Abdel Karim published on the page of old photos and documents on December 7, 2016, titled:

Anil Kumar: Sudanese by Birth, Indian by Appearance

Sudanese by birth and Indian by appearance, Dr. Anil Kumar Shotalal, the dean of the Indian community in Sudan and head of the Urology Department at Omdurman Hospital, speaks Arabic fluently, a skill to be envied. His father named him “Anil” in honor of the great Nile River, which is why he loves Sudan and immerses himself in Sudanese dialect. I sat with him in a conversation characterized by simplicity and light-heartedness. Here are the highlights of our dialogue:

Who is Dr. Anil?

I am Dr. Anil Kumar Shotalal, born in Wad Madani to Indian parents. My father came to Sudan in 1921 through the port of Suakin as a trader. I studied primary school in Wad Madani, then middle school, and went to Alexandria for medical school, specializing in urology in the People’s Republic of China for five years. I then worked in several government hospitals, including medical director at the health centre of Kober Prison, which added much to my experience. I also worked at Khartoum Hospital, the Council of Ministers, Al-Shaab Hospital, the Chinese Hospital, the Ministry of Labor, and many other hospitals.

Who was the first Indian to enter Sudan?

The first Indian arrived in Sudan as a migrant from Aden, settling in Suakin about a century and a half ago in 1850. His name was Lushan Amarshan Shah, and he was a trader in spices and fabrics. Suakin was one of the old Sudanese ports that witnessed the settlement of these

Eastern groups. This migration was followed by additional waves, extending to Kassala, then Port Sudan, Al-Obeid, Al-Qadarif, and eventually inward to Omdurman, which has the highest density of Indians.

How many Indians are there in Sudan?

They are considered the smallest community, numbering about 1,800 people.

What are the similarities between the two countries?

The Sudanese thobe and Indian sari, the exchange of visits, and standing by neighbors and family in both joyful and sorrowful occasions, along with spices. For example, we have young people who weekly distribute food to orphanages and the elderly, a practice that has lasted for over seven years. The community also built wards in Al-Dayat Hospital and donated blankets to the operation complex.

Have you lived in India?

I have not lived there, but I travel there during holidays and do not feel nostalgic. Interestingly, during the five years I spent in China, I missed Sudan a lot. Despite the difficult economic conditions, I find myself packing my bags every holiday heading to Sudan.

Which singer does Dr. Anil listen to?

I listen to Zidan Ibrahim, and I hum along to the song “Fi Al-Layla Dik.”

What Sudanese dishes do you enjoy?

I love okra stew and molokhia, which is quite similar to the Indian version of molokhia, with some sugar added in the Indian style. We also have kiswa made from millet and wheat, which is somewhat similar to the Sudanese kiswa that I always make sure to buy from the market.

What problems do you face?

Thank God, we do not have any problems during my presidency of the community for two terms. Everyone respects each other, and no issue has ever arisen beyond my control.

Describe the Indian marriage rituals.

Marriages are characterized by organization and tradition. When the girl's family finds a suitable young man, they go to his family to propose after confirming the girl's good character. The girl's family prepares all her marital needs, including clothing, perfumes, and jewelry. The girl is advised by her parents that she is going to her new family and must respect them.

What are the marriage costs?

About 50 to 60 million Sudanese pounds. Due to these high costs, families usually start preparing their daughters for marriage from the age of fifteen, as a father might suffer a heart attack if he spends such an amount in one night.

There is a strong trade relationship between Indians and Sudan; what are your comments?

Yes, most Indians in Sudan work in traditional trade such as spices and their products, and fabrics. Sudanese cities have known Indian fabrics and textiles like qinjal and damour in various weights, as well as industrial dyes, along with imported products for clothing, decoration, and gifts, famously known from the store of Hajj Ibrahim Mirza, which was located at the central station in Khartoum. His family is well-known in Khartoum, and his son Adel Mirza is among the prominent families that worked in trade, along with the late Hussein Band Ali Muhammad from Omdurman, and the famous mathematics teacher Hamada Shah.

Any final words?

My loyalty to Sudan is endless, and I hope it becomes one of the advanced countries. I also express my gratitude and loyalty to my teacher, Dr. Osman Abdel Karim, who taught me urology.

Appendix (2)

Interview with the Dean of the Indian Community in Sudan, “Shandola Samji,” published in Al-Majhar Newspaper on February 9, 2014

He has little left of India now, except for the region from which his father came to Sudan. He was born, raised, and has a family in Sudan. He possesses vast knowledge and is a first-rate intellectual. He speaks Arabic fluently, like a native, and is well-versed in literature and poetry. We attempted to learn more about various aspects of his life: where he was born, where he started his education, why he came to Omdurman, his first work experience, how he entered the business world, the number of members in the Indian community in Sudan, marriage customs, hobbies he has practiced, Sudanese authors he has read, the singer he prefers to listen to, and the sports club he supports. We present him to the readers through this interview.

We began by asking him:

Who are you?

“Shandola Samji Beta Mabra.” My father came from India in 1920 and settled in the Sawakin area. However, his ambition was not in public service, so he gathered 15 pounds and moved to the city of Halfa, which became a permanent hub for him in business. He didn’t leave it until after the displacement. I was born in Halfa and began my early education in the “Abd al-Jalil” Koranic school. Afterward, I joined an elementary and then a middle school. Since there were no high schools there, we had to move either to Omdurman or Khartoum. We chose Omdurman and rented a house in the (Housh al-Qazzaz) area, in the “Shuhada” district.

Where did you continue your education?

I joined (Komboni) schools but could not complete the secondary school due to family circumstances.

Where did you go afterward?

I worked at (Mitchell Kosti) company, and then I moved to work at a shoe factory in Omdurman. Afterward, I worked at the German airline company. After six years, I decided to move into the market.

What kind of work did you do in the market?

I began by brokering car spare parts, then I established my own business, importing spare parts, and I still do that today.

You mentioned your education began in the Koranic school; are you a Muslim?

I am a Hindu. My father always said that knowledge is not tied to any particular religion.

How much of the Qur'an did you memorize at that time?

I memorized part of the Qur'an, which is enough for a Muslim to perform prayers.

When you moved to school, did you attend religious classes?

Even though some Copts and Syrians would leave religious classes, I attended them and enjoyed the stories from the Qur'an that the teacher shared.

How were your academic performances?

I was always at the top of my class until the second year of secondary school.

Did you have any hobbies?

Reading.

What subjects did you read?

Initially, I was fond of reading Egyptian magazines like “Rose Al-Youssef” and “Al-Kawakib.” Then I shifted to reading English magazines. I have a deep love for Arabic literature and poetry, and I memorize much of it.

Have you read books by Sudanese authors?

I read a lot about the history of Sudan, as well as works by (Al-Tayeb Salih) and the poet “Ahmed Mohamed Salih.”

How many members are there in the Indian community in Sudan?

The Indian community in Omdurman numbers about 800 people. There is also a community in Kassala of 180 people, in Port Sudan around 120, 20 in Al-Damar, 20 in Gedaref, 5 in Atbara, and two in Juba. There are also two families in Madani.

Who are the most famous Indians in Sudan now?

Most of the Indians who came to Sudan practiced trade. However, with the spread of education, people like (Anil Kumar), a kidney and urinary specialist, and (Kurt Kumar), an eye specialist, became well-known. Dr. Andina, who currently works in Oman, is also famous.

What are the similarities between Indian and Sudanese customs and traditions?

Most Indian customs and traditions are similar to those of Sudan.

How is marriage among you?

It is similar to Sudanese marriage. After the groom gets to know the girl, his family visits the girl's family to make a formal proposal. On the engagement day, the groom offers three pieces of "sari" (a traditional Indian garment). The wedding date is determined by astrology, where we consult an astrologer with the birthdates of both the groom and bride to check their compatibility.

What if the compatibility is not found?

If compatibility is not found, the marriage will not take place. If compatibility exists, the marriage happens, and the most important thing is the announcement of the marriage.

Do you have a "Shiala" or "Bride's Breakfast" like the Sudanese?

We don't have the "Shiala," but we follow most of the Sudanese traditions. Since divorce was not common, there is no "Mahr" (dowry) in the traditional sense. We pay a small dowry, which is about one and a half Sudanese pounds.

After marriage?

The wife moves directly into the husband's house and assumes her duties at home from the very first day.

Is it permissible for the husband to live with his in-laws?

That is forbidden in our culture. Anyone who does so commits a great sin against his or her parents.

What are the rituals for the firstborn?

Before birth, meaning once pregnancy is detected, the woman is not allowed to bathe or wash her head. When the fetus reaches eight months, a celebration is held, and sweets, fruits, and money are offered to her,

acknowledging her as a fertile woman. After the birth, the woman is sent to her family for a month to recover from childbirth, and then she returns home.

When is the baby named?

After one week of birth, a big celebration is held, and only the aunt names the child. This is a tradition that still exists. However, due to the changes in life, the family may choose the name, but it is the aunt who officially names the child.

Can one marry a relative?

In India, it is forbidden to marry a cousin, uncle, or aunt. Even if a relation exists as far back as the seventh generation, marriage is prohibited.

If we go back to the past, do you have a favorite singer to listen to?

I am a fan of the late Ahmed Al-Mustafa, the dean of Sudanese singers.

Which sports teams do you support?

I have been a fan of Al-Merrikh since I was ten years old.

What programs do you make sure to watch on radio or TV?

I follow the programs of both (Al-Shorouk) and (Al-Nil Al-Azraq) channels, and I enjoy the “Guest of the Evening” program on (Al-Shorouk).

What saddens you?

What saddens me is the neglect and lack of attention to the city of Omdurman. I am also upset by the piles of rubble in front of newly constructed buildings.

What remains for you from India?

I no longer have any family in India except for the region of (Ahmedabad), from where my father originally came.

What is the secret of Sudanese openness to India?

Most Sudanese who go to India now do so for medical treatment because it is affordable there. The Indian embassy issues between 50 and 60 entry visas daily. At the beginning of the year, it grants 200 visas for studying, and the Sudanese certificate is recognized in India without the need for equivalency.

Are there Sudanese residing in India?

There is a Sudanese businessman named Salah Al-Rifai, who is married to an Indian woman and is one of the largest exporters of meat, fruits, and vegetables to the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. He has been living in India for about 40 years. There are also three others who are married to Indian women and work in a hospital as public relations officers.

What about Sudanese-Indian relations?

During the recent visit of the Indian Foreign Minister, the Indian Oil Company was granted the right to explore in Blocks (7-8), and India is building a 500-megawatt power station near Kosti. India is also involved in establishing the "Mishkor" factory in White Nile, as well as factories for iron and steel.

Do you visit India?

I annually visit India.



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Observers of the relations between the African continent and India, particularly with East Africa, note that these relationships are ancient and deeply rooted, with a profound historical extension throughout the ages. The cultural and human interactions have contributed to enhancing trade exchanges between these regions. Due to the commercial boom and the abundance of various goods in East Africa and the Indian subcontinent, trade voyages between the two sides became active, utilizing large merchant ships such as dhows, safar, ghunja, baqarah, and lunjah, in search of goods available in those areas.

This commercial activity led to the settlement of large numbers of Indians along the coasts overlooking the Red Sea, including Sudanese ports. Among the most notable goods that the African ports along the Red Sea were famous for including ostrich feathers, elephant tusks, and gold, while the African ports received many Indian products, such as spices, perfumes, cotton garments, swords, and other items. Sudan has historically witnessed successive migrations of various population groups from both within and outside the African continent, including African and Arab groups coming from the Arabian Peninsula, as well as from East Asia and Europe. This is a result of its distinctive geographic location and the abundance of its resources and wealth, making it an attractive destination for trade and settlement. The Indian community is among the most significant of these incoming groups to Sudan, noted for its prominence in the profession of trade, which is one of the oldest crafts practiced by humanity.



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