



The Allure of South Asian Indian Indigenous Culture in Zayyan's *We Are All Birds of Uganda* (2021)

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Abstract

Hafsa Zayyan's *We Are All Birds of Uganda* (2021) has been interpreted variously as a text on Ugandan history, religion, racism, family relationships, exile, and return migration. While the various interpretations of the text are illuminating, enough has not been done to uncover the vast and complex world of the South Asian Indian culture woven from ancient traditions, diverse languages, and profound spiritualities. This is in terms of foregrounding the enduring allure of its Indigenous culture rooted in enterprising inclinations, sustaining family businesses, strict intra-marriage norms, religion, culinary delights, and family, and community bonds. These are against the background of exiled immigrants living in the West and or returnee Asians of Ugandan origin. This paper employs the Marxist critical theory as a theoretical framework. This is used to examine how economic forces shape society and culture. Furthermore, how this contributes to the inequality and oppression meted out to the South Asian Indian. The paper adopts the descriptive qualitative research design as its methodology. It finds that hard work, wealth accumulation, and loyalty to family ideals remain the enduring legacy of the South Asian Indians irrespective of their places of settlement. The stronghold on its cultural heritage remains a vital source of strength and identity bringing to mind the enduring human spirit in the face of change. Consequently, deviation from these cultural ideals results in broken family bonds, frustration, and feelings of alienation.

Keywords: South Asian Indian, culture, family bond, matrimonial taboos, Hafsa Zayyan



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Introduction

Hafsa Zayyan's novel, *We Are All Birds of Uganda* (2021), offers a captivating exploration of South Asian Indian culture, weaving together its rich drapery of enterprising inclination, enduring family traditions, and vibrant religious and cultural influences. This paper examines the factors that contribute to the allure of this culture by delving into these themes as contained in the primary text. Firstly, is the deep-rooted entrepreneurial spirit of the South Asian Indians. Historical factors such as trading traditions, colonization, and post-independence reforms influenced their

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development spirit. For instance, for centuries, Indians have been engaged in trade both domestically and internationally. This fostered a culture of risk-taking, resourcefulness, and adaptability. Bhabha (1994) opines, "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiating that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha, 1994, p.2). The British colonization of Uganda between 1894 and 1962 brought openings for the British officers in Uganda to bring over South Asians from India to serve as protections and even, mediators between themselves and the Africans in the middle of their commercial and administrative activities. These South Asians also made up the prerequisite labour force and guerrillas needed at that time. The British regarded them as more hardworking than the Africans whom they viewed as lazy and insubordinate. Eventually, these South Asians, often the Pakistanis, fashioned a small community in Uganda. When their contract with the British terminated, they stayed and used their reserves to open new multipurpose businesses. As their business flourished, they called on their families to join them as migrant employees and acquaintances. James (1975) notes:

The Asians' great liability well has been their visibility. As a mercantile class dealing with African peasants, often as the representative of foreign capital, they played an all too conspicuous role in the local economy; when Africans were faced with falling prices for their crops or rising costs in the towns, the agents who they confronted were the Asians (p. 229).

Cultural factors such as individualism with collectivism, high value on education, religious influences, and the spirit of *jugaad* further contribute to the South Asian Indian enterprising spirit. The culture of individualism within collectivism is such that Indian culture values individual achievement and familial ties. This creates a supportive environment for entrepreneurs who can leverage family networks for resources and support. Hinduism, Jainism, and even Islam emphasize values like hard work, ethical conduct, and social responsibility which resonate with entrepreneurial values.

Secondly, it is the sustainable family business model drawn from a strong family structure and shared values. Joint family systems create a support network, sharing resources and childcare, allowing family members to focus on the business. Also, defined roles within the family business ensure smooth operation and prevent conflict. In addition, hierarchical structures emphasizing respect and obedience foster discipline and commitment to the family's shared goals. South Asian Indians' shared values encourage family businesses to prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains. Also, their frugal mindset is an ingrained value. Family members are raised to persevere and remain dedicated to hard work. They are known to be obliged to consistently contribute to the community by giving back.

In addition, strict intra-marriage norms favoured by endogamy employ a caste system for social order preservation and purity. Religious beliefs and cultural norms in a bid to strengthen group identity and traditions encourage marriage within the same religious or linguistic community. Marriage in South Asian Indian communities is further seen as an alliance between families, upholding family honour and lineage

through prescribed pairings. The impact of Endogamy is that it preserves traditions and identity by way of arranged marriages. However, it restricts options for partner selection which leads to social pressure, ostracisation, and even family conflict.

Furthermore, because of the unequal economic power between the Indians and the Africans by way of buyer and seller, as well as the employer (Indian) - employee (Ugandan) relationship, the cultural differences and matrimonial taboos hindered intermarriage between the Indians and the Africans. The Indians prefer to marry among their community or at most among the mixed races. Barot emphasizes the social confinement of Indians:

Although Bakuli is often regarded as an African area, social contact between Indians and Africans, apart from their brief encounters in shops, is non-existent. During my stay, there was no single instance of an Indian knowing an African as an equal or a friend. Separation and distance between the two sides is a marked feature of life in Bakuli. (Barot, 1975, p.18)

The rich religious tapestry of the South Asian Indian culture foregrounds religion woven from Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism. In this paper, Islam as the religion of the South Asian Indian of Ugandan origin upholds the five pillars of Islam. Celebrations and festivals, one of which is Eid-al-Fitr in Islam strengthen social bonds and transmit cultural traditions across generations. Religion further inspires art, family, community identity, and social structure for the South Asian Indians.

The South Asian Indian cuisine delight echoes with flavours as can be found in regional specialties. For instance, the South Indian panorama is made up of lentil-based stews, (Samber), fluffy rice pancakes (Dosas), and filter coffee brewed in a unique contrivance. These cuisine delights signify communal feasts and seasonal specialties. Ayurvedic influences in the menus are aimed at promoting well-being alongside culinary enjoyment. The strong family and community bonds seen within the South Asian Indian community are propelled by various forms of support systems, in terms of joint family systems and community networks. It encourages shared values and identity in forms of collectivism, respect for elders, and tradition. Worthy of note is also the fact that mobilization and financial assistance come in handy in times of crisis.

Objective of the Study

The paper aims to explore the Allure of South Asian Indians' Indigenous culture as seen in the novel; *We Are All Birds of Uganda*. These are in the areas of enterprising inclinations, sustaining family businesses, strict intra-marriage norms, religion, culinary delights, and family, and community bonds.

Literature Review

Ismail et al's (2023) article interrogate Zayyan's novel, *We Are All Birds of Uganda* in the light of the diasporic identity of South Asian Muslims in Uganda. The researchers employ the postcolonial critique using Bhabha's concept of liminality. The analysis of the text examines the various immigrants' experiences, including their voluntary and

involuntary migrant experiences. Also, how the characters struggle for identity in the host country. The article finds that, firstly, the characters' cracked and volatile uniqueness can be harmonized when they accept various other identities bringing liminality to their hybrid identities. In addition, multi-generational diasporic identities can break through potential challenges to bring distinctive perspectives and rich cultural heritage to the communities they belong to.

This article differs from this paper in the area of focus and theory. While the article examines the diasporic identity of South Asian Muslims in Uganda, this paper focuses on the allure of the South Asian Indian culture both in Uganda and in the host region of England. This paper employs the Marxist theory while the researchers use the postcolonial critique employing Bhabha's concept of liminality. These are the gaps that this paper aims to fill. However, the paper and article have some similarities only in the choice of primary text and also in appreciating the multi-identities of the South Asians of Uganda origin which when embraced can contribute to a more multicultural world. Kandola in his study, problematizes the South Asian family culture of promotion and reinforcement of patriarchy as well as the idealization of wealth. He opines that these are potential influences for gang involvement by an average South Asian youth (p.4) Jheeta (1988) identifies the role of the family in a typical South Asian culture as that which provides a sense of belonging, identity, economic security, and honour (p. 66). Scholars like Almeida, 1996; Ibrahim et al. 1997; and Segal, 1991 in their works reiterate the vision expected of a South Asian Indian which is to sacrifice one's dream to preserve and strengthen the overall family goal. This informs the idea of *Izzat*. Honour and respect (*Izzat*) for one's family are encouraged above individual wants (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006)

The South Asian culture promotes familial interdependence within the family space. Parents and elders act as authority figures in enforcing cultural norms on their children. This is to protect the family values and honour (Almeida, 1996; Segal 1991; Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006). Shariff (2009) examines the adolescent ethnic identity formation in relation to parenting stress. This challenge arises when parents insist on traditional South Asian values and behaviour (Kurian & Ghosh, 1983; Segal, 1991; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Wakil et al., 1981). These two issues are submitted by Shariff as the major challenges faced by South Asian families in counseling (p. 44).

For (Dosanjih & Ghuman, 1998), youth independence is frowned upon. This is because South Asian families are hierarchical based on age, gender, and generational status (p. 26). This leaves the parents and elders with more authority and decision-making responsibility (Sue, 1981). Segal 1991 views the role of a mother or grandmother to be more of a caretaker. Ismail et al, on their part, examine the varied experiences of migration of the immigrants in the texts employed. Also, how they navigate the struggle for their identities in alien countries. The forced expulsion of South Asian Indians from Uganda is examined in the light of involuntary migration by the authors. The authors find a harmonious display of old and new identities as represented by the major characters having pulled through the challenges of migration. This leaves them with hybrid identities and liminality (Ismail et al. p. 22).

This study relates to the paper in the area of foregrounding the beauty of the rich cultural heritage of the South Asian Indian which they bring with them to the host country. This makes for a unique perspective on the lives of these immigrants despite the multi-generational diaspora identities and bottlenecks the immigrants are exposed to on arriving in the host country.

Marxist Critical Theory and the Indigenous Culture of the South Asian Indians

Marxist critical theory draws from the work of the great philosopher and economist, Karl Heinrich Marx. It analyzes culture, literature, and society through the key ideas of capitalism, power and ideology, historical materialism, and social transformation. Capitalism focuses on economic structures and class conflict. While power and ideology examine how dominant ideas and beliefs serve the interests of the ruling class. Historical Materialism views history as shaped by material circumstances and class struggle. Social transformation seeks to understand how societies can be changed to achieve greater equality. This paper however focuses on power and ideology as well as historical materialism as they relate to the indigenous culture of the South Asian Indians. In the words of M. H. Abrams and Geoffery Harpham (2011) Marxism is hinged on the claim that "Human consciousness is constituted by an ideology- that is the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which they explain, what they take to be reality. An ideology is, in complex ways, the product of the position and interests of a particular class. In any historical era, the dominant ideology embodies and serves to legitimize and perpetuate the interests of the dominant economic and social class" (203-204). Marx and Engels (1972) muse about capital,

... simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. (Marx- Engels, 1972, 320).

Marxist critical theory is an effective tool in the analysis of Hafsa Zayyan's *We Are All Birds of Uganda* because it offers a framework for analyzing culture through the lens of social relations and power structures. It focuses on economic inequality and class conflict. Using the material conditions strand of Marxist theory, it is seen that the contexts of the caste system and family-run businesses in South Asian India are complex social and economic systems that have historically distributed power and resources unequally. Family-run businesses often concentrate power and resources with families, limiting opportunities for outsiders. It goes to show that Marxist theory depends so much on the class structure being that economic relations are the substructure and the superstructures are built on them. Marxism views 'ideologies' to happen following the cultural conditioning we are in. In addressing classism as a Marxist ideology, people's wealth is "in the blood that is inborn" (Tyson 59). Limited mobility can create a cycle of privilege for some families and hinder social mobility for others. However, policies like affirmative action aim to level the playing field by

providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups. However, challenging discriminatory norms and promoting social reforms can help dismantle systemic inequalities.

From the Marxist perspective, the emphasis on entrepreneurship can be seen as a response to limited economic opportunities in the caste system's hierarchical structure. Family businesses, often spanning generations, create a self-reliant economic unit, fostering cooperation with the family while potentially reinforcing class divisions. Strict intra-marriage norms often justified by religious and cultural traditions can be viewed as a mechanism to maintain social hierarchies and economic power within specific castes or communities. Arranged marriages can be seen as strategic alliances consolidating wealth and social status.

Religion plays a multifaceted role. It can be a source of oppression justifying social norms and reinforcing the status quo. However, it can also offer solace, community, and cultural identity. Culinary traditions intertwined with religion, can be seen as both a celebration of community and a potential tool for social control.

Strong family and community bonds provide social support and security crucial in a society with limited social safety nets. However, these bonds can also perpetuate patriarchal norms and restrict individual freedom, especially for women. Also, under Marxist theory is ideology and culture. Cultural norms, religious beliefs, and traditions might reinforce existing power structures. These elements might be presented as natural or inevitable, masking their potential to perpetuate social hierarchies within the South Asian Indian Community. This is usually done by justifying hierarchies, promoting deference, and limiting opportunities. Furthermore, the emphasis on family business and strict intra-marriage norms can be seen as mechanisms for preserving wealth and social status within the dominant group.

Although, Marxist Literary Theory is premised on the notion that literature is a product of social forces and ideology. Terry Eagleton however insists,

The literary text is not the 'expression' of ideology, nor is ideology the 'expression' of ideology, nor is ideology the 'expression' of social class. The text, rather, is a certain production of ideology, for which the analogy of a dramatic production is in some ways appropriate.... The relation between text and production is a relation of labor. (64-65)

For Igwe (2009), Marxism views literature in its cultural, economic, and political context. There is a dearth of documented indigenous literary and cultural texts specifically created by Indians in Uganda. This is likely a result of several factors ranging from arrival and integration to dominant languages and even oral traditions. This is because many Indians migrated to Uganda during the colonial era, settling primarily in urban areas and working in commerce and administration. Their focus was often on establishing themselves economically, with less emphasis placed on recording their cultural heritage within the new land. In addition, English became the primary language of education and administration in Uganda, reducing the use of Indian languages like Gujarati or Hindi for literary expression. Lastly, Indian cultural traditions

in Uganda relied heavily on oral storytelling and performance. These stories, epics, and songs might not have been formally documented.

However, there are some memoirs and accounts that explore the Ugandan Indian cultural experience. Instances of literary works by Ugandan Indians that offer glimpses into their cultural background include *Memoir of an Artist* by Meera Uberoi. Also, *Across the Seas: A Memoir of Exile and Belonging* by Suresh Kumar.

Textual Analysis

Despite the pain and trauma of exile from Uganda in 1972, the South Asian Indians especially of Uganda's history continue to hold firmly to the indigenous culture peculiar to them. Hafsa Zayyan's *We Are All Birds of Uganda* (2021), portrays the protagonist's mother who despite residing now in Leicester, does not relent in carrying out her religion's obligations. Sameer often feels guilty of not being committed to the faith in which he is raised even as he lives alone in London. On one occasion when he wakes up early in the morning following exhaustion from the previous day's work, "Unbidden and unwelcome, the last thing that comes into his mind before he falls asleep is that his mother would be waking up to pray *fajr* at this time" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 2). After work, Sameer meets up with his childhood friends, Rahool and Jeremiah as they often do in the city of London to relieve stress of work. Rahool confesses to his friends, Sameer, and Jeremiah that it's high time he joined his own family business. It has always been an unwritten rule that South Asian Indians often invest and run their family businesses within their families. They have been known to always succeed in whatever business venture they go into. Although Sameer feels disappointed in Rahool for making such a decision, he has secretly nursed the idea of not joining his own family business. He desires to make it on his own and he had hoped that Rahool was with him on this secret agenda. To Sameer:

Their fathers had been friends for many years, both migrants from Uganda who had arrived in Belgrave, penniless, and had gone on to become successful businessmen. Rahool's father had started as a car mechanic and now ran his truck and van rental company. Sameer's family had started out selling saris and then sold the sari shop to open a restaurant specializing in East African Asian cuisine – Kampala Nights – which now had four branches across the Midlands. Both families had invested their money wisely. Both families were very comfortable. (Zayyan, 2021, p. 11)

In the words of Mir social and economic instability often drive people to migrate searching for a decent habitation (Mir, 2018, p.15). Another allure of South Asian Indian indigenous culture is in culinary pleasure which their food offer. Sameer over the weekend goes to Leicester to spend the weekend with his family. His father picks him up and they go to the first Kampala restaurant that his family ever opened, "There is an open kitchen, where the diners can see chefs dressed all in white tossing ingredients in pans over flames, sprinkling herbs over plates with a flourish, slicing red-orange peppers with huge steel knives (Zayyan, 2021, p. 21). Sameer notices how busy the restaurant is. His father further intimates to him about the recent acquisition of another

site close to the current facility to open another restaurant. Sameer is amazed at how much effort his parents put into building a family business empire. He experiences a tug of guilt knowing that he does not want to toe the line of his family restaurant business. However, he is relieved when they eventually arrive home and he takes a glimpse of his mother, "His mother is waiting at the front door, ever the picture of understated elegance in a simple blue salwar kameez and a row of gold bangles" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 30). His mother, sister, and his uncle who now live with them give him a warm welcome. They proceed to eat even as "Zara brings a bowl full of salad and a plate of garlic bread" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 31). This is aside from the bag of samosas they brought from their restaurant and the casserole dish of browned cheese, steaming hot which Sameer's mother sets on the table.

Keeping marriage within the South Asian Indians is a fundamental aspect of their culture that they hold dear. Sameer's cousin, Samah on one occasion brings home a white man whom she wants to marry. The entire family objects strongly until the white man converts to Islam. As Sameer's family enjoys light discussions while having their meal, the discussion steers towards his marital life reminding him that although time has changed, nothing has changed in terms of marriage. In the words of his uncle, Mhota Papa, as translated in the novel by the author, Zaayan, "*Shadi kyareh karwanoh? Shadi karvou ta tatou dharam che. Shadi karva ma dhiel nahi kara!* When will you get married? You know marriage is part of your *deen*. You shouldn't delay it!" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 33). Sameer's mother in adding her voice to Mhota Papa's admonition, reiterates, "When you find a nice Muslim girl that you like, you marry her, you understand? None of this dating-shating" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 34). This cultural worldview of Sameer's parents contradicts his Western view of dating any girl of his choice irrespective of race or cultural background. His mother is quick to remind him that, "...nothing has changed about *haram* and *halal*" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 34). She has always taught Sameer and Zara that love comes after marriage.

Raymond (1977, p. 55) notes that ideology can refer not only to "a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group" but also to "a system of illusory beliefs". Sameer's father excitedly continues to recount to Sameer how he and his mother plan to build an extension of their house. Sameer is shocked because he believes that their current house which already has five bedrooms, and three bathrooms is enough. However, his father tells him that he expects him to remain in the specific ideologies of the ruling class (109-110). Sameer feels sad that he cannot reciprocate the love his parents have shown him by responding positively to their desire to have him in their family business. He again suspends the idea of sharing the offer to work in Singapore with his family. He awaits another opportunity to inform his parents of his dream and plans. In Sameer's view, "He family house when he gets married and for Zara to have a space too in the family house when she eventually visits from her marital home. This is a pointer to the communal life of the South Asian Indians and the conscious efforts made by families to remain bound together without cutting ties irrespective of the institution of marriage. Sameer at this point knows that he would have a lot to contend with in getting to convince his parents to allow him to take up a job offer in Singapore

which is very far away from Leicester where his family stays. Sameer's father is excited to announce to Sammer that his friend's son Rahool who is also Sameer's mate and friend is coming home to join his own family business. Ramesh, Rahool's father came to the United Kingdom from Uganda following the forceful expulsion alongside Sameer's father. Looking back at the accomplishments of both South Asian Indian families so far, Sameer's father filled with emotion says to Sameer, "We made so many sacrifices that you wouldn't understand. We've built an empire from nothing" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 35). According to Castle (2007),

Marxist social theory begins with a base/ superstructure paradigm. The BASE (or infrastructure) refers to the modes of production as well as to the class formations and class relationships generated by them: SUPERSTRUCTURE refers to the social and cultural institutions and traditions that promulgate and sustain the wonders of what it would be like, not earning an independent salary. Needing to draw on the family account and ask his father for permission every time he wants to spend money. Being completely dependent on his parents, just like he was when he was a teenager. No scope for disagreement. (Zayyan, 2021, p. 29)

On culinary delights, Sameer's mother continues to show hospitality and mastery of many culinary pleasures to her family and relations. She employs fragrant spices in her cooking. On this particular occasion of Sameer's visit, "Sameer's mother has made a feast: guar curry – juicy beans in spicy tomato sauce; fluffy pilau, with lamb so tender it slides apart when touched; rich chicken curry. There are samosas, *khichdi* and *kadhi* for those who want it, hot *roti*, *kachumber*" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 36)

Sameer's mother continues to represent the symbol of religious commitment and fervor which the South Asian Indians are known for. Every evening after dinner, "Sameer's mother makes tea for everyone and then announces loudly that she is going to pray (despite this, no one else joins her)" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 30). Sameer's mother remains consistent in obedience to the detects of her faith while hoping that one day her family would become more committed. One late afternoon, Sameer enters the house and stumbles on his mother kneeling and focused on her prayers as she turns her head to greet the angels on her shoulders one at a time. Sameer's conscience pricks him as he thinks within himself,

His mother, the only one in the family who observed the five daily prayers, who had tried and failed to get her children to copy her, who muttered that if their father had prayed, then she is sure that her children would have prayed too. His mother, for whom prayer delivered comfort and peace, not rigidity and obligation. (Zayyan, 2021, p. 32)

Before the forceful expulsion from Uganda, Sameer's grandfather while living in Uganda tried to bring India to bear in their activities and way of life as immigrant South Asian Indians. His family tries to celebrate Indian festivals, "be it Diwali, Vaisakhi, Ashura, Khushali or Eid" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 36). This is even though there are Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs within the small minority of the coloured population. As Muslim South Asian Indians, Sameer's grandparents maintained the structure expected of Muslims, "It shuns and accepts equal measure. We have never been seen to touch

alcohol; we observe daily prayer. We stay away from things *haram*; we provide the biggest donations to the mosque" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 37). During Ramadan, they fulfill their duty of feeding the community. In making the dishes, the women of the house make it a point of duty to fuse in the traditional Indian recipes with Ugandan foodstuffs.

The Indian community which constitutes a small percentage of Uganda's population is seen to be solely behind the boosted economy and revenue of the entire Uganda. Sameer's grandfather with pride recounts the caliber of families within their circle who also visit during Ramadan, "...you will remember Ashkar, who now runs the largest foreign-owned bank in Uganda; our friend Sakib, the owner of the sugar plantation near Jinja – he has come home for Ramadan; the Singhs, in the retail management industry, now running the new shopping mall that has just opened in Kampala" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 37). The native population seems not to see what the Indians see, thereby giving the Indians an edge over them in productivity and business. Sameer's South Asian Indian grandfather during his time while living in Uganda, refused to clamp down on his religious commitment. He encouraged his daughter Farah who was approaching eighteen years to get married so that she would not live in the dormitory while at the university instead of her husband's house. This is to protect her from mixing freely with men which is against the Muslim faith. When Farah deviates from her father's teachings by being in a relationship with a young Christian boy, the entire family is shocked and mourns the disappointment she brought to them. Her father laments, "We gave her life. I have fed her, clothed her, sheltered her, and educated her. And all I have ever asked in return is for her to show *akhlag*, respect towards me, towards our cultures, our values, our traditions" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 38). The entire family insists that he no longer sees the young Christian boy rather they persuade her to meet the Muslim boy who has been arranged for her by both parents.

At work in London, Sameer anticipates the Eid celebration as Ramadan draws to a close. Even though it's a Christian environment, Sameer revels in the fact that,

...after a long month of fasting, Eid-ul-Fitr has a festivity about it that doesn't compare to other holidays (it's our Christmas, Sameer would patiently explain to his colleagues" (46). Sameer goes to Leicester from London to celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr with his family. His South Asian Indian family despite living in the United Kingdom, does not relinquish their religious practices to the background. Rather it gains momentum. This particular Eid day begins with new clothes, food, and family gatherings. Sameer recounts the usual ritual as it unfolds, "... in the early morning Sameer's mother makes honeyed *sevivan kheer*, flaked with almonds and pistachios, oozing with condensed milk; they gulp it down and go to the mosque for Eid prayers. (Zayyan, 2021, p. 50)

Sameer's parents in Leicester receive a visit from Mr. Shah, a Ugandan Indian who returned to Uganda after President Obote's invitation for the previously expelled Indians. The two families left Uganda for the United Kingdom at the onslaught of the eviction not having anything to begin life in the West with. They lost all they had worked for to the Ugandan Africans who took over their businesses. It is now amazing

however that a few years later, Mr. Shah seems to have recovered all he had lost and even much more. In the words of Althusser (2001), Marxism is "a new science: the science of history" (19).

Sameer being around for a break in his parents' house, goes into the sitting room on his mother's prompting to welcome his father's old family friend. Affluence is written all over Mr. Shah as Sameer notices during a handshake,

...a strong grip, black hairs covering the backs of his hands, gold rings squeezed into the gaps between fat, stubby fingers. A rose-gold Rolex Daytona is wrapped around his wrist – very nice. His jet-black hair, slicked back, is barely receding for a man his age. A large stomach protrudes from his short, stout frame, which is decorated by a garish purple jacket (Zayyan, 2021, p. 77).

He has again amassed wealth in Uganda, unlike Sameer's parents who are merely comfortable.

Sameer however does not understand why Mr. Shah is not staying in a hotel seeing that he can easily afford any hotel of his choice. He questions his mother on that, however, his younger sister Zara who lives with their parents and seems to have understood the culture of South Asian Indians more than Sameer responds to him in a dense Indian accent, "*Arey, bacha*, don't you know anything about our people? Why spend the money on a hotel when you can stay with your relatives for free?" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 78). Sameer notices that Mr. Shah, "eats like a true Indian, shoveling rice with his fingers into his mouth" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 78).

As Sameer engages Mr. Shah in a conversation, Mr. Shah reiterates the importance of working for himself rather than for others for a long time. In Mr. Shah's words, "We Asians were born to be entrepreneurs, it runs in our blood. You can't waste your natural gifts, son. You've won the great lottery of life, being born one of us" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 78). Mr. Shah goes ahead to tell Sameer and Zara how he worked hard to revive the old sugar factories which were in ruins upon their return to Uganda, "My grandfather and father had built up such a successful enterprise" (80). Sameer notices one thing about Mr. Shah, he does not encourage waste. He takes back the half-smoked cigarette which he offered to Sameer, but which Sameer could not finish.

Sameer's father continues to take him on a tour of their family businesses. This time, it is a petrol station on the outskirts of Oadby. Sameer's father likes to call it a little side earner, "It runs twenty-four hours a day and has three full-time employees" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 80). Sameer's father thinks that while they wait for Sameer to resign from the Law firm where he works in London, he is expected to pay his salary into the family joint account. In his words, "Really, it's all one pot. You should be sharing your income with us to help this business, which is your business, to grow. That's the way our types of families work. All of this and everything it's earned will come to you eventually" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 81). Sameer, however, does not like this idea. He wonders within himself, how he would feel asking for permission from his parent for every spending especially, his weekend expenditure.

The South Asian Indians are known to easily take advantage of business lacuna. This is the edge they have over the African Ugandas back in Uganda which makes them

explore the economy to their advantage. Mr. Shah tells Sameer, "...of how easy it is to run exploiting opportunities, markets are not saturated like they are here and there are limited labour laws" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 83). Sameer shares the idea of renovating his father's petrol station to establish new retail units. Mr. Shah encourages him, "Now you're thinking like your father's son! Think big and go for it. With your heritage, you can't fail" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 84). True to Mr. Shah's words, Sameer made tremendous progress in putting on paper his growth strategy for the petrol station, "He is extremely pleased with his resourcefulness, almost enamoured with his productivity in the space of a few short days" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 90). It is a pity that Sameer's father deflates Sameer's zeal with his response to Sameer's business growth ideas for the petrol station with his response. In his words, "This, what you're suggesting, would be a major distraction at a time when we have a significant acquisition for Kampala Nights. What we know and what we do is the restaurant business, *beta*, we're not petrol station managers and we don't want to be" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 91). Sameer's father insists that the restaurant business has more financial prospects than petrol and demands that Sameer drop his business idea and toe the line of the family restaurant business.

This weakens Sameer and he blurts off angrily his plans of moving to Singapore. This is against the expectations of his family that he would return home to Leicester to join the family restaurant business. Sameer's parents are disappointed in him. His only sister, Zara seems to be on the side of her parents. She has accepted her faith knowing that as soon as she finishes university, she will be married off to someone from the mosque. At Leicester, Sameer's father goes as far as calling the Law firm where Sameer works to inform them that Sameer does not want to go to Singapore and that he wants to resign. Sameer is shocked and furious at the extent his parents could go to stop him from not following the pattern of the family business. He now remembers how they had also asked the girl he was dating in secondary school to exit her relationship with their son without Sameer's knowledge. Sameer confronts his parents about contacting his employers. Sameer momentarily regrets coming from an Asian family. He sees how his mother supports his father's decision, "The unit. Unbreakable" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 97). Sameer's grandfather in his diary letter to his late wife, explains why he could not make Abdullah, a shareholder of the family business despite being an asset of the company. In his words, "The reason I did not make him a shareholder, my dear, is because Saeed & Sons is a family-owned company. Papa founded this company in the year 1910 and since then it has always been kept within the family. The chain of history is our legacy" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 103). In the words of Ayaz (2020), "the aim of Marxism is to obtain and maintain economic power (1). This collaborates Tyson's opinion that "the economy is a base on the 'superstructure' of social, political and ideological realities" (Tyson 54) The South Asian Indian family continues to maintain the culture of intra-marriage. In the words of Sameer's grandfather, "We are not meant to intermarry. Look at how our community has flourished by keeping to its own; how we have preserved what we brought from India generations ago. Why would we dilute what Allah has blessed us with naturally? Just think of those confused, *chotara* children, not knowing if they are black or if they are brown" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 132). It is almost a sacrilege to intermarry.

Even, Ugandans know that the Indians are the backbone of the Uganda economy. Asians were not allowed to own Agricultural land in Uganda, so they focused on trade and still made their mark. (Zayyan, 2021, p. 175).

Sameer travels to Uganda to visit Mr Shah when his relationship with his parents turns sour because of his refusal to resign from the London law firm and join the family restaurant business. After a few days in Uganda, he is inspired to begin his personal business. While drawing inspiration from his host Mr. Shah, "Sameer draws up a spreadsheet to see what it would cost to start producing and selling Saeed & Sons juices in Kampala: renting a kitchen and machinery, purchasing the fruit and packaging, arranging transportation to retail outlets" (Zayyan, 2021, p.178). Sameer experiences some kind of excitement knowing that he is solely the brain behind the business idea and its success possibility. This is nothing compared to the satisfaction he gets after putting in several days of hard work at the law firm, "He feels renewed, powerful, like he could conquer the world" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 178).

While in Uganda, Sameer visits his late grandfather's house in Uganda and meets the Ugandan family whose grandfather worked for his grandfather and who has retained the use of the house as given by Sameer's grandfather. Sameer falls in love with the Muslim medical doctor who is the granddaughter of Abdulla following the family's hospitality and Maryam's tourist guidance. Sameer is fully aware of the implication of desiring to marry a non-south Asian Indian as is the culture of his people, however, "He has never been more certain about anything; instinct tells him that with her by his side, things will always be all right" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 200). Sameer's father despite being angry with Sameer, secretly hopes that Sameer would change his mind. In his plea to Sameer, he needs, "To know that there is someone who will take over the legacy that we have worked so hard to create..." (Zayyan, 2021, p. 199). He simply cannot imagine his son not inheriting the family business as their cultural norm is. Sameer insists that he wants to resign from the law firm and move to Uganda. He continues by revealing that he wants to marry Abdullah's granddaughter. At this point, his parents are shattered by the news. Sameer's father spits, "Abdullah was our house servant" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 200). His father sorrowfully but firmly informs him that the family will not accept his decision to leave the family business nor marry out of their South Asian Indian tribe.

Sameer's father insists that they can never support Sameer's decisions. In his words concerning marrying a non-South Asian Indian, he opines concerning the girl in question, "She will never understand our family, she will never understand our culture" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 201). Sameer's father believes that there are a lot of South Asian Indian girls in the mosque who they can help Sameer marry instead of him going to Uganda to find a wife. Sameer tries to reason with his parents by saying, "We live in a multicultural world now, you can't expect me-or -Zara- to marry someone from the same village in India that your ancestors were from. And it doesn't make sense anyway" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 202). Sameer's only sister advises his brother not to go against their parents, "Like, do you want to disobey them? To get married without their blessing? Come on – surely you agree that's wrong?". Sameer insists and leaves Leicester for

Uganda. With Mr. Shah's assistance, he starts his own juice business. He is anxious about the possibility of him making sales. However, by the end of the first week the retailers contacted Sameer for more bottles because they had sold out everything, "...all of the retailers agree to twelve-month contracts with him" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 230). Sameer is overwhelmed with joy. Mr. Shah takes him out for dinner to celebrate him. Over dinner, Mr. Shah tells Sameer that more restaurants have indicated interest in trying Sameer's products. The demand is already going high, "They talk about opening a factory, employees, and automating the processes. Tremors of excitement run the length of Sameer's spine: so, this is what it feels like to create something" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 231). Sameer's excitement overshadows the feeling that his parents are not even speaking to him. He looks forward to marrying Maryam and running his already flourishing business.

However, Sameer begins to encounter challenges from Ugandan producers in his line of fruit juice business. It seems that they now experience low turnover because customers prefer Sameer's own brand of juices. This is simply because Sameer fuses his native South Asian Indian spices and herbs with the Uganda fruits and herbs giving his products a unique taste and nutrient. The Uganda juice producer accuses Sameer of stealing his business. In further attacks Sameer, "You Asians, always helping each other out, never thinking about the people who are hosting you in the very land on which you are standing! (Zayyan, 2021, p. 232). Sameer feels bad about the accusation and when he relates his experience to Mr Shah, he is told that it's a normal occurrence with the Ugandans who mostly haste to see the Indians succeed. He encourages Sameer to overlook the accusations and focus on his business because, "This is just capitalism" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 233).

Sameer's father continues to impress on Sameer to have a change of mind. He tells him that even though he is English, having been born in Leicester, United Kingdom, he was raised with Indian values, and he is expected to reciprocate the sacrifices made by his parents to raise him to become who he is now. He implores Sameer to fulfill his obligations to his parents and the entire family by returning to the family business and getting married within their race. Sameer is moved and confused at the same time, especially after the experience of Indophobia. He relates this to his fiancé Maryam but her response to him is that "Some things just can't be fixed" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 237). Sameer and Maryam go ahead with the wedding plans. A few days to the day, Sameer's mother and Zara arrive in Uganda without his father indicating that the family is not in full support because his father is against his mother and sister coming. Sameer's mother cannot bear the pain of not witnessing his only son's wedding so she comes with suitcases filled with gifts, especially of layers upon layers of salwar kameez for Maryam and her family, "... an Asian tradition Sameer had no idea existed" (Zayyan, 2021, p. 240). Sameer's mother remains solemn all through the marriage rites, however, her face takes a new lift during the *isha* prayers done in the congregation of Maryam's family members (Zayyan, 2021, p. 241).

Conclusion

The analysis of the primary text above uncovers the vast and complex world of the 21st-century South Asian Indian culture woven from ancient traditions, diverse languages, and profound spiritualities. This is in terms of foregrounding the enduring allure of its Indigenous culture rooted in enterprising inclinations, sustaining family businesses, strict intra-marriage norms, religion, culinary delights, and family, and community bonds. These are against the background of exiled immigrants living in the West and or returnee Asians of Ugandan origin.

This paper employs the Marxist critical theory as a theoretical framework to examine how economic forces shape society and culture. Furthermore, how this contributes to the inequality and oppression meted out to the South Asian Indian. Consequently, the paper finds that hard work, wealth accumulation, and loyalty to family ideals remain the enduring legacy of the South Asian Indians irrespective of their places of settlement. The stronghold on its cultural heritage remains a vital source of strength and identity bringing to mind the enduring human spirit in the face of change. Therefore, deviation from these cultural ideals results in broken family bonds, frustration, and feelings of alienation. It is seen that strong family structure and shared values within the South Asian Indian communities create a stable foundation for businesses, fostering trust, commitment, and a shared vision across generations. However, challenges like balancing family dynamics with professional demands and ensuring fair succession planning require constant attention. This is made more problematic because of urbanization and education, economic independence, and even legal reforms.

Despite challenges, family and community bonds in South Asian Indian culture provide individuals with a sense of belonging, support, and shared identity even in diverse and challenging environments. Cultural norms, religious beliefs, and traditions that reinforce existing power structures in the South Asian Indian communities are dynamic and can be levers for both reinforcing and dismantling social hierarchies.

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