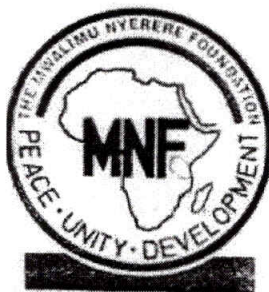


THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



“TANZANIA-INDIA RELATIONS”

BY

**DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
CHAIRMAN OF THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION**

AT

**THE FUND RAISING DINNER BY THE TANZANIA-INDIA
FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION**

Dar es Salaam,
19 July 2002.

Mr. Chairman

**Your Excellency, High Commissioner Dinesh Jain
and Mrs. Jain**

Your Excellencies

Dear Friends

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by thanking the organizers of this function, the Tanzania – India Friendship Association, for inviting me to join you this evening and for according me the privilege of addressing you.

It is a particular pleasure for me to have an opportunity of participating in this noble initiative of your Association, which truly reflects the common spirit of caring and generosity characterizing both the Indian and Tanzanian people. I wish to congratulate the members and leaders of the Tanzania – India Friendship Association for the dedication and commitment that they have demonstrated in the founding of this Association and consolidating it, within such a short period, to the level of undertaking such major initiatives. I have been kept fully abreast on the Association's plans and activities, even when I was out of the country, and I can only commend you for your endeavour to further strengthen the cordial relations that exist between our two countries and our peoples. The occasion of this evening is an eloquent testimony of a people to people linkage in international relations.

I have been asked to speak on Tanzania – India Relations. I hope you do sympathize with me, that this is not an easy subject for such a distinguished and informed audience which is present here. Many of you and particularly the organizers of this function are a living example of this subject, in a very real and determined way. You are working on this relationship, you are promoting it, you are more aware of its prospects as well as some of its difficulties. At the same time, I should also admit that since the early years of my diplomatic career, I have been greatly inspired and remained with very fond memories of the Indian nation and her people. It is therefore not easy for me to address this subject dispassionately.

I do believe, in this regard, that the choice of this subject, for an evening of this nature, is probably meant to contribute towards reflecting on how best to consolidate the relations between our two countries and our peoples so as to be able to surmount the common challenges that face us at this advent of the new century and the new millennium. Indeed, it is towards this direction that I would like to orient my address.

I find it useful to start by situating the Tanzanian – Indian relations within the overall context of the Indian – African historical relations. In this respect, I am more inclined to subscribe to the popular narrative that the monsoon winds were created so that our two peoples can establish contacts between each other. It is therefore quite likely that the route which Vasco Da Gama followed as he steered his ship from Zanzibar and the Tanzanian Coast, to the Indian Sub-Continent in search of the precious Indian spices had probably been traveled by some brave Indian or African sailors. Why should it be easy for Gulf merchants to come down the East African coast, and their Indian counterparts not to do so? Nevertheless, even if we use Vasco Da Gama's voyage as a reference point, we should be talking about a recorded contact of more than 500 years between Africa and India.

During these many centuries, our fate and destiny has been linked, and in this regard, we have shared common aspirations. As Africans we suffered the indignities of the slave trade and colonialism

and the stigma of racial discrimination. But so too did the Indian people, who as indentured labourers, whether in Port Elizabeth, or the ports of Durban, Cape Town and in the various sugar plantations, were subjected to exploitation and discrimination.

It is against this background of common humiliation that the struggle of the Indian people for independence provided hope and inspiration to the Africans, and made what appeared to be remotely feasible to become achievable goals, thus giving a new impetus to the resurgence of African nationalism. And as President Thabo Mbeki recalled recently, on the eve of the inaugural session of the African Union, the great fighter of Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi, remains a shared icon for our two societies because he perfected his skills as a people's revolutionary within the context of Africa's colonial experience.

It is therefore no accident that throughout Africa's liberation struggle, India has been in the forefront in supporting the just cause of the African people. This support has been consistent regardless of

the Government in power. It started with the administration of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and carried on with the succeeding governments of Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and with the succeeding administrations including the current one led by Prime Minister Atal Bihar Vajpaye. This support has been multifaceted. At the United Nation for example, India has been a reliable ally and partner of Africa in the struggle against colonialism and racism. Who can forget the powerful and eloquent indictment against the apartheid system delivered by Krishna Menon in the Security Council long before it was fashionable to say anything against the racist regime in Pretoria.

It is therefore not surprising that the relations between Tanzania and India have been bolstered by the broader context of a common Continental experience and shared aspirations for freedom, dignity and improvement of people's welfare. It is these values that strengthened the bond between leaders like the Founding Father of the Tanzanian modern nation, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and the late Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi. It is the same shared

vision that fostered the determination of our two nations to promote South – South cooperation as a basis for strengthening the position of developing countries in global relations.

It is within this historical and dynamic Continental linkage that the Tanzanian – Indian relations have to be situated and advanced. As we endeavour to realize the visions of our nations and to overcome the challenges of globalization, it is necessary to harness our respective endowments and deploy them in optimizing the collective good of our peoples.

Both our nations are developing countries, though, of course, India has made great strides in surmounting some of its socio-economic obstacles and in achieving an exemplary level of political progress. It is a nation with an advanced industrial base, a modern agricultural sector and dynamic service and commercial spheres. It has a large number of reputable scientists, recognized not only by their outstanding contributions in their country, but also in centers of excellence of Europe and America. Her bankers, doctors, artists as

well as businessmen and women have been able to optimize their nation's interests and to consolidate a firm socio-economic base in a globalizing world. And quite remarkably, despite her large population, currently estimated at more than one billion, India has been able to sustain a vibrant democratic culture throughout its modern history.

Both our countries are characterized by social diversities that we have strived to use as assets for the collective development of our respective nations. The ethnic, religious and social differences found in our societies are providing a rich mosaic of culture and traditions that are being harnessed for the benefit of the people as a whole. The fact that among the people of Tanzania, there is a sizeable population that traces its historical origins to India makes the social bond between our two countries to be even more profound.

In the framework of relations between our two nations, the historical linkage, the fact that both India and Tanzania are developing countries, while at the same time, India having achieved the outstanding progress in various fields, provide a strong basis for

consolidating cooperation and solidarity between our two nations for the benefit of our peoples. Indeed, these assets provide a space and opportunity for advancing our relations and pursuing mutual interests.

It is encouraging that over the years, tremendous efforts have been made to promote the friendly relations between Tanzania and India. I wish to pay tribute to all the officials, businessmen and women, as well as private citizens who have contributed to this achievement. The solidarity and understanding that prevails between our two countries in global affairs has been strong and consistent. The trading relations and opportunities for investment that exist between India and Tanzania have been satisfying while more efforts are being made to foster improvement.

It is in the area of education and training where significant achievements have been attained. India has a first rate educational system which excels in every field. Many Tanzanians, have trained in India and have proceeded to undertake responsible assignments in

our country over the years. While serving as Tanzania's High Commissioner to India, I had also the privilege and opportunity of carrying on my undergraduate studies there. There are indeed a number of doctors, engineers, accountants, and information technology experts who trained in India and who are now serving in our national institutions.

These are all important accomplishments. However, for a relationship of more than five centuries, we should not be satisfied with these achievements. We need to overcome the obstacles and strive to attain a higher level of cooperation. I sincerely believe that there is still a greater more potential for trade and investment between our two countries. While it is true that India has succeeded to revolutionize its agricultural sector and is now self sufficient in food crops, there are still commodities that it can import from Tanzania and also vice versa.


I strongly believe that we can and should learn from the Indian experience in terms of food security and food self-sufficiency. I still recall that at the time I represented my country in New Delhi in the mid 1960's India was still dependent on food imports and food aid. The Green Revolution transformed India from a country which was chronically in food deficit into a net exporter of foodstuffs. This year it is reported food grains may reach an all time high surpassing last year's bumper harvest of 211 million tons. Tanzania is an agricultural Country and for a long time to come agriculture will continue to be the mainstay of the national economy. Our ability to eradicate poverty will very much dependent not only on our success in addressing the problem of food insecurity but also on increased productivity in agriculture generally. And this means more than increased acreage brought under grain cultivation. It means application of science and technology and putting in place the necessary support infrastructure.

Similarly as we now enter a new round of global trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization, it is important for

our two governments to maintain their solidarity for the mutual benefit of our people.

The great stride that India has made in Information and Communication Technology can be very helpful to Tanzania in overcoming the digital divide. Indian ICT and expertise can assist Tanzania in accessing this critical medium which is relatively more expensive to acquire from the western market. In this respect, the whole process of technology transfer is much more viable when initiated through India that shares a similar socio-economic milieu with Tanzania than if it is done from elsewhere.

Two obstacles have to be surmounted in achieving all these. In the first place, it is necessary that we both overcome some of the prejudices, myths and stereotypes that may exist between ourselves. The global establishment media does not paint our societies favourably. For a long time, we have tended to be gullible to the negative portrayal of our capacities and our cultures. It is important for organizations such as the Tanzania – India Friendship Association



to work towards dispelling these myths and stereotypes about Indian and African peoples and societies and to reinforce the basis for developing a positive relationship.

The second obstacle that needs to be surmounted pertains to the kind of relations that we should endeavour to reinforce. As Africa endeavours to consolidate the African Union and to develop a new partnership internally and globally, it is important to ensure that the Tanzanian – Indian relationship remains mutual and reciprocal. Much as India is relatively more advanced and industrialized, the relation it fosters with Tanzania should not be a donor – recipient one. All efforts have to be made to ensure that a dynamic and sustainable interaction is promoted which is based on reciprocal exchange and cooperation between the peoples of the two countries.

Once again, the Tanzania – India Friendship Association has a great contribution in exploring avenues for such a relationship that is based on a people to people linkage.

The enthusiasm you have demonstrated in the short period since the founding of your organization gives me a great sense of hope and optimism. I wish you all the best in this noble endeavour.

I thank you!