

THE ASIAN CONTRIBUTION

In 1907 Winston Churchill noted that problems arising from the impact of European and African involved also a third race, the Asiatic. The industry, thrift and sharp business acumen of the Indian, combined with his ability to live on a few shillings a month, would give him economic superiority if unchecked. After discussion of the problem Churchill put the case of the British Indian.

How stands the claim of the British Indian? His rights as a human being, his rights as a British subject, are equally engaged. It was the Sikh soldier who bore an honourable part in the conquest and pacification of these East African countries. It is the Indian trader who, penetrating and maintaining himself in all sorts of places to which no white man would go or in which no white man could earn a living, has more than any one else developed the early beginnings of trade and opened up the first slender means of communication.

It was by Indian labour that the one vital railway on which everything else depends was constructed. It is the Indian banker who supplies perhaps the larger part of the capital yet available for business and enterprise, and to whom the white settlers have not hesitated to recur for financial aid.

The Indian was here long before the first British official. He may point to as many generations of useful industry on the coast and inland as the white settlers—especially the most recently arrived contingents from South Africa (the loudest against him of all)—can count years of residence.

Is it possible for any Government with a scrap of respect for honest dealing between man and man, to embark upon a policy of deliberately squeezing out the native of India from regions in which he has established himself under every security of public faith?

Most of all must we ask, is such a policy possible to the Government which bears sway over three hundred millions of our Indian Empire?

We are in [the] presence of one of those apparently hopeless antagonisms of interests which baffle and dispirit all who are concerned in their adjustment. And these questions are not confined to East Africa or to South Africa. A whole series of new problems has arisen, and will grow graver and larger as the immediate history of the British Empire unfolds.

My African Journey, by Winston Churchill (1908), pp. 49-50.