



Compte rendu d'entretien
Nairobi – Kenya

PORTRAIT : IBRAHIM
Date de l'entretien : Juin 09

My name is Ibrahim, I'm a Kenyan citizen, I was born in Mombasa. My mother came from Tanzania and my father was born in Kenya. My grandfather came from India and he died in Mombasa in 1942, when I was not born yet. My grandfather was a broker and my father was employed in an office, he studied in India but after he came back to Kenya. He got married in 1942 and I was born in 1944. I've never been to India and I have no intention of going to India because I was born here, this is my country, I love it and I like to stay in Kenya only. My father, when he retired, went to stay in Sweden because my sister got married in Sweden and all the times my father used to be with my sisters. So when I got married in 1960, I moved from Mombasa to Nairobi. I was on my own, I never stayed with my family when I was married. As I told you before my father and my mother moved to Sweden and they became Sweden citizens also. My father died in 2004 and he told my sister that he wanted to be buried in Mombasa. So he was buried in Mombasa. After the death of my father I asked my mother to move back to Kenya and to come to stay with me. In 2005 my mother agreed to come to stay with me but unfortunately she just stayed only two weeks with me and she died here in Nairobi. So I took her to Mombasa and I buried her next to my father's grave.

I have got three children. The first one is a daughter and she's married. The second one is son and he's married and he has a child. The third is a son. My son used to work here, last year he went to Tanzania, he got a very good job there but there were problems with his work permit, he had to come back. Now he's here with me but he's going to Zambia because he found a job there. My other son works in a travel agency, he's well settled, he's doing his job very well and he's enjoying his life. About myself now. I used to work as an accountant but not a qualified one. In 1982 I started my own business in renovation. Now I'm in the same business but I'm semi-retired, I don't take lots of job and I got my limited number of clients, like for example Alliance Française or Ifra, and I'm happy with them.

I had a big dream: I wanted to be a motorcar mechanical. I've been rallying, I've been travelling a lot in the cars, I like driving. When I was in school I had choice of two sections: commercial section and technical section. I took the technical one. At school I was very good in math and so for me the job of accountant was very easy. But after a while I realised that I was not interested in accountant work and I decided to start my own business. I had a very good friend in business renovation, he was always pushing me up to take a renovation job and he helped me a lot. I succeeded in this activity and I'm happy with this job.



When I was young and I was at school I was a footballer. I was the captain of my team at school and when I came to Nairobi I played for some clubs. So I like football but cricket also. I played cricket, I'm umpire and I have been the chairman of the Umpire Association last year. This association has the control of all the umpires and wherever any international games come to Kenya they approach the Umpire association for the umpiring of the games and we provide umpires.

Is cricket very popular in Kenya?

Kenya knew cricket recently because before the most important sport here was the football. But now they're beginning to play cricket too and there are lots of Africans who became a very good cricket players. At schools also, they're beginning to play cricket and so I think that in the future in Kenya there will be lots of cricket players.

To come back to your education can you tell us how far did you go in school?

I studied for my career school in Mombasa, I was in a primary school that was from standard one to standard seven at that time and from standard seven I went to form: form one, form two, form three and form four. I go through the Cambridge University, I passed my exams but I never had an opportunity to go out because I come from a very poor family, my father was the only one to support the family and he could not afford. So after leaving the school I had to start working.

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

I have two brothers and two sisters. I'm the eldest in the family then my sister follows me, she lives in Australia now, then there is another brother who lives here in Nairobi, he's a retired man, he had depression problems and so now he doesn't work. My other brother is also in Australia and another sister is also in Australia.

What kind of job they do in Australia?

One of my sisters is an accountant, the other is a secretary and my brother is a telephone technician.

Have you ever thought to emigrate?

I've never thought about it and I've never spoken to my children about living Kenya because they're happy here. And now I am too old to go away from here and to start from the beginning again.

When you were young, have you ever thought to emigrate to Sweden or to Australia?

That time was a very good time in Kenya, I've never had any problem and I've never thought to emigrate. But now time has changed, there are lots of problems here in Kenya, people are running away. But you know, now problems are everywhere. Even if you go to Europe or to America there are problems. The time has changed so badly, the human beings are not honest now, attitudes of all the people are spoiled



now. Honestly discipline is lacking, and that's one of the most important problems that are affecting us now.

Do you feel part of the Indian community into Kenya or do you feel Kenyan as anybody else? Tell us something about the Indian community here in Kenya.

Most of the people of the Indian community come from India but some of them also come from Pakistan. I'm a Muslim but my family comes from India. During the time of British rule here in Kenya when they were constructing a railway from Mombasa to Nairobi and India was under the British colonials, British brought people from India to work for the railway line which was in construction. From there lots of Indians came and settle in Kenya. My grandfather did the same thing, but he came here never worked for the railway line, he started his own business as a broker agent and he got married here. Indian community is a very big community, there are different communities, different tribes inside. Indian Community tried to establish the same life that lived in India here in Kenya. It was a beautiful time until 1973 when Kenya became independent.

And what about now?

Now it's ok Me and the other Muslims we feel like Kenyans not like Indians. So I developed myself with the local people here and we, the Muslims, live like local people. But there are some members of the Indian community who are still following the Indian tradition of life and they don't manage to mixed up with local people. For Muslims there are no problems of taking up the lifestyle of the local people. But Hindus are a very different community and they have lots of problems to mixed up with the local people.

To go back to your job could you tell us how much is your monthly income?

Mostly I have got sub contracts also. When I take a job of constructing something I don't go in big constructions. Sometimes I have to pass my job to some other people and I take the profit. Now that I'm semi retired my monthly profit is about 10500 Ksh, minimum.

How many people do you support with your earnings?

At the moment I have a family of six people, we are all living together. My son is with me with his wife and his kids.

Did you buy your house or do you rent it?

My house is my own house. It is not a house, it is a flat. My own community has helped me: our community tried to help some working class people to have their own places. I bought my house from my community in 1976. It's a two bedrooms house with a sitting room, it's a nice small house and at that time I paid it 1200 Shl.

How do you place yourself in the Kenyan society? Do you feel privileged?



I don't say that I'm privileged. I'm just an happy person. Because I have developed friendly relationship with everybody. I don't see only people from my own community; I'm mixed up with local people. Local people, Kenyan people respect me.

Do you think that there is a middle class in Kenya?

Yes, we have a middle class. But now that middle class is going upper or is going down. In Kenya now there are rich people on one hand, and poor people on the other hand. There are very few middle class people now in Kenya.

From your point of you, what kinds of jobs do middle class people?

Most of them are workers; big companies employ them. Few of them are in the business, but in a small-scale business. They have no chance of promotion. They are depending on the other people.

In your opinion how much is the earnings of a middle class people?

If you take the house where they live the rent must be 4000-5000 Ksh. So monthly their earnings must be around 20000 Ksh.

Do you place yourself in the middle class?

Yes, I place myself in the middle class. Because whatever are my earnings I spend them.

Are you involved into politics?

Honestly I hate politics. Sometimes also in sport when I saw something political going on I just went away from there. I have left my association three times because of the political things. I'm not involved in the politics at all.

You have never been?

No, I've never been involved in politics. Because politics is a dirty game. Politicians can never be men of church, you know. A person who is very honest, who is used going to the church will never become a politician. Politics is for the crook people. This is my feeling so I don't want to involve myself in politics at all. Now the honesty and the discipline are disappeared in the human beings. That's the problem, you know. If you see the past history when Abraham Lincoln was there, when Ghandi was there, they were honest people. But now is changed, the time has really changed. It's going from bad to worst now. People's attitudes have changed, they are always thinking on themselves.

Middle class persons that you know, are they involved in politics? Do you think that a political change could come from them?

It's very difficult now. I don't think that middle class could play an important role in determining a political change. The gap between the upper class, the middle class and the lower class is a great gap. The upper class is too powerful, we can't do anything, we can just look watch and see what happens.



In your opinion what kind of activity do the Kenyan upper class people?

Most of them are business man. They have business in Kenya and outside Kenya. They are enjoying their lives, you know, money bring money.

Did your children go to a public school or they went to a private one?

My children went to a public school. They arrived up to form four.

Why didn't they go further than form four?

I tried to push them to continue their studies, but they didn't want, they were not interested at all in continuing studies. If they didn't continue to study it was not because I couldn't afford it: our community proposed to help me in paying for my kid's instruction but they didn't want to go on. So, as you can see, our community is always there to help us.

Do you belong to social clubs into your community or outside?

I belong to outside clubs. We have community clubs also but I'm not a member of them. I am a member of different community clubs. I'm a member of **Agacan sport club** in Nairobi and a member of **Naghara sport club**. Since being an umpire I can go to any club, I don't need any membership or anything because they respect that. Actually I am a member of the Ismaili community club but I'm not Ismaili.

Can you tell us something more about these clubs?

Agacan sport club is a community club, is a public club, anybody can join: they have to get entrance fee and to pay the annual membership. When I joined the club there is no entrance fee, I was just became a member because I was in the sports, I was a football captain for some team clubs here and I played cricket. As I am sport man I don't have to pay the entrance fee, I pay the annual membership, and it's about 10000 Ksh par year.

Does your wife works?

She used to work before she got married; she used to work in a bank. But once she got married, she is just housewife. She also goes to the community and she does social works, for example, she teaches religion to the children of the community.

Is she paid for teaching religion?

No, she's a volunteer.

Where do you live exactly in Nairobi?

I live in Naghara area.

What are your relationships with the local empy? Do you know him or her?

She's a lady actually. **Margaret Manghiri**, but I've never meet her because I'm not interested in politics.



What has been the impact of the economical crisis on your life?

It affects everybody actually but we have to struggle and we have to survive. Because being a middle class or a lower class people is very difficult, nobody listens to us. So we just have to face it. We don't have the power to do anything. When there is a crisis like this the situation is very difficult because prices go up, especially the prices for provisions. The situation is especially difficult for the lower class people, because they spend all that they earn, they have no savings.

Do you make savings?

You know what middle class people do, you know what I do, if I go to buy meat, for example, I will buy meat for a week and I will keep it at home. I do provisions. But for the lower class people it is worst, they have no money for provisions, they are suffering more. There is nobody to look after them. Nobody is interested at them. Is not more as before. When I was young, we used to care for others also. But now things are changed, people are on their owns, they don't want to see others. I'm fell really sorry for all lower class people. During the post electoral crisis in 2007, lower class people, poor people suffered more than the others. Some of them stayed for days without food but nobody bothers to see them.

Were you involved in the events of 2007 post electoral crisis?

I was not involved but what we did with my community people was to try to bring food, clothes to people who were suffering. We didn't aid only Muslims but all the people who needed our help. We tried to help everybody, without any kind of distinction.

Are you involved in charity organisation?

Not directly, but if there is someone in my community who needs help I do my best to help him.