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Indian Diaspora in Africa: A Heritage Resource in Indo-African Interactions

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Abstract: There are more than 3 million People of Indian Origin (PIO) in Africa. They are settled in Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone and Arab speaking countries. Bulk of them have gone more than 150 year ago, though there is a recent skilled and short term India diasporas. There was substantial and active presence of trading Indians along African coast since ancient times, but bulk of them went as indentured worker, construction workers and business Diasporas during colonial period. They went at the lowest rank of society but over the period they emerged as section that manages and controls substantial part of GDP in many African countries. They fought with Africans for African liberation and today economically and politically they are important segment of African society. However, before globalization due to policy of active dissociation followed by Government of India with its Diaspora, they remained somewhat detached from India. As the Diaspora has emerged as one of the important mega trends and movers of globalization, Indian government too has changed its Diaspora policy and establish a Ministry for its Diaspora to globally promote its economic, political and strategic interest through its Diasporas, African Diasporas has also emerged as an important heritage resource for Indo-African relations. This paper would examine the Indian Diaspora factor in Indo-African Relations and its potential as a heritage resource in providing India a competitive edge in its relations with Africa under globalization.