



India's Strategy in South East Africa: A Study on India -Madagascar Relationship

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1. Introduction

Indian Ocean is the 3rd largest ocean of world and an account of one fifth portion of the world ocean .It makes connection with three big continents of world including Asia, Africa and Australia. Strait of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Arab sea are prominent strategic juncture in this region. Political uncertainty, regional conflict and ‘juggling relation” between India and China, proactive policy of US are eye-catching in Indian Ocean in general and for Madagascar in Particular. This region seems very important, stumbling block and significant from Geopolitics and geo-economics perspective (WFB, 2023).

India is a country that rich in its history ,culture and civilization. Being a postcolonial country ,third world nation and rising power ,India believes in Vishwamitra, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,Vishwaguru and the world as a family .South South Cooperation ,helping nation by providing humanitarian assistance and adding African Union in G20 ,all are reflected in India' s Foreign Policy for world in general and for global South in particular and also fight against apartheid by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa that shows India's approach in African region in general and for South East African region in particular. Through NAM India and other developing nations including Madagascar had taken their Independent decision while avoiding engaging with any other power block. Madagascar has participated in NAM Summit in 1980 .Under Narendra Modi Government, extended



Neighborhoods, Vision Sagar all are placed for developing a sound ,Strategic and mutual collaborative relation in Indian Ocean region in general and for Madagascar in particular .

Madagascar in past was under the control of traditional power of France and in 1960 Madagascar got independent from France .However the nation is unique ,distinct and diverse in its nature and it is a house of 27 million people and major exporter of cloves ,perfume to the different corner of world . Madagascar plays an important role in the Indian Ocean Region from a Geopolitical and geo-economics perspective. The interests of major powers are situated in this Strategic place.

India and Madagascar were under colonial rule though under different empire including India under British and Madagascar under France .They have shared a long history that seen in their mysterious origin ;tectonic plate was activated in huge speed under heavy pressure that erupting volcano and subsequently two region were created such as India and Madagascar.Hence Madagascar is being considered India' s lost brother .Flora and Fauna in both India and Madagascar has shared similar features .India and Madagascar are connected in different way from a historical and evolution perspective .

International Yoga observation, creation of Hindu Temple at Antananarivo and Tamil merchants in 11th century has explored Madagascar, all are talking about India's historic long relationship with Madagascar. Since late 18th century, Indian diaspora are seen though in a small number including 17,500 but their contribution for development of Madagascar is appreciable. Indian Diaspora has been carried out the heritage ,culture of India that visible in celebrating Diwali ,devotional song , performance of daily aarti and dance .This is not only enjoyed by Indian people but also participate by foreigners.5000 tone of rice to Madagascar, vaccine assistance to Magalasya, cycle to school children of Antananarivo and opening of CGARD by president of India and high level official visit between India and Madagascar are crucial in highlights India' s tall figure as Vishwa Mitra and Noble idea like world as a family .India engage with madagascar under different multilateral initiative including NAM ,G77 ,ISA are crucial in this context .Security in the Indian Ocean region ,maritime Security and China's parochial policy under One Belt One Road Initiative provoked India to increase its hand in building a strong strategic bilateral relationship with Western Ocean Region in general and for Madagascar in particular through the brand strategy 'Vision SAGAR'.PASSEX naval exercise conducted between India and Madagascar in 2021 to tranquilize the aggressiveness of China.



This paper presents on India Madagascar relations from different angle and discuss how India maintain its Strategic presence in western Indian Ocean especially Madagascar to achieve a win win situation.

2. **Historical linkages Between India and Madagascar**

India and Africa relations have a 3000 year long history (Jain,et.al ,2017).Both were under colonial rule .India and Madagascar became independence in the mid 20th Century however relationship between them goes back to 18th century and India became independent nation in 1947 from British rule while Madagascar became independent in 1960 from the France(India Africa Network ,n.d.).From geographical relation perceptive ,India and Madagascar have long historic ,socio and cultural relations (MEA GOI ,2024) .Madagascar and India has diverse and distinct culture (Katiyar et,al 2017),being a multicultural society it accomodate the interest of different stakeholder and Tamil merchants or south Indian went to Madagascar in lieu of trade via a maritime silk route in the 11th century (BBC NEWS 2023).in 1954 India has established a consular general in Madagascar which later became the embassy of India in Madagascar(India Africa Network,n,d).Different cultural, historical and survey oriented activities has been conducted by consular general with collaboration of Madagascar people including celebration of International Yoga day(Ibid) ,creation of Hindu Temple are prominent in this context(Pravasi Setu Foundation ,2024).After independence both country were want to take an independent decision in their foreign policy while avoiding the entanglement in the cold war rivalry.In 1980 Madagascar has participated in NAM Summit.From this discussion it is clearly stated that India and Madagascar relation is testament from independent nation to become a prosperous states (India Africa Network,n,d).

India and Madagascar has long maritime transport connection.People from India especially western state of India ;Gujarat which is the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi arrived to Madagascar.There are total 17500 Indian Diaspora in madagascar that accounts 2% of total Madagascar Population.Though Indian diaspora are minority in population but their capacity , dedication and contribution in the development of Madagascar for different fields shows an importance of the Indian Diaspora in Madagascar (Ani News,2021).

3. Indian Diaspora and Hindu Temple: Madagascar



Figure-1:Hindu Temple in Madagascar / Grand Hindu Temple inaugurated in Madagascar's capital

Source-(ANI,2022)



Figure 2:Grand Hindu Temple inaugurated in Madagascar's capital

Source(July 26 ,2022)

Cultural and Heritage linkage between India and Madagascar is very prominent in nature .A long awaited Hindu Temple Hall and Hindu Temple was inaugurated in 2020 and 2022 respectively (Kantak,2020., Bw Business World ,2020.,Opindia 2022,).Hindu Diaspora showed their pleasure in the foundation of this great significant Cultural initiative.

On this creation of Hindu Temple at Antananarivo, Madagascar,Abhay Kumar ,an Indian Ambassador and Sanjeev Hematlal President of Hindu Samaj in Madagascar highlighted how this will be a testament for heritage ,culture and values of India in Madagascar(Ani ,2022).



Hindu Diaspora are very enthusiastic for Hindu temple in Madagascar that connect them with tradition ,culture ,roots of their motherland India and values of their origin land and also it will promote unity ,harmony and communal spirit among people of Indian Diaspora .Expect Indian Diaspora,other citizens are also allowed to participate in devotional activities that shows the great culture of India in foreign countries especially for Madagascar(Pravasi Setu Foundation,2024).

In late 18th century,Indian people especially from western state Gujrat arrived in Madagascar with the help of a small boats for doing commerce and trade in indian Ocean region .There are total 26 million people in Madagascar and around 20 ,000 people is known as Indian Diaspora that account 2% of total population of Madagascar.They are not only limited to business activity but also helping to building a prosperous,resilient and outstanding economic growth for Madagascar by contributing a good number in GDP that shows the greatness of being Indian Diaspora in building other nation (Kantak ,2020).

Hindu Diaspora performs various traditional and ritual activities in the Hindu Temple of Madagascar including Diwali, Navaratri and daily aarti etc .That help to nurture the new generation of Indian diaspora about Indian culture,tradition and values .This devotional activities ,songs are not limited to Indian people but also followed and influenced by the people of Madagascar (Pravasi Setu Foundation,2024).

From this above argument it is stated that India' s values ,tradition and cultural heritage has been carried out by Indian Diaspora in foreign countries and also impacted upon others citizens that help India become a Vishwa Mitra and voice of the global south .

4. Economy and Commercial Relationship between India and Madagascar



Figure-3: Economy and Commercial Relationship between India and Madagascar

Source-(BBC NEWS 1 December 2023)

Being an extended neighborhood ,4th largest island of the world and geographical proximity of maritime trade,has provided the importance of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean Region in general and for India in particular (Siddique,2023)

India exports different products to Madagascar through bilateral ,multilateral agreement and MOU that includes Rice ,Sugar ,and mineral resources.on 7th September 2022 India donated 5000 Tonnes of Rice to Madagascar in building a prosperous nation and fulfill the nutrition need of the nation that shows India's approach to global South especially Madagascar is important in this context (Ani ,2022) .

During the horrifying Pandemic of COVID 19 ,people across the globe were struggling for Vaccine to halt the disease ,but India with it' s destiny had produced numerous high quality vaccines that not only for Indians but also helped other nations . Madagascar was not left from this benefit under initiative India and India has provided Vaccine under her Vaccine Diplomacy to Madagascar.Many Madagascar people became free of disease due to this assistance by India (Sing ,2022)



Figure-4: India handed over 5000 tonnes of rice to Madagascar



Source-(ANI ,2022)

In a diplomatic and official visit ,former president Shri Ram Nath Govind paid a historic visit to Madagascar in 2018 and he addressed the Indian Diaspora at Antananarivo the capital of Madagascar.He inaugurated the Centre for Geo Applications in the area of Rural Development . It seems a major project and proactive initiative by India to Madagascar in improving the social security,living standard of rural people in Madagascar (Singh,2022) .

Many Indian companies shows their entrepreneur enthusiastic attitude in investing at Madagascar and Airtel and Tata pvt. Ltd have created different infrastructures and also Agarwal's Eye Hospital and Appollo hospital all have provided scope of employment ,growth in GDP and also good health facility by Indian doctors and infrastructure that creates a sound relation between India and Madagascar (abid) .

Dammu Ravi , Secretary to MEA ,visited to Madagascar on 15 December 2023 and had addressed the Indian diaspora via a local conference and urged to collaborate with Indian govt.on trade and commerce in bringing growth and technology revolution for Madagascar (Siddique,2023).

Bilateral Cooperation between India and Madagascar

Name of The Initiative	Year of Signing /Establishment	Official Visit by dignitaries /grant in aid
CGARD -Centre for Geo Applications in the Area of Rural Development	2018	Ram Nath Govind
7th edition of Raisina Dialogue	2022	Foreign Minister of Madagascar had participated in Raisina Dialogue



4th International Conference of CDRI	May 2022	President of Madagascar Mr Andry Rajoelina participated in CDRI Conference
Ministerial Session on Global South Summit	Jan 2023	H.E.Ms. Vina Marie orlea
MOU on Defence cooperation Bilateral agreement	2018	Ram Nath Kovind
INMTT -Indian Navy Mobile Training Team	2019	To impart training for Special Forces of Antananarivo
Memorandum Of Understanding e-VBAB Network Project	July 2022	
-Natural Disaster Management Agency of Madagascar	2018	India donated USD -2 million grant to Madagascar

Table 1: Bilateral Cooperation between India and Madagascar



Source (MEA,India (n.d.)

5. Multilateral Engagement between India and Madagascar

Liberal Institutions provide a scope of dialogue,cooperation,coordination and collaboration for different nations in working together for building a sustainable ,mutual and cordial relationship in the era of multilateral world order .

India and Madagascar are two like minded developing third world countries in the global South whose relationship reflect in the 200 years of long history and working in different multilateral platform especially in NAM ,G77 ,ISA and G20 to provide a strong relationship between two countries(MEA,n.d.,Kenton,2022.,Singh,2022.,etal).

Madagascar is a member of Non Alignment Movement and has participated in NAM Summit in 1980(MEA,n.d) .India is a founding member of NAM who believe in south south Cooperation.India and Madagascar are working together under the membership of G77 that provide an interaction between third world countries to halt the western narrative and stand for each other not only in the time of good wishes but at the time of turmoil and crises(Kenton,2022).

Being vocal for climate change ,India in 2015 started a landmark initiative that International Solar Alliance and placed it' s headquarter at Gurgaon, Haryana.Immediately within a one year , Madagascar has joined in ISA in 2016 and ratified it in 2018 .They have signed different MOU under ISA for avoiding chance of climate change .This collaborative agenda strengthen the bilateral relationship between two developing and like minded countries .Apart from it , Madagascar is an important 4th largest island ocean that account 27 million people and has potential to accommodate logistic infrastructure .Under the 'Vision SAGAR' India and Madagascar has developed a good bilateral relations in maritime exercise including INS Mumbai to Toamasina(2006),INS Talwar to Diego Suarez (2008),INS Airavat to AntSiranana(2020) are important in this context (MEA,n.d),Conducting workshop to avoid piracy and Madagascar became important from security issues in maritime transportation perspective (Singh 2022).

African Union became the permanent member in G20 under the initiative of India in 2023.Thats shows the India' s stand on global South in mighty platform like G20 which is the organization of both



developed and developing country .This move by India create a trust factors among the peoples of Africa in general and for Madagascar in particular (The Hindu,2023). Madagascar also support India's approach on UNSC reform,India's non permanent membership in UNSC for 2022-23 that was supported by Madagascar (MEA,n.d).In other sphere including Coalition Disaster Resilient Infrastructure ,Defence Minister Conclave ,Indian Ocean Region Defence Minister Conclave ,India -Madagascar developed a collaborative relation to strengthen bilateral agreement in defence sector as well (MEA,n.d).

From this argument, clearly stated that multilateral platform , collaborative approach in different organisations, South South Cooperation all are became driving force to create a good bilateral and cordial relationship between India and Madagascar and Indian Diaspora also ignite the relationship between host country like Madagascar and motherland like India .

6. Security Ties between India and Madagascar

As per the Geological survey of the US in 2012 and China 2018 Madagascar has energy potential that would fulfill the need of energy gazer . Madagascar being a member of One Belt One Road Initiative by China provide a high level concern for India to build a strong ,viable , sustainable, prosperous and maritime strategic presence through SAGAR Vision strategy in Indian Ocean Region for general and for Madagascar in particular (East West Centre,2024).

It is believed by EAM S Jaishankar that “India always stood with Madagascar and will continue to work for SAGAR Vision”(Ani,2022).Because Madagascar is an extended maritime neighborhood of India (Siddique,2023).India has already invested 907 million USD in Madagascar under different sector including Oil,Mining and Gas (India -African network,n.d).

To establish a maritime Security ,indo Pacific security and strong relationship in exclusive economic zone with Indian western Ocean region ;India did a bilateral defence naval exercise with Madagascar naval named as PASSEX exercise in 2021.It is an imperative for India to have a presence in ocean neighborhood and maintain relationship in Indian western Ocean region(Chaudhury,2021).

From the above argument,it is clearly stated that India and Madagascar bilateral relationship stands testament from geoeconomics and geopolitical perspective.



7. Conclusion

India and Madagascar share a wide interest in economic ,cultural and maritime security .To achieve this milestone ,Indian Diaspora is the driving force to bridge the connection between the two nations under south south Cooperation.

Humanitarian assistance, engagement in multilateral initiative,economic and commercial relationship ,presence of Indian Diaspora and security ties between India and Madagascar are applied to encompass the emerging relation between India and Madagascar to build a sustainable and restore peace in Indian Ocean Region .To build a strong and strategic presence in western Indian Ocean ,India would have to take a proactive role in redefining foreign policy to accommodate the importance of Madagascar under Indian diaspora in considering as a ambassador in different sphere,all could have crucial in this context to build a win win situation and restore tranquility in the Indian Ocean Region .

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