

India's Global Migration

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India's Global Migration: Rethinking Citizenship for the Diaspora

Context

India has the **largest diaspora globally**, with over **3.5 crore Indians living abroad**. Migration has had **significant economic, political, and cultural implications**, influencing remittances, foreign policy, and citizenship debates.

As global migration policies tighten, India must reconsider its **citizenship framework** to strengthen diaspora ties while protecting national interests.

India's Global Migration and Its Impact

Growing Indian Diaspora

- The **number of international migrants has tripled since 1970**.
- Nearly **one in 40 Indians lives abroad**, making India the **largest source of emigrants**.

Economic Impact

- India receives **\$130 billion in annual remittances**—the **highest globally**.
 - Remittances **surpass foreign investments (\$42 billion)** and help **reduce trade deficits**.
 - **Shift in remittance sources** from Gulf nations to advanced economies like the **US, UK, and Canada**.
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Migration and India's Foreign Policy

- India considers its **diaspora a strategic asset**, integrating migration into **foreign policy**.
 - The **Ministry of External Affairs** promotes overseas employment opportunities.
 - India works to **protect migrant rights** and strengthen economic ties with NRIs.
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High-Level Committee on Diaspora & OCI

Recommendations on Dual Citizenship

- The **High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (2000)** recommended **dual citizenship**.
- It found **no constitutional barrier** and called security concerns **manageable**.

Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)

- Introduced in **2005**, but **not dual citizenship**.
 - **Restrictions**: No **voting rights**, no **public office eligibility**, **land purchase limits**.
 - OCI is a **privilege, not a right**, and can be **revoked**.
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Global Trends in Migration & Citizenship

- **Tighter immigration policies** in developed nations.
 - **Growing risks for non-citizens**, making foreign citizenship **essential for security**.
 - Many Indians **renounce citizenship out of necessity**, not choice.
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Policy Recommendations for Dual Citizenship

1. Retain Indian Citizenship

- Indians should **retain Indian citizenship** while acquiring another nationality.
- Aligns with **global best practices**.

2. Political & Public Service Rights

- Voting rights can be extended **through in-person or overseas mechanisms**.
- **High offices and security-sensitive roles** may remain restricted to single-citizenship holders.

3. Security Considerations

- **Case-by-case scrutiny**, rather than **blanket restrictions**, for dual citizenship.
- **Generational ties and security assessments** to determine eligibility.

Benefits of Dual Citizenship

Economic & Emotional Ties

- Encourages **investment, entrepreneurship, and knowledge transfer** to India.
- Strengthens **diaspora engagement** with Indian society.

Identity & Global Integration

- Recognizes **evolving global identities** and prevents **diaspora alienation**.
 - Avoids the **forced choice between nationalities**.
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Conclusion

India's diaspora is a **key global asset**, but the **OCI framework falls short** of their aspirations.

Dual citizenship would:

- **Enhance India's global integration.**
- **Strengthen economic and cultural links.**
- **Encourage long-term diaspora engagement.**

As India expands its global role, a **progressive citizenship policy** is necessary to **fully leverage its diaspora's potential**.



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