



GS FOUNDATION BATCH FOR CSE 2024

International Relations- 20

(Indian Disapora)

Indian Diaspora

International Migration 2020 Highlights by UNDESA (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) has said that the Indian Diaspora (18 million residing outside India in 2020) is the largest in the world.

The Indian diaspora around the world now stands at 31.2 million, of which PIOs were 17 million and NRIs were 13 million, spread across 146 countries in the world.

According to Reserve Bank of India, India received approximately \$107.5 billion in remittances in 2022-23 with USA being the biggest source, accounting for over 23% of these funds.

Nearly 200 persons of Indian origin, according to some estimates, occupy leadership positions in about 15 countries; about 60 per cent of them are in cabinet positions. President Joe Biden has appointed nearly 140 Indian Americans to key positions in the administration. Indian-origin men and women also lead top businesses, universities, scientific establishments, and civil society in the English-speaking world.

Evolution of Policy towards Diaspora:

During pre-independence period, The Indian political elites had shown solidarity and shared their concerns with the Indian expatriates through deputations by the Congress delegates. the plight of Indians abroad was a major issue for the independence movement led by Indian National Congress.

After achieving independence in 1947, there was a paradigm shift in the position of Diaspora policy as a result of India's foreign policy being guided by Nehruvian ideals of anti-imperialism and racial apartheid, respect for Sovereignty and non-alignment.

The then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru categorically announced that ethnic Indians who chose to remain abroad would consider themselves as citizens or nationals of their respective host lands. In fact, they were encouraged to integrate with host culture and fight for the liberation of their adopted lands.

- Even during the nationalist backlash against the Indian communities in Africa and Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, Delhi consciously distance itself from the Indian communities abroad.
- As India turned inwards, Delhi also took a dim view of the "brain drain" as many well-trained Indians began to look for opportunities elsewhere.
- It was only in the late 1980s that Delhi began to rethink its approach to the diaspora.
- **PM Rajiv Gandhi** was the first to appreciate the potential role diaspora could play in advancing national development and improving India's ties with the US.
- In 2000, the **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** was commenced to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards development of India. A separate Ministry for Overseas Indians was also formed under PM Vajpayee. In 2016, it was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Since then, successive governments have harnessed the diaspora for national development.

- With coming of Modi government, diaspora has got even greater centrality in both domestic and foreign policy.

Some innovative initiatives for the diaspora are Know India Programme (KIP) and Study India Programme (SIP), Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana, Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) etc.

Countries Hosting Indian Diaspora -2020

- United Arab Emirates (UAE) – 3.4 million
- United States of America (USA) – 2.7 million
- Saudi Arabia – 2.5 million

Role of Diaspora:

- Projecting India's soft power: In most of the nations, they are the richest minority and act as "bridge-builders" between India and their adopted countries.
- Lobby for India's national interests
- Support economically through investment and remittances.
- Ambassadors of India's syncretic culture and traditions
- Contribute economically to India's rise through investments and helping in mobilising investments in India.
- Key to Changing negative perception about India and creating a positive perception.

Indians in the Gulf

- Around 8.5 million Indians live and work in the Gulf countries, one of the largest concentrations of migrants in the world.
- The geographical and historical proximity, demand for blue-collar workers in the gulf makes it a convenient destination for Indians.
- Today migrants from across India are working and living in the Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait).
- Source of remittance for India.
- Concern of Indian workers has been a concern in India's engagement with the Gulf.

Benefits:

1. It has deepened the relations between India and the gulf states.
2. A win-win relationship- where gulf states get the much-needed workforce and Indians get employment and India gets remittances.
3. Indian businesses are among the biggest investors in the gulf region

Challenges:

1. Harsh punishments like death sentence for common crimes to Indians puts Indian diplomacy in a tight spot. Recently, Qatar awarded death sentence to eight Indians.
2. Accusations of substandard working conditions and exploitative laws like kafala system.

3. Frequent conflicts in the region and need to evacuate Indians.
4. Economic downturn in gulf states, new laws like Kafala system and Covid-19 pandemic have restricted employment opportunities for Indians.

Indians in USA and West:

- The diaspora is highly educated and goes to the USA for better employment opportunities, higher education, research and development.
- Migration has increased substantially after the IT revolution.
- In recent decades the population has grown substantially with 2.4 million Indian immigrants' residents in the United States as of 2015.
- This makes the foreign-born from India the second-largest immigrant group in the US after Mexicans.
- Indian diaspora in the USA is both politically and economically influential. They are among the most educated and high per capita income group in the USA.
- They have played key role in strengthening India- USA relations.

The Indian Diaspora has evolved over three phases in U.S, firstly the pursuit of education and employment, secondly, as major source of remittances (\$10.657 Billion annual remittance from US to India in 2017) and thirdly as effective players in impacting the dynamics of U.S.

Indians are among innovators, investors and entrepreneurs creating job opportunities and giving edge to the US and European economies.

- Sunder Pichai (Alphabet), Satya Nadela (Microsoft), Ajay Banga (Master Card), 34% of Microsoft employees in US are of Indian origin.
- 12% scientists in USA are Indians.
- 36% of NASA scientist in US are Indians.
- Prominent politicians: Nicky Helly, Pramila Jayapal, Rishi Sunak

Leading Indian-American entrepreneur and activist Swadesh Chatterjee in his book 'Building Bridges: How Indian-Americans Brought the United States and India Closer Together', provides a first-hand account of the involvement of the influential community in getting the deal through the US Congress. It was a grassroot campaign by Indian-Americans, who literally flooded their lawmakers with emails, letters and faxes, that saw the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement pass through the Congress, says a new book on the unprecedented coming together of the community for the deal.

Issues:

1. It creates scope for interference in India's domestic politics. E.g.- during protests against agricultural laws.
2. India gets involved in cases of discrimination and hate crimes. This might distract attention from other substantive issues.

3. Changes in migration related rules like H1-b visa (USA) and Mode-4 migration (EU) have been key areas of concern in diplomatic negotiations.
4. Activities of Khalistan-supporters, aided by ISI and other anti-India elements have created a new challenge and has potential to disrupt the bilateral relations.
5. Accusations of India's involvements in assassinations and assassination attempts of terrorists in foreign nations has emerged as a new area of Challenge in the bilateral relations with these nations.

Indians in Africa:

There is More than 3,000,000 people of Indian descendants in Africa. Indian Diaspora in Africa constitutes 12.37 per cent of the total Diaspora of India. A large chunk of Indian diaspora continues to live in African countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, and Nigeria.

They are mainly the descendants of indentured and ex-indentured labourers who had been taken by the colonial regime to work on the farms. In recent times, people have moved for investment and business purposes due to booming economies of Africa. However, the government gives lesser attention to the African diaspora compared to the diaspora in the Gulf or in the Western nations.

Prominent People:

Prime Minister of Mauritius Praveen Jagannath
Bhimji Shah (Kenya), Sudhir Rupareila (Uganda) is among the richest Africans.

Challenges:

1. Indian businessman like Gupta brothers found involved in money laundering dents the image of honest business practices by Indian diaspora.
2. Incidences of hate crime that occurs sometimes in Kenya, South Africa etc.
3. Sentiments about Indian businesses as exploiters in the past during Idi Amin regime has started emerging again in countries like Tanzania.

India in South East Asia:

1. The Indian civilization naturally extended to the territories of present-day South-East Asia. The spice and silk routes helped in exchange of ideas, culture and people apart from trade.
2. There is no uniformity in terms of social, political and economic progress among Indians in South East Asia.
3. Indian diaspora is in key position in the areas like IT, education and technology in Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia etc.
4. In Singapore, prominent persons of Indian origin include former President Late S. R. Nathan and Late S. Rajaratnam, an influential personality in the public life of Singapore.
5. Indians are also well represented across judiciary, civil services and armed forces.

6. The economic and social status of Indian vis-à-vis Chinese and locals are not satisfactory in nations like Malaysia.
7. The Indian community's contribution to Malaysia's GDP is about 2% and its share in Malaysia's international trade is about 3%.

Steps taken to deepen engagements:

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
- Merging of PIO and OCI cards:
- National Pension Scheme for NRIs
- Overseas citizenship of India scheme
- Know India Programme
- Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana
- Scholarship Programmes for Diaspora Children (Click here for Website....)
- Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conferences
- India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI)