



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the potential of Indian diaspora as a resource to India and steps taken by Indian government to harness their potential. Also discuss the challenges faced by them. (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce by giving some data on Indian Diaspora.
- Examine the potential and steps taken by government to harness the potential.
- Enumerate the challenges faced by the diaspora and suggest the way forward as concluding remark.

Introduction

- A UN report says that India now has the largest 'diaspora' in the world, with more than 16 million persons of Indian origin living abroad. This Non Resident Indian (NRI) pool represents a little over 1 per cent of India's population but is a crucial cog in the wheel of India's development.

Body

Potential of Indian Diaspora as a resource:

- **Largest remittance-receiving country:** According to a World Bank report, India was the largest remittance-receiving country in the world, with an estimated \$69 billion in 2015. This amounts to a whopping 3.4 per cent of India's GDP.
- They bring **technical and domain expertise** to domestic startups and often act as angel investors.
- The Indian diaspora is the great **promoter of Indian culture** abroad. The Indians living abroad have carried with them India's traditions, customs, religious faiths, philosophy and festivals. They promote India's life style in the countries they are living.
- They interact with local people **sharing new ideas and techniques**. The ideas and techniques when implemented bring a vast improvement in the quality of indigenous production, which in turn boosts exports as high quality goods have better international market.
- They affect not just the popular attitude, but also **government policies** in countries where they live, to the benefit of India. India benefits tremendously through these people in luring large multinational companies as well as entrepreneurial ventures.

Steps taken to harness this vast potential:

- **Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas:** The event is held regularly to celebrate the Indian diaspora across the worlds and their contribution to India-both in India and abroad.
- **Merger of PIO and OCI cards:** PIOs and OCIs card holders are people who want to stay connected and involved with India more closely. For that same reason, the government of India issues PIO cards and OCI cards to them according to their needs and now merged for greater good.
- In words of our prime minister, Indian diaspora are our '**Rashtradoots**'. He addressed Indian diaspora in different parts of the world from Madison Square, New York to Kigali, Rawanda.

- The Government of India has given several incentives to NRIs for investing their funds in India. They are exempt from several taxes and other charges. NRI seats are reserved in all the medical, engineering and other professional colleges.
- The **Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2017** the provision would help non-resident Indians (NRIs) to participate in the electoral process. It extends the facility of 'proxy voting' to overseas Indians, on the lines of service voters.
- The government has launched a string of initiatives and repackaged old schemes such as the **'Know India Program' (KIP)**. For those looking to go abroad, training centers and orientation programmes are provided to train future employees on relevant skills and minimise culture shock.
- To partially reduce the risk of vulnerability from fraudulent contracts, nurses for example can now only be recruited through one of the six state government placement agencies.
- Furthermore, in 2015, the Ministry of External Affairs launched the **e-migrate system** that requires all foreign employers to register in the database

Challenges faced by them

- **Language Barrier:** The slang, the pronunciation, the body language for subtle differences of meanings. The language barrier requires new adjustments and it takes time to improve the communication skills.
- **Cultural Shock:** Everything is very different all of a sudden for a new person. The language, the market places, scene on the street- it is all a bit too much to adjust to overnight.
- **Rising incidence of hate speech and crimes** against Indian Diaspora by the locals due to racism, Communalism emboldened by coming of nationalist and ultra nationalist governments to power in many countries.
- **Increasing anti globalization:** Fear of losing jobs and educational opportunities due to Trumps' "American First" policy. The visa rules are being made stricter in many of the countries including USA, Australia etc.
- **Sectarian crisis** in Syria, increasing terrorist activities and war in the Middle East countries (Yemen, Oman, Libya, Syria etc) leave our diaspora vulnerable to attacks.
- The **'Nitaqat' law** makes it mandatory for local companies to hire one Saudi national for every 10 migrant workers. This has adversely affected the employment prospects of the Indian working class in Saudi Arabia.

Way forward

- India must follow a robust and flexible policy in order to leverage the strengths of Diaspora and minimize the possibilities of any negative fallout.
- Engagement with the Diaspora in the developed world has to be multifaceted and aimed at making India a knowledge power. Their strengths have to be leveraged for political lobbying, image projection and economic development of India.