



## Debate on Dual Citizenship for Indians

**For Prelims:** [Citizenship](#), [Overseas Citizenship of India](#), [Remittances](#), [Foreign Direct Investment](#), [Article 9](#), [Know India Programme](#)

**For Mains:** Role of the Indian Diaspora, Dual Citizenship for India, Constitutional Provisions on Citizenship

[Source: IE](#)

### Why in News?

The debate on **dual citizenship for Indians** has resurfaced. As India hosts the **world's largest diaspora**, discussions are growing on whether **genuine dual citizenship**, rather than just the [Overseas Citizenship of India \(OCI\)](#), would better align with India's evolving diaspora policy and global realities.

**Note:** Dual citizenship grants individuals legal status in multiple countries, allowing passport issuance, political participation, visa exemptions, and employment rights.

### What is the Debate on Dual Citizenship for Indians?

#### Arguments in Favour

- **Largest Diaspora:** Over 3.5 crore Indians live abroad (nearly one in 40 Indians). India is the **top recipient of remittances globally**, with USD 129 billion received in 2024, far surpassing [foreign direct investment \(FDI\)](#) inflows of USD 42 billion.
- **Limitations of OCI:** The OCI is not actual dual citizenship. It does not confer political rights (e.g., voting, holding public office) or allow ownership of agricultural land.
  - It is seen more as a privilege than a right, and can be revoked unilaterally, reducing its security and appeal.
  - Many Indians abroad feel that OCI status makes them **second-class citizens**, weakening their connection with India.
- **Policy Inflection Point:** Measures like the [US policy of ending birthright citizenship](#) reflect the hardening global climate toward migrants, raising the need for dual citizenship.
  - Additionally, many Indians are renouncing their citizenship to secure rights in foreign countries, an emotionally difficult step that **genuine dual citizenship could help mitigate**.
- **Strategic Engagement:** A globally integrated Indian citizenry strengthens **India's soft power and international influence**, while dual citizenship could unlock greater diaspora investment, political advocacy, and cultural linkage, supporting the government's aim of positioning the global Indian community as a **national asset**.
- **Comparative Trends:** Numerous countries, including the US, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany permit dual citizenship with tailored safeguards.

- India, with proper legal architecture, could do the same without compromising national security.

## Arguments Against

- **Constitutional Restrictions:** The **Indian Constitution (Article 9)** does not permit dual citizenship. Acquiring foreign nationality leads to automatic loss of Indian citizenship.
- **Democratic Legitimacy:** Citizenship is inherently linked to **undivided allegiance**. Dual citizens voting or holding office in India while being citizens of another state challenges **democratic sovereignty**.
- **Political Instrumentalism:** Experts warn of a “**comprador class**” (individuals who exploit dual nationality for personal or economic gain without genuine loyalty to India).
  - Dual citizenship can increase the risk of external influence in domestic politics through **diaspora lobbying or funding**.
- **Security and Strategic Concerns:** The **original rationale** behind India’s strict citizenship framework was to clearly **demarcate citizens post-Partition**.
  - Allowing dual citizenship could **open legal grey zones** in security-sensitive matters, especially if the individual is involved in sensitive professions abroad.
- **Sufficient Existing Framework:** Experts argue that the OCI program ensures diaspora engagement without political rights, maintaining sovereignty while enabling economic collaboration and contributions through channels like **FDI and remittances, making dual citizenship unnecessary**.



# Citizenship

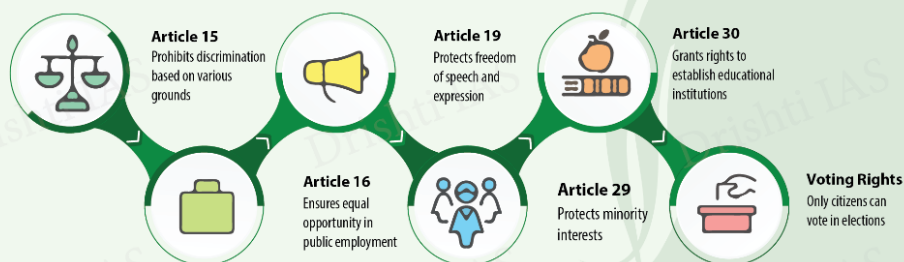
*Citizenship is the legal recognition of an individual as a member of a state, granting rights and privileges, and requiring allegiance. In India, it defines who holds these rights and follows citizenship laws.*

## Constitutional Provisions Related to Citizenship

Articles 5 to 11 of the Indian Constitution deal with citizenship provisions, specifically outlining who became citizens at the commencement of the Constitution (January 26, 1950).



## Rights Available Only to Citizens of India



## Citizenship Act, 1955

- **Acquisition and Loss:** This Act outlines:
  - Ways to acquire Indian citizenship:
    - Birth
    - Descent
    - Registration
    - Naturalization
    - Incorporation of territory
  - Conditions under which citizenship can be lost:
    - Renunciation
    - Termination
    - Deprivation
- **Amended 6 Times (since 1986):** 1986, 1992, 2003, 2005, 2015, and 2019

## Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019:

- ◆ **Eligibility:** Grants citizenship to six communities (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians) from **Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh** who entered India on or before **31<sup>st</sup> December 2014**.
- ◆ **Exemptions from Legal Punishments:** The Act exempts these communities from prosecution under the **Foreigners Act, 1946** and the **Passport Act, 1920** for illegal entry or overstaying in India, thereby providing them with a pathway to **citizenship without facing legal consequences**.



## What are the Middle-path Reforms on the Issue of Dual Citizenship?

- **Enhancing the OCI Framework:** Provide **greater legal stability and rights** (e.g., land ownership for certain categories, easier business rules). Ensure **due process and transparency** in revocation or denial of OCI status.
- **Participatory Mechanisms:** India could consider allowing limited political participation for OCIs at the **local governance level**, such as [panchayats](#).
  - OCIs at the panchayat level can drive knowledge exchange, investment, and development, leveraging global expertise to improve local governance.
  - This would also enable diaspora engagement without granting national elections voting rights. Such a model balances diaspora **inclusion with constitutional safeguards**.
  - Additionally, at the national level, institutionalize diaspora **advisory councils** through platforms like the **Global Indian Network of Knowledge (Global-INK)** without extending political franchise.
- **Cultural Identity Programs:** Expand the coverage of programs like **Tracing the Roots** (a Ministry of External Affairs initiative helping Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) trace their ancestry in India), [Know India Programme](#), and **scholarship schemes for diaspora youth** to strengthen their connection with Indian heritage.
- **Selective Dual Citizenship:** If ever introduced, restrict it to citizens of strategic partner nations, with clear exclusions for high offices and sensitive roles.

## Conclusion

As the world becomes more interconnected, India's approach to citizenship must evolve. Enhancing OCI rights and adopting middle-path reforms can foster deeper diaspora engagement. A pragmatic, phased approach balances national interests while embracing global realities.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Examine the constraints preventing dual citizenship in India. Should India reconsider its stance? Justify your view.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Prelims**

**Q. With reference to India, consider the following statements: (2021)**

1. There is only one citizenship and one domicile.
2. A citizen by birth only can become the Head of State.
3. A foreigner once granted citizenship cannot be deprived of it under any circumstances.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**

**Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: (d)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/debate-on-dual-citizenship-for-indians>

