



# The American Dream: A Tale of Indian Migration



SHRI RAM CONSULTING & RESEARCH CENTRE



ENTRANCE  
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# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction: The Journey of Indian Immigration to the United States

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## Chapter 1



# Introduction

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Immigration is the **movement of people from one country to another** with the intent to live there temporarily or permanently. It has historically shaped civilisations by driving demographic shifts, economic growth, and cultural diversity. People migrate for various reasons, mainly economic opportunities, safety, or improved living conditions. While immigration **enriches** host societies through innovation and diversity, it also **presents challenges** such as integration, security, and resource management. Overall, immigration remains a defining global force influencing economies, societies, and policies worldwide.

## Prehistoric Human Migration

Prehistoric human migration began **roughly 1.8 million years ago** when *Homo erectus* first left Africa, reaching Eurasia, Southeast Asia, and Europe over time. Archaeological sites like Dmanisi in Georgia confirm these early journeys. These ancestors adapted to diverse climates, developing new survival skills that marked humanity's first global spread.

Modern humans (*Homosapiens*) **evolved about 150,000 BCE** in Africa and began major migrations between 70,000 and 50,000 BCE, crossing into Arabia and gradually populating Asia, Europe, and Australia by 40,000 BCE. By 15,000 BCE, they reached the Americas via the Bering land bridge. Interactions with Neanderthals and Denisovans led to genetic mixing, shaping modern populations.

By 2,000 years ago, **humans inhabited nearly every region on Earth**, including the Pacific Islands, having adapted to a vast range of environments and formed unique cultural identities through innovation and cooperation.

## The Classical Age of Trade

The Neolithic Revolution, also called the **Agricultural Revolution**, began around 10,000 BCE and marked humanity's shift from hunting and gathering to farming and settled life. Originating in regions like the Fertile Crescent, it spread to Asia, Europe, and the Americas, leading to permanent villages, population growth, and technological advances such as pottery and polished stone tools.

This transition made **trade, social hierarchies, and early political systems possible**, laying foundation for civilisation. Major migrations followed, including the Austronesian seafaring expansion, Indo-European and Indo-Aryan movements across Eurasia, and the Bantu migration in Africa, each spreading agriculture, tools, and language across continents.

## Medieval Migrations

The Migration Period (300–700 CE), also known as the **Barbarian Invasions or Völkerwanderung**, marked Europe's shift from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. Germanic, Slavic, and Hunnic tribes, including the Goths, Vandals, Franks, and Lombards, migrated through the weakening Roman Empire, **causing the fall of the Western Roman Empire** and the rise of medieval kingdoms.

At the same time, **Turkic and Mongol expansions** (6th–13th centuries CE) reshaped Central Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe, while Arab-Islamic migrations transformed North Africa and the Mediterranean, spreading new cultural and linguistic influences.

## Age of Exploration

The **Age of Exploration (15th–17th centuries)**, or **Age of Discovery**, transformed global migration through **European colonisation** of the Americas, Australia, and Oceania. Nations like Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Germany promoted overseas settlement to expand wealth and religion.

Starting with **Columbus's voyages in 1492**, colonisation grew rapidly. By the 16th century, around **240,000 Europeans** had migrated to the Americas; by the 19th century, over 50 million people had left Europe for the New World, founding permanent colonies such as Jamestown (1607) and Plymouth (1620). This wave of migration **reshaped global demographics**, introduced new trade networks, and marked the rise of European global empires.

## Forced Migration: The Slave Trade

The Transatlantic Slave Trade (16th–19th centuries) was the **largest forced migration** in history, with over 10–12 million Africans taken mainly from West and Central Africa to the Americas.

Beginning around **1550**, European ships, first Portuguese, then Spanish, Dutch, French, and British, transported enslaved Africans to meet labour demands on sugar, tobacco, and cotton plantations. Many perished during the brutal Middle Passage, the deadly Atlantic crossing.

This trade reshaped societies across three continents, **causing massive depopulation and suffering in Africa** while fueling the economic rise of Europe and the Americas.

# Dawn of the century

## Indentured Labour Migration

After the abolition of slavery (1834), European colonies **replaced enslaved Africans with indentured labourers** from India and China. Between 1834 and World War I, Britain transported about 2 million Indians to 19 colonies such as Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia, to work on sugar and tea plantations.

Chinese labourers also migrated under contract to colonies in the Caribbean, the Americas, and Southeast Asia. Though described as “**free**,” the system was **exploitative**, earning the label “a new form of slavery.”

## World Wars and Their Aftermath

During the World Wars and their aftermath, global migration reached unprecedented levels. The collapse of the **Ottoman Empire** led to **reciprocal migrations**: Muslims moved from the Balkans to Turkey, while Christians moved in the opposite direction. The **Russian Civil War** (1917–1923) displaced about **3 million Russians**, Poles, and Germans fleeing the new Soviet regime.

In parallel, the **Holocaust** (1938–1945) and rising antisemitism drove mass Jewish migration. By the early 20th century, around **400,000** Jews had already settled in Palestine, while others migrated to the United States. After 1945, Jewish survivors increasingly moved to the British Mandate of Palestine, laying the foundation for the State of Israel.

## The Partition of India

In 1947, following the partition of India, massive population movements took place between India and Pakistan based on religious identity. The division, brought about by the Indian Independence Act of 1947 after the end of British rule, displaced nearly **17 million** people across the subcontinent. Estimates of the death toll range from several hundred thousand to around a million. Muslims from former British India migrated to Pakistan, including East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), while Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Hindus from East Pakistan moved toward India. The Punjab region witnessed severe communal riots, resulting in between **200,000** and **500,000** deaths in retributive violence. According to the **UNHCR**, around **14 million** Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims were uprooted during this event. Scholars regard it as the largest mass migration in human history, with Nigel Smith describing it as “**history’s greatest migration**.”

## Contemporary Migration

Since the 1970s, migration patterns have become far more diverse and global. Beyond traditional destinations like the Americas, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, previously emigrant nations such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal became major receivers of migrants.

The **oil boom in the Gulf** during the 1970s created a surge of temporary labour migration from South and Southeast Asia to countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE. At the same time, newly industrialised **Asian economies** such as Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore attracted workers from poorer nations, including Bangladesh and Myanmar, marking the rise of intra-Asian labour migration.



Indians crowding onto trains during the partition of India into a predominantly Hindu state (India) and a predominantly Muslim state (Pakistan) in one of the largest population transfers in history, 1947.

# From Roots to Waves: The Indian Journey to the USA

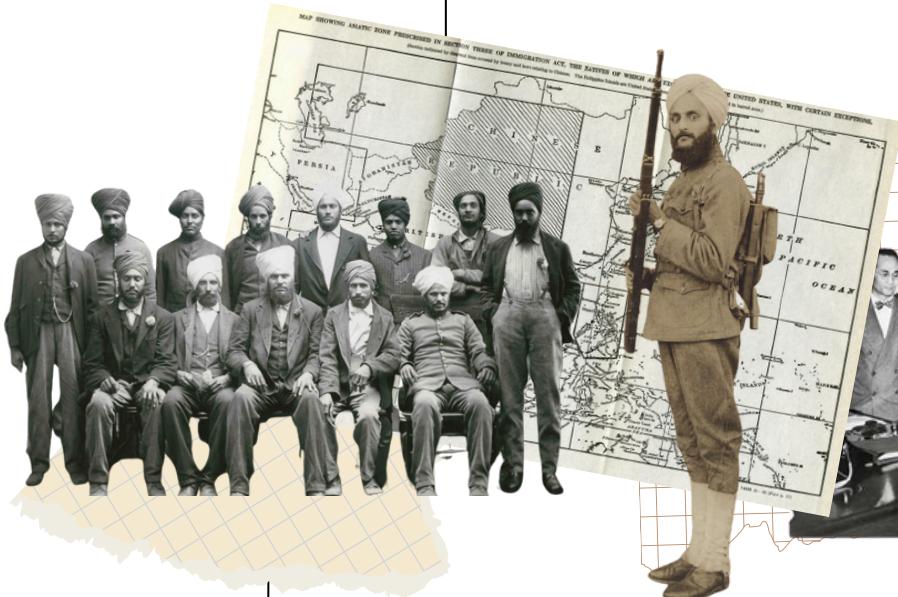
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## Chapter 2



Immigration Act creates “Asiatic Barred Zone,” banning Indian entry.

**1917**



Luce–Celler Act granted Indians and Filipinos limited quotas and first-time eligibility for citizenship.

**1946**



Immigration Act introduces H-1B visa for skilled workers.

**1990**



Covid-19 pandemic causes severe decline in new arrivals; travel bans and job freezes.

**2020**



**1923**

Supreme Court rules Indians “non-white,” revoking citizenship and property rights.

**1870 – 1930**

First Punjabi labor migrants arrive on U.S. West Coast; build early Indian communities despite discrimination.

**1965**

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, abolishes racial quotas and establishes a skills- and family-based system.

**2008**

Global financial crisis slows migration; fewer H-1B visas filled, 35% drop in Indian student visas.

# Historical Foundations Of the Indian Diaspora in The United States

## Late 19-Early 20 Century

The first wave of Indian migrants, primarily from rural Punjab, arrived on the U.S. West Coast particularly in California, Oregon, and Washington. Many found employment in railroads, agriculture, and lumber mills. Despite facing racial discrimination and restrictive immigration laws, these migrants built resilient communities, establishing temples, cooperatives, and small businesses. Prominent figures such as **Taraknath Das** and **Lala Lajpat Rai** connected Indian nationalist movements with activism among the Indian diaspora in the United States.

## Racial Barriers and Legal Exclusion

In the early twentieth century, Indian migration to the United States faced severe legal and racial barriers. **The Immigration Act of 1917** drew the so-called **“Asiatic Barred Zone,”** a sweeping restriction that virtually halted immigration from India and much of Asia.

Just a few years later, in **1923**, the U.S. Supreme Court delivered another blow in the landmark case **United States v/s Bhagat Singh Thind.** Although Thind was a World War I veteran and had been granted citizenship, the Court ruled that Indians were not “white” and therefore ineligible for naturalization. As a result, many Indian immigrants lost their citizenship and property overnight. These measures drastically curtailed Indian migration to America, leaving only a handful of elite students, diplomats, and officials able to enter the country in the years that followed.

## 1940s-1950s: Limited Entry and Political Shifts

The **Luce-Celler Act of 1946** was a landmark U.S. immigration law that granted Indians and Filipinos limited immigration quotas and the right to become naturalised American citizens for the first time.

It allowed an annual quota of **100 immigrants** from both India and the Philippines, naturalisation rights to Indians and Filipinos previously denied due to racial exclusion laws like the Asiatic Barred Zone Act (1917), and rights for immigrants to own property, become U.S. citizens, and sponsor family members for immigration.

## 1965: The Immigration and Nationality Act

The most pivotal moment in the story of Indian migration to the United States happened with the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965. This landmark legislation, signed by **President Lyndon B. Johnson**, put an end to the national origins quota system that had heavily restricted immigration from Asia and other non-European areas since the 1920s. With the new rules in place, immigration priorities shifted to emphasize family reunification and the recruitment of skilled professionals. For Indian migrants, this was a groundbreaking opportunity. The Act opened the floodgates for highly educated Indians especially doctors, engineers, scientists, and academics to move to the U.S. in significant numbers. American universities, hospitals, and tech companies eagerly sought out talent from India.

This surge of migration after 1965 dramatically transformed the Indian American demographic landscape. Unlike the earlier wave of laborers, these new arrivals were often urban, English-speaking professionals who quickly made their mark in fields like medicine, information technology, and academia. Their success stories helped fuel the model minority narrative, but they also sparked new discussions around race, class, and assimilation.



U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

# Indian Skilled Migration to the U.S.: Trends, Disruptions, and Resilience

Additionally, the 1965 Act paved the way for **family-based immigration**, enabling the first wave of skilled migrants to bring over their spouses, parents, and children. Over the years, this fostered a more stable and multigenerational Indian American community, complete with cultural institutions, religious centres, and civic organisations. The impact of the 1965 Act is still felt today, as it not only **ended years of exclusion** but also marked the start of India becoming one of the largest sources of immigrants to the United States. It transformed a previously marginalised presence into a **vibrant diaspora** that is now intricately woven into the social, economic, and political fabric of America.

## Interlinking Technology Growth and H-1B Workforce Dynamics

The 1990s marked the **most transformative phase** of Indian migration, driven by IT globalisation and the U.S. Immigration Act of 1990, which introduced the H-1B visa for **skilled professionals** in IT, engineering, and medicine.

As U.S. tech firms expanded during the **Silicon Valley boom**, demand for skilled talent surged, drawing thousands of Indian graduates from IITs and engineering colleges. Indians soon made up nearly half of all H-1B holders, shaping innovation in both nations. This migration spurred "**brain circulation**", where professionals maintained strong India ties, fueling tech transfer, remittances, and startup growth across the two economies.

## Aftershocks of the 2008 Global Recession

The **2008 global recession** caused a notable slowdown in U.S. visa issuance. H-1B quotas, which previously filled within days, took months to meet as hiring in tech and finance contracted. Similarly, student visas for Indians fell by almost **35%** between 2008 and 2012, reflecting tighter financial conditions and fewer study-abroad opportunities.

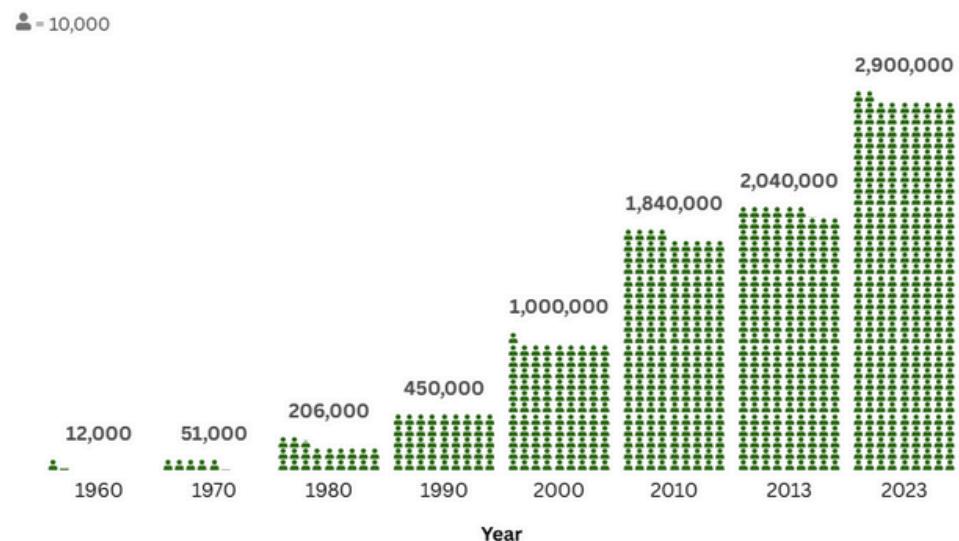
While **new migration from India temporarily declined**, especially in finance and weaker tech industries, established immigrants largely remained in the United States, weathering the downturn and sustaining longer-term professional and community networks that would later support post-recession recovery.

## Impact of Covid-19

During 2020–2021, U.S.-bound Indian immigration sharply **declined** due to COVID-19 related consulate closures, travel bans, and a drop in U.S. job and campus-based opportunities, especially after the April 2021 travel restriction on India. These disruptions **slowed** H-1B and student visa processing dramatically, causing unprecedented backlogs. However, by 2023, the U.S. Embassy in India issued a **record number of visas**, surpassing **pre-pandemic levels** and signaling a strong revival. New measures such as local H-1B renewals, National Interest Exceptions for students, and expedited visa processing accelerated migration recovery and widened professional and educational entry channels were taken in this aspect.

Immigration trends from India to the US between the **2000s and 2025** have recorded a continued and **significant increase** in skilled, student, and family migration, interrupted by downturns in the 2008 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, each with different impacts on volumes, visa categories, and migrant drivers.

Immigrant Population from India in the United States, 1980-2023



Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 and 2023 American Community Surveys (ACS), and Campbell J. Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850-2000" (Working Paper no. 81, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, February 2006), available online.

# Push and Pull: Why Indians Migrate

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## Chapter 3



# The Great Push: Domestic Constraints Catalyse the Search for Global Economic Parity

Migration from India to the United States has evolved into one of the most dynamic patterns of human mobility. It is shaped by converging economic, educational, and political forces operating in a rapidly globalizing world. By 2025, India had emerged as the largest global source of international migrants, with over **5.4 million people** of Indian origin residing in the United States. This movement represents not merely the relocation of individuals but the global projection of India's aspirations for opportunity, knowledge, and advancement. The push factors include economic, educational and political drivers.

## Economic Drivers

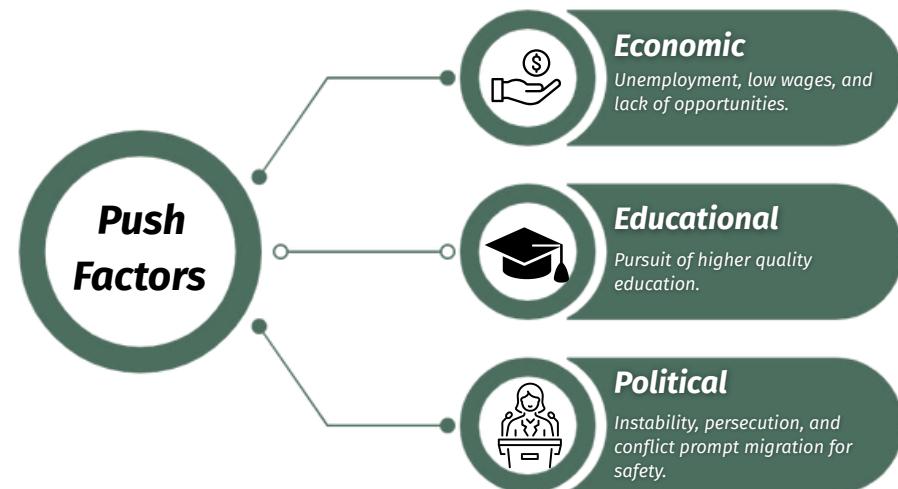
Economic conditions remain the foremost push factors behind migration from India. Persistent wage gaps, underemployment, and limited career progression have made migration an important avenue for economic empowerment. The stark asymmetry between the U.S. and Indian economy continues to **drive migration**. For many educated Indians, particularly in urban areas, professional success abroad promises both financial security and social prestige. Moreover, the flow of remittances, which forms a crucial lifeline for millions of Indian households, reinforces the economic rationale of migration and strengthens India's foreign exchange reserves.

## Educational Drivers

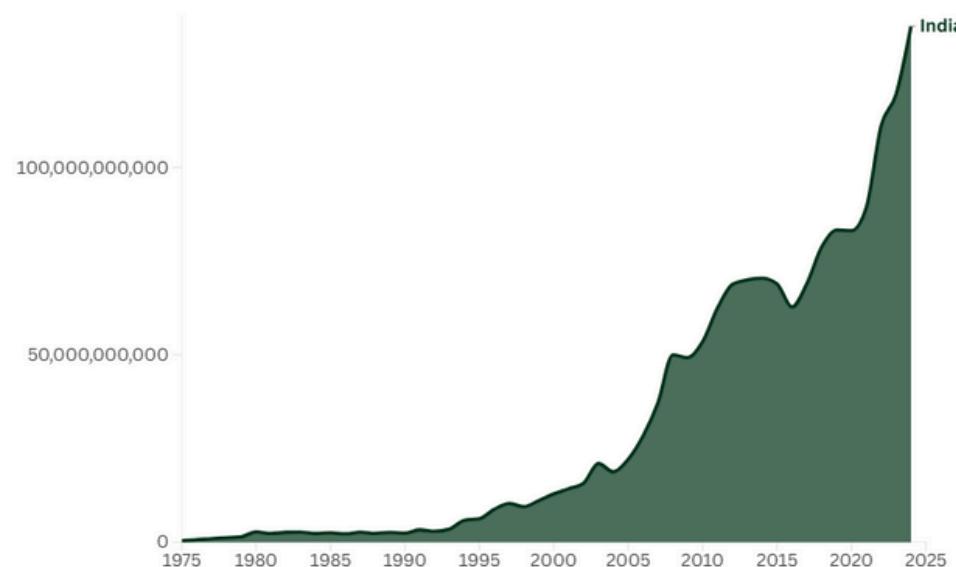
Education has emerged as an equally powerful motivator. In the 2024–25 academic year, over 4,22,000 Indian students were enrolled in U.S. universities, forming one of the world's largest international student populations. The U.S., with its research intensive environment, world-class facilities, and robust job market, functions as both a learning destination and a launchpad for professional integration. A significant share of these students transition into the American labor force, eventually receiving H-1B visas and contributing to the country's knowledge-driven economy.

## Political Drivers

Alongside economics and education, political dynamics within India also influence patterns of migration. Periodic regional unrest, bureaucratic inflexibility, and caste-based or minority politics can act as 'push' factors, particularly for highly skilled or marginalized communities seeking secure environments. In contrast, the United States is frequently perceived as a meritocratic society promising autonomy, fair competition, and structured pathways to citizenship. These converging motivations together 'pull' India's steady flow of migrants to America.



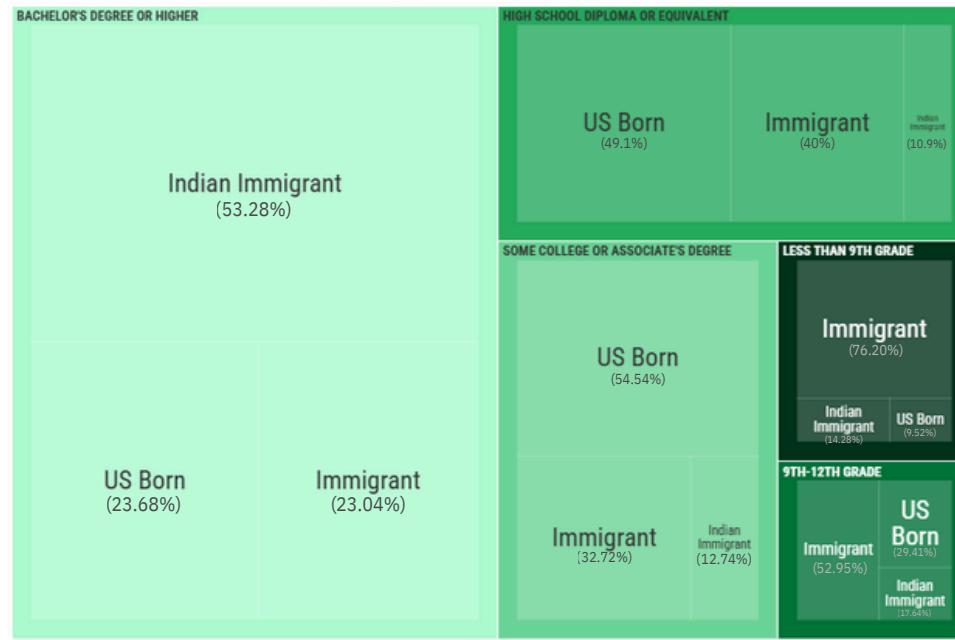
Annual Remittance Flows to India, 1975-23



Source: Migration Policy Institute. (2024). Tabulation of data from the World Bank Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), Remittance inflows (June 2024 update) [Data set]. World Bank. [available online](http://available online).

# The Structural Magnet: US Demand Finds its Perfect Supply in India's High-Skill Pipeline

Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population (ages 25 and older), by Origin, 2023



Batalova, J. B. M. G. a. J. (2024, November 8). Indian immigrants in the United States. *migrationpolicy.org*. available online

Demographically, Indian immigration reinforces the vitality of the U.S. economy amid an aging workforce. Migrants from India possess a **relatively young age profile, high labor participation rates**, and a strong representation in professions that are central to the country's growth industries. Economists consistently argue that without sustained migration inflows—especially from educated demographic hubs such as India—the U.S. would face a gradual contraction in labor supply and innovation capacity.

***“Indian immigrants deliver the highest economic benefits to the United States, with H-1B visa holders expanding GDP the most. An H-1B visa today will likely increase GDP by \$500,000 after 30 years and reduce the debt by \$2.3 million.”***

Source: Thacker, H. (2025, October 25). Indian immigrants bring largest gains to US economy. *Report. The CSR Journal*. available online

The structural composition of the U.S. economy acts as a strong magnet for global talent, and Indians remain among its most sought-after professionals. The impressive scale of American innovation, technological leadership, and sustained economic growth have resulted in constant demand for skilled labor, particularly in the **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields**. Indian professionals have been central to meeting this demand.

Education serves as the bridge connecting supply and demand. Four-fifths of Indian-born adults in the U.S. hold at least a **bachelor's degree**, and nearly half possess **postgraduate or professional qualifications**. This exceptional educational profile aligns seamlessly with U.S. labor market needs. Consequently, Indian migrants are widely represented in expanding sectors, including information technology, finance, and healthcare, where they contribute to both innovation and productivity gains.

Economically, the imprint of Indian immigration is profound. Indian Americans rank among the most **economically successful ethnic groups** in the United States. Their entrepreneurial energy is visible in tech start-ups, healthcare organizations, and research laboratories. Moreover, economists contend that without sustained immigration, the U.S. workforce would gradually contract. In this context, Indian migration serves as a stabilizing demographic force, maintaining the workforce and sustaining economic growth in an increasingly competitive global economy.

THE  HINDU

## Indians earn the most among Asian Americans: Data

**About 77% of Indians have a bachelor's degree or higher, second only to Taiwanese (83%)**

Source: Team, H. D. (2025, May 8). Indians earn the most among Asian Americans: Data. *The Hindu*. available online

# Globalisation and Transnational Networks: Shaping the Dynamics of Indian Migration

## Role of Globalisation & Transnational Networks

Globalisation has fundamentally redefined the nature and direction of Indian migration to the United States. The rapid expansion of communication technologies, affordable air travel, and digital connectivity has virtually collapsed geographical boundaries. In this globalised context, the distance between India and the United States has been transformed into a bridge for economic, social, and cultural mobility. What was once a linear journey of movement has become a cyclical network of interaction, sustained by the circulation of people, ideas, remittances, and influence.

As of 2025, India's diaspora stands at an unprecedented **35.42 million people**, the largest in the world, comprising **15.85 million** Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and **19.57 million** Persons and Overseas Citizens of Indian Origin (PIOs/OCIs). Nearly 5.7 million Indians reside in the United States, the single largest destination for Indian migrants. This widespread distribution has created a dense transnational web that operates simultaneously across familial, professional, and digital spheres.

## The Architecture of Transnational Networks

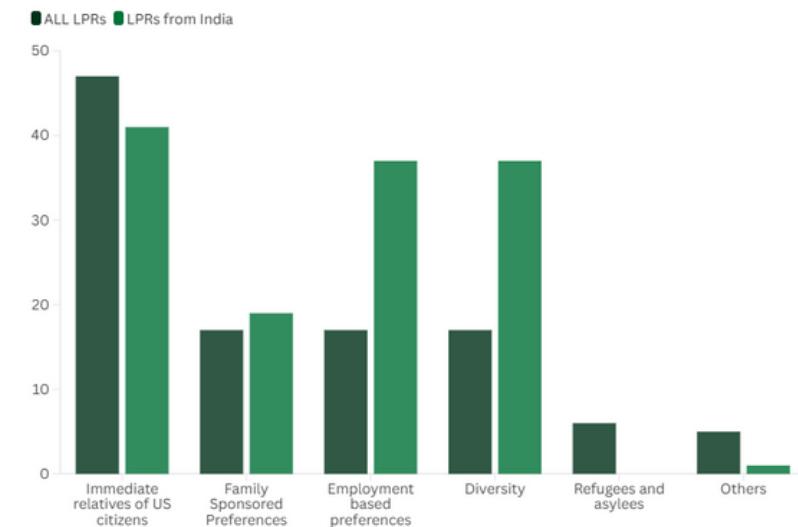
Beyond economic metrics, these transnational networks represent the invisible architecture that supports Indian migration. Families, alumni associations, professional groups, and regional cultural organizations act as structural nodes that assist new migrants, reduce relocation costs, and provide access to employment, housing, and legal guidance. This digitized infrastructure not only accelerates the mobility process but also sustains relationships across borders, ensuring that migration becomes a shared social enterprise rather than an individual journey.

Remittances are the most tangible expression of this ongoing transnational connection. In FY 2024-25, Indians abroad sent a record **USD 135.46 billion** back to India, a **14% rise** from the previous year, contributing nearly 47% of India's merchandise trade deficit and serving as a vital stabilizer for the national economy. In parallel, diaspora investments through NRE (Non-Resident External) accounts and entrepreneurial collaborations have nearly doubled, channeling capital into India's technology, real estate, and education sectors.

## Cultural Hybridisation and Soft Power

Culturally, globalization has allowed Indian migrants to integrate into American society while preserving a deep connection to their roots. Indian communities have established temples, cultural centers, and media outlets that actively promote regional languages, and art. These spaces serve as cultural bridges simultaneously preserving Indian traditions and introducing them into the American mainstream. Through yoga, Bollywood, festivals like Diwali, and cuisine, the diaspora has become a significant agent of **India's soft power**, enhancing the country's global image as pluralistic, creative, and inclusive.

Political engagement further reflects the maturation of transnational influence. Diaspora organizations and civic leaders of Indian origin have played visible roles in promoting bilateral cooperation, influencing trade and technology agreements, and lobbying for stronger Indo-U.S. ties. Notably, Indian Americans have been instrumental in supporting key diplomatic initiatives such as the **U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement (2008)**. Their success in corporate, academic, and political leadership—seen in figures such as Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella, demonstrates how globalization transforms migration into a force of shared innovation and governance.



Source: MPI tabulation of data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Homeland Security Statistics (OHS), "Table 10: Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status by Broad Class of Admission and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Year 2023," updated September 16, 2024, [available online](#).

# Settlement Patterns: Communities and Contribution to the American Landscape

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## Chapter 4



# Regional Concentration of Indian American Communities

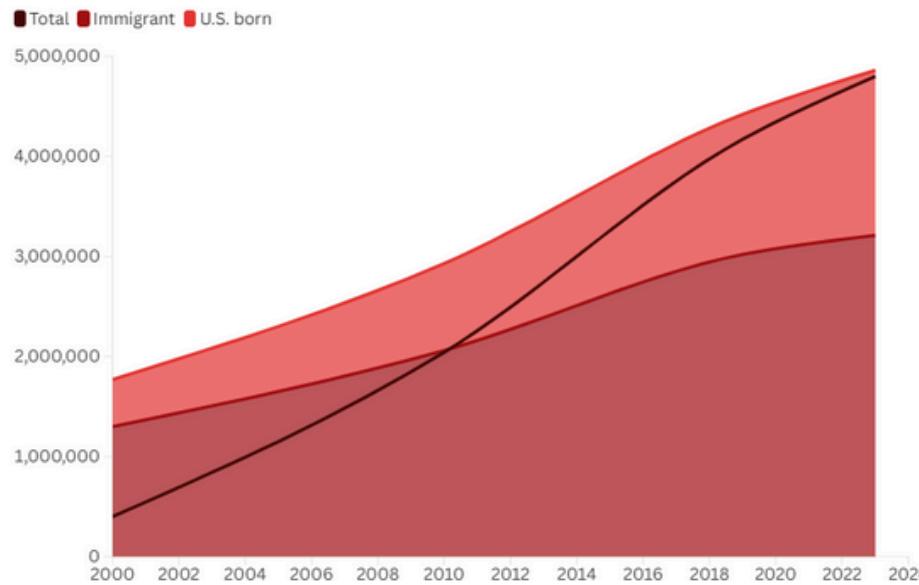
The geographic distribution of the Indian American population is not random; it is a strategic function of the U.S. economy's high-skill demand. The settlement pattern demonstrates a shift toward seeking out professional opportunities rather than simply congregating in existing ethnic enclaves. This has led to an extreme concentration in just a handful of states that lead in technology, finance, and healthcare.

## Geographic Concentration

The Indian American community is the **second-largest Asian origin population** in the U.S., with a remarkable growth trajectory since the turn of the century. An estimated **5.2 million people** identified as Indian in 2023. The population has grown by an exceptional **174%** over roughly two decades, increasing from 1.8 million in 2000 to approximately 4.9 million in 2021-2023. This expansion accelerated dramatically between 2010 and 2020, with a decadal growth rate of **42%**, one of the highest among all immigrant groups.

### Indian population in the U.S., 2000-2023

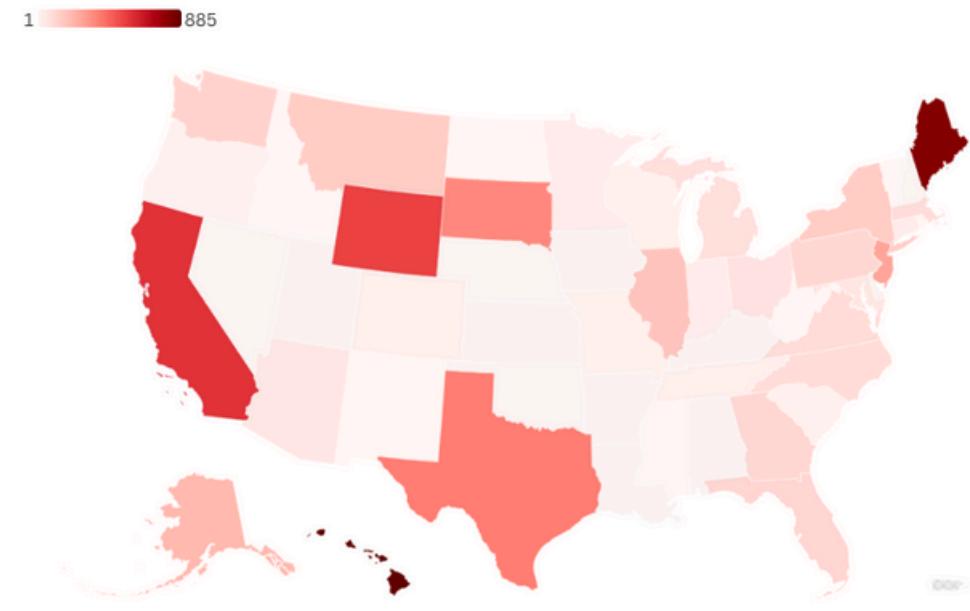
U.S. Indian (alone or in combination) population, by nativity



Source: Pew Research Center. (2025, May 1). Indian population in the U.S., 2000-2023 | Pew Research Center available online/

## State-Level Concentration: Economic Centres Dominate

Over 50% of the Indian American population is concentrated in just **five states**: California, Texas, New Jersey, New York, and Illinois. It signifies that Indian Americans tend to settle in states offering significant economic opportunities.



Source: State immigration data profiles. (2023, January 30). migrationpolicy.org. available online

# Cultural Preservation and Socio-Economic Integration in the Indian American Community

The Indian American community manages the tension between cultural preservation and socio-economic integration through the creation of robust formal and informal institutions. These institutions build dense, transnational networks that strengthen internal cohesion and amplify external political and economic engagement.

## Mechanisms of Integration and Engagement

### 1. Dynamic Association Affiliation

Affiliation with formal ethnic associations follows a life-stage-dependent U-shaped curve:

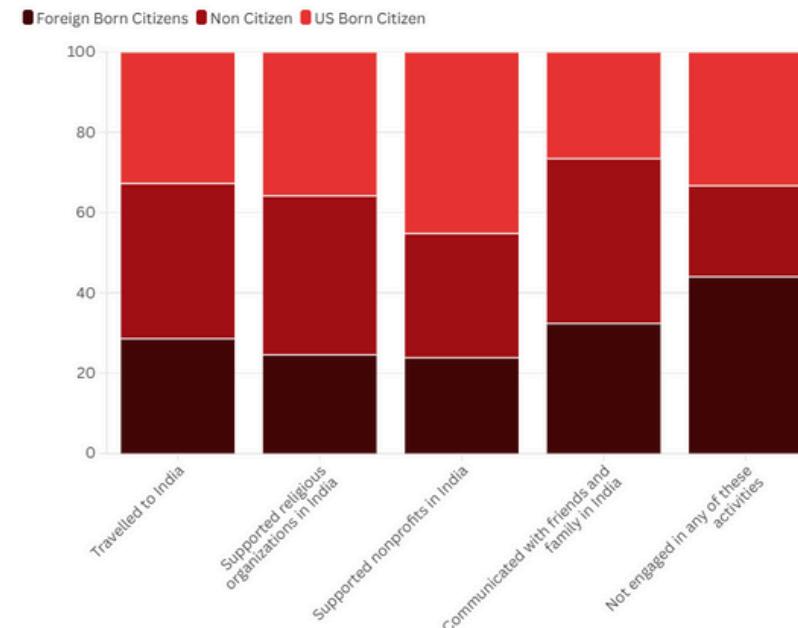
- **Phase 1 (Initial Migration/Peak 1):** Affiliation is High, driven by "culture shock," the desire for familiar connections, self-esteem, and establishing immediate professional networks (e.g., student associations). 43% of participants belonged to an association upon arrival.
- **Phase 2 (Mid-Career/Trough):** Affiliation is Low/None. As immigrants successfully integrate and become "Americanized," they rely on informal networks within their workplaces (e.g., tech companies) and Indian-populated neighbourhoods.
- **Phase 3 (Parenthood/Anticipated Rise - Peak 2):** The need revives as immigrants seek to instil Indian values, culture, and mother tongues in their U.S.-born children, promoting bilingualism and biculturalism.

### 2. Maintaining Transnational Connections

Survey data document these connections in personal and cultural terms. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace conducted an **Indian American Attitudes Survey** in 2024.

Transnational Engagement among Indian Americans remains frequent, driven primarily by digital communication and travel, though engagement varies by citizenship status. The most common form of engagement is **communication**, with 55% of the sample communicating with friends or family in India at least monthly.

Travel is the second-most-common activity, with 39% travelling to India in the past year. Again, Noncitizens lead in **recent travel** at 46%. **Philanthropic** activities are also notable: 17% supported religious NGOs and 14% supported non-profit NGOs in India in the past year.



SoBadrinathan, S., Kapur, D., Richter, A., & Vaishnav, M. (n.d.). How Indian Americans live: Results from the 2024 Indian American Attitudes Survey. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/06/indian-americans-social-survey-data?lang=en>

### 3. Cultural Connectivity and Identity

Cultural connectivity serves as a defining feature of the Indian American community's bicultural identity.

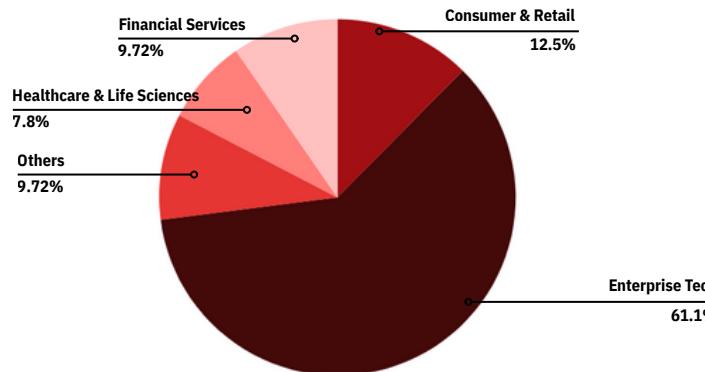
This connection is maintained through easily accessible media and practices. Eating **Indian food** is the most common cultural practice, reported by 81% of Indian Americans in the past month. Media consumption is also widespread, with 65% having watched **Indian movies or television** in the past month. This practice is notably higher among noncitizens (77%) than U.S.-born citizens (58%).

Additionally, 38% of the community engaged with **Indian dance, music, or art** in some form. Regarding identity, "Indian American" is the most common self-identification at 26%, followed by "Asian Indian" (22%) and "Indian" (20%). U.S.-born individuals are more likely to merge identities, with 48% identifying as "Indian American," whereas a larger share of the foreign-born (33%) identify simply as "Indian".

# Economic and Technological Contributions

Indian Americans play a major role in the American economy. Their influence extends way beyond their population share. Many launch businesses that generate wealth and jobs, and many hold well-paying professional jobs.

Indian-origin CEOs were at the helm of **16 Fortune 500 companies** in 2023 (3%), managing enterprises that generated roughly 978 billion (5%) in revenues and employed 2.5 million people (9%) across the globe that year

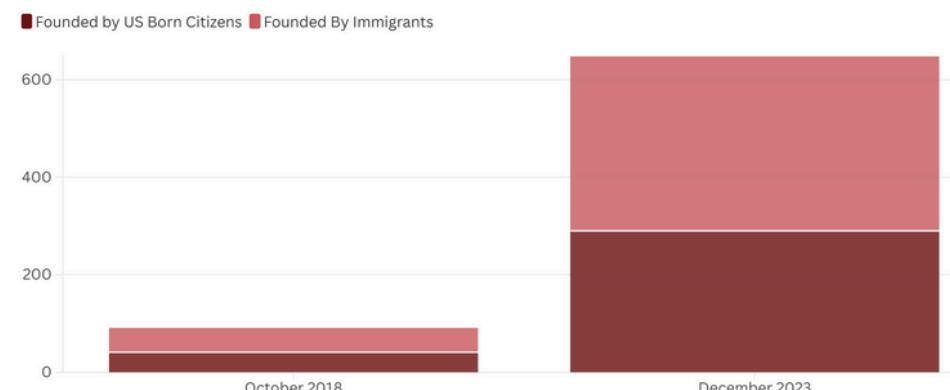


Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/20010/international-enrollment-in-higher-education/>

Entrepreneurship is another major activity done by Indian Americans. Indian Americans have founded businesses in various industries, such as restaurants, retail, real estate, consulting, and technology.

The **entrepreneurial drive** among Indian Americans has spurred economic growth in the areas where they live and work.

Number of Unicorns in the U.S.



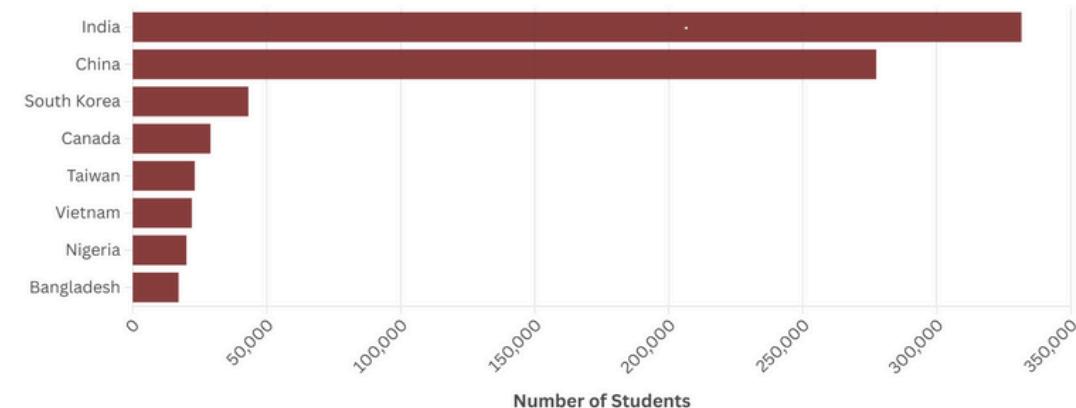
Source: Buchholz, K. (2025, May 23). Where America's international students come from. Statista Daily Data. [available online](https://www.statista.com/daily-data/2025/05/23/where-americas-international-students-come-from/)

Among these 358 unicorns, **72 (or 20%) have Indian migrants as founders** or co-founders, collectively accounting for over \$195 billion in valuation and employing approximately 55,000 people.

The achievements of Indian Americans have also benefited educational institutions. Indian American donors have contributed more than **\$3 billion** to American universities since 2008. These donations help fund campus development, research, and scholarships. This generosity shows a dedication to education as well as financial success.

Another essential connection between the two countries are Indian students. They are the biggest population of foreign students in the United States. Through tuition, housing, and living expenses, Indian students make over \$8 billion in economic contributions to the United States annually. This educational exchange helps develop skilled professionals and enriches the human capital of the Indian American community.

Origins of International Students in the U.S.



Source: Buchholz, K. (2025, May 23). Where America's international students come from. Statista Daily Data. [available online](https://www.statista.com/daily-data/2025/05/23/where-americas-international-students-come-from/)

Overall Indian Americans contribute broadly to the U.S. economy through taxes, consumer spending, and innovation. Their high levels of education and professional growth have increased household incomes and generated economic momentum in cities across the nation.

# Cultural Influence and Representation in Media and Politics

## Cultural Influence and Acceptance

Indian Americans' success and numbers have increased, and so has their cultural and political clout. In the United States, Indian culture, which was once viewed as foreign, is now more **respected and familiar**. Indian cuisine is popular throughout the nation, with many people enjoying foods that were once thought to be alien. Bollywood and other Indian dance, music, and movies appeal to a wide range of viewers. These patterns demonstrate the community's attempts to spread its customs as well as America's growing tolerance for diversity.

## Media and Entertainment Representation

There are more Indian Americans in the media and entertainment industry. Indian-born actors, writers, and directors are now employed in television and **mainstream Hollywood**. Through their efforts, stereotypes have been contested and representation has improved. However, media portrayals remain inconsistent, with Indian Americans frequently depicted in oversimplified ways that fail to capture the diversity of the community.



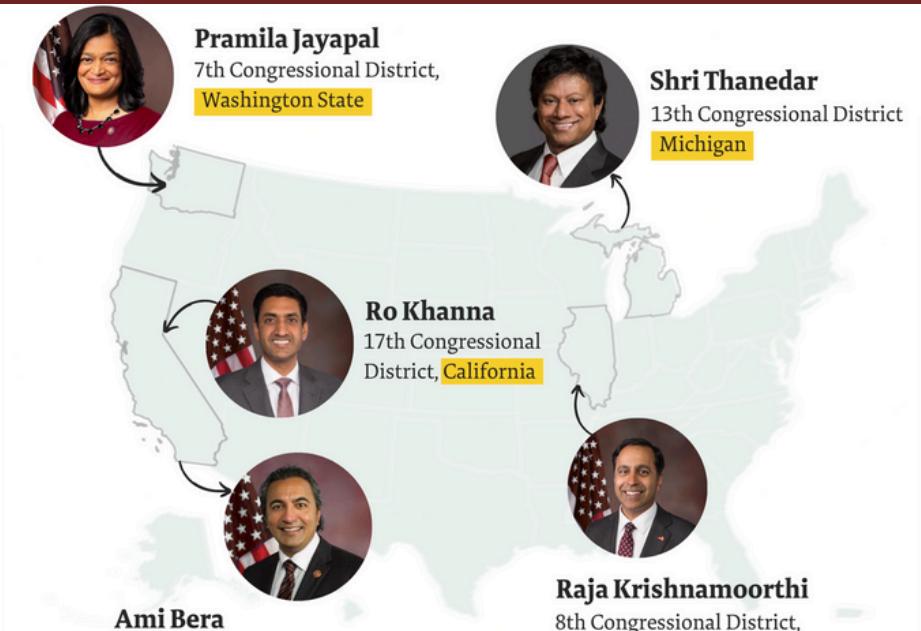
## Political Participation and Leadership

Political participation among Indian Americans has increased. Earlier immigrants often avoided politics, but now Indian Americans vote at rates similar to other immigrant groups. Political organisations advocate for community interests, and several Indian Americans serve in Congress, state legislatures, and local offices. Their leadership reflects both integration into American politics and a desire to represent their community.

The growth of Indian American cultural and political presence is an ongoing process. The community continues to **balance** maintaining Indian heritage with active participation in American life. Their experience shows how immigrant groups can shape and be shaped by American society.

### The 'Samosa Caucus'

Indian-American lawmakers in the US Congress



Source: Pti. (2022, November 9). Five prominent Indian-American politicians in race for U.S. Congress in midterm polls. *The Hindu*. [available online](#)

# Challenges and Tensions

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## Chapter 5



# Immigration Policies, Visas, and Green Card Backlogs

## A Foundation of Shared Interests and People

The United States and India have a **strategic partnership** that ranks as one of the most significant ones in the new millennium. This union is reinforced not only by the economic ties and common democratic values, but also by the continuous exchange of people. Indian knowledge in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) has become the **foundation of U.S.** creative output, whereas the U.S. remains one of the top destinations for Indian students and the workforce.

## A Divergence Between Talent Flow and Immigration Policy

However, this relationship reveals a major divergence with U.S. immigration policy. Despite numerous **temporary visa options** available for Indian talent, the path to permanent residency remains severely restricted due to systemic backlogs.

This bottleneck is causing a great deal of irritation to the bilateral relationship, creating a **stark contrast** between the welcome extended to temporary workers and the closed door to permanent settlement.

## The Temporary Visa Pipeline: H-1B and L-1 Dominance

Most Indian professionals begin their U.S. careers with non-immigrant visas, where they form a dominant cohort. The H-1B visa program for speciality occupations acts as the major gateway, with Indian nationals consistently making up **70 to 75 percent** of approved petitions. This highlights their pivotal role in filling vacancies in the U.S. tech and engineering sectors.

Alongside this, the **L-1 visa for intra-company transfers** is a critical instrument for multinational corporations, including leading Indian IT services firms, enabling them to move managers and specialists to U.S. branches.

## The Academic Pathway: Students as a Long-Term Investment

The F-1 academic student visa forms another strong talent pipeline. With over **3,31,602 Indian students**, who constitute the second-largest international student body in the U.S., they represent a long-term investment in the bilateral relationship.

The Optional Practical Training (OPT) program serves as a key link, allowing U.S.-educated graduates to gain practical training. Often, these individuals transition into the H-1B workforce, ensuring a continuous flow of qualified talent into the U.S. economy without interruption.

## The Broken Bridge to Permanent Residency

Conversely, the transition from temporary worker to lawful permanent resident exposes a deeply dysfunctional system. This employer-sponsored process is a marathon involving multiple stages. It begins with PERM labour certification, where the employer must prove to the Department of Labour that no qualified American workers are available for the position. Following certification, the employer files an Immigrant Petition (I-140) to assign the worker to a preference category, most commonly **EB-2** for advanced degrees or **EB-3** for bachelor's degrees with experience.



*Indian workers: An important lifeline for the U.S. economy*

# Barriers Beyond Borders: Policy Gaps and Indian Migration

## The Root Cause: Per-Country Caps and Decades-Long Waits

The final stage, filing for Adjustment of Status (I-485), can only occur when a visa number is immediately available, a situation postponed for Indians for decades. This immense delay is caused by the **7% per-country cap**, a provision from 1965 that limits employment-based Green Cards to about **9,800 per country annually**.

This quota is wholly inadequate for India, which accounts for over **70% of applicants** in key categories. A study by the National Foundation for American Policy reveals a backlog of over **1.2 million Indians**. With so few visas available for this vast pool, waiting times for new Indian applicants now exceed 50 years, and in some cases, even 100 years, trapping families in a perpetual state of limbo.

## Systemic Flaws in the H1B Lottery Process

The integrity of the lottery system of the H1B visa has been severely compromised by a large number of exploitative registrations, which has been the most significant and urgent issue of the recent H1B visa situation.

For the FY2025 cycle, more than **470,000** entries were submitted for only **85,000 visas**, and most of the volume was inflated by unethical practices in which a single person was registered multiple times by different entities in order to increase their chances of being selected. This deliberate manipulation of the system has gone to the very core of the program's fairness; thus, the chances of picking legitimate, unique applicants have been significantly decreased, and the program's goal of getting the best global talents has been distorted.

To this effect, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has made a bold decision to combat this phenomenon by a major change: moving to a "**beneficiary-centric**" lottery.

Under this new system, the choice will be made based on the one and only individual rather than on the number of petitions filed for him/her, thus it hopes to make the H1B program accessible again to be fair from a social justice perspective.

## H-1B fee hike sparks anxiety among Indian professionals

Amisha.Rajani  
@timesofindia.com

**Hyderabad:** The US announcement of a sweeping hike in H-1B visa fees, raising annual sponsorship costs to \$1,00,000 per employee from Sept 21, has triggered anxiety among Indian professionals—the largest group of H-1B holders—and confusion among employers who rely on them.

For many, the timing could not have been worse. "I've been in the US for a decade after completing my MSc. I work in Chicago and came to India with barely one suitcase for two weeks. My stamping is scheduled at Hyderabad consulate on Sept 22. My wife and child are in the US. I'm stuck here," said one professional.

He recalled booking his appointment after spotting available slots in Chennai and Hyderabad. "I never imagined such a situation. I can't fly back by Sept 21, and no employer will pay \$100K re-



If US opportunities become unviable, talent may return to India... Companies might also shift more projects to India rather than incur steep sponsorship costs — **Ankit Jain** | immigration consultant

gardless of my contributions. I don't even know if my visa will be stamped," he added.

The US move is expected to hit India hardest. Of the 3.9 lakh H-1B visas approved in 2024, 71% went to Indians, with China accounting for just 11.7%. India has historically dominated the H-1B program, underscoring the crucial role of Indian IT and tech

talent in the US workforce. Even those still in the US are on edge. A software engineer in Los Angeles, with a Nov stamping scheduled in Hyderabad, said her company advised her not to travel. "I haven't seen my parents in over two years, but I can't risk my career if I get stuck in India."

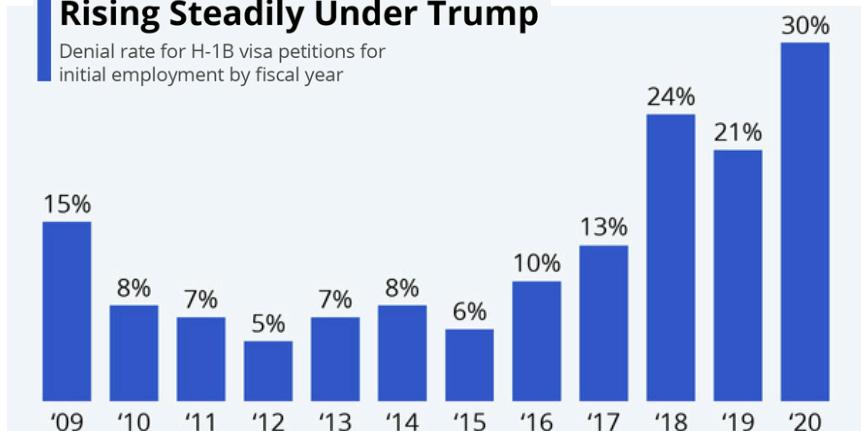
Some companies are preparing to fight back. A Chicago-based professional with a Dec stamping said his employer's legal team is exploring a court challenge to new rule. Experts suggest the upheaval could have broader implications. Immigration consultant Ankit Jain said his firm has received dozens of panic calls and is advising clients to stay put or wait for clarity, assuring that companies are likely to take action soon.

**AIMIM president slams Modi govt**

AIMIM president and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi criticised the Modi-led govt after the US announced a \$1,00,000 annual fee on H-1B visa applications. "My quarrel is with this govt: What did you achieve with Howdy Modi and Namaste Trump? Birthday wishes are not foreign policy," he posted on X. He said Modi's policies sacrificed long-term national gains for domestic posturing. **TNN**

### H-1B Visa Denials Have Been Rising Steadily Under Trump

Denial rate for H-1B visa petitions for initial employment by fiscal year



Source: McCarthy, N. (2020, June 23). H-1B visa denials have been rising steadily under Trump. Statista Daily Data. [available online](http://available online)

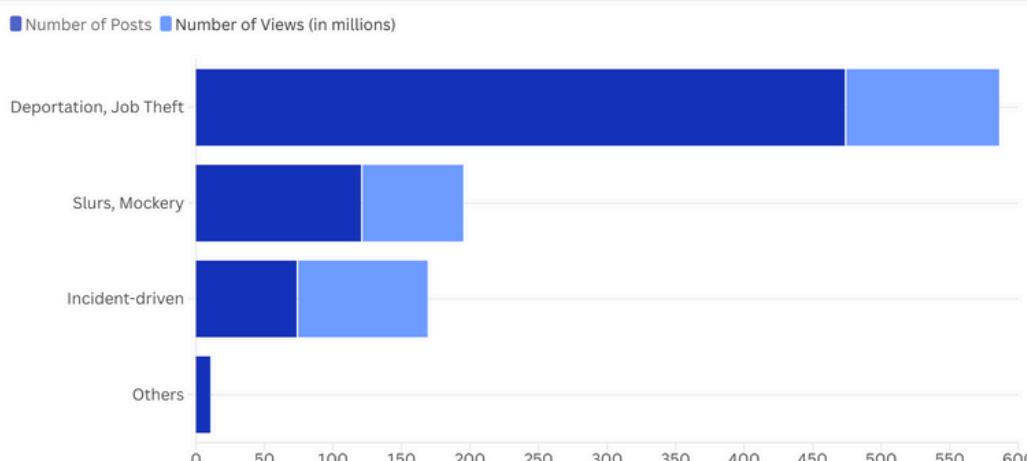
# Evolving Nature of Racism and Xenophobia in Indian Migration

Indians migrating abroad face significant challenges from racism and xenophobia, which manifest both structurally, socially and across multiple other contexts. These challenges are deeply rooted in immigration policies, digital platforms, socio-political tensions, and the lived realities of diaspora communities.

## Types of Online Hate Narratives

Social media has emerged as a major conduit for spreading anti-Indian racism, particularly on platforms like X (formerly Twitter). Between July 1 and September 7, 2025, X witnessed an alarming rise in anti-Indian racist activity, with **680 posts** collectively amassing over **281 million** views. A majority of these, approximately 69.7% (474 posts), were centred around portraying Indians as “invaders” and “job thieves,” drawing 111.8 million views centred around immigration, deportation, and expulsion themes.

Other posts largely revolved around explicit slurs, jokes, and derogatory generalisations about Indian culture. There also exists a significant amount of incident-based scapegoating, a prominent example of this is the **Florida truck crash** in 2025, involving an Indian-origin Sikh driver, Harjinder Singh and the tragic death of three people; following the incident, members of the Sikh trucking community reported increased harassment at truck stops and on social media.



## Shades of Inequality

Skin tone significantly influences immigrants' earnings in the U.S. On average, immigrants with the lightest skin tone earn **17% more** than those with the darkest skin tone. In particular, darker-skinned immigrants face an earnings **penalty of 3.4%** from the baseline, which decreases to 1.7% after accounting for other employment-related factors.

### Earnings Premium/ Penalty (%)



## Political Flashpoints Fueling Racism

The surge in anti-Indian hate posts online has shown a strong correlation with major political events. Notable appointments like **Kash Patel** as Director of the FBI and **Vivek Ramaswamy** being appointed to lead the newly established Department of Government Efficiency sparked waves of online backlash and xenophobic narratives. Simultaneously, increasing **US-India tariff tensions** in August 2025 also further ratcheted up anti-India sentiment.

## The Human Cost of Racism

This normalisation of racist stereotypes on social media has emboldened acts of harassment and violence against Indians abroad. Data presented in the Indian Parliament this year revealed that at least **91 attacks** on Indian students overseas were recorded, **resulting in 30 deaths**, with Canada, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Germany accounting for the highest number of incidents. Individuals reported facing verbal harassment, physical confrontations, and overwhelming sense of fear that has disrupted their daily routines and limited their social engagement.

# Mapping Diaspora Dynamics: Socio-economic, Regional, and Caste Dynamics

## Structural Racism

Systemic racism is also deeply embedded in the global labour markets, shaping who gets access to work and the upward mobility for racial minorities. Indian migrants, despite having similar qualifications as local workers, frequently encounter discrimination and wage disparities. A study by the **International Labour Organisation** found that migrant workers globally experience wage disparities of around **13% on average**, sometimes up to 42%, even when equally qualified. These inequalities were further exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Indian migrants faced heightened stigma and xenophobia, often being perceived as carriers of the virus, and being fired from jobs, which deepened their socio-economic marginalisation.

Racism in the tech sector is layered: Indian professionals face discrimination as outsiders from the majority-white leadership, while internal hierarchies based on caste privilege lead to practices within the Indian diaspora, where lower-caste individuals face both racial and caste-based discrimination simultaneously.



*The Interplay of Race and Caste*

## Ethnic and Regional Clustering

- **Gulf Countries:** Migrants from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Karnataka dominate the Indian population in the Middle East, forming tightly knit communities with distinct cultural practices.
- **North America:** Subgroups such as Punjabis in Canada and Gujaratis in the U.S. have separate community bases with strong regional identities.

## Religious Groupings

In Canada, the Sikh diaspora is politically and culturally active, with some members supporting the Khalistan separatist movement, while the Hindu diaspora generally opposes such agendas. Tensions between these groups have occasionally escalated, as seen in the November 2024 vandalism of the **Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton**.

## Socio-economic Stratification

In Gulf countries, the majority of Indian migrants work in low-skilled or semi-skilled jobs such as construction, domestic work, and service sectors, often facing limited labor rights. In contrast, Western nations like the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. host predominantly high-skilled, high-income professionals employed in IT, medicine, finance, and entrepreneurship.

For example, Indian households in the U.S. have a median income of nearly **\$150,000**, and Indians account for approximately **71% of H-1B visa approvals**, highlighting their concentration in skilled sectors.

## Persistence of Caste Dynamics

Caste continues to shape the Indian diaspora, with upper castes (Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasthas) overrepresented in skilled migration, while Dalits and OBCs remain underrepresented. For instance, in the U.S., 83% of Hindu respondents identify with upper castes, compared to 16% OBCs and 1% SC/ST, highlighting persistent disparities in access to opportunities and elite diaspora circles.

# India's Diplomatic Response

## Chapter 6



# US Immigration Policy and India's Economy

## Visa Policy Shapes Skilled Workforce Mobility

India's economic ties to the United States run on **multiple rails** trade, investment, services and people. One of the clearest channels through which **U.S. immigration policy affects India** is the mobility of high-skilled labour, particularly in information technology, healthcare and research. Changes in H-1B rules, visa processing backlogs, and **restrictions on work-authorization** can reshape the incentives for Indian firms and professionals, for example, when the **visa cap tightened in 2017–2018, Infosys expanded its delivery centers in India and increased local U.S. hiring** showing how they alter decisions about whether talent should migrate, outsource, or be retained and trained domestically.

## Politicization of Immigration Elevates Business Uncertainty

**Policy interactions matter:** U.S. domestic debates on immigration intersect with strategic concerns about **supply-chain resilience** and **critical-sector shortages (healthcare workers, STEM specialists)**. Some U.S. policy proposals frame selective immigration as necessary to fill short-term critical-sector gaps an outcome that could complement India's role as a talent exporter if channels are stable and predictable. For example, recent **U.S. bills on critical sector immigration** aim to fast-track healthcare and STEM workers. Conversely, **unpredictable visa policy or anti-immigrant political rhetoric** can increase costs for Indian firms and professionals and raise political friction in bilateral relations. Analysts underline that **rebuilding predictable, merit-based, and transparent channels** is as important as headline-level quotas.

## Diaspora Talent Drives Innovation & Investment Flows

A third channel is **investment and knowledge transfer**. Indian professionals in the U.S. frequently act as conduits for **venture capital, dual-location startups, and transnational R&D collaborations**. A case in point is the role of **Indian-born tech leaders like Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella**, whose networks influence bilateral technology partnerships. **Restrictions that reduce long-term stay** or create instability for overseas Indians can reduce the probability of return migration, slow two-way entrepreneurship, and lower the rate of informal 'brain circulation'. That said, many firms and professionals adapt by **increasing local hiring, expanding offshore development centers, or using remote work arrangements** meaning policy shocks generate a mix of adjustment and structural change rather than complete disruption.

## Remittances Support Consumption and Forex Stability

A second mechanism is **remittances and household income**. Large flows of remittances from the U.S. and other destination countries sustain consumption in many Indian households and support foreign-exchange reserves; sudden tightening of immigration rules or large-scale deportations would have measurable macroeconomic effects in worst-case scenarios. For example, in **FY25, remittances from the U.S. alone accounted for a significant share of India's record-breaking \$135.46 billion inflows**. However, **remittances are also diversified geographically (UAE, Saudi Arabia, US among top destinations)**, so the direct macro exposure to U.S. policy alone is limited compared with total diaspora linkages.

### IMMIGRATION

## Trump: 'Our country is full'

In a visit to Calexico, president says that migrants are straining system, calls asylum claims a hoax

By Zeke Miller and Jonathan Lemire  
The Associated Press

CALEXICO • Declaring "our country is full," President Donald Trump on Friday insisted the U.S. immigration system was overburdened and illegal crossings must be stopped as

he inspected a refurbished section of fencing at the Mexican border.

Trump, making a renewed push for border security as a central campaign issue for his 2020 re-election, participated in a briefing on immigration and border security in Calexico before visiting a 2-mile see-through steel-mat bar-

rier that was a long-planned replacement for an older barrier — and not a new wall.

"There is indeed an emergency on our southern border," Trump said at the briefing, adding that there has been a sharp uptick in il-

BORDEN + SPARELLA



President Donald Trump speaks as he visits a renovated section of the border wall with Mexico in Calexico on Friday.

ACQUELINE MARTIN  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Strategic Diversification Strengthens India's Positioning

Finally, **strategic implications for India's economy hinge on government and firm responses**. India can reduce vulnerability by investing in upskilling, improving domestic R&D and higher-education capacity, and negotiating mobility frameworks that protect mutual interests (e.g., skilled-worker pathways, mutual recognition of qualifications). Simultaneously, **India's large and diversified diaspora, and strong inbound investments, give it leverage to lobby for stable migration regimes** while also accelerating India's own efforts to capture more value domestically (higher value-added services, product development rather than pure coding services). For example, **India has recently signed mobility partnerships with the UK and Australia to diversify skilled migration opportunities**. In short: U.S. immigration policy influences India's economy, but the relationship is multi-faceted and mediated by adaptation, diversification, and policy choices on both sides.

# The Diaspora as a Strategic Bridge

## Strategic Importance of the Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora is a strategic asset for India, serving as an economic driver, diplomatic bridge, and cultural intermediary. Through trade, philanthropy, and cultural engagement, overseas Indians strengthen bilateral ties and enhance India's global profile.

Prominent figures such as Vice President **Kamala Harris** and members of the **Indian-American Congressional Caucus** exemplify how diaspora representation shapes perceptions and reinforces India's soft power and international credibility.

## Economic Linkages and Development Impact

Economically, the diaspora plays a critical role in enhancing **India's growth through remittances**, investment, and entrepreneurship. Beyond capital inflows, diaspora-led ventures foster enduring commercial relations and channels for technology and knowledge transfer. Such engagements contribute to India's innovation capacity and broader integration into global markets.

These transnational economic networks underline the "**living bridge**" concept, wherein diaspora communities act as active participants in promoting bilateral engagement rather than passive conduits of identity or heritage.

## Political Positioning and Representation

### Dynamics

Politically, the diaspora operates within a **complex landscape** that demands dual accountability to both India and their countries of residence. While many members advocate for policies aligned with India's strategic interests, they must also navigate **local political sensitivities**.

The Indian-American community, for instance, often experiences internal divisions during periods of policy divergence between India and the United States.

Concerns about domestic political perception, electoral implications, and potential backlash can inhibit unified diaspora advocacy. Accordingly, India's foreign policy and diaspora engagement strategy must remain **empathetic to these contextual realities**, enabling constructive participation without prescriptive expectations.

## Institutional Mechanisms and Networked Cooperation

Diaspora networks play a crucial role in **fostering bilateral cooperation** across sectors such as education, finance, and technology. They enable collaboration through university partnerships, joint ventures, diaspora-led investment funds, and professional associations that facilitate **knowledge exchange and innovation**.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has strengthened these linkages through initiatives like **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** and dedicated investment platforms, creating structured avenues for long-term engagement.

During national crises, these networks have demonstrated their effectiveness. For instance, during the second wave of COVID-19, **Indian-origin philanthropists and organisations** in the United States mobilised substantial financial and material support, underscoring the diaspora's reliability as a development and crisis-response partner.

## Comparative Global Models and Policy Insights

Comparative experiences from nations such as China and Israel illustrate the transformative role diaspora networks can play in national development. Both countries successfully **leveraged external talent pools** and diaspora capital to enhance their domestic innovation ecosystems.

For India, adopting similar structural approaches anchored in trust, transparency, and responsiveness to diaspora concerns regarding **property rights, security, and dual citizenship status** can considerably strengthen the effectiveness of engagement programs.

## Policy Recommendations and Implementation Framework

A pragmatic approach for India should **balance stronger institutional engagement with respect to diaspora**. Build trust through consultative mechanisms, efficient services, and clear investment frameworks is essential.

Drawing from **Ireland's "structured diaspora diplomacy,"** coordinated efforts of governments and diaspora bodies can create a resilient bridge fostering trade, innovation, and strategic alignment.

# CONCLUSION

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## Chapter 7



# Conclusion: Tracing the Journey and Future of Indian Migration to the United States

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The comprehensive analysis of Indian migration to the United States reveals a multidimensional story shaped by historical legacies, economic transformations, social dynamics, and evolving policy frameworks. Together, these forces have produced one of the world's most vibrant, successful, and globally connected diasporas.

## Historical Evolution and Policy Shifts

The trajectory of Indian migration began with early labourers and activists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who faced **exclusionary U.S. immigration laws** and racial discrimination. Policies such as the **Immigration Act of 1917** and the **1923 Supreme Court** ruling that denied Indians citizenship severely curtailed their rights and opportunities.

A historic shift arrived with the Immigration and **Nationality Act of 1965**, which abolished race-based quotas and emphasised skilled migration and family reunification. This landmark policy marked the beginning of large-scale professional migration from India, laying the foundation for sustained growth, educational achievement, and social mobility across generations.

## Waves of Migration and Demographics

Subsequent waves, ranging from the influx of skilled professionals during the **tech boom of the 1990s** to the rise of student and family-based migration, have positioned Indian Americans at the forefront of U.S. innovation and entrepreneurship. Today, over **4.5 million Indian Americans** reside in the United States, representing one of the most educated and economically prosperous immigrant groups. Concentrated in technology, healthcare, finance, and academia, they play a pivotal role in driving economic dynamism and shaping the nation's knowledge economy.

Beyond economic success, Indian migrants have **enriched the cultural and civic landscape** of the United States. Through festivals, religious institutions, and philanthropic initiatives, they have sustained their cultural heritage while fostering deeper cross-cultural understanding.

Simultaneously, enduring **transnational linkages** through remittances, knowledge exchange, and charitable engagement have strengthened India's economic and social development.

## Persistent Challenges and Social Dynamics

Despite remarkable progress, significant challenges persist. Prolonged green card backlogs caused by **outdated per-country quotas** continue to limit family stability and professional advancement for thousands of Indian immigrants.

Incidents of **racism, xenophobia, and workplace discrimination** reveal the lingering inequities that affect integration and representation. Additionally, internal diversity spanning religion, caste, language, and generational perspectives adds layers of complexity to community cohesion and political mobilisation within the diaspora.

## Diplomatic and Strategic Roles

Functioning as a **"living bridge"** between India and the United States, the Indian diaspora has become an essential agent of bilateral engagement. Through investments, advocacy, and educational and scientific collaboration, it strengthens economic, cultural, and strategic ties between the two nations. However, sustained engagement requires nuanced, inclusive policies from both governments, ones that balance diaspora aspirations with host-country realities and avoid over-instrumentalisation of migrant communities for diplomatic objectives.

## Policy Implications and Future Outlook

The future of Indian migration depends on policies that uphold **openness, equity, and meritocracy**. Streamlining visa processes, reducing backlogs, and ensuring fair labour practices are essential to preserving the **dynamism of this transnational community**. Strengthening diaspora organisations, promoting intercultural dialogue, and fostering civic participation can further amplify their positive impact.

Indian migration to the United States embodies a journey of resilience, adaptation, and mutual growth. From early exclusion and restrictive policies to becoming one of the most successful diasporas, Indian migrants have **transformed global perceptions** through education, innovation, and cultural vibrancy. Yet, persistent challenges such as immigration backlogs, discrimination, and internal diversity call for inclusive policies and sustained dialogue. As India and the U.S. strengthen their strategic and cultural ties, the Indian diaspora will continue to serve as a living bridge advancing shared prosperity, equity, and global understanding.



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