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Dual citizenship is an idea whose time has come

1. Context and Significance

- India's increasing global migration and large diaspora have reignited the debate on **granting true dual citizenship**.
- The current **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)** status does not meet the expectations or legal standing of full citizenship.
- This debate gains renewed relevance as India approaches the **25th anniversary of the High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora's report**.

2. India's Role in Global Migration

- Over the last 50 years, India has played a **central role in global migration trends**.
- **India's diaspora is the largest in the world**, with over **3.5 crore Indians** living abroad.
- India is the **top recipient of remittances globally**, receiving nearly **\$130 billion annually**, which helps manage its **trade and current account deficits**.
- Migration patterns have shifted: while earlier dominated by **Gulf workers**, most remittances now come from **developed countries**.

3. Impact on Foreign Policy

- The increasing mobility of Indians has reshaped India's **foreign policy priorities**.
- The government now aims to **facilitate overseas employment** and recognizes the diaspora as a **strategic asset**.
- The External Affairs Minister has stated that "**the world is becoming the workplace of Indian youth**", highlighting India's proactive diaspora engagement.
- Despite this, the **citizenship rights of Indians abroad** remain a major concern, especially for those forced to give up Indian citizenship.

4. The Debate on Dual Citizenship

- India introduced **OCI status in 2005** to maintain connections with the diaspora, but it does **not grant true dual citizenship**.



- The **High-Level Committee (2000)** had recommended **full dual citizenship**, citing **no constitutional barriers** to implementing it.
- The report argued that **security concerns could be managed** without denying rights, aligning with **global migration policy trends**.
- Rising **restrictions in host countries** on non-citizens make the issue of Indian dual citizenship even more urgent.
- Many Indians are **reluctantly renouncing their Indian citizenship** to access rights abroad.

5. Limitations of the OCI Status

- OCI status grants some benefits but lacks **voting rights, public office eligibility, and ownership of agricultural land**.
- It is treated as a **privilege, not a right**, and can be **arbitrarily revoked** for political reasons.
- OCI holders are often treated as **foreign nationals** in professional, legal, and academic contexts.
- Many feel they are **second-class citizens**, leading to dissatisfaction and a growing demand for **genuine dual citizenship**.

6. Recommendations for Implementing Dual Citizenship

- **Retain Indian Citizenship Upon Acquiring Foreign Passport:**
 - Currently, acquiring foreign nationality requires renouncing Indian citizenship.
 - This can be reversed to allow retention unless voluntarily relinquished—an approach used by countries like **USA and UK**.
- **Balance Political Rights and National Security:**
 - Voting rights can be confined to those physically returning to vote or via **remote voting mechanisms**.
 - Restrictions on **high public office** can remain, but **local-level political participation** can be permitted.
 - This ensures engagement without compromising sensitive posts.
- **Ensure Fair and Equal Treatment:**
 - Dual citizens should enjoy all **civil and legal rights** unless barred due to **specific, justified national security concerns**.
 - A **transparent policy** can define roles accessible to dual citizens and those requiring sole allegiance.



7. Addressing Security Concerns

- Security is often cited as a concern, but these fears are **outdated or exaggerated**.
- The older concern of distinguishing **Indian and Pakistani citizens** is less relevant today.
- India can selectively allow dual citizenship with **democratically stable countries**.
- Individual security vetting should replace **blanket restrictions**, ensuring only genuine risks are flagged.

8. Emotional and Practical Need for Dual Citizenship

- Many Indians abroad maintain **emotional and cultural ties** with India, even if they take up foreign citizenship for practical needs.
- Forcing people to **choose between identity and opportunity** leads to alienation.
- Genuine dual citizenship will allow Indians to retain their heritage while contributing fully in their host countries.
- An engaged diaspora will bring **knowledge, investment, innovation, and influence** back to India.

9. Conclusion and Way Forward

- As demographic and economic shifts continue, **migration from India will only increase**.
- India must shift from symbolic gestures like OCI to **meaningful policy changes** by embracing true dual citizenship.
- This move will offer practical benefits, strengthen the diaspora's bond with India, and reflect global identity trends.
- Allowing Indians to **retain their citizenship alongside foreign affiliations** will amplify India's **global influence and economic reach** in the 21st century.

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