



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: POLITY

TOPIC: CITIZENSHIP

DATE: 10.01.2025

IS INDIA OPEN TO THE IDEA OF DUAL CITIZENSHIP?

India's Current Stance on Dual Citizenship

1. India does not currently allow dual citizenship, as per its **Constitution** and **Citizenship Act**. The existing framework requires an individual to relinquish Indian citizenship upon acquiring the citizenship of another country.
2. The **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)** card provides certain benefits to individuals of Indian origin residing abroad but does not grant political rights, such as voting or contesting elections.
3. Citizenship in India is fundamentally tied to political participation and national loyalty, which is seen as incompatible with the concept of holding allegiance to multiple nations.

Key Clarifications: Categories of the Indian Diaspora

1. Non-Resident Indians (NRIs):

- NRIs are Indian passport holders living abroad temporarily or permanently.
- They retain all rights associated with Indian citizenship except for the ability to vote unless physically present in India or registered at their place of entitlement.
- Arrangements for NRIs to vote from abroad were discussed but remain limited in execution.

2. People of Indian Origin (PIOs):

- PIOs are individuals with Indian ancestry but who hold foreign citizenship.
- While earlier issued a PIO card, this was merged into the **OCI card** in 2015, though the change did not confer any additional rights beyond what PIOs previously had.
- PIOs and OCIs do not possess political rights in India, including voting, holding public office, or influencing the Indian political system.

3. OCI's Terminology Confusion:

- The term "Overseas Citizen of India" creates confusion as it implies political rights and privileges akin to Indian citizenship, which is not the case.



Challenges and Risks of Dual Citizenship

1. Political Loyalty and Divided Allegiances:

- Dual citizenship could result in divided political loyalties, with individuals balancing allegiances between India and the country of their second citizenship.
- Critics fear this could undermine India's sovereignty by allowing individuals with foreign loyalties to influence the nation's political landscape.

2. Instrumental Use of Citizenship:

- There is concern that individuals might acquire Indian citizenship for convenience, such as leveraging economic benefits, without committing to the responsibilities and loyalty associated with it.
- Granting political rights to individuals who may not have full allegiance to India is considered a risky proposition.

3. Recolonization Concerns:

- Allowing dual citizenship could potentially create a class of individuals with significant influence in India but loyalty to foreign nations. This has been likened to the concept of a "comprador class"—a group serving foreign interests at the cost of national sovereignty.

Arguments Against Dual Citizenship

1. Legal and Constitutional Framework:

- The Indian Constitution (Part II) defines citizenship under strict criteria such as birth, parentage, or prolonged residence. It does not provide for dual citizenship.
- Any move to allow dual citizenship would require significant constitutional amendments, which may face legal and political hurdles.

2. Global Precedents and Restrictions:

- Even countries considered more flexible, like the U.S., impose restrictions. For instance, only natural-born U.S. citizens can become President.
- Figures like **Elon Musk**, despite his significant contributions to the U.S. economy, cannot run for the presidency because he was born in South Africa.

3. National Security and Sovereignty:

- Granting political rights to foreign citizens could lead to undue foreign influence in domestic governance, compromising national security and self-determination.



- Critics argue that individuals with divided loyalties should not have a say in shaping India's political future.

Role and Contributions of the Indian Diaspora

1. Economic and Diplomatic Contributions:

- The Indian diaspora has played a key role in strengthening bilateral relations and facilitating foreign investments.
- Prominent figures like **Satya Nadella** (CEO of Microsoft) and others have committed resources to India, particularly in fields like artificial intelligence and technology.

2. Cultural and Bilateral Bridge-Building:

- The diaspora acts as a cultural and diplomatic bridge, strengthening India's relationships with countries like the U.S., U.K., and Australia.
- Events like state visits often rely on the diaspora to rally support and foster goodwill between India and their host nations.

Examples of Individuals Committed to Indian Citizenship

1. Historical examples of individuals who relinquished foreign citizenship to fully integrate into Indian society include:
 - **Mother Teresa**, who chose Indian citizenship to further her humanitarian work.
 - **Mirra Alfassa** (The Mother of the Aurobindo Ashram), who became an Indian citizen despite earlier advocating for dual citizenship.
 - Economist **Jean Drèze**, who gave up Belgian citizenship to fully engage in India's development efforts.
2. These examples highlight the principle that full allegiance to one nation is necessary for citizenship, particularly in a democratic society.

Concerns Over Populism and Potential Abuse

1. There is apprehension that raising the issue of dual citizenship may be motivated by populism or economic expediency rather than national interest.
2. Granting dual citizenship could empower the diaspora to disproportionately influence India's domestic politics, potentially undermining democratic processes.
3. As **Amitabh Mattoo** argues, opening this "Pandora's box" could lead to a slippery slope where India's political decisions are influenced by foreign interests.

Future Considerations and Recommendations



1. Enhancing OCI Card Privileges:

- The government could consider expanding the economic and social privileges of OCI cardholders without conferring political rights.

2. Maintaining a Clear Boundary:

- The role of the diaspora should remain supportive, focusing on cultural, economic, and diplomatic contributions without crossing into direct political influence.

3. Strengthening Bilateral Ties:

- India should leverage the diaspora's success to foster global partnerships and attract investments while ensuring national sovereignty is safeguarded.

Concluding Remarks

1. Both **Vivek Katju** and **Amitabh Mattoo** firmly oppose dual citizenship, emphasizing the risks of divided loyalties and potential foreign interference.
2. They argue that while the diaspora plays a crucial role in India's global presence, political rights should remain exclusive to Indian citizens fully committed to the nation.
3. The debate on dual citizenship may continue, but India is unlikely to adopt this policy in the near future due to concerns over national security, sovereignty, and political stability.

Source: <https://thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/is-india-open-to-the-idea-of-dual-citizenship/article69082143.ece>