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Layoffs are back — and so is the erosion of the professional's identity

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and Indian Emigrants

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrates Mahatma Gandhi's return to India in 1915.
- Successive Prime Ministers have called overseas Indians ambassadors of Indian culture, talent, and enterprise.
- PM Modi referred to them as "Bharat's Rashtradoot."

The Other Side of Migration

- Illegal migrants returning from the US paint a different picture of India's socio-economic reality.
- They highlight issues like lack of opportunities and discrimination, leading to desperate migration.
- Many face hardships similar to indentured laborers of the colonial era.

Historical Context: Indentured Labour and Nationalist Opposition

- Indian nationalists opposed the indentured labor system, viewing it as slavery.
- In 1915, British Indian officials acknowledged the political issues of forced labor migration.
- Today's illegal migrants share similar struggles, driven by economic desperation.

Legal vs. Illegal Migration: A Stark Contrast

- Legal migrants contribute human or financial capital and are welcomed by host nations.
- Illegal migrants, offering only wage labor, are often seen as liabilities.
- Demographics and social attitudes shape the way they are treated.

Rising Numbers of Illegal Migrants

- US authorities have detained 170,000 Indian migrants attempting illegal entry in the past five years.
- Many illegal migrants come from developed states like Gujarat and Punjab.



- Kinship networks abroad encourage migration, but lack of local opportunities also plays a role.

Wealthy Indians Also Leaving

- Not just the poor, but also the wealthy are emigrating for better lifestyles.
- Citizenship-by-investment programs attract high-net-worth individuals.
- 6,500 wealthy Indians emigrated in 2022; 4,300 in 2024.

Declining Indian Citizenship

- Over 2.25 lakh Indians renounced their citizenship in 2022, and 2.16 lakh in 2023.
- Between 2011-2023, nearly 18.8 lakh Indians gave up their citizenship.

Global Migration Trends and US Policy

- Migration has historically been a search for better opportunities.
- Early American settlers were Europe's poor, not elites.
- The US, once open to marginalized people, is now shutting its doors.

Challenges for Deported Migrants

- Returning illegal migrants may struggle with reintegration into Indian society.
- They return from a land of opportunity to the same conditions that forced them to leave.
- Unlike celebrated NRIs like Rishi Sunak and Satya Nadella, they face stigma.

Conclusion

- Migration is a natural human phenomenon shaped by economic and social conditions.
- While India celebrates successful NRIs, it must also address the issues forcing illegal migration.
- Reintegration policies and economic opportunities are needed for returning migrants.

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