

Full Length Research Article

## Citizenship And Residency Status Of Indian Migrant Workers In Contemporary Gulf States: A Study Of Bahrain, Kuwait And Oman

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### ABSTRACT

Indian migrant workers in Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman are contract temporary workers. Millions of migrant workers live in these countries. There is essentially no route to permanent citizenship for Indian migrant workers in these states, who are classified as temporary or guest workers. Indian migrant workers in Gulf State do not generally become citizens. They have not granted citizenship but they are granted residency. The majority of Indian immigrant workers in the Gulf States did not possess intentions of establishing permanent residency therein. Indian migrant workers in the Gulf States function primarily as temporary contractual workers. They are ineligible for citizenship rights. The offspring of these migrant workers are not accorded citizenship, regardless of their place of birth within the Gulf States. They are not afforded any special privileges or immigration status. However, in certain exceptional circumstances, the Gulf States have conferred citizenship upon select Indian individuals. Citizenship has been extended to a specific cohort of Indian nationals. This paper analyzes the legal status of Indian migrant laborers in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, with an emphasis on citizenship rights and residency permits.

**Keywords**— Indian migrant workers, Gulf States, citizenship rights, residency permits, temporary labor migration, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman.

### Introduction:

Citizenship is a legal concept and idea. It is legal status of a person in a particular country. It is a legal status of citizens with rights and duties.<sup>1</sup> It grants an individual rights and responsibilities towards the state. Citizenship is granted to every citizen irrespective of cast, creed, and sex, place of birth, language, and religion. But there are millions of people worldwide who are not citizens of any country. Any individual who lack citizenship has no status and position and referred as stateless person. They are denied the citizenship and basic rights.<sup>2</sup> It is legal bond of citizens to a particular state.<sup>3</sup> It is one of the important and fundamental rights of citizens. Each state has absolute authority to grant and terminate the citizenship to anyone. Under international law, states set rules for acquisition, loss of citizenship and change citizenship.<sup>4</sup> States can confirm citizenship to their citizens. The states decide who is citizen through its laws. It is one of the most important characteristics that determine person's status. Citizenship is a distinguish features of public identity. It is necessary for decent human

life.<sup>5</sup> Citizenship is a distinguish features of public identity. It is necessary for decent human life.<sup>6</sup> Citizenship can help the citizen to enjoy social, political and economic, personal, religious rights.<sup>7</sup> It offers citizens to several rights and responsibilities such as participation in self-governing process, the right to vote, better jobs opportunities, the right to public office, appointment to constitutional positions, full enjoyment of fundamental rights, freedom of movement and residence, equal participation in political debates and discussion, negotiation and legal protection etc.<sup>8</sup> It's also link between an individual and state. Citizenship means full and equal membership of state. It is a legally recognized national membership of state and therefore not voluntarily.<sup>9</sup> However, citizenship is more than just a between states and their citizens. It go beyond legal status or rights or responsibilities, it also involves recognition as an equal member of the community.<sup>10</sup> In simple terms, the virtue of being citizen of the country is called citizenship. It is signifying that a person belongs to a particular state or multiple states. It shows the membership of a

particular state. It gives several rights and freedoms to the citizens in the state.<sup>11</sup> Citizenship means loyalty towards the state. It has commitment to perform certain duties and responsibilities towards the states particularly to defend the states against any war or aggression. It shows loyalty towards the state. Therefore, civil, political and social rights characterize citizenship as legal status. It is human trait that speaks of belonging to a particular state. It is full and equal membership of the nation. It is the legal relationship between state and its members. Citizenship can guarantee the rights and duties of individual in society. In theory, citizenship confers membership, identity, values and rights of participation.

### Evolution of the Concept of Citizenship

The concept citizenship is as old as the state itself. It has existed for a very long time. Citizenship derives from the Latin word *citoyen* for *civis* i.e. city state which means member of political community.<sup>12</sup> In the early days of human civilisation people believed that they belonged to cities rather than states. At that time anyone who is a citizen of any country is entitled to live, work, vote, and pay taxes in that country. Historically, the citizenship is related to the creation of the ancient Greek city states where the population was mainly divided into two classes. The first class was citizen and the second class was slave. Citizens had all rights including civil and political rights. They took part directly or indirectly in all the activities of the state. Slaves, on the other hand, suffered from a range of political and economic hardships and were denied these rights and benefits. Citizenship rights were denied to women as well. Only free-born men were granted citizenship. In ancient Greece, only few citizens acquire citizenship, while slaves did not acquire citizenship. Only those who had civil and political rights and who participated in the civil and political life of nation were considered as citizens.<sup>13</sup> Early Republican Rome was also divided into two classes: the Patricians and the Plebeians. A similar process followed when people belonged only to the wealthy class known as Patricians. They were a privileged class and had civil and political rights. They were large landowners. They took part in the civil and political life of the state. The rest of the population was landless tenants called Plebeians. They were not a privileged class and had any no rights.<sup>14</sup> However, during the Middle Ages, citizenship was linked to the protection of the state because absolute monarchies sought to enforce their power over their heterogeneous populations.<sup>15</sup> This followed in the footsteps of the social contract theorists such as Hobbes and Locke who held that the primary functions of the ruler was to protect life and property of citizens. This was a gentle caring of citizenship because the security of the individual depended on the state.<sup>16</sup> The United States of

America and United Kingdom provided for their citizenship in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Citizen's rights were denied in nation like Sweden until the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to this, till Russian Revolution people did not have equal freedom and voting rights before to the Russian Revolution. In Germany also civil rights were established late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> In modern period and in the era of welfare state every citizen has right to citizenship. All citizens have rights to acquire citizenship.<sup>18</sup>

### Historical Background of Indian Migrant Workers in West Asia

India and Gulf States have had trade ties since the time of the Indus valley civilization. At that period many Indians migrated to Gulf States work in Arab countries either for trade or business establishment. As a result, when Islam arrived in Gulf States many Indian settlers were engaged in range of business.<sup>19</sup> Medieval Arab authentic sources confirmed that the presence of colonies of Indian merchants in West Asia region. This suggest that there were Hindu traders in the West Asia region.<sup>20</sup> Hindu and Muslim merchants from Sindh and Gujarat were a major players in West Asia maritime trade and finance. Scholars and religious leaders from India and Arab world engaged in great deal of discourse in the later middle ages.<sup>21</sup> India was not just a significant trading and commercial. Partner in Indo-West Asia during ancient era. Key exchanges included Indian spices, textiles, precious stones and timber for West Asian horses and pearls.<sup>22</sup> West Asian nations benefited from India's early modernity, cultural renaissance, reform movements, and numerous other facets of sociocultural life, including music, art, architecture, interior design, and cuisine.<sup>23</sup> Many Indian merchant communities also spread throughout the West Asian region around this time. Gulf Indians at the period enjoyed British-style advantages, and West Asia was essentially an extension of British India. Many Indian groups established themselves throughout the West Asian region during the British era. Several of these communities' well-known business owners are still prosperous.<sup>24</sup>

The Indian migrant workers are one of the most important workforces in West Asia. Migration from India to West Asia is not new phenomenon. It is very old phenomenon.<sup>25</sup> From very beginning, West Asian region was a center of migration. After the discovery of oil and the establishment of the oil industry, the West Asian region becomes a very attractive region for the whole as well as for the Indian sub-continent.<sup>26</sup> West Asia is home to a huge numbers of Indians. Currently 9 million work and live in West Asia.<sup>27</sup> Large scale migrations of Indian migrant were began after the 1970s.<sup>28</sup> (Ronald Skeldon, , December 1986, p.759) Indians migrated to West Asian region in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for

work and trade. In 1948, there were only 14000 Indians living in West Asian region.<sup>29</sup> (Ronald Skeldon, , December 1986, p.759). By the middle of the 19th century, Indian migrant became majority of the population in United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Israel, Iran and Iraq etc. India is one of the largest migrant sending countries in West Asia.<sup>30</sup> Most of the Indian migrant livings in West Asian countries are come from very poor background and rural areas. They are not educated. But they are very hardworking people and away from their country. Only small number of the migrant come from wealthy families and are well educated and work as doctors, engineers, bankers, chartered accountants and college and University teachers.<sup>31</sup>

Indian migrant workers in West Asia do not generally become citizens. In West Asia, no Indian was granted citizenship but they are granted residency. West Asian countries generally did not granted citizenship to foreigners.<sup>32</sup> Most of the Indian migrating to West Asia had no plans to settle there. Indian migrant workers in West Asia are temporary contract workers. They could not qualify for residency. The children of migrants are not granted citizenship even if they are born in West Asia. This means that if they quit job jobs, they have to come back to India. They did not grant special privileges and immigration status. But in some special cases, West Asian countries have grant citizenship to an Indian. They have offered the citizenship to a select group of Indian.<sup>33</sup> Indian migrant' labour in West Asia is a part of its economy. They did not give political and social rights. However, most of West Asian countries have begun to change their citizenship and residency status.

#### **Status of Citizenship of Indian Migrant Workers in Bahrain**

Bahrain is one of the smallest country in Arab world. It is located north of Qatar and east of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom borders Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran on the sea.<sup>34</sup> In 2021, the population of Bahrain is 1.6 million. About 80,000 are non-Bahrainis. The majority of them are migrant workers from the Philippines and South Asia. The population of Bahrain is primarily Muslim with about 70% of Shia majority and 30% Sunni. The majority of people reside in the northern part of the main island.<sup>35</sup> Manama is capital and largest city. Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy. The Al Khalifa family has been in power since 1783.

Bahrain is partially democratic country. The King is the head of the State while Prime Minister is the head of the government. Bahrain is a member of League of Arab states and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Although Arabic is the official language but English and Persian are commonly spoken among Bahraini citizens. Many of the non -Bahraini community are traders and merchants who spoke English, Hindi, Urdu and Farsi.<sup>36</sup> Bahrain was key trading hub in ancient times. In the 19th century, the small island was home to British colonies. During this period, Bahrain received an influx of Indian bureaucrats to serve the growing civil services.<sup>37</sup> After the discovery of oil, a significant numbers of Indian migrant workers were arrived in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s professional skilled and semi-skilled labour was brought to the Bahrain. The lives of these people are not good. They come from the very poor background of Indian society and they come to Bahrain alone.

#### **Profile of Indian Migrant Workers in Bahrain**

They left behind their spouse, children, parents' sibling and debts.<sup>39</sup> Majority of Indian migrant come from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Goa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.<sup>40</sup> When their ship reached the Harappan colony in Oman and Bahrain on the route to Mesopotamia in 3000 BC, Indians started trading with Bahrain. <sup>41</sup> Few Indian families have been residents of Bahrain, despite the fact that they have been there for many years. Many of Bahrain's most well-known individuals have strong ties to India. Indian Rupees were Bahrain's legal currency during the British rule. <sup>42</sup> Bahrain is home to several prominent Indian figures. Mohammed Dada Bhai, a former toy vendor who is now a hotel magnate, is one of the most successful Indian entrepreneurs in Bahrain. In 1925, his father, Ahmadali Dada Bhai, left the princely state of Rajasthan, Dungar pur to immigrate to Bahrain. He is a millionaire and has a Bahraini passport. <sup>43</sup> Another important businessman is Iqbal Madani an international banker in Bahrain. Other prominent Indians are Mickey Jagtian, head of the conglomerate landmark Group, Dr Ravi Paillai, chairman of RP Group and Annand Lobo, President of the India club, Bahrain.<sup>44</sup> Indians make up about 30% of the population of Bahrain and the country largest migrant workers. Indian migrant workers in Bahrain are the largest work force.

S.No.	Category	Key Characteristics
1.	Total Population	325,000 to 350,000 Indian nationals; they comprise roughly 30% of Bahrain's total population.
2.	Primary States of Origin	Kerala (majority), Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.
3.	Occupational Distribution	70% Blue-collar: Construction, contracting, maintenance, and domestic work. 30% White-collar: Medicine, finance, IT, engineering, education, and retail management
4.	Income Levels.	Blue-collar: Average ~BHD 120–250/month (approx. ₹26k–₹55k); minimum wages can drop to BHD 60–100. White-collar: BHD 9,000–23,000/year (approx. ₹20L–₹50L).
5.	Education Profile	Ranges from illiterate or primary education (predominantly in manual labour) to advanced degrees (physicians, CAs, engineers).
6.	Housing & Social Life	Labourers: ~83% live in labour camps; often 5–7 people per room. Professionals: Typically live in private flats (Manama/Juffair) with family.
7.	Gender Ratio	Predominantly male (construction/manual labor); female migrants (15,000+) are largely in domestic work, nursing, and teaching.

*Sources: Embassy of India in Bahrain and Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The majority of the Indian community, comprising over 350,000 people, hail from Kerala (about 200,000), followed by Tamil Nadu (approximately 50,000), Andhra and Telangana (12000-15000), and the remaining states of Maharashtra, Goa, Punjab, Ultra Pradesh, and Rajasthan<sup>45</sup> Indian migrant workers engaged in various sectors of the country; 65-70 % of the Indian migrant are working in the construction, gardeners, drivers, storekeepers, carpenters, chemists, barbers, hardware, jewelry and electronics, as well as contracting & maintenance. Indian migrant are highly skilled professional who are essentials to Bahrain's socio-economic development including doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants, bankers, architect and many more. A very few proportion of overseas Indians are that of traders and entrepreneurs.<sup>46</sup>

Indian elite and prominent businessman in Bahrain rarely acquire Bahraini citizenship, even though many were born there. These communities include second and third generation residents ranging from established business families such as Siddhis, Gujrati and Bohras Muslims to long standing communities like Dhobis (traditional washer men).<sup>47</sup> Citizenship may be possible for Muslims but difficult for others. The presence of Indians in Bahrain is not a phenomenon of the oil era. Much before the beginning of oil era in Bahrain, the Indian merchants were found in Bahrain. These merchants were involved in the trades and exports of pearls. These traders migrated to Bahrain from the Indian states of Sindh and Gujarat.<sup>48</sup> It was estimated that some 2500 Indian families had made Bahrain their home by 1925. Most of these Indian families were

engaged in retail trades. In addition, the Bahraini citizens include individuals of Indian origin known as Banyan (Bania). These are Indians who traded and settled in Bahrain before the oil era. They are mostly of Hindu faith and also known as Hunood.<sup>49</sup> They have Bahraini citizenship and all the rights of Bahraini citizenship. Number of Indian nationals who successfully naturalised in Bahrain. But of course, they are very few in number as compared to the Indian expatriate workforce.<sup>50</sup>

Indian migrant workers in Bahrain generally do not acquire citizenship. By permitting foreigners to become permanent residents, the Bahraini government hopes to preserve the status quo without jeopardizing its cultural values or way of living. Marriage to a citizen is the only method to become a naturalized citizen, however even this does not guarantee citizenship, particularly for non-Muslims. Only Bahrain's monarch has the authority to confer citizenship to foreign nationals who have served the country admirably for a long time.<sup>51</sup> Indian migrant workers were granted work permits by Bahrain government, but they were not granted citizenship. The businessman who imports foreign workers should be granted a permission by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The foreign worker must be in excellent health, possess a valid passport, behave well, be able to enter the country legally, and have authorization to live there. Work permits are renewable and have a one-year expiration date. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs may revoke them. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has the power to fire employees for breaking the law.<sup>52</sup> Regarding Bahrain's citizenship and residency status, there hasn't been much policy reform. In 2014, foreigners who meet the following criteria

may be given Bahraini citizenship: they must have legitimately resided in Bahrain for at least 25 years (15 for Arab nationalities) since the law's enactment, behave well, speak Arabic well, and have registered real estate in Bahrain. However, for ten years, a foreign national awarded citizenship under this clause will not be eligible for voting rights, representation, nomination, or appointment in local councils. Through naturalization, his spouse and kids will be recognized as Bahraini.<sup>53</sup> Bahrain introduced a "new Platinum Residency Visa scheme" on February 7, 2022, giving foreign investors, expats, and their families the chance to live there permanently. A component of Bahrain's economic recovery is the golden resident visa. The visa holder will have unlimited access and departure rights, the ability to work in Bahrain, and residence advantages for spouses and other close family members. The candidate must make at least 20,000 Bahraini dinars a month on average and have lived in Bahrain for five years.<sup>54</sup> It is golden opportunities to attract more foreign investment, Bahrain has introduced a 10-year renewable residency visa that includes work authorization and family benefits. This initiative is anticipated to drive property demand and strengthen Bahrain's position as a premier regional hub for business and residency.<sup>55</sup> Both citizens and non-citizens who possess property valued at 200,000 dinars or more, retirees earning 4,000 dinars, and exceptionally gifted and intelligent individuals are eligible to apply for a Bahraini visa.<sup>56</sup>

#### **Status of Citizenship of Indian Migrant Workers in Kuwait**

Kuwait is very a small country of West Asia situated between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in Persian Gulf. It is a multi-ethnic kingdom.<sup>57</sup> Kuwait is constitutional monarchy. It is welfare state like India. Islam is the State religion of Kuwait. Any other religious practice is not allowed in Kuwait. The official language of Kuwait is Arabic. Kuwait was under British protract. It is independent Arab State with full sovereignty. It gained independence from Britain in the 1960 and nationalised its oil industry in 1970.<sup>58</sup> Its economy is totally depending upon oil industry. It is highly educated country and highest rate of literacy in the West Asian countries. The population of Kuwait is 3.5 million and only one million of them are Kuwaiti.<sup>59</sup> Kuwait is worried because only 40 % of its population is Kuwaiti national.<sup>60</sup> Now the Kuwaiti has become minority in their own country. Some three quarters it is migrant labour force.<sup>61</sup> Out of which about 60 percent of population are non-citizens and 30 percent of migrant workers in Kuwait are from India.<sup>62</sup> India has long been a natural trading partner of Kuwait. With the Indian Rupee serving as legal cash in Kuwait for more than a century till 1961. As of right now, Kuwait is heavily dependent on the

Indian migrant workers. Indians make up 21% of Kuwait's overall population and 30% of its workforce. There are more than 10 lakh Indians in Kuwait. The large number of Indian migrant workers living in Kuwait has making them the country's largest non-Arab population. Indian migrant workers have now played a key role in the Kuwait economy.<sup>63</sup> Indian migrant workers are educationally, socially, politically and economically weak. Over 70% skilled or professional occupations are staffed by non-Kuwaiti. Eighty five percent of the Kuwaiti population are Muslims, majority of whom are a Sunni Muslim.<sup>64</sup> and the rest 15 percent constitute other groups like Christians, Hindu, Buddhist, Shikhs and others.<sup>65</sup> They can speak Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujrati, Marathi, Telgu and Malayalam in Kuwait. They have poor communication of Arabic but they have learnt Arabic within months. But Kuwaitis are unable to understand these languages. There are 6 lakh Hindus, 1 lakh Buddhists, 20,000 Sikhs and 451,000 Christians in Kuwait.<sup>66</sup>

Kuwait was a tiny trading port in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mainly dealing in maritime trade with the Indian subcontinent via the ports of Karachi, Mumbai, Cochin, and so on. Arabian horses, dates, and pearls were transported to India by Kuwaitis on wooden dhows, and they returned from India with fabrics, spices, lumber, and other goods. As a result of the chances that the booming trade activities offered, Indian traders also began to arrive in Kuwait. These traders dealt in textiles, spices, food, and other products, among other things. Kuwait is important for India in terms of employment, gas, crude oil and petroleum. Kuwait also holds an important position in terms of energy reserves. India is depending on Kuwait for 40% of its annual oil imports.<sup>67</sup> So it is clear that Kuwait is very much important for India because it provide our energy needs and also gives opportunities of employment to 10 lakh of Indians migrant workers in Kuwait who contribute significantly the economic and scientific development of the country.<sup>68</sup>

Indian migrant workers are the largest migrant worker in Kuwait.<sup>69</sup> Majority of Indian migrant who work in Kuwait are low wages paid workers. The long staying Indian migrants are high salary as compare to short staying migrant workers in Kuwait.<sup>70</sup> There are 25,000 Indian nationals who are staying illegally in Kuwait. Indian migration to Kuwait started after the creation of the Kuwait state and development of the oil industry after 1970 marks the large scale migration. In Kuwait one third labour forces are imported from India.<sup>71</sup> Majority of migrants come from Andhra, Telangana Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. India has been the source of supply of some of the expertise and

equipment and also an equally essential skilled and semiskilled as well as manual worker.<sup>72</sup>

Most of Indian migrant workers have come to Kuwait from poor background and rural' areas. They are uneducated and poor. Majority of the male and female Indian migrant workers are illiterates or can only read and write. Very few Indian migrant workers have completed Universities and Colleges education. They are skilled and unskilled Indian migrant workers in Kuwait. Majority of the Indian migrant workers do not have any business, property and adequate agricultural land in India.<sup>73</sup> Most of them are young and unmarried. They are not highly qualified but they are technical and skilled workers.

Some Indian migrant workers who are working in Kuwait sell their properties and agricultural lands and pay huge amount for visa for recruiting agency for employment. Only small numbers of the Indian migrant workers come from well off families and well educated. They are core hard professionals as doctors, scientists' engineers, software experts, and University and college teachers, management consultants, architects, bankers, chartered accountant, technicians, graduate nurses, retail traders, businessmen.<sup>74</sup> They cannot interact and contract with local people in Kuwait. It is only a formal and impersonal contract.<sup>75</sup>

### Profile of Indian Migrant Workers in Kuwait

S.NO.	Category	Key Characteristics
1.	Private Sector  Private Sector  Private Sector	Over 523,000 Indians work in the private sector, forming the largest group in this segment.
2.	Domestic Workforce  Domestic Workforce	Indians lead this sector with approximately 343,000 workers (42.2% of all domestic labor), primarily serving as drivers, cooks, and household help.
3.	Government & HealthCare	About 28,000 Indians are employed in government roles, including over 24,000 nurses, 1,000 doctors, and 500 dentists.
4.	Professional Fields	Many serve as engineers, chartered accountants, IT experts, and management consultants.

*Source: Embassy of India in Kuwait and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Lok Sabha Reports*

In Kuwaiti trade, small groups of Hindu traders continue to be significant. An early entrepreneur was Rao Sahib Jasmani. In the other Gulf nations, he was well-known. Malhotras is among the other well-known businessmen. In 1946, AK Malhotra opened a well-known restaurant in Kuwait to launch his career. Leading Kuwaiti business magnate AK Malhotra is active in a wide range of industries, from manufacturing to hotels.<sup>76</sup>

Indian migrant workers in Kuwait are refused citizenship. Acquisitions of citizenship are restricted and impossible in Kuwait for Indian migrant workers. Kuwait does not offers citizenship for some years or indefinitely to Indian migrant workers.<sup>77</sup> The citizenship is almost universally not granted by the Kuwait to Indian migrant workers.<sup>78</sup> Indian migrant workers are not considered immigrants in Kuwait, which has a limited policy for awarding citizenship and a policy to reduce the permanent settlement of migrant workers.<sup>79</sup>

Kuwait's Nationality Law states that Indian migrant workers and their children are not granted Kuwaiti citizenship.<sup>80</sup> In addition to this Kuwait minimise the labour migration. Kuwait also has policy to decrease the number of dependents of migrant workers.<sup>81</sup> Indian migrant workers in Kuwait have limited rights and labour laws which prevent them settling in Kuwaiti society permanently.<sup>82</sup> Kuwait has no programme and policy for the integration of Indian migrant workers. They are contract workers in Kuwait for one or two years on renewable basis. Most Indian who migrates in Kuwait does not have plans to settle down in Kuwait. Indian migrant workers who are working for long time in Kuwait cannot be majority owner of a company.<sup>83</sup>

Indian migrant worker in Kuwait feel comfortable with economic aspect but they do not settle permanently in Kuwait with their family. They leave their families back home and send their earning back to them with full hope of returning later to their

country. Indian migrant workers may be debarred from the Kuwait if they are unable to renew their work permits or Aqama. As a result, most migrant workers are only considered temporary residents. The majority of them are temporary migrant workers who are ineligible for permanent residence.<sup>84</sup> The children of Indian migrant workers are not given citizenship even if they are born in Kuwait. This implies that when they leave their jobs they have to go back to India. They have not given the special privileges and immigration status. Indian migrants' workers in Kuwait are part of its economy. But they have not given political and social rights. In Kuwait all the NRIs are considered as foreigner and do not normally qualify for the local citizenship. The Nationality Law of 1999 states that Indian migrants may apply for Kuwaiti citizenship after 20 years of residency (15 years for residents of other Arab nations); however, only Indian migrants who are Muslims by birth or conversion are eligible. He or she had to have been practicing for five years if they converted. He or she needs to be fluent in Arabic.<sup>85</sup> Only foreign national women married to Kuwaiti national are exceptions to this rule.<sup>86</sup>

#### **Status Citizenship of Indian Migrant Workers in Oman**

Oman is an independent country in the Gulf States. It is a country which is surrounded by Saudi Arabia to the west, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the northwest and Yemen to the southwest.<sup>87</sup> The total population of Oman is 4.6 million. It is estimated that foreign migrant workers make up to 40% of the population.<sup>88</sup> Oman economy is based on hydrocarbon resources, mainly oil and natural gas.<sup>89</sup> Oman became an Islamic country in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>90</sup> Over 75% of its population is Muslims, 25% of the population is Hindu or Christians. Arabic is state language. Other languages are English, Hindi, Baluch and Urdu.<sup>91</sup>

Three quarters of Muslims are Ibadi. There remaining quarters are Sunni; Islam is the largest dominant group and the traditionalist branch. Islam is the state religion, Shariah is the basis of law and the Sultan must be a Muslim.<sup>92</sup> Oman has a kingship, which is an absolute Arab monarchy with the king holding all legislative, executive, and judicial authority. As a result, the King is regarded as the Head of State and Government. He also serves as the Prime Minister, the Finance and Defence Ministers, and the President of the Central Bank. The Supreme Judicial Council nominates judges, and King appoints them.<sup>93</sup>

Indian migrants are the second largest migrants in Oman. They played an important role in the building of Oman. It is a very liberal country for migrant workers.<sup>94</sup> There is 676,781 Indian migrants in

Oman.<sup>95</sup> The total number of migrant workers in this country fell by 9.3% in the first half of 2020. Migrants now make up about 38% of the total population, a five-year low from the figures of 43.6% recorded in 2015.<sup>96</sup> The majority of Indians reside in Oman are workers and professionals. Indian migrants are the largest in number and make up about 54% of the population. About 50% of the Indian communities live in Muscat. The Indian migrant workers have occupied the highest positions in Oman as compared to other communities.<sup>97</sup> Oman remains a mixed and multi-ethnic society with Arabs, Baluchs, and Gujrati Bhatias. Indian migrants include number of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists, of which Muslims are largest in number. Whereas, Hindus make up about 25% of the total population. One of the largest religious minorities in Oman is the Hindu communities, who immigrated to Oman from Sind and Gujarat in India.<sup>98</sup> On the other side Christians are also count in large number as well. They have religious freedom and can freely participate in all the religious activities, like public wedding, festival pujas and other festivities. The male to female ratio Omani Indians is 706 males per 1000 females' Indian migrants. Indians are the only large South Asian community living with family in Oman. About 29% of the domestic sector in Oman is made up of Indian citizens.<sup>99</sup>

The Indian migrant workers are considered as vital pillars of Oman's economic growth and modern development. The largest numbers of Indian migrants have been employed in the construction sector, manufacturing sector, food and hotel sectors, etc. They built, highways, roads, ports, airport, and residential complexes. Indians in Oman are employed in a wide range of professions, including engineers, physicians, scientists, software specialists, chartered accountants, management consultants, architects, semi-skilled workers, retail dealers, and skilled professionals including technicians and nurses. and business owners comprise the majority of Indian immigration.<sup>100</sup> A large number of Indian medical health care workers, work in public as well as private hospitals.<sup>101</sup> There are Indian scholars indifferent faculties and departments of Sultan Qaboos University's. The majority of Indian workers in Oman work in low income jobs in Oman. The blue collars (salesman and domestic workers) make up 82% of and the white collared workers (engineers, doctors, executives, accountants, teachers in Universities and Colleges and scientists etc.) make up 15% of Indian migrant workers in Oman.<sup>102</sup>

#### **Socio-Economic and Professional Profile**

The Indian migrant workers are regarded as one of the vital expatriate community in Oman.

S. No.	Professional Category	Estimated Percentage	Examples of Roles
1	High-Level Professionals	10%	Engineers, Bankers, Managers, Executives, Businesspeople
2	Healthcare Professionals	significant	Approximately 2,000 Indian doctors work in Omani hospitals
3	Skilled Workers	35%	Technicians, Nurses, Software Professionals, Architects
4	Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	55%	Construction, Services, Domestic Work

**Source:** National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) in Oman and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in India. 2025.

The majority of Indian workers have come from poor backgrounds. More than 76% of Indian workers in Oman have not graduated. Only 15% of Indian workers have Universities degrees.<sup>103</sup> They come from the Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Maharashtra.<sup>104</sup> Indian migrants in Oman send a huge amount of \$ 780 million remittances to their families and stabilizing India's foreign exchange. It reduces poverty of migrants and their families back home, lead to increased economy, health and educational levels, encourage entrepreneurship, increase access to information and aid in combating climate change.<sup>105</sup> Remittance have made a significant impact on savings. Remittances of Indian migrants are used for buying houses, purchasing land and educating of their children invested with the hope of future economic security.

Oman is the only country in the Gulf States that grants citizenship to foreigners or any foreign nationals after residing in the country for more than 20 years. Many Indians obtain citizenship on this basis.<sup>106</sup> Omani citizenship have been granted to very few Indian migrants by the royal family. The majority of them are business tycoons and are vital to Oman's trade and business. They've been in Oman for many generations. The royal family of Oman has historically used Bania, a Hindu trading community of the Mahajan caste from the westernmost part of Kutch, Gujarat, India, as bankers. The late Sultan Qaboos bin Said gave them Omani citizenship on a selective basis. The Gulf area offers this unique advantage, particularly to Indian migrants. Elder Kanaksi Khimji of the Banyans community, who oversees the tribe's interactions with Omani authorities, was given the title of Sheikh by the late Sultan of Muscat.<sup>107</sup> The only Hindu with the title Sheikh in the world is Kanaksi Khimji. Khimji Ramdas is the head of Khimji corporate Groups. The ancestor of Khimjis came to Oman in 1870 and since then the Khimjis have flourished. Most of

them are business tycoons.<sup>108</sup> Most prominent among those of Indian origin who have been granted Omani citizenship and brand name of Oman are the Khimji Ramdas Thakeray, Mr. P. Mohammed Ali, Mr. Suresh K. Virmani, Kiran Ashar and Mr. RM Parekh etc. However, in addition to these there are a large number of Indians who have excelled in Oman, contributed significantly to Oman's development and made a good name and prestige for India and Indians in Oman.<sup>109</sup>

As of 2020, some 2,911 people of Indian origin had been granted Omani citizenship, making Oman possibly the only Arab nation on the Arabian Peninsula with a liberal policy for awarding citizenship to foreign nationals who have lived in the country for at least 20 years.<sup>110</sup> The royal family of Oman has conferred citizenship to a few Indians. The majority of them are business tycoons and are vital to Omani trade and business. They have been in Oman for many generations. The most well-known individuals of Indian descent to receive Omani citizenship and the Omani brand are Mr. P. Mohammed Ali, Mr. Suresh K. Virmani, Kiran Ashar, Mr. RM Parekh, and Khimji Ramdas Thakeray.

**Conclusion:** Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman are home to one of the largest Indian migrant workers in Gulf States. Hundreds and thousands of Indian migrant workers have lived and worked in Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman for decades, contributing its infrastructure, economy, education, IT, healthcare and other sectors. Citizenship for Indian migrant workers in Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman remains exceptionally rare, as these Gulf States. These countries are follows a very restrictive citizenship. In these countries the process of acquiring citizenship is very hard. These countries are rarely given citizenship to Indian migrant workers. The Governments primarily reserves citizenship for native Bahrainis, Kuwaitis and Omanis and their

descendants, with very few exceptions. For Indian and others expatriates, this means citizenship is not easily attainable. Indian migrant workers in Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman are generally considered foreign expatriates rather than prospective citizens. Instead, Indians focus on long term residency, employment stability, labour reforms, wages, overtime dues and education opportunities in Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman while retaining their Indian citizenship.

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