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# PRAVASI PULSE



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# Letter from the *Editor*



## **Dear Readers, Contributors, and Esteemed Members of Our Diaspora**

As we welcome the vibrant energy of April, this edition of *Pravasi Pulse* celebrates the extraordinary voices shaping our understanding of identity, resilience, and belonging across borders. At the heart of this issue are the stories of women and thinkers who bridge worlds—geographically, culturally, and emotionally—reminding us that the diaspora is not just about movement, but about meaning.

We begin with Khushi Titoria, whose powerful work, *Bridging Worlds: The Resilience and Influence of Women in the*

*Diaspora*, illuminates the often-overlooked contributions of women who navigate dual worlds with grace and grit. Her words remind us that resilience is not just survival—it is transformation.

From the intersections of heritage and healing, Apoorva Rajashekar's *Roots and Renewal: Navigating India's Evolving Mental Health Landscape* offers a critical lens on how mental health is being redefined in Indian communities, both at home and abroad. Her insights challenge us to confront stigma while embracing progress.



Journeying to Malaysia, Miki Kishiwa's fieldwork, *Who Are the Peranakan Indians? Bridging Cultures and Building Unity in Malaysia's Diverse Society* uncovers the rich, hybrid identities of a community often hidden in plain sight. Her research is a testament to the beauty of cultural fusion.

Then, Shubhangi Singh's *Roots & Routes: Journeys of Migration, Identity, and Belonging* takes us deeper into the emotional cartography of displacement—how we carry homes within us, even when we leave them behind.

And, of course, our conversation with Mahesvari Autar—a force of cultural preservation and innovation—ties these threads together, proving that diaspora stories are as much about the future as they are about the past.

But this is just the beginning. Starting next month, we turn our gaze inward to a narrative often overshadowed: India's internal migrants. From seasonal laborers to urban dreamers, their stories of struggle and reinvention are the untold spine of our nation's growth. We'll explore the villages left behind, the cities that both welcome and exclude, and the human cost of development.

Because migration isn't just about crossing oceans—it's about crossing streets, states, and societal lines. And every journey deserves to be heard.

Keep reading, keep questioning, and keep connecting.

Warm regards,  
*Prakash Kumar Jha*  
*Editor-in-Chief*  
*Pravasi Pulse*

**"They called it 'leaving home' -  
but home is what we built in the  
spaces between departure and  
arrival."**

# Pravasi News Digest



In the 120th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat,' Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the significance of staying connected to one's cultural roots, asserting that individuals deeply rooted in their heritage remain resilient against challenges. Reflecting on his recent visit to Mauritius, he praised the Indian diaspora for preserving their cultural identity over generations. He shared messages from listeners who appreciated the performance of 'Geet Gawai' during his visit, emphasizing the enduring connection of overseas Indians to their traditions. PM Modi recounted the journey of Indian indentured laborers who, despite uncertainties, established a unique identity in Mauritius while maintaining their cultural ties. He also mentioned witnessing 'Chowtaal' performances in Guyana and played audio clips of 'Phagwa Chowtaal' from Fiji and Suriname, illustrating the vibrant continuation of Indian cultural practices globally. Additionally, he lauded organizations like the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society for their dedication to preserving Indian dance, music, and culture internationally.

Air India plans to attract the 35-million-strong Indian diaspora by offering cheaper fares, aiming to offset the impact of its outdated cabins amid upgrade delays. CEO Campbell Wilson acknowledged the fleet's inconsistencies and indicated that pricing would be adjusted accordingly, though specific discount details were not provided. The airline is also working to reduce airport transfer times to within 180 minutes to enhance the travel experience. Currently, Air India operates 51 weekly flights to the US and 80 to Europe, with a fleet of 198 aircraft.



**The Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) has collaborated with the Indian diaspora in Germany to launch 'Project Sarvasetu.' This initiative aims to bridge the skill gap by leveraging the expertise of overseas Indians to enhance the employability of youth in Andhra Pradesh. The project focuses on providing training and mentorship in various sectors, facilitating knowledge exchange between professionals abroad and local talent. By doing so, 'Project Sarvasetu' seeks to create a robust ecosystem for skill development, ultimately contributing to the state's economic growth and addressing the challenges of unemployment.**



During his address to the Indian community in Mauritius, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke partially in Bhojpuri, acknowledging the linguistic heritage of many Mauritian-Indians descended from 19th-century indentured laborers. The PM emphasized the "living bridge" between India and Mauritius, noting that nearly 70% of Mauritius' population traces roots to Indian migrants who arrived between 1834-1920. The event particularly highlighted the preservation of Bhojpuri folk traditions in Mauritius, where the language has evolved into Kreol while maintaining its cultural significance. Modi's use of Bhojpuri - a first for an Indian PM overseas - recognized this unique diaspora identity shaped by 190 years of migration history.



Devotional apps such as AppsForBharat, Vama.App, and Utsav are expanding globally to cater to the Indian diaspora by offering digital rituals and e-commerce services. Leveraging the heightened spiritual engagement during events like the Maha Kumbh, these platforms have experienced significant growth. For instance, Vama.App plans to launch in the US, UK, and Canada in the April-June quarter, with further expansion into the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Similarly, AppsForBharat's Sri Mandir app already serves users in markets including the UK, Australia, Canada, and the UAE, with plans to reach Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, and parts of Europe over the next year. These initiatives aim to connect the global Indian community with their cultural and spiritual roots through accessible digital platforms.

Investments by the Indian diaspora in funds based in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) have exceeded \$7 billion, with participation from over 5,000 Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). GIFT City offers investment opportunities in foreign exchange terms, and its banks now manage assets surpassing \$78 billion.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a warm welcome from the Indian diaspora upon his arrival in Marseille. During his visit, he highlighted the significance of the new Indian Consulate in Marseille, which he and French President Emmanuel Macron inaugurated, marking it as a "historic moment" in India-France relations. PM Modi also paid tribute to Indian soldiers who fought in the World Wars at the Mazargues War Cemetery and acknowledged Marseille's historical connection to India's freedom struggle, notably recalling Veer Savarkar's attempted escape there.



Between October 2024 and January 2025, Non-Resident Indian (NRI) deposits experienced a net outflow of \$1.5 billion, despite the rupee's 3.3% depreciation during this period. Fresh inflows declined to \$2.4 billion, a significant decrease from \$11.9 billion in the previous seven months. This trend is attributed to a tighter job market overseas, particularly in Gulf countries, and concerns over global economic uncertainty. Additionally, low oil prices have affected incomes in the Gulf, further influencing NRI deposit behaviors.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon is on an official visit to India from March 16 to 20, 2025, at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This marks his first visit to India in his current capacity. Accompanying him is a high-level delegation comprising ministers, senior officials, business leaders, media representatives, and members of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand.



Sunita Williams, the renowned NASA astronaut of Indian descent, has expressed plans to visit India following her recent return to Earth after an extended mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Her family confirmed that she intends to visit her ancestral village of Jhulasan in Gujarat, reflecting her deep connection to the country. During her nine-month mission, Williams received widespread support from India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally wrote to her, expressing the nation's pride in her accomplishments and extending an invitation to visit upon her return. The Prime Minister conveyed that despite the physical distance, she remains close to the hearts of 1.4 billion Indians.



Saba Haider, originally from Ghaziabad, has made history as the first Indian-origin woman to join the DuPage County Board in Illinois, USA, following her election in November 2024. This achievement highlights the growing presence and influence of the Indian diaspora in U.S. politics. Haider is deeply involved in community service, serving on several local boards and committees, including the DuPage County Health Department's Public Health Board and the Indian Prairie Educational Foundation. Her success reflects the increasing political engagement of the Indian diaspora, further strengthening its impact in the U.S.

In the lead-up to Canada's federal election on April 28, 2025, a notable number of candidates of Indian origin are actively participating across various political parties. Current estimates indicate the following candidacies:

- Liberal Party: 17 candidates
- Conservative Party: 28 candidates
- New Democratic Party (NDP): 10 candidates
- Green Party: 4 candidates
- People's Party of Canada (PPC): 8 candidates



Jay Bhattacharya, an academic of Indian origin, has been confirmed as the 18th Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States. The U.S. Senate approved his nomination with a 53-47 vote. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Bhattacharya was a professor of medicine, economics, and health research policy at Stanford University. He also led Stanford's Center for Demography and Economics of Health and Aging. His research primarily focused on health economics and public health policy. Dr. Bhattacharya gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic as a co-author of the Great Barrington Declaration, which advocated for a "herd immunity" approach by allowing the virus to spread among low-risk populations while shielding those at higher risk. This perspective was met with both support and criticism within the scientific community.

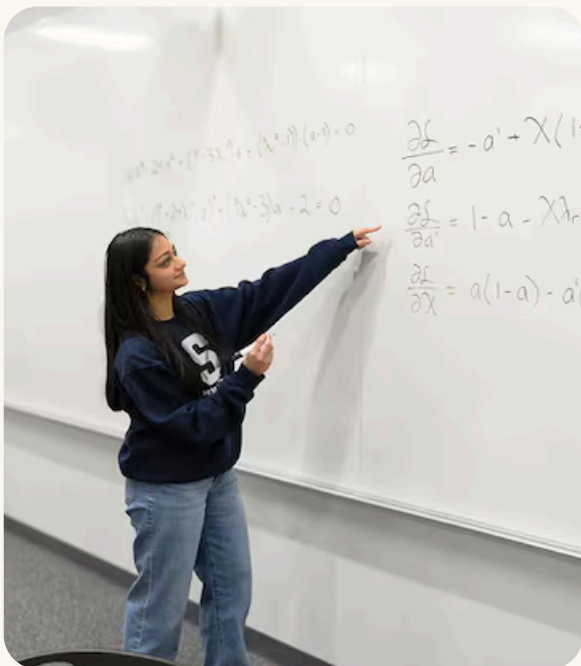
Kashyap "Kash" Patel, the Indian-origin FBI Director appointed under President Donald Trump, recently shared an article discussing how his Hindu upbringing has influenced his worldview and leadership style. Raised in New York within a traditional Hindu household, Patel's family background is notable. His father, Pramod Patel, fled Uganda during Idi Amin's regime in 1972, eventually settling in the United States after a brief period in India. His mother, Anjana Patel, hails from Tanzania. The family emphasized values such as hard work, respect, and education. Patel's parents also instilled in him a respect for all religions, reflecting the universal tolerance advocated by Swami Vivekananda in his 1893 speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

**The University of Houston (UH) has addressed concerns regarding its "Lived Hindu Religion" course after allegations of bias and misrepresentation. Student Vasant Bhatt claimed that the course portrayed Hinduism negatively and labeled Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "Hindu fundamentalist." In response, UH emphasized that the course is grounded in religious studies, employing analytical terms like "fundamentalism" to understand religious movements across various traditions, including Hinduism. The university stated that such terminology aids in comprehending the evolution of religions without judgment or bias. Professor Aaron Michael Ullrey, who teaches the course, clarified that the curriculum utilizes descriptive anthropology to explore the historical and social complexities of Hinduism. He refuted claims that he labeled Hinduism as a colonial construct or that he referred to Prime Minister Modi in a derogatory manner. This incident has sparked broader discussions about academic discourse, cultural sensitivity, and the portrayal of religious identities in educational settings.**



Chandra Arya, a three-term Member of Parliament (MP) representing Ottawa Nepean, has been barred by Canada's Liberal Party from contesting the upcoming federal election scheduled for April 28, 2025. The party revoked his nomination due to concerns over his alleged ties to the Indian government. Specifically, Arya's unauthorized visit to India in August 2024, during which he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi without informing Canadian authorities amid strained bilateral relations, raised security concerns. In response, Arya refuted the allegations, attributing his removal to his outspoken stance against Khalistani extremism within Canada. He emphasized that throughout his tenure, he has engaged with various diplomats and international leaders without seeking prior government approval, asserting that such interactions are customary for MPs.

Three distinguished Indian-origin women—Anu Aiyengar, Anjula Acharia, and Seema Mody—were honored by the Indian Consulate in New York during the 7th Annual International Women's Day celebration. Aiyengar, the Global Head of Advisory at JP Morgan, was recognized for her leadership in finance, while Acharia, a founder of A-Series Investments, was celebrated for her entrepreneurial ventures, including supporting female-led startups like Bumble. Mody, a CNBC anchor, was acknowledged for her influential reporting on global markets. The event, also recognizing Wendy Diamond for her work in women's entrepreneurship, highlighted the significant contributions of Indian-origin women in diverse fields, empowering future generations.



Divya Tyagi, an Indian-origin graduate student in aerospace engineering at Pennsylvania State University, has simplified a century-old mathematical problem in aerodynamics. Her work refines British aerodynamicist Hermann Glauert's model, which previously focused solely on maximizing wind turbine efficiency without considering factors like forces acting on the turbine rotor or blade deformation under wind pressure. By incorporating these additional factors, Tyagi's research offers a more comprehensive understanding of wind turbine dynamics, potentially leading to higher energy output and reduced costs. Her findings, published in *Wind Energy Science*, suggest that even a 1% improvement in power coefficient could notably increase a turbine's energy production, possibly powering an entire neighborhood.

**In March 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney appointed two Indian-origin women, Anita Anand and Kamal Khera, to key positions in his cabinet. Anand, 58, serves as the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry, while Khera, 36, is the Minister of Health. Both previously held ministerial roles under former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Anand represents Oakville in the House of Commons and has held various portfolios, including Minister of Transport and President of the Treasury Board. Khera, born in Delhi, moved to Canada during her schooling and represents Brampton West. She is among the youngest women ever elected to the Canadian Parliament and has served as Minister of Seniors and Parliamentary Secretary to multiple ministers.**



# Bridging Worlds: The Resilience and Influence of Women in the Diaspora

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Women in the diaspora have played a major part in the long-standing changes in civilizations, economics, and cultures brought about by cross-border migration. Their tenacity and impact have been vital in forming diasporic groups around the world, whether as political influencers, cultural guardians, or economic contributors. Women in the diaspora demonstrate incredible adaptability in the face of systemic obstacles like prejudice, economic instability, cultural displacement, creating identities that connect both their new surroundings and their ancestral homelands.

The diaspora's women play a significant role in the long-term cultural, economic, and civilizational shifts brought about by cross-border migration. In addition, diasporic women have a significant impact on both their home and host nations. Beyond financial transfers, they also make contributions to artistic expression, educational progress, and social and political activism. Many have assumed leadership positions in neighborhood groups, promoting immigrant rights, gender equality, and legislative changes that affect underprivileged groups. By promoting intercultural understanding and international cooperation, they contribute to the development of more inclusive societies. Diasporic women are still redefining conventional narratives of migration and influence despite historical and modern obstacles. This conversation



aims to shed light on their crucial role in the dynamics of the worldwide diaspora by analyzing their experiences, hardships, and accomplishments. Their tenacity and influence bear witness to the ability of flexibility and self-determination to mould identities and promote advancement, both inside and outside of diasporic communities. Knowing their story adds to larger questions on gender, identity, and transnationalism in addition to enhancing talks on migration.

As stewards of customs, languages, and values, women are essential to the preservation of culture in diaspora groups. They guarantee the perpetuation of cultural heritage across generations by their involvement in family structures, social organizations, religious institutions and artistic expressions. In foreign countries, women are frequently in charge of preserving and passing down traditions, ceremonies, and folklore that support ethnic identity. Despite their

important achievements, they still struggle to strike a balance between tradition and modernity while negotiating problems, including gender roles, cultural integration, and financial limitations. Family and domestic spaces are among the main ways that women in the diaspora sustain culture. By teaching local languages, telling stories and engaging in traditional practices, parents inculcate cultural values in their children as their primary caregivers. Because it helps newer generations stay connected to their ancestors, language preservation is very important. By involving their children in cultural activities like traditional music, dances, food, and religious rites, mothers frequently take the initiative to ensure that their children develop an awareness of their history. Cultural identity is celebrated and reinforced through festivals and community events which are frequently planned by women.

Women actively participate in social and religious organizations that serve as centers of culture in addition to their roles in families. They establish venues where cultural customs are practiced and transmitted through community centres, mosques, church assemblies, and temple events. To create a sense of community among diaspora members, women frequently take the lead in projects like language classes, workshops for dance and music, and religious education programs. These areas offer chances for solidarity and cross-cultural interaction, particularly for recently arrived immigrants who are looking for comfort and familiarity in unfamiliar settings. Through their artistic creations, women also make a substantial contribution to cultural preservation. In order to preserve and honour their cultural legacy, many women in the diaspora have achieved success as writers, poets, musicians, and filmmakers. The challenges and tenacity of maintaining identity while adjusting to new societies

are reflected in the literature produced by diaspora women. The diaspora experience has been given expression by writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who have written about cultural displacement and legacy. In a similar vein, women's commitment to teaching and performing dance styles in diaspora groups has allowed them to flourish, including Bharatanatyam, Flamenco, and African drumming. Even with these efforts, women still have a difficult time maintaining their culture when they live abroad. Cultural assimilation, when newer generations may reject old customs because of the influence of mainstream society is one of the main challenges. Women frequently find it difficult to strike a balance between protecting their ancestry and letting their kids grow up in different cultures without losing their roots. Furthermore, because women are expected to maintain customs that may restrict their own liberties, gender roles can occasionally be limiting. Another issue is financial limitations, since many immigrant women work in occupations that require a lot of work and offer little time for cultural pursuits.

#### Case Study: Ethiopian and Eritrean Women in the U.S.: Preserving Indigenous Languages and Traditions Through Community Networks

Over the past few decades, the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in the United States has expanded dramatically, especially in major American cities like Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Washington, D.C. In order for future generations to stay connected to their history, women in this community are essential in maintaining indigenous languages and traditional customs. Despite the demands of assimilation, Ethiopian and Eritrean women serve as cultural guardians, transmitting linguistic and traditional

information through family networks, religious institutions, and community organizations.

Oral traditions, storytelling, and community life have always been highly valued in Ethiopian and Eritrean civilizations. Women have continued these traditions in the United States by creating spaces that support the growth of indigenous languages like Oromo, Tigrinya, and Amharic. They accomplish this through teaching language programs at community centers, conversing with children in these languages at home, and introducing traditional proverbs and folktales into casual conversations. Furthermore, religious institutions have a crucial role in preserving language and culture. Through local language services and events hosted by Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches, as well as Muslim community groups, younger generations can engage with their heritage. Language skills are maintained, and cultural values are fostered through religious storytelling by women, who often supervise these religious gatherings and teach young pupils. Traditions are crucially preserved by grassroots projects and organizations run by women. Cultural workshops, traditional dance courses and legacy festivals are organized and taught by women through groups like the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) and Eritrean American organizations. These forums expose young Ethiopian and Eritrean Americans to artisanal crafts like basket weaving, traditional music, and dances like Eskista. Holiday celebrations, culinary customs, and marriage ceremonies all serve as channels for maintaining cultural continuity. In order to preserve these culinary traditions Throughout the diaspora, women frequently take the lead in making traditional dishes like injera, Doro wat, and tsebhi. An essential component of both Ethiopian and Eritrean culture, coffee

ceremonies continue to be a social and ceremonial activity in many homes and community events, encouraging communication and connection across generations.

The aim of Ethiopian and Eritrean women in the United States to maintain their language and traditions is fraught with difficulties, despite their best efforts. Younger community members frequently find it challenging to maintain proficiency in their home tongues due to assimilation pressures, English dominance, and generational differences. Language gaps between generations can arise since many immigrant children prefer to communicate in English on a regular basis. Women have responded to this by changing their methods and using contemporary technologies and bilingual education in cultural transmission. Digital storytelling, social media communities, and online platforms have become cutting edge ways to interact with younger audiences. Furthermore, Ethiopian and Eritrean heritage-focused weekend schools and summer camps have grown in popularity, giving kids the opportunity to learn their native tongues in controlled environments.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, women are essential to the diaspora's cultural preservation because they uphold family customs, encourage communal involvement, and support artistic expression. Their tenacity guarantees that cultural heritage endures throughout generations in spite of obstacles including economic hardships, gender norms, and assimilation pressures. By bridging the gap between the past and the present, their work promotes a vibrant, diversified society. In addition to taking care of their children, Ethiopian and Eritrean women in the United States are also vital to the preservation of their culture. Despite the difficulties of



migration and integration, they make sure that their rich legacy continues through their efforts in language retention, religious instruction, and community involvement. Their adaptability and tenacity benefit not only their local communities but also the United States' larger ethnic terrain.

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# ***Call for Articles: What We Carried: Culture, Conflict, and Adaptation in Indian Migration***



As May unfolds, Pravasi Pulse shifts its gaze to the untold stories of resilience and reinvention within the Indian diaspora and beyond. This edition celebrates the journeys—both across oceans and within borders—that redefine identity, belonging, and legacy. From thriving global communities to the struggles of internal migrants, we explore how movement shapes destiny.

**Themes include, but are not limited to:**

1. What We Carried: The Visible and Invisible Burdens of Indian Migration
2. From Villages to Dubai, Slums to Silicon Valley: The Many Journeys of Indian Migrants
3. Bidis, Bytes, and Blue-Collar Dreams: The Uneven Arc of Indian Migration
4. Roots and Routes: How Migration Redefines Indianness at Home and Abroad
5. The Cost of a Ticket: Sacrifice, Survival, and the Indian Migrant Story
6. Lost Homelands, New Borders: The Dual Displacement of Indian Migrants
7. Temples in Texas, Tenements in Thane: The Architecture of Indian Migration
8. When the Train Stops: Stories of India's Invisible Internal Migrants
9. Diaspora vs. Displacement: Whose Migration Matters More
10. Remixing Home: How Indian Migrants Rewrite Tradition in Distant Lands and Cities

## **IMPORTANT DATE**

<b>Article submission deadline</b> April 25, 2025	<b>Publication</b> May 1, 2025	<b>Word Limit</b> 1000-2500 words
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# ROOTS AND RENEWAL: NAVIGATING INDIA'S EVOLVING MENTAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE

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I was born and raised in India in a family that valued tradition, education, and community above all else. Nine years ago, I migrated to Aotearoa, New Zealand, as a student, rooted in the rich cultural heritage of my homeland while stepping into a world that would shape and transform me in ways I had never imagined. Today, as a Mental Health Practitioner and an Addictions practitioner working in the health sector, I find myself at the intersection of two worlds—where my Indian roots shape my understanding of human connection, and my Western experiences push me to rethink how we support our people.

Like many in the diaspora, I navigate a 'fusion life'—where age-old traditions meet the demands of modernity. I have witnessed first-hand how our communities shift, adapt, and sometimes struggle in this transition. At the heart of it all is mental health—an area where we must bridge the past and the present to build a more resilient future. Mental health does not exist in isolation; it is deeply embedded within our cultural experiences, values, and social structures. Addressing mental well-being requires acknowledging the unique ways in which different cultures view distress, healing, and support. By contextualizing mental health within our traditions and lived realities, we can create solutions that are not just effective but also culturally meaningful.

## **The Changing Fabric of Support**

In the India of my grandmother's time, mental health was not a standalone conversation. It was embedded in the everyday fabric of life—woven into large family gatherings, temple visits, shared meals, and deep-rooted social bonds. The concept of loneliness was nearly non-existent because life was always lived in proximity—emotionally and physically—to family and community. There was always someone to lean on, whether it was a neighbour who acted as an extended family member or an elder whose wisdom guided decision-making.

Fast forward to today, and we see a starkly different landscape. The Western world is facing a loneliness epidemic, with soaring rates of depression, anxiety, and isolation. Individualism, while offering freedom, has often come at the cost of communal belonging. The rise of nuclear families and the pressures of modern life have left many feeling disconnected. In the West, mental health struggles are exacerbated by long working hours, financial stress, and a culture that often prioritizes productivity over well-being. The stigma around mental health has lessened, but access to care remains limited, and many people still struggle to find the sense of community that can be a crucial factor in healing.



And yet, as India modernizes at an astonishing pace, we see similar patterns emerging: families shrinking, social interactions becoming digital, and traditional support systems eroding under the weight of urbanization and globalization. The India I knew nine years ago is very different today, and while I do not claim to fully understand the current challenges of living in India, I do see the echoes of Western struggles beginning to take shape.

### **Why Cultural Context Matters in Mental Health**

Mental health is deeply personal, but it is also cultural. The way we experience distress, express emotions, and seek help is shaped by the values we grow up with. In many Western societies, therapy is a common and encouraged resource, yet for many Indians, seeking mental health support can still carry a stigma. Our emotional resilience has long been nurtured within the structures of family and community, which means that solutions must account for these dynamics rather than impose a one-size-fits-all approach.

For example, in Indian culture, emotional distress is often expressed through physical symptoms—stomach aches, fatigue, headaches—rather than direct conversations about sadness or anxiety. Elders may see mental health struggles as a test of faith or endurance rather than a medical concern. Meanwhile, younger generations, influenced by global discourse, are beginning to acknowledge and seek help for mental health challenges. This generational shift requires careful navigation—honouring the wisdom of our elders while integrating modern psychological support in ways that feel authentic and respectful to our cultural frameworks.

Historically, our communities have provided mental health support in ways that Western psychology is only now beginning to recognize—through storytelling, spiritual guidance, music, and communal activities. Think of how grandmothers would sing while making hapla or pickle, embedding rhythm and routine into daily life. These were not just chores; they were communal, seasonal rituals that created a sense of belonging. In contrast, in many Western cultures, people often lack such built-in opportunities for emotional connection, leading to an increased reliance on formal therapy.

Growing up in India profoundly influenced my thinking. Having a grandparent so close helped me see the world differently—one where resilience was about connection, not isolation. I learned that sustainability wasn't just about the environment but also about relationships and traditions. Indians have long been pioneers of sustainable living, from making seasonal food to being deeply in tune with nature. Our songs, our rituals, and our shared meals are reflections of a life deeply connected to time, place, and community.

### **Ajji's Wisdom: A Guide to Generational Strength**

Whenever I think about resilience and community, I think of my ajji, Smt Leelamma—my grandmother. She was the anchor of our home, not just for the immediate family but for anyone who needed a warm meal or a listening ear. I remember sitting by her side as she rolled chapatis, listening to stories of a time when people leaned on each other without hesitation. She would often say, "Kayakave Kailasa"—work is worship. Any work, no matter how small, should be done mindfully and with conviction, as if one's life depended on it. She lived by this philosophy, whether she was cooking for the family, creating sculptures, painting, making art from discarded materials, or innovating new dishes. She was an artist in every sense, turning even the simplest tasks into acts of creativity and purpose.

Her words continue to guide me in my work. In mental health, we talk about resilience, but my ajji lived it. She taught me that true strength comes from interconnectedness, from knowing that no matter what, you are never truly alone. And that is the message I carry forward—not just as a psychologist but as someone deeply committed to ensuring that we, as a community, never lose sight of what makes us whole.

The future of mental health in the Indian community depends on how well we balance tradition with transformation. We must not only preserve our collective ways of living but actively rebuild them where they are fading. Because at the end of the day, our greatest asset has never been wealth or status—it has always been each other.

### **Where India Leads and the West Learns**

Despite these shifts, India remains a beacon of communal resilience. The concept of sangha—a collective that supports each other through life's ups and downs—is still very much alive. While Western societies now invest in research on social prescribing (where people are encouraged to connect with community groups for mental well-being), India has long had informal versions of this in the form of religious gatherings, festivals, and family systems that naturally absorb stress and hardship.

For generations, strong community ties have been a protective factor against mental health crises. Families can be imperfect, sometimes even abusive, but there was always someone—a grandmother, an aunt, a teacher—who would step in, offer guidance, and reassure you that you were not alone. That buffer of support has historically protected many from complete despair.

One striking example of cultural reclamation is yoga. For a long time, urban India dismissed yoga as outdated, incompatible with modern lifestyles. It was the West that rediscovered and revitalized it, turning it into a global wellness industry. Today, yoga is a billion-dollar movement outside India, while within the country, attitudes remain conflicted—oscillating between pride in its ancient roots and skepticism about its commercialization. This love-hate relationship reflects a broader struggle: how do we modernize while staying true to what once kept us grounded?

### **Building Stronger Communities**

The answer lies in intentional connection. Whether we live in India or as part of the global diaspora, we must reclaim our traditional ways of supporting each other while adapting to modern realities. This means creating spaces where people can talk openly about their struggles without stigma. It means valuing elders not just as relics of the past but as custodians of wisdom. It means ensuring that our children grow up with a sense of belonging that extends beyond a digital screen.

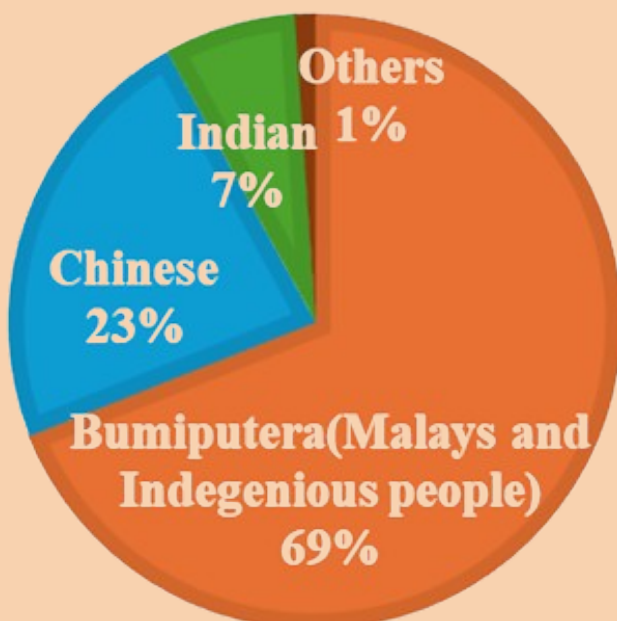
### **A Reflection on Resilience and Generational Wisdom**

I invite you to reflect on the ideas explored in this article. Take the time to engage in a meaningful conversation with a friend or family member, sharing experiences and insights. Through these dialogues, we can deepen our understanding of resilience, community, and the enduring wisdom passed down through generations. Consider this: How would your grandfather have responded to the challenge you're facing today? Pondering this question might offer valuable perspectives, connecting you to the timeless strength and wisdom of your heritage as you navigate your own struggles.

# WHO ARE THE PERANAKAN INDIANS? BRIDGING CULTURES AND BUILDING UNITY IN MALAYSIA'S DIVERSE SOCIETY

## Overview of Malaysian Society

Many Indian immigrants have naturalized in Malaysia. Most of them are Tamil Hindus who migrated from South India as labourers during the British colonial period. First, let's explore the Malaysian society in which they live. As of 2023, the population of Malaysia is approximately 33.5 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). Islam is the national religion, but the federal constitution guarantees freedom of belief in other religions. Citizens are categorized into 'Bumiputera,' 'Chinese,' and 'Indians.' Bumiputera consists of Malays, who are Muslim, and other indigenous people. According to 2020 estimates, Bumiputera accounts for about 69%, Chinese about 23%, and Indians less than 10% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).



The ethnic composition of the Malaysian population  
(created by the author based on Department of Statistics  
Malaysia 2020).



Location of Malacca, a key settlement of the Peranakan Indians  
(Created by the author using Google Maps).

## Who Are the Peranakan Indians?

In Malaysia, some communities do not fall neatly into the three official ethnic categories. One such group is the Peranakan Indians, who have formed their distinct community while maintaining harmonious relationships with other ethnic groups. The term Peranakan derives from the Malay word anak, meaning "child," and refers to the locally born descendants of foreign settlers. Various Peranakan communities exist in Malaysia, including Chinese, Arab, and other origins.

Among them, the Peranakan Indians are the descendants of Tamil Hindu traders who arrived in Malacca during the 15th century and gradually assimilated into the local society. Their community includes people from various caste backgrounds, such as Chitty, Pillay, Naiker, Rajah, Padayacee, Mudaliar, and Patter, though caste distinctions are not strongly observed. For example, leaders of the committee are elected without regard to caste.



The Peranakan Indian community has historically maintained its religious and social cohesion through the joint ownership of ten Hindu temples, including the Sri Poyyatha Vinayagar Moorthi Temple, which was built in 1781 and is considered the oldest Hindu temple in Malaysia. In addition to managing these temples, the committee also owned approximately seven acres of surrounding land, which has been leased at affordable rates to Peranakan Indians. This land has long served as a crucial centre for their communal and religious activities, reinforcing their cultural identity and collective cohesion.



Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, one of the Hindu temples owned by the Peranakan Indians (Photographed by the author, May 2024).

with other ethnic groups, and by the 1970s, exogamy had become more common than endogamy. Specifically, between 1966 and 1976, the attributes of spouses of Peranakan Indians in Malacca were 20 Peranakan Indians and 34 non-Peranakan Indians (20 Indians, 5 Malays, 6 Chinese, and 3 non-Malaysians) (Narinasamy 1983: 260). Even today, marriages with non-Peranakan Indians are common.

### Cultural Characteristics

The Peranakan Indians have developed a unique hybrid culture, influenced by diverse cultures such as Chinese and Malay. For example, many of them use a language that mixes Malay with Chinese and Tamil in daily conversation. They enjoy not only Indian dishes like Dosa and Idly but also meals using local spices, herbs, and coconut milk. For clothing, they wear traditional Indian attire such as Sarees and Punjabi suits when visiting Hindu temples, but they also wear Kebaya, a local traditional outfit.



Peranakan Indian women wearing Kebaya.  
(<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=990128953160674&set=pcb.990128976494005>)

In the 1950s, the committee began renting the land not only to Peranakan Indians but also to other ethnic groups at affordable rates. As a result, people from other ethnic backgrounds, besides Peranakan Indians, started to settle there. For example, in 1976, the composition of 98 households was 27 Peranakan Indian households, 52 Chinese households, 17 Indian households, and 2 Malay households (Narinasamy 1983: 253). Peranakan Indians deepened their relationships

### Hindu Temple Festivals

Most Peranakan Indians are devout Hindus and celebrate various religious festivals, including Ponggol, Shivaratri, Varusa Pirapu, Navaratri, and Deepavali. The most important festival is the Dato Chachar festival, held at the Sri Maha

Mariamman Temple. The festival, which has been held annually for ten days, attracts thousands of participants (Pillai, 2015), including Peranakan Indians who have moved away from Malacca, other Indian Hindus, and a significant number of Chinese attendees.

During these celebrations, they engage in severe practices (Kavadi), such as piercing their bodies with spears or carrying milk pots in processions, to show their gratitude for the fulfilment of their vows to the gods. They also make donations of money, rice, and cooking oil. In addition to seeking healing for chickenpox, they also seek various other spiritual blessings. Among the devout believers, some are possessed by the Gods.



Scene from the Dato Chachar festival in May 2024  
(Photographed by the author).

## Ancestor Worship

Peranakan Indians practice distinct forms of ancestor worship. Unlike many other Hindus in Malaysia, they primarily follow burial customs rather than cremation. The committee jointly owns and manages a cemetery in Malacca, where most of their ancestors are laid to rest.

During the Margali season, which occurs around December, Peranakan Indians wake up early each morning to pray and

place hibiscus flowers at their doorsteps to welcome the spirits of their ancestors into their homes. After that, in January, they visit the cemetery for a ritual known as Naik Bukit, a practice influenced by the Chinese Qingming Festival. During this ceremony, families gather to clean the graves, decorate them with flowers, and offer meals served on banana leaves, including Indian dishes, local sweets, and foods that were favoured by the deceased.

In addition to the Naik Bukit ceremony, families observe a biannual food offering ritual known as Parchu. During Parchu, a variety of dishes, including shrimp, chicken, seasonal fruits, and sweets, are prepared and offered to the spirits of their ancestors. The first Parchu ceremony takes place in January, while the second is held between June and July, coinciding with the fruit harvest season.



Food offerings for ancestors during Parchu.  
(<https://melakachetti.com/important-occasions/>)

## Conclusion

The Peranakan Indians have developed their community through the committee, which manages both land and Hindu temples. Their religious festivals and ancestor worship rituals not only serve to strengthen their internal communal ties but also provide important opportunities for interethnic exchange with other Malaysian communities. By nurturing and adapting their cultural heritage while

engaging in interactions with other ethnic groups, they have developed a dynamic and inclusive identity that continues to shape their role in Malaysia's multicultural society.

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In this edition of Pravasi Pulse, we are honored to feature Mahesvari Autar, a dynamic cultural leader whose work bridges continents, histories, and generations. With deep roots in the Sarnami-Hindustani community—descendants of indentured laborers brought to Suriname during Dutch and British colonial rule—Mahesvari’s personal story is a testament to resilience, heritage, and the power of cultural expression.

A passionate advocate for the Indian Diaspora, particularly those with Surinamese ties, Mahesvari has curated over 100 events, bringing international artists and thinkers to the Netherlands while fostering cross-cultural dialogue. Through her platform DesiYUP, she launched the groundbreaking Endless India Festival in 2023, commemorating 150 years of Hindustani immigration and forging partnerships with leading institutions.

Beyond event curation, Mahesvari is a creative visionary—crafting theatre productions that blend classical Indian arts with contemporary themes and penning the beloved children’s book Radha’s First Concert. Her expertise as a cultural liaison and speaker ensures that the voices of the Hindu and Indian Diaspora communities are amplified in public discourse.

Recognized as the first runner-up for Rotterdam Woman of the Year 2025 (Arts & Culture) and a finalist for Rotterdam Businesswoman of the Year 2019, Mahesvari’s dedication to preserving heritage while shaping inclusive cultural spaces makes her a true force of inspiration. Join us as we delve into her journey, her mission, and her vision for a more connected and celebrated Diaspora.

- How have your Sarnami Hindustani and Indian roots influenced your identity and career?

Music and spirituality are deeply intertwined in both Sarnami Hindustani and Indian traditions, which has profoundly impacted my life. I grew up surrounded by bhajans and folk songs (Baithak Gana), but my mother's approach to studies has ignited my entrepreneurial spirit. It's because she insisted that I should learn Hindi as an additional language to 'Dutch, German, France, and Spanish'. My ability to understand and speak Hindi became a powerful tool for me to set up my cultural platform, DesiYUP, in 2011. Through DesiYUP, I'm able to bring the Arts & Culture of India to the Netherlands.

- What inspired you to pursue a career in journalism, and how did your early experiences shape your professional journey?

I've always been drawn to stories – hearing them, telling them, and understanding their power to connect us. However, it was my deep sense of curiosity about the world and a desire to explore different cultures and perspectives that were the driving forces behind my pursuit of journalism. My early experiences in the field were incredibly formative. I learned how to research effectively, navigate complex situations, and communicate clearly and concisely. These experiences instilled in me a strong work ethic and a commitment to uncovering the truth, i.e. a certain perspective, which continues to guide me in everything I do, from cultural programming to writing children's books.

- What do you believe are the most significant contributions of the Indian Diaspora to the cultural landscape of the Netherlands?

Beyond the artistic and culinary contributions, the Indian diaspora has built strong and vibrant communities across the Netherlands. These communities have not only provided a sense of belonging for people of Indian origin but have also contributed to the social and economic development of the country. The entrepreneurial spirit is simply amazing; the number of restaurants that are now being opened, or various home-made products that are being developed are just two examples to credit the entrepreneurial mindset of the Indians. This creates value for the Dutch community and let's not forget economy.

- How do you think the experiences of the Indian Diaspora have evolved over the generations in the Netherlands?

The experiences of the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands have undergone a significant transformation across generations. The first generation often focused on establishing themselves, navigating a new culture, and maintaining their connection to their homeland. What I do notice is the language barrier; the first generation was very comfortable speaking in English rather than communicating in Dutch. While the Sarnami-Hindustani community is raised speaking Dutch. Consequently, the first-generation community hardly mingled. The real change that I could notice is when PM Narendra Modi came to visit the Netherlands in 2017 and opened his speech by acknowledging the Sarnami-Hindustani community for preserving their culture,

language for (now) 151 years. His speech did cause a relationship shift between the first-generation Indians and the Sarnami-Hindustani community.

The second-generation Indians, born and raised in the Netherlands and the Indian expats that came to live here in the last let's say 10 to 15 years have brought a lot of change in terms of socially and economically. There is an emergence of sub Indian communities. Every state of India is now represented in the Netherlands. I believe this is also a challenge for the community as well to navigate multiple identities, balancing their Indian heritage and integrating in the Dutch society. To give you an example, when I bring an artists and I know he is has roots in Bengaal, I know that I will attract a primarily Bengali audience to this concert who are also keen to hear Indian classical music live. So, as a cultural platform, I cannot focus on one particular sub-community; I always have to ensure that my programming is diverse enough to attract music lovers from all parts of India.

- Can you elaborate on how DesiYUP has helped bridge cultural gaps and introduce the Dutch audience to the richness of Indian music and arts?

Beyond presenting performances, DesiYUP strives to build a community around South Asian arts and culture. We create spaces where people from different backgrounds can come together, share experiences, and learn from each other. Our events are not just about watching a performance; they're about fostering dialogue and understanding. We believe that by creating these meaningful connections, we can break down cultural barriers and promote a more inclusive and harmonious

society. We do this by collaborating with both established and emerging artists from different backgrounds; we create unique and innovative performances that resonate with diverse audiences and promote intercultural dialogue. We don't just present the art; we provide the context. DesiYUP emphasizes education and understanding. We offer program notes, talks, and workshops that help audiences delve deeper into the cultural significance of Indian Arts & Culture. This approach is crucial in bridging cultural gaps, as it allows people to appreciate art on a more profound level. By providing this context, we empower audiences to connect with the music, literature and arts in a meaningful way, regardless of their background.

- What challenges have you faced in promoting Indian culture through DesiYUP, and how have you overcome them?

In the beginning, building trust and credibility was a significant hurdle. As a relatively new organization, it took time to establish ourselves within the Dutch cultural landscape. We overcame this by consistently delivering high-quality programming, building strong relationships with artists and cultural institutions, and demonstrating our commitment to our mission. Through perseverance and a genuine passion for what we do, we've been able to build a loyal following and establish DesiYUP as a respected international platform for South Asian arts and culture. To ensure that we collaborate with the right venue, we had to ensure a diverse audience who would be interested in our program. That has been our key challenge. We want to connect with people from all backgrounds, not just those who are already familiar with Indian culture. Also,

we noticed that Indians familiar with classical art forms have the tendency not to appreciate the art forms by willing to pay for concerts. They do when commercially interested parties are involved, for example, a Diljit Dosanjh, Shreya Ghosal or well-known comedians such as Russel Peters. But spending time and money on new emerging Indian talents has so far not been encouraged so far. Hence, our organization cannot depend solely on the Indian community. Our third challenge is building a strong and dedicated team of volunteers and supporters who are passionate about our mission. Who are not just part of DesiYUP for the events or access to our network, but who truly believe in connecting with people through arts and culture. Who have the same values and strong work ethics.

- How has your work with the Indian Diaspora influenced your approach to journalism and media production?

My work with the Indian diaspora has instilled in me a deep sense of cultural sensitivity and a commitment to fostering intercultural dialogue. I've learned the importance of understanding different cultural contexts and perspectives, which is crucial in journalism and media production. It's not just about translating words; it's about conveying cultural meanings and ensuring that messages are understood in their intended context. This experience has made me a more thoughtful and responsible communicator, always striving to bridge cultural gaps and promote understanding.

- What has been your most memorable project with the Embassy of India in the Netherlands, and why?

I've been fortunate to collaborate with the Embassy of India on several enriching projects over the years. Even before I founded DesiYUP and was working for the national broadcast channel OHM. Every project that I did for the embassy or where they supported me was of absolute value. It's pretty hard for me to choose, but I guess when I was invited by the Embassy to travel to India for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was a memorable occasion to see India from up close. Another occasion was when I got introduced to PM Modi in a Meet & Greet session, where Ambassador Venu Rajamony informed him about the work of DesiYUP. And thirdly, when I was asked to be the MC for the community event of President Ram Nath Kovind two years back. These are all wonderful memories. What I value most about our relationship is their commitment to promoting Indian culture in the Netherlands and their willingness to support organizations like DesiYUP. Each project has been a valuable learning experience, contributing to our shared goal of fostering cultural exchange and understanding.

- How do you envision the future of Indian cultural promotion in the Netherlands and DesiYUP's role in it?

I believe the future of Indian cultural promotion lies in strong collaborations and meaningful cross-cultural exchange. We need to work together with other cultural institutions, artists from different backgrounds, and commercial organizations as promoters/funders to create truly enriching experiences. DesiYUP will continue to be a catalyst for these collaborations, fostering partnerships that bring together diverse perspectives and create innovative projects that explore the intersection of Indian culture with other art forms and cultural traditions. This collaborative



approach will not only expand the reach of Indian culture but also contribute to a more vibrant and interconnected cultural landscape in the Netherlands.

- What impact do you hope your work will have on the next generation of the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands?

I hope my work will inspire the next generation to embrace their Indian heritage with pride. I want them to feel a strong connection to their roots, to understand the richness and beauty of their cultural traditions, and to feel empowered to express their identity in their own unique way. It's about giving them the tools and resources they need to navigate their dual identities and to feel a sense of belonging within both the Dutch and Indian cultural landscapes.

- How do you measure the success of your efforts in promoting meaningful Indian music and culture?

For me, success isn't just about numbers; it's about the quality of engagement and the impact we have on our audience. We look at several factors: audience attendance, of course, but more importantly, we pay close attention to audience feedback. We value the conversations we have with people after performances, the messages we receive online, and the reviews and testimonials we gather from artists and our partners in the cultural sector. When people tell us that they've been moved by a performance, that they've learned something new, or that they've felt a deeper connection to Indian culture, that's a true measure of success.



# ROOTS & ROUTES: JOURNEYS OF MIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND BELONGING



Shubhangi Singh  
Pursuing Master's in International Relations

Migration is as old as humanity itself. From the earliest nomadic tribes crossing continents in search of sustenance to the modern-day movements driven by war, economic opportunity, or climate change, the story of human migration is a tapestry woven with threads of resilience, loss, and reinvention. The interplay between "roots"—the places, cultures, and histories we come from—and "routes"—the paths we take to new destinations—defines not only individual lives but entire societies. At its core, migration is more than a physical journey; it is a profound exploration of identity and belonging, challenging us to reconcile where we've been with where we're going.

## **The Eternal Dance of Departure and Arrival**

Migration begins with a departure, often born of necessity or ambition. History is replete with examples: the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, the transatlantic slave trade, the Irish fleeing famine in the 19th century, or the Syrian refugees escaping conflict in the 21st. Today, the United Nations estimates that over

281 million people live outside their country of birth, a number that continues to grow as globalization, conflict, and environmental crises reshape the world.

Each journey carries a dual burden: the weight of what is left behind and the hope of what lies ahead. For many, leaving home means abandoning familiar landscapes, languages, and traditions—anchors of identity that ground us in a sense of self. Yet, it also opens the door to new possibilities: a safer life, a better job, or the chance to rewrite one's story. This tension between loss and opportunity is the heartbeat of migration. Take, for instance, the story of Maria, a young woman who left rural Mexico for the United States. Her roots lie in the sunbaked fields of Oaxaca, where her family has farmed for generations. Her route took her across the border, undocumented, to a bustling city where she now works as a cleaner. Maria's identity straddles two worlds: she sends money home to support her parents, preserving her ties to Oaxaca, while learning English and adapting to American customs.

Her sense of belonging is fluid, caught between the nostalgia of her roots and the realities of her route.

### **Identity in Flux**

Migration inevitably reshapes identity. The moment one crosses a border—geographic, cultural, or linguistic—the self begins to morph. This transformation can be both liberating and disorienting. For some, it's a chance to shed the constraints of their past; for others, it's a struggle to hold onto what defines them.

Consider the diaspora communities that dot the globe: the Chinese in San Francisco's Chinatown, the Punjabis in London's Southall, or the Somalis in Minneapolis. These enclaves are testaments to the human need to preserve roots amid new routes. They recreate the sights, sounds, and tastes of home—temples, mosques, markets—while simultaneously adapting to their adopted lands. A second-generation Punjabi Brit might speak English with a London accent, enjoy fish and chips, and still celebrate Diwali with the fervor of their grandparents. Their identity is a hybrid, a bridge between two worlds.

Yet, this blending is not always seamless. Migrants often face the question, "Where are you from?"—a query that assumes a singular answer but rarely gets one. For those who straddle cultures, the response is complicated. A child of Nigerian immigrants in Canada might say, "I'm from Toronto," only to be met with, "No, where are you *\*really\** from?" This insistence on pinning identity to a single origin reveals a deeper societal discomfort with

fluidity. Migration exposes the fiction of fixed identities, forcing us to confront the reality that who we are is shaped as much by where we go as by where we began.

### **The Search for Belonging**

Belonging is the elusive prize at the end of the migrant's journey—or so it seems. To belong is to feel accepted, to have a stake in a community, to call a place home. But for many migrants, this sense of belonging is hard-won, if achieved at all. Discrimination, economic hardship, and cultural alienation can make the new land feel as foreign as the day they arrived.

The refugee experience exemplifies this struggle. Fleeing persecution or disaster, refugees arrive in host countries with little more than their lives. Their roots have been violently severed, and their routes are dictated by survival rather than choice. In camps or resettlement programs, they face the daunting task of rebuilding not just their livelihoods but their sense of self. A Syrian family in Germany, for example, might grapple with learning a new language, navigating bureaucracy, and confronting stereotypes—all while mourning the home they can no longer return to. Belonging, for them, is not a gift bestowed upon arrival; it's a process, painstakingly forged over years.

Even voluntary migrants encounter barriers. Economic migrants, like Maria, often toil in low-wage jobs, living on the margins of society. Their contributions—cleaning offices, harvesting crops, driving taxis—are vital, yet they're frequently met with hostility or indifference. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many nations hailed these "essential



workers," only to revert to anti-immigrant rhetoric once the crisis waned. This ambivalence underscores a paradox: migrants are integral to the fabric of their adopted societies yet often denied full membership in them.

### **Roots as Anchors, Routes as Wings**

The metaphor of "roots and routes" captures the dual nature of migration. Roots anchor us to our origins, providing a sense of continuity and heritage. They are the stories our grandparents tell, the recipes we cook, the songs we sing. Routes, meanwhile, are the wings that carry us forward, exposing us to new horizons and possibilities. Together, they form a dynamic interplay that defines the migrant experience.

For some, roots remain a source of strength. The Jewish diaspora, scattered across continents for centuries, has maintained a cohesive identity through shared religion, language (Hebrew), and traditions like Passover. Even as their routes diverged—to Europe, the Americas, Israel—their roots kept them tethered to a collective past. Similarly, the African diaspora, forged through the trauma of slavery, has cultivated a rich cultural legacy—jazz, reggae, and soul food—that transcends borders.

For others, routes take precedence. Tech professionals moving from India to Silicon Valley or students studying abroad often embrace their new environments, prioritizing adaptation over preservation. They may marry outside their culture, adopt local customs, and raise children who know little of their ancestral

homeland. Their roots become faint echoes, overshadowed by the routes they've chosen.

Most migrants, however, live in the space between. They neither fully abandon their roots nor wholly embrace their routes. Instead, they create something new—a syncretic identity that defies easy categorization. A Vietnamese American might celebrate Tết with pho and firecrackers while also hosting a Fourth of July barbecue. This fusion is not a dilution of identity but an expansion, a testament to human adaptability.

### **The Global Tapestry**

Migration is not just an individual journey; it's a collective force that shapes the world. Cities like New York, Dubai, and Sydney are living mosaics, their streets pulsing with languages, cuisines, and customs from every corner of the globe. These urban centers demonstrate how migration weaves a global tapestry, threading together disparate cultures into a shared human story.

Yet, this interconnectedness also sparks tension. Rising nationalism in many parts of the world—Brexit in the UK, "America First" policies in the US, or anti-migrant sentiment in Europe—reflects a backlash against the perceived erosion of local identity. Critics argue that migration threatens sovereignty and cultural cohesion, pitting "us" against "them." But this view overlooks a fundamental truth: migration has always been a driver of progress. The exchange of ideas, skills, and traditions across borders has fueled innovation, from the Silk Road to the Industrial Revolution to the digital age.

Moreover, the "us" versus "them" dichotomy ignores how migration blurs these lines. A Turkish-German engineer, a Filipino nurse in Saudi Arabia, or a Haitian teacher in Miami is neither fully "other" nor entirely "us"—they are both, and more. Their presence challenges societies to expand their definitions of belonging, to see diversity not as a threat but as a strength.

### **The Future of Roots and Routes**

As we look to the future, migration will only accelerate. Climate change is expected to displace millions, turning coastal dwellers into "climate refugees." Technological advances will enable remote work, prompting new forms of digital nomadism. Political upheavals will continue to push people across borders. The journeys of tomorrow will test our capacity to adapt, both as migrants and as hosts. How will identity evolve in this shifting landscape? Perhaps roots will become less tied to geography and more to virtual communities—online spaces where culture is preserved and shared.

Routes, too, may lose their permanence, as people move more fluidly between places, unbound by traditional notions of settlement. Belonging might shift from a fixed state to a spectrum, where individuals claim multiple homes simultaneously. What remains constant is the human impulse to seek a better life, to carry our roots with us as we forge new routes. Migration is not a disruption of the human story but its essence—a testament to our ability to endure, to connect, and to reimagine who we are. In every journey, there is a search for

meaning, a negotiation between the past and the future. And in every migrant, there is a mirror, reflecting our shared capacity for courage and change.

### **Conclusion**

"Roots & Routes" is more than a catchy phrase; it's a lens through which to understand the migrant experience. It reminds us that identity is not static but a living, breathing thing, shaped by the places we leave and the paths we take. Belonging, too, is not a destination but a journey—one that requires patience, empathy, and an openness to the unknown. As the world grows ever more connected, the stories of migration will continue to define us, weaving a narrative that is as diverse as it is universal. In the end, we are all travelers, seeking our place in the vast, unfolding map of humanity.

# ***Call for Articles: What We Carried: Culture, Conflict, and Adaptation in Indian Migration***



As May unfolds, Pravasi Pulse shifts its gaze to the untold stories of resilience and reinvention within the Indian diaspora and beyond. This edition celebrates the journeys—both across oceans and within borders—that redefine identity, belonging, and legacy. From thriving global communities to the struggles of internal migrants, we explore how movement shapes destiny.

**Themes include, but are not limited to:**

1. What We Carried: The Visible and Invisible Burdens of Indian Migration
2. From Villages to Dubai, Slums to Silicon Valley: The Many Journeys of Indian Migrants
3. Bidis, Bytes, and Blue-Collar Dreams: The Uneven Arc of Indian Migration
4. Roots and Routes: How Migration Redefines Indianness at Home and Abroad
5. The Cost of a Ticket: Sacrifice, Survival, and the Indian Migrant Story
6. Lost Homelands, New Borders: The Dual Displacement of Indian Migrants
7. Temples in Texas, Tenements in Thane: The Architecture of Indian Migration
8. When the Train Stops: Stories of India's Invisible Internal Migrants
9. Diaspora vs. Displacement: Whose Migration Matters More
10. Remixing Home: How Indian Migrants Rewrite Tradition in Distant Lands and Cities

## **IMPORTANT DATE**

<b>Article submission deadline</b> April 25, 2025	<b>Publication</b> May 1, 2025	<b>Word Limit</b> 1000-2500 words
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