

## International Migration: An Outline of Capital Migration and its Impact on Economic Growth of India

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### ABSTRACT

There are multiple reasons for human mobility, but mostly it occurs due to economic reasons as proposed by Ravenstein migration law. International migration tends to bridge the demands of labor within societies and this is an inevitable process. Mostly, people from the low income countries have a quest to move toward high income countries to attain better economic opportunities and enhance their standards of life. As per the official figures, there are over 18 million Indian diaspora abroad, with over 9 million of the Indian emigrants concentrated in the gulf region. The paper focuses on the outflow of the Indian emigrant's toward high income countries that include high skilled semi-skilled and low- skilled labors, which has led India to become on the top of remittances recipient in the world with estimated amount of 125 billion USD. The present paper systematically discussed the outflow of international labor migrant from India and its impact on Indian Economy. Moreover, the paper further highlighted the contribution of International labor migrants from various countries toward the high income countries. The data used for the current study include latest factsheets and reports of RBI, World Bank, IMF, Asian development Bank, IOM, ILO and UNHCR. Besides, numerous published research papers in the high impact journals were systematically reviewed to enrich the present study.

**Keywords:** *International Migration, gulf region, Remittances, Indian Economy, Emigration policies*

### 1. Introduction

Migration is an inevitable process. It is in the nature of man to move from one place to another since early history for multiple reasons like escaping natural or manmade disasters, seeking better lives, in search of more secure environment in a quest for freedom to get rid of certain cultural practices to access better economics opportunities (Dogan, 2021). Migration is continuously shaping the world and changing its demographic structure even today (Simpson, 2022). It is estimated that the number of people who have migrated to live and work in the other countries has doubled from 99.8 million in 1980 to 200 million in 2005. This has further increased up to 258 million in 2017 and about 281 million in 2020 which equates to 3.6 percent of global population as per the report of international organization for migration (UNDESA,

2020)<sup>1</sup>. The world today is more connected through technology and the distances have reduced due to better connectivity of space and land and the world has shrunk to a global village (Parsons, 2022; Sen, 2000). Therefore, migration of people have become easier than it was earlier.

The theoretical framework and scientific studies on human mobility started in early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Migration studies become an important activity for the researchers, as in early 1885 Earnest Gorge Ravenstein was the pioneer for the scientific study on the migration laws and principles of migration and has propounded that one of the major cause of migration is economic and peoples choose to migrate from their origin country toward destination countries to attain better socio-economic opportunities (Ravenstein, 1889). However, the Stouffers theory on intervening opportunities discussed that, number of opportunities in the destination countries push people to move long distance and attain better life (Stouffer, 1940). Besides, Everett Lee propounded the push pull theory for the movement of individuals and discussed various key factors, such as employment opportunities, better living conditions, political stability, educational opportunities, improved healthcare and services and the chance to be with family, "pull" people to migrate from their origin location toward their destination country. Meanwhile, negative factors that "push" people out of their native country toward transit or destination country, include political unrest, economic hardship, unemployment, and poor living conditions, lack of services and opportunities and conflict are the key factors that disperse peoples toward abroad(Lee,1966).

According to the IOM, a person who relocates abroad in search of work and financial stability, is commonly referred to as an international labor migrant( IOM,2008). Economic reasons are frequently the driving force behind this travel, as people look abroad for employment possibilities, better pay, or better working conditions than they can find back home(Roy&Debnath,2011). As a major worldwide phenomena, international labor migration involves millions of individuals moving abroad each year to work in a variety of sectors, including domestic work, hospitality, agriculture, construction, and healthcare (Hamada, 2012). These migrants encounter a range of obstacles and prospects. Obstacles may include legal concerns pertaining to immigration status, workplace exploitation, linguistic obstacles, cultural adjustment, and familial separation (ICM, 2017). Similarly, chances can also include as chance to learn new skills, earn more money, assist their families back home with remittances, and occasionally even become permanent residents of the host nation. Likewise, international agencies are established as international labor organization (ILO) to safeguard the migrant workers' rights, ensure ethical labor practices, and expedite legal migration routes(ILO,2013)<sup>2</sup>.

Commonly, migration and the movement of humans from a place to another is a product of environmental, social, cultural, economic and political and /or physical disparities and enforced individuals to choose mobility's from their origin country and settle to another countries (Griggs, 1977; Ravenstein, 1889). The most prominent feature of migration is, to contribute in increase or decreases of the population size and change its structure and demography drastically at a given point of the time (Skeldon, 2006). However, human mobility played a vital role to impact on fertility and mortality rate of the societies (Vollset et al., 2020). For example, when the male population migrates, the females are left alone which will bring down the fertility rates (Ravenstein, 1889). Besides, the international migration and movement of the people from low income countries toward high income countries brought a big challenge to the nations and countries in the globe, and enforced governments to generate policies and legal frameworks to maintain migrant rights and prevent exploitation against them( De has, 2021). Extensively, it

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<sup>1</sup> The data used from data set of International Migration stock 2020 published by the United nation department of economic and social affairs(UNDESA)

<sup>2</sup> <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/10279.pdf>

is estimated that number of people who have migrated for work in the other countries has increased to 169 million in 2019 and estimated 647 billion USD of remittances transferred by the migrants toward their native countries in 2022 (IOM, 2024).

Significantly, the bulk of economic migration in the modern era has happened from low-income to high-income nations, which is guided by the mutual agreements and signed memorandums of understanding to alleviate labor market shortages (Appleyard, 1989; Gonzalez Benson, 2021). India, with an estimated population of 1.4 billion, is the most populated country in the world and one of the main migration origin countries in South Asia (World Bank, 2023). However, India is experiencing an influx of forced immigrants (refugees and asylum seekers) who have experienced abuse and violations as a result of internal socio-political conflicts in countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Pakistan. In response, the Indian government has offered safe havens to protect humanity in accordance with the preamble of the general declaration of human rights (Shalizi&Kumar, 2024). Similarly, India is amongst the fastest growing economy in the world with an estimated GDP 3.55 trillion dollar, and growth of 7.6 (World Bank, 2023; IMF, 2023). Due to increase in unemployment rate that reached to 4.2 (ILO, 2023), outflow of Indian labor force accelerated toward high income countries, specifically, USA, Canada, Australia, Gulf countries and United Kingdom(UNDESA,2020). Likewise, India is sending the largest number of international migrants to overseas, which includes high skilled low skilled and semi- skilled workers (Tejada & Bhattacharya, 2014). Significantly, India placed at the highest rank of remittances recipient countries since 2009 with estimated 89\$ billion in 2021 and 125\$ billion in 2023(World Bank, 2023; IMF, 2023). The outflow of migrants played a vital role in socio-economic growth of India and contributed the share of 3.5% in Indian GDP (IMF, 2023; World Bank, 2023). In today's scenario, Over 90 percent of Indian workers, most of them are low and semi-skilled, exist in the Gulf region and South-East Asian countries. Considerably, the Indian people started migration toward Arabian countries such as Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in early pre Islamic era to seek employment and start businesses with Arab traders. However, aftermath of the Islam, various Indian diaspora were settled in the Iraq, gulf region and Persia to participate in the establishment of ports and infrastructure which increased later in 20<sup>th</sup> century when oil was discovered and absorbed millions of the Indian labors in the gulf region(Jain, 2005). The present paper discusses the outflow of Indian migrants toward high income countries since 2000, and portrait the inward of remittances and its share in economic growth of Indian economy. Though, the paper discourse the movement of Indian nationals toward north America and gulf countries specifically the out flow of high- skilled, semi -skilled and low- skilled workers, and their contribution in fulfillment of capital market in the region. Besides, how international migration boosted the economy of India by inward of remittances.

## **2. Objectives**

- To portray the outflow of Indian emigrants in the Globe and inward of remittances.
- To discuss the significance of the gulf region on Indian economy.
- To analyze the impact of capital migration in economic growth of India.

## **3. Research methodology**

The present paper is exploratory and descriptive in nature that rely on secondary data. The present study conducted based on systematic literature review that relies on explanatory approach to find out the importance of capital migration for the upliftment of societies. The data used for the present research paper include the factsheets produced by the international labor organization (ILO), international migration stock, International monetary Fund (IMF), Asian development Bank (ADB), World Bank and annual reports of ministry of finance, ministry of external affairs and ministry of home affairs India.

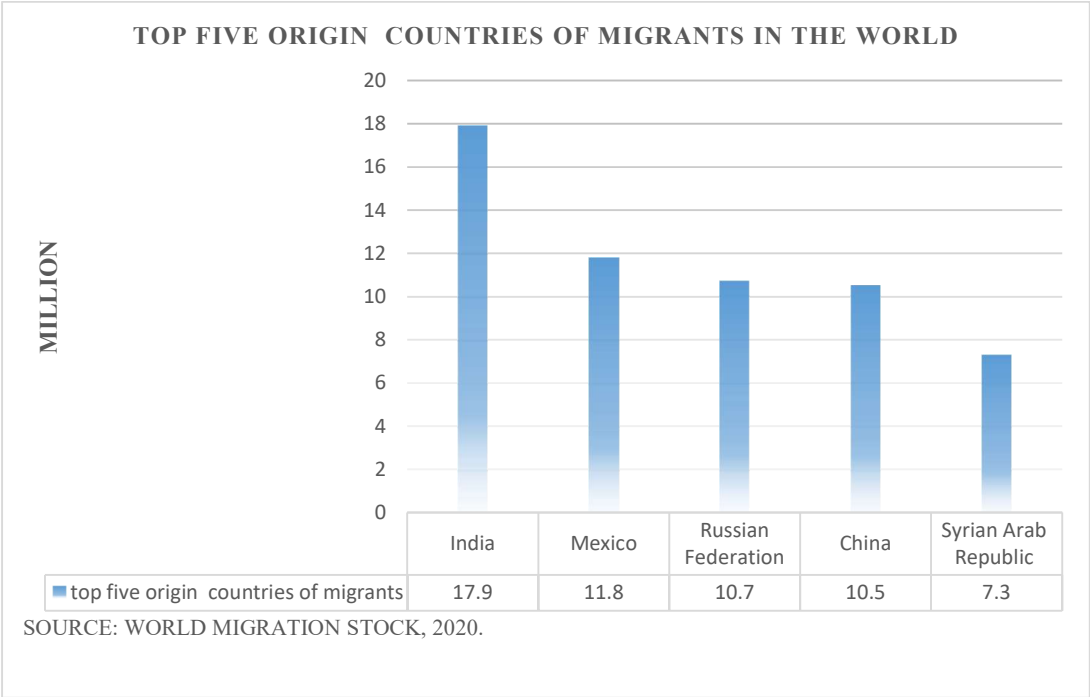
## **4. International migration and India**

Indian emigration policy focuses on dispersion of skilled individuals toward high income countries due to acceleration of population and increase in unemployment rate (ICM, 2017). Latently, India ranked on the top of the most populated countries in the globe with estimated population of 1.4 billion (World Bank, 2023), and day by day increase in the unemployment rate brought socio-economic worries to the citizens. The government of India under ministry of overseas affairs, formed legal frame works to systematically outflow the high skilled, semi-skilled and lower skilled capitals toward high income countries specifically gulf region (Jain, 2005), which is based on signed MOUs between countries and affiliated agencies (FARGUES & SHAH, 2018). According to the United Nations report, around 281million people around the world are living abroad from their origin countries and are migrant, which constitute around 3.6 percent of the total global population (UNDESA, 2020). Moreover, if we look into continental division of migrants, Asia has originated 83 million, Europe 86.7 million, North America 58.7 million, Africa 25.4 million and Latin America 14.8 million international migrants. India continued to be the largest country of origin of international migrants. India had the largest number of migrants living abroad (17.9 million), followed by Mexico, Russian federation and China (11.8 million, 10.7 million and 10.5 million respectively). The number of outflow of international migrants from India consistently increasing since 2000 from 6.6 million and reached to 17.9 million and placed to the highest rank in the origin of international migrants within the globe(UNDESA, 2020). The main destination for the Indian migrants began after the outflow of over thousands of Indian workers toward Gulf region (GCC). The massive demand and consumption of the Oil in the world, enforced Oil companies in the Gulf countries to increase the production of the oil and manage inflow the labor toward the gulf countries. The number of the Indian migrants in the gulf countries reached to over eight million over the past four decades (Jain, 2005;FARGUES & SHAH, 2018; Deepa, 2023).

Government of India took initiatives to promote and generate international migrants and contribute to the labor market of the high income countries. The overseas Indian affairs (OIA) under the ministry of external affairs is responsible to deal international migrant belonging to India and formulate efficient and effective policies to boost the Indian diaspora and capital within the globe. Besides, the India center for migration (ICM) which is an autonomous body and is a think tank to ministry of external affairs India play a vital role in management of international migration belonging to India. The (ICM) is responsible to conduct empirical studies on migration issues, maintaining the migrant database and specify employment opportunities abroad, identify labor supply gaps, conducts skill development and consultation, implement pre-departure orientations to migrants and deal issues arise related to Indian workers in abroad. The (ICM) main key activity is to support policy makers and executives for regulation of the international migration belonging to India (ICM, 2017).

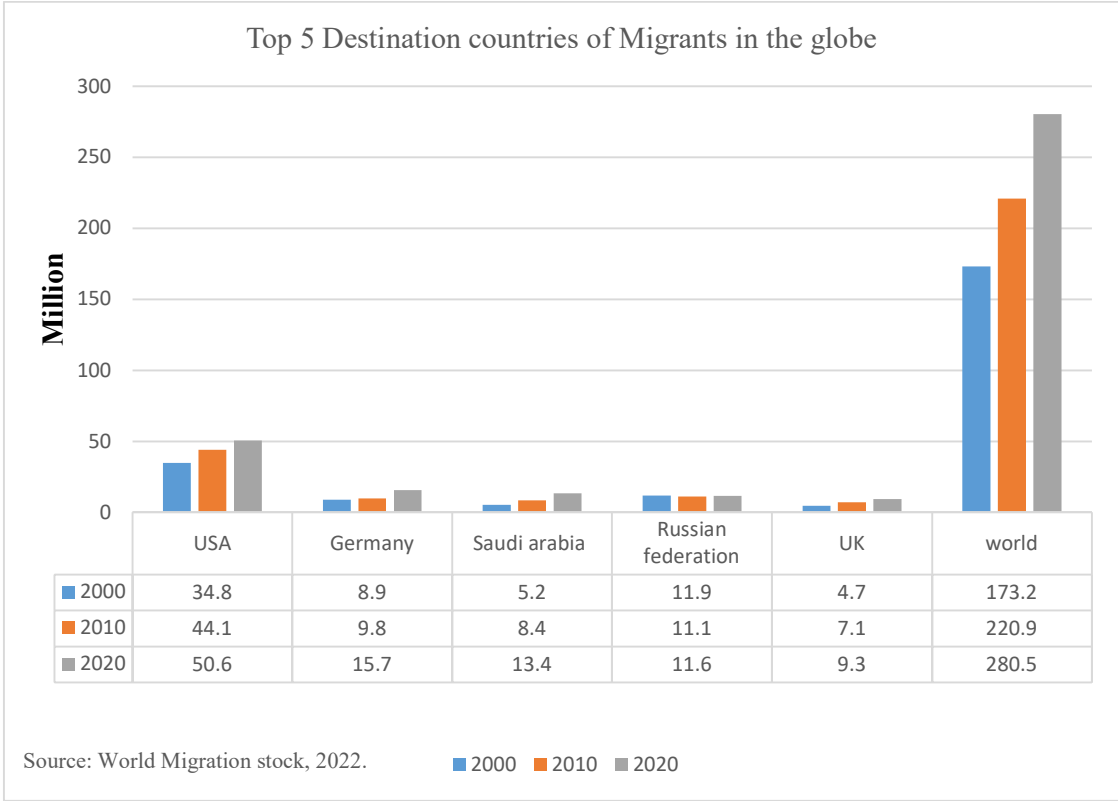
The international migrants from India derives from different states. Prominently, the outflow of the vast population regulated from Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab, Kerala, Punjab and Haryana toward high income countries (Tewari & Mishra, 2022). Similarly, the number of outflow of irregular migration of individuals increased in the world (Pickering & Cochrane, 2012) as thousands of the individuals including male and female encountered in the European and northern American borders using illegal documentation prepared by the human-traffickers and moving irregularly. Latently, the number of irregular and undocumented migrants from India increased between USA and Canada border. According to the data shared by the custom and border agents of USA, about 97000 undocumented Indian migrants encountered in the fiscal year 2023. Moreover, the estimated 14000 were encountered between years 2023-2024 (Farivar, 2024), in the border between Canada and USA. Majority of the irregular migrants toward north America using Mexico, Brazil and South American countries as transit to reach USA and Canada(Pickering & Cochrane, 2012).

**Figure 1: Top five origin countries of Migrants in the world**



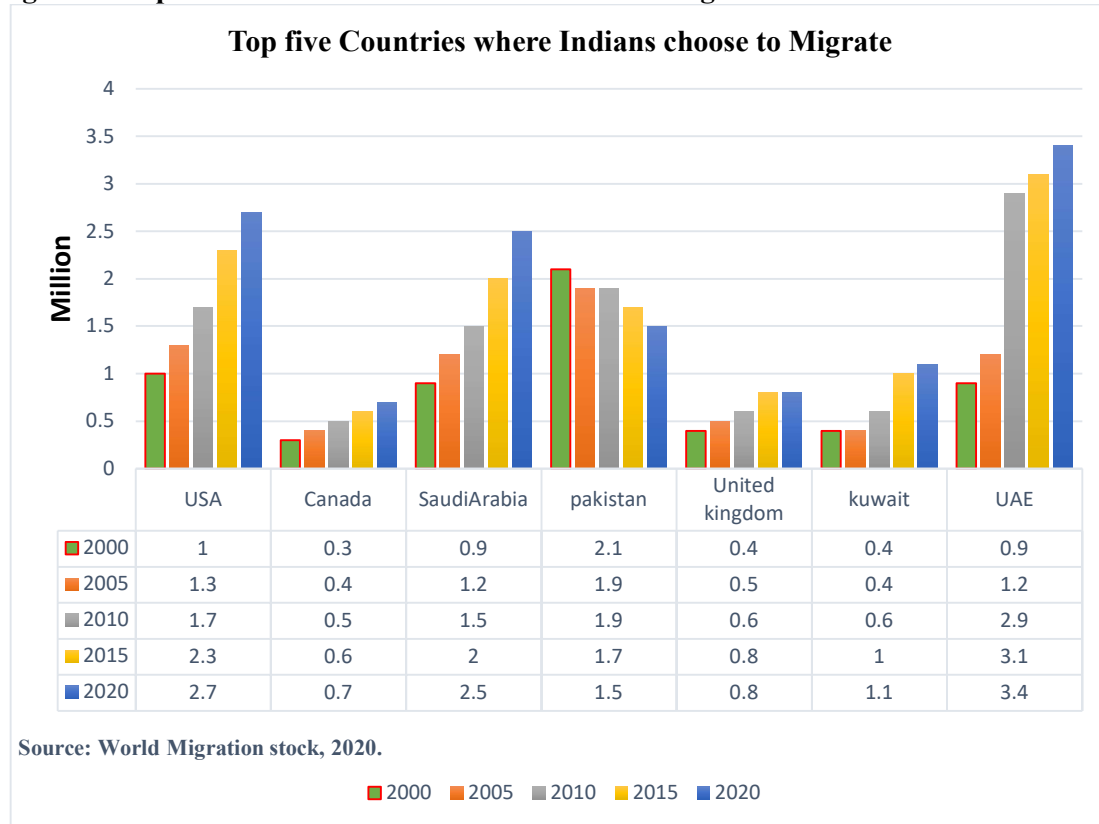
India is consistently adding its share of migrants into the world, which has increased between years (1990-2022). However, in 2000 the international migrants originated by the India were 7.9 million, later increased to 9.6 million in 2005, 13.2 million in 2010, 15.9 million in 2015 and the number rapidly rose to 17.9 million in 2020. Besides, Mexico placed as the second largest origin of the international migrants in the globe with share of 11.8 million and followed by the Russian federation with share of 10.7 million, and china placed in fourth most origin of international migrants in the globe that followed by the Syria with share of 7.3 million.

**Figure 2: Top five host countries of Migrants in the globe**



As per the chart, the International migration top 5 destination countries in the globe starts with United States of America. USA is a popular destination in the world owing to its flexible migration policies for attracting high skilled, semi-skilled and lower skilled migrants to overcome the shortage of its labor market. Migrants all over the world choose to move USA for better work opportunities and due to high income and wages. Moreover USA has liberalized its migration laws to attract skilled migrants from across the world. USA hosted estimated (50.6 million) of international migrants out of 280.5 international migrants around the globe and is followed by Germany (15.5 million), Saudi Arabia (13.4 million), Russian Federation (11.6 million) and United Kingdom (9.3 million).

**Figure 3: Top five countries where Indian nationals Migrate**



The table shows the acceleration of Indian migrants toward high income and low income country as Pakistan since 2000. According to the latest world migration report 2020, the number of Indian migrants reached to 3.4 million in UAE and 2.7 million in USA and followed by Saudi Arabia (2.5 million), Kuwait ( 1.1 million), Pakistan (1.5 million), United Kingdom ( 0.8 million) and Canada ( 0.8 million). The flow of Indian migrants toward Pakistan is effected due to partition and similarities in socio-culture of both countries. While, movement of Indian toward high income countries is based on increase in unemployment rate and to seek better socio-economic opportunities.

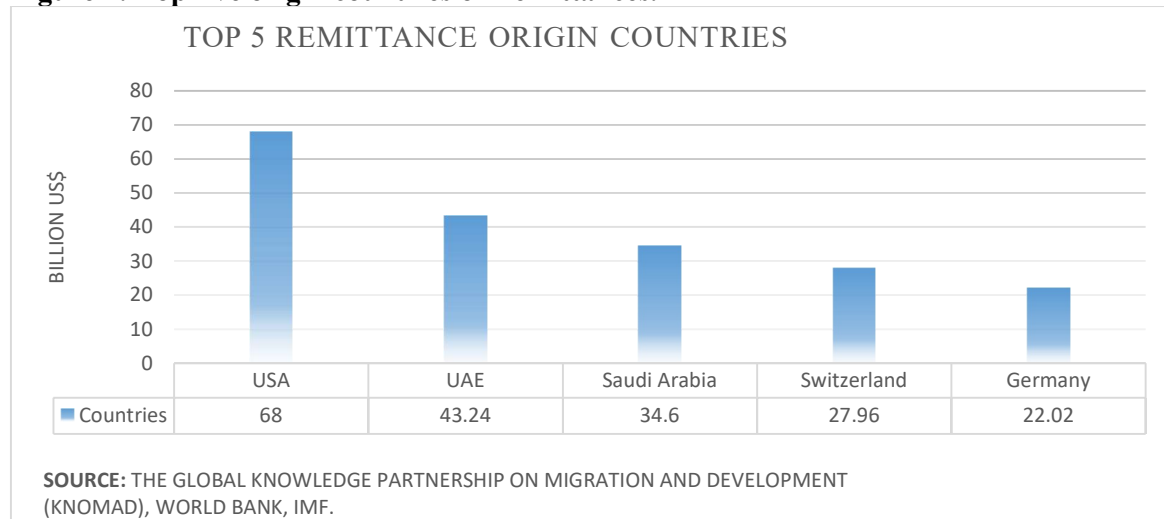
### 5. Remittances flow and economic growth of India

The money that migrants earn while working overseas and send back home to their families or communities is known as remittances created by the emigration (De Haas, 2006). Similarly, the transacted cash greatly boost the economies of developing nations and provide a vital source of income for many households back in their origin countries (de Haas, 2006; Azizi et al., 2023). However, for many families in poor nations, remittances are a significant source of income, frequently surpassing other international financial flows like foreign aid and foreign direct investment play a vital role in economic growth of low income countries (Azizi et al., 2023). Remittances help nations to reduce poverty by giving families the money they need for their basic necessities like food, housing, medical care, and education (Singh, 2017; Simpson, 2022). Remittance recipients may invest the money in small enterprises, engage in agricultural pursuits, build residences, or save for future expenses, among other expenditures. Moreover, remittances have an advantages, but they also carry dangers and significant transaction fees through unofficial routes (Freund & Spatafora, 2005), which could decline the real amount that recipients receive.

Likewise, remittances are the part of earnings of labor migrants in the form of cash or goods which sends by them to their families in their country of origin and are direct stable incomes

of countries which are generated by the high level income countries in the world through its international migrants and have become the source of foreign income to the developing economic countries (ADB, 2017). However, remittances play a wide role in economic growth of countries which end up with the quality life of individuals and their family's life (Tewari & Mishra, 2022). Remittances are the second major source of external financing for low and middle income countries after foreign direct investment. In the global level all the transactions of remittances serviced by commercial banks, money transfer services (swift, western union, money gram), post offices and agents. Indian banks playing the main role in receiving and distributing of remittances in the country (Freund & Spatafora, 2005; Tewari & Mishra, 2022). Most of the low and middle income countries receives large scale of remittances from the high income countries annually by estimated 630\$ billion in the world (World Bank, 2023). According to the latest report of World Bank India receives largest number of remittances in the world with estimate 89\$ billion in 2021 and 125\$ billion in 2023, the contribution counted to three percent in GDP growth of national economy (Ratha, D., Ju Kim, E., Plaza, S., J Riordan, E., & Chandra, V.2022).

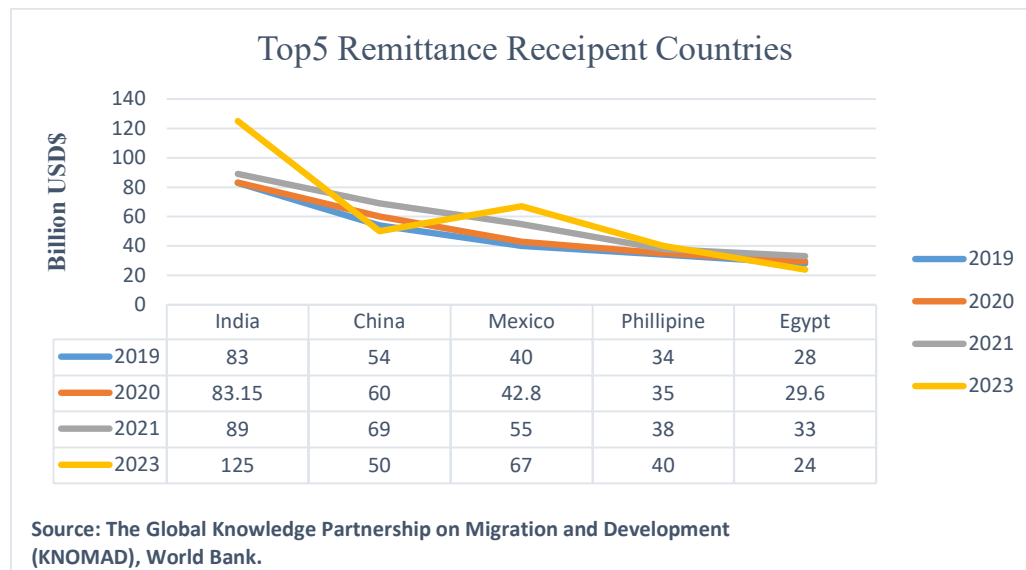
**Figure 4: Top five origin countries of Remittances.**



The table shows that, united state exercises the highest rank in origination of remittances for the low and middle income countries that helps them to support economic growth and develop quality of life. As per the latest report of World Bank USA is the largest generator of the remittance with estimate 68 \$ billion which followed by UAE (43.24\$ billion), Saudi Arabia (34.6\$ billion), Switzerland (27.96\$ billion) and Germany (22.02\$ billion).

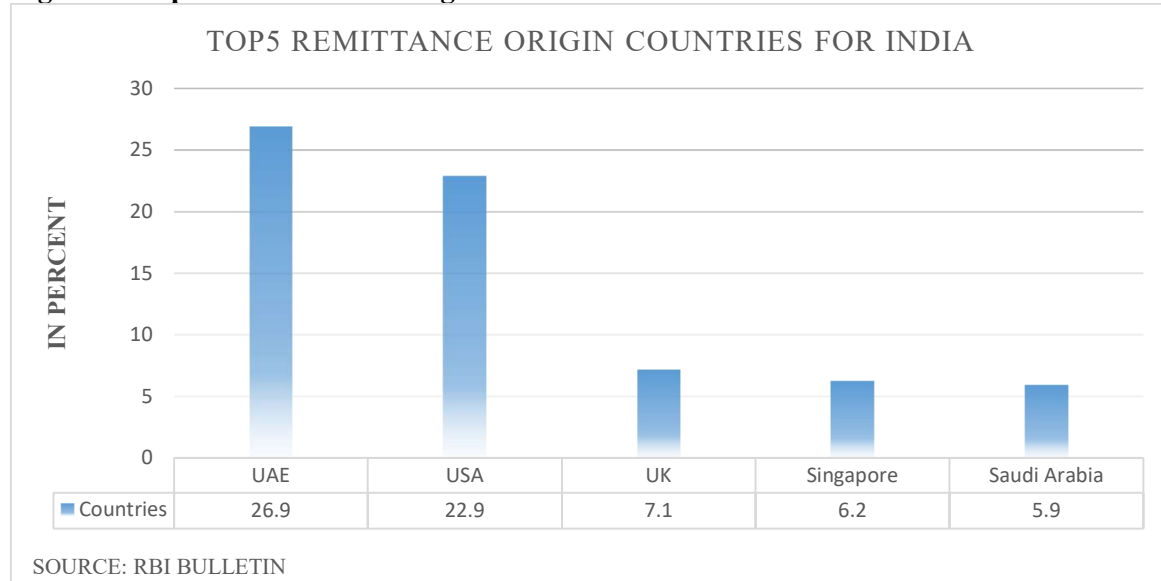
**Figure 5: Top five Remittance Recipient countries.**





Low and middle income countries receives remittances from high income countries through migrants earnings, most of the migrants transfer money to their families and communities in their origin countries. According to the latest reports of the World Bank, India has received an estimated 83\$ billion in 2019 that increased to 89\$ billion in 2021 and 125\$ billion in 2023. China received 69 \$billion in 2021 but the number decreases to 50\$ billion in 2023. However, Mexico received 55\$billion in 2021 but the number increased to 67\$ billion in 2023. Beside, Phillipine received 38\$billion in 2021 and the number increased to 40\$ billion in 2023. Egypt received 33 \$ billion in 2021 but the inward of remittances decreased to 24 \$ billion in 2023.

**Figure 6: Top five Remittance origin countries for India.**



According to the chart, India is the biggest recipient of the remittance in the world, According to the report of World Bank, UAE is the highest origin country of the remittances for India with estimated 26.9 % of the whole remittance generated, and received by India in 2021 and that followed by USA estimated 22.9%, UK 7.1%, and Singapore 6.2% and Saudi Arabia 5.9% in 2021.

## 6. Gulf region, remittance and its impact on Indian Economy

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established by an agreement signed on 25 May 1981 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The GCC countries consist of six countries of gulf region those are

rich in Oil production, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE in view of their special relations, geographic proximity and similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives (Mina, 2023). The GCC Charter states that the basic objectives are to have coordination, integration and inter-connection between Member States in all fields, strengthening ties between their peoples, formulating similar regulations in various fields such as economy, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, administration, as well as fostering scientific and technical progress in industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources, establishing scientific research centers, setting up joint ventures, and encouraging cooperation of the private sector (FARGUES & SHAH, 2018).

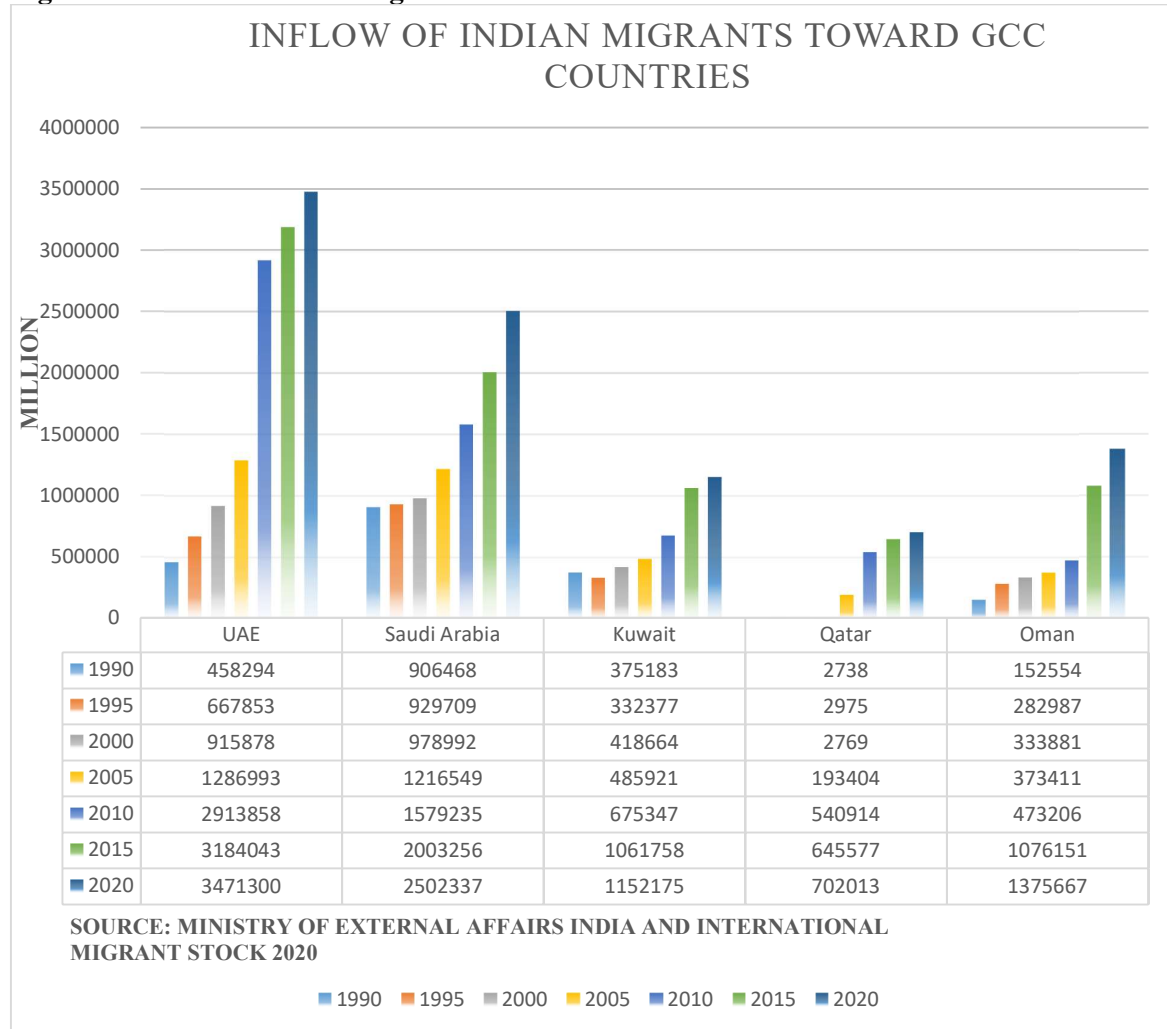
India is the biggest contributor of labor to oil generation companies in gulf region, in its historical perspective, since twenty century where oil was discovered in the gulf region, and Indian labor started to migrate toward the gulf countries. Labor is an essential contributor to the production of the oil. In the initial phases, thousands of the Indian workers migrated toward GCC countries (Jain, 2005) for the work and after the development held in transportation, communication, housing and education, the outflow of Indian works and their need of high-skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled workers felt which motivated over eight million of the Indian nationals to emigrate with their families toward GCC countries (Noushad et al., 2022) which consists of Saudi Arabia, yamen, Kuwait, Oman and UAE in the last four decades (Jain, 2005; Deepa, 2023). The majority of the Indian migrants residing in the gulf countries are likely belonging to south India such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. However, the contribution of North Indian such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh increased in the last years. Moreover the majority of the Indian migrants in the Gulf countries are Muslims that followed by the Cristian's and Hindu (FARGUES & SHAH, 2018).

The government of India under the 1983 emigration Act, played a key role in the management of the Indian emigrants and overseas in the word. The act is a safe guard for the secure emigration of Indian nationals and works for the protection and welfare of the Indian emigrants across the globe. The policies of Indian state prior duty is to promote and facilitate the emigration of Indian workers across the globe and secondly to protect the rights and welfare of Indian emigrants in abroad which is implemented by the ministry of external affairs and Ministry of the home affairs India (FARGUES & SHAH, 2018). However, The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a collective entity that has tremendous significance for Indian labor market. India, therefore, has a vital stake in the stability, security and economic well-being of the Gulf countries by contributing the high-skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled workers (Deepa, 2023). As a group, the GCC has been increasingly determining the economic, political, and security policies of its member States. The GCC countries are moving ahead rapidly with their economic integration efforts. The GCC has emerged as a major trading partner for India and it has a vast potential as India's investment partner for the future. The GCC's substantial oil and gas reserves are of vital importance for India's energy needs. The GCC countries are collectively host to a large Indian expatriate community. In nutshell, the GCC offers tremendous potential for cooperation in trade, investment, energy and manpower.<sup>3</sup>

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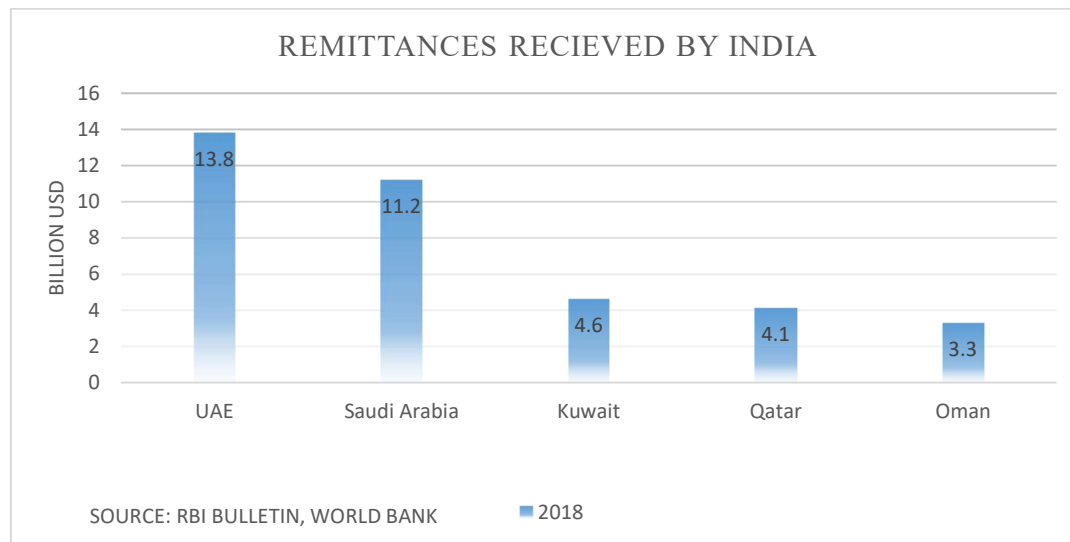
<sup>3</sup> [https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Gulf\\_Cooperation\\_Council\\_MEA\\_Website.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Gulf_Cooperation_Council_MEA_Website.pdf)

**Figure 7: Inflow of Indian Migrants toward GCC countries.**



The chart, portrays that, the concentration of Indian migrants in Gulf Cooperation council GCC countries is more than other high income countries. Majority of the Indian migrants in GCC located in UAE with estimated over 3.4 million which increased over 3 million since 1990. The inflow of Indian emigrants to Saudi Arabia is with estimated over 2.5 million people, the number of individuals increased over 1.5 million since 1990. However, the Indian emigrants toward Kuwait reached to above 1.1 million since 1990 and followed by Oman with estimated over 1.3 million and Qatar 0.7 million. However, Yemen is a part of the GCC countries where Indian migrants exist with a small numbers. Similarly, the majority of the population with estimated 50% of Indian emigrants are engaged with the low skilled work specifically in oil companies and similar works in the Gulf countries, 30% of the Indian emigrants are busy with semi-skilled and 20% are involved with high- skilled works.

**Figure 8: Inward of Remittances in India from GCC countries**



The Gulf cooperation council countries in addition to provide livelihood and jobs to millions of Indians also contribute to the Indian economy in the form of remittances. The remittances further adds to the country's national external income and ensures capital flows. The chart 8 clearly depicts the contribution of Gulf countries in the inwards of remittances toward India. These accounted for about 54% of total remittances received that year in 2018 by India. According to the RBI Bulletin UAE remained top remittance generator with figure 13.8\$ billion followed by Saudi Arabia 11.2\$ billion, Kuwait 4.6\$ billion, Qatar 4.8\$ billion and Oman 3.3\$ billion in 2018.

## 7. Findings

Indian people started to migrate in abroad since early period of the time. The main reason of Indian mobility is capability of being a work force, high unemployment rate and motivation to seek better socio-economic opportunities. However, India became the foremost country in origination of international migrants in the world. Besides, India receives the highest remittances with estimated 125 billion USD. Indian economy and the socio-economic life of Indian citizens were boosted due to inward of remittances by the Indian diaspora. Moreover, the gulf region countries played a vital role in generating the employment opportunities for the various categories of workers such as high, low and semi-skilled belonging to India. Considerably, the key target of Indian labor market concentrate on the gulf region countries. However, relaxed emigration policies of the destination countries accelerated the out flow of the Indian work force toward high income countires.

## 8. Conclusion

International Migration is unavoidable in the present era of connectivity and enhancing technological advancements. However, the relaxed immigration policies pulled millions of the individuals toward high income countries. Eventually, India is contributing the largest emigrants to the world population and at the same time India also receives the highest amount of remittances from the high income countries. Which in turn engaged to improve national exchange and ensures the capital flows. Out of the total inward of remittances in India, the contribution of GCC countries is more than fifty percent and approximately formed three percent of India's GDP. The outflow of Indian nationals increased within last two decades and aggregated the inward of remittances toward India. Therefore the emigration of Indian nationals toward gulf region is a strategic importance for the Indian economy. However, the growth in unemployment rate will fetch the individual to select emigration toward high income countries.

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