

ALL ABOUT IMMIGRATION and VISAS – The Usual Questions.

In other words, all you wanted to know about Immigration and Visas and did not know whom to ask, or did not know if you will get the right answers. Here is an attempt. This document is useful if you are employed and are seeking greener pastures through immigration for professionals. If you are an Employer or Entrepreneur, or planning to be one, you should wait for the next write-up, which will be quite different in perspective from this one. If you read both, you will understand why. If what is highlighted in Green Fonts appeals to you, you should migrate. If the Red one's hold your attention more, stay put wherever you are.

Should you consider living and working in another country?

If you are doing well in India as a Worker/Professional, AND if you are in an industry that is likely to grow, you are better off in India than elsewhere. India, along with China, is destined to grow and prosper, by default, even if not by design. Therefore, if Political stability prevails, there is much to gain by staying back, than by moving on.

If you have just started out in your career, regardless of the industry OR if you are in an industry which by its very nature is trans-national or international (For example Hotels/Hospitality, Research, Education etc.), a few years in a developed economy will work well in your favour.

However, Living and Working in one of the developed countries can still be an option for all of the above, for the following reasons:

1. If you have never ever worked in a developed economy: You should give it a try. You will gain new insights and perspectives. A new work environment will broaden your horizons and make you more capable of accommodating vastly different views. You may acquire new skills, views and capabilities by virtue of your stint.

The downside: You will need to start out at a lower salary. Indian experience is not rated as 'International' experience. You may not be able to adjust to the cultural mindset. You will have to leave your prejudices, and beliefs, behind.

2. If you have young children: The welfare benefits for a family in any of the developed countries are significant. India's welfare and social security is a far cry and leaves much to be desired. Whilst our schools and colleges offer a rigorous and disciplined approach, there is not much in terms of follow through. Whilst our healthcare is above average, it is so only for the one's who can afford. Also, it is almost impossible to face a health crisis if you have not wisely invested in both Life and Health Insurance. And last but not the least, the 'perception' continues, whether true or not, that the one's educated abroad 'must be' more intelligent than the one's schooled at home. The reverse may be true in many cases, however, the halo of a 'foreign education' or 'foreign experience' continues to glow bright, refuses to fade, and is likely to remain so for the few decades.

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The downside: You may not be able to raise the children on 'indian values', if that is what you cherish.

3. Lack of Corruption, Encouragement of Meritocracy: In everyday life, corruption is virtually non-existent in almost all of the developed economies. If you work hard, and if you deliver results, you will find yourself appreciated, and suitably rewarded. At least that is generally the case. You don't need family ties, 'references', and recommendations to grow if your performance speaks for itself.

The downside: None. Except, you will have to learn to readjust, re-adapt, when you return to India.

If so, which is the 'right' country to migrate to?

1. If you have at least a Master's Degree and above: Denmark, UK, USA.
2. If you one or more Bachelor's Degree: Canada, Hong Kong, Australia.
3. If you have a recognized Diploma/Trade Certificate: Hong Kong, Canada, Australia.

What are the opportunities available?

If you qualify, it is because there are opportunities available. All the countries follow a points based system, though the ratings and attributes for which points are awarded vary from country to country. None of the countries will approve your application if you do not meet the criteria. However, be prepared to hunt for a job. The green carpet welcome does not extend to the doorsteps of companies that hiring. You have to compete, and with vigor, with the local talent to be able to get a job.

How much time does it take?

Varies from Country to Country, and often, the systems and procedures change too. The answer to the question is 'a very long time'. But as a general yardstick, 6 months to 3 years depending on the Country and the Category. As of now UK Tier 1 seems to be the quickest, around 45 to 90 days from the date of filing.

How much does it cost?

The cost varies from Country to Country, and category to category. Hong Kong (The Quality Migrant Admission Scheme) seems to be the cheapest at the moment.

Should you use an Immigration Consultant/Adviser?

You should apply on your own if you have:

- Sufficient time to research various options on your own.
- The diligence to find out and understand the requirements.
- Not enough money to hire a Consultant, Or not enough faith in hiring one.

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If the reverse is true, you should hire an Immigration Consultant.

The Downside of applying on your own: A simple error, may lead to rejection/refusal of your application. Sometimes this may happen immediately, at other times, toward the end of the process. If you choose to apply again, you will have to invest time and money all over again. Of course, it holds true even if you hire an Immigration Consultant and he/she does the same mistake.

What are the pitfalls of Immigration process?

Mostly, Time and Money.

- Immigration is a costly affair. If you are refused, you lose the money. At least in most cases.
- Immigration is a time-consuming process. You should not put on hold your plans that you would have executed had you chosen not to migrate.
- Acceptance and Assimilation in the new society. This is an important point. As discussed earlier, you must be willing to leave behind your prejudices and beliefs. You may not be accepted very well by the society. The country may welcome you, if you satisfy the criteria for selection. The society would feel otherwise. In most cases, it will take time for the new society to accept you as one of their own. If you are the type that is strongly opinionated, you are better off staying back. Migrate ONLY if you are willing to accept all experiences as new learnings. You see, you always have the choice to hop on to the next plane back home, albeit you will have to deal with the consequent inconveniences of relocation.

What are the basic requirements without which it is not possible to Migrate under the Workers or Professional Category?

1. Excellent Communication skills in English: This is a key requirement to Migrate to all the countries mentioned above. The assessment of English Language skills is done differently by different countries. However, a high level of proficiency is required to apply and qualify for any of the immigration options.
2. Documentation: At some point in time, you will have to make available your credentials for verification. It is better to start early.
3. Sufficiency of Funds: In many cases, this is a pre-requisite. In all cases, you will not have access to public funds during the initial duration of your stay. Almost in all cases children will have access to public funded schools and your family will have access to health benefits.

The next article will be on Immigration And Visas - For Employers and Entrepreneurs.
