

# Daily Editorial Analysis 18 December 2025

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## The Story of 'We, the Moving People'

### Context

- **Modern citizenship** has traditionally been tied to territorial residence, with political rights anchored to stable habitation within defined borders.
- However, **large-scale migration, both international and internal**, is disrupting this foundational assumption.
- As populations move with increasing frequency, governments face growing challenges in regulating political membership, electoral participation, and demographic change.
- This tension has produced **public anxiety, nativist politics, and administrative interventions** that are reshaping democratic systems.

### Citizenship, Migration, and Electoral Anxiety

- The overlap between citizenship and territory weakens when people migrate.
- Electoral systems that depend on fixed residence become **sites of political contestation**, as questions arise over who is entitled to vote and where.
- In India, the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls is justified as a response to duplicate registrations caused by migration.
- Yet such exercises raise fears of **disenfranchisement of mobile and vulnerable populations**.
- Similar anxieties are visible in the United States, where demands for access to voter databases and documentary proof of citizenship have been framed as election-integrity measures.
- Critics argue that these moves **risk restricting voter access and undermining federal autonomy**.
- In both countries, **the fear of alien voters** has become a powerful political narrative, often outweighing empirical evidence.

### Global Migration and the Rise of Nativism

- Although migrants form only a slightly higher share of the global population than in the past, **their absolute numbers have nearly doubled since 1990**, exceeding 300 million by 2024.
- This demographic reality has intensified political reactions, particularly in developed democracies.
- Immigration ranks among the **top electoral concerns** in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, where the proportion of foreign-born residents has risen sharply.
- This has fuelled **nativist populism**, even as these economies rely heavily on migrant labour.

- The contradiction between economic dependence and political exclusion lies at the heart of **contemporary migration politics**.

## Labour Without Citizenship

- A defining feature of current migration regimes is the growth of **temporary labour systems**.
- Wealthy countries increasingly seek migrant workers who contribute economically but **do not settle permanently or claim political rights**.
- Examples include H-1B workers in the United States and migrant labour systems in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Singapore.
- These arrangements produce **a large class of workers without political identity**, essential to economic growth yet excluded from democratic participation.
- **Migration thus creates mobility without belonging**, redefining the relationship between labour and citizenship.

## Internal Migration and Democratic Representation in India

- Migration within national borders has equally profound political consequences.
- In India, **rural-to-urban and inter-State migration** has reshaped demographics, electoral outcomes, and party strategies.
- Voting rights remain tied to place of residence, making electoral roll revisions decisive not only in determining who can vote, but **where that vote is counted**.
- This has major implications for federal politics. **Migrant-receiving States gain political weight**, while migrant-sending States risk losing influence.
- With **delimitation approaching after decades**, internal migration is set to significantly redistribute political representation.

## Cultural Transformation and Historical Continuity

- Migration is not only a political force but also a cultural one. **Migrating populations carry languages, beliefs, and social practices**, reshaping societies over time.
- Historically, migration enabled the spread and transformation of religious traditions, languages, and cultural identities.
- Contemporary examples, such as the **celebration of Deepavali at the White House**, highlight migration's role in expanding cultural universes rather than eroding them.
- Languages themselves bear **the imprint of past migrations**, reflecting gendered and social patterns of movement.

## The Retreat from Birthright Citizenship

- One of the most consequential shifts concerns **birthright citizenship**, long considered a settled principle in liberal democracies.

- In the United States, long-standing interpretations of constitutional citizenship are being challenged amid fears of demographic change.
- India has similarly restricted citizenship by birth for children of undocumented migrants.
- These developments signal **a global move away from inclusive citizenship toward conditional belonging**, driven by migration-related anxieties.

## Conclusion

- **Migration is moving more than people;** it is moving the foundations of political life.
- By destabilising the link between territory, citizenship, and representation, it compels democracies to confront fundamental questions of belonging and participation.
- Administrative processes such as **censuses, electoral roll revisions, and delimitation are not neutral exercises**, but arenas where the future of democracy is negotiated.
- As populations continue to move, **the central challenge will be adapting political institutions** without sacrificing inclusion, representation, and democratic legitimacy.

## The Story of 'We, the Moving People' FAQs

**Q1.** How does migration challenge traditional ideas of citizenship?

**Ans.** Migration disrupts the assumption that citizenship is tied to fixed residence within a specific territory.

**Q2.** Why do electoral roll revisions become politically sensitive in migrant societies?

**Ans.** Electoral roll revisions determine who can vote and where, raising concerns about exclusion and disenfranchisement of mobile populations.

**Q3.** What contradiction lies at the heart of contemporary migration policies in wealthy countries?

**Ans.** Wealthy countries depend on migrant labour while restricting migrants' political rights and pathways to citizenship.

**Q4.** How does internal migration affect federal politics in India?

**Ans.** Internal migration shifts political representation by increasing the influence of migrant-receiving States and reducing that of migrant-sending States.

**Q5.** Why is birthright citizenship being reconsidered in some democracies?

**Ans.** Birthright citizenship is being reconsidered due to anxieties over migration, demographic change, and national identity.

**Source:** **The Hindu**

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## India's Overseas Bill Betrays Migrant Workers

### Context

- As India's economy rises, millions from States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Kerala migrate abroad for work, sustaining families and contributing significantly to national income.
- However, the **Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2025**—meant to replace the **1983 Emigration Act**—risks weakening protections for these vulnerable workers.
- Marketed as a modern, efficient reform, the Bill prioritises ease of movement and deregulation over worker safety and welfare.
- Critics argue it could intensify exploitation rather than provide meaningful safeguards, turning a promised shield into a system that accelerates migrant workers' insecurity.
- This article highlights how India's Overseas Mobility (Facilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2025, risks undermining the rights and safety of millions of migrant workers by prioritising deregulation and administrative ease over protection, accountability, and welfare.

## Overseas Mobility Bill, 2025: Core Concerns

### • Dilution of Migrant Workers' Legal Rights

- The Bill removes provisions that earlier allowed migrant workers to directly pursue legal action against exploiters.
- Unlike the 2021 draft, it weakens enforceable rights and shifts responsibility to an overstretched state apparatus.

### • Weakening Protections for Women and Vulnerable Migrants

- Labour migration is deeply gendered, yet the Bill dilutes specific safeguards for women and children.
- Stronger penalties proposed earlier are replaced with vague references to "vulnerable classes," risking poor enforcement.

### • Silence on Human Trafficking

- The Bill fails to explicitly address human trafficking, despite migrants operating in high-risk corridors.
- This omission undermines protection against coercion, forced labour, and modern forms of slavery.

### • Deregulation of Recruitment Agencies

- Key anti-exploitation measures are rolled back.
- Mandatory disclosure of recruitment fees is dropped, increasing risks of debt bondage, contract substitution, and fraud by unregulated agents.

### • Risky Accreditation and Digital-Only Oversight

- Replacing Emigration Check Posts with digital clearances may streamline procedures but removes critical on-ground safeguards.
- The accreditation model risks legitimising unscrupulous recruiters.

### • Reduced Accountability Abroad

- Earlier provisions holding recruitment agencies responsible for reception, dispute resolution, and document renewal overseas are diluted.
- These duties are shifted to government bodies with limited capacity.

### • Surveillance Without Safeguards

- The Integrated Information System expands data collection without clear consent or protection norms, raising concerns about surveillance rather than worker welfare.
- Online recruitment fraud remains unaddressed.

- **Inadequate Reintegration Support**

- Reintegration measures are weak.
- The Bill offers limited support for skill training or trauma care and excludes migrants deported within 182 days from rehabilitation benefits.

- **Excessive Centralisation**

- Decision-making is concentrated at the Centre, sidelining States with high migration experience like Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.
- Trade unions and civil society groups are excluded from governance structures.

- **Weak Penalties and Enforcement Gaps**

- Penalties target recruitment violations but fail to address traffickers or abusive overseas employers, leaving the most powerful actors beyond the law's reach.

## **A Call to Strengthen Protections for India's Migrant Workers**

- India's labour migrants are vital contributors to the economy, not expendable exports.
- The Overseas Mobility Bill, 2025 risks **deepening inequities** by weakening safeguards and accountability.
- Parliament must act to restore **workers' self-advocacy rights**, enforce transparent recruitment fees, ensure post-arrival protections, and involve States and civil society in governance.
- Stronger anti-trafficking provisions, expanded definitions of work, meaningful penalties with compensation, and well-funded reintegration support are essential.
- What migrants need is not facilitation alone, but firm legal and institutional protection.

## **Conclusion**

- Unless substantially amended, the Overseas Mobility Bill will deepen migrant vulnerability; India must replace facilitation-driven reform with a rights-based, federal, and worker-centric protection framework.

## **India's Overseas Bill Betrays Migrant Workers FAQs**

**Q1.** Why is the Overseas Mobility Bill, 2025 controversial?

**Ans.** The Bill dilutes enforceable rights, weakens safeguards against exploitation, and prioritises deregulation, raising fears of increased abuse and insecurity for Indian migrant workers.

**Q2.** How does the Bill affect migrant workers' legal remedies?

**Ans.** It removes provisions allowing migrants to directly seek legal redress, shifting responsibility to overburdened state mechanisms and reducing workers' ability to challenge exploitation.

**Q3.** What are the concerns regarding women migrant workers?

**Ans.** The Bill replaces strong gender-specific protections with vague references to "vulnerable classes," risking weak enforcement against trafficking, abuse, and sexual violence.

**Q4.** Why is deregulation of recruitment agencies problematic?

**Ans.** Dropping fee transparency and on-ground checks increases risks of debt bondage, contract substitution, fraud, and exploitation by unregulated or unscrupulous agents.

**Q5.** What reforms do critics demand to protect migrants?

**Ans.** They seek restored self-advocacy rights, explicit anti-trafficking provisions, transparent recruitment rules, stronger penalties with compensation, federal participation, and robust reintegration support.

**Source:** TH

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