



The great crowds in Mumbai had once engendered a rare, cosmopolitan culture that embraced all migrants.

4 THE WANDERING BROTHER

My mother laughs when she recounts how I had urged her to buy a house – anything, anywhere! – because we had nowhere to call our own. Full of adolescent drama, I had said: *I need at least six feet of earth!*

She had spent fifteen years working in two industrial township schools in Rajasthan. She learnt to use a spade and broke rocky ground that no gardener thought could be made to yield. It yielded spider lilies and tube roses. We grew accustomed to the landscape. Quitting or losing the job, however, meant losing the place. It was impossible to belong to a township where you needed the management's permission to stay.

I wanted not just a roof overhead but a roof that couldn't be retracted. A bit of earth that couldn't be pulled out from under my feet.

My mother may have been amused by my drama; nevertheless, she put her life's savings into a small apartment on the fringes of a very big city that was, my brother argued, the only 'city' in the country. The rest of India, he said, was a village.

I scoffed, but there was no denying Bombay's fabled cosmopolitanism. As a port, it had been familiar with sailors and merchants of half a dozen ethnicities including Arabs, Portuguese, British, Abyssinians, Persians. By the nineteenth century, it was India's second largest trading and manufacturing hub. Only half its population was Marathi-speaking, and that half too had migrated from elsewhere.

Bombay wasn't just built by but also *for* migrants. Factories needed hands. Owners, often migrants themselves, helped

create basic urban infrastructure. Cheap one- or two-room apartments were built in the heart of Bombay, in what's known as the mill district. People learnt to live with an inherited culture at home and a mixed-up culture outside. The city developed its own patois, Bambaiyya, a street dialect broadly based on Hindi but with infusions of Gujarati, Marathi, Konkani and Dakhani.

Nobody wasted much time dwelling on where you came from; what you were willing to do mattered more. Besides, people knew better than to dwell on antecedents. Pressed up against strangers in a bus or train – groin to groin, nose to armpit – the memory of social distance and hierarchy could only cause paralysis in a country where untouchability was rampant.

By the time we moved, the riots of 1992–93 had dealt a severe blow to the city's cosmopolitan reputation. Thousands were killed, women were raped, Muslim-owned establishments were set on fire. Most politicians did little to contain the violence. The Shiv Sena won the next state assembly elections and changed the capital's name to Mumbai. 'Bombay', it was argued, was a non-native name.

Still, in the popular imagination, Bombay/Mumbai was the city where nobody went to sleep hungry. It would not guarantee shelter but it would give you bread. Writers, actors, software developers, labourers at construction sites, plumbers, carpenters, chauffeurs: all found work.

The city put me through a wringing-dryer twice a day before it held out the promised bread. It was unlike anything I'd seen, read or imagined. The longer I traversed its lengths, the more I felt as if the city was scraping off my childhood skin and I wasn't growing a new skin fast enough. But I never had to sleep rough or go hungry.

I paid taxes. I learnt to forgive (a woman who slapped me on the train) and to hit back (men who tried to stalk or humiliate me). If I walked at my natural pace on the street, someone was sure to shove past, muttering '*Garden mein chal reli hai?*' ('Taking a stroll in a garden?') A few years later, I was snapping at others who strolled rather than sprinted.

I gave up wearing dupattas after a tangle of impatient commuters nearly strangled me with the one I was wearing. Like other women, I put on scarves only after I got off the train. Like them, I went to the beach to eat snacks rather than to swim. I waded through overflowing drain-water to get to work, even filing reports with my feet on top of a dustbin in a flooded room. The city had one rule – keep going. I kept going. I was even starting to speak in a less grammatically correct Hindi, in keeping with the patois. In short, I became the average Bombayite/Mumbaikar.

Yet, this was also the city where, for the first time, I grew aware that the word *bhaiyya*, ‘brother’, was not always a term of respect.

Across India, it is common to address strangers as if you are related to them: *Bhai*, *Bhaiyya* or *Didi* for men and women respectively, if they are approximate to your age. It is considered good form everywhere, including Mumbai where Marathi speakers use *Maushi* (aunt) to address women and *Bhau* (brother) for men. *Bhaiyya*, however, was a different matter. It was a word people of north Indian origin, like myself, used, and it became synonymous with Hindi-speaking migrants. We came to embody *Bhaiyya* as outsider.

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In *India Moving*, Chinmay Tumble argues, ‘If the major ideological battle of the twentieth century was between capitalism and communism, in the 21st century it is likely to be between cosmopolitanism and nativism.’¹ This certainly proved true for India, where nativism had a head start. As early as the eighteenth century, in the southern kingdom of Hyderabad, there was hostility towards northern administrators the ruler was trying to import for their talent. He was pressured into a policy of hiring *mulkis*, or locals, and the official language of administration became Urdu rather than Persian, since Urdu was native and Persian was not.

The Constitution of India guarantees citizens the right to move and work anywhere in the country. However, nativist

movements have emerged to secure jobs for 'locals', interpreted loosely as someone who speaks the dominant language in a particular state. Bombay Presidency was split up into Maharashtra (Marathi-speaking regions) and Gujarat (Gujarati-speaking regions), with intense squabbling about who would get Bombay. Maharashtra got to keep it, but the question of who the city belongs to, and who belongs in the city, still hung in the air.

There were demands, in the 1960s, that the state stop using English. With the emergence of a new political party, the Shiv Sena, the nativist movement grew aggressive. In *Samrat: How the Shiv Sena Changed Mumbai Forever*, journalist Sujata Anandan writes, 'Maharashtrians constituted 50 per cent of the population of Bombay (about 40 per cent today), but most were blue collar workers'.² Party chief Bal Thackeray (1926–2012) had railed against migrants in speeches and editorials, although his ire was initially directed at south Indians, who were better educated and took the better jobs. A political cartoonist himself, Thackeray represented the middle-class south Indian as an 'ugly, grotesque figure' with tag lines such as S.I. vultures.³ The campaign against them included the slogan '*Pungi bajao aur lungi hatao*' ('Blow the horn, remove the lungi'), a thinly veiled call to attack those who wore lungis (a type of sarong), as south Indians traditionally did. This, despite the fact that Thackeray himself wore lungis.⁴

Chinmay Tumble also shares a story about his father's family changing their names in the 1960s. While their neighbours were politically anti-migrant, they were not aggressive. Even so, an uncle decided to change his name and that of his siblings, so they would not stand out as south Indians. Traditionally, a single alphabet letter was used as a prefix or suffix to represent the family's place of origin; he changed "T" to Tumble, the village that the family came from, and used that as a surname instead because it was phonetically similar to Marathi surnames like Kamble or Nene.

By the time I moved to Mumbai, the focus of resentment had shifted. There was intermittent lashing out at non-native

cultural expression. We were warned against celebrating Valentine's Day since it was not a local festival. Commercial establishments were asked to display names in Marathi, or else! Thackeray called for ration cards, which confirm residence and guarantee food at minimum prices for the poor, to be denied to north Indians.

What was ironic about the Shiv Sena's belligerence was that Thackeray's parents too were migrants. A breakaway faction of the party – now the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), led by Bal Thackeray's nephew – was aware of this irony and tried to create a false personal history for the family on their website, suggesting that they had moved to the city from within the same state.⁵ Questions of origin were pertinent because the MNS was carrying on where the Shiv Sena left off. By 2008, 'Bhaiyyas' who made very little money in the informal economy – street-food vendors and auto-rickshaw drivers – were being attacked.

Earlier, in 2003, the Shiv Sena had initiated a 'Mee Mumbaikar' campaign, seeking to define who was a legit resident. Liberal voices in the party argued that it could be anyone who made a 'contribution', or someone who did not 'milk' the city by not paying taxes. Slum dwellers, 55 per cent of the population compressed into 12 per cent of the city's land, were singled out for castigation.⁶ As one Shiv Sena advocate put it: 'Why are you leaving Uttar Pradesh and Bihar? Why are you coming here to live in slums?'

He was asking the wrong question, of the wrong people. Less than 12 per cent of migrants work across state borders in India. Of the 574 million migrants in Maharashtra, the overwhelming majority – 479 million – move within the state, many of them fleeing drought and debt.⁷ However, they were not accused of milking the city merely because they were hungry or homeless.

Émigré politicians tap into native sentiments among migrant communities. That north Indians were starting to win elections in Mumbai alerted Marathi speakers to the fact that they couldn't take political power for granted. 'Bhaiyyas' in the city were not wealthy, but they were no longer content with bread and a spot

in a slum. They wanted representation, and had started to express themselves through language, food and their worship of the feminine aspect of the sun as a goddess, rather than the locally favoured god.

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Governments have always attempted to control mobility. Tumber writes that in the ancient Indian kingdom of Magadh, people had to pay a road toll and immigration was controlled. There were additional rules governing the movements of untouchable castes and married women. As recently as the nineteenth century, there were taboos against overseas travel. Crossing the seas, it was believed, caused you to lose caste. Given that caste is hereditary, it is near impossible to 'lose' unless you change your name and actively shroud your lineage. Metaphorically speaking, however, you could lose caste by travelling to lands where nobody monitored who you touched, or married.

Taboo or not, Indians did travel. Ever since the British started maintaining detailed records, we have data showing that India is one of the most migration-prone nations. Between 1834 and 1937, over 30 million people emigrated, mainly to Burma, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, of which nearly 24 million returned. Over 2 million were taken as indentured labour to British, Dutch and French colonies.⁸ Between 1873 and 1916, Suriname alone received 34,000 Indians from the 'Bhojpuri' region: a swathe of districts in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where Bhojpuri was spoken.

The peasants who went overseas were only following a pattern. In *Cultural and Emotional Economy of Migration*, social scientist Badri Narayan describes it as a 'continuation of the old military migratory patterns'.⁹ These emigrants were called Purbias, men from the east, or more accurately, from the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh and parts of western Bihar.

I looked at Azamgarh district to construct an image of the sort of place that cannot hold onto its people. The district gazetteer of 1921 recorded that about 61 per cent of the local population depended on agriculture. The land was fertile, the climate

equable, yet there wasn't enough food. 'In good years there is little or no export, in bad there is considerable import', notes the gazetteer. Conditions could be further judged from the observation that a house of brick or masonry was rare. The economy, even a century ago, was driven by emigration. Between 1891 and 1900, 'no less than Rupees 12 lakh were annually remitted'. At least 76,079 people from Azamgarh alone had migrated to other regions or gone overseas. A century later, the same region still sends workers all over the country, and is still sustained by remittances.

Badri Narayan notes that the lives of the descendants of those who went overseas in the colonial era improved significantly, while the families that didn't migrate remain poor. Other studies also indicate that the probability of remaining poor in India is lower among migrants than among families who do not send at least one member of the family to work outside the village.¹⁰ Poverty often means not having the minimum caloric value needed to stay alive, so we can imagine the consequences of *not* migrating.

Over 454 million of 1.2 billion people, or 38 per cent of India, is a migrant. This is defined by the 2011 census as people born outside the place where they currently live, and probably does not take into account seasonal migrants who return to home base every few months.¹¹

North Indian 'Bhaiyyas' go further north, to Kashmir and Punjab, and much further south, to Kerala. As in the era of indentured labour, many of them don't know where exactly they're headed, or where they'll sleep. Many are brought by labour contractors, who respond to a demand for strong and skilled bodies, even in overcrowded cities like Mumbai that pretend not to need them.

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Hindi film script writer and poet Javed Akhtar once repeated a bit of wisdom that's been handed down by the elders: it takes four generations to create a culture, but only one to destroy it.

Cultural destruction can come from disruptive events like war, earthquakes or famine, mass migration, but it can also come from reactionary nativism and intolerance.

Bombay was an island city but, in a metaphorical sense, it was the opposite of an island. It grew north-south, vertical-horizontal, wresting every inch of space from sky and sea, taking in people from all ten directions. There used to be mock-arguments in India with people taking sides between Delhi and Mumbai. The former represented the landlocked north – more open space, more tangible history, more affordable housing, but politically rife, unhurried, given to outbursts of machismo and feudal hangovers, hostile to women. The latter represented west-facing southern port towns – fast, business-like, glamorous, women out in much larger numbers, decent public transport, but also brutal in what it extracted by way of time, space, nuance and personal ideals.

I came as an outsider to both cities, and I saw the truth of both stereotypes. I had moved to Delhi for a few years, partly because I couldn't deal with the petty cruelty and daily panic of Mumbai's overloaded trains, and when I did return, I chose a flexi-work or freelance routine. I needed to feel safe if not comfortable. I also saw both cities change over two decades. Delhi became a bigger migrant hub, with better public transport, more complex regional politics. It began to take on some of the nicer aspects of Mumbai, where the infrastructure has not kept pace. There is more muscle flexing, and politics in Mumbai is less about pressing for workers' rights and more about who is, or is not, a rightful resident.

Disruption can also come from technology. One of the nicest things about Mumbai was its web of diverse friendships formed in brief snatches of time. You had 'building' friends, people you played with as a child, and college friends, train friends, office colleagues, walking friends in parks or promenades. You played cards on the train, joined groups to sing hymns or film songs, even bursting into competitive singing across train compartments. I cannot say that this forged an inclusive politics, but it

did lend the city a patina of inclusiveness. As long as you could share your tiffin with strangers, or sing with them, the sharp edge of nativism was blunted.

Now people barely make eye contact. With cellphones and cheap internet packages, much of the middle and upper classes are locked into a personal cave of media. Nobody knows what others listen to, or read. On streets, in malls, in the foyer of cinema halls, in trains, in elevators, on beaches, conversation is winding down. The culture we are experiencing does not teach us how to talk – or sing – our way out of discomfort.

Cultural disruption, and the resultant disattachment, is magnified in places where discrimination is normalised. Conversely, when it is not challenged over one generation, discrimination itself becomes the dominant culture. A 2018 study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative examined multi-dimensional poverty in India. Every second person from the scheduled tribes, every third person from the scheduled castes (castes listed in India's constitution as being historically oppressed and discriminated against) and every third Muslim was found to be poor.

Mumbai is still the safest city in the country for women. I look over my shoulder, but not as often as I would elsewhere. But is it possible to feel at home when you are discriminated against? Or, if you are tolerated, are banished to the margins?

My sense of belonging in the city was shaken when I realised that I was a double, or even triple, negative. I wasn't just north Indian, I was single and Muslim.

The 1992–93 riots had cleaved the city through its heart. Communities that had lived cheek by jowl for decades began to segregate. Renting or buying homes became difficult for Muslims. The suburb where my mother bought her first apartment had started out cosmopolitan. People of all faiths and sects were buying in, united by the fact that they were hanging on to the middle-class shelf by the fingertips.

A few years later, a Muslim writer friend was dismayed to learn that he couldn't buy or rent a home in most parts of the

city. For years he struggled with real estate brokers. So often was he asking the sad question – ‘Are Muslims allowed in the building?’ – that his little son had begun to repeat the words.

A lot of housing societies discouraged Muslim buyers and tenants. My own brother discovered that renting apartments was a problem, even in our suburb, and he wasn’t even bearded or cap-wearing. I too had real estate agents hanging up on me when I tried moving out of my mom’s flat. Unmarried people were not welcome either. It had become one of the bald facts of urban negotiation. Newspaper articles and blog posts were written about discrimination but nothing was done to fix it, although it was a violation of both the Constitution of India and the ethos of the city. Little or no political challenge was mounted by politicians or influential business houses.

The Pew Research Centre indicated in 2010 that the number of global Indian migrants has doubled over the last twenty-five years. As a percentage of the population, the size of the diaspora has not changed, but a disproportionate percentage of religious minorities has been leaving.¹² Christians formed 19 per cent of emigrants though they comprise less than 3 per cent of our population; Muslims accounted for 27 per cent although they comprise about 13 per cent of the population. Whether they are leaving because of uncertainty, poverty or discrimination, is hard to say. Chances are, they face discrimination on the basis of colour or race in their new locations too. However, it is harder when you’re treated like a stranger in a place that you’ve always thought of as home.

My writer friend, born and raised in Mumbai and struggling to rent an apartment here, finally decided to move to another country.

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Sorrow is the key to home. Without a sense of having lost something, without aching a little, how does one know the strength of one’s attachment?

In north India, the concept of *Pardes* (anywhere that is not your native place) is different from *Bides* (foreign lands). Both suggest distance and the likelihood of becoming strangers. In the folk psyche, Narayan writes, overseas migration was a form of imprisonment and exile, as represented by the word *Kala-pani* (black water), an island prison from where escape was near impossible.¹³ Yet, many Indians chose to emigrate because to stay was also punishment. It was a choice between devils known and unknown – poverty and discrimination on the one hand, and bondage, loss of identity, loss of beloveds and uncertainty on the other.

For a migration-prone region, pain is embedded in Bhojpuri culture. Badri Narayan writes about '*Bidesiya*' as a cultural genre, both in the homeland and in the émigré's destination. The expression for the ache of separation is '*bidesiya bhav*', and it can be found in music, drama, paintings that speak of loneliness, or of troubles back at home.

People carry what they can to reconstruct home in new places. When people began to leave for the Caribbean as indentured labour, they carried the lightest version possible: faith, language, memory. Folk songs, stories, copies of the Ramayana, Hanuman Chalisa, Quran and Hadiths, poems by Kabir, the sacred thread they wore, souvenirs like a Queen Victoria rupee were passed down to the next generation.¹⁴ They could hold on to their culture partly because they migrated in groups, and partly because they had limited interactions with European plantation owners or native Caribbean populations. Thus, a Bhojpuri migrant in Mumbai, in Suriname, or in Holland could claim similar cultural roots.

After Suriname gained independence, many Indians migrated to Holland, where they were identified as Surinamese-Hindustanis. This time, cultural memory disintegrated faster. Narayan writes that 'wanting to be as Indian as possible, while obsessively holding on to what one originally took with him or her as well as turning away from Dutch culture, led to isolation and a generation gap'.¹⁵

The sentiment is familiar to migrants all over. Like young Surinamese-Hindustanis, they want to claim a rich cultural

heritage but know little about it, especially not what makes it 'rich'. They pick things up from Bollywood films, television soaps, lifestyle magazines. They identify as Indian or hyphenated Indian – British-Indian, Indian-American – but have limited experience of heterodox religious practices or regional subcultures. The Purbia, or 'easterner', was so defined, after all, by people in Delhi. The same migrant in Mumbai is a Bhaiyya. Further south, he is 'from the north', and in the United Kingdom he might be '*desi*' or South Asian, indistinguishable from Pakistanis or Bangladeshis.

The first couple of generations endure upsets: unfamiliar laws, new faces, new languages. Migrant and native struggle to adapt, grasping at straws of memory. But the further people move, the more strands break.

This holds true for internal migrants too. As long as they hope to return to the village, their sense of a specific and unique geographical identity endures. Once the connection snaps, the inner location of self blurs.

This can open the door to monocultures and bigotry. Once people have withdrawn their inner anchor from a specific village or town, it is easier to shoo them into pens of religious affiliation. Religion offers material refuge and the illusion of stability through never-changing mores and rituals; it also offers a global community to which to belong. In India, this has played out as significant financial support from non-residents for organisations that stress homogeneity and monoculturalism 'back home'.

The size of our international diaspora is significant¹⁶ – over 25 million – and India is the world's largest recipient of international migrant remittances: over USD 69 billion in 2017, and that's just what's accounted for. Political donations in India are anonymous but one can guess at where some of the funding is coming from based on the fact that the government has reportedly considered allowing non-resident Indians to vote.¹⁷ It is a right and privilege denied to internal migrants in India.

Domestic remittances account for no mean sum, about USD 20 billion. However, the majority of internal migrants are poor

and too busy to organise themselves and to insist upon that crucial rite of belonging – voting.

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Disenfranchisement is the ultimate way a person can be turned into a stranger: through your country turning stranger on you.

People pushed furthest to the margins – those lacking identity cards or fixed addresses, the displaced and the homeless – struggle to get onto electoral lists. Those who live on the literal margins, near international borders, are also at risk.

Consider the Bengal Presidency – the region spanned what is now three separate nations: India, Bangladesh, Myanmar. People didn't necessarily move, the maps did. Burma was once administered through British India. Nearly 7 per cent of its population was of Indian origin, including Bengalis in the Arakan region who were either brought as workers or acquired as slaves – people now called Rohingya. In 1937, the British began to administer Burma as a separate entity and after it won independence, in 1948, controls over citizenship tightened. The Buddhist majority nation, with its military dictatorship, has been brutally intolerant of the Rohingya, who had little option but to keep trying to cross borders.

Within India, the map changed, again and again. Assam is one of the states whose borders have shifted half a dozen times over the last century, and it has suffered decades of violence on account of a militant demand by indigenous Bodo tribes for a separate state.¹⁸ A fifth of the population was born outside the current borders of the state; one-third speak a language other than Assamese.

Demographic anxieties have been fuelled by electoral politics with campaigns against those who look or sound different, and politicians seeking to evict, or at least disenfranchise, minorities. There is now the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, which defines 'foreigners' as those who settled in Assam after 25 March 1971. It was struck down as unconstitutional in 2005, but that didn't prevent the government from

implementing a National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam in 2017. Those who didn't make the list were put in detention centres. Several people have already killed themselves, fearing loss of citizenship.¹⁹

In South Asia, where hundreds of millions cannot read or write, where documents are easily lost in floods and people are too poor to maintain bank lockers, and where documents are full of mistakes made by careless state officials, this has been a punitive exercise. The family of a former president of India had not been able to produce adequate paperwork.²⁰ Foreigner Tribunal hearings have been held hundreds of kilometres away with no more than one day's notice.²¹

The establishment of belonging has been turned into a criminal drama where people are deemed guilty unless they can prove their innocence, and where innocence means error-free documentation. A misspelt name leads to prison.

It is possible to have lived in a valley or on a riverbank for a thousand years without a piece of paper to substantiate you. Papers, however, require an interface with bureaucracy, money, or connections to nudge someone into certifying your presence. Many of us have helplessly raged at suggestions that we pay someone to affirm that we live in the houses we live in, that we are indeed standing before a government employee who can vouch for our existence.

When we first moved to Mumbai, we needed a new ration card as identity proof. Weeks after applying, I failed to get one. There was no explanation, but I was encouraged to seek help from 'agents' who hung around and expected me to fork up some money. Out of a grand sense of loyalty to my nation and unwilling to compromise my own sense of integrity, I refused. There was no rejection of my application but there was no card either. Nothing moved until I happened to mention the problem to someone who was well-to-do and well connected, who mentioned this to someone else, who mentioned it to someone in government. I was given a letter from the food and civil supplies ministry instructing the local office to process my application.

I was a journalist who came from generations of literacy, but I was powerless against a system that needs a steady supply of unofficial grease. Early in my career, I learnt not to be deluded about paperwork. Citizenship depends on the whims of a clerk at the window.

At any rate, no paperwork is ever adequate. Records are easily destroyed or manipulated. When nativist leaders go looking for their 'non', no amount of screaming about roots, grandparents or last century imperialism helps.

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Once the NRC was compiled in Assam, it turned out that the majority of those who could not prove citizenship were Hindu. Politicians did a quick flip-flop, blaming the verification process, soothing ruffled voters by saying that those lacking documentation would not be deported, then appealing to the Supreme Court to allow more tribunals.²² The existing list was based on paperwork, hard enough to acquire and protect. What would an alternative registry of citizenship be based on?

There are indications. In 2019, the home minister declared that Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs would not have to leave the country, even if they are found to be illegal immigrants from neighbouring Muslim majority nations.²³ Combined with the exercise of identifying alleged foreigners, this means that Muslims alone must worry about being placed in a detention camp, and risk being labelled 'doubtful' citizens on account of something as petty as a name misspelt by a government clerk.²⁴

The government has declared that 'foreigner' tribunals will be set up across India and it is no accident that 'foreigner tribunals' were tackled first in Assam, where a third of the population is Muslim. A few electoral points can be gained in each constituency through listing people as D voters; D for 'dubious' or 'doubtful'. There are attempts to ignite similar fears in West Bengal, another border state with a Muslim

population of 27 per cent, and Uttar Pradesh, with about 19 per cent Muslims. Detention centres are also being built in states such as Maharashtra and Karnataka, which do not have international borders but where internal migration is high.

At the time of writing, Parliament has cleared a new law, the Citizenship Amendment Act, which allows for citizenship to be granted to refugees or people who claim to be fleeing persecution in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, as long as they are Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jain. Muslims are the only group excluded.²⁵ The law makes no allowances for people fleeing persecution in other neighbouring states such as Hindu majority Nepal, Communist China, or Buddhist majority Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

The meaning of *foreign* is thus reduced not to passport or ancestry but to exclusions of religion. The homeland, by implication, is not a geography but a faith, and any change thereof is liable to get you tossed into the sea.²⁶

