

NEUROSIS OF ARAB AND INDIAN DIASPORIC CHARACTERS
IN IBRAHIM NASRALLAH'S *PRAIRIES OF FEVER* AND
DEEPAK UNNIKRISHNAN'S *TEMPORARY PEOPLE*

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Abstract: Prairies of Fever by Ibrahim Nasrallah and Temporary People by Deepak Unnikrishnan revolve around characters of the Arab and Indian labor diaspora in the contemporary Gulf, respectively. Present literary analysis of these texts indicates the silencing and othering of the non-citizen Arab and Indian nationals in the Gulf while shelving their intra-psychic conflicts. Tracing the concept of inferiority complex as highlighted by neuro-psychologist Alfred Adler and referencing Gulf Studies to substantiate arguments, this paper studies the Arab diasporic character Muhammad Hammad in Ibrahim Nasrallah's Prairies of Fever and the plethora of Indian diasporic characters in Deepak Unnikrishnan's Temporary People to contextualize neurosis in the backdrop of the Gulf society. This paper finds that the neurosis of Arab and Indian migrant diasporas in the Gulf is directly proportional to the Gulf's systemic unfairness.

Prairies of Fever by Ibrahim Nasrallah and *Temporary People* by Deepak Unnikrishnan are key postmodern texts that deal with the diasporic experience in the Gulf, albeit from the perspective of two different races. While the former text is considered the "Arabic answer to the divided self" by translator Jeremy Reed, the latter indicates Deepak Unnikrishnan's tribute to "anyone who left, then remained in the Gulf for family's sake, only to leave again."

Scholarship on *Prairies of Fever* is inclined towards the hyphenated existence of diasporic Arabs in the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) countries. Contrary to expectations, such research notes the discrepancy in excluding Arab diasporic characters while creating a larger regional image of the Gulf (Elayyan, 2016, 87). Such dispensability adds to the protagonist Muhammad Hammad's larger existence as a spectral figure (Boyalı, 2019, 579). These point towards potential analysis of the mental illness that Muhammad Hammad finds himself in from the novel's beginning. Similarly, the publication of literary fiction in English, no matter how sporadic, by writers of the Indian diaspora in the Gulf culminates into what is broadly termed as Indian writing from the Gulf. So far, research on Indian writing from the Gulf is inclined towards focusing more on some texts over others. For example, *Goat Days* by Benyamin has been the most critically read. On the one hand, the analysis of *Goat Days* identifies the migratory experience, which explains the cause behind

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diasporic trauma, pinpointing the South Asian diaspora's identity crisis in the Gulf (Narnolia and Mausam, 2016, 8).

Psychological trauma in *Goat Days* is further noted in studies on migration challenges and consequent alienation (Kumar, 2020, 45). Anxiety is one such issue studied to focus on the existential crisis of Najeeb (Fernandez, 2014, 43). It stems from the intermediate positioning of the South Asian characters between the host and home country with little hope of long-term settlement in the Gulf (Vinai and Prasuna, 2017, 123). All of it deromanticizes the South Asian diasporic life in the Gulf (Jose and Rajasekaran, 2015, 77). On the other hand, the plight of leadership and administration in the Gulf reflects the sectarian divide in an unnamed Gulf city, as seen in Benyamin's *Jasmine Days*, that leads to the increased othering of the South Asian diaspora (Gopinadh, 219). It is augmented in *Temporary People* by Deepak Unnikrishnan, which places South Asians in the Gulf as "spectral figures" (Menon, 2020, 190).

However, other texts within Indian writing from the Gulf, such as *Sand Storms*, *Summer Rains* by Asha Iyer Kumar; *A Safe Harbour* by Sunaina Serna Ahluwalia; *An Indian Ode to The Emirates* by Geeta Chhabra, *Al Arabian Novel Factory* by Benyamin, *Dubai Heights* by Aditi Chakraborty and *Shamal Days* by Sabin Iqbal remain largely understudied. Consequently, any reading of Indian writing from the Gulf, documented in scanty and nascent output, has made these texts distant from critical attention. While the legacy of this diasporic phenomenon that began after the oil boom of the 1950s in the Gulf has been studied broadly in anthropology, sociology, and economics, literary studies remain within the purview of Foucault's theory of the panopticon to understand the prison time of Najeeb (Ibid, 410) or application of the concept of dispositive to cast Najeeb as a prototype for South Asian laborers (Sebastian, 2018, 239).

However, perfunctory mention of the psychological impact of migration to the Gulf in *Goat Days* (YT, 2020, 1613) or struggles of diasporic life in *Goat Days* (Kumar, 44) provides a direction for further analysis of Indian writing from the Gulf. It hints at potential neuropsychological readings of a niche that has been overlooked or unidentified. While comparative studies of novels regarding the Arab diaspora in the Gulf, like *Prairies of Fever* by Ibrahim Nasrallah, *The Other Place* by Ibrahim Abdal Magid, and *The Bamboo Stalk* by Saud Al Sanusi have been undertaken (Elayyan, 2016, 88), an analysis of select texts from both Arab as well as Indian writing from the Gulf is yet to be attempted.

Race affects Employment in the Gulf deeply, and racism affects how diasporic characters view themselves, facilitating contesting narratives of victimization reflected in literature (Dakkak, 2021, 125). Such literature lays bare the larger grip of an Adlerian study. Thus, pursuing Adlerian neuro-psychology is a logical step toward decoding the neurotic emotions and the triggered behaviors of labor diasporas in the Gulf.

Conceding that both *Prairies of Fever* by Ibrahim Nasrallah and *Temporary People* by Deepak Unnikrishnan reflect the diasporic experience in the Gulf that is indented with racial bias, this paper traces the neurotic Arab and Indian characters' experiences in both these texts. It is done through a thorough analysis of the

applicable points presented in *The Neurotic Constitution* by Alfred Adler. After a brief description of Adler's theory of inferiority complex and citing evidence from *Prairies of Fever* and *Temporary People* that acknowledge the purposeful depiction of it, this paper focuses on the traits of the neurotics in both primary texts. A study of these characters implies the stringent hierarchical basis of the Gulf society. It establishes the extent and effect of the neurosis of non-national diasporas arising from discriminatory labor laws in the Gulf. Finally, the conclusion focuses on pinpointing the causes of such neuroses upheld by a master-slave dynamic by analyzing its depiction in both texts. It arises out of the lack of migrant rights in the Gulf, creating a suffocating environment indented with racial bias.

Intra-Arab migration to the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) states far outdates the migration of other nationalities to the Gulf. Such migration has been mainly from the less wealthy Arab states to the sheikhdoms of the Gulf (Babar, 2017, 10). It is primarily due to the imbalance in the natural endowment of oil reserves. The non-oil-rich Arab countries face challenges of a rising youth population, high unemployment, limited opportunities, and an overall stagnant development that triggers migration to earn basic sustenance. The GCC states' numerous multi-million-dollar mega construction projects led to a dire need for labor initially meted out by this kind of out-migration from the poor (non-oil rich) Arab countries. However, such Arab labor was found to be expensive and sought long-term settlement rights in the GCC nations, thus disturbing the dynamics of power flow in the GCC. It was a severe drawback to intra-Arab recruitment in the GCC.

On the contrary, the coming together of Arabs and Indians happened in phases but revolved around trade since the beginning of their association. Indians migrated to the Gulf in the pre-Islamic era for employment and business purposes (Jain, 2005, 60). Later, in the case of the spice trade, there were instances of migratory practices from India to the Gulf and vice versa. It helped strengthen the ties of the past and provide a direction for the future. The spice trade, comprised the first phase, was completely dominated by the Arab merchants (Stone, 1964, 705). Such association brought about the grounds for a literary exchange alongside other goods. The Arab minds were fascinated by the voyages of the fiction of Sindbad the Sailor, about the eponymous sailor who goes out on eight voyages in realms of mystery, magic, and supernaturalism. Much later, English literature came to be influenced by this character, with Edgar Allan Poe writing a tale called *The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade* and James Joyce using Sindbad as an alias for the character W.B. Murphy in his work *Ulysses*, to name a few. Apart from these, stories like the allegorical *Kalila Wa Dimna*, based on the names of the two jackals who are the main characters, were probably drawn from the Panchatantra.

The second wave of migration from India to the Gulf took place mainly after the arrival of the British in the Gulf in the 1820s, which became strengthened by the Indian freedom struggle and the Arab nationalist movements. The 1970s marked the third wave of Indian migration to the Gulf due to the discovery of oil fields across several Gulf nations, which brought about the requirement for cheap labor. It was fulfilled by the South Asian migrants to the Gulf who braved dire conditions and, in

many cases, even discriminatory violence to help build modern amenities in the Gulf from scratch.

While Pierre Janet identified the attributes of a neurotic in his work *Hysterical Psyche*, there is no elaboration or detailed description of the causes and concerns of neurosis in it. This gap was filled up to some extent by Joseph Breuer, who studied the symptoms and their implications directly from the patient. This practice was taken up by Sigmund Freud, who stressed the libido as the main driving force behind neurosis, which Adler considered erroneous and an impediment to a proper understanding of neurosis. Alfred Adler chiefly concentrated on studying the neurotic character as an essential part of neuropsychology, as mentioned in the opening pages of his work *The Neurotic Constitution*.

Adler picks up his argument from Freud, stating that the libido or any other sexual perversion rearranges according to the “goal idea” or adherence to a fictitious goal. This fictitious goal helps sustain the notional understanding of a situation and, over time, merges with the reality principle or the knowledge of reality by the neurotic individual. The goal idea disrupts reality and puts an imaginary ideal in its place. So, ego-consciousness equates to the entire person.

It must be noted that Adler is quick to point out that, like all other phenomena related to the psyche, neurosis is to be read in connection with the entire psychic life of an individual. It means that all the phenomena of the mind are to be understood in the context from which they arise. So, while nervousness is an attribute of the neurotic individual, the emphatic presence of this trait creates a paranoid individual who is not merely disturbed but also disoriented. Such neurosis is influenced or provoked or even driven by an inventive, organized, and adjustive power. Power here refers to an individual succumbing to a puzzling and unclear set of impulses caused by the ideal goal idea. Hence, the neurotic shows certain sharp traits of character. These go beyond the mark of the ordinary and are excessive, exaggerated, and primarily emphasized. Disagreeing with Freud on the division of id, ego, and superego, Adler saw the personality as an organized whole where the conscious and the unconscious flow into each other like a fluid. Adler also considered the ego as the self of the individual. No matter how mysterious an entity is, it belongs to the individual's entire personality.

Though specific references to any particular neuro-psychotic theory or theorist are absent in *Prairies of Fever* and *Temporary People*, the scenes depicted throughout the narratives of both postmodern texts reflect the critical features of Adlerian neurotics. Adler defines the psyche as separate from the corporeal sphere and adjustive. Meaning the psyche can mold itself according to circumstance. In the case of the neurotic, the psyche finds “a point which forms the centre of gravity of human thought, feeling and volition” (Adler, 2001, 28).

In light of the Gulf, the kafala system binds workers to their sponsors, where there is room for systemic and structural violence to be levied upon the sponsored guest worker (Gardner, 2005, 22). It widens the citizen/ non-citizen gap, where interactions between diasporas and the Gulf administration become more of an interrogation. Hints of this are seen in the cop scene in *Temporary People*. The Indian boy who has done nothing wrong and was only playing football with his friends at an

empty parking lot in the United Arab Emirates is being looked upon suspiciously by police on patrol. He reminds the cops that his father is at home and can speak with them if necessary. However, the cops insist on asserting their social position over the boy by asking him to converse in Arabic: “Dis my country. Arabic! Not English. Arabic. OK?” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 49). The boy’s inability to do so makes him feel nervous and threatened. It leads to an evolution of a self-estimation about being different and othered.

It immediately evokes feelings of inferiority, which Adler defines as: “This feeling must always be understood in a relative sense, as the outgrowth of the individual’s relation to his environment or his strivings” (Adler, 2001, 7). It has much to do with the estimation he is given, allowed, or encouraged to make of himself. Similarly, the othering of Muhammad Hammad is noted when the chief of a small precinct in Sabt Shimran asks him: “You’re a stranger to Sabt Shimran, aren’t you?” (Nasrallah, 1993, 22). It echoes the colloquial Arabic term “ajnabee” used to denote the foreigners in the Gulf. It resonates with the feelings of being remorsefully othered, inflicted onto the reader in the lines: “But secretly you were annoyed at their disrespectful manner of dismissing you” (Ibid., 22).

Though initially referring to a constitutionally inferior individual, Adler’s theory expands to cover feelings of inferiority. It brings about a sense of inferiority, which Adler notes affects the nerve tracts. It is reflected in the psychic superstructure, which tries to compensate for the inferiority if possible. Hence, “The compensating psychic superstructure will bring about an accentuated manifestation of the psychic phenomena of presentiments and forethoughts and their effective factors such as memory, intuition, introspection, analysis, attention, hypersensitiveness, in brief, of all the fortifying psychic forces. To these reassuring forces also belong the fixation and accentuation of those traits which form useful guiding principles in the chaos of life, thus diminishing the feeling of uncertainty” (Adler, 2001, 6-7).

Inferiority complex is an escapist measure of sorts for the neurotic. From an Adlerian viewpoint, it makes the individual take a standpoint to get a perspective regarding the issue at hand. Adler finds in such antithetical conditions a threatening position for the neurotic who tends to prolong the ego-consciousness despite the situation looking seemingly inferior. Falling off the building under construction is one such issue in *Temporary People*. It happens accidentally most of the time, and the fact that such accidents recur shows the dispensability of hired labor in the Gulf. However, self-infliction of harm by falling off buildings, wanting to rip them from their foundational base, reveals the underlying feelings of inferiority of the laborers. It has been studied that physical deformity is a chief cause of depression and suicidal ideation among laborers in the Gulf (Maskari). It is reflected in *Temporary People* in the Indian neurotic character Charley.

Charley thinks that death is better than the dire labor terms in the Gulf. His co-worker Iqbal notes: “He’d realised pretty early it was hard to die in the workplace or the camps. He wasn’t unhappy. He just wanted to die” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 16). To stress Charley’s fatal inclination is essential here. It creates distress and affects his ability to function. His sense of feeling inferior translates into making himself physically deformed. He tries hard to bend the strict employment rules in the Gulf,

thinking that he has it all figured out. Iqbal elaborates: “So Charley tells me that every couple of months he would give himself an accident” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 17). It is his manner of thinking that his family will be compensated for a lifetime for his death, but he had miscalculated. His sudden reversal in his desire to live shows the intensity of his fictional goal, which is the Gulf dream, from which he feels the need to fetch a little more before dying. It echoes: “The feeling which the individual has of his inferiority, incompetency, the realization of his smallness, of his weakness, of his uncertainty, thus becomes an appropriate working basis which, because of the intrinsically associated feelings of pleasure and pain, furnishes the inner impulse to advance towards an imaginary goal” (Adler, 2001, 18).

Similarly, the experiments conducted by Moosa in *Temporary People* to cultivate South Indians on Petri dishes in the laboratory to serve the need for a cheap labor force in the Gulf arises out of the requirement placed by the Gulf administration to create laborers that can endure extremes of weather and work conditions. It soon turns into a ploy by Moosa to teach the administration a lesson for their unequal and often inhumane treatment of Indian laborers. It has its basis in Moosa’s feelings of inferiority. It is noted: “After years of being feted by his patrons, Moosa woke up one day and had a change of heart. He doctored his seeds and didn’t tell a soul. The new formula produced canned Malayalees designed to prioritize reason, with minds difficult to tame” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 51).

The need to create a new variant with amplified features indicates the assumption that the existent category of Indians is low in quality. It evokes their inferiority, aggravating their neurosis that is manifested as “double personality, dissociation, and which is frequently seen in the changing humor of neurotics, but also in the succession of depression and mania, of ideas of persecution and grandeur in the psychoses” (Adler, 2001, 22). Such antithetical states are mainly seen in the unnamed laborers in *Temporary People* who are loaded into buses and arrive in their uniforms at the construction site, endure the unbearable heat of the Gulf to toil through the day time, only to be stuffed at night into their congested labor camps. While the daytime heat decays them, the nighttime heat makes them sweaty. Hence, recreation for them has to be something cheap but creative, like the salty pool of sweat dug up by Badran in which all the laborers float.

Inferior feelings, according to Adler, are based on the blame game that nags at the individual’s psyche. He sums it up: “Therefore from constitutional inferiority, there arises a feeling of inferiority which demands compensation in the sense of a maximization of the ego-consciousness. From this circumstance, the fiction that serves as a final purpose acquires an astonishing influence and draws all the psychic forces in its direction. Itself an outgrowth of the striving for security, it organizes psychic preparatory measures to guarantee security, among which the neurotic character as well as the functional neurosis are noticeable as prominent devices” (Adler, 2001, 17).

According to Adler, an inferiority complex intensifies neurosis, which includes (but is not limited to) excessive sensitiveness, quick irritable weakness, vulnerability, egotism, fascination towards the fantastic, rethinking of reality, anxiety, depression, tyrannical attitude, and absent-mindedness. Adler noticed certain traits within the

neurotic character. These, or at least some of these, help to construct and uphold the neurosis. Its effect is noted as: “And it generates several psychic predispositions whose purpose it is to secure to the neurotic superiority in all situations of life, but which on the other hand makes his aggressiveness, his affectivity, appear to be in a state of constant irritation” (Adler, 19). This is the point of development of mental aberrations or what Adler terms as forms of “over irritability of nerve tracts” that causes a degeneration in the personality.

Although several scenes of neurosis express the inferiority-ridden migrant’s state of mind in both primary texts, the strongest resemblance between the neurotic and the idea that drives the neurotic is influenced by what Adler terms as the gaze of the neurotic. It is best seen, for example, in the opening scene of *Prairies of Fever*, where Muhammad Hammad is puzzled that he is being declared dead but being spoken to simultaneously. The first-person narrative voice mentions here: “My eyes frantically tried to follow my features as I spun around myself. For an instant I was sure I’d outwitted them with my argument. But there again, I had no assurance of that” (Nasrallah, 1993, 13). His neurotic gaze is always directed towards the future. It adds to the sense of feeling deficient due to the lack of some or the other organ or may not be due to any constitutional deficiency but a feeling of inferiority.

Anna’s loneliness of taping fallen laborers in *Temporary People* and the anxiety of being unable to save many of them piles up within her mind. Becoming physically and temporally away from her children makes her emotionally deprived. Her wish to enact Iqbal’s dream in her suicidal scene, where she jumps off a building under construction after being pushed by a pigeon the size of a school child, exudes her emotional unavailability. Her neurosis makes her imagine she has intricately designed wax wings, but she cannot flap them as she falls back to the ground.

The fear of unknowingly hurting the sentiments of the authority in the Gulf is deep-seated in the minds of the neurotics in both texts. The five intruders, supposedly men of authority, are described in the opening scene of *Prairies of Fever* as: “There were five of them. This is the only fact. Five, without features” (Nasrallah, 1993, 12). The use of the word “fact” emphasizes the derangement of Muhammad Hammad. The idea that he has to stress their existence brings out his paranoid self, who may be overestimating their number, making him feel threatened.

The second-person narrative voice in *Prairies of Fever* creates insight just like magic realism tends to exploit reality in the interlaced narratives of *Temporary People*. The constant shift in the narrative voice makes Muhammad Hammad not see what is happening to him as his lonely experience for a long time. He immediately makes it an issue plaguing him and his alter ego, who he thinks is his roommate. It gives him a feeling that he is not alone and a justification for his behavior. Nonetheless, deportation is a better outcome than persecution or trial in the Gulf for having violated some law. It is the case with Mukundan from *Temporary People*, who chooses to escape before the Gulf authorities punish him for his sexual escapades that are unacceptable by the law in the GCC.

Additionally, his inability to describe their features shows his neurosis that he cannot register details and overcomplicate what is happening. It displaces actual circumstances while his mind constantly tries to shift the focus away from himself to

his supposed roommate, who is missing. It is seen in his assertion about the dance of the cloud that is equated to a local singer Al Qahim's undecipherable song: "Despite your efforts, you couldn't make sense of the song, for the fluctuations of the voice eluded your ear" (Nasrallah, 1993, 30).

The fact that Muhammad Hammad feels deeply disturbed amplifies his neurosis. It is increased manifold times when he is supposedly charged with the murder of his roommate and interrogated by a policeman for hiding the corpse. Muhammad Hammad's inability to accept his neurotic debility worsens things for him, turning him into a fugitive. He falls deeper into the pits of his paranoid subjectivity, which does not wish to be deported or persecuted by the law. While the interrogative personnel appear from time to time to question the whereabouts of his roommate, it is the moral police, and the religious police is the one Muhammad Hammad seems most fearful of.

Similar scenes of interrogation abound in *Temporary People*, such as a private investigator who knocks at Moosa's daughter Sabeen's door to question her about the disappearance of her father. Moosa used to work as a scientist for a government-owned company that manufactured hybrid laborers in the Gulf. It is related to a magically realistic episode of creating hybrid laborers on petri dishes who can endure the extreme heat of the Gulf and do not wilt after long hours of work.

It is in light of the policy that migration for family members of an employed diasporic individual to the Gulf requires sponsorship in the kafala system. The overall patron or kafeel has to be a Gulf national, while the sponsor for family members of the diasporic individual is usually the male working member of the family. In such a case, the family of the diasporic individual is to stay in the Gulf as long as their sponsored male member is allowed to reside there. So, six months after her father's disappearance, Sabeen receives the news that he is dead. She and her mother must leave the Gulf immediately, as they will be stripped of their sponsorship. It is noted: "In a week, we boarded a plane for Kerala, no dead body, no belongings, no plan" (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 63). Hence, once the function of these migrants is over, then they are required to leave the GCC with no claims whatsoever.

Such dispensability leads to several exaggerations in the neurotic's psyche. In the case of Muhammad Hammad in *Prairies of Fever*, it causes hypersensitivity. For example, when interrogated by the five intruders, he notes: "I thought quickly, trying for the easiest way to regain my composure. Without letting them see, I felt my pulse, then let my fingers travel up to my chest. Everything appeared normal, my heart was regular, and my veins echoed its beats" (Nasrallah, 1993, 12). In the case of Anna in *Temporary People*, it causes discontentment. Anna recalls her son and daughter visiting her in the Gulf with remorse in her heart. It is clubbed with the demolition and construction work that is part of the beautification of the city in the Gulf because: "If they visited now, she wouldn't know where to take them. She didn't know the new malls as well. Or her children" (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 21). Paradoxically, Muhammad Hammad and Anna want to continue to toil in the Gulf voluntarily. Their neurosis arises from the insecurity of losing their employment in the Gulf, of having to relocate, and of feeling displaced again.

From time to time, the ego consciousness is elevated, “and in as much as the realization of one’s inferiority is taken as an abstract standard for inequality among human beings, the greater, the stronger and his measure are taken for the fictitious goal so that it may be a guarantee against this uncertainty and fright” (Adler, 2001, 24). For example, injuries at work may go unnoticed or even untreated for laborers in *Temporary People*. That such recurrence of deaths on construction sites is not any form of suicidal ideation of the neurotic character cannot be denied. Neurosis among such characters arises from this distinct understanding that the hired Indian labor force is replaceable as it is readily available at cheaper rates and in more significant numbers than their Arab counterparts. It is noted: “When workers fell, severing limbs, the pain was acute, but borne. Yet what truly stung was the loneliness and anxiety of falling that weighed on their minds” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 11).

Adler notes the neurotic’s unacceptance of how life unfolds. However, in the case of diasporic workers in the Gulf, they have little choice but to accept their conditional existence throughout their work contracts. Johnny Kutty is one such Indian character in *Temporary People* whose neurosis arises out of being distant from his family, and the distance, in turn, plants suspicion in his mind rigged with paranoia. He uses the fone once a year to call his wife in Kerala. The Fone is a device similar to a rotary phone with a unique feature: “The fone’s main purpose was teleportation” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 25). Johnny Kutty’s suspicions make him imagine all kinds of illicit things between his wife and his friend Peeter, which makes him strive towards trying hard to prove his version as the truth. It makes him destroy the fone for which he is arrested.

Adler also mentions that for the neurotic, his neurosis is marked by symbolism. This symbolism is considered a part of the neurotic, his experiences, and how he relates or cannot relate to the persons around him. For example, the new Malayalee laborers designed by Moosa to prioritize reason are termed cantankerous twits by ministry memos. They replicated the real protests by South Asian laborers at the construction site of Burj Khalifa in 2006. Such riots symbolize their unpaid wages, mistreatment, and poor working conditions. This symbolic protest is deeply rooted in the neurotic craving for security. Breaking the rules to riot or even having the ability to be a part of protests gives a sense of security by providing what appears to be a precise estimation of the self. This self-estimation is a rough patchwork of impulses in the neurotic’s mind. Through the symbolism, the neurotic can project his inner desires and unify them to the fictional goal. It makes the residents of the Gulf interlinked to one another as residents of the same society but bound by rules set by the administration.

Regarding the diasporic characters in both primary texts, their migration to the Gulf is a voluntary choice for monetary upliftment. Voluntary, conscious choices are bound to make the individual more responsible, but whether he takes full responsibility for his role or shuns his responsibilities is up to him. However, the neurotic is seldom willing to accept that. This effect is noted as “The neurotic character is thus incapable of adjusting itself to reality because it is always striving toward an impossible ideal” (Adler, 2001, xiv). The ideal does not necessarily bear

negative connotations. It is necessary to drive and push the individual from its niche living. However, it is problematic as the neurotic tends to go overboard with his ideal.

So, Adler notes that due to these uncertainties, the neurotic constructs a goal in a definite and more precise manner and adheres to it more anxiously. Hence: “The neurotic, however, like the child devoid of contact with life and like the primitive understanding of early man catches at the straw of his fiction, hypostasizes it, arbitrarily ascribes to it a real value and seeks to realize it in the world. For this, the fiction is unfitted (still more unfitted when) as in the psychoses, it is elevated to a dogma or anthropomorphosed” (Adler, 2001, 15). This extreme heightening of the ego-consciousness of the neurotic heightens the pressure on the psychic structure. Every day, living in the Gulf for the diasporic neurotics becomes a confrontation done anxiously and cautiously.

For example, ensnared in the meshes of his particular fiction, impulse and aggression drive Muhammad Hammad in *Prairies of Fever*. He gets paranoid, and his paranoia is manifested in a triadic form. It comprises him, his roommate, who happens to go by his name, which is his alter ego. His neurosis stems from a severe and complete error of judgment where any form of conversation with the authority becomes equated to being interrogated. The assumption exists that the pleas or situational grievances of the diasporic individual will not be heard.

Death, disease, and degradation loom large in such a mind, as noted in the lines: “You felt your heart contract at the thought that graveyards outgrow the local inhabitants” (Nasrallah, 1993, 20). These not only bring out the degenerative state of mind of Muhammad Hammad. The restrictive place and difficulty of living in a remote locale are reflected in: “A village like no other village, and we’re distributed to small rooms with roofs made out of corn stalks, and doors without locks” (Ibid, 25). The lack of proper medication, transportation, and other basic amenities is noted through the end meted out to other Arab diasporic teachers. It is seen in the Egyptian teacher Ibrahim al-Damanhuri, who died of a snake bite. It was recorded as the obstruction caused by the road building that led to a delay in rescue operations. Similarly, the road was blamed for the death of Palestinian teacher Husam Abu Ali when a jeep overturned, killing him, made the Sudanese teacher Ahmad Uthman resign out of these dire living conditions.

Nonetheless, Adler notes that hallucinations may be a warning voice in neurosis. It makes the neurotic adhere even more stringently to the guiding principle. For example, Muhammad Hammad in *Prairies of Fever* is proud of being on the run but doubtfully so. He is declared dead, which no longer shocks him as much as being accused of murdering his missing roommate. Midway through the narrative, he turns suicidal when, instead of jumping into the well to save the fallen, he feels his descent into the well is similar to being buried in his grave. It is noted in the lines: “Then your own body started its slow descent into the mound of corpses that blocked the well, before making contact with the water and the smell of gas that hung in the dark” 36). He wakes up soon after and begins to run from the police chief again.

In another hallucinatory episode, a naked Muhammad Hammad is being chased by a pack of wild dogs only to find himself being laughed at. The time frame of this laugh is eight months, which becomes a memory for the longest time that is

suffocating. The source of the laughter is unknown. It arises from his fear of being found, caught, arrested, prosecuted, or even persecuted. Being laughed at is similar to being fully exposed, which his nudity symbolizes. The notion that he can be read furthers his paranoia. Hence: "The greater the feeling of inferiority, the more imperative and stronger will be the necessity for a steadying, guiding principle and indeed the more distinctly it manifests itself, and like compensation in the organic sphere, the effectiveness of psychic compensation is linked with a functional increase and brings about novel and many-sided manifestations in the mental life (Adler, 2001, 28).

Muhammad Hammad's unconscious is flooded with the image of Ustadh Muhammad Hammad, his name. Memory also betrays him. He recalls the life of Ustadh Muhammad, which is the same as everything that happened in his own life until he begins to see his apparition running next to him in broad daylight to avoid being caught by the cops. However, all of this running is equated to that of a wooden horse which cannot run in the first place. His neurosis is so deep-seated that there is no running away from it but only running further into it.

Muhammad Hammad's dichotomous state of mind marks his hypostasized state of anxiety. Nakedness adds to his anxiety, insignificance, weakness, awkwardness, incapacity, guilt, and remorse. There is a tendency to emphasize and exaggerate existence at large, as seen in the lines: "this absent presence, this existence that borders on nothingness" (Nasrallah, 1993, 44). The more intensely the deprivation is felt, the more need to assert oneself. It makes his alter ego an inseparable part of him while projecting it as a genuine individual in the form of his roommate: "Sometimes I believe I've known him since childhood, but I can't be sure of this since he does nothing to familiarize my memory" (Ibid, 88).

The inability to prove his points causes panic attacks that deteriorate his mental health. Panic can be seen in his myrmecophobia or the fear of ants. Such a phobia is a part of the more significant neurosis of Muhammad Hammad, which tends to feed all kinds of absurd fears, such as his chiroptophobia or fear of bats. It makes him roll his body inside the blanket so the bats cannot suck his blood. It occurs to him that he is being unreasonable, but the fact that his thought pattern remains unalterable makes him fall deeper into the abyss of neurosis. It is noted as: "Even after you'd locked the door and gone to bed, your fear persisted" (Ibid., 98).

Such instances from both texts provide examples of the non-national migrant character's suffering in the Gulf from a neurosis that is excessive, irrational, and stressful. Understanding the context from which the characters arise becomes key to deciphering their grievances. The presence of forethought or the ability to anticipate actions, according to Adler, is an essential task of thinking. Ambition is the foremost guiding principle towards the ideal and "hence the hesitating, cautious behavior of neurotics, their mistrust, vacillation and doubt" (Adler, 2001, 20).

Characters delineate their intermediate positioning in the Gulf while trying to maintain a balance by trying to blend in without being too demanding on their environment. It is marked by the inability to realize the illusiveness of the Gulf Dream. This dream is undefinably conceived without words as a way of living to do away with the uncomfortable insecurities of the present. Adler also mentions that the

neurotics live in a state of phantasy and the future: “All present existence is to him only a preparation” (Adler, 2001, 10). The Gulf dream, which may not materialize for many or may take a form beyond their imagination, can be equated to the fictional goal that Adler mentions. The future is embodied in it, which is misunderstood or misconceived as a permanent condition or a conditionally better option.

Hence, “Often his illness is borrowed from his environment either by simulation or exaggeration of actual ailments, all this in order to strengthen his position” (Ibid, 29). It aligns with Adler’s understanding of any individual as a united whole that intends all its actions. The fact that Muhammad Hammad’s death, disappearance, and his escapist desire coalesce into a single feeling is noted in the fact that he begins to enjoy this ability to go through spatiotemporal shifts, at least in his deranged mind. It is noted in the lines: “Before she had time to complete her sentence, you’d disappeared. You vanished completely, leaving Fatima transfixed by a circle of pain” (Nasrallah, 1993, 23). Despite having left that space, Muhammad Hammad’s ears ring with the incessant weeping of someone.

Neurosis in the case of Arab and Indian migrants in the Gulf arises out of their “in-betweenness” or intermediate positioning in the Gulf. It echoes Alfred Adler: “Often his illness is borrowed from his environment either by simulation or exaggeration of actual ailments, all this in order to strengthen his position” (Adler, 2001, 29). This experience of a larger situational neurosis in the Gulf is fetishized in both texts beyond any temporal order. It adds a timelessness to the already enchanting and fantastical narratives. Both narratives replicate the migration to the Gulf that is rigged with the uncertainty of work conditions and visa terms, which “forces the neurotic to a stronger attachment to fictions, guiding principles, ideals, dogmas. These guiding principles float before the normal person. However, to him, they are a figure of speech, a device for distinguishing above from below, left from right, right from wrong, and he is not so involved in prejudice that when called upon to make a decision, he cannot free himself from the abstract and reckon with reality” (Adler, 2001, 15). It also hints at the lack of proper mental health facilities for non-citizens in the Gulf (Zahid, 2014, 80). It asserts the need to seriously address the terms and conditions of employment of diasporas in the Gulf.

Ethnographic studies have reasserted that regardless of race, all non-citizens are deliberately pushed to societal margins in the Gulf (Kapiszewski, 2005, 68). These margins are discriminatory and grant non-citizen diasporas an inferior status by purposefully othering them. Diasporas in the Gulf are put in a position where they are welcomed to labor only to be excluded later. Additionally, the lack of migrant rights in the Gulf creates adjustment issues apart from the usual difficulties of relocating to a foreign land. For example, the two and a half pages of words describing the diasporic people in *Temporary People* who come in all shapes and sizes belonging to varied professions that end in: “City Maker. Country Maker. Place Builder. Laborer. Cog. Cog? Cog” (Unnikrishnan, 2017, 139). It acts as a record of what it means to be a member of the Indian diaspora in the Gulf. Regardless of professional affiliations, they are looked upon as congesting the employment system in the Gulf. It records the hierarchical basis through which the state relates to its non-citizen population for whom deportation due to violation of unwritten rules is very much real (Advani).

Existing in paradoxical states of neither being completely included nor completely excluded reflects the chaos behind “ivday” (here) and “avday” (there), as stated in *Temporary People*. Daily existence becomes akin to living in transit.

Emerging research in clinical psychology on the mental health of migrant workers in the Gulf shows that Arab and Indian writing from the Gulf had captured the essence of psychosomatic ailments in advance. While depression has been mentioned in clinical studies of diasporas in the Gulf, literary representations focus more on neurosis to address the contemporary social issues faced by diasporas due to exclusionary policies of the Gulf. Though the neurotic characters in *Temporary People* are not as elaborate, well-crafted, or phantasmagoric as Muhammad Hammad, they are not free from being neurotics altogether. It may be argued that personal causes of neurosis cannot be ascertained in every character. However, it cannot be denied that a patterned behavior in these characters emerges to evoke a context that has more to do with their employment conditions than personal shortcomings. Most importantly, the tension that these neurotics create in the narratives seeks to familiarize the reader with the racist ground reality, no matter how situation-specific.

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