

**NAVIGATING DIASPORIC SPACE: MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN
BENYAMIN'S *GOAT DAYS***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in
English Language and Literature*

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March 2025

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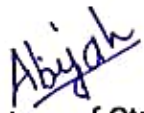
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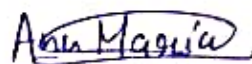
Paper ID 3400432

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Navigating Diasporic Space: Memory and Identity in Benjamin's *Goat Days*," is a record of bonafide work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Jeena Ann Joseph, Assistant Professor, Department of English, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, or any other similar title of recognition.



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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled "Navigating Diasporic Space: Memory and Identity in Benyamin's *Goat Days*," is a record of bona fide work carried out by Abijah Bertina Arby under my supervision and guidance.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who were instrumental in the conception and development of this dissertation. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, Principal, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam for her help and support.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Supervisor Dr. Jeena Ann Joseph, Department of English, St. Teresa's College, without whose guidance and encouragement this project would never have been completed. I am fortunate that I had the kind association of my guide, whose careful monitoring and unstinted support enabled me to complete this work.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Preeti Kumar, Head of the Department of English, and all the faculty members for their encouragement and support. I also thank profusely all the members of the faculty, for their endless support and valuable suggestion throughout my study period.

Abijah Bertina Arby

CONTENTS

	Introduction	1
Chapter 1	Avtar Brah's Concept of Diasporic Space in <i>Goat Days</i>	6
Chapter 2	Navigating Diasporic Space in <i>Goat Days</i>	19
Chapter 3	The Impact of Diasporic Space: Memory, Resistance, and Identity in <i>Goat Days</i>	39
	Conclusion	45
	Works Consulted	50

Introduction

The concept of diaspora has been largely analyzed within the fields of postcolonial and migration studies and has thus provided insights into the experiences of dislocation, cultural adaptation and transformation of identity. Avtar Brah's theoretical construct of the diasporic space expands this conversation to include the unique interactions of historical, social, and political forces that shape diasporic life. Unlike traditional definitions of diaspora that focus exclusively on the movement of people from one location to another, Brah's concept emphasizes the ties that bind migrants to those they left behind, their home homeland, further complicating questions of belonging and home.

Benyamin's *Goat Days* (that is, *Aadujeevitham*, its original Malayalam title) tells a harrowing story that of Najeeb, a Malayali migrant who, drawn by the promise of a better life in the Gulf, ends up enslaved in the Saudi Arabian desert. His experience encapsulates themes of displacement, alienation, and resistance they are central to diasporic discourse. The book, in documenting what his pain has been like, also reveals many of the mental and emotional devices he uses to navigate through. Looking at the bigger picture, Avtar Brah's ideas help us understand how Najeeb's forced move affects his identity and sense of belonging. The term 'diaspora' generally denotes forced migration or exile-like cases of the Jewish, African, and Armenian communities in quite another past. Presently, however, many scholars have expanded on this idea and now include people who cross borders on a voluntary basis, resulting in hybrid identities and cultural exchange. Diaspora is seen as more than just a journey; it's a state of being filled with tensions between one's home and the new country, inclusion and exclusion,

and the struggle between remembering and adapting. Diaspora is seen not just as a journey but as a condition marked by the struggles between one's homeland and the new country, feelings of belonging and isolation, and the balance of memory and adaptation.

In her important work, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1996), Avtar Brah introduces the idea of diasporic space, pushing back against the usual views on migration. She contends that diaspora isn't a uniform experience; instead, it is influenced by overlapping histories of colonialism, labor, and global capitalism. Diasporic space, according to Brah, is the active engagement among migrants, non-migrants, and the socio-political frameworks that regulate their lives. It is not limited to a specific geographic area but rather is a continuous process of negotiation in which various identities and histories intersect.

This framework is especially significant for *Goat Days*, as it enables us to view Najeeb's experience not merely as a personal battle but as a segment of a broader story concerning labor migration, economic inequality, and cultural detachment. His experiences in the Gulf illustrate how diasporic individuals are frequently dehumanized, regulated, and made invisible within global labor frameworks. Benjamin's *Goat Days* offers a sharp contrast to conventional diasporic narratives that highlight mobility, opportunity, and cultural blending. Rather, it reveals the grim truths of migration where aspirations for wealth transform into horrors of enslavement. The story narrates the torturous journey of Najeeb, who ends up being trapped in work and loneliness in this strange environment without any possible means of communication or freedom or social ties. Najeeb's story really stands out as a criticism of the harsh working

environments that are experienced by many South Asian migrants in the Gulf, stressing themes of economic inequality, systemic discrimination, and social disconnection.

Using Avtar Brah's theorizing as an overarching framework, the experiences of Najeeb serve as one of the most significant illustrations of diasporic space, where the intersections of power, race, and class operate to produce modes of regulation and exclusion.

The desert, without a trace of human habitation, means displacement and destruction. Yet, even with all his torture, mental and physical, Najeeb recalls his place of origin, Kerala, which serves as a tool of resistance against the erasure of his individuality.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Each focusing on various facets of Avtar Brah's idea of diasporic space in *Goat Days*. The first chapter will try to understand the theoretical basis by examining Avtar Brah's concept of diasporic space, its implications, and its significance in modern migration research. It explores essential concepts like inclusion/exclusion, hybridity, and belonging across nations. chapter two projects the Diasporic Space in *Goat Days*. This chapter utilizes Brah's framework to examine Najeeb's experiences, assessing the novel's portrayal of compelled labor, estrangement, and mental resilience. And chapter three analyzes the impact of diasporic space: memory resistance, and Identity in *Goat Days*. This chapter investigates Najeeb's homecoming to Kerala, analyzing how trauma and displacement persist in influencing his feelings of belonging.

Chapter one of the project traces the Avtar Brah's Idea of Diasporic which

tells about the theoretical background by exploring Avtar Brah's idea of diasporic space, emphasizing themes of inclusion/exclusion, hybridity, and transnational identity. It examines how historical, political, and economic factors influence diasporic experiences, highlighting the significance of Brah's concepts in modern migration research. The chapter also emphasizes how *Goat Days* reinterprets diaspora, viewing it not as voluntary migration but as compelled displacement and imprisonment.

The second chapter Explores the Diasporic Space in *Goat Days*. Using Brah's theory to examine *Goat Days*, focusing on Najeeb's experience as a migrant laborer in the Gulf. It explores his encounters with coerced labor, cultural disconnection, and mental anguish, illustrating how diasporic environments alienate and strip away his humanity. It further examines how memory and nostalgia serve as survival tools, emphasizing Najeeb's struggle against total loss of his identity despite severe anguish.

The third chapter is about the impact of diasporic space: memory, resistance, and identity in *Goat Days*. The concluding chapter explores the enduring impacts of Najeeb's displacement, emphasizing memory as a form of resistance, the influence of trauma on identity formation, and the intricacies of returning to one's homeland. It examines how Najeeb's identity develops, causing him to feel like an outsider even in his own country. The chapter wraps up by considering *Goat Days* as a critique of labor migration and a significant illustration of how diasporic individuals cope with displacement, survival, and the development of identity. This study seeks to deepen our understanding of *Goat Days* through an exploration of Avtar Brah's theory, which strives to portray these events as more than a survival story. Externally positioned with regard to labor

migration and diaspora, the novel exposes experiences of South Asian migrants in the Gulf that are constantly relegated to obscurity. The thesis will demonstrate that diasporic identity is continuously transformed through memory, displacement, and resistance, and that literature is a powerful site for giving prominence to these voices.

Avtar Brah's Concept of Diasporic Space in *Goat Days*

The basic diasporic spatial trend postulated by Avtar Brah gives a chance to comprehend the underlying migration and sense of identity not only on the physical ground but also in psychological area. Diasporic space refers to an example where a space has diversity in terms of culture, traditions and experiences as well as different stories of different people who form a network of relationships with each other through belonging, exclusion, and presenting personal attributes. To be specific, this framework is the most astute when it is employed in the stories of migrants because being physically distanced from their homeland is the one that leads to the creation of the tension between past, present, and future of the individual in terms of their imagined future. However this diasporic space turns out to be a geographic but also a conceptual connection where notions of home, identity, and community are in a continuous state of renegotiation. According to Brah, "The concept of Diaspora space is the very place where inclusivity, exclusivity, belonging, and unfamiliarity are open to dispute" (208–209). Therefore, it does really put a great emphasis on how identities change within the diaspora due to the fact they are not simple and they can be pliable regarding them based on the individual's sense of shadow and their connection with the dominant culture. In Brah's theory, a salient aspect is the idea of home being uncertain and therefore contested within the diasporic imagination. For a lot of people living in diasporic spaces, home is more of an idea based on memory and desire rather than an actual physical place. The imagined "home" becomes affected by the individual's cultural memory, family history, and personal experience of

migration. As Brah puts it herself, "Home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination"(192) in the diasporic imagination, underscore the ways in which displaced persons tend to romanticize their terrain of origin, resurrecting it as the idealized memory in stark contrast to their day to day existence. This fluidity of home is deeply tied up with memory studies, as it is their memories of home that provide a form of psychological anchor for diasporic persons resisting cultural erasure that may often be their lot in exile.

This is what the *Goat Days* is a case study for Brah's concept of diasporic space. Najeeb's journey physically displaces him into an alien but cruel environment, where he clings to memories of Kerala to psychologically navigate this disorienting and oppressive diasporic space. They are about home, family, community; actually, though traumatic, they take him somewhere closer to belonging, the soul deepening his cultural roots even where the environment is oppressive. In an idealized memory that sharply contrasts with his present experience of displacement and captivity, Najeeb's home is preserved. This collective memory of home thus continues to ground Najeeb, giving him psychological refuge in belonging even in the height of isolation.

In diasporic spaces, most members developed cultural memory as a mode of supporting continuity and resisting alienation in their current status. Najeeb's memories of Kerala are personal yet also belong to a larger collective memory of the Malayali people, for whom the memories act as a cultural and emotional lifeline in times of captivity. Memory studies can deepen Brah's idea of diasporic space by pointing to how these disconnected peoples actively use memory of home in resisting cultural erasure. Faced by his detachment from Kerala, Najeeb's home becomes, source of his memories, a mind-space of belonging and resistance

within the diasporic space that means a cultural survival for him.

In diasporic spaces, home takes on an initial ever changing character as one shifts from a physical geography into a mental space constructed and re-constructed by the memory and imagination. Home in Avtar Brah's theory of 'diaspora space' now becomes an important element in the theory of home for an exile or any displaced person. For the diasporic subject, the home ceases to be a fixed point of reference; it exists instead as "mythic place of desire" (Brah 192). By this theoretical assertion, one understands that the idea of home is imagined and highly idealized by the diasporic subjects themselves while passing through the actual uncertainties and alienation of their present surroundings.

Avtar Brah, by writing on diaspora, states how the term home is becoming elusive and contentious among sojourners. A symbolic place of belonging and identity becomes home; it can be built up through memory, rather than just a physical space. Brah states that "home is a mythical place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (192) meaning that many in the diaspora have 'home' as an imaginary site; it has emotional and cultural connotation but does not have direct reference to their real lives. In such cases, 'home' become sanctuaries from the dislocation that they naturally feel around their setting. For Brah, diasporic are those spaces in which the multiple identities, histories, and subjectivity are possible in their cross-positioning. It includes those blurry boundaries of belonging and alienation and the idea of 'home' turns out to be not a return to any original place but a continuing act of imagining and re-imagining one's roots. This notion reflects the experience of the displaced like Najeeb in *Goat Days*, whose mental construction of the homeland Kerala becomes a refuge against oppression in Saudi Arabia. By employing the Indian writer's experience of exile from Kerala, so much in contrast

with Brah's conception of home as fluid and contested, Najeeb's experiences will perhaps also resonate with him after his exile. While Saudi Arabia presents a hostile atmosphere for Najeeb, the location intensifies his emotional bond with his homeland. The in between state of longing only makes the classification of home more volatile, resting on his idealization of Kerala as an imagined fact. It thus functions as a sanctuary for Najeeb in his suffering; at times, the pain stemming from the very state of captivity seems unbearable, but the reflections of Kerala ease the pain. Memories of Kerala are not just a site of nostalgic yearning for him; they are intertwined with Najeeb's very consciousness and existence, which constitute the scaffolding holding him together in the midst of his unimaginable dehumanizing conditions.

The harshness of his present circumstances gives him nostalgia for Kerala. On the other hand, the desert that Najeeb finds himself in denotes his dislocation from emotional and cultural perspectives while Kerala, in contrast, is cool, green, and filled with sounds that symbolize comfort, safety, and belonging. As he narrates: "Even in the heat of the desert, I could feel the cool breeze from the coconut groves of Kerala." (Koyippally 129). This statement brings forth how his geographies and memories of Kerala bring mental respite from the torturous atmosphere of heat and bitterness that surround him there.

In this manner, it mythologize through memory creating Najeeb's idea of 'home.' It is a site of mental escape from the corporeal and emotional agonies of exile. His memories of Kerala represent more than just a longing for coming back to a physical location; they are also Najeeb's avenue for asserting his cultural identity and maintain a feeling of belonging in the face of displacement. These landscapes he remembers the rivers, paddy fields, and the coconut groves-become

horrific cultural icons in the context of his present captivity. Brah's contention that 'home' is a mythic space of desire for the diasporic subject is illustrated through Najeeb's memories of home scattered throughout the narrative. In this manner, memories become all the more meaningful, for they serve as a psychological survival mechanism the only connection left for him. The Kerala of Najeeb's memories is idealized a place that represents comfort, warmth, and emotional support. In Najeeb's reconstructions, Kerala is much more than a physical space; it represents a space that holds cultural continuity for him in standing against the alienation and cultural erasure he faces in Saudi Arabia. This mythic 'home' serves two functions for Najeeb. First, it provides psychological resistance to the onslaught of exile. Such memories impel a psychological resistance to his captors project of dehumanization and cultural obliteration. Second, even in its idealization, Kerala stands as a beacon of hope for Najeeb somewhere he can find the emotional strength of promise that he will one day return home. 'Home' for Najeeb is not merely a physical return that holds him mentally afloat during the whole process of displacement. Memory functions for individuals in the diaspora as an integral instrument in dealing with the movement and choice of space that are infinitely complex and most commonly disjointed by overwrought contradictions.

In *Goat Days*, for Najeeb, memory is instead an active process: a complex of survival and resistance. Remembering acts as a form of catharsis to some extent against the trauma and alienation of exile: it forges a link between the embellished past and the intolerable present. Another critical means of asserting one's cultural identity in these diaspora where physical and cultural boundaries are blurred is memory, a tool for resisting the alienation of exile. Avtar Brah's conceptualization

of diasporic space lays to rest the simple binary of "here" and "there" and instead foregrounds the intermingling of multiple identities, histories, and experiences in such spaces. According to her, diasporic space is alive, contingent on movement and displacement and the continuous shifting of identity. Brah states, "Diasporic space is neither a simple binary of here and there, but an intersectional space."^(208- 209) This proposition highlights that diasporic identities themselves are fluid to the point where one is not defined by one's very displacement but rather accounts for the various subtle ways in which memories, histories, and environments interact. Memory plays a crucial role in negotiation. For Brah, it is a lifeline in linking his past with the present so that the diaspora can preserve a bit of a sense of belonging and continuity, however alienated he/she might feel. Memory resides not in the past; it is ever-present and ever-changing, creating perceptions of present realities. For Najeeb, memories of Kerala are not just static recollections; rather they are living, vibrant forces helping him to negotiate his present and resist erasure of his cultural identity. In *Goat Days*, Najeeb's memory of Kerala functions as a source of healing and resistance against the atrocities of his exile in Saudi Arabia. Najeeb's individual memory is, in fact, a shared memory: the collective memory that belongs to the wider cultural and religious community he comes from. The memories from Kerala of festivals and religious practices, together with family gatherings, form this continuity of experience that connects him to his homeland, some of the ways of surviving his long-distance dislocation. This shared memory is immensely significant to Najeeb because it offers him resistance against his captors' attempts to wipe out his cultural identity. His physical cloudiness, a sharp contrast to the hostile landscape of Saudi Arabia, is liberated by the recourse to the memories of Kerala, giving him a sense of

emotional protection and identity.

As Brah argues, diasporic people inhabit a space of interference where different identities and histories clash. For Najeeb, the colliding layers of identity interact with memory. His memories of Kerala are united with not only his individual experiences but with a shared cultural and religious heritage that strengthens his belonging. In moments of severe physical affliction and emotional isolation, his memories serve as anchors to his being. These memories are vivid, sensory experiences connecting the present life he is living in Saudi Arabia with the past life in Kerala. For example, Najeeb remembers the communal act of prayer: "We used to pray together under the open sky, the stars watching over us like guardians." (Koyippally 130). Such recollections further assert Najeeb's religious identity and underline the fullness of community and belonging he attaches to the mythic land. Here, the open sky and starlight are more than just physical elements of the landscape; they become symbols of continuity and guardianship. Prayer connects him to a larger web of people who share his beliefs and cultural practices, thus allowing him to feel at home even in separation. Praying together under the stars also becomes a salient memory contesting the idea of shared memory in the diasporic space. For Najeeb, these religious practices become memories shared among the larger cultural traditions that justify and reinforce his identity. The stars watching over them were like guardians, referring to the collective history of his community for him: offering solace and protective embrace. Memory in this way becomes not just an individual act but a collective process that interconnects Najeeb with family, community, and cultural life. Najeeb's memories serve as a means to resist the erosion of cultural identity. The memories serve purposes that amount to an internal quiet rebellion against the

host denying dignity and stripping cultural markers. Through memory, Najeeb recalls his religious practices and family ties to resist cultural assimilation and dehumanization. It is a mechanism through which he retrieves himself, reclaiming self and cultural identity against exile and oppression.

Memory does not only preserve the past in diasporic contexts; it is also a potent weapon in the fight against cultural dismantling and personal dislocation that sometimes accompany exile. In *Goat Days*, Najeeb's memories allow him to contest the dehumanizing situations he experiences while being captive in Saudi Arabia. Remembering about his homeland helps him to resist the alienation his captors insist on imposing and sustains a sense of self despite cultural and personal disunity. Memory, as Avtar Brah conceptualizes it, is not a passive recall; popular use of memory within the diaspora runs in the opposite direction, a strategy of survival and assertion of one's cultural identity under conditions of pressure and intimidation. Avtar Brah does emphasize that diasporic memory isn't merely a way of remembering the past but is also an important means against the alienation that often comes with being scattered. "Diaspora is about kinship's of exchange, not boundaries," as Brah puts it.(Brah 210). Such insights become important in understanding memory in diaspora.

Internally, diasporic individuals find themselves occupying spaces where their cultural identity is not only muzzled but also regressed upon in varied ways.

Memory thus forms part of the resistance; it becomes "the way one asserts and keeps one's sense of self and belonging". For Brah, memory is thus an inheritance in all diasporic spaces, as it keeps one in touch with one's land and legacy, even with a distance that is felt both physically and psychologically. Najeeb relives his journey to Kerala in *Goat Days*; his memories thereby give him an important

supporting cord to preserve his cultural identity and resist the dehumanization imposed upon him by his captors. Najeeb escapes the harsh desert by memory, forming a sense of independence and identity that are denied to him in the present conditions of his life.

In *Goat Days*, Najeeb's memories of Kerala are not passive recollections, but rather they are active mental refuges that allow him to stay afloat in the trauma of exile. Subjected to the cruelty and isolation of his captivity, Najeeb's memories of home resist psychological assaults against him. These memories keep him alive against the alienation suffered in a foreign, oppressive space- the sounds of Kerala in particular: ""The chirping of the birds, the rustle of the palm trees"" (Koyippally 126). These sounds become enduring symbols of home keeping him firmly rooted in his identity and in his past. These sensory memories bring Najeeb continuity, momentary comfort, even in the desert. Brah with respect to memory as a survival mechanism stands validated here-these memories are not just remembrance for him but rather an active weapon resisting being stripped naked of his humanity. By clinging to the sound memory of Kerala, Najeeb fights the encroachment of his cultural markers, somehow preserving an affinity and identity that otherwise may have faded out. The Sound eloquently marks memory; this notion rings true for him. In the unforgiving landscape of the Kuwaiti desert, where his physical and emotional conditions are under continuous threat, the sound of Kerala-the chirping of the birds, the rustle of the palm trees (Koyippally 126)- is no mere memory. With each utterance, Najeeb reaffirms who he is and where he comes from. With every attempt of his captors to strip him of his cultural identity, Najeeb clings tighter to these memories. Hence his memories stand as a silent resistance against alienation and cultural assimilation. "Even in the depths of the desert, I held onto

the sounds of Kerala. The chirping of the birds, the rustle of the palm trees... they kept me alive," (Koyippally 127). This account testifies to how memory sustains life for Najeeb. Despite the physical distance from Kerala and the alienating space he occupies in Saudi Arabia, Najeeb's memories of Kerala are evocative and potent. The memory of Kerala's natural sounds becomes a life-giving force, overshadowed in day to day life. For Najeeb, these memory sounds are not merely nostalgic; they constitute an active means of resisting the oppressive forces surrounding him.

In the landscape of Kerala, Najeeb manages to hold onto the part of himself that is beyond the clutch of his resisters. The sound of palm fronds rustling and birds chirping is the sugar to the sensory memories and resilience to the heritage and identity. They become the head space for moment retreat for Najeeb from the hard reality of life in captivity, reaffirming his membership in a much larger cultural and geographical arena. More than serving as a mere link with the past, such memories are an assertion of Najeeb's current affiliation with Kerala and its cultural practices.

Najeeb's memories are not only anecdotal but rather collective and molded out of the cultural and religious practices of his community so that it could be argued that they are part of a larger frame of cultural exchange.

Here, therefore, holds true Brah's theory of diaspora regarding networks of cultural exchange rather than fixed borders. Memories of Kerala will hook Najeeb not only with family but also in wider nets of the cultural and religious community that he originates from. This memory becomes thus a collective experience. It is not only individual but surrounded in common cultural inheritance. Memories of Najeeb regarding Kerala are part of a larger composite

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tradition at the heart of which are the generations old patterns of celebrating festivals and religious observances, family attachments, etc. That collective memory allows Najeeb a claim of identity and belonging in the floods of alienation and dislocation in which the diaspora is engulfed. In the desert, where Najeeb has been torn away from his community, his memories are made to tie him with a much larger network of cultural exchange that is above the ability of corporeal and geographical boundaries. Such memories in Najeeb are not only a mechanism for survival but also a weapon used against cultural effacement imposed by the captors. By remembering certain communal rites and rituals, Najeeb is claiming his cultural autonomy in an area where it is otherwise under large threat. The diasporic theory-space of Avtar Brah has further been applied to *Goat Days*, unveiling the multifaceted ways in which memory bears in Najeeb's exile and displacement experience. Najeeb's diasporic space, an arena of different intersecting subjectivities, is where he experiences his captivity in Saudi Arabia along with emotional and psychological after-effects of physical separation from his homeland. Brah provides a way to envision Najeeb's memories of Kerala as not only sentimental remembrances of home, but as action-ready weapons in his battle with the alienation posed by his present condition and self-making. These memories create mental homes in *Goat Days*, "Memories," acts as an escape route for Najeeb: providing relief from that oppressive environment, which has brought about all suffering and confusion caused by captivity. For Brah, space at home for the diasporic imaginary on the other hand is mythic: a place of desire and longing that is never really pinched at some actual location that exists only in the mind of the displaced individual. Kerala is such a 'mythic' home for Najeeb: an idealistic

space providing emotional sustenance during despair. The memories of Kerala, especially the sensory experiences such as that of the fresh cool breeze grazed through coconut grooves or the sound of palms rustling in the wind, gave Najeeb a mental escape from the ruthless reality. Memory then becomes a site of resistance against dehumanization present in his environment. It's a vehicle that allows Najeeb to reach back to her cultural- identity roots, thus facilitating an external effort to shore up Najeeb's selfhood from pressures to assimilate and conform.

Memory in *Goat Days* turns out to be an experience of the collective as well as the individual. Instead, Brah argues that the diasporic spaces are defined instead by webs of cultural exchange. For Najeeb, it is the solidarity of shared memory: Kerala, and these memories will have a great role in sustaining his cultural identity at all distances, be they physical or psychological, from home. He remembers the part he played in community rituals and religious practices as well as family affiliations with the community, placing him within the larger cultural narrative beyond his experience. The collective memories theory of Maurice Halbwachs lends strength to the notion that memory is socially made and fashioned by the wider cultural and social contexts in which memory is shared. Najeeb's communion with the synthetic recollection of his community affords him the weapon to combat the cultural obliteration that he is currently undergoing, thereby confirming membership to a place and identity that transcend the alienating forces of exile.

If we can bring together Brah's insight and Najeeb's experience, we can better perceive the memory role in identities shaped in diasporic spaces. Memory also becomes an active force in that it allows Najeeb to resist the dislocation and isolation that exile imposes on this memory in the context of diaspora. With this memory, Najeeb continues to maintain a sense of cultural continuity by

preserving his identity and also resisting the forces of erasure that could otherwise strip him of heritage. Thus, memory is a form of survival: a way to clutch one's past, culture, and identity even in the most hostile of environments.

The straightforward relevance of Brah's theory in *Goat days*, memory is a psychological refuge and a means of resistance for Najeeb to traverse the politically fictional yet often hostile territory of diaspora. Because of his homeland and community memory's active recollection, Najeeb can remain who he is, belong even in disaster. It becomes a powerful site for understanding the many ways in which people throughout their travel in diasporic and exile spaces try to make sense of their lives in relation to past, present, and future events when considering Brah's conceptualization of diasporic space as an intersection in which diverse identities and memories collide. Ultimately, *Goat Days* speaks to the strength of memory and what it helps soldiers faced with cultural erasure accomplish in terms of identity within a frequently alienating world.

Chapter 2

Navigating Diasporic Space in *Goat Days*

Benyamin Daniels's Malayalam bestseller "*Aadu Jeevitham*", (2008) translated to English by Joseph Koyippally as "*Goat Days*", was published in the year 2012. Benyamin's poignant literary endeavor surpasses many Indian diasporic writings in shedding light on the atrocities faced by labor migrants who travel from India to Gulf countries in search of better employment and monetary avenues. The graphic and insightful description of the life of these migrants in a remote Arabian desert is quite startling. "*Goat Days*", makes the peripheral voices of labor migrants audible across globe. It diligently explores the diasporic elements of the protagonist's journey so as to convey the gruesome realities of the industrial wastelands and urban dystopia. The author explores the reasons behind voluntary labor migration and its effects on both national and international levels. The novel serves as a revelation for individuals worldwide who wish to relocate to other countries in pursuit of improved financial conditions. Using Avtar Brah's idea of diasporic space provides a way to understand the complicated lives of people who are caught between being uprooted and holding onto their cultural identity. In the novel *Goat Days* by Benyamin, the main character Najeeb is compelled to leave his homeland, leading to both physical and emotional struggles in a new environment. This chapter looks at how Najeeb deals with his diasporic space by exploring themes like cultural separation, the will to survive, defiance, and the growth of his identity. By examining Najeeb's experiences in the Gulf using Brah's perspective, we can better understand the complexities of diaspora as a realm shaped by memories, strength, and a longing for a place to call home. Migration is often seen

as a means to achieve financial stability and social progress, particularly for individuals from underprivileged regions. In *Goat Days*, Najeeb's move to Saudi Arabia is motivated by his wish for economic safety, a common aspiration among many workers from Kerala who look for better prospects in the Gulf. Instead, these experiences felt disconnected from the typical narrative of voluntary migration: success and stability were replaced by deception and a life marked by significant hardship and separation. Thus, migration transforms into a more unsettling story: what was once filled with the promise of a fresh beginning now centers around coercion, resilience, and resistance. For Avtar Brah, understanding Najeeb necessitates recognizing the importance of diasporic space. She expands the discussion beyond mere physical relocation, which traditional definitions of diaspora often emphasize, to include the social, political, and emotional dimensions of living in a diaspora. Brah characterizes diasporic space through dynamics of power, cultural interactions, and the tensions between belonging and the sense of exclusion.

The Gulf converts Najeeb into confinement and isolation rather than a land of new opportunities. His story has prompted us to think about what a diasporic identity means, particularly for people who cannot choose to leave their home country; in fact, from the very second Najeeb reaches Saudi Arabia, his chances of success seem hopelessly predetermined. Unlike other immigrants who come to terms with the new cultures, Najeeb is totally deprived of the opportunity to adjust to his surroundings. He becomes deprived of his freedom, unable to communicate, and forced to lead a life of total subjugation. This lack of choice marks a clear departure from the usual movement. In general, diaspora individuals enjoy some agency in managing their identities between the home country and the new one.

However, in Najeeb's situation, he is neither a chosen migrant nor an empowered individual within a diaspora he is a prisoner, a worker fighting merely to stay alive.

An important point of Brah's theory is her focus on "liminality" the notion that people in a diaspora exist in a transitional state, belonging completely to neither their original homeland nor the place they move to. Najeeb's disconnection from Kerala cuts him off from his cultural and personal identity, placing him in a liminal state where his previous life fades into the background. His longing for Kerala is his only consolation, showing how diasporic spaces have a psyche along with physicality. The protagonist's reminiscences of home, his wife, the expected arrival of a child, and the familiar vistas situated at his village starkly contrast with the constant disappointments of life in Saudi Arabia. Such forced relocation only complicates his thoughts, a crucial dimension of Brah's concept of a diasporic space. Probably another major impediment cementing his sense of alienation is the language barrier. Not being able to comprehend or speak the Arabic language has rendered Najeeb utterly speechless, unable to ask for help or defend his rights. This lack of foreign language capabilities are further exploited by his captives to tighten their grip on him. This communication breakdown illustrates the difficulties faced by many migrants who, upon reaching a new country, feel separated due to differences in language and culture. However, for Najeeb, the situation is much more severe his silence becomes not only a hurdle to adjusting but a crucial method of his oppression. Brah's idea of diasporic space also looks at how power dynamics affect the experiences of migrants. In the Gulf Stream, South Asian migrant workers frequently find themselves confined to the lowest level of a strict socioeconomic structure. The

Kafala system which effectively binds these workers to their employers with limited legal avenues for protection further exacerbates their vulnerability. Najeeb's predicament illustrates this exploitative model directly he is seen not as an individual but as a commodity, a replaceable laborer without rights. His captors maintain total authority over his body, his work, and even his personal identity.

At the core of *Goat Days* is the clear difference between Najeeb's aspirations and the harsh truth of his captivity. His original hopes for financial success are shattered by a harsh life filled with pain, isolation, and oppression. This disconnect is a recurring theme in numerous diasporic stories migrants often perceive their new country as a place of opportunity, only to confront unforeseen difficulties. In Najeeb's scenario, however, this disappointment is intensified. His journey does not follow the path of struggle leading to eventual integration or achievement. Rather, his migration narrates a tale of enduring hardships, with no promise of freedom or improvement. Even with the massive challenges he faces, Najeeb's determination stops him from completely losing his sense of self. His capacity to cling to his memories, dream of liberation, and preserve his cultural background even under severe oppression shows the intricate ways in which diasporic individuals resist being erased. Recalling one's identity acts as a means of defiance, serving to affirm his existence in the face of a system that aims to diminish him entirely.

Najeeb's journey to Saudi Arabia in *Goat Days* is not a voluntary decision; rather, it marks an unchosen entry into a brutal environment where he relinquishes all control over his life and sense of self. His journey reflects Avtar Brah's idea of diasporic space, which looks deeper than just changing locations to explore the

power structures, cultural battles, and feelings of being disconnected that characterize the lives of migrants. Unlike typical diasporic individuals who manage to balance two identities in a new country, Najeeb finds himself in a situation where he must focus solely on survival. His experience consists of forced labor, cultural disruption, and deep loneliness, transforming his migration into a painful ordeal instead of a journey of freedom. From the time Najeeb lands in Saudi Arabia, his hopes for financial security and a brighter future quickly fade. Rather than arriving in a land full of possibilities, he encounters deception and enslavement, trapped in a harsh system that takes away his voice. This stark contrast to his hopes shows the coercive aspects of his migration. Unlike other diasporic individuals who choose to adapt to new cultural settings, Najeeb has no options but to accept the harsh realities that surround him. He is not just a stranger in a different nation; he is a prisoner, stripped of even the most fundamental rights of movement and speech. His role as a bonded worker places him outside the standard understanding of the diaspora, marking his experience as one of severe marginalization. A notable element of Najeeb's experience is his cultural dislocation. In Kerala, he belonged to a lively social and cultural environment, connected by his language, traditions, and community. However, in the Gulf region, he loses touch with these comforting aspects of his life. The difficulty of speaking Arabic becomes a significant barrier, isolating him further as he struggles to express his anxieties, needs, or even to affirm his identity. This lack of communication intensifies his solitude, making it challenging to find his place in the new society. This linguistic disadvantage supports Brah's theory that diasporic spaces are influenced by power relations those unable to navigate the predominant culture often find themselves on the outskirts.

Furthermore, Najeeb's cultural identity is gradually diminished by his situation. He is compelled to live in utter solitude, tending to goats in an empty desert, encountering no one apart from his cruel employer. His existence falls into a dull routine of hard work and pain, robbing him of any feeling of belonging. Unlike conventional diasporic figures who might discover comfort in cultural groups or communities in their host country, Najeeb faces total isolation. This intense loneliness heightens his sense of dislocation, transforming his migration into a journey of utter alienation rather than one of cultural engagement. The emotional toll of being displaced amplifies Najeeb's distress.

The recollections of Kerala, his relatives, and his life prior to moving become his main sources of solace, though they also highlight the pain of his confinement. His desire for home grows stronger because of the sharp differences between his former life and his current situation. Kerala symbolizes warmth, affection, and human ties, while the Gulf signifies isolation, imprisonment, and a loss of humanity. Brah's idea of diasporic space indicates that migrants typically find themselves in a transitional state, caught between their original homeland and the country they now inhabit. In Najeeb's case, this transitional state is not only about identity; it represents a psychological struggle. He finds himself in a place where he feels he doesn't truly fit. His homeland is off- with the harsh reality he faces. Najeeb's resilience shows through his memories and his desire to limits and the nation that is supposed to host him disregards his existence. Even break free. His cultural identity, though in danger, continues to provide him with inner fortitude.



Imagining the landscapes of Kerala, his loved ones, and even the smallest details of his past life serves as a subtle defiance against the forces trying to obliterate his identity. These memories allow him to preserve a sense of self, even as his environment seeks to diminish his value.

In *Goat Days*, Najeeb's journey to Saudi Arabia reinforces his life into a situation of confinement and pain. Despite being physically imprisoned, his thoughts remain unchained his recollections of Kerala, his loved ones, and the beauty of nature keep him grounded, enabling him to fight against the total loss of his sense of self. Avtar Brah's idea of diasporic space points out that being displaced is not just a matter of location but also involves emotional and psychological factors. Najeeb's journey in the diaspora is colored not simply by the hardships of forced labor and isolation: he has great mental and emotional strength to bear the loss of his identity, through memory. His memories of his homeland are pivotal for his survival in an extremely harsh and lonesome desert environment. It is freedom, language, and cultural ties that elude him; in his mental world, it is Kerala that offers him a sense of belonging in an otherwise disparate existence. He dreams about the wife and the unborn child and the warmth of family bonds in the moments when he can find some solace in the harsh realities he faces today. Memories serve as a psychological refuge, equipping him with emotional support while reliving the agonizing moments he has experienced. In a setting aimed at erasing his humanity and identity, his capacity to remember the past represents a form of resistance, a means to assert his existence in a place that perceives him merely as a laborer. Nature also significantly supports Najeeb's resistance by fueling his memories. His recollections of Kerala's vibrant greenery, flowing streams, and familiar sounds

sharply contrast with the harsh desert surroundings he finds himself in. This stark difference highlights the disconnection between his native land and his current prison while emphasizing how vital memories are for preserving personal and cultural identity. According to Brah's theory, individuals in the diaspora often feel torn between belonging and isolation, and for Najeeb, nature symbolically represents this conflict. His desire for the landscapes of Kerala shows his ongoing bond with a realm that exists beyond his painful present, helping him resist fully conforming to the oppressive environment he faces. Najeeb's emotional ties to his home reshape how he perceives the diasporic space. Although physical displacement is a key aspect of being in the diaspora, *Goat Days* illustrates that one's diasporic identity is also profoundly influenced by memories and yearnings. Unlike other diasporic individuals who work to blend into a new culture, Najeeb lacks chances to define his identity in the foreign land. Instead, his experience in the diaspora is marked by loneliness, making his mental defiance even more important. His determination to remember Kerala, in the face of hardship, challenges the belief that being physically uprooted must lead to losing one's culture or personal identity. In addition, memory acts as a driving force behind Najeeb's desire to break free. His hopes of going back home prevent him from giving in to hopelessness, supporting Brah's point that diasporic places are shaped not only by loss but also by strength. By keeping his past alive in his mind, Najeeb chooses not to be a helpless victim of his situation. His deep yearning for Kerala, his community, and his identity strengthens his determination to endure, turning memory into a way to fight against both his captors and the loss of his identity. When Najeeb reaches the Gulf, his cultural identity is nearly wiped away. He transforms from a free individual to an anonymous worker,

dominated by his Arab master and trapped in an inhospitable desert alongside a flock of goats. The surroundings are unfriendly there is a lack of companionship, no chances for socializing, and no access to the cultural symbols that once shaped his identity. The dynamics of forced migration diminish him to just a laborer, separated from his history. A fundamental part of cultural identity is autonomy, and in captivity, Najeeb is stripped of it. He cannot decide his food, sleeping arrangements, or whom to converse with. The solitude intensifies his dilemma without his native language, cultural traditions, or social engagement, he feels emotionally and mentally isolated. His self-perception starts to fade, and at points, he even doubts his own humanity. The loss of his name and identity signifies the plight of numerous migrant laborers treated as expendable workers instead of individuals with backgrounds, families, and cultural foundations. Najeeb discovers ways to resist total assimilation into this dehumanizing system. His survival extends beyond the physical to also encompass cultural and mental dimensions. He adopts three main approaches to preserve his identity: faith, recollection, and language. The memory acts as a source of strength where the longing for home represents a significant way to resist the hardships faced by the character.

During his time in captivity, Najeeb frequently envisions the beauty of Kerala, his loved ones, and his previous life. He uses these memories to mentally escape from the harsh conditions around him. The comforting sights of Kerala's backwaters, tall coconut palms, and monsoon showers offer emotional comfort when compared to the vast deserts. These recollections serve as a barrier against overwhelming hopelessness, allowing him to maintain his sense of self in a stifling situation. So the Language plays a critical role in defining cultural identity, and for Najeeb, holding onto his mother tongue, Malayalam, is essential for

maintaining his identity. Even though he lacks others from Kerala to speak with, he continues to think in his native language. This inner dialogue shields him from fully becoming part of the unfamiliar surroundings. When a person forgets their language, they risk losing an important tie to their cultural roots. Najeeb's dedication to thinking, dreaming, and reminiscing in Malayalam is a subtle yet powerful statement of resistance. While captivity tests Najeeb's sense of identity, it also reshapes it. Being compelled to migrate places individuals in precarious situations where they need to balance the instinct for survival with the desire to stay true to themselves. When Najeeb finally escapes, he has transformed from the person who departed Kerala filled with aspirations for a brighter future. He shows signs of his time in captivity, yet he also represents the determination of someone who has struggled to remain recognized. Returning to Kerala does not restore his previous identity; rather, it marks the emergence of a new diasporic identity formed by painful experiences and strength. According to Avtar Brah's view, those in the diaspora are perpetually navigating various cultural spheres. For Najeeb, this means bearing the burden of his traumatic history while attempting to reestablish his place in his homeland. His identity is now shaped not only by his Malayali heritage but also by his experiences of survival in a foreign and unforgiving environment. Therefore, *Goat Days* demonstrates that cultural identity is dynamic it faces challenges, evolves, and can sometimes be reclaimed through acts of resistance. Desert in *Goat Days* transcends being a mere setting for Najeeb's suffering it actively influences his experience of displacement. Typically, diasporic individuals maintain ties to their homeland through other migrants, language, and cultural practices. However, Najeeb's situation is unique; he is forcibly separated from human society and placed in a dry, lifeless environment.

The desert's expanse, stretching infinitely in every direction, reflects the void he experiences internally, exacerbating his sense of powerlessness. It sharply contrasts the vibrant, green scenery of Kerala, which only exists in his recollections.

This geographical dislocation brings about an existential displacement where Najeeb no longer fits into any human environment. Unlike other migrant workers who might face hardships collectively, bonding over tales of home and nurturing a shared identity, he is deprived of even this minor comfort. The desert secludes him not only from Kerala but also from all human contact, rendering his suffering an intensely personal and unavoidable ordeal.

One of the most remarkable elements of Najeeb's experience is his total separation from society. His employer, an Arab farm owner, views him as an object rather than a worker, reducing him to a mere instrument for herding goats. There are no dialogues or camaraderie with fellow laborers only the monotonous repetition of arduous tasks in silence. The lack of language further alienates him; he cannot converse with those around him, leaving his thoughts confined to his mind. Unlike the standard diasporic experience, where cultural exchange and adaptation play a role, Najeeb's journey is one of absolute cultural eradication. He lacks the chance to assimilate into his new surroundings or affirm his identity. Instead, his existence is simplified to mere survival, dictated by his master's commands and the unyielding demands of the desert. The longer he endures this isolation, the more his sense of self begins to diminish, resulting in a transformation that deepens the gap between him and his previous life. A crucial element of Najeeb's alienation is his enforced relationship with the goats he cares for. Stripped of human contact, he starts to develop an unsettling connection with

these animals, not born from affection but as a necessity for survival. His reliance on them sleeping next to them for warmth, imitating their behavior, and even eating the same food obliterates the boundary between human and animal.

The idea of "home" is usually perceived as a refuge—a place where people feel safe and warm, where they feel the pulse of acceptance. For the migrant or the one who was compelled to depart from one's homeland, this region is not a static one; instead, it is a most dynamic and complex space shaped by memories, nostalgia, and long-term experiences. .Avtar Brah's diasporic space is an important concept in truly understanding Najeeb's hybrid identity, mainly focusing on the emotional and psychological upheavals that could happen in those spaces post-migration. So here the Home can be seen as a Space between Fraught with Memory, Not Just a Place .In Najeeb's case, returning home should be the epitome of joy, a dream that sustained him through his darkest times in the Gulf; instead, that homecoming turned out to be a disillusionment. He was not quite at peace, Desperately trying to recapture some semblance of life in his now alien home. This unsettling feeling, a direct result of the hardships faced by him, changed his understanding of home and belonging. This diasporic space, articulated by Brah, thus, signifies that migration is a two-fold twist: one being the actual relocation in space and time, and the other, a very deep emotional and psychological transformation for migrants. In the desert, yearning bitterly for home, he began to realize that for him home constituted much more than bricks and mortar—it included identity, security, and recognition as a citizen with dignity. Sadly, when he gets back to Kerala, he finds, the former home has changed for him.

Benayamin's *Goat Days* offers a grim depiction of forced migration, in

which the desert symbolizes alienation and displacement. In contrast to typical diasporic experiences where migrants often find comfort within cultural communities, Najeeb's journey is characterized by deep isolation. The expansive, desolate desert landscape epitomizes his loss of control, erasing his identity and relegating him to a life stripped of human connection. The lack of companionship, combined with his severe living conditions, heightens his feeling of estrangement, turning the desert into a psychological prison that solidifies his alienation. An Identity Hybrid Homeland-Shaped and Traumatized His longtime experience in the Gulf turned Najeeb into an outsider caught between two cultural realities. Yes, he has returned physically to the native land, but there still remains that part of him attached to the diasporic space of suffering. As such, Najeeb would develop a hybrid identity characterized by his Malayali root and traumatic past spent in the Gulf. This framework shows that diasporic people are always going between different cultural spaces and often bring the weight of the past along with them since they returned home. For Najeeb, Kerala is no longer the comforting constant place he had imagined it to be when he was held captive. All of a sudden, he finds himself alien to that world he had left behind. The people around him, including those he loved, cannot really appreciate how much he has gone through. This creates an internal dislocation for him in the very home he longed for. His time in the Gulf would also reshape his perception about the world. He had seen the Gulf as a land of opportunities before moving there, a place where you could get a chance to boast about financial independence as well as a more bright future. And this true picture broke that illusion.

The disillusionment then becomes a defining point in his post-return identity: he is no longer a Malayali who went abroad to work; he is one of the

survivors of extreme hardship, who has seen the worst of forced labor and modern slavery. His identity no longer tied singularly to Kerala but also to the larger narrative of migrant workers suffering exploitation in foreign lands. This duality speaks to the overall experience typical of many return migrants, who leave their home countries with the promise of economic advances but come back carrying very heavy emotional and psychological baggage. They're never really the same again: neither fully belonging to their homeland nor to the foreign land where they suffered. Najeed has now to reconcile these two identities, that of the one who left with the one that returned. Making Memory will have much of a significant role to play in Najeed's navigation in this new reality upon returning home. The past is not going to be forgotten or pushed aside; it runs energetically in the veins of consciousness. The trauma of captivity restructures his vision of self and spatial context. Memories of his suffering linger in a way that defines his interactions and perceptions, making it impossible for him to return completely to a pre-migration identity. Moreover, memories of Kerala that had been an emotional haven for him have become very much the opposite. Reminiscing about home inside the desert was liberation into a different reality. Coming back is more about remembering how different what he imagined would be and what he truly experiences. Kerala in memory was a safe haven; the Kerala he returns to feels alien. This memory-reality gap is a defining struggle for many displaced people. They tied singularly to Kerala but also to the larger narrative of migrant workers suffering exploitation in foreign lands. This duality speaks to the overall experience typical of many return migrants, who leave their home countries with the promise of economic advances but come back carrying very heavy emotional and psychological baggage. They're never really the same again: neither fully belonging to their homeland nor to the

foreign land where they suffered. Najeeb has now to reconcile these two identities, that of the one who left with the one that returned. Memory will have much of a significant role to play in Najeeb's navigation in this new reality upon returning home. The past is not going to be forgotten or pushed aside; it runs energetically in the veins of consciousness. The trauma of captivity restructures his vision of self and spatial context. Memories of his suffering linger in a way that defines his interactions and perceptions, making it impossible for him to return completely to a pre-migration identity. Migration is often viewed as an economic opportunity, an option to be availed for upward mobility, or just a sacrifice for some monetary stability. The unspoken other side of these migrations often includes forced labor and exploitation with emotional trauma attached to it. Even with many migrant workers working sterile environments and returning home, no one speaks of these realities neither the workers themselves nor do the community members they return to. In *Goat Days*, the silence of Najeeb upon his return to Kerala parallels the real-life abyss many Gulf returnees experience: social stigma, self-shaming, and lack of acknowledgment from their communities have rendered many unable to voice their agony. Mutism is not just Najeeb's reaction to trauma; it is a kind of collective act traversing the globe that has to do with ways in which migration narratives are given meaning, framed within the desires and aspirations of economic gain, rather than the human experiences attached to them. Najeeb uses silence as part of his coping strategy for trauma. In his mind, the eldritch inhumanity he witnessed in the Gulf is hardly something that he can articulate. This sits well with many return migrants, especially those who fall victims of exploitation or abuse in foreign lands. The migrants are expected to come back home with success stories-financial stability, improved social status, and economic contributions to their families.

When, however, they return with nothing in hand or with emotional scars, they are usually unable to talk about their experiences for fear of being disbelieved, pitied, or judged. The shunning of articulation by Najeeb is also due to the internalized perception of migration in society. Migration is seen as the first step to finding financial success in Kerala, as in other regions with high concentrations of Gulf migration. Stories of suffering have found little space in the public forum, especially those that run counter to the hegemonic discourse that portrays the Gulf as an opportunity land.

Returnees who cannot fit into this ideal persona are relegated to silence or stifled by stigmatization. Furthermore, trauma itself hampers expression and communication. In fact, psychological research has observed that it is mostly in cases of extreme emotional distress that people find it the hardest to put a name to their suffering. Najeeb's silence can be viewed as a symptom of PTSD: a condition so often seen in survivors of modern-day slavery and forced labor. The trauma of being held in captivity from being treated like a beast to being beaten and tortured by an extremely violent master and living in total isolation leaves debilitating scars that render it almost impossible for him to reintegrate into life as he remembers it.

Migration is often projected as an economic opportunity, an avenue to be used for upward mobility, or simply a sacrifice for some financial stability. The other darker side of forced labor, exploitation, and emotional trauma is mostly left unspoken; some feel it in migration situations, some workers in return to society, some not. In *Goat Days*, the silence of Najeeb returning to Kerala holds a parallel with thousands of Gulf returnees on the ground, unable to speak about their suffering because of social stigma, self-shame, and general unacknowledgment by

the society they return to. Najeeb's silence, therefore, acts not merely as an individual response to trauma, but rather as a collective response to show how migration narratives become meanings framed around economic aspiration, rather than the human experiences attached to them. For Najeeb, silence serves as a means of carrying his trauma through life. Putting anything into words seems in the realm of impossibility in light of the horrors he witnessed in the Gulf, tantamounting to dehumanization. This resonates with a host of returnee migrants, especially the ones who have been subjected to exploitation and abuse in foreign lands. Up-and-coming migrants are expected to return home with success stories: financial stability; improved social status; and economic contributions to families. Whereas, when returnees come with nothing, or emotionally troubled, the very discussion about hardships with returnees is shattered, for they fear disbelief, pity, or judgment.

It is precisely this means of articulation that Najeeb lacks as a result of the ingrained perception of migration. Kerala, like any other high Gulf-migration area, for many years has, in one way or another, understood a Gulf job as one way to gain the financial foothold. The consideration of narratives describing suffering has just no place in the public discourse, especially narrating from a contrarian perspective against the possibility of the Gulf as a land of opportunity. Therefore, those returnees who oppose the legitimate stereotype are silenced or stigmatized. In addition to this, trauma itself acts as an impediment to any kind of expression and communication. To speak largely, psychological research has shown that sometimes people become less able to verbalize their suffering in times of extreme emotional distress. Regarding manifestations of PTSD nowadays, Najeeb's silence is easy to understand: it is not the first time in PTSD research that this condition

has been examined in poor victims of slavery or forced labor. The trauma he suffered in captivity-to being beaten like a dog, suffering mercilessly under a vicious master, and being an isolated captive-will burn through his mind like an everlasting graph, each scar immovably etching itself into his consciousness, branding and stringing together the impossible life and irreconcilable pain he faces in his struggles to regain in decent life. Social Stigma and the Alienation of Return Migrants can be seen as Even when migrants do try to share their experiences of struggle, the understanding usually eludes them-the very many who never tried to leave home. To Najeeb, Kerala was surely home, it was not the belonging he once longed for. Back physically in his homeland, he has undergone experiences that have fundamentally changed him and created psychological distance between him and the people around him. His suffering remains invisible because society does not know how to acknowledge or address it. The above opens a broader pattern used in migration studies, in which returnees often find themselves socially alienated when coming back home. Many of these migrants from the Gulf return to Kerala with very deep emotional and physical scars. Yet public discourse hardly recognizes these hardships. Implicitly, in fact, there is the pressure to move on and continue with life as though everything had happened. This social expectation thus deepens the psychological burden of returnees since they navigate their trauma without relief as they work through it alone. In *Goat Days*, Najeeb's isolation accentuates the contradiction of return migration: home is supposed to be full of comfort and familiarity, but is, instead, transformed into another alienation site. He has not yet fitted himself perfectly back into the world he left but, instead, into the one he has. None of the people around him is able to see or understand his suffering. This dislocation is typified by most return migrants in that their

individual experiences leave a gulf between them and their communities. Besides, there is an economic angle in this alienation. Many of the returnees come back to financial instability, as their time abroad may not have paid off meaningfully for them in the end. Migration is predominantly viewed as an economic fence, and when they fail without such financial success, they become mere failures at times and not survivors. This even goes further in making discouraged about narrating their life experiences, as sharing may turn to another judgment other than empathy. So indeed, the story of Najeeb in *Goat Days* questions simplistic conceptions of migration and return. The journey itself through the novel unveils that the diasporic space requires not only geographic movement but also psychological movement. Migration is a non-linear path with a definite starting point and ending; it becomes an intensely trans-formative journey that reshapes the identity of an individual person, belonging, and emotional world. One of the most important themes of *Goat Days* is the way in which it messes with the idea of home. For Najeeb, certainly it does not bring the relief he imagined it would. Rather, he finds that home itself has changed-not physically, but in meaning to him. The memories of Kerala kept him going during the time of captivity, but now he finds that they were idealized, frozen in time. The Kerala that he comes back to is the same, but he is not. This disconnect highlights how migration A place is made more emotional and psychological than a geographical one.

Doubtless, it has shades of Najeeb's experience of the fragmented belonging that somehow characterizes the diaspora. He still carries his suffering when he came out of the Gulf and does not allow him to reconcile with his former life. He has now acquired a hybrid identity based both on his Malayali roots and traumatic experiences abroad. He exists in liminality-neither in Kerala nor in the

Gulf- embodying the struggle of many returnees caught up between worlds. *Goat Days* throws the reader into the harsh realities of migration as against the hitherto overwhelming narrative of economic success. This goes beyond centering Najeeb's silence and estrangement to make audible the cries of thousands of returnees suffering as they do unrecognized. It disrupts the romance around homecoming and illustrates that the displacement restoration very often amounts to a new struggle, one in which old matters, too, have to be reconciled with the new.

Chapter 3

The Impact of Diasporic Space: Memory, Resistance, and Identity in *Goat Days*

Avtar Brah's concept of Diasporic Space is intrinsic towards the understanding of migration, exile and identity in physical and psychological spheres. Diasporic space is a multilayered realm wherein diverse identities, histories, and experiences intersect, creating a complex web of belonging, exclusion, and cultural negotiation. This framework offers important insights, especially in the context of migrant narratives where a rupture from the homeland leads to a conflict between the person's past, present, and possible future.

The psychological survival of Najeeb's memories of Kerala are sharp and unrelenting throughout the novel, and give him a sense of purpose as well as emotional comfort. Stripped of fundamental human rights and forced to work long hours in the desert, he often finds his thoughts turning to his village, the family he left behind and the small pleasures of life in that now distant world. These memories serve as a refuge where he can briefly escape his painful reality. By extrapolating the landscapes of home the smell of the monsoon rains, the sight of coconut trees, the rumblings of family in his mind, Najeeb resists total psychological disintegration. Brah's concept of diasporic space shows how migrants often experience dislocation as an identity crisis. In Najeeb's case, his captors try to render him nameless.

In *Goat Days*, nostalgia is sidestepped from a mere yearning for the past to the point of actual resistance. By glowing the image of his family's love and a familiar village, Najeeb poignantly resists the bleakly violent world imposed on him. The reminiscences of his close people supply him with the hopes of obtaining

the freedom and living in the way he likes as opposed to the current situation. In comparison with the physical forms of resistance that can lead to tough consequences, nostalgia represents an inner form of rebellion, which is impossible to get from or track. Also, Najeeb's memory of home is instructive to him, for it gives him hope, which has a positive effect on survival. In place of falling into despair, he lives through the conviction that he will get back home one day. This hope becomes Najeeb's lifeline and it is what makes him fight off the feelings of uncertainty and fear at their bleakest moments. His memories of Kerala in those heartbreaking moments comfort him by reinforcing the thought that his anguish is not something permanent and that his true consciousness is still attainable, above the area that confines him. According to Avtar Brah, the diasporic experience is the stage where one's identity is at stake, the people are forced to a perpetual state of non-being in a space where they are not welcomed. For Najeeb, both his cultural and personal identity are safeguarded by memory. Najeeb's memories of what things were like prior to migration the relationships, the traditions, the everyday situations serve as a countermeasure to the obliteration of self. They dehumanize him through the exploitation of his labor which he counters by holding on to his past which is the quintessence of his being. Moreover, his memories also influence his perception of freedom. In his flight, Najeeb misses his home, but he feels that the experience has definitely shaped him. The delight of walking down memory lane is in that it also problematizes his homecoming as it is a necessity to join the past and present by engaging the past trauma and acknowledging the differences' in times becoming nostalgic. The novel subtly inquires whether home offers the same comfort even if people are displaced from it which is a demonstration of diasporic identity's many layers.



Goat Days is not just the physical and emotional struggle pointed out in the exotic solitude in which Najeeb is under the terms of servitude. His transitioning from a hopeful migrant laborer to a profit-generating captive of the sand dunes is his own life story; however, it represents the broader story of migrants who have been left behind in the whole world. The harsh reality of forced labor that forces him to be only subject to the will of his captors might at times make him feel as if he were in hell. Moreover, such conditions for him make him incredibly vulnerable and test his strength which is always at stake. Here, we can see the psychological impact of displacement faced by Najeeb, who is already in a painful state, suffers because of the most difficult situations such as isolation, fear. He is not able to communicate with any person, only the goats he tends, and this eventually brings about extreme loneliness to the extent that he is gradually devoid of his own feelings. His mental agony of displacement is aggravated by the inability to communicate to any human being.

His inability to speak the same language as the others results in him being neglected and hence dehumanized more and more. His emotional suffering is truly the point of silent rebellion daydreaming, family memories, and finding the ways to escape his identity. In his confinement, he fights back with the only thing he can and that is his thoughts that stay with him like a friend. Beneath the scorching sun of the desert, he lacks the basic necessities food, water, and shelter. His body is frail due to hunger, exhaustion, and extended exposure to severe conditions.

The suffering that Najeeb endures is insufferable and beastly. The slaveholders think of him as an object without personality or dignity and only a machine for work. His everyday life is full of hard physical activity. This is expressed by the tedious shepherding look after the goats in the desert which he

does often without rest. He is bound to be beaten and reprimanded for his minor mistakes which not just reinforces the power of his captors but total control that they have over his life. His persistent physical pain shows him the way to get through life which is already a burdensome task. So, Against all odds, Najeeb's strength of character is really amazing. His ability to keep confronting the harsh conditions without completely giving up thus the proof of human strength. He is not directly opposed to oppression, as he understands that such a method would provoke violence, but he uses mental power refusing to lose the sense of self as his main act of resistance. His liberation from captivity is not only a physical freedom but also a mental one. The moment he leaves the desert he takes back the person he has lost. His trip from enslavement to freedom highlights the external themes of displacement and survival, revealing the multifaceted battles that the migrants have in adjusting and coping with the new reality.

Najeeb's journey in *Goat Days* is not only an act of physical displacement, but also a process of identity transformation which has been shaped through his endurance, staying power, and eventual exit. So, first, he sees himself as a bright prospective immigrant seeking a better place to live, but his detention in Saudi Arabia modifies him from the one above into a survivor who has to hammer out his life inside a suppressive system. At the start of his journey, Najeeb emerges as a Malayali skilled laborer who looks for foreign jobs. His migration is motivated by the need for money and the hope for a better life. However, there is a twist; since coming in, he is given no chance to make free choices, he is enslaved, and his life is stigmatized. During this time, his identity is severely tested. His name, language, and mostly his individuality are being vanished, reducing him to a body made out of labor. Najeeb has an alteration in the perception of who he is. His



captors try to convert him entirely into what they are but his memory and inner strength do not lead to his total transformation into the forced identity. His stance is muted yet essential by means of subversive acts, calling to mind earlier times, and the left-over of his mother tongue in his thoughts, he, then, keeps up with his previous self. At this point, when Najeed flees, he feels as though he is a completely different person. His ordeal has altered his views of the concept of freedom, the very essence of survival, and the course of migration. Now he is not the same as the young worker who got up from Kerala; instead, he takes with him the burden of the past sufferings and the realization of the fact that diasporic identity is both intricate and unstable. By negotiating the identity, he puts into display the large struggle of migrants who need to harmonize their previous lifestyles with the new difficulties of moving and staying alive. Arriving back from the place of his confinement to Kerala is the event which makes Najeed meet an inevitable obstacle, as he cannot now easily become a part of something he previously was. His experience in the diasporic space has profoundly altered him, making his return not a successful homecoming but a ponderous repositioning between past and present identities.

Even though all these days he wanted to come home just to be with his loved ones again, the trauma that he had to put up with is a barrier that at present separates him from the environment which was his home. Relationships with the family and close friends are also not the same anymore, as they try to figure out how deep his pain had been. Not only does Najeed not talk about his experiences with anyone, but also it is this factor that causes greater rift between him and others, which means return migration has emotional walls too.

Furthermore, the way he looks at Kerala has been radically damaged. What

once was a symbol of security and inscribedness is now alien, as he suffers from post-traumatic stress due to slavery and displacement. The tension between the two also reflects Avtar Brah's rationale that home is not a stable place but a changeable, multifaceted area that is determined by the events of travel and return. In the final analysis, Najeed's journey is a proof of the fact that diasporic identity is not solved at the moment of return but is an ongoing one as migrants negotiate their past traumas with their present realities.

Conclusion

Migration has long been seen as an avenue to better opportunities, but Benjamin's *Goat Days* poses a challenge to this romanticized idea by portraying the brutal realities of forced migration. By putting to work Avtar Brah's understanding of diasporic space, this thesis finds that the novel locates migration less as a path to personal achievement, and more as a journey marked by the values of confinement, struggle, and defiance. This conclusion restates the prime points argued for in the study: first, that diasporic space in *Goat Days* is a space of exclusion and survival; second, that Najeeb's journey provides a deeper understanding of the spectrum of identity, displacement, and return. Avtar Brah's concept of diasporic space has proffered vital insights into the understanding of *Goat Days*: forced migration is not just about movement but also entails the very power relations that decide inclusion and exclusion. By contrast to the usual migration narratives that stress assimilation and hybrid identities,

Brah's exposition brings into sharper focus the political, economic, and social configurations at stake in the experiences of migrants. This analytical angle becomes crucial in the reading of *Goat Days* since Najeeb, a migrant worker, undergoes complete alienation, exploitation, and has no agency in the foreign land. Exploitation, according to Brah, shows that such aspects of diasporic space comprise aspects of inclusion and exclusion as migrants find themselves in liminal spaces, not fully integrated into either homeland or the host country. Najeeb's experience provides that contrast during his time in Saudi Arabia; he is present in the country, yet absent from all rights, freedoms, and basic cultural assimilation. His position as a Malayali migrant worker places him lowly in the caste hierarchy,

thereby exemplifying the view put forth by Brah that diasporic identities are constituted by power structures and not cultural hybridization alone. The first chapter of the study set the theoretical framework, discussing the link between Brah's concept of diasporic space and migration and identity. In this chapter, the construction of diasporic communities through narratives of home, belonging, and displacement was discussed, especially that diasporic space may always be treated as more than simply geographical space; it becomes a battleground over which struggle, negotiation, and identity radicalization operate. The chapter further showed how Brah's theory was applicable to *Goat Days*, in that migration here is mostly not voluntary; rather, it becomes a condition of the protagonist imposed upon through deceit and coercion.

The second chapter applied Brah's ideas to *Goat Days* and examined how Najeeb's standing as a migrant catapults him into the extreme margins. The movement of Najeeb from Kerala to Saudi Arabia was very much one of a different kind not cultural exchange but one of bondage and degradation. The novel portrays how forced workers are denied an agency of their own, thereby fortifying Brah's assertion that diasporic space is a construct determined primarily by power architectures limiting freedom and belonging. This chapter also explored how memory and nostalgia emerge as the backdoor escape route for Najeeb to stay alive and maintain a dubious link with a fractured identity.

The last chapter has probed into the long-term effects of Najeeb's displacement, pointing out the intricacies of identity formation under the influence of diasporic trauma and complications in returning. While Najeeb escapes from physical capture, his sense of being lost is splintered, a case exemplifying that diasporic subjects cannot recover their past identity wholly. This corroborates



Brah's view of a diasporic identity being in constant flux, influenced by the weight of past memories and the impact of present realities. Therefore, after returning to Kerala, being emotionally severed away is an evidence that the diaspora is not only concerned with the movement; it also entails psychological and cultural dislocation. A Diasporic Space is a Site of Power and Resistance the study's most striking finding is that a diasporic space in *Goat Days* is a site of resistance beyond a site of suffering. Najeeb's memories of home become a form of protest against his attempts to be enslaved and isolated, aiding him in avoiding total disintegration of his identity. His memories become an act of psychological survival, one in which he consciously refuses to forsake his cultural roots, language, and personal memories. This, then, brings Brah's argument of being an active participant in negotiating identity on the part of the diasporic subjects and not being passive victims of displacement.

Najeeb's resistance finds its limits in structural inequalities, which point to how the power constellation in the diasporas form migrant experiences. The Gulf labor migration system has been purposely designed to keep workers below the threshold, taking away their legal rights, freedom, and mobility. Najeeb's suffering is the picture of so many South Asian migrants in the Gulf, whose profound existence is defined by both invisibility and exploitation. It throws into relief the fact that such diasporic spaces could brutally exclude, reaffirming Brah's contention that diasporic identity is tied in to systems of power rather than simply to cultural hybridity.

The complications of return and the permanence of diasporic experience is another important contention here is that diasporic identity is not washed away through repatriation. Najeeb's repatriation to Kerala does not bring back his lost

sense of self; instead, it disorients him even further, thus mirroring Brah's notion that diasporas are not about getting from one place to another; they are all about how identities get permanently altered by displacement. Najeeb's trauma follows him to work back home so he cannot return to the life he once knew. His experience complicates an already complicated binary of home and exile, proving that diasporic subjects exist in limbo and can never truly belong to either their homeland or their place of settlement. Even when Najeeb manages to escape physically from captivity, internally his emotional and psychological state remains in a deep exile. This stands against the grain of the typical "happy-return" trope in migration narratives, demonstrating how diasporic encounters leave deep wounds that do not get healed by being back home.

This thesis contributes to the fields of diaspora studies, migration literature, and South Asian labor narratives by applying Avtar Brah's theory to a novel that questions the traditional paradigms of migration. *Goat Days* envisions a dystopic rendition of the diasporic experience where migration becomes less a site of opportunities but rather a site of extreme exploitation and suffering. By applying Brah's theory, the present study has demonstrated how the diasporic spaces have been shaped by power structures that include and exclude different subjects, rendering certain others invisible, as opposed to just cultural hybridity.

The present study emphasizes the role of memory within the diasporic narrative and illustrates how displaced persons engage with their identities through nostalgia and internal resistance. The scope of the discussions surrounding the concepts of forced labor and South Asian migration have now been widened to cover the point that being part of the diaspora does not necessarily mean a voluntary act; on the contrary, many are shaped by coercion,

desperation and an economy of need. It remains a gripping story and a shocking exposure of the idealized perceptions of migration, bringing to focus the harsh realities of forced labor and cultural alienation. Running parallel to Axtar Dadi's journey of the diasporic space, this thesis has exhibited that migration is not merely about physical movement but entails the navigation of structures of power, exclusion, and survival. Nareek's narrative is not simply one of displacement but witnesses the resilience and suffering of myriad migrant workers who lived through the daunting shadows of the global labor economies. This research demonstrates that diasporic identity is fluid, fragmentary, and highly negotiated. Home return does not mean restoration. Diaspora is a lifelong traverse through Nareek with respect to withered, belonging, and resistance.



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