



## NAJEEB-THE SYMBOL OF VICTIMIZATION IN BENYAMIN'S *GOAT DAYS*

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Victimization is a perpetual issue that occurs all over the world. It refers to the outcome of an intentional action that cause harm to a person. A victim is a person who is impaired, injured, or killed as a result of a crime. Victimization is generated when hoax imposed on innocent people. “We live in a society of victimization, where people are much more comfortable being victimized than actually standing up for themselves.” (Marilyn Manson). A person who have been victimized is experiencing the negative consequences of the intentional actions taken by another person cunningly.

In the early 1990s, the Iraq war crippled the Gulf region, especially the oil exporting countries. The middle of July 1990, confrontation between Iraq and Kuwait intensified on oil policies and other matters, after the war there was a period of increasing employment opportunities in all the post- war countries. During the post-colonial period, a mass number of Indians started migrating to foreign countries especially to the United Arab Emirates. Emigration by skilled and semi-skilled workers from India to the Middle East is a strategy for better economic returns. Significant migration from India to the Persian Gulf began in the 1970s, following the oil boom. Since then, an increasing number of semi- and unskilled workers from South India started to work in Gulf countries on temporary migration schemes in the oil industry and in services and construction. Most people are from the south Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. These states have a historic connection with the Gulf countries, they have large Muslim populations and are experiencing high unemployment rates when migration picked up in the 1970s.

The nature of migration to the Gulf is different from the Migration to other developed countries. “Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety, and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family” (Web Ban Ki-Moon). First this stream is dominated by unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and second, being workers on contract, they must return home when the contract expires. Since the contrast is time bound, families do not accompany them nor are they generally allowed by the receiving countries.

Benyamin's (1971- ) *Goat Days* (2008) shares the real-life experiences of a Malayali migrant named Najeeb Muhammed. He is a sand miner, the daily wage income is not sufficient for a three-member family, moreover they are expecting a child too. There is a rumour that, soon sand mining from the river should be regulated so he may lose his job. While trying to balance life one way or another, he remembered that one of his friends from Karuvatta casually mentioned about a visa during their conversation. A four months pregnant wife and ailing mother, when thinks about all those things he has no idea where it goes. Gulf life is an eternal dream of an ordinary Malayali.

After the Iraq war, the oil exporting companies increases their job opportunities especially in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the other Arab countries. Najeeb is ecstatic that he gets a good opportunity to improve his living standards. It is a general way to discuss it with his wife Sainu. She says: “It is a god



send opportunity, ikka, does not waste it. How long have I been telling my brothers about this, and nothing has happened.” (GD 36). He strongly believed that Allah has given him a great blessing during his life’s sufferings. The very next day he agrees and informs it with his friend who is from Karuvatta. The visa is arranged by the brother-in law who resides in Karuvatta. Thirty thousand Indian money is immediately needed in order to arrange the visa. Twenty thousand is for the Arab for the visa arrangements and other Ten thousand for given to the Bombay agent and for the other expenditures.

The next two weeks are an unforgettable period in Najeeb’s life. Before his friend’s brother-in law leaves he must collect twenty thousand. He is lending out money from his friends, relatives, sand miners and fixed up the total by mortgaging the house and the little gold from Sainu. Fortuitously, he gives the money to his friend and he is waiting for the visa. Najeeb thinks of his dream city. Like the dreams of every migrant, he assumed of buying new television set, radio, fridge, gold chain, big house and the list goes on there is no ending.

Najeeb is the common figure of every ordinary house hold in India. His dreams, his feelings, emotions, and everything is similar of the century. Needs will drive man to his destination. The point is whether to accept the challenges in abroad or to stay in India with all constant issues.

In due course, Najeeb got the news that his visa is ready, he praises Allah for the mercy. He is in the seventh heaven,

Nobody would have embraced his wife like I held Sainu that night. My son? Daughter? I would not be there for the birth. I would not be able to massage Sainu during her big pain. As if to make up for that, I kissed Sainu’s growing belly, but whenever I return, I will bring enough presents for you. (GD 39).

Some situations in lives are more absurd than a film scene. In course of his preparation to the journey he buys some new clothes, his wife and mother made some hand-made pickles. Through her words: “Why ikka, you are going to a land where everything is available in plenty.” (GD 41).

It is a normal thought that her life is going to be changed. Najeeb says heart-felt good bye to his family, friends, relatives, and even to his entire locality. It is a dramatic moment. “I did not heed the tears of Sainu and Ummah. I was reluctant to sob in public.” (GD 40). Along with Najeeb, a tall and thin lad fellow traveller Hakeem from Dhanuvachapuram, he also gets a visa along with him, through the same brother-in-law to work in the same company. Both reached Bombay, there the luxurious life of the people and the city made him to think that his future days will be going to cherish and started dreaming about his upcoming days in Gulf. From there the flight departed to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, without knowing the harsh realities of life. “City of my dreams, I have arrived, kindly receive me.” (GD 43).

The days Gulf countries are not much established on T.V, so that obviously he knows everything only in the words of others. He is unaware of the place, people, and the language. These two anticipated Indians reach Riyadh.

Another strenuous effort is to find out the person, who pick them from the airport. It is a herculean task to find him from the midst of the crowd. He meets a fellow Malayali, who works in the airport for his



help. He asks him about the name of the company, place, and everything, but the poor Najeeb know nothing. From the person Najeeb comes to know that he is going to work under one Arbab, (which means saviour). He holds that his Arbab will come soon. Circumstances makes a man victim. He patiently waits and finally there they meet their Arbab. His grotesqueness and gestures made Najeeb, a thought that he is his Arbab. He meets Najeeb and asks “Abdullah?” and pointed his fingers at him. He had never heard such a crude voice before. He shook his head indicating no. The same way he points to Hakeem, he also shook his head indicating no.

Even Arbab says some words in Arabic but they could not understand. Although, Arbab calls the name Abdullah, both innocents they do not think much about it. Illiteracy and ignorant are evident that came up into a closure that, his Arbab is totally disturbed because he may wait in the airport for so long hours that is the reason for his impatience. Silently they followed him and enter his pick-up van. Najeeb is exhaustive that at last like everyone he gets his Arbab. In this situation, one can understand perplexed situation, it is his mistake to think it would be his Arbab, though he is not his actual hired employee.

Najeeb makes a slight comparison that he sees many Arbab’s in the airport but their smell and even their sweat has some fragrance but his Arbab has no such quality. It is the first time he travels in the Arabian roads; they zealously enjoyed the ride and they reached their destination.

Arbab gestured Hakeem to accompany him, but at the same time, he does not allow Najeeb to follow them, Najeeb, thinks

even in the darkness I could see his eyes redden with rage. I asked him something in Malayalam. His furious gestures failed to drive me back to the vehicle. Then he unbuckled his belt and swung it in the air once. It’s blood-curling whoosh was frightening. (GD 56)

This is the first time Najeeb came to know about the grim reality of his future life. He and Hakeem are separated, and the Arbab locked the gate from outside. Arbab hands over him to another Arbab and his accommodation must be somewhere else.

Najeeb reaches his place, that is almost one kilometre far from Hakeem’s place. This is totally different, full of desert and there is no sign of human presence. Moreover, there is no sign of tent or any other building. Najeeb is totally struck, full of sand dunes, unaware of his accommodations.

I could see some shadows move, moan, and jump inside the fence. Then, as if to acknowledge my presence, I heard a light whimper. It was the bleat of a lamp! I peered inside the fence. Goats! Hundreds of goats! Rows of goats, undulating like a sea. It struck me like a thunder bolt. I had a rough idea of my job now. (GD 59).

Najeeb gradually gets the idea of his nature of job, and thinks of his pitiable condition. He is actually scared of everything. There he meets a man and his appearance forces him to call as “scary figure” It had matted hair like that of a savage who had been living in a forest for years. His beard touched his belly. He had on the dirtiest of Arab clothes.

The scary figure laughs at him and says something in Hindi but the language is the barrier of their communication, although he could not understand his words but he clearly knows the pain in his eyes,



there is sarcasm in his word. Language is not at all needed to understand one's pain, his eyes would tell everything.

Najeeb is totally uncomfortable with his new place, there is disgusting and offensive smell everywhere. In his first day he does not have anything to eat and is totally tired. There is no shelter at all, so he sleeps in the sandy desert, and used his bag as pillow. Arbab asks him to wore off his new clothes and leather shoe instead of it he forced to wear the nasty clothes as well as the boots. When he enters that he understands himself that it is the initial stage of becoming another scary figure. He learns the first word *Masara* and thought that it may be the name of water. Najeeb knows about his job. There are almost twenty-five sections and each section has fifty to hundred goats. In every section there are tubs for water, his job is to fills up all the tubs for the goats. Arbab shows his binoculars and gun to Najeeb, indirectly he tries to give him a warning. He realizes the fact that escaping from that boundary is quite impossible one.

“A broken immigration system means broken families and broken lives” (Jose Antonio vargas). Najeeb's pitiable condition goes to various extremes, in order to clean his private parts, he takes some water from the tubs, before using it he gets a slap from Arbab and he furiously takes the water mug. From the incident Najeeb gets that for this type of trivial things water should not be used. when he was in his home town, he spent most of the time by drowning in the river, he practices a punctual and disciplinary life style. Cleanliness is his ideology, but the harshest thing in the desert is the ban on sanitation. He hesitately eats the khubus without washing his hands. Instead of using water he uses the stones to clean his body. Another problem is his food in the morning and evening time he gets only the khubus and water along with hot milk. The most pitiful thing is that he is in the middle of the desert and there is no shelter anywhere and he exhausted under the sun burn.

Through this depiction there is a blind belief that gulf life is the peaceful and safe one, every migrant who misses out their homeland, their family, customs, and traditions and unfortunately, they are forced to do the task for the sake and the betterment of their family.

Najeeb realizes that scary figure escaped from this place and he feels satisfied that once he too will escape from this desert. The goats that separated in different shelters as of their varieties and age wise. Herding all the cattle camels in the wide desert makes him realize that, escaping from there is not an easy process. After the escape of the scary figure, he is alone in the desert and do the work lonely. It is a back-breaking one, herding each section of goats in the desert moreover giving them food and water around the clock. When Najeeb herding one section of goats in the desert, he happens to see one goat is going to labour pains. Within seconds it gives birth to a male goat. In this time Najeeb back to his memories about his wife through his words; My Sainu, my wife- she has given birth. A baby boy, as I had longed for. In that belief, I named that new born goat Nabeel. The name I had thought of for my son. (GD 107)

Najeeb gets a punishment because he tries to make the new born drink its mother's milk. He gives more love and compassion to Nabeel, considers as his own son. The only solace that he gets is about the arrival of truck once a week and the wheat trailer once a month, these vehicles were the only means by which he could connect with the outside universe. Even though the people belong to different country side and Najeeb will not understand their language. Once he tried to escape from the place but the opponent workers do not help him out from escaping. Once a water driver and truck driver speak with



Najeeb, at the same time Arbab beats them with his gun. Escaping from desert is far away from his dream.

The climate changes in the desert, it started drizzling, the single drop fell on his body it writhed like he had been stabbed. After the eight or ten months a drop of water touched his body. Another thing finds out that Arbab is afraid and he crouched in a corner like a coward. When he finds out the gun from under the pillow but he does not do anything. He calculates the day it is almost nine-ten months that he does not bath and even change his cloth. The same day he thinks of Hakeem and goes to his *Masara*, when Najeeb reached in the front of gate and he shocked to see Hakeem.

When that figure came near me, I looked at it carefully. Dark, skinny, dishevelled, ugly. Another scary figure. This was not my Hakeem. Hakeem was handsome. Very fair. Very good to look at. Strong for his age. I had even advised him in jest to stay put in Bombay and try his luck in films (*GD* 136).

Najeeb cannot control his tears. He is shocked to see Hakeem. He is totally changed. In the lonely dessert there he finds some small shrubs and herbs, he used to speak with his hardships. The climate changes in the place totally disturbs his daily routines. He calculates the time only with the burning sun. the place is entirely cold so he thinks that it is the best time to escape from there. In a sudden thought, he tries to escape from there but unfortunately Arbab sees it and shot with his gun. By the grace of Allah fortunately it does not hit his body and it hits into the goat's chest. In punishment Arbab locks him in the *Masara* and he does not get any food and water. Somehow, he untied his legs and reaches the water container, there are some left- over grains for the goats. He takes up the grains and eats along with some salt and sleeps in the *masara* with goats and he became a goat.

Najeeb used to call the goats, the names of his own people from his native. Marymaimuna, his soul mate and gorgreous girl, moreover she was a good singer. He falls in love with her when he was in the fifth standard. Another goat's name is Aravu Ravuthar, he calls this name because in his native this man once beats and slaps his father likewise one of the goats used to slap him in the same way.

In days of frustrations Najeeb thinks of his meaningless life. He has been impotent and urges to be sexually active. Nobody can control the sexual desires of a man. He sees several female goats.

I needed a body to lie close to. I needed a cave to run into. I became mad.in the intensity of that madness, I got up and rushed out. When I opened my tired eyes in the morning, I was in the *masara* (*GD* 168).

He used to eat with them, sleep with them and talk with them, he himself identifies as one among the goats. The circumstances make every person hardened Najeeb he slowly forgets his family; his entire life becomes a goat. There is only two ways for every problem one is to accept the fact and the other is try to escape from the barricades. In his case he cannot do anything he is always surveillance under the vision of Arbab, he carries a large binocular, as a vigilant soldier he checks every side. Accidentally, Najeeb finds out the skeleton of the scary figure that created an unimaginable impact in his life. He wants to see Hakeem, but the main thing is there is a small mountain in between their *masaras*. Hakeem's Arbab is a savage; Arbab's pastime included flicking boiling water, pulling his hair, poking a stick into his backside, kicking his chest, dunking his head in water. (*GD* 169)



While herding with goats, he accidentally sees the skeleton of a man and has seen a belt. After a second, he gets to know that the belt belongs to that scary figure, who escaped from there in his third day in desert.

When Najeeb comes to know about the other migrant in Hakeem's place. It creates a slight change in his character. When he gets another companion creates, it creates a confidence in his attitude, it sends a message that his new friend, Ibrahim Khaderi;

He was a gigantic figure. Very tall. My first impression was that he seemed like a character from prophet Musa's time. From a distance I was convinced that he was a pathan from pakistan. They came close and Hakeem introduced him to me; Ibrahim Khadiri from Somalia (GD 178).

he knows every corner of the place and they both trying to escape from the desert. On the day of their escape, Najeeb goes to the shelter.

I hugged and gave Marymaimuna who wasarby a kiss. I am leaving girl, leaving you. Iam going. Don't you have many Aravu Ravuthars and Moori Vasus here to keep you company? (GD 179)

The next day, Hakeem came to Najeeb's side and gives him the hint of their escape. Najeeb is so happy to hear the news. The same evening, Arab called him and said about the wedding of the elder Arbab's daughter, and gives all the responsibilities to him. Najeeb is the trusted servant that Arbab gets in his life time, many of his previous servants are indolent. Before leaving, Najeeb enters the Masara.

My dear brothers, iam leaving. If I remain here any longer, I will die. I must escape from here. Never from you, but from my own fate. I will remember you as brothers were with me through my misery. (GD 185).

The goats are disturbed in Masara. Najeeb gives a heart- felt adieu to the goats. It is a heart touching scene, if he looked back, maybe he would not have been able to leave that place. Throughout the night, they ran without knowing any specific route. The desert is wide and far, it is not possible to see the other end of the desert. They ran quickly and never talk or even glance at one another. After some time, they take time to rest. They see a vehicle coming towards them. Unfortunately, they thought that it could be their Arbab, so they hide under the sand dunes. When the mini-lorry passes Ibrahim recognises that driver is his friend. They felt in deep frustration and sorrow. In the morning, the sun would blaze up everything and there is no place to hide them in the morning. In the midst, they unfortunately do a stupid thing, instead of going to the direction of vehicle they ran to the opposite direction. They are so hungry and totally exhausted because of fatigue. They do not know the direction and not able to see the highway. The land is stretched far and wide. Several sand dunes are scattered over a large area. During their journey they meet with thousands of venomous snakes, centipedes, lizards, spiders, and many other creatures are there. The day without drinking water so they are exhausted on the sand. Najeeb's legs are heavy and swollen, he cannot be able to stand and walk. They spent two nights and a day and half without a drop of water. Hakeem begins to moan for water. In between Najeeb and Hakeem started vomiting and Ibrahim tries to make a shelter for them with his clothes. Hakeem runs forward shouting like a mad man and blood is dripping from his nose. He begins to cry for water. Ibrahim and Najeeb tried to stop him but he behaves like a mad man. Blood begins to ooze out from his nostrils and mouth.



He began to cry very loudly. He pushed us away when we went to catch him and began to eat hot sand. Although Ibrahim and I tried to stop him, he shrugged us off with demonic strength and kept eating sand. Then, he started vomiting. Hakeem began to spit blood. He writhed in the sand like a beaten snake (*GD* 216).

Hakeem died of hunger and fatigue and his corpse is there in desert. Ibrahim takes Najeeb into his shoulder and walks in the desert. Finally, Ibrahim sees a lizard in the desert, which indicates the presence of water. Ibrahim sees a water pond and stay there for almost three days. They are totally confused of the directions. Moving forward they see a path made by vehicles and see the human presence. The next day Najeeb hears the vehicles' sound and he understands that they are so near in the highway. He searches for Ibrahim and he does not find there. Najeeb comes to know that Ibrahim disappears somewhere else.

He is in the middle of the desert and Ibrahim departed to some other place and somehow, he reached the highway. When Najeeb reached the highway, he sees a very expensive car zooming in from afar. Inside it is a handsome, richly dressed Arab. With the help of him he reaches Betha, a city with huge buildings, many people and a lot of commotion, heavy traffic.

Najeeb is completely tired of the days of grief and he faints in front of Kunjikka's hotel, a refuge for Malayalis in the Betha market. He tried to overcome and helps him to back his health, there is no way to back to India. There he called his wife Sainu after three and half years, and came to know that his only son started his primary education. His wife informed him the death news of his mother and they both had a very emotional conversation. His passport is with Arbab, so it is not easy to go back India. From there he gets another friend Hameed, they both decided to arrest himself, then only they go back to India.

Najeeb reached the police station and tries to get attention from the police then only they ask him about 'pathaka', that is needed for a person to roam around the town. As Najeeb and Hameed do not have pathaka, the police arrest them and produce in front of the officer, Mudeer. He wondered by seeing the large room and the portraits of the kings and a picture of the Kaaaba. The wall opposite had a board with some photos pinned on it. Najeeb gazed through the photos and he shocked to see the picture of Ibrahim Khadri. Mudeer enquire him about the person but he said no, he jumped and slapped his ears. Najeeb is totally struck by seeing the picture of his saviour.

There is a parade that held every week, at the day the Arabs has the right to find out his absconding prisoners and their first reaction who recognized his worker was to give them a slap that could pop an eardrum, someone they unbuckled their belts to whip the prisoners till their anger subsided. The unfortunate Najeeb again meets his Arbab walked past the line, but the Arbab left after throwing in a shovel of burning coals of doubt later he observes, "It's just that he is not under my visa, otherwise I would have dragged him back to the Masara. (*GD* 251).

Every procedure and paper documentation are ready. After three and half years Najeeb came back to India. In the novel, the author epitomises and portrays the Migrants sufferings and problems in another country. Through the character Najeeb, a man of innocence and moreover he is the representative of the ordinary Malayali. It is a general concept that living in abroad would improvise their standards of living and would get a better fortune. Najeeb also believes the same concept. Unfortunately, the circumstances



made him to stay there for almost three and half years in desert. The toils and torments that he faced is unimaginably depicts in words. Even in the first time that it is his innocence and illiteracy made him into the victim. Arbab calls out his name as Abdullah, it simply specified that he is looking for Abdullah, but his illiteracy made him to think that he is his Arbab, without knowing he followed him and later lead into his entire life in the desert. The arrival of Ibrahim khadiri to Najeeb's rescue and his identity is a mystery in the novel, maybe he is assumed as a culprit but for Najeeb he is a saviour. Throughout the novel, Najeeb never shakes his faith to Allah, he strongly believes for his plans. Alienation, nostalgia, and homesickness are the major feelings that are even experienced by the immigrants who are having a good social environment in the immigrant nation. The traumas of a man like Najeeb who encounters slavery and psychic disposition in a foreign land would be more pitiable and miserable. The article analysis that, unless if one does not have a proper education and observation to the reality, the materialistic world would not accommodate him to survive.

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