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Migration, Exile, And Trauma In Deepark Unniskrishnan's *Temporarypeople*

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Abstract
In primordial times, migration and exile had the capacity of providing security, succour or solace for people who were no longer safe in their traditional homelands. Early fictional works on migration and exile were basically deployed to paint a picture of how an individual who was faced with an existentialist challenge was able to overcome the situation and have a new, positive experience altogether. In contemporary times, however, artistic portrayal of migration/exile narratives tends to paint a seemingly opposite picture of the experience. This is the thrust of this study which examines the basis, trajectory and aftermath of migration in DeeparkUnniskrishnan's *Temporary People*. The study adopts trauma theory for its framework. The interpretive design was adopted.The tropes deployed are the diaspora, nostalgia, identity negotiation and return migration. Findings reveal that disenchanting realities, particularly ambivalences, displacement, alienation, solitude, and hostility typify the Indian and other Third-World migrants' experience in their host land. Related tropes of rootlessness, frustration, and trauma encapsulate their experience in the United Arab Emirates. Trauma among the migrants finds expression in anxiety, self-estrangement, psychosis and depression. Thus, rather than being the much anticipated Eldorado, the suffering inherent in exile becomes more severe than the ones the migrants had run away from in their native homelands. Among Third-World subjects, migration is a phantasmal search for the ideal and an experience in ambivalences.

Key words: Migration, Exile, Trauma, Nostalgia, Third-World
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Introduction

Generally, migration denotes the movement of living organisms – animals, plants, andhumans – from one location or region to another for numerous and varied reasons. But of these three categories, only human migration may be deemed to be deliberate, time-bound, purpose-driven, and distance-specific. Among the numerous realities of human history, migration is one of the most recurring experiences as people, the world over, do have reasons to leave or want to leave their traditional homelands for a new one. In fact, there appears to exist an innate tendency on the part of man to leave their traditional homeland for a new, sometimes, foreign one. Studies abound about the early migration of people from one part of the earth to another. In "The Great Human Migration", for example, Guy Gugliota posits that homo sapiens first lived in Africa and that at about seventy to eighty thousand years ago, these peoples began to disperse and fill the remaining parts of the world as a result of sustained changes in the climatic conditions of the initial settlement (https://www.smithsonianmag.com). In the same vein, Michael Price, a foremost American archaeologist, notes that "all non-Africans alive today descend from a single wave of migration out of Africa, perhaps between 50,000 and 60,000 years ago", and that the need to explore the world formed the basis of the journey (https://www.science.org). This is further corroborated by Michael De Filippo, et al, whose study also traces the first ever human migration to Africa,which migration saw people move and occupy the present day Asia, Europe, America, Australia, and indeed every other part of the world(https:/www.researchgate.net).

The Bible, which, incontestably, is one of the earliest sources of English literature especially during the Medieval and Renaissance Periods, is inundated with enormous migration stories or accounts. For example, on divine instruction, Abraham had to leave his biological home, Ur, for Canaan, to establish a new nation. Jacob and his family migrated from Canaan to Egypt to avert a severe famine. Several years later, and on divine instruction, the same family, this time as a nation (Israel), migrated from Egypt to the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses. The scriptures also records that Jesus' family had to migrate from Bethlehem to Egypt to avoid King Herod's persecution (The Holy Bible, Genesis 11, 12, 46; Exodus 1; Matthew 2). Like migration, exile also has some primeval underpinnings. Just like the picture created above on biblical migration, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden as a result of their disobedience may be regarded as a literary narrative of a movement away from home to exile, as it marked the beginning of man's wandering on the surface of the earth. This exilic wandering was continued by their offspring typified by Cain who killed his brother, Abel, out of unbridled envy and anger, and like his parents, received a curse from God (The Holy Bible, Genesis 3 and 4).

The literary art is replete with enormous exilic inscriptions or representations. For example, upon discovering, after many years, that he killed his father, Laius, at the crossroads, and later married his mother, Jocasta, Oedipus blinds himself and gets banished from Thebes. This exile is a form of punishment and a way to purify the city from the pollution caused by his (Oedipus) abominable deeds (Sophocles' *OedipustheKing*). This

scenario is almost exactly recreated in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, adapted from Sophocles' *OedipusRex*. Here, Odewale suffers Oedipus's fate by being banished from Kutuje after it is convincingly established that the man he killed at the place where the three footpaths meet and the woman he subsequently married were his biological father and mother, respectively. In a somewhat different scenario, Okonkwo, upon killing, inadvertently though, a fellow Umuofian, is banished from the clan for seven years. Thus, for all these years, Okonkwo remains an exile in Mbanta, his maternal community, where he is granted a familial asylum in tandem with the culture of the people. In Mbanta, Okonkwo, alongside his wives and children, lives peacefully, engages in economic activities, and prospers therefrom (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958, pp. 103-134). It is indeed safe to observe that right from primordial times, exile/migration had the capacity to provide solace to those who were confronted with some existentialist situations or challenges.

In contemporary times, however, artistic depiction of exile/migration narratives tends to paint a seemingly opposite picture of the experience. Rather than being the much-anticipated Eldorado, migrationin recent times is presented by many authors as risk-laden, precarious, and terrible experience especially among Third-World subjects. In *The Human Cost of African Migration*, for example, Toyin Falola examines the pains African and indeed Third-World migrants go through in a bid to leave the shores of their continent for Europe, America, and other economically viable segments of the world. The author observes that there has been a rather unprecedented and pervasive rise in migration trends among young Africans who seek greener pastures and a new lease of life in other climes. Falola's work succinctly paints a hypothetical picture reflective of the notion that African and indeed Third-World subjects are willing to pay any price humanly possible to have their lives improved somewhere far away from their traditional homelands (cited in Micah Asukwo, 2023, p. 61). However, quite disheartening is the fact that these journeys do end up, in most cases disillusioning, lamentable and therefore, regrettable. This is the thrust of this study which examines the disenchanting, alienating, lamentable, ambivalent and trauma-laden aftermaths of migration in Deepak Unikrishnan's *Temporary People*.

Review of Related Literature

Temporary People was published in New York in 2017. Its author, Deepak Unnikrishnan, who hails from Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), resides in the United States of America. The work has received enormous critical reactions. Reviewing the novel for the *Oak Literary Magazine*, Elizabeth Jaeger notes that Deepak Unnikrishnan's debut work of fiction weaves together twenty eight short stories that explore the untoward experiences encountered by immigrant labourers from the Asian continent who find themselves in the UAE. These Asian migrants, Jaeger notes, undergo harrowing experiences that may be likened to "a purgatory of sorts" in view of its dehumanising disposition (http://www.the literaryreview.org). She describes the condition of migrants in the UAE as portrayed in the novel as "ghastly and deplorable", a status situation that adversely affects the migrants' "psyches, families, memories, fables and languages" (http://www.theliteraryreview.org). On the author's spectacular style, Jaeger notes that Unnikrishnan deliberately deploys vivid images to capture the condition of each

character's experience even as she views the entire stories as haunting, empathy-invoking, raging, and despair-inclined. Jaeger rounds off her review by stating that Unnikrishnan's work is a must-read for everyone especially those who fantasise foreign nations as holding the key to their happiness, not anticipating or foreseeing the disillusioning or regrettable situations or realities that abound therein (http://www.the literaryreview.org).

Also reviewing the novel, Saadia Faruqi notes that only very few persons are aware of the travails faced by foreign nationals or migrants who live in the United Arab Emirates also called the Gulf States. For Faruqi, news reports that emanate from the region do focus more on the locals and their kings, and that it is very rare to find the western media discuss the challenges faced by foreigners whom he describes as "the largest percentage of the Gulf populations" (https://www.nyjournalofbooks.com). Faruqi is, however, excited to find Unnikrishnan's novel attempting to break the jinx and as well blaze the trail in an effort to draw the world's attention to this group of hitherto diminished, forgotten, and neglected, yet very important segment of the UAE's population. He describes migrants in the UAE as those brought in from Third-World countries, and "given tasks to complete, then sent back home spent and useless" (https://www.nyjournalofbooks.com). The migrants, he notes, are like objects caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, and that in spite of working very hard to develop the region, they have no hope of gaining citizenship, "and through appearance, language, and culture, they stand out as different from the real citizens of the Gulf States" (http://www.the literaryreview.org). Faruqi is at home with the novelist's style of narration which he describes as a mixture of contemporary settings with a hint of fantasy. Moreover, Unnikrishnan's novel, for him, portrays and projects the unreal, the real and the surreal.

In "Challenging Migration Narratives in Deepak Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People*", Raya Alraddadi argues that Unnikrishnan's work unequivocally challenges dominant migration narratives which tend to focus more on mundane issues rather than the concrete realities and experiences of migrants in their host lands. The critic further notes that Unnikrishnan's deliberate effort at adequately presenting the concrete experiences of the "exploited and estranged individuals who are often positioned outside the narrative itself" speaks to his poise to develop "a broader critical perspective that addresses the impact of global power on emerging narratives of labour migration" (https://www.muse.jhu.edu). On his part, Mohammed Illyas, in his "Critical Discourse Analysis of Diaspora Writings: A New Paradigm", notes that literary critics who are basically engaged in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) appeared to have been confined to "political and socio-political contexts" and that Unnikrishnan's text opens a new "diasporic dimension" or vista for critics involved in CDA as the text "will expand the horizon of the research domain of CDA and motivate researchers in both literature and language domains to explore new research avenues" (https://www.archive.aessweb.com.). Thus, for Illyas, Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People* has contributed towards widening the scope and dimension of Critical Discourse Analysis.It is, however, expedient to note that of all that has been reviewed, none of the works centres categorically on the motifs and dialectics of exile and trauma in the text, which is the preoccupation of this research.

Exilic Ambivalences, Disillusionment and Trauma in Deepak Unikrishnan's *Temporary People*

Migrationis an outcome of tensions between the individual's desires and perceived, anticipated, or hoped-for opportunities (White, 1995, p 15.). One of the implications, among others, is that the predominant catalyst for migration and indeed migrants generally is hope – hope for a better experience in all ramifications as opposed to despair in one's homeland. However, in spite of the enormous hope that ordinarily serves as its stimulus, migration, White believes, is an experience in ambivalences. It is characterised, essentially, by unanticipated, unforeseen, and profound uncertainties. White (1995, p. 3) foregrounds this assertion when he notes that migration is "rarely absolute, unambivalent or final; it is not a cause and consequence of a definite break with a cultural life that is part of history, but a partial and conditional state, characterised by ambiguity and indeterminacy".

Generally speaking, migration is a journey in search of livelihood, better quality of life and living, improved social status, and general life's stability. In many instances, migration appears to be the last resort on the part of those whose societies or nations have carefully, tactically, and/or subtly abandoned their primary responsibility of providing the enabling environment for survival for their citizens, thereby leaving their survival in their own hands or in the hands of fate. As a consequence, such societies or climes do witness a massive movement of their citizens to faraway places that are capable of providing them a lifeline in terms of job opportunities and other necessities of life. The result is that, if offered opportunity, some members of these prospect-bereft societies or nations would not want to go back to their traditional homelands; they might want to fulfil any condition, including working extra hard, to be members or citizens of the new homeland, given the life-enhancing opportunities that abound therein. In terms of the number of years spent in a particular environment, some members of the Third-World nations do actually meet the common requirements to become citizens of the new homeland having lived their youthful and latter lives there. But very unfortunately, and, in spite of having lived their entire active days there, members of these Third-World nations normally discover to their chagrin that they do not just belong, and that they are foreigners, exiles or the Other. This perpetually deferred hope, anxiety, and aspiration of migrants who have spent their entire active years in foreign lands without the prospect of acquiring citizenship there is the focus of this section of the study as depicted in Deepak Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People*.

Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People (*henceforth*, TP)* chronicles the rather bizarre and delusionary experience of Third-World migrants of Indian, Pakistani, Nepali, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi origin who find themselves in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, all bubbling cities that constitute parts of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), popularly called the Emirates. They are there as migrant workers and found in the construction industry and indeed many other sectors of the Emirates' economy. The migrants, majority of whom are Indians, are in legions and constitute over seventy per cent of the workforce of the entire Gulf region (www.reseearchgate.net). They are the nurses, gardeners, artisans, masons, nannies, mechanics, storekeepers, interior decorators, electricians, barbers, security guards, taxi drivers, carpet sellers, morgue cleaners, photographers, to mention just a few (*TP*, 2017,

pp.137-139). However, in spite of their intimidating number which makes it appear as if the entire Gulf region would not thrive economically without them, they are regarded or treated as aliens, exiles, and, as the title of Unnikrishnan's text suggests, temporary people. They are those who can be dispensed with anytime the authorities so deem fit without batting an eyelid.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the most economically strong, viable, and prospective countries not only on the Asian continent but the entire world. As of 2020, its population was estimated at 9.6million. It has its capital at Abu Dhabi, often times considered the centre of the Emirates' oil industry. Other prominent cities in the Emirates include Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Qaywayn, and Ra's Al-khaymah. The Emirates' economy has been adjudged one of the fastest growing in the world with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita estimated at 43,103.3U$D while its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita stood at 70.430U$D, making it one of the top ten richest countries in the world (https://www.britannica.com/place/dubai-). Given the fact of its relatively small population vis-à-vis the economic activities that abound therein, it is natural that the country welcomes some foreign hands to come in and avail themselves of the various ranges of economic activities that therein abound. This is, perhaps, the basis for the flourishing of the Emirates with migrant workers majority of whom are from the developing countries of the Asian continent – India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh (*TP*, 2017, pp.85-86). These migrant workers constitute over seventy per cent of the workforce of the Emirates. Indians, for instance, find the Gulf coast their second home as far as migration prospect is concerned. They go there in their numbers basically as unskilled labourers, and as those who can afford to do any category of menial jobs for a fee (www.britannica.com/place/dubai-). Their experience in the Gulf is, perhaps, the basis for Unnikrishnan's narrative and indeed other related narratives which have the Gulf coast as their setting. It is probably the reason why exile, as an experience, continues to have a widened definition, description or conceptualisation by scholars.

Migrants in Abu Dhabi are not regarded or treated as human beings; in fact, they are not even treated as exiles which, of course, they are. They are rather treated as expendable, replaceable, and worthless property or things with absolutely no value. The migrant workers, majority of whom are Indians, form part of the workforce in the high-rise buildings or skyscrapers that inundate the Gulf cities and work even at nights. Rather than provide proper medical services for these workers, a quack nurse (Anna) is employed to "tape construction workers who fell from incomplete buildings" (*TP,* p.9). Khalid, the contractor in charge of the building does not deem it necessary to have these workers receive proper medical attention in cases of eventualities, which are indeed regular. The constant nature of these eventualities is not unconnected with the fact that these workers are made to work even in the dead of the night to satisfy the whims and caprices of their employers. Naturally, these workers are bound to feel sleepy, get tired, grow weak, or become fatigued. This is why a good number of them do frequently fall from any of the floors of the buildings unabated and get wounded. When such situations occur, Anna would be required to stitch their wounds before asking them to leave the construction site. The

narrator relates the pesky scenario more vividly thus:

> Anna, working the night shift, found these injured men, then put them back together with duct tape or some good glue, or if stitches were required, patch them up with a needle and horse hair, before sending them on their way. The work, rarely advertised, was nocturnal. (p.9)

Anna could "glue" more than ten workers who fall from such tall structures a day, which, of course, is indicative of the huge number of possible casualties on a weekly or monthly basis. When found in more critical conditions, Anna would be expected to pray till the victim regains consciousness (*TP*, p.9). Because of the levity with which these migrant workers are treated, a good number do die on a monthly basis (p.9). For some reasons that are more scary than fathomable, some of these construction workers do jump from the top floor to the ground in a bid to prove to some newcomer co-migrants that they are "veterans" (p.9). In many an instance, some do have their bodies seriously "broken" or injured while waiting for Anna or any of her colleagues to come during the night and have their bodies "glued" back to their former shapes (p.9). They, thus, complement their employers in undermining their self-worth. Quite disconcerting about the whole scenario is the fact that Anna has no professional know-how about the job; she had never formally undergone training to qualify her a nurse or health worker. The interview process that saw her to the job is indeed terrifying: she is asked whether she possesses "reasonable handyman skills", to which she says no. The next and indeed the last question she is asked is whether the sight of blood do make her faint, to which again she says no. After *successfully* answering the two questions, Khalid, the interviewer, simply orders: "Okay, start work tomorrow" (p.10).

Unarguably, Khalid does not regard the Indian workers and other Third-World migrants in the Emirates as human beings, hence, the levity with which he treats virtually everything that bothers them including their lives. Even when in very critical conditions, no ambulance or doctor is called to save the lives of these workers. Rather, Khalid simply remains unruffled and stays stuck to his parsimonious, bigoted, and chauvinistic mentality that whoever would not recuperate at the work site would never recover at all (p.12). In other words, there is no point taking the victims to the hospital if they cannot respond to Anna's treatment approach or effort. Certainly, with this kind of approach, many people are bound to die. This is how Iqbal, for example, dies (p.12). Anna, the charlatan, claims she had lost about thirty seven people in the course of working as a nurse, but that at the present construction site in Abu Dhabi, Iqbal, an Indian, is her first victim (12).

Conversing with the deceased before his death, Anna learns that the man had left his homeland, India, for greener pastures in the Emirates as "everyone he knew yearned to be a Gulf boy" (p.13), and that he had come to confirm the news that there are numerous jobs in the Gulf – an expression that is more of a sarcasm than commendation given the reality of his experience. When asked about his homeland, Iqbal simply responds that India is synonymous with "shit", and that it is a place "that suffocates its young", (p.13), hence, the reason why people like him are undergoing the kind of horrendous experience they are

passing through in foreign lands. Iqbal's notion of exile at this point aligns with White's (1995, p.6) conception of the subject matter as "a metaphor of death". It is indeed exasperating to find that those who run away from the fangs of gradual death in their traditional homeland occasioned by unemployment and poverty subtly surrender themselves to a worse fate in foreign lands in the name of searching for means of livelihood and/or greener pastures. Death in the Emirates hides under the cloak of job opportunities to unleash its onslaught on its hapless victims, basically members of the Third-World.

Before the last fall that resulted in his death, Iqbal had experienced enormous agony of exile, one of which is deprivation. Exiles are social pariahs whose disadvantaged condition deprives them a good number of things that would have added value to their lives, one of which is sex. Iqbal is in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the Emirates, a predominantly Muslim setting, with all its trado-religious laws and restrictions. Iqbal is in his middle thirties, ordinarily, a sexually active young man. But as an exile, he has little or no access to women especially given the particular clime he finds himself. So, in a bid to handle his sexual longings, Iqbal resorts to masturbation whenever he finds himself alone. In one of those moments, Iqbal masturbates while on one of the floors of the skyscraper under construction. Enmeshed in its pleasure, Iqbal falls to the ground. Though this does not result in instant death, it affects his general state of health very badly. Iqbal is so entangled in masturbation that he sometimes ejaculates on birds that perch nearby (p.14). Apparently, Iqbal's idiosyncrasy may be attributed to his inability to live the desired life - his not having the projected sum with which to travel back home and get married. Of course, when he considers how long it would take him to labour and raise money enough to travel back to India and get married, he gets plunged into a pool of uncertainty, scepticism, and pessimism. At this point, his only option is to find an alternative means to have his sexual cravings handled, and for him, the way to go is masturbation. Thus, for Iqbal, masturbation becomes an adaptation that is aimed at surviving or coping with the emotional deprivation of exile.

Exile is a precarious, devastating and hope-bereft experience. It is an experience which makes people susceptible to actions and behaviours that may appear eerie, illogical, and absurd. This, of course, may not be unconnected with the general vicissitudes that characterise the experience of exile, especially when the initial high hopes and aspirations begin to give way to boundless frustration and despair. This is the situation with Indian migrants in Abu Dhabi. Charley, like other Indian migrants had come to the Emirates with sound intents and purposes. Though not categorically stated, he might have objectified his journey, given himself targets and timelines. Charley has a family in India, which he can hardly cater for. All of a sudden, some uncanny, queer, and wild thoughts overwhelm him; he wants to die in his place of work so that his family may be compensated. How he intends to go about this is indeed horrifying, as Igbal narrates to Anna:

> So Charley tells me that every couple of months he would give himself an accident. He'd start with small ones. Fall off the first floor, lose a few toes. Then he would build up: third

> floor, sixth floor. Thing is, he'd tell me beforehand. A note, some secret code indicating when he planned to do this, and where. So I'd wait for the deed, and before anyone found out I'd go to him, remove one piece of him – don't know, a finger or something – then throw that into the trash bin. Stick People would fix him up at night, but there would be a part missing. He promised himself four accidents a year (p.17).

This is definitely the height of self-harm anyone can contemplate. It is symptomatic of the level of desperation, gloom and despair on the part of the migrants typified here by Charley. Charley's contemplation is archetypal to the state of mind of many Indian migrants in the Gulf. They have lost hope of a blissful life for themselves. For them, life no longer exudes the fragrance that is capable of appealing to any of the senses, hence, the need to have it truncated if doing so would affect positively the welfare and standard of living of their dependants, next of kin or inheritors back home. Rather lamentable, however, is the fact that, in spite of all the attempts at self-elimination, Charely would not die. After six good years of the failed attempt at dying, Charley decides to stop it, but not without a price: he had lost a few of his "fingers, toes, a kidney, and his penis. His legs were half the size they'd been when he arrived…" (p.17). Iqbal reports that there are times he would plead with him to let him watch him masturbate and subsequently ejaculate. This is because he no longer has a penis with which he can also masturbate. Thus, Charley's disgusting action that results in losing virtually every vital part of his body may be attributed to the frustration that typifies exile (Adedina, 2024). His resort to the contemplation of the absurd and the unimaginable is a pointer to the fact that exile is capable of making one lose grip with rationality, including emotional and psychological stability.

Indeed, the condition of Indian migrants in the Gulf is appalling. For the employers in Abu Dhabi, the migrant workers have no business approaching them for anything whatsoever, be it for their wages or any other issue that bothers on their welfare. They create a wide gap between the migrant workers and themselves to the extent that, should any of them deliberately or inadvertently approaches them for any issue irrespective of how germane, what befalls them thereafter should be considered their own fate. The likes of Khalid would take undue advantage of the Indian migrants most probably because of the huge number that keeps arriving the Emirates on a quotidian basis in search of the means of livelihood. The Gulf is a beehive of economic and social activities, hence, the amazing number of migrants in search of job opportunities. This is why a great majority of the entire workforce in Abu Dhabi, for instance, are foreigners. Migrants or job seekers from foreign nations appear to have very little or no restriction into the Emirates to avail themselves of the copious economic activities that inundate the oil enclave of the Asian continent. The caveat, however, is that no migrant worker, irrespective of how long they would have lived and worked in the Gulf should hope for, contemplate or bother themselves about acquiring citizenship of the Emirates because that would be tantamount to building castles in the air; it would remain nothing but a mere wish. They are guest workers, and as guests, their stay has a time-frame: immediately after completing any assigned job(s), they are at liberty to

leave. This class of migrant workers in the Emirates are in their tens of thousands (p. 23). Any attempt to stay longer than the work visa permits, the migrant worker faces forceful deportation even as they risk forfeiture of their wages (p. 19). So, the migrant workers, irrespective of the level of dedication and commitment to work, are regarded as foreigners, exiles, and temporary people who should not overstay their welcome, otherwise, they risk being "sent home" as in the case of Kuriakose (p. 19).

Apart from the possibility of physical separation of families, exile is capable of tearing families apart. It engenders unfaithfulness on the part of spouses with its concomitant effects. A typical example is the case of Johnny Kutty, whose close friend, Peeter, takes over his "estate" (wife) while Johnny is labouring profusely for the entire family's welfare in Dubai (pp. 25-26). Unknown to Peeter, Johnny is seeing, live and direct, the intimate exchanges of affection between him and his wife through a device called "Fone" (p. 25). The device, according to the narrator, looks and functions like a typical mobile phone or handset; the principal difference between it and a regular handset is that it can only make calls, but cannot receive. Apart from that, the user of the device can see the receiver clearly without the latter noticing or seeing the caller (p. 25). This is what Johnny Kutty uses to communicate with his wife from Dubai only to find Peeter behaving towards his wife in a way that suggests they are in a romantic relationship. Johnny Kutty's fears are, however, confirmed when the young wife calls a few weeks later to intimate him of her pregnancy, which news results in Johnny going bonkers. He is so emotionally destabilised that he goes unrestrainedly aggressive and violent. For reasons not unconnected with his inability to control his anger, Johnny burns the fonethat *showed* him what his wife and his once-best friend were doing (Adedina, 2024). He transfers his misery, fury, and bitterness on the kadakaran's (shopkeeper) fone. His action appears soothing to him at the circumstance given his sheer inability to come to grasps with what has befallen him; he has been emotionally and psychologically dislodged. When arrested by the police and given opportunity to call anyone he knows to inform them of his whereabouts, Johnny would not dare touch any phone, given, of course, what a certain "fone" had done to his "once-happy" life (p. 27).

Johnny Kutty is indeed a victim of exile; he is a victim of the distancing, the physical separation of families and loved ones that is inherent in exile. This is, perhaps, the basis for Paul Zeleza's (2005, p.3) conceptualisation of exile as a multifaceted experience which involves, not only ontological, but also spatial and temporal displacements, and "entails alienation from homeland, family, language, and the continuities of self…". This corroborates Salman Rushdie's (1991, p.210) perception of migration which states that to migrate is to become invisible, "or even worse a target; it is to experience deep changes and wrenches in the soul".

Exiles are a vulnerable lot. They are not given the kind of social attention that non-exiles enjoy even as issues about their security and related welfare matters are not normally accorded the priority it deserves. This negligence on the part of the government of the host land also affects their children who are also susceptible to social hazards chiefly because of their parents' status as exiles. This is one of the issues Unnikrishnan brings to the fore in *TP*.

In the narrative, Indians and other foreign migrants in the Gulf live in an area that is a bit detached or far away from where citizens or non-exiles live. In this kind of setting, government has little or no business providing security and other welfare needs for the residents, the result of which is the vulnerability of the people in the area. This is why children of the migrant workers or exiles are assaulted, molested, and raped with impunity by some bad boys who loiter around the neighbourhood. Even if these incidents are reported to the police, nothing tangible is done to fetch the perpetrators or forestall a recurrence.The result is the sheer impunity with which the dubious elements exhibit their trade. Since the police appear nonchalant about the condemnable development, what hapless parents do is to take their destiny in their own hands. Accordingly, they all come together and appoint a "responsible adult" (p. 112) who will surreptitiously investigate the alleged criminalities so as to proffer solutions to them, maybe, in the form of vigilante or the like, since the authorities appear bent on burying their heads in the sand.

In one of the investigator's reports, a child molester hides inside a building near the elevator and defiles children unabatedly. The report also notes that the children who are victims of these ugly onslaughts are those of the migrant workers or exiles. The investigator's proffered solution is therefore hinged on the need for cameras to be installed in the "building elevators to keep an eye on tenants and guests using the machines" (p. 113). This is, ordinarily, what government would have done, but would not apparently because of the caliber or status of people that are involved or affected – exiles. Exile is, thus, an experience which marginalises, silences, and excludes (Crush2003, p.243). An experience in solitude and unfriendliness, exile is capable of creating in the minds of migrants "a sense of deracination" even as it has the potentiality of making "one feel outside in some way" (Rushdie 1991, p.172). Of course, the Indian and other foreign migrants in the Emirates do actually know that they do not *belong*, hence, the need to proactively take their destiny in their own hands.

White (1995) (earlier cited) posits that migration is rarely absolute, "unambivalent or final". Rather, it is a partial or conditional state characterised by ambiguity and indeterminacy. Sometimes exiles do fall in love with their host land and would want to continue to remain there especially if they consider, from a comparative point of view, that the host land possesses or has some life-supporting opportunities and prospects than their traditional homeland. In spite of some of the awkward experiences in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and other cities in the Emirates, the Indians and other foreign migrants would not mind continuing to remain there especially when they consider the job opportunities that abound there. But the authorities of the Emirates regard them as temporary people who have no business staying beyond a specified or permitted period of time. In this particular instance, the notice to quit the Emirates is very short, which short notice the exiles or migrant workers are expected to comply with without delay. A date, June 15 to be précised, has been fixed for all the foreign workers and migrants in the Emirates to leave; it is indeed a massive deportation. A majority of the deportees are Indians. To dispel the rumours of mass deportation of those who had put in their entire lives in the making of the Emirates, government issues a statement stating justifications for her action – the well-known

government stratagem, gimmick or gambit: “The Emirates, especially Abu Dhabi, isn't crumbling. Many former residents have decided it is time to retire, that's all, the young get old” (p. 84).

When asked whether the Emirates would acknowledge the contribution of these people to her development, the government spokesperson's response is that a delegate will be at the airport to see them off. “In our home, we see to it that every guest is walked to the door” (p. 84). Countries whose citizens are being deported include India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bengal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh – all Third-World Asian countries (p. 84). It is indeed pathetic that a majority of the deportees have spent a number of years in the Emirates without any tangible achievement. As many of them are going back home after many decades, it is possible that they may not have where to lay claim to having left the homeland for a long time. Theirs is indeed a life of ambivalence, belonging neither here nor there. Indisputably, exile is not “the state of being placid, satisfied, or secure”, but an experience in uncertainties (2000, p.163).

Trauma is one of the pivotal aftermaths of exile. It finds expression in fear, shame, sadness, anger, denial, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), dissociative disorders, and substance abuse problems (www.vitalitycollective.ca). Presenting the weird experience of Indian and other Third-World migrants/exiles in the Emirates, Unnikrishnan brings to the fore, some incidents or episodes that are trauma-laden in the narrative. John Kutty (earlier mentioned), an Indian migrant in Dubai was just newly married when he left the wife for the Emirates in search of job opportunities. In a bid to communicate with the wife at least once a week, Kutty normally goes to the kada (shop) and uses a device called 'fone' to talk to the wife. Incidentally, the user of the device can see the receiver and others around them clearly without the latter noticing or seeing the caller. In one of the times he calls the wife via the device, John Kutty sees his close friend, Peeter, behaving towards his wife in a way that suggests that the duo had been in a romantic relationship for a long time. As a result, Kutty is emotionally torn apart to the extent of having the device burnt to ashes (p. 27).

Certainly, John Kutty is a victim of one of the traumas of exile – anger – apartfrom being a victim of the distancing and physical separation and its aftermath that is akin to exile. Kutty is a victim of the shock that comes with the uncovering of traits of infidelity in his relationship with the wife. He is a victim of his sheer inability to cope with the repeated recurrence of the memories of his sight, hence, his resort to violence - an action that lands him in police net. However, in spite of his resort to violence, there is hardly any guarantee that Kutty would be able to wipe the memories of the event off his mind, for in trauma, there is a constant return of the traumatising event in the form of a waking memory “which can nonetheless only occur in the mode of a symptom or a dream” (Caruth 1995, p. 60). So, as long as he lives, Kutty is bound to live with this memory, what Caruth calls “the illusion of never forgetting”, for trauma is not just an effect of “destruction”, but very fundamentally, “an enigma of survival” (p. 58). So, given the condition Kutty finds himself, it is possible that he gets deprived of sound sleep for a prolonged period of time, and when he eventually makes effort at sleeping, dreaming throughout the period of sleep or somnambulating is

bound to be his constant or near-constant experience. Again, this is in tandem with another of Caruth's theorisation of traumatic events when she notes that in trauma, there is a "constant return of the traumatising event in the form of a waking memory which can nonetheless only occurs in the mode of a symptom or a dream" (1995, p.60). The implication is that the emphasis on trauma is not on the traumatic event alone, but also on the aftermath, the post-traumatic stage which finds outlets through dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, and other repetitive phenomena.

One of the subcategories of trauma is what Irene Visser (2015, p.110) calls vicarious trauma. It could also be called communal or collective trauma. This is the kind of trauma incurred by witnesses or other recipients of traumatic events. Thus, while recognising the effect of trauma on the individual, this sub-categorisation also takes cognisance of the contagious effect of trauma beyond the domains of the immediate victim. Indeed, quite traumatic to the passers-by, onlookers or witnesses is the incessant fall of labourers from high-rise buildings at construction sites in Abu Dhabi. The buildings are so high that when the labourers fall, they lose different sensitive organs or parts of their bodies including their limbs. In many an instance, the onlookers or passers-by become so highly affected by the incidents that they get unwittingly traumatised.

Generally, in Deepark Unnikrishnan's *TP*, Third-World migrants of Indian, Nepali, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi origins are treated, not as normal humans, but as beasts of burden. They are exposed to all sorts of hazardous, lethal, horribly risky and daring kinds of jobs culminating in the death of many migrant workers, which death is treated with levity by the Emirati authorities. In spite of the menacing nature of these jobs, they are hardly paid as and when due. Their whole-soul contribution to the development of their host land notwithstanding, these south Asian migrant workers are regarded as temporary people who do not *belong*. Irrespective of the number of years they would have put in in the service of the Emirates, they are nothing but foreigners, migrants, and/or exiles. What appears a constant probability for these migrant workers is the tendency to return or be returned to their traditional homelands whenever the authorities so deem fit.

Conclusion

Migration is a journey in search of the means of survival. It is a movement from an economically mismanaged, socially unstable, and prospect/opportunity-bereft clime to a somewhat stable, life-supporting, economically viable, and prospects-building one. Globally, migration has assumed an unprecedented dimension in recent times, catalysed by the apparent inequality in the world in which very many countries continue to look up to a few others for survival. From this context, migration may be defined as the movement of members of the developing Third-World countries to the developed nations in search of the means of livelihood. However, in spite of the dogged resolve to abandon the traditional homeland for a new, foreign one, Third-World migrants soon come to grasp with the ambivalences of exile occasioned by the fact of alienation, displacement, solitude, hardship, nostalgia, hostility, and trauma. This study examined the odd experiences of Asian migrantsin the United Arab Emirates and found that rather than being the much-

anticipated Eldorado, the frustration, suffering, and misery inherent in exile appear more biting than the ones the migrants had run away from in their traditional homelands. Migration, therefore, especially among Third-World subjects, is a phantasmal search for the ideal and an experience in ambivalences.

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