

focused on cases of exceptional women or if these histories reflected common realities. Overlooking the occasional typographical and citation error, this work is stunning in its dismissal of the stereotype of the invisible Gulf woman. ✂

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NEHA VORA. *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. xi + 245 pages, acknowledgements, notes, bibliography, index. Paper US\$24.95 ISBN 978-0-8223-5393-5.

How to describe the ever-changing social life of noncitizens in a petrodollar nation-state? What happens when these noncitizens enter their second, third, or fourth generation of living in this place? Such is the quandary for anyone doing ethnographic research in the emergent Gulf countries. While citizenship might be an overwrought subject of anthropological study, the fact remains that there are a number of unusual examples that are proving to be models for other nation-states to follow. One such place is Dubai, a postmodern, neoliberal experiment in crafting a new kind of nation-state, or in this case, a city-state. The United Arab Emirates is a kingdom divided into seven emirates organized as a federation. Dubai, the most populous and perhaps well known of these emirates, is the subject of Neha Vora's *Impossible Citizens*. Drawing on a scholarly lineage that includes postcolonial studies, urban ethnography, and diaspora studies, this interesting ethnography describes the everyday issues and social life of Indians living in an unusual diasporic relationship to Dubai. Vora draws on the idea of the "regional" without naming it so; she thinks of diaspora in terms of the close proximity of South Asia and the UAE, which are separated by the Arabian Sea.

The vexing question the book pursues is how to think of social life when legal citizenship is not an option in a country. In the case of the UAE, a country largely propelled by oil wealth, the Emirate of Dubai has set out to convert this surplus into a tourism, media, entertainment, sports, and shopping hub. Gambling on real estate value and the future dividends of a rentier state, this economic strategy employs neoliberal market logics and an idea of national life centered on commerce. What remains unclear is how the social rationale was devised for those millions of migrants brought in to build the country. More often than not, the model of urban planning throughout

the Gulf has discounted the social realities of migration. The presence of wealth from oil revenue, plus recent efforts to diversify the economy beyond the oil industry, has ushered in social mobility in Dubai and the development of a middle class, albeit a migrant middle class. Those on the lowest rungs of this social hierarchy face race and class inequities, including human rights violations. The emergence of a migrant middle class raises a number of questions regarding stratification in an overwhelmingly immigrant country. Vora does well to explore these questions in a range of sites including tourist spots, gold markets, workplaces, and higher education. Of particular insight is the notion, discussed in chapter four, of a racial glass ceiling created by the racialization of nationality in employment.

In fact, the strength of the book and its argument is primarily in the domain of employment, a category that has come to substitute for a rights-based notion of citizenship in Dubai. As Vora deftly describes, employment is not just a means of compensating labor; it is the core of social life for noncitizens and weaves together notions of belonging and diasporic identity. Yet, what is unexpected here is that, for Dubai's South Asians, home is only a short plane ride away. In this important point, the relationship of geographic region and diaspora reflects a temporal and spatial shift connected to distance. As Vora astutely points out, Dubai is already like South Asia for many of its inhabitants. It is in this sense that hybridity is practiced, not in terms of fluid identities but fluid places. This argument reflects another valuable insight in *Impossible Citizens* regarding the encounter and engagement of South Asians with Emiratis and other nationalities. For middle-class South Asians, relationships with Emiratis are described as amiable and inevitably close because of a range of care work and social relationships, while the greatest tensions are with whites from Europe and North America because of an unfair system of racial hierarchy.

If I have one criticism about the book, it is that Vora claims to have focused on the so-called "Indian" diaspora while she clearly also interviewed those identifying as Pakistani. Vora at times interchangeably uses Indian and South Asian to describe diasporic experience. However, I was left wanting more analysis from her own interviews, which seem rich, and I felt more context was needed in terms of differences and similarities between the Pakistani and Indian diasporas. ✂

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