

Panopticon and Disciplinary Power in Benjamin's *Goat Days*: (Foucaultian Reading)

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Abstract

The current research uses Foucault's theory of panopticon and power to illuminate Benjamin's *Goat Days*, a moving story originally written in Malayalam. The research aims to analyze Benjamin's novel in the context of Foucault's theories of panopticon, power, and surveillance, uncovering how the story reveals issues of exploitation, isolation, and resistance within the Kafala system in the Gulf. It follows the harrowing journey of Najeeb Muhammad, an Indian migrant worker in Saudi Arabia who becomes imprisoned by an Arab sponsor. By examining the characters' experiences, the paper seeks to emphasize the broader implications of the panopticon system and the impact of oppressive authority on individual agency and resistance. The study seeks to address the question: How does Benjamin's *Goat Days* embody Foucault's panopticon theory in depicting the experiences of migrant workers in terms of control and self-regulation within the Kafala system? It seems that *Goat Days* offers a compelling critique of systemic exploitation and the potential for resistance even after prolonged internalization.

Key words: *Goat Days, Kafala System, panopticon, power, surveillance.*

البانوبتيكون والسلطة التأديبية في رواية "أيام الماعز" لبنيامين: (قراءة فوكوية)

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ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث مفهوم البانوبتيكون في رواية "أيام الماعز"، للكاتب الهندي بنيامين، في ضوء نظرية ميشيل فوكو في السلطة والمراقبة، ويهدف البحث إلى تحليل الرواية في سياق نظريات فوكو حول البانوبتيكون، السلطة، والمراقبة، للكشف عن كيفية معالجة قضايا الاستغلال، العزلة، والمقاومة ضمن نظام الكفالة في دول الخليج العربي. ويتتبع البحث الرحلة المؤلمة لنجيب محمد، بطل الرواية، وهو عامل مهاجر هندي في السعودية، والذي يصبح، بالخطأ، سجيناً لدى كفيل عربي. ومن خلال فحص تجارب شخوص الرواية، يسعى البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على الأثر الأوسع لنظام البانوبتيكون وتأثير السلطة القمعية على السلطة الفردية وكيفية مقاومتها. ويهدف البحث بالنهاية للإجابة على السؤال الآتي: كيف تجسد رواية "أيام الماعز" لبنيامين نظرية البانوبتيكون لميشيل فوكو في تصوير تجارب العمال المهاجرين من حيث التحكم والتنظيم الذاتي ضمن نظام الكفالة؟ يبدو أن رواية "أيام الماعز" تقدم نقداً قوياً للاستغلال المنهجي وإمكانيات المقاومة حتى بعد عملية تطبيع طويلة. يقدم البحث رؤية جديدة في فهم الأدب العالمي عموماً ورواية "أيام الماعز" بصورة خاصة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أيام الماعز، نظام الكفالة، البانوبتيكون، السلطة، المراقبة.

Methodology

This study follows a qualitative analysis, employing a theoretical framework based on Michel Foucault's theories of power and panopticon system. By conducting a close reading of Benjamin's story, the research inspects the narrative elements and character experiences to explore themes of power, surveillance, and resistance. This research depends on the English translated copy of Benjamin's *Goat Days*, which was published in 2012 by Penguin Books by Joseph Koyipally.

Objectives

This paper aims to raise the voices of marginalized labor migrants around the world by focusing on the ideas of power, resistance, and panopticon.

1-Introduction

1-1-Overview on Benjamin's *Goats Days*.

Originally written in Malayalam, and later translated into many languages, Benjamin's *Goat Days* is based on real-life events. It intricately follows the journey of Najeeb Muhammad. He embarked on a work trip after securing money for a visa to work as helpers in a construction company (Benjamin, 251). Along with Hakeem, another boy in the story, they set out to Saudi Arabia, motivated by dreams of uplifting their families. However, their trip turned into a nightmare when they were taken in by the wrong sponsor (arbab), leading them to a goat farm in the desert under the control of a bad-tempered Bedouin. Najeeb was forced to work constantly, hungry, fatigued, and denied basic necessities. He faced threats, surveillance, beatings, and insults under the arbab's harsh supervision. Isolated and unfamiliar in the country, Najeeb started identifying more with the goats, feeling like one of the farm animals. His attempts to escape failed, leading to severe punishment from the arbab. However, a glimmer of hope arose when he secretly contacted Hakeem and Ibrahim Khadiri. With Ibrahim's help, Najeeb and Hakeem finally escaped their arbabs' control, albeit with sacrifices. Hakeem tragically perished, and Ibrahim vanished, leaving Najeeb to navigate his way to a nearby city with the help of Indian refugees. After being arrested, Najeeb awaited deportation in a Sumesi Prison, finding it better than life on the desert farm (Benjamin, 22).

The story explores themes of exploitation, isolation, and alienation within the Indian diaspora in the Gulf. It sheds light on the destructive impact of the Kafala System on migrant laborers.

1-2-Theory framework

The current research makes use of Michel Foucault's concepts of power, resistance and panopticon for analyzing Benjamin's *Goats Days*. Applying these

concepts helps readers understand how power dynamics shape individuals, cultures and narratives, revealing deeper understandings about themes of normalization, surveillance, control, and individual agency.

In his book, *Disciplinary and punish*, Foucault discusses two forms of punishment: the first form is called sovereign power which is related to the monarchs or kings in which severe punishment is used against the criminals. The second form is linked to disciplinary power in which each prisoner is carefully supervised where punishment is no longer associated with bodily punishment as before. In this case, it is about exercise and supervision. The criminals are enforced to follow a new apparatus of control that leads to follow the disciple program. (Foucault, 1977, p. 35-37) Thus, the two kinds of punishment which belong to different historical periods, are differ in the visibility kind where the first one is visible, out in the open, the second form is made invisible and the criminals are made visible.

Therefore, power operates through a web of relationships rather than being imposed by a single authority. (Foucault, 1982, p. 782) It can figure out identities, social relationships, and knowledge. He suggests that power can be found in all social relationships, he states, "it seems to me that power is 'always already there', that one is never 'outside' it" (Foucault, 1980: 141). Thus, power is omnipresent in the sense that man cannot be out of the umbrella of power. "The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others...Power exists only when it is put into action,"(Foucault, 1982, p.788). because it comes alive through actions and relationships rather than present as a static entity.

The idea of "disciplinary power," which Foucault suggests, is a way of shaping and molding people to adapt to society norms and expectations through a variety of institutions and practices.(Foucault, 1995, p. 135). This system is imposed through institutions like universities, prisons, and hospitals where individuals' behavior is regulated throughout surveillance and normalization.

Foucault identifies the concept of biopower as a mechanism through which power functions on the biological and social aspects of people in order to controlling them. He examines how power is exercised through disciplinary mechanisms that aim to shape and control individuals, turning them into "docile bodies" that conform to societal norms (Foucault, 1977, 137). This power can regulate all aspects of life and death of the subjects and control the very core of people's existence, Foucault states, "This new mechanism of power applies directly to bodies and' what they do rather than -to the land and what it produces" (Foucault, 2003 , p.35).

Hence, the discipline system "produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces, of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)"(Foucault, 1977, p.138). That is to say "Docile bodies" are subjected to control, observing and training to be suitable and obedient. Although this system increases the

utility of the body, yet at the same time reduces the independent power and autonomy of this body. It increases the usefulness of the body and increased domination over it.

Foucault's disciplinary power does not imply that power operates in a predictable manner; rather, it is consistently met with opposition and resistance, that is '[w]here there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1978, p. 95) where individuals may resist power relations. Individuals and groups subvert power structures because wherever there is power, there is resistance throughout subtle or overt, reactions in their actions, speech, and adoptions. Resistance is a part of the same network of interactions as power; it is not something separate from it.

Individuals sometimes are accustomed to follow specific social norms. This process, which impacts behavior and expectations, is called panopticon which operates alongside power and surveillance, captivating people to follow the prevailing ideals.

When people internalize cultural norms, they adopt a self-regulatory habit and live in a continuous state of surveillance. Therefore, a "panopticon," according to Foucault, is a situation in which people act as though they are being watched.

Foucault adopts Jeremy Bentham's design for the panopticon as a form of disciplinary technology. In the panopticon model, the individuals are watching their own behavior and supervising themselves. (Foucault, 1977, p. 206). Thus, in the disciplinary society, power is not external, but it is imposed from within.

This system demands organization of people in space then it needs a specific enclosed space similar to panopticon where the individuals are constantly visible. The individuals in this system begin to assume responsibility for their own surveillance.

Literature review

Various scholars and writers have approached themes, characters, and underlying messages in Benyamin's *Goat Days* using diverse theories and perspectives. Maalya, Jayan, along with Mangayarkarasi (2024), explore themes of migration, violence, alienation, homelessness, and identity crisis in the novel. Their paper situates the novel within the historical and socio-economic context of the Gulf to provide insights into the psychological and social impacts of migration on individuals. Sukanya Sen Gupta (2022) deals with the transnational plight of unskilled Indian migrant workers in the Gulf in Benyamin's *"Goat Days."* Gupta highlights cross-cultural communication, labor exploitation, and the notion of equal benefits from globalization. Isam M. Shihada (2016) examines the Kafala sponsorship system and its role in enabling the exploitation of Indian migrant laborers in Saudi Arabia. Drawing on Benyamin's novel, Shihada effectively emphasizes the need for systemic reform, both from the Saudi government and the migrant-sending countries, highlighting the necessity for ethical alignment with the values of justice and humanity in labor practices. Jasmine Fernandez (2014) explores the existential crisis of the protagonist,

Najeeb, in Benyamin's novel. The research analyzes the existential crisis based on economic and social aspects, also delving into the absurdity and despair of the protagonist's life caused by fate. However, the current paper aims to uncover the novel's intricate impact through Foucault's perspective of power and surveillance, focusing on the panopticon system to present a clear understanding of the novel's depiction of systemic exploitation and individual agency.

Discussion and analysis

Analyzing Benyamin's *Goat Days* through the lens of Foucault's theories on power and resistance offers multiple insights. The novel exemplifies Foucault's conceptualization of power and resistance as a multilayered and relational phenomenon mainly based on the relationship between the unnamed arbab and Najeeb. This relation, which is shaped by the subjugation and interrelation, mainly represents the panopticon system where individuals act as they are always observed by an authority.

From the first meeting with the wrong sponsor, Najeeb and Hakeem are shocked with the rude behavior of this man who imposes his sway on the two men when he snatches their passports and lets them follow him to get in his old pick-up car. From this point, their relationship become that one of controller and controlled, Najeeb narrates: "he snatched my passport and looked into it. Similarly, he snatched Hakeem's passport. Then, without saying anything, he walked forward. Carrying our bags, we followed him"(Benyamin,48). After that, the subjugation to the arbab's rules finds its way to Najeeb's everyday life which has been changed from a civilized life to a life of Bedouin. His food diet, his morning rituals, in the first day of his life in the desert have been changed. Such effect "violated all his hygiene rules"(Benyamin,68).

Enforcing Najeeb to change his clothes is a kind of controlling of his personality and swaying the power over him. The arbab forces Najeeb to wear an Arab dress "a thobe" and leave behind the pants of the jeans. Najeeb narrates, "[t]he arbab went inside and brought me a thobe— the dress of the typical Saudi Arab man[...]and a pair of boots"(Benyamin,69). The occasion of changing the clothes is a symbol of changing the personality of Najeeb in the same way that the character and identity of the "scary figure," another captivated shepherded whom Najeeb finds him in the masara, are changed. The important remark in this incident is that when the arbab lifts Najeeb's pants and shirt, he tells him 'Sheelaadi... sheelaadi,' slang Arabic words which means literally "take these away" (Benyamin, p.69). Without much resistance, Najeeb follows the order; he changes his clothes and removes the new brand leather shoes and steps into a stinking boots.

Imposing the language over people is part of forcing people to change their identity and be subjugated to a certain power. Foucault thinks of language as a productive tool that can establish norms and individualize subjects according to power's requirements. Najeeb is forced to use Arabic as a form of coping with

the new condition of controlling; he normalizes himself according to the current situation. The first word that Najeeb acquires is "arbab" which symbolizes the master-slave relationship. This event reflects Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* where the first word that Robinson Crouse teaches Friday when he met was "master"(Benyamin,174). After that, Najeeb acquires "Khubz" which symbolizes the control of his living, then he learns the words that relate to instruction and control such as 'Sheelaadi ... sheelaadi.'(Benyamin, 69).

As many Indians who have worked in The Gulf and returned to India, Najeeb uses the word Khubz, the food that is similar to chapatti in Najeeb's country. According to Foucault's perspective, this can be interpreted as a form of biopower. Najeeb and other returners have forced to eat khubz instead of chapatti in order to go on living. The shift in dietary habits can also be interpreted as a manifestation of Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, where those Indians are subjected to a system of rules, routines, and expectations that aim to mold them to conform to the dominant cultural norms. According to Foucault, the ability to define, authorize or prevent certain discourses or conceptualizations of power shapes the very possibilities for its exercise because "[d]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it" (Foucault,1978, p. 101).

The degree of control may reach its highest level when man is dehumanized. In many situations, Najeeb is treated like an animal. He is punished by the arbab for his trying to escape. He is prevented from food for two days. After that, Najeeb could untie and he finds eating "raw Unhusked wheat"(Benyamin,p.150) and drinking water from the same containers of water of the goats. His phrase, "I slept in the masara with the goats. By then I had indeed become a goat" (Benyamin,p.150) highlights the sense of dehumanization as he behaves like a goat. Moreover, the way he shaves himself, using the sheep-shearing scissors, is an impressing and it indicates a great statue of dehumanization, Najeeb narrates: "I took the big sheep-shearing scissors and manically cut away at my hair and beard"(Benyamin,p.160). Thus, Najeeb is subjugated to a discipline system that "produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies.

Based on Foucault's lens of normalization, Najeeb's naming of the goats after the names of his local people suggests that he adapts to his environment by internalizing his circumstances. The phrase "I gave a name to each goat in the masara"(Benyamin, p.161) signifies a transfer of his view, where he normalizes his subjugation and loneliness by creating a semblance of normal life. This reveals how people adjust their behaviors and thoughts to cope with the imposed conditions. Najeeb describes his life with goats in this phrase: "I kept talking to them as if I were talking to dear ones when I walked them, milked them, filled their containers and gave them fodder"(Benyamin,p.167).

According to Foucault, Panopticism is a system of control where persons are continually aware that they are being observed, forcing them to regulate their own manners, so they act as if they are constantly under surveillance. This

produces a powerful apparatus of self-discipline and social control without the need for direct power. The concept of panopticon can help us understand the surveillance in the life of the characters of Benyamen's story. Foucault's panopticon, as a system of surveillance, can exist everywhere all the time because it is "a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men" (Foucault, 1977, p.205). This system is a power which can be implemented in many institutions; "it is exercised spontaneously and without noise, it constitutes a mechanism whose effects follow from one another. Because, without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives power of mind over mind (Foucault, 1977, p.206).

This can be applied to the scary figure, Hakeem and Najeeb's characters. The scary figure's internalization of surveillance extremely influences his relationships with other characters in the story especially Najeeb. Under constant watch of his sponsor, he becomes more cautious and subjected, limiting his ability to trust those around him. The omnipresent sense of being observed by his sponsor makes the scary figure more self-reliant, focusing on his own thoughts and plans rather than creating alliances. This creates a barrier between him and Najeeb, affecting their ability to work together or share experience. The scary figure does not try to escape for years nor does he escape with Najeeb because he lives as if he is being seen everywhere and anytime by his arbab. He works according to the will of his sponsor even though his sponsor is absent. Najeeb describes this normalization as follows: "The scary figure slept soundly on his cot, unmindful, a cloth on his face to block the sun. The sunlight and the heat did not seem to affect his grimy body" (Benyamin, 81-82). The scary figure serene repose in such extreme conditions shows a great acquiescence to the omnipresent power structures that confine him. The ability of the scary figure to sleep "soundly on his cot, unmindful, a cloth on his face to block the sun" (Benyamin, p.81) shows an internalization of the conditions imposed upon him, an indication of what Foucault might describe as the subtle omnipresence of power that shapes behavior and perception. In the repressive isolated place where the scary man and Najeeb are held, the existence of watchful overseer or the mere belief that they are being observed influences their behavior, instilling a sense of powerlessness and entrapment.

The binocular, the tent and the gun of the sponsor represent the apparatus of the panopticon system in the farm.

In the first days of Najeeb's arrival to the masara, the arbab called Najeeb to his tent and let him try the binoculars and look at the vast area. The arbab wants to create a sense of hopelessness, even though Najeeb is not aware of their true purpose. "I looked at it—as far as I could make out, it was a pair of binoculars" (Benyamin, p.72). To elaborate more, this situation can be seen as a way of confirming that Najeeb participates in his own surveillance, highlighting

the impression that he is always being watched. The arbab's order "Shuf ...Shuf"(Benyamin,p.72), which means "look.. look", ensures the arbab's insistence on observation and reflects the panoptic mechanism of internalizing the surveillance where the observer enforces the observed to engage in looking. During this surveillance ceremony, the arbab "lifted up the pillow and drew out a double-barrelled gun"(Benyamin,p.72). Based on Foucault's theory, power is not just about observing; it also comprises the capacity to punish or threaten. The gun represents a tool of intimidation by the hand of the arbab to sway his authority through fear, so the arbab "aimed at the sky. A bird was flying high up. He aimed at it and fired a shot. Bingo. The bullet hit the bird and it fell"(Benyamin,p.72). The arbab's fruitful shot not only reveals his hunting skill, but also reinforces his authority over Najeeb's life, hinting to Najeeb about the potential consequences of disobedience.

After Najeeb had tried the binocular, the arbab "grabbed it from [him] and took it inside the tent."(Benyamin,p.72) The tent represents the sponsor's tower of authority. By retreating to the tent with the binoculars, the sponsor creates a barrier between himself and Najeeb, emphasizing his position as an observer. This act of role distribution represents the panoptic system where the watcher hides, preserving control through knowledge and surveillance. The result was that the arbab orders Najeeb to go away using the Arabic words "Yella, roh ..." (Benyamin,p.73) which mean "go away" at this moment, Najeeb declares "I realized that my life had become inescapably bound to those goats"(Benyamin,p.73).

The arbab's tent became an integral part of his panopticon system of observation, control, maintain authority and impose the rules. Najeeb was called to the tent to be scolded and punished for cleaning his backside with water. This highlights the broader theme of surveillance and self-regulation especially when Najeeb acted as if he understood the arbab's advice and convinced himself that using water to clean himself after using the bathroom is a "magnitude crime" (Benyamin,p.18). Thus, Najeeb adapts his behavior in response to surveillance. This aligns with Foucault's theory of the panopticon, where the observer (the arbab) creates an area from which he can observe and discipline the observed (Najeeb).

The tent symbolizes the tower of the prison that controls all the area; it stands for a dominant point of authority and surveillance; it is the place where the arbab maintains his power and observe the actions of Najeeb and the scary figure. Whether the arbab was sleeping or awaking, they were working constantly in the farm. This circumstance reflects the panopticon's design, where the viewer is veiled, but the inmates feel that they are constantly watched.

When Najeeb gets broken arm, he goes crying several times to the arbab's tent and begged to take him to the hospital but the arbab didn't pay any attention(Benyamin,p.120).

Moreover, the binocular represents the intensive surveillance. It allow the arbab to monitor Najeeb from a distance, forming a sense of omnipresence. It stands for a developed system which goes with Foucault's theory in which surveillance generates a self-regulating behavior among those being observed. This thinking alters his movements to avoid punishment or escape attempts and he is forced to work in a very bad conditions for more than three years.

The arbab's gun also stands for a tool of authority and intimidation. It ensures compliance. It reflects Foucault's idea that power is not just about surveillance but also about the ability to enact consequences for resistance and non-compliance. The scary figure's failed escape which leads to his death, his refuse to communicate his thoughts or plans to Najeeb and his nasty body highlight the isolation and power imposed by the farm owner on him. The panopticon leads to a lack of trust and communication between the captives and forms an atmosphere where escape becomes not only challenging but also hazardous.

Even when the arbab was out of his tent and drove away in his vehicle and Najeeb is "free, out of anyone's coercion or control"(Benyamin,135), Najeeb does not go anywhere and he "gave up the desire to escape"(Benyamin,p.135).

While he was herding the goats in the desert, Najeeb tried to escape when he was outside the binoculars' range but "the arbab was standing up on his vehicle with his binoculars"(Benyamin,p.147). He tried to run away, but the arbab fired him twice without hitting him then ordered him to get into the car, giving him some smacks and insults. This occasion makes the arbab intensifies the observation on Najeeb that he "hadn't taken his eyes off the binoculars"(Benyamin,p.171). The fear of the binoculars and gun combined the three, Najeeb, Hakeem and Ibrahim during their final escape. They were afraid that "When the arbab reached the masara and realized that [they] were not there, he would come with his binoculars and the gun. He would spot us in the desert"(Benyamin,p.193).

Overall, employing the apparatuses of binoculars, gun, and tent by the writes create a microcosm of Foucault's panopticism. The tent, binoculars, and gun enable the system of surveillance and control to shape the behavior of the captive characters. These tools create a considerably powerful sense that effects Najeeb's agency which leads to bind his life to the goats and the arbab's needs. This embodies Foucault's theory about the operating of power through surveillance and coercion in social relations.

Najeeb's statement "I had learnt to live with my circumstances.....I became used to my life over the course of a year. I no longer found it burdensome"(Benyamin,p.175) suggests his gradual acceptance of his circumstances. It also illustrates how individuals internalize social norms about suffer and endurance when their personal experiences are shaped by broader societal pressures. Najeeb comes to a state of life where he has "No thoughts, no worries, no desires"(Benyamin,p.176). Moreover he reaches a point where he finds himself happy with this condition, "I had forgotten my family, my home,

my homeland. ...I was not at all affected by their sorrows or their miseries. My life was happy. Happy"(Benyamin,p.153), in this point, he finds himself as "a goat in the masara of goats"(Benyamin,p.176). This state of normalization depicts the panopticon system in the gulf and the life of the foreign labors.

Change in habits is one part of suffering Najeeb confronts, it can be read throughout Foucault's disciplinary power. While he used to use much water in his everyday activities including the post-defecation cleaning, this process becomes a problem in the desert. He cannot clean himself using water. Instead, he is forced to follow stone cleansing for his personal hygiene. By the time, he is accustomed to clean himself using the stones instead of water. He is subjected to the system of the desert. Najeeb states. "To avoid being beaten by the arbab for trying to clean myself with water, I began cleaning my behind with stones"(Benyamin,p.93). Najeeb's ideologies has been changed as he declares that "Cleanliness had been my ideology[...] the breaking of all my habits began that day, didn't it? The harshest for me was this ban on sanitation"(Benyamin,p.78).

Day by day Najeeb's thinking start to change from refusing and complaint to acceptance. He keeps learning and coping with the new conditions of life. Without being observed by the arbab, his interest is changed from thinking of his home and future dreams into thinking about how to spend his day and satisfy his arbab. It is a kind of normalization and functioning according to the panoptic system as described by Foucault. The following passage describe this situation:

Can you imagine what I had been thinking about that night as I lay down? About going to the masara early in the morning and milking the goats; controlling the goats as the scary figure did and coming out with a vessel full of milk; the arbab's face lighting up when he saw me with the milk; and single-handedly herding the goats of a masara and bringing them back (Benyamin,p.95)

Even when Hakeem asked Najeeb to be prepared to a imminent escape, Najeeb is unsure and he is full with hesitation. He said, "I can't go anywhere in this figure and form. I am a goat. My life is in this masara. Till I end my life or die of some disease, I don't want to show anyone this scruffy shape, this scruffy face, this scruffy life. Mine is a goat's life."(Benyamin,p.181) This passage shows a great kind of normalization where individuals reach the state of surrender and total internalization with the norms of life. It also shows the panoptic state which leads to Najeeb's great fear and surveillance to his arbab even though his arbab is away from his observation. He eagers to an opportunity to escape but when it comes he "became detached."(Benyamin,p.181). His life is bound to the goat from the first day. "Yella, roh ..." the arbab pushed me after the goats. That moment, I realized that my life had become inescapably bound to those goats"(Benyamin,p.73).

Depending on Foucault's concept of panopticon, Najeeb and Hameed's behavior of subjugation to the police and being happy to be arrested reflects the panopticon system. Their behavior shows a form of normalization where people are put to the power of system by themselves without being forced, Najeeb describes this internalization: "Like us, the four or five others there were also in handcuffs. I doubt if any of them were as happy to be arrested as we were" (Benyamin, p.8). They were happy to be put and slapped even though they didn't do a crime. Even with the bad condition in the cell and the discrimination situation where "Arabs spreading their legs comfortably, others had to suffer even more" (Benyamin, p.9), the prison was like a heaven for them; it was described as a "marriage halls" (Benyamin, 3). Such normalization appears clearly when they got used to the ways of the prison within a short time that they were showing themselves bowed all the time against the officers, "Hameed and I remained silent and kept our heads bowed" while they were treated or conveyed to another place" (Benyamin, p.8).

The arbabs' exercise of power over the workers and the constant observation and control appear throughout the weekly identification parade in the prison. Searching the escaped workers, arbabs make a close examination of the workers' faces. Such observation reflects the panopticon system where people stay in a state of constant surveillance and visibility under the control of the power of observation. The panopticon system turns the inmates to be powerless, as the arbabs could simply identify and regain their "absconding workers" (Benyamin, p.9).

The juridical mechanisms that granted the arbabs the right of imposing their power over the abscond workers indicates how power can be operated through the law and legal institutions, subjecting the prisoners to further abuse and suffering. This highlights Foucault's conceptualization of power as a multilayered and relational system.

On the other hand, one can see how limited and futile is the resistance of the prisoners. However, their efforts to get rid of the normalized power system, such as their loud protests and cries of innocence, mirror Foucault's recognition of the potential possibility of challenging and the reshape of subjectivities.

Describing the abscond workers as goats "being led to slaughter" (Benyamin, p.22) highlights dehumanization and objectification of the workers. the arbabs employ numerous disciplinary mechanisms, surveillance, and juridical power to figure out the prisoners' subjectivities, altering them into docile, and helpless subjects subjugated to the sponsors' power.

As a part of the system of control, the arbabs impose physical violence and punishment over the abscond workers. Examining the prisoners' faces carefully, Hameed's Arab sponsor jumped on Hameed "like a cheetah" and slapping him with his hand, belt, and the iqal, till the anger subsided (Benyamin, p.29). Exercising such physical power represents a means of implanting fear, strengthening the arbabs' control, and modeling Hameed's subjectivity as a

weak, subordinate individual. Based on Foucault's theory, it appears that power relations can produce particular forms of subjectivity.

It appears that the individuals let themselves be subjugated to the power of the subjugators. At the first meeting with the arbab in the airport, Najeeb was ready to normalize himself even with such rude man because he finds him the custodian of all his dreams, and the "the visible god who would fulfill all [his] ambitions"(Benyamin,p.48).

In a panoptic system, people prioritize compliance and survival in the moment over future aspirations or reflections on the past. Observation of the arbab renders Najeeb to response only to the immediate demands of his environment. Focusing only on "managing the todays"(Benyamin,p.96), Najeeb shows how the constant observation has managed him to self-regulate his behavior to avoid punishment or his arbab's disapproval. Moreover, he reduces his potential for resistance. This bring into line with Foucault's theory that surveillance not only monitors and controls behavior but also restrains the individual's ability to ponder beyond the immediate context. Najeeb's life becomes a chain of present moments governed by the arbab's authority. Najeeb's statement "I neither bothered about yesterdays nor worried about tomorrows. Just focused on managing the todays. I think all my masara life was just that"(Benyamin,p.96) highlights the pervasive nature of the panopticon in his daily life.

Najeeb's life in a new isolated place reveals a great struggle with both the physical and psychological demands of his compulsory work. His works under the oppressive command of the arbab, a harsh and rude man, symbolizes the external forces of power that control Najeeb's every move. Najeeb's resistance is crushed not only by direct violence, but also by the overwhelming force of normalization of the panopticon life. Even his thoughts reflect the oppressive power that holds him captive, making him believe that if he wants to survive, he must work "till [he] died, not just till [his] bones broke"(Benyamin,p.94). The indication to bones breaking before death shows the extent of the repression; it is not just a physical toll but a thorough subjugation of the spirit.

When Najeeb was sheltered by some Indian guys from his community, he was shocked to see himself in the mirror because he saw "a stranger[....]someone else altogether"(Benyamin,p.244).

Najeeb 's submitting to his arbab's power highlights how power operates through domination and oppression. His experience with this harsh labor denotes a way of normalization where he accepts a life of suffering and hardship as a new norm. The repressive conditions become internalized as part of his existence, highlighting that people can be enforced to accept even extreme hardships as normal when they feel helpless to alter their circumstances.

Applying Foucault's concept of Panopticon, Najeeb feels the constant surveillance of an internalized power structure although he was alone. His thoughts reflect the pressure to keep working tirelessly, as if he was under continuous observation, which let him conform to the expectations of those in

power, even to the point of breaking, Najeeb declares: "I was learning to face life alone, to train myself in jobs I had never performed before, to try out a new way of life, to get accustomed to an uncommon situation. It was not as if I had a choice; I was utterly helpless. [...] we would work till we died, not just till our bones broke"(Benyamin,p.104).

Najeeb's gradual acclimatization to nauseating stench in the masara and goat's milk reflects Foucault's idea of normalization. In the beginning, "the smell emanating from goats' urine, the stench of the droppings, the reek of grass and hay that got wet with the urine"(Benyamin,p.128) are irresistible, inducing a visceral response (vomiting), then over time the condition becomes normalized. The phrase "I mumbled a few words like goat,"(Benyamin,p.107-8) highlights how bodies and senses adapt to the new conditions.

The nauseating stench can symbolize the oppressive nature of Najeeb's experience. However, when he becomes familiar with the smell, he surrenders to the conditions imposed by his surroundings, illuminating the subtle means in which power operates.

Najeeb's visceral reaction (vomiting) against the smell represents a form of initial resistance against the awful experience, reflecting a struggle to maintain personal boundaries against an prodigious external power. On the other hand, his acceptance of the new conditions to be part of his identity shows a complex interchange of power and resistance. The phrase "It became so much a part of me I could not believe that such a stench had ever existed"(Benyamin,p.128) highlights how deeply ingrained these norms can become after removing the initial resistance. This transformation may refer to a loss of agency, where Najeeb internalizes the conditions of his environment.

The scents of different animals become integrated into Najeeb's daily life, transforming from sources of anxiety to markers of identity and knowledge. He became familiar with every kind of cattle throughout their smells.

In contrast, Najeeb's phrase "There was only one animal in that masara without any smell, and that was me"(Benyamin,p.129) suggests a sense of alienation. As the other animals are marked by their smell, Najeeb's lack of a smell can symbolize disconnection to this sensory world.

As Najeeb likens his miserable life to the goat life, he hints to his escape when he declares that "Goats are the only domesticated animals that, despite living with man for about six thousand years, slip back into their wild nature whenever possible"(Benyamin,p.105). His speech reflects the tension between normalization or subjugation and the inherent instinct for freedom. Comparing Najeeb's life with goats, his speech underscores a fundamental resistance to confinement and control. In spite of long domestication "six thousand years", goats have an persistent urge to return to the wild. This reflects the speaker's journey, indicating a strong drive for freedom. Najeeb's escape from the "life of goats" advocates a triumph over imposed power. It mirrors the idea that,

whatever the forces of control prolonged, the drive desire for liberty and self-determination can ultimately triumph.

Najeeb's decision of escaping can be seen as a regaining of his agency, even in the face of what seems to be an inevitable destiny.

Although the scary figure appears to be fully subjugated to the power of the arbab and he was representing the ultimate consequence of normalization, his abscond represents the inevitable decision of resistance.

Najeeb and Hakeem were at a crossroad: either they follow the way of subjugation and weakness and accepting their fate and become cogs in the power system, or they resist and fight for their independence. At the end, they choose resistance and destroy the power system of Kafala. This refers to an essential part of Foucault's philosophy that whenever there is power, there is resistance; power and resistance are always connected.

The internalization of surveillance reflects Foucault's idea that power is most effective when it compels individuals to regulate their own actions. Nevertheless, surveillance acts as a catalyst for the scary figure and Najeeb's resistance. Their awareness of being observed intensifies their desire for freedom, prompting strategic planning and self-discipline necessary for the eventual escape. Najeeb's story is a testament to the potential for resistance within the constraints of power, which challenges the belief that power is absolute and assures the ability for individual defiance.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated the intricate interplay between power, surveillance, and resistance in Benyamin's Goat Days, framed through Foucault's panopticon theory. The novel vividly portrays the dehumanizing conditions faced by migrant workers within the Kafala system, where constant observation and internalized control effectively suppress individual autonomy. Najeeb's transformation from a hopeful laborer to a resigned figure, identifying with the goats he tends, underscores the pervasive impact of systemic exploitation. Yet, the narrative also reveals the indomitable human spirit, as the protagonist's eventual escape signifies a profound act of resistance against an oppressive regime. This analysis not only enriches our understanding of the novel's thematic depth but also underscores the broader implications for human rights and labor practices in contemporary society. Through this exploration, the study contributes to a critical discourse on the potential for agency and resilience amidst pervasive control.

Najeeb's life takes a drastic turn when he is trapped on a remote goat farm, subjected to brutal treatment by his arbab, and forced into a dehumanizing existence akin to the animals he tends.

Analyzing the novel through Michel Foucault's theories of power and surveillance, the story exemplifies the panopticon model, where individuals internalize control and self-regulate under constant observation. Najeeb's gradual acceptance of his circumstances, mirrored by his adaptation to the harsh environment, highlights the intricate dynamics of power and resistance. Despite the oppressive conditions, a flicker of hope persists, culminating in a perilous escape. This reflects Foucault's assertion that resistance is inherent wherever power exists. *Goat Days* serves as a powerful critique of systemic exploitation and a testament to the enduring human spirit.

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