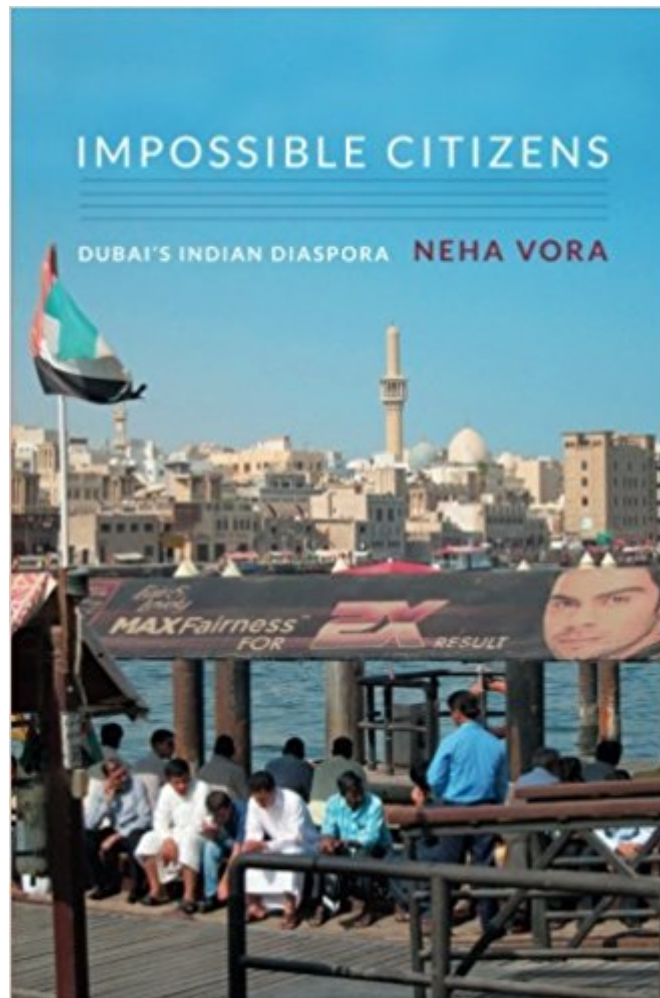




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# Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora



## Synopsis

Indian communities have existed in the Gulf emirate of Dubai for more than a century. Since the 1970s, workers from South Asia have flooded into the emirate, enabling Dubai's huge construction boom. They now compose its largest noncitizen population. Though many migrant families are middle-class and second-, third-, or even fourth-generation residents, Indians cannot become legal citizens of the United Arab Emirates. Instead, they are all classified as temporary guest workers. In *Impossible Citizens*, Neha Vora draws on her ethnographic research in Dubai's Indian-dominated downtown to explore how Indians live suspended in a state of permanent temporariness. While their legal status defines them as perpetual outsiders, Indians are integral to the Emirati nation-state and its economy. At the same time, Indians—•even those who have established thriving diasporic neighborhoods in the emirate—•disavow any interest in formally belonging to Dubai and instead consider India their home. Vora shows how these multiple and conflicting logics of citizenship and belonging contribute to new understandings of contemporary citizenship, migration, and national identity, ones that differ from liberal democratic models and that highlight how Indians, rather than Emiratis, are the quintessential—•yet impossible—•citizens of Dubai.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In *Impossible Citizens*, Neha Vora examines how Indians living in Dubai, where they are formally excluded from citizenship, create other forms of belonging through relationships with various communities—including Indians of other classes, other South Asians, and

Emirati as well as particular spaces within the city-state. This book makes a strong argument with both theoretical and empirical significance that Indians are integral to the legitimacy of the Emirati state." Ilana Feldman, author of *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule*, 1917 "Neha Vora's *Impossible Citizens* is not only a fine ethnography of the 'permanently temporary' Indian population in Dubai, it is also a searching re-examination of concepts such as 'citizenship,' 'diaspora,' and 'democracy.' In the finest traditions of ethnographic work, Vora thoroughly undermines the usual scholarly use of these concepts by showing how little analytic purchase they give us in one case. She argues instead for a view in which migrants are not separated from citizens, and the economic causes of migration are not seen as disconnected from questions of social and cultural citizenship. Theoretically innovative and ethnographically rich, this study will be a necessary guide to modes of belonging in the contemporary globalized world." Akhil Gupta, author of *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* "Vora's book is not merely an interesting narrative; it is also theoretically sophisticated, working through the Dubai case to argue an urgent need for questioning several core analytic concepts | she confidently ranges around questions of citizenship, migrancy and governmentality including taxation and welfare and deftly demonstrates how academic and popular discourse alike fail to disengage from the imperial genealogies of their own epistemologies | Accordingly, this book deserves a readership beyond its obvious regional constituencies. Anyone thinking about state, citizenship, migration, rights or contemporary economies, or about the intellectual and political work that we do when we delineate and separate analytic domains, prising them from the flow of daily reactions and transactions that form social life, will find much here." (Caroline Osella *Times Higher Education*) "Impossible Citizens is immediately engaging and sophisticated in its presentation of the myriad realities of the everyday lives of Indians in Dubai. . . . [T]he promise of the book is not just for those identifying with Area Studies or readers interested in Diaspora Studies and research on transnational ties that link South Asia with the other parts of the world, but also for those who wish to engage with thematic subjects of citizenship, migration and its links to home economies and an anthropology of how neo-liberal economics affects the spatial, sensual and social architecture of cities." (Anandita Bajpai *South Asia*). . . a rich and comprehensive ethnography of Dubai's Indian community that sets new standards for writing about 'guest workers' in the Gulf. Impossible Citizens examines citizenship precisely through those who mark citizenship's limits; and in so doing, provides a compelling analysis of political governance that speaks to multiple disciplines

and regions of the world. (Noora Anwar Lori Middle East Journal) "[Vora's] careful study of a group of migrants makes a compelling contribution to the anthropology of migration, transnationalism, and cities as well as to area studies of South Asia and the Middle East." (Kristin V. Monroe Journal of Anthropological Research) "A rich ethnography which provides a fresh perspective on the Indian community in the rapidly changing city of Dubai." (Sanjukta Mukherjee International Migration Review) "Impossible Citizens will no doubt appeal to anyone interested in the Southasian diaspora and in new forms of citizenship." (Tristian Brusle Himal Southasian Magazine) "...this book is a remarkable study in the field of Gulf Studies, migration, diaspora, and citizenship. It challenges these concepts with the exceptional case of Dubai.... Her painstaking research has resulted in an extraordinary and extremely well documented contribution. The book is well organized and well written. It will be welcomed by students, professionals, and academics alike." (Gijsbert Oonk Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 2016-01-01) "[W]ith Impossible Citizens, Vora •through her rich ethnographic work and her very well laid out arguments• contributes significantly to our understanding of citizenship, diaspora and belonging by introducing the largely understudied, highly multicultural yet stratified society of Dubai." (Idil Akinci The Australian Journal of Anthropology 2016-01-01)

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Challenging us to look beyond the received wisdom and rote scholarship about immigration, citizenship and identity in the contemporary world, Neha Vora's book is a great one in many many ways--especially if you've been a student of the humanities for a while. It is rare to find a scholar who can actually teach you (if you are a migrant from the 'third world' living and working elsewhere and if you are trying to think more clearly and in new ways about globalisation, culture, migration, diaspora, identity etc). I can't think of another book that has made me think about historiography, sociology, economic determinism and so much else in the field of method and generally the production of knowledge as this book has. Simply because Vora's book is a new path, forcing you to think anew, accept the challenge of thinking and living and coming to grips with the world. Identity, agency, location, political geography, learn to think about these in refreshing ways. There is also a great discussion on youtube where Prof Vohra presents the views in her book. The best part in the discussion is a paper by Professor Attiya Ahmed on the adoption of islamic practices and piety by domestic workers in Kuwait. It is an amazing and important intervention on the whole issue of labour, migration, citizenship, "cross cultural" encounters etc. Prof Vohra intervenes at one point to

emphasise a point made by Prof Attiya--this is a crucial point in the discussion. A must-watch video if you are interested in these matters. Prof Attiya's paper is just superb.

Garbage. I advice you not to waste your money and time on this book. The writer is looking for glory for her people outside her country. If you want to unmask the fallacy the writer's ideas and make her look speechless..! Just ask her this questions.. WHY INDIAN "DISPORA" IN OTHER COUNTRIES COULDN'T BUILD LIKE DUBAI... Merely she wants all indians in UAE to get the citizenship just because they worked there.. lame and weak reasoning. if it was my choice I would have given it less than one star,

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