

## Diasporic Sensibility and Consciousness in Poetry of Sujata Bhatt

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### ABSTRACT

Diasporic Sensibility and Consciousness in Poetry of Sujata Bhatt reveal the three very commonly used terms—'self', 'personality' and 'identity'. These terms were constantly under investigation in the present paper. The purport of this paper is to study inclinations of Bhatt on various themes like feminism which demonstrated the state of a middleclass Indian Woman; who is crushed up, battered and not taken care at all and macro level revolutions. The paper has a study which demonstrates the hatred of Hindu religion and its preplanned commandments in opposition to women. Sujata Bhatt is apprehensive with the diverse social evils ubiquitous in the society. Her Diasporic writing embodies kind of paradoxical experience because of which a tensional quality is at the heart of her writings. The diasporic experience cannot be reduced to a simple-minded rejection or acceptance of the homeland. Sujata Bhatt creates an incorporation of her various diasporic experiences in the Indian diaspora. Though boundary maintenance and preservation of identity are generally emphasised, there is a strong cross current that emphasizes hybridity, fluidity, creolization, and syncretism. Poetry of Sujata Bhatt reveals anxiety and obsession, regarding cultural individuality, gallop through her poetry about places, reminiscences, various forms of arts, science and politics. The researcher has studied that Sujata Bhatt, is majorly concerned about native and foreign languages. She is both socially and globally sentient poet. The paper inhibits understanding of the implication of above mentioned themes in poetry.

Sujata Bhatt, is a present-day woman poet, who interconnects the sentiments from the women's end. The motivating part of this young female poet is that in spite of passing on the female concern to the greater skin, she has impressed upon countless other understandings associated with the people of diverse sections' of the society. She is conscious of manifold persecutions prevalent in the society. She has been writing poetry, which knocks woman's life.

Sujata Bhatt has written a poem based on her aunt-Hirabhen. Titled as, 'A Story for Pearse', has demonstrated the state of a middleclass Indian Woman; who is crushed up, battered and not taken care at all. All these annoyances directed her to finalize a supposition in which she is unrestricted from all the limitations:

*My great-aunt Hirabhen  
was rescued from her mother-in-law  
rescued from her husband  
soon after she was married.  
Her mother-in-law used to beat her  
with a bamboo pole.  
She made her work all day  
with little food,  
then whipped her every night  
until her pretty skin turned ugly. (Lines 16-25)*

Here, in a country like India, where opting for a divorce makes woman's life even more complicated, Hirabhen took a tough decision of being free. However, here being free is not that simple; one has to get separated from her own's life:

*But I am certain  
That her soul walked out  
on her that day in court.  
After the battle was won  
There was nothing more  
For the soul to say-  
After she was free  
She could never feel her soul again. (41-48)*

Bhatt has been demanding to examine the wounded soul of married Indian woman. As a contemporary woman poet, despite understanding the concealed traumas of woman's life, she also looks for macro level revolutions. She is both socially and globally sentient poet. She is also apprehensive with the diverse social evils ubiquitous in the society. By examining the writings of women poets, we will gain a deep insight into the politics of home that has been complicated by the issues of gender, domesticity and sexuality. Diaspora across different political, economic and cultural systems, according to bell hooks, "requires the pushing against oppressive boundaries set by race, sex and class dominations" (1989, 15). In this sense, diaspora, as both dehoming and rehoming discourse, inscribes the changes and transformations of power relations, and unlocks new forms and expressions of home. For many women diasporas, home is a contested cultural process of being and becoming.

Sujata Bhatt is also apprehensive with the themes of women's voices in history and a sagacity of displacement from her 'homeland'. Sujata, who was born in Ahmedabad in 1956 and brought up in Pune, also spent much of her early days away from India, due to her father's work as a virologist, she

along with her family transferred to New Orleans. At that time, she was five. Sujata came back to India for a while before again moving to Connecticut 'for good' when Bhatt was twelve, so that her father could take up a post at Yale University. She currently resides in Bremen, Germany. Her multiple experiences of getting moved out from India were further influenced by losing the connection of her inhabitant language upon comprehending that both languages, Gujarati and Marathi might not be sufficient in the US.

Her poetry acquaints the absence of women's voices from the Irish literary rule with her own emotion of divergence in being a poet and ultimately a woman. She confronts this conflict by speaking for Irish women in olden times and by giving voice to her experiences. In connecting the details of her own life with Irish history, Bhatt endeavours to undermine her feeling of dislocation from her native soil.

Inside this perception, one of the research highlights on three main aspects of diasporic consciousness, which are skilfully expressed in the poetries of Bhatt. The very first aspect looks at the feelings and instincts of the poets in the Concepts. In examining Bhatt's connections with her motherland; it is obvious that their poetries of deport and displacement mostly comes from the diasporic awareness. Within this concept, an utmost focus is on three aspects of diasporic consciousness that are notified in Bhatt's poetry. The first aspect is, as stated above, inseparably associated with Irish or Indian identities.

Since the poet was not fluently able to use her native dialect or language in the host society, they must resettle her sensitivities of language in relation to the host culture and motherland. The last feature of diasporic realization is the saga of coming back to the homeland. It is easy and possible for poets to actually go back to their homelands, but paradoxically, they cannot revisit to their childhoods, the early days prior to which they left Ireland and India. Consequently Bhatt successfully and impressively create a legendary homeland in her poetry, which in the words of Sushelia Nasta is "built on the discontinuous fragments of memory and reconceived in the imagination." (11) Certainly this contemporary poet is element of an Irish or Indian diaspora, however, her dislodgment creates in them a sentiment of loneliness. Hence, their fan readers behold their symbols of diasporic awareness in her poetries and are expected to scrutinize the personal pronoun 'I' as the narrator or 'lyrical persona' of her poems.

Sujata Bhatt describes her own sentiment of loss in the poem "Whenever I Return" in which the expressive poetic qualities addresses the reader with her impactful words,

*Don't speak to me of exile.  
Don't question my memory.  
How can you understand  
The souls of brain cells?  
How can you understand  
Coefficients you have never even lived?(62-68)*

The diasporic experience cannot be reduced to a simple-minded rejection or acceptance of the homeland. What happens is a more complex process of "confluence." Similar to Bhabha's

hybridization, this process is not a super imposition of one culture on the other, nor is it a facile transplantation. As Parameswaran puts it:

Every immigrant transplants part of his native land to the new country, and the transplant may be said to have taken root once the immigrant figuratively sees his native river in the river that runs in his adopted place; not Ganga as the Assiniboine or the Assiniboine as the Ganga, both of which imply a simple transference or substitution, but Ganga in the Assiniboine, which implies a flowing into a merger that enriches the river. The confluence of any two rivers is sacred for the Hindu ethos, perhaps because it is symbolic of this enrichment. In the literary context of the immigrant experience this image has an added dimension. At the confluence, the rivers are distinct, and one can see the seam of the two separate streams as they join (79-80).

Bhatt's passionate issues affected readers to think about the pinch of her incident of loss and to understand her the way she sees herself—as a strained deport, who believes what Edward Said describes as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home". (173)

As talked in the above paragraphs, it is from beginning to end this lens of exile that diasporic realization takes hold. The common grounds why Boland and Bhatt observe themselves to be forced exiles, they consider that neither they belong to their dear homeland nor to the host society where they have been migrated due to their parent's transfer. And hence, propagating sentiments and emotions of separation, not-belonging, and homelessness in both of them were reflecting through their pieces of works, their poetries. As stated by Stuart Hall, this duplexity of awareness points that 'critical points of deep and significant difference [between] "what we really are"; [and], since history has intervened - "what we have become" (26)

Sujata Bhatt considers that she neither belongs to her homeland India, nor to where she has to migrate, the U.S. or Germany. Since, as an exile, her life has created a significant distinguish between what her identity was and what her identity has become now, the poet's 'home' becomes a combination of her experiences in these various and different cultures. In 'The Multicultural Poem', Bhatt represents her amalgam personality in incarnating the "Multicultural Poem" as a demonstration of her own occurrence of being what Cecile Sandten calls "bicultural by birth and migration, and tri-cultural by marriage" (1). In her poem, the narrator voices that, It wants to be read at the border to the person who checks your passport. The multicultural poem does not expect the reader to 'understand' anything. After all, it is used to being misunderstood. (52-56)

For Sujata, it is a 'loss' that she lives in the diaspora because she feels disconnected from the homeland and her native language is also different. Bhatt's diasporic perception articulates her experience of being 'out-of country' and 'out-of-language', as the poet renegotiates language in the diaspora. When Bhatt for the very first time moved to New Orleans, she describes the feeling of being 'out-of-language'.

When she first moved to the US, since she was unable to speak English, she was unable to converse. Over the period of time, she learned English and started integrating both languages, English and her mother tongue, Gujarati in her everyday life, the poet's hybrid identity made her feel detached from both her motherland and her native language. In "History is a Broken Narrative", Sujata Bhatt gorgeously transfers the teething dilemmas of being not a part -of-language, and the disappointment she felt in heartrending all the way through between India and the US. With the subsequent couplet, she polishes the poem;

*It will give you time -  
time to gather up the fallen pieces  
of your language- one by one  
with your mouth, with your mouth - you need time  
to pick up the scattered pieces of your language  
and the way to the neighbour's house is endless  
with your mouth like a bird.(3,13-19)*

In evaluating her experience of combining languages, the way a bird builds its nest, Bhatt expresses the importance of home language vs. foreign language in the diasporic awareness. Just because she is 'not in the homeland', she feels disengaged from the native soil and must build her own tongue and identity.

In her poetry, readers are made aware encounters of misfortune, disengagement and dislocation can be shared across regional and ethnic limits through diasporic perception. Since they are forced deports, she expresses the divergence they sense exists between who they were prior to leaving Ireland and India, and who they have turn out to be after living in the diaspora. Through her poetry, Sujata Bhatt integrates her experiences of not-belonging and dislocation in India, North America and Europe in a crossbreed room. Life in the diaspora drives her to renegotiate their local vernacular or dialect. She is kind of thunderstruck upon leaving India for the US and Germany. Hence, she must assemble her own tongue and personality. In the poetry Sujata Bhatt, a reader can very well observe dualities of the diasporic perception in spotting upon the facets of not belonging and deport, as well as, the renegotiation of a inhabitant dialect or language.

Feminism refuses to accept all hierarchal arrangements and organizations largely since they give lower preference to women. In this regards, Bhatt, as a poet, shows aggression, through her poetries, on the conservative position of woman in the patriarchal setup with delicate intelligence of sarcasm and satire. Being aware of the Indian situation, Bhatt lingers over Hindu ceremonies, beliefs and religious symbols which have cultural importance. As an illustration; bangles, rings, necklaces, and others are not just ornaments, but they highly signify 'the propitiousness of wifehood'. However, the manner in which Bhatt reminds mother's affection to her bangles, reveals the presence of a strong sense of paradox as her existence has no meaning:

*Ma's bangles are thick maroon and dark,  
They are green glints and unbreakable  
I think because she can wear them all day:*

*Whether she scrubs out clothes  
Or dishes, the bangles stay on.(6-11)*

As a skilled woman, Bhatt provides description of the ailed behavior towards woman in a male conquered culture where a woman has hardly get chance to say anything. In one of the poems titled "Udaylee", she divulges the distressing incident of an upper caste Hindu woman during her menstrual period. A menstruating woman is treated like an inferior and even untouchable. She is kept alone and isolated, though possibly allowed to read and write letters. However, the poet speculates at the satirical compensations that such imprisonment brings in a women's life accidentally:

*Only paper and wood are safe  
from a menstruating woman's touch.  
So they built this room  
for us, next to the cowshed.  
Here, we're permitted to write  
letters, to read, and it gives a chance  
for our kitchen-scarred fingers to heal.(1-7)*

Dispora no longer remains just a signifier of cultural displacement; it becomes as much a happy enterprise of transgender flights into the open sky. Sujata Bhatt has a direct head to head with the wind, the mother of the bird:

*I could be anything  
depending on the light:  
the owl, the tree, the woman-  
I know the sort of shadows  
the wind prefers-(20-24)*

Similar to post-feminist poets, Sujata Bhatt has also used fairy story to contradict the power of patriarchy. In "Parvati", one of her famous poems, she points her finger at Parvati for giving all her power, all her divine energy called 'Shakti' to her husband Shiva, thus accommodating male shield and inability. She condemns women for their conceding to accomplish the requirements and begs of the male God.

Sujata Bhatt's poetry establishes the indications of her understanding of time, history and cultures. It shows signs of the powerful impression of these driving forces of self and identity in her poetries. In her first three books of poetry, a sort of uneasiness and superiority could be found, resultant from displacement and evacuating from one's own home, nation, culture, language and backgrounds. Sujata Bhatt practices the pain of dislocation but does not show it in the mode other diasporic poets have done so far. She is continuously holds with her the home sickness wherever she goes. A sense of constancy of linking with home remains continual and unceasing. It steps down through her poetry and she keeps showing her feeling and affection of home in the following way:

*I am the one  
who always goes  
away with my home  
which can only stay inside  
in my blood- my home which does not fit  
with any geography." (64-69)*

For her, home is not a sheer environmental and regional unit; it is the fraction and package of her identity, her internal

consciousness. Even at time when she is far from home, She feels being with home all the time.

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