

Diasporic Sensibility in the Poetry of Sujata Bhatt

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Abstract:

In this research paper, the researcher takes a glimpse at diasporic perception in the poetry of Sujata Bhatt. The researcher will take a look at key ideas identified with Diasporas in the context of the poetry of Sujata Bhatt. In this paper, the researcher proposed to take a glimpse at her works A Different History, then concentrate on two specific parts of diasporic cognizance which incorporate the artist's emotions of not-having a place and their composition of outcast, and the issue of the language in Bhatt's verse, which is joined with Indian character. The paper also concentrates on a third part of diasporic cognizance, the myth of come back to the country, yet for the purpose of time, the researcher highlights it just quickly in this paper.

Key words: Diaspora, Migration, Culture, Identity

Sujata Bhatt was born in Ahmedabad, and brought up in Pune until 1968, when she immigrated to United States with her family. She has an MFA from the University of Iowa, and for a time was writer-in-residence at the University of Victoria, Canada. She received the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Asia) and the Alice Hunt Bartlett Award for her first collection Brunizem. She received a Cholmondeley Award in 1991 and the Italian Tratti Poetry Prize in 2000. Her translations from the German include Mickle Makes Muckle: poems, mini plays and short prose by Michael Augustin (Dedalus Press, 2007). Bhatt

was a visiting fellow at Dickinson College, Pennsylvania and currently works as a freelance writer. She has translated Gujarati poetry into English for the Penguin Anthology of Contemporary Indian Women Poets. Combining Gujarati and English, Bhatt writes “Indian-English rather than Anglo-Indian poetry”. Her poems have appeared in various journals in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, and Canada, and have been widely anthologised, as well as being broadcast on British, German, and Dutch radio. In 2013 she was made Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Nottingham Trent University, England.

Salman Rushdie made well known the idea of ‘imaginary homelands’. Presently, it is a sort of unequivocal standard, a measuring stick to judge content, particularly content by a diasporic Indian. What Rushdie attempted to express was a whole-world destroying snippet of history as experienced by the Diasporic intellectual elite. Rushdie's vocal encounters changed the way we see the eras of Indians living abroad, particularly their scholarly development, clearing over the issues of class, doctrine, shading, religion and other conceivable contrasts.

Talking about Diaspora as an expatriate experience, there are issues of rootlessness, and dislocation, experiences of both nostalgia and amnesia, which need to be answered. Writers living abroad live in the margins of two different cultures; there are issues of this margin to be explained.

The poetess Sujata Bhatt, while writing her poems gives importance to the culture and various religions in India. She has emphasized in her poems by repeating words and questions and thereby making her poem stronger. She writes about Indian traditions, lost identities, importance of language, cultural difference to create different moods and themes.

In the first part of the poem *A Different History*, she concentrates on respect for education and learning. She claims that in Indian religion every object is sacred. There is God in trees. You should treat your books as the goddess of knowledge.

You should be gentle when turning the pages of the book that you read for knowledge of religion.

Great Pan is not dead; he simply emigrated to India.
Here, the gods roam freely, disguised as snakes or monkeys;
every tree is sacred
and it is a sin
to be rude to a book.

(‘A Different History’ from the collection
Brunizem)

She has composed these poems portraying the British colonization days when the British oppressed the Indians. They constrain them to take in the English language however in India different dialects were talked. She is irate at this disposition of the British. She likewise discloses how British attempted to change the characters of the populace of India with a sickle. She guarantees that the future era will love this abnormal language like they adore their native language. As indicated by her language had been utilized as a weapon to focus on its victimized people in an allegorical sense.

Structure Based Analysis

1. Note lines 9 to 14 and notice the indentations of the lines.

“It is a sin to shove a book aside
with your foot,
a sin to slam books down hard on a table,
a sin to toss one carelessly across a room”

Note that the poet has done this knowingly to draw attention to the action described. Similar to when you boot a book; the sentence unexpectedly shifts to the right, as if you have kicked it into that situation. In the same way when you criticize a book stiff on a table or toss it hastily across the room you move the book, although perhaps not as far if you had kicked it.

2. Similarly, the whole of the second verse is indented. This shows perhaps a form of limitation or segregation between the two.

a. The first canto represents the ones unaffected by globalization and the western society. People who maintained their “original” culture.

b. The second stanza represents those who chose to migrate and are bound to or favour the expat or international or western culture.

Note that although the degree of indentation is different, the border is the same. This means that the second stanza has less ‘line space’. This perhaps can address the issue that the thinking of the next generation is narrower and less open minded. It also shows how little in breath they know about their society and their heritage, especially one as rich as India.

3. Assonance. This means that we can find internal syllables rhyming with each other. Note the word “book”, “foot”, “room”, “wood”, and “swooping”. Note how the four “oo” sounds can be found in the first stanza, while the last one is only found at the end. Perhaps this can be used as an index to show your level of knowledge of your past. Similarly, it can mean that you never really truly forget your culture, but perhaps lose a bit or remember little, no matter how much you are influenced by globalization, colonization or one of those –izations. Especially in places like America, a lot of the Asians are Westernised, but keep parts of their heritage alive, perhaps like eating Chinese food or something.

4. Free verse.

a. This demonstrates the fact that the poem is a completely free and is basically used to vent the poet’s opinions on the matter. She perhaps is saying that her opinion belongs to her and she just wishes to express them onto the world. She could perhaps be saying that

she is not right, nor is she saying that globalization is necessarily a bad thing.

b. On the other hand, she could be saying that globalization or westernization is a completely different thing, a phenomena that humans have not ever experienced in the history of us living together. It breaks all conventions as it has never been done before, similar to how this poem, with its free verse and peculiar paragraphing, breaks all conventions of a typical poem.

5. The whole poem is in English. This completely contradicts the fact that she is ranting about the change in culture and language and the horrible effects of the something-ization when she is speaking the language caused by it. She is in this way putting herself not on the pedestal but beside it, saying that she is one of the stupid something-ized people to create an empathy link between the reader and the poet, perhaps making it look as if 'we can do this together' kind of image. She is putting herself in the humble position.

The poem appeals to the reader because it is full of culture of a different country. In the initial stage it is descriptive and then changes to interrogative. The cultural background of Sujata is reflected in the first part of the poem. She has referred to God and books to talk about Indian culture. As you read the poem further you realize that she is talking about learning a new language. She admits that, in spite of having to learn 4 languages she had to adapt herself to the English language. She compares herself with any one, who would feel scared to learn a new language because of ending up in making mistakes.

In the diasporic writing "home" turns into the focal point of social area/disengagement. Nonetheless, this "home" has its own issue of hypothesis. The point I am attempting to make here is that an ostracize creator's encounters are not so much drawn towards a lost country (importance, an ideological

minute identified with the writer's close to home history). To start with, for a specific artist, the country may not be as severally non-existent as if there should be an occurrence of Rushdie (for instance, Ramanujan, whose wonderful ethos was solidly established in India; however he spent later years of his life in Chicago). Regardless of the possibility that it is along these lines, the way the writer arranges the contention may shift. Besides, for an ostracize creator, the country may not be lost by any stretch of the imagination. It might all that much be the piece of the creator's memory, and it might not the slightest bit impact the creator's present cognizance. There are a great many things for a writer to discuss. As the banality goes, the writers are the residents of the world. Regardless of the fact that an ostracize creator discusses his country, fanciful or genuine, the degree may differ from individual to individual.

These sentiments and these sights are quite often urban Western and quite often individual. Being an Indian artist, writing in English, and living in Germany—these things don't appear to trouble her. She is calm with her circumstance. Not at all like Ramanujan, for instance, who has dependably returns to Indian in quest for his lovely universe, Bhatt has discovered her universe on the planet itself. The “injury” of being an Indian on the planet is missing here. She has discovered an answer for herself:

History is a broken narrative
Pick a story and see where
it will lead you
You take your language where you set it
or do you
Get your language where you take it?
“History is a Broken Narrative” (Augatora 40)

According to Steven Vertovec ‘diasporic consciousness is a particular kind of awareness said to be generated among contemporary transnational communities. Its particularity is variously described as being marked by a *dual* or *paradoxical nature*... in which the individual is [aware] of decentred

attachments, of being simultaneously “home away from home” or “here and there” Kim Butler distinguishes between forced and voluntary exile in stating that while ‘types of relationships between the diaspora and the homeland will depend on changes in homeland conditions and the timing of those changes’.

Be that as it may, it’s in the non-verbal universe of creatures and plants that Bhatt discovers a wellspring of solidarity denied to people with the exception of the extremely youthful, as in her sonnet ‘The Stare’ in which the ‘monkey kid’ and the ‘human youngster’ experience a minute of delicate association. Maybe it is this aching for solidarity which makes Bhatt's composition so exotic; her poems are rich with the odour of garlic, the touch of bodies, and the energetic plumage of parrots. A serious colourist like the ladies craftsmen who motivate some of these sonnets, Bhatt recognizes that language parts us as a matter of fact however through the physical power of her composition conveys us closer to it so that ‘the word/is the thing itself’.

Michael Schmidt watched that her “free verse is quick moving, dire with stories, delicately talked. Her rhythm is characteristic, her phrasing undecorated.” (Schmidt) Bhatt has been perceived as a particular voice in contemporary verse. She is, the *New Statesman* announced, “one of the finest artists alive”. Her poem 'A Different History' managing the issues of globalization and westernization, included in the verse treasury utilized for various connotations and denotations.

Principally, Bhatt is a poet with leanings towards the strange (dreams show up over and again in her work), however she additionally has a solid sense on occasion of history and the postcolonial legislative issues of society. Tending to thusly the perusers and the Hindu goddess of Siva's Himalayas, she composes:

Do you know what it feels like
to pick green tea-leaves that grow
on the other side of the path from the guava trees – Parvati
why did you let Twinings take everything?

Parvati
I must confess
I like Twinings the best.
....
Heathen.
Pagan.Hindu.
What does it mean, what is a pagan?
Someone who worships fire?
Someone who asks Parvati to account for
the Industrial Revolution. ("Parvati" Brunizem 43)

As a major aspect of this general authentic interest, additionally as her very own aftereffect diasporic developments, Bhatt has a proceeding with enthusiasm for historical underpinnings and issues of moving crosswise over dialects and scripts. The title of her first accumulation, *Brunizem*, takes the word for a dirt sort that runs over the northern side of the equator, connecting a hefty portion of her nations of home. Her title, Augatora is an Old High German word for 'window' and the history and diverse relationship of terms for the same item are followed:

Today, unravelling the word
Augatora – and thinking of the loss
of that word – imagining the days
of a thousand years ago when these languages collided
bitterly, bloodily –
Old English, Old Norse, Latin,
Old German – I turn
to your Danish grammar book – ("Augatora" 17-18)

This is not to recommend that Bhatt favours a basic perfection of congruity or consistency situated in settled standards or phenomena. On occasion, she does appear to recommend some vital fit in the middle of her language and experience that stays character: a memory of a tyke offering water by the rail route line can just happen in Gujarati ("Search for my

Tongue” *Brunizem* 65); a moment from childhood in Poona is recalled in Marathi (*Augatora* 19).

Jane speaks of her language and body being changed by her relationship with Tarzan:

At first
I thought I should teach you
English – return to you
what you have lost.
But you have changed the sounds
I listen for,
.....
Already you have changed my eyelids,
my ears, the nape of my neck –
The way I lift my head to listen. (*Augatora* 57)

In her most famous piece, there is a physical contest enacted in the poet’s body as well as a textual competition between print types that admits of no easy resolution:

I can’t hold onto my tongue.
It’s slippery like the lizard’s tail
I try to grasp
But the lizard darts away.
(“Search for my Tongue” *Brunizem* 63-66)

Bhatt has been blamed for draining buzzwords of political rightness or automatic examinations of multiculturalism by no less than one Indian faultfinder apparently more intrigued by national character (Mehrotra), yet from the viewpoint of worldwide developments of people groups her work constitutes an intriguing tackle how to discover one's spot on the planet. It is pass that Bhatt is occupied with contrast, yet frequently this discovers interpretation not in broad daylight questioning, yet rather in individual, single experience, enrolled at a generally physical level.

Is this being judgmental?
Or is this how one bears witness
With words? (*The Stinking Rose* 113)

In “The Stare”, for example ([*Monkey Shadows*] *Point No Point*62), a young monkey and a small child make eye-contact with each other, but their mutual curiosity does not permit any shared understanding.

Sara Ahmed talks about how different groups of people are labelled as ‘emotional’: within narratives of the nation as strong and rational and patriarchal, women and migrants are seen as weak, emotional, feminine, less developed, undermining of the social fabric. Despite her recourse to affective language, the overall impression from Bhatt’s work is of a distanced affect-less observer adopting what Sundeep Sen calls “a quietude of stance”.

Her assimilation in 20th-century American poetics, and her enthusiasm for Eastern European writing in interpretation, are reflected in the current week's sonnet, ‘*Łódź*’, similar to her habitation in Germany since the late 1980s.

Initially distributed in *Augator* (2000), “*Łódź*” structures a piece of an area titled “History is a Broken Narrative”. A few ballads get different sections of the boundless human diaspora and patch them together, frequently expanded by the stories and voices of people. Different poems, similar to this one, middle on a hesitant individual demonstration of witness that appears to be likened to reflection.

In the shadows of *Łódź* untruth a few broken stories of the 20th century. The Jewish cemetery of the sonnet, secured in 1892, shaped piece of the *Łódź* Ghetto in German-involved Poland. “*Łódź*” recognizes this history sideways by starting with a sort of careful withdrawal from its own motivation: “I waver to say/ what I think:/ 'this cemetery is excellent' ...” (Bhatt) The utilization of dashes all through the sonnet, now and then in lieu of full stops, underscores the delicacy of feeling, as though more formal accentuation would too extremely bind and possess the poem's subject.

From the poem the gloomy yet beautiful reference is:
It is May and the green
shadows falling across the stones

make me think
that if I lived in this town
I would visit
this place every day –

The speaker proceeds with the dialog with herself, comparing present assurance (“It is May”) with the restrictive temperaments without bounds. There's a probability, even a trust, that she would visit consistently, and stroll here “notwithstanding amid the darkest days of November/ and December –” however the voice appears to be excessively insightful and excessively sincere, making it impossible, making it impossible to take the aim similarly as a vow.

Distinctively, the poem closures on a dash, not a full stop. Without the scarcest pomposity on the speaker's part, it accomplishes a provisional gift: a feeling that the spot has been saved by the vision of authentic congruity, that vista of ways which stretch out previously, then after the fact the awfulness of the ghetto. Trees, grass and blooms have sprung up around the headstones. This Polish cemetery appears to be warmed and mitigated by the green light that radiates from Bhatt's memory of her adolescence cultivate in Poona.

Narayana Chandra praises Bhatt’s “sharply visual and tactile imagery” (1994). It is this that gives her work its immediacy for the reader, but while affective, body-located discourse has its essentialising, universalising aspect, it is also an unstable mode of experience and expression. SnejaGunew sees “Food and Language as Corporeal Home for the Unhoused Diasporic Body”, citing Bhatt’s fusion of language and tongue. Gunew asserts that, “language shapes us and that language is fundamentally grounded in the body itself” (94). We can understand affect in this context as a pre-cognitive, pre-cultural registering of sensory impressions that is simultaneously an interface with cultural and linguistic systems codifying feeling into emotions and shaping behaviour (Tomkins, Massumi). M.S. Pandey reads Bhatt’s work in the old mode of diaspora’s exile

and loss, but I do not find the kind of nostalgia for lost origins in the memories of India that this approach suggests. Indeed, Cecile Sandten quotes the poet as herself rejecting definitions in terms of postcolonial resistance or diasporic suffering. She sees herself as “Indian in the world” (2000, 102).

On the off chance that personality rests in influence and the body, Bhatt does not, notwithstanding, essentialised the vagrant body as a strong site of character grounded in real individual experience, specific memory and particular social practice. Diaspora opens up a multiplying of implications. To some degree, the sustenance/dialect/character relationship is portrayed by conventional ethnically stamped cooking – Gazpacho for Spain (Augatora 23); Wurst for Germany (SR 83); turmeric for India (Augatora/ Point No Point 133). Bhatt noticed how Indian ladies in the US attempt to hold character in keeping on creating a valid (“Chutney” *The Stinking Rose* 29). Then again, the voyaging artist does not worry about such fixity. Something as straightforward as garlic experiences semantic and social change in *The Stinking Rose*, a worldwide ethnography of diverse words and implications and practices that make of a widespread peculiarity a worldwide majority. Bhatt likewise sees composing as a consistent methodology of investigation (approved by Swami Anand's recommendation to the youthful artist in India: “Swami Anand” *Brunizem* 18) and memory and the body as a progression of rooms that experience normal refit.

But I am the one
who always goes away.
.....
Maybe the joy lies
in always being able to leave –

But I never left home.
I carried it away
with me – here in my darkness
In myself....

We weren't allowed
to take much
but I managed to hide
my home behind my heart.

("The one who goes away" The Stinking Rose 3-4, Point No
Point 105-6)

But then, Bhatt's verse is basically a verse oeuvre. Her experiences with different articles and bodies find her however appear to affirm her persona as a private being, a void vicinity whose emotions rise up out of the escalation of an inclination in collaboration with an item or circumstance and in the demonstration of offering voice to that experience from a private, intelligent position. A craft of diversion and backhandedness: experience prompts development away into dream or memory or impartial editorial, trailed by reflection on this, connection to a resounding picture that proposes a temperament, a position in connection to something – a reluctant engagement that is in the snippet of the sonnet/of the experience and won't admit to more noteworthiness than that. How feelings work is of significance to considering diasporic composition, since the thought of development is intrinsic in the importance of the word 'feeling'.

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