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SUJATA BHATT'S POETRY SCRUTINIZES DIASPORA AND MULTICULTURALISM

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ABSTRACT

The researcher examines diasporic vision in Sujata Bhatt's poetry in this article. In the framework of Sujata Bhatt's poetry, the researcher will look at major ideas associated with Diasporas. The researcher proposed in this study to look at her work A Different History, then focus on two specific aspects of diasporic cognizance: the artist's feelings of not having a place and their construction of pariah, and the issue of language in Bhatt's verse, which is linked with Indian character. Sujata Bhatt, an Indian diaspora poet, converts her personal experiences in Asia, America, and Europe into an imaginary encounter that culminates in a tangible, lived experience that alters her understanding of cultural differences. Her diaspora experience initially unsettles her, as evidenced by her poetry. Sujata Bhatt's poetry, on the other hand, documents the process of self-recovery and self-preservation through an act of metamorphosis through an intensive search for a wholesome identity. This quest finally leads to a celebration of life's rich diversity and pluralism. "Through her poetry, Sujata Bhatt teaches and promotes the integration of people from different countries, ethnic groups, and religions". The proposed article will look at a few of Sujata Bhatt's germane poems to show how she sees multiculturalism as a condition that leads to active acceptance of diversity rather than passive toleration. The report also focuses on a third aspect of diasporic awareness, the myth of returning to the homeland, but the researcher just briefly mentions it in this work because to time constraints.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Multiculturalism, Identity, Self-perception, Foreign Language.*

Introduction

"Sujata Bhatt was born in Ahmedabad and raised in Pune until 1968, when she and her family moved to the United States. She holds an MFA from the University of Iowa and was a writer-in-residence at the University of Victoria in Canada for a period. For her first collection Brunizem, she won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Asia) and the Alice Hunt Bartlett Award. In 1991, she won the Cholmondeley Award, and in 2000, she won the Italian Tratti Poetry Prize. Mickle Makes Muckle: poetry, mini dramas, and short prose by Michael Augustin is one of her German translations (Dedalus Press, 2007). Bhatt is a freelance writer who was a visiting fellow at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. She contributed to the Penguin Anthology of Contemporary Indian Women Poets by translating Gujarati poetry into English. Bhatt writes Indian-English poetry rather than Anglo-Indian poetry, combining Gujarati and English. Her poems have been widely anthologized and broadcast on British, German, and Dutch radio, as well as in numerous periodicals in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, and Canada. She was appointed Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom in 2013".

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"Exiles, emigrants, and expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some yearning to reclaim, to gaze back, even at the danger of being mutated into pillars of salt, Salman Rushdie wrote in an article published in 1985. But, if we do look back, we must do so with the knowledge—which raises serious doubts—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will be unable to reclaim precisely what was lost; that, in short, we will create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but imaginary homelands, India's of the mind". The diasporic experience has long been marked by a sense of loss of roots. “As evidenced in the poetry of poets like AK Ramanujan and R Parthasarathy, post-independence Indian writing has insisted on recording this sense of loss”.

Sujata Bhatt's poetry, on the other hand, demonstrates a shift in attitude toward loss, as she moves from an uncomfortable feeling of tension brought on by living on three continents to a joyful declaration of diversity. While Salman Rushdie appears to believe that “a diasporic writer's return to his hometown may only be wishful thinking for a proxy-homeland, Sujata Bhatt converts dislocation into a positive state of multiple-belongingness”. Sujata Bhatt is “...bicultural by birth and migration, and...tricultural by marriage” (99), according to Cecile Sandten, and multicultural by her art. She redefines the concept of homeland in her poetry. They are not "invisible ones, hypothetical homelands, Indias of the mind" for her, but expansive homelands characterised by more than just geographical and governmental bounds. Rather, she situates the actual homeland inside a greater concept of homeland.

When it comes to diaspora as an expatriate experience, there are questions regarding rootlessness and dislocation, as well as nostalgia and amnesia. Writers who live in other countries live on the outskirts of two cultures, and there are challenges that must be addressed. Sujata Bhatt, a poetess, emphasises India's cultural and religious diversity in her poems. She emphasises in her poems by repeating words and questions, which helps the poem stand out. She uses a range of moods and topics to generate distinct moods and themes while writing on Indian rituals, lost identities, the value of language, and cultural differences.

This isn't to say that Bhatt ignores the schisms brought on by diasporic consciousness; she recognises them and designs techniques to confront, master, and transcend them. She takes use of it by expressing herself through poetry on three continents: Asia, America, and Europe. She uses poetry to help her grasp cultural differences in a fresh way. “According to this study, her poetry evolves from reflecting the disturbing influence of diaspora to inverting it in order to begin a process of self-recovery and self-preservation, with a reframing of the 'self' being a critical phase in this process”.

Subjectivity is often determined by how the 'self' is produced through language. "The concept of subjectivity problematizes the straightforward link between the individual and language, substituting human nature with the concept of the human subject's production through ideology, discourse, or language," as Bill Ashcroft puts it. These are regarded as determining variables in the construction of individual identity, with these factors acting as a consequence rather than a cause" (220). As Ashcroft points out, the babel of tongues produces concern in multi-cultural writers about their own linguistic identity, which plays an important part in self-construction. Sujata Bhatt, on the other hand, aspires to change this by combining a variety of languages to create a subjectivity that transcends language, culture, and nation.

In her poem Search for My Tongue, Sujata Bhatt expresses the worry and sense of rootlessness that come with learning a foreign language. The adoption of English, an alien language, was considered a betrayal by the first generation of Indian writers. "...writers working in English are held accountable for nothing less than a failure of national conscience," Jeet Thayil writes in his Introduction to 60 Indian Poets (xi). Sujata Bhatt is also concerned about the English language displacing her native speech. She perceives learning English as a loss of tongue and identity:

- “You ask me what I mean by saying I have lost my tongue. I ask you, what you would do if you had two tongues in your mouth, and lost the first one, the mother tongue, and could not really know the other, the foreign tongue”.
- "Two tongues in your mouth" connotes a linguistic as well as a personal identification crisis:
- "She refers to her tongue in three ways: as the physical tongue in her mouth, as her' mother tongue' (her language), and as a sign of her own identity and Indian culture."

The words "lost the first one, the mother tongue, /and couldn't fully know the other, /the foreign tongue" allude to a period of transition in which the poet appears to be stuck:

- “You could not use them both together even if you thought that way. And if you lived in a place you had to speak a foreign tongue, your mother tongue would rot, rot and die in your mouth until you had to spit it out”.

Her newly acquired English, she believes, poses a threat to her mother tongue, which she thinks will "rot and die in [her] mouth." "Colonialism...reshapes physical territories, social terrains, and human identities, often violently," writes Ania Loomba (155). The English language's colonial background threatens to destabilise the monolithic identity she intends to create. She sees it as a parasitic entity that depletes the mother tongue's vitality. In this context, the poem can be read as an extended metaphor for language as a plant. “At first, she is worried that it is going to ‘rot and die’ (that she is forgetting it), but later it ‘grows’, ‘shoots’, ‘buds’, ‘blossoms’, representing the poet growing in confidence, remembering Gujarati words, forming them on her lips, and finally speaking them full out fluently in Gujarati”.

The mother tongue, on the other hand, tries to reclaim its position.

position:

“It returns as a shoot stump.

longer, moister, stronger veins

It binds the other tongue.

In my mouth, the bud opens, the bud opens.

The other tongue is pushed aside”.

She is unable to connect the two languages in her head since their connotations are so diverse. As a result, there is a fragmented awareness and a frozen identity.

“When I glance up, I think of aakash and suraj, followed by sky and sun.

Don't try to convince me that they're the same; I'm well aware of the distinctions. When you think of the sky, you think of dark clouds carrying snow, and the first snowfall always falls on Thanksgiving Day”.

The only option to reclaim her identity appears to be to reclaim her mother tongue. She sees learning English as a betrayal that can only be atoned for by learning Gujarati again.

“But consider these words: aakash, asman, aabh...

Large black crows fly overhead.

The sun, always the sun, without a cloud in the sky, which means no rain, which means no wheat, rice, greens, or bread.

Nothing.

Crows only, black crows.

Despite this, the humid June air and Connecticut's stormiest sky will never be Aakash”.

By the end, the diasporic condition, which was once perceived as paralysing, has evolved into one that is revitalising. The phrase "the exiled composer's skull" implies that a diasporic writer is in a perilous situation due to her alienation. The author, on the other hand, artistically combats this crippling alienation by utilising the multicultural experience (which is frequently the root of a sense of exile). The word "echo" implies that this is a difficult operation.

Her oxymoronic combination of the phrases "echo" and "numbness" actually reflects a synthesis of disparate feelings.

Sujata Bhatt resolves the problem later in the poem by converting the death-like numbness metaphor into one of rejuvenation:

“The multicultural poetry is a creature, a being whose spirit breathes like an orchid in the light still damp from the rain on a day when the garden tilts slippery, sublime – on a day when the garden dazzles getting loud with birdsong”.

A poetry, she says, is "a living creature," "a person" that quivers with vitality like "an orchid in the sun/still wet from the rain." The aridity of the "exiled composer's cranium" has been replaced by the life-giving showers of inspiration and artistic expression. Her mind's barren desert has been transformed into a garden, complete with fruit-bearing trees and the slightest echo transformed into delightful birdsong.

The poet is also aware that a multicultural poetry is difficult to categorise because it defies categorization. It defies any attempt to confine it to a small area.

“It's not going to stop.

It isn't going to be your animal.

Rather, the act of expressing the experiences is liberating in the sense that a multicultural poem breaks down barriers that have led to pointless discrimination”.

The plurality of languages merges into the singularity of pure, abstract Language at this level of understanding. "It itself is a value," says Ayyappa Paniker, "but language is used in a completely other manner." Language does not in this sense refer to English, Marathi, or Malayalam" (15). When Sujata Bhatt says:

It wishes to be read to the person checking your passport at the border.

National and linguistic barriers, the passport officer must recognise, are constructs rather than absolute reality. The poem eludes readers locked in a cocooned existence, rejecting diversity and multiplicity:

“The reader isn't expected to "understand" anything in the multicultural poem.

It's used to being misunderstood, after all.

Refraction is the word.

More discussion is desired.

The retina is sandwiched between the light and the retina.

'Remove your squint,' it advises”.

The multicultural poem acts as a prism, scattering the false illusion of monolithic existence across a broad spectrum of diversity. Readers can only be cured of their warped view, their "squint," by engaging in a discussion with the poetry. The distance between "the retina and the light" is therefore erased as poetry becomes perception itself.

It is the chapter of history that you cannot learn in school.

By virtue of its being a lived reality, the poetry imparts the vision that books fail to teach.

Sujata Bhatt examines variety via the prism of the mask, alluding to the great idea of life as a theatre and people as players. The phrase "likes to wear a mask-every day/A different face" is used in multicultural poetry to emphasise that the numerous cultural identities associated with humanity are only masks that obscure the underlying oneness that exists among them. As a result, the house becomes a space where multiple points of view ("eyes") and voices ("mouths") coexist.

The walls of your house are covered in eyes and lips. –

The following sentences appear to highlight the fluid nature of identities:

“Silk strands, paper hair

They sway in the breeze, and sometimes they lift themselves with a rustling sound and appear to be about to fly away.

The poetic oeuvre of Bhatt reflects the transition Hoskote observes between two generations of Indian poets writing in English”.

Sujata Bhatt and other diasporic writers are aware that they are products of two or more cultures that appear to be irreconcilable, which gives them a sense of rootlessness. These authors describe this disquiet on “political, metaphysical, and existential levels”, exacerbating the issue of diaspora. The harshness and disharmony created by the initial recognition of dispersion are poeticized in "A Search for My Tongue." "A Different History" angrily opposes the disharmony in her poetry, while "A Multicultural Poem" harmonises the conflict into the euphony and consonance of integration.

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