

Writing Self: The Poetry of Sujata Bhatta

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Abstract: Sujata Bhatta, a post-modern Indian diasporic poet, lives in Germany and writes about India and Gujarat keeping herself in the centre. The poet and her sense of Indenisation are the main theme of the writings. She is the only Indian diasporic poet who even uses three languages- English, Germany and Gujarati- in a poem which is her uniqueness as a poet. Though her writings are autobiographical, they have a super sense of indigenous culture.

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The poetry of Sujata Bhatt is a self revelation and in other wards almost all of them are autobiographical by context. In her *From Gujarat to Connecticut to Berman* (1988) she admits that the theme of her poetry is her personal experience and her life as whole. She writes, "It is also a power to control and give shape to mind in order to be intimidated or over whelmed by its foreignness" (P-04). In her poetry Bhatt uses linguistic variations and multilingual mixing. She employs language as a means to represent cultural identity and differences. Here her self is an epitome of cultural centre which revolves around her poetry. In other wards she is the centre of her poetry sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. Often the important and unforgettable incidents and events become the major theme of her writing. She does this by interlacing or intercalating her poem with passage in some of the Indian official languages such as Gujarati, Hindi ad Sanskrit. Though English is her main language, her writing emits a flavour of Indianness especially Gujarati. She also uses German and Spanish language in some of her pomes but it sounds Indianness and her inner voice. This playfully incursion into the poetic text of different languages sought the specific cultural contexts of his poems which can be defined as inter cultural mode of writing making her personal experience the central theme.

The artistic poetic technique of Sujata Bhatta is that she could combine the west and the east in her poetry autobiographing her lost childhood and the bygone days of tragic and comic life. She is one of the North Indian diaspora to use English and Gujarati for poetic self expression and discusses the problem of feminism in the post modern era. Sujata Bhatt had firsthand experience of the migratory process that has affected her life and outlook, for which it is accurate to apply the term 'South Asia Diaspora' as a taxonomic first step in the tax of pilling down the nature of her poetry. The literatures of south Asian Diaspora take into

account such experience as migration as exile, the quest for identity, conflicts of allegiants as well as displacement, dislocation, homelessness and ambivalence. In an autobiographical essay Bhatt says of exile is very much painful to her. She admits that her attachment with India is more passionately linked when she is away from her dearest motherland. In the vacant mood, she feels the presence of India and Indians though she is bodily in German, but her spirit lives in India. Solitude is bliss for her which gives her chance to reminisce the lost days in Indian soil.

Although she seems to have solved the problem of displacement as she intimates in her biographies and poems, feelings of uprootedness, displacement ad exile are also prominent in her writings, along with an accurate awareness of the epistemological and cultural implication of diasporic condition.

In her poetry, Sujata Bhatt consciously and sometimes self consciously writes selectively about eastern as well as western cultural context. The contexts that are often merged, led off one against the other, on confirm in their affinity, mutuality and complementarily. In contrast to many other writers of south Asian diaspora such as Meena Alexander, Bhatt does not regard herself as uprooted, in search of an imagined homeland, or myriad in nostalgic memories of a lost past. Her poetic communication of diaspora is perhaps best accounted for in the terms of the alternative conscious devoid by Stuart Hall. Hall terms it as 'black diaspora', of West Indians in and outside Britain. Bhatt does not come under the term 'black diaspora' as she unifies the east and the west in her writings without concentrating on a particular region though she feels homesick for Gujarat and Gujrati culture.

Bhatta, like the other Indian diasporic poets A.K. Ramanjuan, Meena Alexander and R. Partha sarathi, is very much homesick and feels homelessness as result her creation is nothing more than reflection of self. In searching for the

green pasture outside of the homeland, the Indians go abroad for bright future but they repent there and crave for returning to the root which they cannot do. When their homesickness becomes intense they could not help writing. So they relieve themselves through welding their pains and revealing themselves and their inward feelings for Indian and alien culture. Even other Indian poets like Nissim Ezekiel and Jayanta Mahapatra are to some extent autobiographical poets. Their poems contain the subject of their personal suffering and pathos of bygone days. Jayanta Mahapatra's 'A Whole House in Calcutta Street' and Nissim Ezekiel's 'The Scorpion' could be cited as the classic example of subjectivity of the poetic context. But T.S. Eliot says the best poetry. "Not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion, it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. (Impersonal Theory of Poetry). In the contrary to T.S. Eliot's Theory the diasporic poets could be proved as the popular creative writers of international recognition despite their subjectivity and reflection of self in their writings. When the poem *The One Who Goes Away* is analyzed, it revealed the personal panics of displaced and its outcome. The poet accurately versifies her personal anguish in this poem. She says,

I am one

Who always goes

Away with my home

This can only stay inside

In my blood my home which does not fit

With any geography.

In the same poem she expresses her possessiveness and homesickness images where she celebrates the richness of identity. she says.

But I never left home I carried it away

With me herein my darkness

In myself. (*The One Who Goes Away*).

Home is always the centre of her poetic consciousness. Home is the centre where her poetry begins and it ends celebrating and recognizing her identity. Remembering the memorable day's incidents, legends, Rituals, rights, in the family she constitutes the images of home and nation. He poet looks back to her past as a child and is playing with a sick boy whom she loves. Again her heart bleeds reminding Hindu Sikh riot of her home nation. In this poem she hints a lot about poverty as Jayanta Mohapatra hints many things about the same in his 'Country'. 'Hunger' in Ahmadabad becomes an unforgettable socio economic hindrance which she always sites in her poems. When Jayanta Mohapatra generalizes poverty and hunger in Orissa in his poem 'Country', Bhatt's 'Hunger' and 'Poverty' are personal. She is very much village

centric for which her poem contains images like peacock, Buffalo, Lizard, Crocodiles, Monkeys which are the prominent rural animals surround outside home and village. The childhood days are devoted taking care of the domestic animals of her house. She develops a sense of belonging with them which figures the important images of her poetry. By using such images Bhatta reveals herself and her rural Gujarat through her poetry. She does not forget to mention the personalities like swami Anand, Nanabhai, Achiketa, Grandmother and Dedvi Bhai Pathak who are the parts and partial of her life during her childhood days and she tries to relate herself with a past that makes the present meaningful.

Many of Bhatt's poems depict her attachment with the place she lives. When she visits her native place it is like a pilgrimage to her. She portrays the land where her umbilical cord was cut off just like a place of her dreams and heaven. A companion between the poems on the concept of home or nation and those of cities of west indicates a kind of passionate involvement and on the other a reportorial flatness and a colour of language. In a poem 'Kankarian Lake' Bhatt describes a tale basing on the newspaper report which is personally related to her and her home she writes:

Sometimes a gardener

Or a homeless man

Or a wandering story teller

Would fall asleep on the grass

Too close to the lake

And soon enough the newspapers

Would report about how

The crocodiles have devoured

Yet another careless man.

(*Monkey Shadows* -31)

In this poem she represents the nature and natural scenery and the way it is reported in the newspaper is very realistic. The garden and the lake the natural elements stand for the ecological balance which is disturbed by the careless man. Here the poet is concerned about ecology and she wants that nature should be remain unchanged and undisturbed by the modern man what Prafulla Mohanti exactly wants in his *My Village My Life*. Mohanti is a diaspora lives in London and visits his native place every year. He is shocked like Bhatt finding her village Nanpur, is radically changed by the modern man. So Bhatt wants her native place which is the macrocosm of India should remain unchanged and undisturbed.

She again goes to her lost childhood which she spent with her grandparents. The grandparents are no more now but their warm lone is still with Bhatt which provides her stuff to live and to be energetic.

She sleeps with the grandparents and the grandmother asks her to open her eyes and look at the sky. She does accordingly and the grandmother goes on counting the stars. Bhatt appreciates the poem so much that it creates a special space for her

She says,

I see her staring at the sky

Enjoying a private game

Of untangling the stars

And counting them

Into their correct constellations

(Monkey Shadows 26)

Like Sarojii Naidu, Amrtia Pritam and Amitav Ghose, the poetry of Bhatt is both intrinsic and extrinsic while portraying the society and individual. She brings about a fine coordination while depicting the picture of an individual who himself reflect the society as a whole and vice versa. For exp. the analysis of casteism, husband wife relationship, sacred and profane inside home have been depicted through different images which reveals many things stating from an individual entity to the action as a whole particularly in the Indian context. In *For My Grand Mother* she recollects the days of mourning after the grandmother's death. The grand's mother stands for a traditional society giving emphasis on strict rules and regulations including castism. She reveals her painful feelings of the demise of her grandmother who was her intimate friend, philosopher, guide and love. She records the pang of the grandma's unexpected loss in her Brunizem.

"A aji, there was an eleven year old girl

Who sat on our doorstep?

During the feast

Of your mourning

She would not cry or eat

Sleep or speak

And I could not explain

About my taut

Four hours of sleep

In the closet, on the floor

With your softly dying clothes.

(Brunizem 25)

Self revelations is not new phenomenon in literature rather it goes back to the very antiquity past, even to the days of purans and legends. The poet is always the part and partial of his/her poetry. Poetry is versified by the feelings, thought and ideology of the poet. In the same way Sujata Bhatt immortalizes her personal feeling and the subject matter of her home in her poetry Brunizem. Here she expresses her newly launched youthful feelings of love and frustration.

Like Salvian Pathe, Kamala Das and Meena Alexander, Sujata Bhatt reveals herself and her home culture in her poetry. Nostalgia is the predominating factor of her verse. Her sense of writing always goes back to the past and childhood days just like Kamala Das and Alexander.

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