

**Indian Poetry in English**  
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**Lecture - 23**  
**Sujata Bhatt**

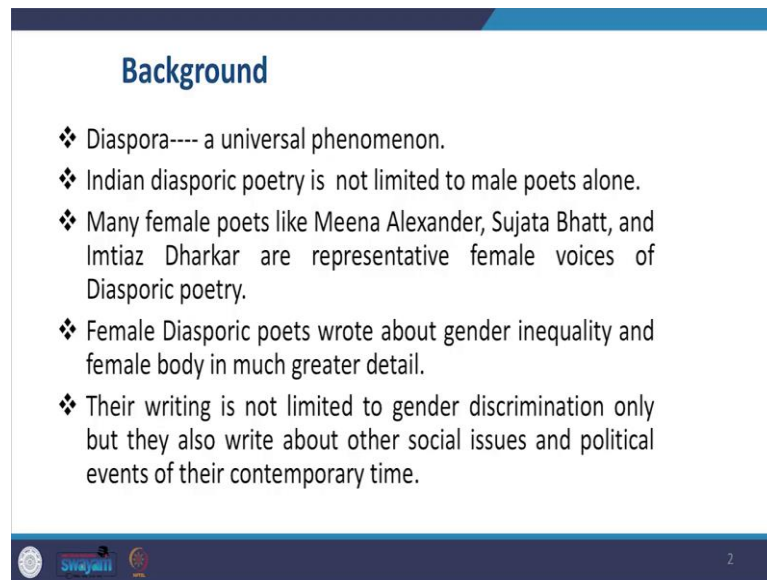
Good morning friends and welcome back to NPTEL online certification course on Indian Poetry in English. All of us remember that presently we are dealing with Indian diasporic poets. And in this series today we are going to discuss the last poet of Indian English diasporic writing and that is Sujata Bhatt. My dear friends till now we have already discussed many other diasporic writers, but today the writer that we have taken up or the poet that we have taken up is Sujata Bhatt.

Like all other diasporic poets Sujata Bhatt also was born in India, but then as we have been saying in some other lectures as well like any other diasporic poet she also settled abroad. My dear friends, diaspora as we have been saying that it has become a universal phenomenon. The world has become global; people take their birth in some place and then because of some circumstances or the other they have to travel to some other lands and if the professional requirements or any of their familial requirements need it they get themselves settled there.

So, is the case with Sujata Bhatt also. Sujata Bhatt was born in India especially in Ahmadabad and then she had her early studies in India. And later on she was taken to USA and finally from USA she also switched over to Germany where she settled. Before we go to have a look at Sujata Bhatt's poetic corpus (Refer Time: 02:30) let us have a look at her early life achievements and the way Sujata Bhatt as a diasporic poet progressed.

As I have been saying the diaspora has become a universal phenomenon and Indian diasporic poetry is not limited to male poets alone. You have already seen in the previous lecture, we talked about Vikram Seth fine, and we have prior to that we have talked about Meena Alexander.

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### Background

- ❖ Diaspora---- a universal phenomenon.
- ❖ Indian diasporic poetry is not limited to male poets alone.
- ❖ Many female poets like Meena Alexander, Sujata Bhatt, and Imtiaz Dharkar are representative female voices of Diasporic poetry.
- ❖ Female Diasporic poets wrote about gender inequality and female body in much greater detail.
- ❖ Their writing is not limited to gender discrimination only but they also write about other social issues and political events of their contemporary time.

Even prior to that we have talked about A K Ramanujan and we have talked of some other poets as well. So, many female poets, namely Meena Alexander and then Sujata Bhatt, Imtiaz Dharkar are representative female voices of diasporic poetry. Actually, diasporic poets not only write about the feelings of diaspora, but when it comes to women poets they also talk about gender inequality and especially the female body, female body actually occupies a large space in diasporic poetry especially by Indian women diasporic poets.

They are writing even though much is soaked in a body, but yet they are not confined only to body, but they also touch upon various social issues and political events of their contemporary times. Sometimes or the other we have already found that while memory is a crucial factor in many of the diasporic poets they also tend to see and have a look at the surroundings where they live in and they also have their eye for details for the contemporary times.

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## Sujata Bhatt

- ❖ Born in 1956 in Ahmadabad, Gujarat.
- ❖ Immigrated to U.S.A. in 1968.
- ❖ A bilingual poet who writes both in Gujarati and in English, translator, and a freelance writer.
- ❖ MFA from the University of Iowa, and for a time was writer-in-residence at the University of Victoria, Canada.
- ❖ Married to the German writer, Michael Augustine, settled in Bremen, Germany.
- ❖ Translated Gujarati poetry into English.
- ❖ She has been broadcast in British, German and Dutch radio.



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Now, as we have been saying Sujata Bhatt was born in the year 1956 in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Later she was taken by her parents to USA in 1968. Sujata though a Gujarati by birth, she writes both in Gujarati as well as in English. She is a translator and a freelance writer. Apart from her poetry writing she also did a masters in fine art from the University of Iowa and for a time she was also writer in residence at the University of Victoria in Canada.

Actually, why she got settled in Germany is because of her marriage with Michael Augustine-- a German writer and later on Sujata settled in Bremen, Germany. She has also been broadcast in British, German and Dutch radio.

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- ❖ Received Commonwealth Prize (Asia) in 1988 for *Brunizem*.
- ❖ Italian Tratti Prize in 2000.
- ❖ More an Indian poet than a diasporic poet.
- ❖ Her poems give importance to Indian tradition, regional language and various religions of India.
- ❖ Explores both Indian and diasporic experiences.
- ❖ She delineates the experience of being a South-Asian woman in postmodern Europe.



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Now you might be curious to know as to what are the prizes or the awards that Sujata Bhatt got. Sujata Bhatt actually got awarded for her very first book entitled *Brunizem* in the year 1988 she actually received Commonwealth Prize in 1988. Later on in 2000 she also got Italian Tratti Prize fine. She is if we have a look at her poetic (Refer Time: 06:08) as I have been saying she is more an Indian poet than a diasporic poet.

If we delve deep into the world of Sujata Bhatt we can find that her poems give importance to Indian tradition, Indian mores, Indian customs, even Indian birds and animals fine and various religions of India as well. She has been exploring both India and diasporic experiences. The experiences of being a South Asian woman in postmodern Europe is very much at the core of her writing.

So, we shall also take up her writings since hers (Refer Time: 06:54) is a quite rich and memory is at the center of many of her writings it is better to know. The poetic works that has to her credit the very first work entitled *Brunizem* which got published in 1988 and also got awarded.

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**Poetry Collections**

- *Brunizem* (1988)
- *Monkey Shadows* (1991)
- *The Stinking Rose* (1995)
- *Point No Point* (1997)
- *Augatora* (2000)
- *The Colour of Solitude* (2002)-a long sequence of poems about the works of Rainer Maria Rilke, his wife the sculptor, Clara Westhoff Rilke, and their common friend Paula Modersohn-Becker, the painter.
- *Pure Lizard* (2008)

So, now this *Brunizem* you might be curious to know about the word Brunizem how this word was coined. This Brunizem word actually is a coinage of French and Russian. Brunizem actually means a sort of dark prairie soil. And the poems which we find in this collection *Brunizem*, we can find that this touches upon three continents-- Asia, Africa and America.

Next to *Brunizem* came *Monkey Shadows* now this *Monkey Shadows*---- it is also you know full of poems which actually record the memories you know which record the memories. One critic has gone to the extent of saying that it is actually a sort of memorialization--- intense memorialization of intensely lived experience. Memories of her years spent in India and then since the title says *Monkey Shadows*. So, we can also find the depiction of monkey and child, we also find the depiction of the spaces between, the experiences--- between that of a monkey and a child how they look at each other and how they actually try to articulate the inarticulate experiences, how we can also find there is actually a contrast of human and bestial experiences in the second volume that is *Monkey Shadows*.

We shall also take up some poems from *Monkey Shadows* in order to find out how her brush, how her pen actually spills memory and other experiences related to or steeped in India. The third book entitled *The Stinking Rose. The Stinking Rose* which has got 25 poems is actually a bit metaphorical *The Stinking Rose*. And here there are poems which are based on garlic lures many people say that this collection is a bit weak.

But there are some of the poems which we will like very much. Through this garlic she actually wants to convey a lot. There is one line where she says that what is in a name, I mean, she has actually taken from other poets and all, but there majority of the times she has mentioned the garlic lores. Then comes *Point No Point*; which may be considered to be a sort of you know a sort of journey of the self --*Point No Point* it came out in the year 1997.

And then came out *Augatora* once again this word also is actually a mixture this would also is a mixture of German words fine and it actually means window. So, through this volume also she not only talks about various experiences; experiences of different countries she also talks about the tastes of different countries when we shall go to the depict that we will find out. And then came *The Colour of Solitude* in 2002 which is actually a long sequence of poems depicting the works of Rainer Maria Rilke, his wife the sculptor.

And then their common friend Paula Modersohn Becker the painter and then in the year 2008 came *Pure Lizard*. So, these are some of her poetry collections. Now all of us perhaps might be interested to know what actually she talks about in her poetic volumes.

As a diasporic poet, like all other diasporic poets she also talks about rootlessness, she talks about dislocation, nostalgia, amnesia I mean memory of not only something lost, but then the memories which always is at the back of her mind.

But then she also tries to find out something when she looks at something and then suddenly she goes, she takes a retreat to the past. And of course, there is also a mention of the composite culture various religions, rituals and one thing that actually distinguishes Sujata Bhatt from all other diasporic writers is that she is always struggling to find her own language. There are two things that are very pertinent and very important in are the works of Sujata Bhatt. One is--- language and the other is body.

It has been said by some eminent critics that Sujata Bhatt was one of the most controversial and yet the most famous diasporic Indian English poets. We of course, see a sort of feminine consciousness and one can also go to the extent of calling Sujata Bhatt a sort of confessional poet and she confesses the urges know the yearnings the longings of body and that also in a very candid manner. Many of her poems can also be considered to be unabashedly erotic we will also see why it has been called unabashedly erotic.

Now, here we can take one poem which, but then that is not actually going to write Sujata Bhatt off as a diasporic poet. Sujata Bhatt also has in her poetic numbers a yearning for the discovery of the self.

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**General Themes of Her Poetry**

- Rootlessness
- Dislocation
- Nostalgia
- Amnesia
- Composite culture
- Indian rituals, and religions
- Marginalization of gender
- Feminine consciousness

Why name a place Point No Point?  
Does it mean we are nowhere  
when we reach it?  
Does it mean that we lose our  
sense  
Of meaning, our sense of direction  
When we stop at Point No Point?

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For example, we can take here some lines from one poem Point No Point where actually she says—“Why name a place Point No Point? Why name a place Point No Point. /Does it mean we are nowhere when we reach it?/ Does it mean we are nowhere when we reach it/ does it mean that we lose our sense of meaning/ our sense of direction when we stop at Point No Point.”

So, one can also find that how in a very simple manner, but yet in a very subtle way she talks about the discovery of her own self. So, as I have been saying that *Brunizem* which was her first collection became very famous. And there are many poems in this collection which have also been included in several anthologies for example, the poems entitled “The Peacock”, where she actually talks about how like the peacock I mean maybe it can be considered to be symbolical how in their wings they actually encompass everything.

And how suddenly when they dance, they suddenly try to show the outside world, how where you live you can enjoy. But at the same time it is not only the depiction of the singularity of the bird, but it is also actually the stillness of life that is there in peacock, then comes the “Women of Leh are such.” Then we have “A Different Story” which can be considered to be the most significant diasporic poem by Sujata Bhatt. Then “Something for Plato” and then “Iris.”

We will here take one very important very significant voice that actually Sujata Bhatt is trying to search and here we can find the clash between two languages; the one language that is Gujarati- her first language her mother tongue which she feels that she has lost while she is actually trying to imitate English. So, the title of the poem is search for my tongue when I read the lines of the poem you can also find out how Sujata narrates through her own poem in a very candid manner in a very transparent manner.

That how she finds herself stuck between two languages, between two tongues; tongue here means language. And then she actually tries to get back her first and while she tries to imitate the second one the first one is always in a sort of animated suspension, is not it?

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**"Search For My Tongue"**

You ask me what I mean  
by saying I have lost my tongue.  
I ask you, what would you 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.  
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.  
I thought I spit it out  
but overnight while I dream,

"The Peacock"  
The Women of Leh are such"  
"A Different History"  
Something for Plato  
Iris

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The poem begins like this- "You ask me what I mean/ by saying I have lost my tongue/ I ask you what would you do/ if you had two tongues in your mouth.

So, she presents the situation the predicament of a person who has got two languages and they are sandwiched between the two and lost the first one-- the mother tongue and could not really know the other the foreign tongue fine.

So, here we can find that how one language which actually tries to dominate over the first one and how the first one the mother tongue is already lost. Here we find she is addressing to somebody, here it appears that it is actually a sort of dramatic monologue where the audience is not found, but then the poet is addressing somebody.

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 I thought I spit it out, but overnight while I dream. So, the painful situation of a person who has got one language which can help him or her survive and at the same time the same person gets actually deprived of the first language, but then can we really say a goodbye to our first language that is mother tongue? Exactly not and what happens?




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**Continued**

munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha  
may thoonky nakhi chay  
parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay  
foolnee jaim mari bhasha nmari jeebh  
modhama kheelay chay  
fullnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh  
modhama pakay chay

it grows back, a stump of a shoot  
grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,  
it ties the other tongue in knots,  
the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,  
it pushes the other tongue aside.  
Every time I think I've forgotten,  
I think I've lost the mother tongue,  
it blossoms out of my mouth. (from *Brunizem*)

Sujata Bhatt - *Search For My Tongue*



It actually appears in dream and with the dream it gives a sort of hope with the dream it gives a sort of succor, a sort of support. And what she does let us see. She loses her first language, what she does? She actually incorporates Gujarati her first language even in the midst of English. So, many critics have gone to the extent of saying that the use of Gujarati may also tell other people how she was very much, in love with the blood, in love with the tongue that was her own. But some other critics have called it a sort of foolish practice, is not it?

Munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha

may thoonky nakhi chay

parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay

foolnee jaim mari bhasha nmari jeebh

I mean this is actually Gujarati and what Sujata does is-- She later on provides us with the translation of what she says. So, in a way she is trying to satiate her own desire, her own yearning of getting back her first language:

it grows back, a stump of a shoot  
grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,  
it ties the other tongue in knots,  
the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,  
it pushes the other tongue aside.  
Every time I think I've forgotten,  
I think I've lost the mother tongue,

it blossoms out of my mouth. (from Brunizem)

So, every now and then when she finds that she is going to lose her own language-- the first language the mother tongue what happens is the dream actually comes and then it appears that the other tongue the other tongue is being it pushes the other tongue a sides. So, there is a conflict and this conflict of language continues in majority of her works. We can also see what are the issues that she actually takes up.

The very first thing is--- she talks about the class of two languages; that is English and Gujarati. And then the clash of the native and the alien the native and the foreign language you know in a way she is actually giving us a sort of impression of how when we have been colonized we have actually said a goodbye to our first language. And it also suggests that the two types of identities that either we try to have one identity. So, this other identity which we are actually trying to wear in that actually pushes the first identity on the margin.

Language is actually not only a sort of reference or a record of our identity, but it is actually a stamp of our identity and then in a way very beautifully she talks about the migration and the assimilation. And you know one experiment that Sujata Bhatt has done is the introduction of Gujarati along with English. So, this is one poem search for my tongue I am reminded of and I can take you back to the poems of Kamala Das where she had said 'the language I speak in becomes mine.'

But here what happens? Here this diasporic poet she actually says- the other language pushes my first language towards the margin. So, there is an immediate clash that we can find and it is not only that Sujata confines herself only to the struggle of language or the identity, but as we have been saying that Sujata Bhatt was also trying to talk about or depict the concerns of the feminine self. She actually rued the loss of many unwanted girl child many unwanted girl children who actually cannot see the light of the day and they are suspended.

We can take some of the lines. The entire poem has been given for you, you can have a look at. And while we recite these lines and try to understand the essence of the lines we can understand the sort of pathos, the suffering that a woman who actually has not been able to come to this earth only because of gender how what sort of pain and struggle and what sort of feelings may the unborn child may have.

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**“Voice of the Unwanted Girl”**

Mother, I am the one  
you sent away  
when the doctor told you  
I would be  
a girl — In the end they had to  
give me an injection to kill me.  
Before I died I heard  
the traffic rushing outside, the monsoon  
slush, the wind sulking through  
your beloved Mumbai —  
I could have clutched the neon blue

no one wanted —  
No one wanted  
To touch me - except later in the autopsy room  
when they knew my mouth would not search  
for anything - and my head could be measured  
and bent cut apart.  
I looked like a sliced pomegranate.  
The fruit you never touched.  
Mother, I am the one you sent away  
When the doctor told you  
I would be a girl - your second girl.  
Afterwards, as soon as you could  
you put on your grass-green sari -  
the orange stems of the parijatka blossoms  
glistened in your hair -

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“Mother, I am the one/ you sent away/ when the doctor told you/ I would be/ a girl in the end they had to/ give me an injection to kill me/ before I died I heard/ the traffic rushing outside, the monsoon/ slush the wind sulking through/ your beloved Mumbai/ I could have clutched the neon blue.”

So many aspirations, many expectations which are actually nipped in the bud they actually come to the fore through this poem.

“No one wanted/ no one wanted/ to touch me except later in the autopsy room. / When they knew my mouth would not search/ for anything and my head could be measured/ and bent cut apart/ and bent cut apart fine I look like a sliced pomegranate. /

So, look at the comparison.

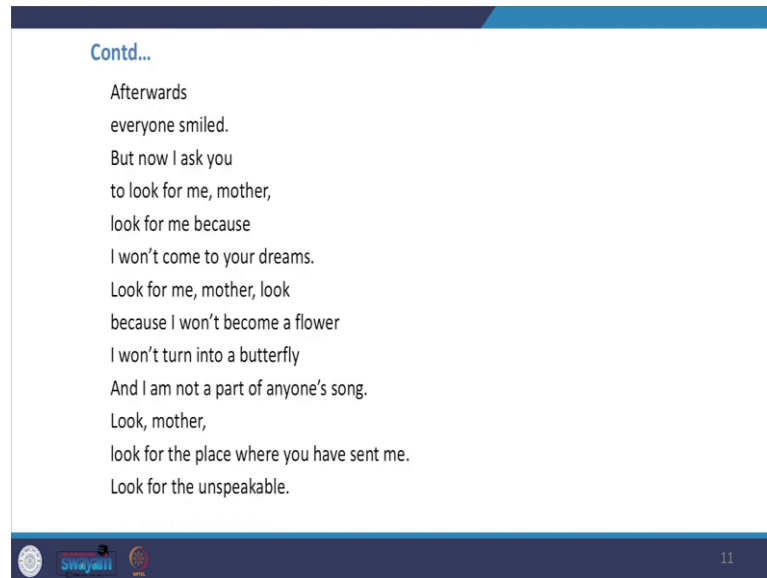
“I looked at the sliced pomegranate/ the fruit you never touched/ mother I am the one you sent away/ when the doctor told you/ I would be a girl. “

So, there is actually a sort of concern a sort of sympathy with the unborn child.

And that way we can find that Sujata Bhatt is expressing her own anguish. This is not only a phenomenon in one country, but this is actually a global phenomenon and there the author/ the poet actually tries to take a dig at. “Afterwards, as soon as you could/ you

put on your grass green sari/ the orange stems of the parijatak blossoms/ glistened in your hair.”

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“Afterwards everyone smiled/ to look for me mother/ look for me because/ I will not come to your dreams.” So, when everything is over you also look satisfied why could not you assert your right to have the girl child ‘because I will not become a flower/ I would not turn into a butterfly/ and I am not a part of anyone’s song./Look mother/ look for the place where you have sent me/ look for the unspeakable.”

So, through this poem she actually not only tries to take a dig at the civilized society, but she is also trying to awaken those mothers who actually under the pressure. Or under some other you know conditions have to say a goodbye to the child who could not take birth fine, because of many regions or the others. So, there is not only a sort of pathos there is actually a sort of suffering at the suffering for the girl child, fine?

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## Contd...

for the place that can never be described.

Look for me, mother, because  
this is what you have done.

Look for me, mother, because  
this is not 'God's will'.

Look for me, mother,  
because I smell of formaldehyde-  
I smell of formaldehyde  
and still, I wish you would look  
for me, mother.

So, when finally, it comes look for me mother because this is not God's will. So, what you are perhaps trying to interfere with the God's will, God did not want that. "Look for me mother because/ I smell of a formaldehyde/ I smell of a formaldehyde /and still I wish you would look/ for me mother." Will you ever mother look for me something that you have lost a precious child fine.

So, there actually the poet tries to show a sort of struggle a sort of conflict between the self of a woman and then the society the society cannot understand. But how are you also not to be blamed because you could not assert your right to give birth to the child only because she was a girl child fine. So, we can find that there is a sort of a feminine sensibility and there is also a dig at the patriarchal order fine. And if we confine ourselves we can say it is only a sort of patriarchy, you know.

But then looking at the outside looking at the modern world we can find how the dangers of modernity and there has been a sterility of thought, our thoughts have become quite sterile.

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**Food for Thought**

- Articulation of a child who is not yet born
- Female foeticide
- Feminine sensibility
- Social evil
- Critique of patriarchy
- Dangers of modernity and sterility of thought
- Tone- melancholic

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The tone of course, is very melancholic my dear friend. So, these are the two points that we have discussed, but then one poem which in true sense can be considered to be diasporic is “A Different History.” In this poem when you read you will also find that not only the poetess Sujata Bhatt talk about how languages are also colonized. But at the same time how she talks about Indian traditions you remember when we were discussing Arun Kolatkar, we said that every stone is a God, they are cousins, nephews to each other.

And here also Sujata Bhatt being you know in Germany or wherever she is. Because throughout she has been a traveler and many critics have gone to the extent that there comes a point when no poet/poetry remains a diasporic poetry rather they become a sort of traveler. And while they become a traveler all these thoughts they unplug in the form of memory and then they actually derive not only they memorize, but they also deride so many things.

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## A Different History

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.  
 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.


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So, here is a beautiful example where the poem starts with—“Great Pan is not dead/ great pan is not dead. Let us also remember here that in Plutarch you know the famous historian; he mentions that during the reign of Tivarius while they were having a journey on the ship, one of them said-- Great Pan is dead. And here there is actually a retort by Sujata Bhatt where she says it is said that when Pan was dead a Christ was born in India. and here Sujata Bhatt actually says great Pan is not dead, he simply immigrated to India.

And then she mentions that how in India there are several ways of worshipping Gods and Goddesses because we find there you know Gods and Goddesses even in birds, animals, trees, nature, river, water, ponds everywhere. “Here the Gods roam freely, / disguised as snakes or monkeys/ every tree is sacred.” And then she goes on and on and says she says that whenever you are going to kick a book or slide a book by your feet then perhaps your elders may also say that perhaps it is actually a sort of disregard to Goddess Saraswati.

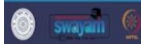
Because the paper which we write on has also come out of the tree and this tree becomes very sacred. “It is a sin to shove a book aside/ with your foot/ a sin to slam books down/ heard on a table/ a sin to toss one carelessly/ across a room”.

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## Contd...

You must learn how to turn the pages gently  
without disturbing Sarasvati,  
without offending the tree  
from whose wood the paper was made.

Which language  
has not been the oppressor's tongue?  
Which language truly meant to murder someone?  
And how does it happen  
that after the torture,  
after the soul has been cropped  
with the long scythe swooping out  
of the conqueror's face --  
the unborn grandchildren  
grow to love that strange language. (From *Brunizem*)



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“You must learn how to turn the pages gently/ without disturbing Saraswati/ without offending the tree/ from whose wood the paper was made.”

And then the second part of the poem while, the first part actually talks about the Indian religious you know belief or whatsoever. In the second part the poet actually comes back to colonization, fine? The idea of colonization how and the again are the language questions comes in and between and she says—“Which language/ has not been the oppressors tongue.”

Every language has become the oppressors tongue you know somebody who exploits they exploit you with the help of language; language is a great weapon or a tool to exploit, to subdue others. “Which language truly meant to murder someone /how does it happen/ after the torture/ after the soul has been cropped/with a long sight swooping out/ of the conquerors face/. In a very subtle way, she refers to the Britishers how they actually dominated over Indians, fine, for years and then that also with the help of the language.

And that language actually creates a sort of conflict in the mind of Sujata Bhatt of the conquerors face, ‘the unborn grandchildren grow to love that strange language.’ Here against, it takes a dig on how our elders always have been telling us to learn English, no? How once upon a time she had said that the middle of my name is English and I do not want to have it fine. So, there is in a way while she is struggling for the language.




And she says-- Our unborn grandchildren are also told, they are also supposed to grow to love the strange language. This poem is also from the first collection that is *Brunizem*. There are end number of poems in *Brunizem* you can have a look and you can read those poems at your leisure and at your own pleasure. We can also find that this poem in a very subtle in a very succinct manner talks about the transaction of religion and of rituals.

Loss of linguistic control we have already seen and then there is also a concern for the next generation who will also be told to toe the line to ape the line, what is that? That is English, fine. Now the other collection I mean the second collection which actually became very famous because of certain things.

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### "A White Asparagus" (from *Monkey Shadows*)

<p>Who speaks of strong currents streaming through the legs, the breasts of a pregnant woman in her fourth month?</p> <p>She's young, this is her first time, she's slim and the nausea has gone. Her belly's just starting to get rounder her breasts itch all day,</p> <p>and she's surprised that what she wants is him inside her again</p> <p>Oh come like a horse, she wants to say, move like a dog, a wolf, become a suckling lion-cub -</p> <p>Come here, and here, and here - but swim fast and don't stop.</p>	<p>Who speaks of the green coconut uterus the muscles sliding, a deeper undertow and the green coconut milk that seals her well, yet flows so she is wet from his softest touch?</p> <p>Who understands the logic behind this desire? Who speaks of the rushing tide that awakens her slowly increasing blood - ? And the hunger raw obsession beginning with the shape of the asparagus: sun-deprived white and purple-shadow-veined, she buys three kilos of the fat ones, thicker than anyone's fingers, she strokes the silky heads some are so jauntily capped... even the smell pulls her in-</p>
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And that is the *Monkey Shadows* which I have been saying that it actually talks about the memories of the year that Sujata Bhatt spent in India and then it also talks about several rituals. But then there are some poems in this collection which are not only memorialization of intensely lived experience rather they act also talk about a sort of in a very candid manner they express the urges of a lady, they express the urges and the longings of the body. I think it would not be sufficient to read all the lines, but then you can read it at your own ledger I will simply read some of the lines.

A white asparagus is a plant fine and through this the woman the speaker the narrator of the poem she actually talks about her bodily urges. Who speaks of strong currents streaming through the legs the breasts of a pregnant woman in her fourth month. She's

young this is her first time she's slim and the nausea has gone her belly just starting to get around her breast each all day. So, there is in a way the confession and then as the poem proceeds further fine who understands the logic behind this desire?

And this desire is very homely, the desire is very individual, but this desire is that of a lady the desire is of a body and body plays a very significant role in the poetic (Refer Time: 32:48) of Sujata Bhatt. Who speaks of the rushing tide that awakens her slowly increasing blood and the hunger raw obsession beginning with the shape of the asparagus sun deprived white and purple shadow veined. She buys three kilos of the fat ones thicker than anyone's fingers she strokes the silky heads some are so jauntily capped even the smells pulls her in.

So, you can read this poem ----There are, you know, the poem is also metaphorical, but the poem is also candid you can find out the underlying themes and the concerns of the poem "A White Asparagus" it has been called unabashedly erotic fine.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:33)

From *Augatora*

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)

*Wurst*

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)

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And then we come to the other collection which is named *Augatora* again a German word *Augatora* actually talks about the diverse relationship. But before we go to *Augatora* we can you know very hurriedly talk about some lines from *Monkey Shadows* where you know as I have been saying that there is a poem where a child looks at a monkey--- there has been an association with human beings and the monkey, fine. And in India the monkey is revered as monkey God Hanumana fine.

And there are some lines where Sujata Bhatt says some people have monkeys in their dreams, monkeys in their nightmares, monkeys crossing their shadows long after they stopped being children, long after they have left such a garden. So, there is a sort of communication and this communication where the monkey child also does not speak and the child does not speak and then they stare at each other and they try to communicate fine. So, we can find monkeys in abundance in many of our Indian gardens.

This is actually you know in one way or the other there is a sort of cross mythicizing, fine, cross mythicizing in many of the poems of *Monkey Shadows*.

And let us make a switch over from *Monkey Shadows* to *Augatora* which actually means, you know, this German word which actually means window and here you can find three continents you know and the experience of three continents being mentioned by Sujata Bhatt. The diverse relationship in poem after poem you can find the use of dashes and the colons and all and one can also find that how travels and journeys actually enrich us by letting us know.

There is one word which is used *gazpacho* I mean it is a word from cooking in Spain which actually means a Spanish soup. So, three continents as I have been saying, so she mentions gazpacho that is a Spanish word fine and then another word she also uses which is wurst w u r w u r s t wurst that is again a sort of that is again a sort of sauces and then we can find some you know a turmeric has been used quite in abundance.

Let us have a look at some of the lines- "Today unraveling the word/ Augatora and thinking of the loss."

So, here she is actually not only retreating towards the loss of that world imagining the days of a thousand years ago when these languages collided bitterly bloodily. See there is a sort of assurance also at many places uses of old English, old Norse, Latin. So, language, you know, the language that we use it has also got a history, fine, old German I turn to your Danish Grammar book.

And then while she is making a search for her own self and she is thinking about the history. The history of not of a particular word, but the history of many other countries as well and then she becomes very realistic in a way we can consider her to be very existential fine. When she says history is a broken narrative we are reminded of T. S.

Eliot who says—“History is a cunning passage, fine? So, history here in the words of Sujata Bhatt 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.” Meaning thereby when you change your place when you move to a different place, do you really carry your language. Yes, Sujata has already admitted in some of the interviews even that she carried the language which was her own. Do you or do you get your language where you take it, fine? Even though history is a broken narrative, but it is for us as living in a diasporic world.

Whether we are able to take that language with us or we are going to settle, amalgamate or assimilate in a different culture that we, at times, consider to be so proud of. Now, as many people have said that Sujata Bhatt is very much steeped in the questions of women, the feminine questions rather. So, in one of her interviews with Helen Tukey what she said is quite relevant.

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**On Women's Question**

“For most of human history, girls and women’s stories, if told at all, have been told by men, usually from a male perspective and sometimes from an actively misogynist point of view. So in a way, I feel I am “writing back” to history. . . I always felt that I should be able to write about whatever concerned me, without being censored. I’ve always felt a need to break certain silences and yes to bear witness.”  
(In an interview with Helen Tookey)

When she says--- “For most of human history girls and women’s stories if told at all have been told by men. She says that the stories of girls and women’s they have actually been told by men usually from a male perspective and sometimes from an actively misogynist point of view.” But then she says—“So, in a way I feel I am writing back to history.” So, here comes a sort of revenge.

As if you know till now men have written our histories our stories, but now I am writing it I as a woman I am writing it. “I always felt that I should be able to write about whatever concerned me without being censored.” Many people might consider her language to be very candid you know very bold--- as bold as Kamala Das is not it. But here we can find she says—“Let me write about whatever concerned me without being censored I have always felt a need to break certain silences and yes to bear witness.”

So, she is, you know, she confesses it rightly that whatever I am writing I may write very candidly, but I am writing from the point of view of a woman and that is actually quite important for me as a woman poet to express the concerns of the women.

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**As a Poet**

- ❑ She delineates the experience of being a South-Asian woman in postmodern Europe.
- ❑ Writes about Indian traditions, lost identities, and cultural difference for creating regional effect in her poetry.
- ❑ Engages gendered identity as well as cultural identity.
- ❑ Writes about female body without any reservations.

Sadness of recurrent miscarriage-  
"Fetus after fetus lost  
Can't you take me away  
from this city?" (*More Fears about the Moon*)

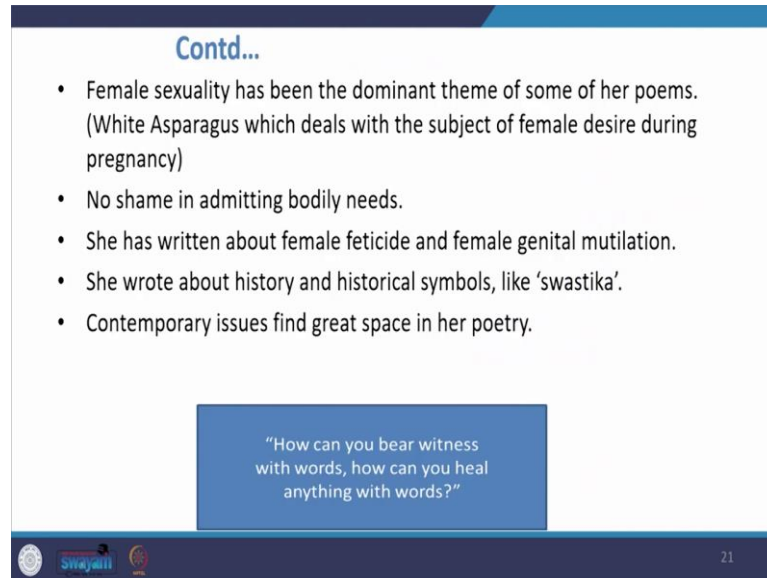
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My dear friends, when we look at the poetic collections of Sujata Bhatt; we find there is a genuine concern towards the feminine self. But then as a South Asian woman we can consider her to narrate her own experience in a post- modern Europe because she had already settled. There were some personal problems as well fine. In one of the poems “More fears about the Moon”, “Fetus after fetus lost/ can’t you take me away/ from this city.” I mean, are men able to bear such sort of frustrations, such sort of miscarriages that she mentions.

And it is actually for the women that they have faced it all. Sujata Bhatt not only writes about Indian traditions, lost identities and cultural difference for creating regional effect in her poetry. One can come across the smells, you know, the cooking smells of several

countries and continents in her writings. She also engages herself in gendered identity as well as her cultural identity. No doubt, she writes about you know as we have said that one of her poems is unabashedly erotic.

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**Contd...**

- Female sexuality has been the dominant theme of some of her poems. (White Asparagus which deals with the subject of female desire during pregnancy)
- No shame in admitting bodily needs.
- She has written about female feticide and female genital mutilation.
- She wrote about history and historical symbols, like 'swastika'.
- Contemporary issues find great space in her poetry.

"How can you bear witness with words, how can you heal anything with words?"

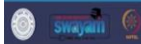
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So, she writes you know without any reservations about female body, female sexuality even though a dominant theme in many of our poems. She is not ashamed at all because she says that she is writing it from the point of view of a woman. She also writes in many poems about female feticide we have already seen, fine, and then there are many contemporary issues that also get room in her poetry. We can take a line as well- "How can you bear witness with words, how can you heal anything with words?"

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## Influence of Different Cultures

- “My work reflects my life so what I have experienced and seen does enter into my poems, and, for example, if I had lived all my life in India and had never really gone abroad, then my poems would be very different. I would not have written about Germany, I wouldn't have written about Italy or England or the United States, nor would I have written about experience which occurred in those places, sometimes in the natural landscapes of those countries. I feel that I'm an outsider wherever I am, and I think that being an outsider gives me a different perspective on life and on any culture including my own. And, so yes - my travels and the fact that I've lived in so many different places have really determined and influenced my writing.”



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Words are the great weapons, my dear friends and that is why we should not lose it. While discussing several cultures as we have found that she mentions- she talks of different cultures what she says is in one of our interviews is a very pertinent and eye-opener: “My work reflects my life. So, what I have experienced and seen does enter into my poems.” She is not a poet who actually imagines, but she is actually a poet who spills, who actually writes her own experiences.

Colored in the cauldron of her own frustrations of her own struggles—“If I had lived all my life in India and had never really gone abroad then my poems would be very different.” So, in a way she actually does not have any regret fine of settling in Germany. “I would not have written about Germany I would not have written about Italy or England or the United States nor would I have written about experience which occurred in those places sometimes in the natural landscapes of those countries.”

Since she was in US for quite some time, so many people have found a sort of Americanism in majority of our poems. “I feel that I am an outsider, wherever I am and I think that being an outsider gives me a different perspective on life and on any culture including my own. So, there is a sort of resolution that even though I am in a different culture, but that culture has enabled me to answer several queries and to resolve certain you know interrogations. And so, yes my travels and the fact that I have lived in so many different places have really determined and influenced my writing.”

So, one can find the influence of different cultures in Sujata Bhatt's writing and that is what makes her a diasporic poet and a diasporic poet having a lot of significance, my dear friend. So, having discussed the poetic oeuvre of Sujata Bhatt now the time has come to wind up this talk, but before we do so, let us take one poem from *The Stinking Rose* which was not that great because many people considered it to be a weak one, but what she says has got an element of her own anguish at the same time of her own experience.

(Refer Slide Time: 44:40)

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...  
But I never left home  
I carried it away  
with me - her in my darkness  
in myself. ("The one who goes away", *The Stinking Rose*)

Thank You

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And also at the same time a sort of longing the longing that she carries within.

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...  
  
But I never left home  
  
I carried it away with me  
  
her in my darkness in myself.



So, the essence of it is---- that I have actually changed several cultures, I have traveled in different countries and continents, but I have always been able to carry with myself my home.

So, I am the one who always goes and this feeling is always prevalent in many of us. So, it has got not only a sort of diasporic element---- an experience, but it has also got a sort of universal tinge because as human beings all of us carry our homes within. Sometimes in the form of memory, sometimes in the form of imagination, but majority of time in the form of experience that actually colors our imagination and our life. With this let me come to conclude this talk.

Thank you very much I wish you all a very good day ahead.