

Diaspora as Thirdspace: Spatialities of Self-Becoming in the Select Poems of Sujata Bhatt

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By

Sandhya Ravindran

17HEHL01



Department of English

School of Humanities

University of Hyderabad

(P.O.) Central University, Gachibowli

Hyderabad – 500046

Telangana, India

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Sandhya Ravindran

17HEHL01

Department of English

School of Humanities

University of Hyderabad

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Place: Hyderabad

Sandhya Ravindran

Date:

Reg. No. 17HEHL01

Supervisor

Head of Department

Dean, School of Humanities

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University of Hyderabad

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Introduction

Making sense of one's self is a primary concern of every human being. This most elementary problem of individual existence in the world has been approached and studied variously in terms of time and history and in terms of the societal and cultural significance. To understand what constitutes the self of a person, I believe, one has to know one's position in or connection to the world s/he lives in. The space one lives in provides an individual with a marker that s/he carries forward in the life's journey. Space and time are two modes of experience a person constantly engages with throughout the entire life. When time has been looked upon as the force of life, space was relegated into the background as a stage where the life events took place. This notion towards space gradually began to change with the spatial turn that happened in the early stages of postmodernism. The spatial studies provided new insights to see how space, like time, becomes the foundational framework for an understanding of self.

The relation of the self and the world is mutually constitutive in nature. The idea of 'being-in-the-world' of Martin Heidegger shows how intensive is the relation a being has with the world or the place. The proposed study intends to look at how the basic concepts of human geography, space and place, provide an alternative way to situate and understand one's self spatially. The context of the study is diaspora where space becomes an essential category in determining one's sense of self. The trajectories of an individual of diaspora chart the becoming of the self through the spaces and places s/he has

travelled, encountered and belonged. For them, space becomes an identifying mark to chart one's self-becoming.

This study proposes to attempt to understand the process of the formation of selfhood in the field of diaspora. Sujata Bhatt, a poet of Indian diaspora, in her poetry collections explores the journey of her 'self' in the different continents she has lived. The poems disclose how the understanding of self can be traced spatially through the places one dwells, travels and recollects both physically and psychologically. The study attempts to look at the selected poems of Sujata Bhatt to understand the process of self-becoming of an individual of diaspora spatially and through this process how does she articulate the transition of alienating spaces of diaspora into spaces of self-assertion and self-becoming.

Diaspora: A Background Study

Diaspora, for many theorists and thinkers, is a concept and a condition that refers to people, groups, communities or an individual who have been caught up in any kind of movement away from their place of origin to various other places either in search of settlement, job, a new way of life or forcibly expelled from or being displaced from homeland. Diaspora denotes movement in and through space, both the real physical spaces such as nations, countries or even continents and the imagined mental spaces such as the home, family etc. It is an in-between space where the people of diaspora no longer can claim the place of their origin and are not assimilated to the new place where they are at present. They are associated with the idea of loss, being nostalgic of the homeland, alienation and estrangement in the new land, displacement etc.

The etymology of diaspora refers to the Greek word which means to sow or disperse. It is a “Greek gardening tradition referring simply to the scattering of seeds and implying some description of dispersal” (Kalra 9). It is a method of sowing seeds which is not meant to grow only in a particular space, but across the spaces. This idea carries the productive nature of the word diaspora which is meant to scatter or to grow i.e. to be productive in any place they have fallen. The classical version of diaspora is the Jewish version of displacement. The Jews were forced to flee after the destruction of the Temple and their exile to Babylon remain one of the notions of the earlier descriptions of diaspora. Robin Cohen’s *Global Diasporas*, “the first major general study of diaspora written by a single scholar” (Dufoix 23) classifies diaspora into classical or victim, labour, trade, imperial, cultural and sojourn diasporas. He also notes how diasporas pose a threat to the concept of nationality and that is one of the reasons why diasporas around the globe are treated with contempt and disrespect. Most of the nations or societies view diaspora as a dissolver of their national, cultural, linguistic and social ties with their fellow citizens. Cohen charts out around nine conditions or features that help to categorize a diaspora community which is modeled from William Safran’s model of the features of diaspora. It includes:

traumatic dispersion from the homeland to other regions or dispersal due to search for new jobs or works or colonial ambitions, a collective memory of the homeland and an idealization of this ancestral concept of home and a promised commitment to its restoration or creation, an ethnic group consciousness which is sustained throughout the group members, a troubled relation with the host land or

nation and also a possibility of a distinctive creative life in host land with a tolerance for pluralism. (Cohen 26)

These features are layered out on the basis of the diasporic communities or groups that are categorized in terms of the nature of movement from their homeland. It is easily decipherable that the negative connotation attributed by history to the victimized diasporas such as Jews or Africans persists in layering out these features. The linkage of trauma (memory or/and the journey) to the movement away from the homeland, an idealization of homeland or ancestral notion of home and a returning to it as part of recreating their nation, the troubled relation with the new societies etc reflect the classical version of the diaspora.

The literature of diaspora generally depicts this troubled, traumatic situation and the reliving of the old, ideal days of homeland and its memories to provide meaning in the new host societies. Does it become necessary to view such ‘spaces’ as negative and traumatic to identify as a diaspora? Why cannot be these ‘spaces’ understood as spaces of assurance or more clearly as spaces of becoming?

Diaspora is a contested position, a position which is tossed between binaries as the homeland and host land, centre and periphery, pure and hybrid, homogeneous and heterogeneous, belonging and alienation. The word diaspora now stands for any such dispersion and this eventful integration of other similar or related conditions has made diaspora open. But there are theorists or thinkers who criticize and accept these transformations to the word meaning and openness of diaspora. Rogers Brubaker through his concept of “the ‘diaspora’ diaspora” (119) refers to the abundance of meanings and

additions attributed to the meaning of diaspora and how extensively the word diaspora has become open to include other mode of movements in and through space. He also notes how the uniqueness of diaspora as a term that refers to certain categories or certain groups has degenerated due to this proliferation. “The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora” (121), and this disappearance in a way can be seen as a positive stance to dissolve the negative, traumatic attributions allocated with the concept of diaspora. It is no more possible to list out or categorize certain people or groups as diasporic as we all in one way or another cross the boundaries drawn upon us. These boundaries can be psychological, social, cultural, national or continental. If such crossing over can be regarded equivalent to the diasporic situation, then it is easy to relate to the space of the people who exist in such situations. Brubaker does not refer to this stance but he writes “if everyone is diasporic, no one is distinctively so” (ibid). This can be reread as to treat the diasporic situation as a situation that can also be seen as a reaffirming space rather than an alienated space.

William Safran in the first issue of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* in 1991 writes an introductory essay in which he classifies and compares diasporas along with expatriate minorities. He considers diaspora or diasporic community to be a “metaphorical designation” (83). Stephen Dufoix in his work *Diasporas* (2008) brings three definitional modes to diaspora which Gabriel Sheffer refers to as a “travelling term” (10). In the oxymoronic definition, which differs from open and categorical ones due to the connection it has to “the emerging theories of postmodernism and its offshoots, tends to let loose the boundaries and keep it open to the hybrid, mixed and encompassing nature of diaspora” (Dufoix 24). This definition of diaspora is visible in the writings of

thinkers and critics Avtar Brah, Homi k Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall and Ian Chambers.

These critics focus on the present location of the diaspora which is a problematic location. The earlier critics and writers cling on to the past roots of the people of diaspora and it makes the people nostalgic and long for such a rootedness in the present societies. As Paul Gilroy's article title sums up: "It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at" (Kalra 29), they look up on the heterogeneous position of diaspora. "The 'where you are at' is a combination of roots and routes" (Kalra 29). These roots (memory) and routes (journey) engage the lives of diaspora; it constitutes the position of the people as a diaspora. These two concepts, roots and routes, are inescapable as these make them diasporic. The past roots in the form of memory accompany the individual and this provides meaning to the present hostile or confused situation in host land. The routes or the journeys they took to reach the current location imply that all such routes are alive in their mindset. The experiences in every journey help to perceive the spaces they have traversed to arrive at a present location. Thus the mental journeys of memory and the physical journeys inscribe the lives of every diaspora. It is crucial to every individual in a subjective way.

The traditional framework or definition of diaspora, keeping in mind 'the ideal type', highlights the violence, estrangement and longing of the diasporic situation. The postmodern critics alter this position and treat diaspora as a situation which celebrates this 'nowhere' stance. "Diaspora inhabit liminal, interstitial spaces and their inter-subjective and intercultural experiences constitute them as hyphenated, hybrid subjects" (Singh 52).

The postcolonial thinker Homi K Bhabha indicates this liminality as the way to resist the claims of both the host land and the home land. The threshold position, the in-between position of a diaspora makes them to completely alter the power of the two poles that stick on to them. This in-between, liminal position helps them to produce their own stance drawing on both the ends (321). Stuart Hall considers this position of diaspora through the ideas of difference, alterity and hybridity. He understands diasporic identity as “constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Rutherford 235). This conception of identity alters the earlier ideas of diaspora and celebrates the heterogeneity. But this conception of a diasporic identity as an in-between or hybrid again confines the individuals of diaspora in another label/identity or category.

Bhabha considers this in-between space, which he terms as “third space” (56) to be open for diverse possibilities for the people of diaspora. But Bhabha conceives this third space more as a temporal, historical concept than spatial. Unlike other classical definitions and interpretations of diaspora, these positions and categorizations of diaspora show how diversely studies have taken shape in the field of diaspora. This opens up new possibilities to look at the position of diaspora.

Steven Vertovec’s three definitions of diaspora provide another important framework that shows the multiple aspects of diaspora. In his article “Three Meanings of “Diaspora”, Exemplified among South Asian Religions” (1997), he defines diaspora as “a social form, a type of consciousness and as a mode of cultural production” (278). It is interesting to define diaspora as a type of consciousness because unlike the social and cultural side of the diasporic community, Vertovec separately tries to argue for a

consciousness of diaspora which is quite absent in the theorizations discussed before. But Vertovec's definition of diaspora as a type of consciousness falls into the same notion of dialectics as proposed in the in-between spaces by Stuart Hall or Homi Bhabha. Vertovec argues that "Its particularity is variously described as being marked by a dual or paradoxical nature" (281). This dialectics consists of the negative notion of the alienating experiences and the positive notion of having an ancestral heritage. The dialectics of loss and hope play a vital role in the diasporic consciousness. Vertovec supplements this idea with the opinions of James Clifford and Paul Gilroy who support this dual nature of the diasporic consciousness. For Clifford diasporic consciousness is "a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue" (qtd. in Vertovec 319). This attributes to the nature of diaspora as subverting the idea of a homogeneous nation or state. Diaspora, for Clifford, moves beyond the confinements of a modern nation or state. These definitions move beyond the earlier classical notions and allusions of diaspora and its experiences.

In the present world of transnationalism and globalization, every other person is diasporic as we tend to cross the boundaries of social, cultural, linguistic and national through the cyber networks, social networks, and other such virtual spaces. Every terrain is fractured by the recurrent movements of people physically, mentally and virtually. This cannot be claimed as diasporic movement but a similar movement where the ties of homeland, cultural or ethnic roots etc become more loosened and do not haunt the persons involved in such movements. Diaspora or the people of diaspora, as it is understood from these features and definitions discussed shares a haunting past and a living present which in turn look forward for a better future in the host land. These hauntings are in the form of exclusions, estrangement, alienation from the host land and a

longing, relishing and nostalgia about the homeland. Belonging is not just a means of location for the people of diaspora. It is a process of reconciliation with these tensions in the host land and the promises of the homeland. They are torn between the alienating experiences of the present and the alluring past. Every diasporic belonging is not just about inhabiting the physicality but also bringing all the inner psychic connections and experiences to the physical location. To inhabit a diasporic space, one crosses roots and routes. The memories and the journeys partaken by the individuals of diaspora constitute their understanding of the space of diaspora. This material or real space along with the imagined spaces helps them to produce their own subjective space in the diasporic situation.

Avtar Brah in her work, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, proposes a “diaspora space” as “a site of immanence” (208) where, she argues, the multiple juxtapositions question the univocal notion of the diaspora. It is an intersectional space of “diaspora, border and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes” (208) and such a space is “the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested” (209). This dialectics is contested in such spaces of diaspora, border and dis/location. Diaspora is an assemblage of multiple locations and journeys that are experienced by certain individual or groups in their own respective manner. Each individual of the diaspora weaves her/his own way of understanding this multiple travels, through the inhabited homes and places. This subjective, personal manner produces respective spaces through the narratives they inform and examine themselves. Only when the individual beings of diaspora can transcend the univocal notion of understanding the space it holds, that becomes a

liberating space rather than a space of estrangement. The notion of Brah contextualizes how space is an inherent part for understanding the essence of the diaspora. She narrates it as an amalgamated, composite space that gives the intention of how open and possible is the context of diaspora for the people or an individual inhabiting such a space. It is a confluence of not just national, cultural boundaries but also the individual, psychic ones. In this context, the diaspora space can be productively used and reformed to overcome the traumatic trajectories of the mental and physical journeys in the individual lives of the people of diaspora. Diaspora as an identity maintains the strong ties it has with the negative and positive poles that define the location of any diaspora. An individual to traverse such identities requires an active agency or self to move beyond. Thus diaspora can be actively produced as a subjective space individually which encompasses both the real experiences of location and belonging along with the imagined, unreal spaces of the memories.

The Poet and Her Works

The literature of diaspora is one of the primary channels to understand the theorizations of the diasporic situation. Literature acts as a platform to bridge disparate real life experiences through the hinge of imagination. A study of diasporic literature will help to understand the depth of the diasporic situation, as diasporic literature by and large re-presents real life experiences. Being a diaspora is a crossroad position for most of the individuals. It is not just a collective cultural identity, it is subjectively experienced by each individual in her/his own manner. Avtar Brah contextualizes the diaspora space of the individual subjects as not just a cultural, economic or political space but a psychic, subjective space too (208). Such a subjective space can be traced in the narratives and

cartographies of the diasporic literature. By the term cartographies I suggest the autobiographical tracings of the space of being recorded by the writers of diaspora through their works of literature. Such writings are drawn straight from their lived experiences, narratives and imagination.

There is a constant tension of self definition if one writes from the position of diaspora. Behind the identity label of any diaspora, for instance the Asian American diaspora or the South Asian diaspora or whether it be any such diaspora groups, there is this position marked between the two continents or nations or groups. That in-between position which Samir Dayal notes as “hyphenation” (Shankar and Srikanth 235) makes it difficult for the writer to choose between the defining labels of the diasporic location such as from which they hail or their present location or precisely both. Salman Rushdie notes this plight of a diasporic writer in *Imaginary Homelands* that “to be an Indian writer in this society is to face, every day, problems of definition” (17). This rises from the self in question, the psyche which is formed from these lived experiences of the diasporic situation. The space of diaspora, as Brah roughly puts it, is a space where the real outer space informs the inner psyche of the individuals. The position of diaspora is a position of space which can also be the personal, subjective space. This subjective space is produced within the cultural or social framework. A writer of diaspora, when tries to write these lived experiences mark out the self spatially rather than temporally. Space is not just the real material space where the writer has travelled, resided or crossed over, but all the mental imaginary spaces s/he has inhabited, narrated and transcended. This kind of confluence of the outer and the inner spaces, of immanence and transcendence is the central idea that informs many of the present writers of diaspora.

Sujata Bhatt, who was born in Ahmedabad, India moved to America at the age of twelve along with her family and then moved to Germany after marrying a German writer and radio producer, Michael Augustin. She has been known for her ‘multiculturalism’ which is mainly due to her life in three main continents: Asia, America and Europe. Her poetical oeuvre includes *Brunizem* (1988), *Monkey Shadows* (1991), *The Stinking Rose* (1994), *Augatora* (2000), *A Colour of Solitude* (2002), *Pure Lizard* (2008) and *Poppies in Translation* (2015). She has also compiled her collections as *Collected Poems* (2013) and published as a different collection. In almost all her collections, Bhatt focuses on the meticulous changes that have happened to the places she visits and these changes definitely denote her position as a diaspora. She registers her childhood experiences through colours, tastes, smells and invokes the sensual feeling in most of her poems. The poems disclose the questions of belonging and how alienating is to be in a foreign land and how the language that runs deep within her altered but stayed throughout her journey as an Indian poet of diaspora.

Bhatt balances the outer (real/physical) and inner (imaginary/mental) spaces of diaspora throughout her writings. She epitomizes three different regions in her writings: India (her place of origin), America (her place of education and work) and Germany (place where she currently resides). These three continents appear and reappear in her poems as real or material places like cities, villages, oceans etc and also as her inner spaces through her memories of home, events, travels etc. Thus space, through journeys and memories, remains as one of the binding forces in her poetry. She, unlike her contemporary Meena Alexander who describes herself as “cracked by multiple migrations” (22), flourishes with these multiple crossings. The flourishing of the self, its

becoming is charted in her poems. She through her poetry mends the gap between her real life experiences and her inner self's exposures. She in her poems actively produces and stretches the blurry thresholds of the space of diaspora. She defines her own subjective space inside the labels of diaspora. The common themes of diaspora such as loss of home, roots, language and culture, alienation and estrangement in homeland and host land, a quest for self identity, multiple travels and migrations etc are represented in her writings too. She looks at these themes as a new way to create a space for herself and her writings. Thus Sujata Bhatt comes as the framework to the main argument of this project: the becoming of the self in space.

Self and Space in Contemporary Thought

Space, rather than time, is the prominent conceptual field of current philosophical and social theoretical writing. This spatial turn in contemporary thinking and writing has resulted in the conception of a new way of approach to human life and its culture from the perspective of space, now widely labeled 'humanist geography'.

This spatial turn in contemporary thought began to happen right from Foucault's celebrated announcement that the era of space was succeeding that of time. What many other theorists had hinted Foucault made explicit in his lecture-cum-paper, "Of Other Spaces":

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history
[...] The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We
are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the
epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. (22)

“Space is the everywhere of modern thought. It is the flesh that flatters the bones of theory” (Crang and Thrift 1). Apart from the material base and the locus of events, space is now considered to be the realm of philosophical thinking and social practice, theory and praxis. More than any other field, it is the philosophical field of enquiry of the nature of human identity and selfhood that has benefitted most from this spatial orientation. The self is in essence constituted in and by space. This spatial aspect of selfhood, a geo-philosophy of self-becoming, is the focus of the present study.

Theorizing Space: Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre and Edward W. Soja

Space and place are referred to in most of the contexts synonymously. In geographical terms, space is something assumed altogether as to say the whole space of geography, but place remains as the contextual point of reference. Yi-Fu Tuan in *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Human Experiences* says in his introduction about this dilemma. He distinguishes between these two concepts of space and place with regard to human values: “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (3). He views the abstractness of space as the openness that the world offers to every being and place as the sheltered space where we house our intimate things and stay enclosed. These ideas of openness and security have been the central axioms of the philosophy of space and place.

Gaston Bachelard and *The Poetics of Space*

A French philosopher of science, Gaston Bachelard breaks away from the early assumptions of space present in science and geometry with his phenomenological study

of space in *The Poetics of Space* (1958). A borderless mingling of the science of mind and imagination is seen in his work.

The Poetics of Space changes the earlier notions of spaces, both the intimate domestic space and the external public space. It topples the way how a human self understands space. Bachelard divides the space of the house into several dimensions. He divides it from the cellar to the garret, house and universe and further pens down the different sections such as drawers, wardrobes, corners, nests, shells etc. He juxtaposes the inside and the outside of the house. The analysis of the house is a cartographical analysis. Just as a map is made with precision, Bachelard draws out the house and its world. Each part of the house connects to the whole idea of an intimate space which is the first accustomed space of an individual. Bachelard shows how a house secures in discreet the intimacies of the human beings. Even when the whole universe has doubts regarding the acceptance of an individual, a house nests itself as the safe adobe of not just the physical body but also the inner self. Thus house is not just an architectural structure made of blocks and cement, but a humane space which breathes life into the people who dwell inside.

Bachelard is both a phenomenologist and a psychoanalyst when it comes to this particular work on poetics. He looks for the spatial dimensions of the intimate and non intimate places and interprets the creation of self of an individual through these spaces of intimacy and non intimacy. He searches around, inside and outside the spaces of his own house where the memories, dreams, fears, and hopes of an individual reside. He interprets the self in respect to the outer world inhabited by it. He looks into how the self tries to humanize and habituate any house that gave shelter to its memories, dreams and fears.

This humanized space does not exist as a passive force but has an active agency in constituting the creative self. Thus self and space intermingle, cross over and coexist closely in the pages of *The Poetics of Space*.

The method of analyzing and understanding space makes Bachelard's work a novel approach in phenomenology. When space was limited to the explorations by a geographer, Bachelard shows how a phenomenologist's way of looking at space enlarges the very concept of space and its beings. He begins with the very primary space in the life of any being, the house. House refers to the architectural or the physical structure of the places where one dwells. The study of house brings into the mind the structural analysis of it from brick to brick. But here Bachelard attempts a quite opposite approach. He notes in the first chapter: "A geographer or ethnographer can give us descriptions of very varied types of dwellings. [...] In every dwelling, even the richest, the first task of the phenomenologist is to find the original shell" (4). A phenomenologist looks at space of dwelling as a space where a being comes in to shape both physically and mentally. The house encloses all the feelings, emotions, fears, dreams, hopes and more an individual surpass with in the life. The space of the house includes the very original rhythm of its being. The arrangements of the spaces inside the house communicate the essence of it. As he describes again, house "is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (4).

The image of the house as Bachelard explains or argues in his work exposes the inside of the 'soulful being'. The house for Bachelard emerges as the "the non-I that protects the I" (5). Here Bachelard does not just define the physical space as it is, but he defines the subjective experiences of the physical spaces which any individual inhabits in

their life. Here along with phenomenology, imagination works at the forefront. Thus both the branches of science (phenomenology/philosophy) and art or poetry (imagination/poetic images) come in collaboration to present the essence of the spaces in a being's life.

“Space calls for action”, he says, “and before action, imagination is at work. It mows and ploughs” (12). Bachelard's attempts to redraw the importance of space back into the intimate lives of the being are matched with the power of imagination. Imagination changes the whole way of space's perception. Bachelard's work provides glimpses of how space is interlinked in the construction of the psyche, along with the power of imagination. Bachelard is in fact showing us different ways of creating (to refer to the root meaning of the word 'poetics') space. As Bachelard notes how “a house allows the poet to inhabit the universe” (51), this work rewrites the earlier notions of space and helps the individual in her/his quest for understanding one's own self to inhabit one's space, which becomes the first step to claim one's self.

Henri Lefebvre and *The Production of Space*

Henri Lefebvre's contribution to theorization of space in social relations and social theory is quite significant. His landmark work, *The Production of Space*, published in 1974, still remains one of the most influential texts written on space within postmodern context.

Henri Lefebvre is the one who categorically put forward the idea that space is productive in nature. This productivity of space happens in every society. It is this idea of space as being produced through human beings as well as being productive that marks the main area of our enquiry into the relation between space and self.

Lefebvre views space as a means to mediate the everyday life and governs the situations of the society. In his work, *The Production of Space*, he brings along and culminates different ways to look at space around us and how through our bodies and the activities we all are related in the production of space. “The meanings that we attribute to space, and for that matter, time are intimately tied up with our understandings of the world in which we live” (Unwin 13). Our understandings shape the social relations and activities in which we all play equal parts.

In, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre theorizes social spaces in detail through the three divisions of physical, mental and lived space which he conceives as forming a unity. He describes it as “‘Spatial practice or Perceived space’, ‘Representations of space or conceived space’, and ‘Representational spaces or lived space’” (33). Social space is what Lefebvre focuses as such.

Spatial practice refers to the practices of a society as understood through “the deciphering of its space” (38). These are spaces which we perceive in the everyday life such as the buildings we live in, the places we travel to, the spaces which we use for several other purposes such as work, family, gatherings, recreation or leisure times, cemeteries, public and private places. Thus through these activities and relations we make through crossing over these spaces, we indeed produce the social or human space. Thus the performances we do in the households, religious, political centers etc help in to continue this process of the production of space through the practices of our everyday life. This spatial practice is also referred to as perception, which takes it close to the idea of phenomenologists who would insist that to make sense of the world around, we need to perceive the world. Thus perception helps to decode the meanings of the outer space.

Thus perception or the spatial practice is important to know about the nature of how the space is being produced through the perceived notions and everyday activities (Lefebvre 38).

Representations of space or conceived space refer to the second stage where the human beings use other means to decode and understand the perceived spaces. This space, according to Lefebvre, comprises of the space of scientists, engineers, planners “all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (Lefebvre 38). It is comprised of signs and symbols such as language and other forms of knowledge.

Representational spaces, also known as lived space, refer to the last stage of social space where both the perceived (physical) and the conceived (mental) spaces coexist together to produce a space of social beings. This is the space which is humanized or socialized by the beings. Lefebvre notes this space as “the space of” inhabitants’ and ‘users’“(Lefebvre 39).

Lefebvre’s triadic conception of space throws the dialectical nature of the hitherto spatial thinking into the open. It is into this openness that later Edward Soja would insert his concept of a ‘thirdspace’. In fact, Lefebvre foreshadows Soja’s spatial trialectics when he talks about the nature of this triad:

A triad, that is, three elements, not two. Relations with two elements boil down to oppositions, contrasts or antagonisms...Philosophy has found it very difficult to get beyond such dualisms as subject-object, Descartes’s

res cogitans and res extensa, and the Ego and non-Ego of the Kantians.

(39)

In fact, the movement from the social space to the personal, subjective space is quite subtle in Lefebvre. It is like that third premise in a syllogism which has to be logically deduced from the preceding two. When Lefebvre says that “from the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space” (38), we know, quite true to the Marxist line, so should the case be with every individual within the society. The spatial practice of a person is to be revealed through his or her own deciphering of his/her personal space in the matrix of social space.

This transition from the social to the personal space is inherent in Lefebvre, because the spatial theory as advocated by him is not to be an abstract theory. It is essentially practical; it connects directly with our social and personal experience. Lefebvre makes it clear when he says: “The perceived-conceived-lived triad loses all its force if it is treated as an abstract model. If it cannot grasp the concrete, then its import is severely limited” (40). This potentiality of Lefebvre’s theory of space to grasp the particular, the concrete, the personal is realized later in full extent when Edward Soja develops his theory of space. Just as there are social theorists like Soja who professedly followed the implications of Lefebvre’s spatial theory manifestly, there are artists and writers whose works have brought into real practice the spatial insights of Lefebvre. Lefebvre himself had often wondered: “what intervenes, what occupies the interstices between representations of space and representational spaces? A culture? Works of art? May be better, imagination?” (43). The idea of the imagination of a person, a poet, occupying, filling in, the interstices between the conceived space and lived space in her

drive towards attaining a meaningful selfhood is the central idea that is explored in this study when we later take up the diasporic poetry of Sujata Bhatt for analysis. When we try to see if the work of a person like her is a representation of diasporic space or is she expressing a representational space of diasporic life, such analyses, informed by theories of Lefebvre, will stretch into making a sincere attempt to perceive our own world and experiences spatially to explore deeper to reach to the very roots of our subjectivity.

Edward W. Soja and Postmodern Space

Edward William Soja made his mark in the social theorizing of space through his work *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989) and accelerated the spatial studies with his work *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996). These two works stand independently in their respective contributions to the conceptualization of space in postmodern theory. Edward Soja is one among the main proponents of postmodern spatiality along with David Harvey, Frederic Jameson and so on. These critics actually inaugurated what is now known as the postmodern spatial turn. As Robert T. Tally observes in *Spatiality*, “the spatial turn was aided by a new aesthetic sensibility that came to be understood as postmodernism” (3). The change was significant indeed: “Postmodernism, in a few short years, had introduced new ways of seeing into geography. It had liberated geographers from antiquated (if not obsolete) paradigms; it bestowed a new legitimacy on the study of space/place; and it connected geography and geographers to key debates in philosophy, social theory, and the humanities” (Dear and Flusty 177).

Soja clearly notes in his preface to *Postmodern Geographies* that his “aim is to spatialize historical narrative, to attach to duree an enduring critical human geography” (1). As the title of the book suggests geography is being reassessed against or together with history with the coming of postmodernism. Edward Soja sees the emergence of spatial studies as a main result and response of postmodernism. Postmodernism made possible the alternative readings of earlier notions. He notes in the preface to his *Postmodern Geographies* that the main intention behind the work is “a spatial hermeneutic” (2), a new way of understanding and interpreting the histories of human lives. Soja repeatedly argues in his works for this contribution of postmodernism in bringing out the new and alarming ways to understand and explore the essential spatiality that imbues the individual and social life.

To invoke this spatiality that has been hidden in the backdrop of postmodern geographies, Soja proposes an ontological spatiality of being. He brings about a clear difference in the attitude towards space; he wishes to go beyond the concrete and abstract definitions of space. These are illusory ideas which have been used to trap the expanding and exploding usages of a spatial restructuring, and this is what Soja wants to rework: to restructure the existing notions of spatiality. He brings about “a third interpretive geography, one which recognizes spatiality as simultaneously a social product (or outcome) and a shaping force (or medium) in social life: the crucial insight for both the socio-spatial dialectic and an historic-geographical materialism” (Soja 7). The first step to make it happen is to break this bimodal structure through an ontological study of the being in which space marks its influence fully. Such an analysis is what Soja initiates through his idea of ‘trialectics of being’ and further through the concept of ‘thirdspace’.

Spatial Trialectics and Thirdspace

Edward W. Soja's book *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996) foregrounds the reworking of spatiality and realizes the radically open perspective of space. Soja, influenced by the writings of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, restructures the earlier notions of space and spatiality and calls forth the need to visualize a new space: thirdspace. The book begins with an "Introduction/Itinerary/Overture" (1) which shows the concept of thirdspace, simultaneously as a discovery, a journey and an approach. He states that the main objective of his conceptualization is to encourage others to think about space differently. This will urge them to situate themselves in the differently emergent views of space. Soja radicalizes the earlier notions of space and provides the freedom to his readers to refer to this new concept of space in their own terms. Soja impels the readers to rethink about the epistemological stances which govern their existence. Unlike the existing understandings of space and its influence, Soja's idea of space takes a detour to reflect on the innate possibilities of this alternative thinking of space.

Space is left either as the unchangeable physical geography or as the mental imaginary realm between the societal acts or relations of the people. Soja wishes to restructure this binary mode of thinking with the insertion of space as one among the primary modes to define the everyday lives of social beings. Soja invokes the idea of space as productive and something which is produced through the societal relations, an idea he borrows from Henri Lefebvre. He adds on to this view of space the idea of thirding, as not an option but to open the binary modes into new possibilities. Soja intends for "a recombinatorial and radically open perspective" (5) through the idea of

thirling. His promise is for three different thirldings: the insertion of space along the historical and social dimensions, the combination of both the modernist and postmodernist view to open it into new alternative readings, and lastly, the three modes through which space is/can be looked upon and initiated in the everyday lives of the individuals.

Soja's central aim is to bring space as one of the prime concerns in understanding, evaluating and realizing the everyday life of individual beings. His propelling concern is to rebalance the existing modes and means of understanding space which encompass the historical and societal aspects. Through this formulation he does not aim to reject the claims of historical and social aspects, but rather include along with it a spatial aspect too. This inclusion of a 'third' aspect breaks away the tension between the other two aspects. The 'thirling' makes it more translucent as every aspect is interdependent and mutually constitutive. This inclusion of space as a third aspect (spatiality) is Henri Lefebvre's contribution and Soja draws inspiration from this mode of representation. Soja reworks and reinterprets Lefebvre's idea of historicity, sociality and spatiality. For this, firstly, he draws a survey of Henri Lefebvre's life along with his work *The Production of Space*. Through this method, Soja tries to translate Lefebvre's ideas of space and spatiality for the readers and to extend the critical attitude and scope of this reworking in understanding his concept of 'Thirdspace'.

Space, in the writings of Lefebvre and Soja, denotes the essential phenomenon which is inescapable by the social and historical realities. It encompasses every other aspect within it without privileging one against the other. Lefebvre explores into the mode of social relationships and states that "The study of space offers an answer

according to which the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing the space itself” (129). Thus the existence of a social being is also a spatial existence. The space is produced through these spatial and social relations. Lefebvre invokes the productiveness of space to show how space like history and sociality helps in building and maintaining relations and is an inevitable part of the being’s existence. As Soja clearly puts: “What Lefebvre is arguing for is a similar action-oriented and politicized ontology and epistemology for space: “everything” also occurs in space, not merely incidentally but as a vital part of lived experience, as part of the (social) production of (social) space, the construction of individual and societal spatialities” (46). Both of these theorists concentrate on the ontological and epistemological restructuring through and by space/spatiality.

For Soja, the very idea of space stands for transformation. It helps in transforming the very existence of the being and it is this ontological reworking that he aims through the expansion of Lefebvre’s trialectic of historicity – sociality – spatiality. Soja reworks the idea of thirding of Lefebvre and uses it further to theorize thirdspace. The triad, historicity – sociality – spatiality, refers to “The Trialectics of Being” (Soja 71) or “the ontological trialectic” (70). This trialectic is what constitutes the existence of the being. A being can be placed in the world only with and through this triad which shows the coexistence, independent and encompassing nature of three vital forces that govern and initiate the everyday life of the being. This trialectic remains the fundamental base to situate and understand the production of knowledge of the world and the being’s existence in it. Lefebvre’s rebalancing also checks against the totalizing structures of time

and history to undermine space and geography. The trialectic generates the view that the ontological base of the being is simultaneously produced through these three elements.

“We are first and always historical-social-spatial beings, actively participating individually and collectively in the construction/production – the “becoming” – of histories, geographies, societies” (73), says Soja and this production and becoming have led the journeys to thirdspace critically relevant.

The historicity and sociality have been the prime concerns in evaluating the existence of a being and so to understand what consists of the spatiality, Lefebvre conceptualizes an epistemological trialectic – Spatial Practice (perceived space), Representations of Space (conceived space) and Spaces of Representation (lived space). These triads are meant to make the being aware of the spatiality that constitutes their daily social and historical lives. Soja redefines the triad borrowing it from Lefebvre to further expand and explore the spatiality. This triad helps in “how we can obtain accurate and practicable knowledge of our existential spatiality” (73). Soja adds on to these three concepts of spaces referring to Lefebvre’s contribution and further unfolds his concept of thirdspace.

Spatial practice which is defined by Lefebvre as perceived space refers to the physical, concrete, materialistic and objective ideas of space. This is considered as a practice by which spatiality is produced. Lefebvre unfolds that “the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space” (38). It is the space which we cross over in our everyday life, the spaces which we perceive directly through the senses. It becomes the idea for the ‘real’ spaces such as our households, localities, nations, buildings and every other material space. This space is action-oriented and adds meaning

to the physical existence of the societies. This is what Soja terms as his “Firstspace” (66) and the knowledge of this space is formed through the human relations and interactions inside the physical geographies such as real places, things, etc. This space has dominated in understanding the materialistic productions of the society and has been promoted in the social theories which concentrate on this materialistic aspect. It is presented as “both medium and outcome of human activity, behavior and experience” (66). This firstspace is also seen as the setting or background in which the real special activities occur and flourish. But Soja refer to this space as incomplete and partial as it provides only the concrete, objective nature of space.

“Secondspace” (67), as Soja redefines, is the reworking of the Representations of space or conceived space of Lefebvre. This space is produced through conceiving the real spaces and constructing a psychological or mental space to circulate the knowledge formation. The secondspace is not physically visible or approachable to the senses of the being but that is embedded and formulated in language, discourse and other inner structures that generate meanings and relations in a society. “For Lefebvre”, this space is, “the storehouse of epistemological power” (67). It is this space that matters more when it comes to the structures of power that run and control the everyday relations in the societies. Soja describes secondspace as “the primary space of utopian thought and vision, of the semiotician or decoder, and of the purely creative imagination of some artists and poets” (67). The knowledge production through this space is mainly “through the spatial workings of the mind” (79). Secondspace, Soja states “is entirely ideational, made up of projections into the empirical world from conceived or imagined geographies” (79). This space is inscribed in the minds of individuals as they inscribe a

mental map of their life's journey and also other route maps which are part of their mindset. It is constructed through imagination, language and other signifying codes. This space is more dangerous than the firstspace in triggering the ideological structures in every society. It is also essential to understand the existence of a being's spatiality. In a way, firstspace collides into secondspace through the 'conceived' process of the 'perceived' spaces. For Soja, thus, the secondspace is the imagined space that helps to sustain the harsh realities of the real spaces.

"Thirdspace" (68) for Soja symbolizes a confluence of the first and second spaces of the epistemological trialectics. It becomes the space of multiplicity, heterogeneity and radical openness. It discloses the "real and imagined" (68) spaces which have subsided the emancipatory and expanding power of space. Lefebvre terms it as lived space, "a space that stretches across the images and symbols that accompany it, the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' (67). It is space that inhabits the physical concreteness and the mental abstractness of other spaces. Thirdspace is an all encompassing space which expands even beyond its speculation. It is "an alternative postmodern geography" (67) for Soja.

This concept of thirdspace exemplifies one among the ways in which 'thirling' disrupts the first and second spaces but also rebalances the spatiality by incorporating both of these spaces. Soja clarifies it: "Critical thirling-as-Othering is the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either / or to the dialectically open logic of both /and also" (60). This logic of 'both / and also' revolutionizes the resistance power and scope of space. Thirdspace splits open the binary structure by which history, geography and society govern. In every aspect of our

existence, we are obliged to belong to any of the binary dialectic which helps and provides us with choices to live the life. There is always a gain and loss, a pressure to belong to the better force of the dialectic. These oppositional forces in the dialectic when introduced to the concept of 'thirling' take away the pressure of distinction and mutually, simultaneously coexist in the vastness of thirdspace. It incorporates class, creed, race, gender, national, linguistic, migratory, environmental and yet more struggles. It becomes the podium to realize these struggles and opens up to accept the marginal, central, hierarchical and categorical issues which trouble the individual and social lives. It can be regarded as a site of resistance, or a site of emancipation or whatever that refers to the spatial, historical and social possibilities of the being. Thus thirdspace is also a view point, a way of looking according to the limits and scopes of a being's understanding of the spatial geography one holds in one's imagination. It is widened through the perceptions, conceptions and the lived experiences which constitute the existence of a being.

Self-becoming in Thirdspace

Space is fundamental in all of these experiences in our life. Soja's 'thirdspace' can be seen as that point in space where all these spaces of our being, our self, come alive. These are the spaces, both real (villages, cities, nations, houses, salons, gardens, museums, streets etc) and imaginary (our memories, dreams, myths, thoughts, daydream etc) which constitute in the becoming of the self. It shows that every physical geography has a subjective element to it. Those are our experiences. Thus space can be produced by us through our relations, experiences, involvements in the physical and mental spaces. Space is elastic, it can be stretched near and afar according to the human being who

inhabits the space. Thus, the thirdspace shows that if we look at things occupied and thoughts of space through the spatial dimension it can provide us with new directions and possibilities to dwell in our geographies.

Soja, in one of his interviews, says that earlier and now every other critic, thinker, philosopher considered being as spatial but ontology (the study of the becoming of the self) as something rooted in time and history. But according to him, in ontology, “becoming is spatial too” (Evans and McPherson 49). Thus restructuring the ontology spatially intends to explain that not only the being, but the process of realizing the being i.e., the becoming of the self is spatial.

Our selfhood is an amalgam of the experiences we shared, the memories we created and events which we indulged ourselves in. These contribute in understanding our own selves better. Space, as Soja and Lefebvre suggest, consists within our physical and mental geographies. The place or space, even though it is physical, has a subjective element in it. When we think about the domestic spaces explored by Bachelard in his poetics, he was indeed creating ‘a space’ inside our domestic spaces, things and surroundings where we are familiar with. Through these theorists and philosophers, space has been seen differently and space constitutes the very fundamental essence of everything that concerns the human being. But not every space is positively open, there are spaces that are contested, ambivalent and confused, such as ethnic cultures, hybrid cultures or diasporic cultures. The self of a being changes not just according to the flight of time but also through the experiences one has in his/her temporal and spatial journeys. The becoming is a process that happens both in time and in space, simultaneously. Only when a space is welcoming and open to all events, languages, cultures, experiences,

possibilities and also when the space allows people to be their own true selves does it become in practical a thirdspace- a space that includes and opens to everything. The space of diaspora is such a contested space.

Diaspora as Thirdspace

Diaspora, or the people who are scattered around the globe/world with or without a place to reside forever, is an inherently spatial position. It occupies and can only be located in space. Diaspora is normally seen or understood as producing such violent and aggressive space which at the same time is heterogenic and hybrid in nature. Being in such a space, a person or a family is seen as stranded with no root of their own to hold on to but to carry along the mental imaginaries of their homeland, culture, language, ethnic and other unique attributions throughout the spaces they travel in search of a new land. It is not a fixed space for the people of diaspora but constantly shifting, changing, adapting and assimilating the spaces they visit in their life's journey. Salman Rushdie writes in his *Imaginary Homelands* that the position of diaspora is made up of "profound uncertainties" (10). Thus such uncertain positions develop more problematic situations for the people inhabiting such spaces. The self of a being might completely collapse and turn over to traumatic and unhealthy realizations which will completely disrupt their lives. This has been one of the common problems faced by diasporic communities. There is no space for them to bring along their old memories and strengths to inhabit and belong to.

The concept of home is a fleeting idea just as the concept of self for the people of diaspora. It fluctuates and changes over from space to space and time to time. This also is

a part of dialectic where two nations, two cultures, two languages act as oppositional forces and forms a compulsion in between these two forces such as the old (homeland's culture, language, memories etc) and the new (host land, their culture, language, history etc). Thus there is a vital need to break this dialectic open and look for alternate possibilities to understand the spatiality of diasporas. Such a restructuring can be done through the concept of thirdspace, keeping in mind the model of Soja's trialectics of spatiality. The dialectics of old and the new, citizen and foreigner, insider and outsider etc are common to describe the spaces of diaspora. But when we understand it in the new spatial dimension as proposed by Lefebvre and Soja, it is possible to stretch these dialectics into a space where it welcomes and situates both of the forces.

Diasporic experiences are well explained by many writers who have lived their life in such problematic spaces. There are writers who have been true to their feelings toward homeland and also there are writers who left away the clinging memories and assimilated as 'an other' in the foreign lands. The Indian diaspora is also diverse in this field as it includes both of these spatial categories. Such a writer is Sujata Bhatt, a poet of Indian origin, but who resides in Germany. She has written extensively large collections of poetry ranging from 1988 to 2015 and her poems talk about the spaces of her homeland and her new lands. In my viewpoint, she, unlike many other writers of diaspora, engages in both the spaces and encompasses both the spaces together in her poems. All her collections reflect diaspora as a space of contestation and liberation. Her poems portray multiple cultures, languages, places and memories that made up her own life. Thus I would like to argue how the becoming of the self is possible in contesting and alienating spaces of diaspora if we open up ourselves and the spaces we bring along to

coexist and mingle together. I would like to draw similarities between thirdspace and diaspora and see how diaspora can be a positive affirmation like thirdspace rather than a negation of other spaces. Thus the study concentrates on how can diaspora be a thirdspace which can include both real and imagined geographies of the self. Keeping Sujata Bhatt's experiences as well as her poetry as a framework to explore self's becoming spatially, I take up two thematic threads, memory and physical journeys, to help in this process. Memory is essential in understanding the mental geography of a person and the self's inner becoming is seen through the memories formed in the experiences. Physical journeys are inherent in exploring the physical expansion of the self and how the real spaces contribute in the continuous reconstitution of the self. Bhatt's poetry blends these two spatial aspects of selfhood exceedingly well.

Literature Review

There have been studies in the field of Indian poetry where Sujata Bhatt has been anthologized but, as one of the critics noted, to a lesser extent when compared to other Indian diasporic poets such as Meena Alexander or Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Schlote 390). But there are critical reviews that have introduced Bhatt's poetry to the literary critical field of Indian literature in English. The reviews of her collections *Brunizem* and *Monkey Shadows* by K. Narayana Chandran (1994 and 1995), of *The Stinking Rose* by Uma Parameshwaran (1996), of *Augatora* by Jane Satterfield (2001), and that of other selected collections such as *Point No Point: Selected Poems* by Sudeep Sen (1997) and *My Mother's Way of Wearing a Sari* by Rabindra K. Swain (2002) have been significant attempts towards a proper appraisal of Bhatt's poetry.

In *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology* edited by Eunice de Souza (1997), Sujata Bhatt secures a space where her few poems from her first two collections are included also with a brief account of her biographical details and a critical review of her first three collections. The focus is on the multicultural, bilingual and experimental aspects (in the case of *The Stinking Rose*) of her poetry. *Contemporary Poetry Anthology* by Nerys Williams (2011) includes Sujata Bhatt among other writers such as John Ashberry and Jorie Graham. The focus is on her 'self-reflexive' style in the lyric poems which deals with the female painters or sculptors as she expressed in her collections *The Stinking Rose* and *A Colour for Solitude*. This study throws light upon the female experiences Bhatt focuses in her poems and how such experiences convey female creativity and subjectivity. The study does not concentrate on the diasporic connections of the poet but treats Bhatt as a distinct female poet who explores through the poems a different style of creativity. In *Reading Postwar British and Irish Poetry* by Michael Thurston and Nigel Alderman (2014), Sujata Bhatt is mentioned in one of the sections that deals with not only poetry written in Britain but also poetry written in English as common. The section analyses a few poems of Bhatt with a focus on how she transcends her cultural and linguistic barriers being a diaspora and conveys a 'cosmopolitan identity' of a postcolonial subject. The section looks at how Bhatt creates her childhood home through the images she uses in her poems. Sujata Bhatt is also referred to as a postcolonial Indian English poet in *A Companion to Twentieth Century Poetry* (2001) by Neil Roberts. The focus falls on the bilingual/multilingual aspect of the poets including Bhatt who represent India in English. The section also shares how Bhatt's poetry tries to evade the national identity and ignore themes of colonialism and post colonialism.

One of the critics who analyses Bhatt's recent collections is from Germany, the place where the poet resides at present, Cecile Standon. She has written many articles mostly in German and in English such as "In Her Own Voice: Sujata Bhatt and the Aesthetic Articulation of the Diasporic Condition" published in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and "'Home was always far away': intertextual and intermedial poetic appropriations of double consciousness in Sujata Bhatt's *Pure Lizard*" published in *South Asian Diaspora*. Both of the articles fall in the broader field of postcolonial area of diaspora and justify Bhatt's poetry as an exemplification of the postcolonial diasporic sensibility she expresses and carries over through her poems. The latter article mainly focuses on the collection *Pure Lizard* and looks at the poems of Bhatt for the intertextual and intermedial aspects which convey the heterogeneous experience of her diasporic situations. The article "explores a poetics of diasporic transformation by renegotiating and appropriating W.E.B. Du Bois's term 'double consciousness', as she draws on the idea of the individual who is characterized by several, albeit warring, identities" (7).

As seen, most of the studies tend to focus on the diasporic condition of Bhatt and how effectively she expresses it in the arena of postcolonial or national background. There have been critical reviews which also concentrate on the bilingual aspect which Bhatt conveys in her poems. Even though there have been studies focusing on the 'self' as represented by Bhatt in her poems, they also fall under the category of postcolonial experiences. There has not been a spatial study of the poems of Sujata Bhatt as I try to attempt in this project, where the spatiality of her poems expresses her becoming of the self.

The Present Study

This study attempts to understand the becoming of the self spatially in the field of diaspora. The study looks at how one's self can be charted through the places one inhabits, travels and remembers. The thesis will look at how space helps to define and constitute the process of becoming for an individual of diaspora. Diaspora is a spatial concept as it deals with multiple locations and migrations in and through places. In such a context, I am looking at how a poet of diaspora, Sujata Bhatt, through her poems charts her 'self-becoming' in the space of diaspora. For this, I will be looking at the selected poems from her whole collection, *Brunizem* (1988) to *Poppies in Translation* (2015). The study will look at how the poet through her memories and journeys constitutes her self-becoming in space.

Method of the Study

The method of the study comprises of textual analysis of the poems of Sujata Bhatt within the broader framework of spatial theory. The main theoretical thread that links the three chapters will be the concept of 'thirdspace' as formulated by Edward Soja. The study will also incorporate the spatial theoretical writings of philosophers/thinkers such as Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Relph, Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Casey, Jeff Malpas, David Seamon etc. supplementing the concept of 'thirdspace'. The first chapter looks into how space constitutes our selves and foregrounds the space of diaspora as a thirdspace, and the second and third chapters will substantiate the concept of thirdspace referring to the two main aspects of the concept: the Conceived space (memory) and the Perceived space (journey). The final, concluding chapter will

summarize how these two spaces as seen through the poems of Bhatt try to create a Lived space (thirdspace). Concepts of spatial theorists and thinkers are used to build up the main argument of spatial becoming of self in the poems of Sujata Bhatt. These theorists are referred to in order to logically develop the argument in which spatial reading of the poems predominates most of the sections of the study.

Chapter Organization

The first chapter, “The Geopoetics of Selfhood in Diaspora” focuses on how Sujata Bhatt in her poems situates her ‘self-becoming’. The chapter deals with select poems of Bhatt to show how space is an intrinsic element in the understanding of one’s self. The chapter discusses how the self is being looked at by different schools of philosophy. Concentrating on the phenomenological aspect of the self, self’s relation to space and place is analyzed. This will lead to the confluence of self and space where the relation will be further contemplated looking at how places constitute one’s selfhood. This will lead to show how diaspora becomes the field of study in constituting such a selfhood and how will it be possible to traverse the alienating spaces of diaspora with reference to Sujata Bhatt. This section further analyses select poems of Bhatt as her way of creating her own ‘self’ in the space of diaspora. The chapter will conclude by showing how the ‘geopoetics’, a creation of self in space, is possible as seen in the poems of Bhatt. The next two chapters will focus on how this ‘geopoetics’ is formulated thematically in the poems of Sujata Bhatt.

The second and third chapters look at how this process of self-becoming is conveyed thematically in Bhatt’s poems. In the second chapter, ‘Memories: Spatial

Reconstitutions of Self’, the concept of memory is looked at as a reconstitution of self in space. Through the close reading of the selected poems of Sujata Bhatt, the chapter will examine how ‘memory’ for Bhatt is spatial more than just temporal and how this spatial memory becomes one of the spatialities that constitute the ‘self-becoming’.

The third chapter, ‘Journeys: Spatial Extensions of Self’, focuses on how journey/s, the real/physical journeys are processes of self-expansion in space. The migratory and individual journeys of the poet to different places can be regarded as her expansion of self in space. Her poems deal with the experiences of these journeys to different places which as an individual of diaspora helped her to recognize and validate her ‘self’. The poems analysis will look at how the journeys help Bhatt to express her expansion of the self, it’s becoming, in the physical/real places. The analysis will attempt to examine how the poet coexists with the different localities of her diasporic life and how place plays an integral role in realizing this belonging of the poet.

This thesis talks about Sujata Bhatt’s poetics of self-becoming as she charts it in her poems through the themes of ‘memory’ and ‘journey’. Diaspora becomes a space of realization and self-becoming for the poet. The space of diaspora, as understood through the poems of Sujata Bhatt, brings together her imagined (memories) and real (physical) journeys of self. Self-becoming of an individual is possible in the space of diaspora which can be regarded as a ‘thirdspace’, a space that expands and includes the different spatialities (memory and journey) of an individual.

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CHAPTER 1

Sujata Bhatt and the Geopoetics of Selfhood in Diaspora

Making sense of our own self is in fact the ultimate concern of all endeavors of human knowledge. It is the driving force behind both philosophy and literature – in truth, behind all epistemology and metaphysics that man has conceived till date. If making sense of our self is the primary concern, marking a place for that self in the world is the closest, secondary concern. This chapter proposes to foreground the central argument of the present study – how an ontological investigation into an understanding of selfhood can be made possible with geography's foundational concepts of space and place.

Compared to terms like 'identity' or 'subjectivity', 'self' or 'selfhood' qualifies to be a better term for a philosophical discussion of the process by which a person realizes his or her place in the world. The term suggests a sense of evolution, a becoming that happens through a complex process that involves conscious thinking and constant experiences. Being, in this very elementary sense, is becoming.

The Philosophical Explanation of Selfhood

The self has been the center of conceptual thoughts in modern thinking, right from Rene Descartes. Descartes' over quoted dictum, 'I think, therefore I am' has brought the human being as the center of knowledge of himself/herself and the world. The attribution of rationality as the prime marker of a being stemmed from Descartes' maxim and this line of thought was taken upon by John Locke and David Hume to the present thinkers

such as Paul Ricoeur. This emerging exploration of the concept of self has made it a quite versatile topic in philosophy. A brief overview of the three different perspectives on self in philosophy would be helpful in this regard: the Kantian, the Hermeneutic and the Phenomenological.

The Kantian perspective of self stems from the early philosophers' conceptual understanding of the self. Immanuel Kant in a way reworks Descartes' idea of self as the core of the human knowledge and gathers on the view that no matter what a person experiences, adapts and evolves, the self remains the same and stable from the beginning to the end. Self is not an evolving entity for Kant. As Dan Zahavi explains, the Kantian "self is the pure subject or ego-pole; it is the subject of experience rather than the object of experience" (104).

The focus changes with the second perspective, the Hermeneutic perspective which talks about the linguistic constructions of the self. Hermeneutics deals with interpretation and this perspective gives value to the interpretive feature which constitutes the formation of self. According to this perspective, the self is a narrative webbed as long as a person lives. Self is constructed as the person is conscious of the inner sense which is the representing voice of one's existence. This perspective rejects the earlier concept of self as a pure subject which remains the same all throughout one's life. Here self is a construction, not a presupposition, and this construction gathers change as the person and the surroundings change. Language as an essential medium for self's construction is a prominent aspect in this perspective.

Paul Ricoeur is one among the main propagators of the narrative approach to the self. As Ricoeur puts it, it is not sufficient to think of oneself as an 'I'; a narrative is required. To answer the question 'Who am I?' is to tell the story of a life" (Zahavi 107). His focus on the hermeneutics of self has paved the grounds for this perspective. Ricoeur says: "To say *self* is not to say *I*. The *I* is posited – or is deposed. The *self* is implied reflexively in the operations, the analysis of which precedes the return toward this self" (Blamey 18). The purpose behind his attempt to formulate these two notions of narrative identity is to answer not only the 'who?' in question but also the 'what?' which together can be assumed as the linguistic questions of identity. Thus language and semantics play an important role in this perspective of understanding the hermeneutics of the self.

The third perspective in this philosophical discussion of self is the phenomenological one. Phenomenological notion, unlike the earlier perspectives, stems from the experiences such as the contact with the surroundings, places, spaces and people. Unlike the earlier perspectives that treat self as a constant thing or a fictional illusion, this perspective concentrates on how self is constituted of its immediate experiences and especially how the world around helps in the construction of the self. Phenomenology is an attempt to study the development of the self through the experiential aspect and it also focuses on how not only a self is modeled and re-modeled through the outer experiences but also how this modeling makes the persons aware of her/his self's existence within them. Simon Blackburn notes in *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*: "Phenomenology is the historical enquiry into the evolution of self-consciousness, developing from elementary sense experience to fully rational, free, thought processes capable of yielding knowledge" (275). Thus experiences do not mean

the ones that are just accessed or manifested through senses. Phenomenology considers self/consciousness as an evolution rather than any fixed position which stands affirm even when the person gathers growth through the senses and perceptions.

Hegel speaks of phenomenology as a “science of the experience of consciousness” (Rauch and Sherman 55). This science studies consciousness through the experiences a person encounters and these experiences make the person conscious of her/his role in it. When a person becomes conscious of the self as the subject and the object of thinking, it brings a conflict into the forefront. How is it possible to delineate between these two precarious conditions of self? When one experiences something, there is a sense of self involvement which is known to the person. Thus the subject, who thinks, is also aware of her/himself as the one being experienced by it. Thus a fixed answer cannot be provided to this question as the self consciousness shifts its focus from subject to the object simultaneously. Hegel “speaks of consciousness as the absolute dialectical unrest” (Rauch and Sherman 56), where a fixed position cannot be brought in between the consciousness’s shifting of poles. It is difficult to define either of these as self-consciousness or being conscious of one’s self. It is a process of becoming which takes shifts, turns, and twists and has the power to completely contradict itself. Thus in phenomenological terms, self-consciousness accompanies not only the experiences which help to constitute its formation, but also the continuous reference to one’s self in understanding these experiences.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception* argues that one’s own body is the first perimeter which helps to understand the outer world’s reality. To perceive the world around with the help of the body is one of the integral parts of forming

one's inner consciousness. Through sensation, one establishes a communicative link with the world and the inner self. The experiences are perceived not directly but with the help of many aspects and body remains as one of the main aspects in realizing the experiences. Kim Atkins's commentary on Merleau-Ponty also revolves around this bodily aspect of interest in the discussion of the phenomenological perspective of self. Atkins notes that for Merleau-Ponty "...body is not only an apparatus of perception, it is both sensible ... and a subject of sensation, simultaneously" (103).

Antti Revonsuo in *Consciousness: The Science of Subjectivity* states that "phenomenal consciousness is the fundamental form of subjectivity" (70). Being phenomenal is to understand the things not as they exist, but as how one experiences their existence. Thus one becomes aware of one's consciousness when it is phenomenal or manifested through experiences. Thus perception remains one of the ways that constitutes consciousness through phenomenal experiences. This perspective of self looks forward to the possibilities of understanding the self in terms of the world around and in which one lives. This perspective does not treat self as a separate entity as only interiorly formed and examined but as one where the interior formations are the result of the perceptions of the outer world.

The phenomenological approach to self understanding helps us see the essential connection between the self and the world at large, between self and space.

The Confluence of Self and Space

The discussions on the nature of self revolve mainly around the earlier interpretations of self by the theologians and philosophers. Self has been considered from

various standpoints of definitions, from being the unitary self to the elusive self. The journeys of the self and its theories prove how far stretched ideas have been interpreted to understand the entity called 'self'. The phenomenological understanding of the self does not isolate self from its immediate and non-immediate surroundings; it juxtaposes self against its surroundings. An individual comes in terms with the world and its reality through the senses. An individual's growth is measured only as s/he comes in terms with the surroundings and as the brain and the senses help to understand one's existence in the world. The journey of the self too is marked along these lines as the individual constantly refers to oneself when it senses the world around. This process of reflection entrusts the correlation between the physical world (space) and the inner world (self). The individual gathers the bits and pieces of one's self through reflecting upon the actions, moments, visions and the impressions of the outer world on the inner self. Through the impressions formed, one's introspection of the world adds on to the development of one's self.

When an individual encounters the situation of explaining oneself, it becomes a crucial turn in one's life which changes the definitions of the outer world. The physical world constantly changes; it adapts, withers, nourishes, and this cycle of movements constitute the very nature of the space. Space cannot be confined as an abstract vacuum but which is being produced in and through these movements of the physical world. From the creation of the world to the recent adaptations of the world, to fit into the globalized and technological habitats, the physical world has journeyed through many turns and levels. This flux reinstates the idea of space as a void container that exists between things, people, and beings to the idea of space as a transforming entity. Thus individual who perceives this fluctuating reality adjusts to this development of space through

various means. The epistemological quest of how the self is constituted in space can be further understood through the lens of phenomenological discussions on self and space by the philosophers from Edmund Husserl through Merleau-Ponty to Martin Heidegger.

Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* provides a new theoretical outline to the idea of perception. Merleau-Ponty follows the path of Edmund Husserl towards phenomenology. His stance on perception and phenomenology can be viewed as a path breaking one with regard to the early concepts of perception by empiricists. Empiricists view experience as the sole medium to understand the world around through the use of senses. Experience becomes the source from which knowledge of the world, the self and the relations of both concepts come into existence. Empiricists failed to admit that there is any knowledge or reality outside the veil of experience. Every consciousness, of the world and of the self, takes form in and through experiences. Merleau-Ponty did not confide himself to this track of empiricists unlike the early philosophers of consciousness. He had his view of how knowledge comes into being, not just through the experiences and sensory impressions, but through the acts of perception, perceiving the world that surrounds us and comes in terms with how the self reflects on this perception to develop its habitat.

Simon Blackburn in *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* notes: "Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the way in which our experience does not form a shut-off, private domain, but a way of being-in-the-world" (231) which throws light upon the concept of perception. Perception or perceived reality for Merleau-Ponty is not limited to the experiences one envisions but it helps to interpret the existence of an individual in the world. It is at this point where phenomenology takes its turn away from empiricists and

rationalists in the understanding of ‘experience’ or ‘perceived experience’. Merleau-Ponty bridges the concept of perception and its phenomenology in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. The work elaborates how the experience we come across in our everyday life is accessed and understood through the act of perception. The habitat comes alive when we perceive it through the body. The senses help the individual in the processing of the outer knowledge and this access to the surroundings adds meaning to the activities of everyday life. The habitus is formed by individuals through these simultaneous acts of perception of experiences.

The images and the perceived consciousness are formed in the inner realms of the individual whereas the experienced object or visual belongs to the outer realms of abstract physical space. Thus the phenomenological understanding of perception tries to see how this conflux of the inner self and the outer space is possible through the acts of perception. Perception builds up the knowledge of not just the outer space but also the inner self which constitutes itself within the space. This association of self and space comes into existence through perception.

Geophilosophy of the Self - How places constitute our selfhood

The interface between space and self happens in a very real sense on a daily basis, according to Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather. She observes that “as we move from one location to another in the course of the day, we experience places as material, bounded localities. But such specific places acquire meaning for us, and she calls it the ‘Sense of Place’. We grow attached to such places. In a sense, such places become part of us – our identity” (2). Teather would call such places ‘geographies of personal discovery’.

The post modern human geography in particular and theorizations of space in general have taken it as an underlying axiom that space is constitutive of human selfhood. Edward E Casey quotes Robert David Sacks (author of *Homo Geographicus*) in this connection: "The very fact that place combines *the unconstructed physical space* in conjunction with social rules and meaning enables place to draw together the three realms, and makes place constitutive of ourselves as agents" (403-4).

Casey observes that it is a mark of the postmodern thought to contest the dichotomies that hold self apart from body and place. Just as body is recognized as integral to selfhood, place is regarded as constitutive of one's sense of self: "place and self help construct and activate each other" (405). Personal identity is no longer a matter of sheer self-consciousness but now involves intrinsically an awareness of one's place — a specifically geographical awareness.

Casey reminds us that any effort to assess the relationship between self and place should point not just to reciprocal influence (that much any ecologically sensitive account would maintain) but, more radically, to constitutive co-ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is *no place without self; and no self without place* (406).

Diaspora as Alienating Space?

Casey's cryptic and unequivocal claim, 'no place without self; and no self without place', nevertheless invites our attention to one particular problematic in this contemporary spatial logic- if the relation between self and space is so symbiotic, how can one explain the particular phenomenon of the feelings and experiences of alienation

and homelessness in space that afflict a significant portion of humanity in our times? This has precisely been the problem of diaspora right from its beginnings until the present day. When a migrant or a person in exile finds uprooted from his/her homeland and thrown into an alien geography, what prevents his/her self absorption in the new place? How does the space of diaspora become a hostile space? These are some pertinent questions which demand an answer when we approach the issues of diaspora from the vantage point of postmodern human geography. One plausible answer to this question is provided, unsurprisingly again, by the very tool of our spatial exploration – phenomenology.

Almost all the writers of diaspora across the globe struggle with this question. While the experiences of hostility and alienation and rootlessness are universal in all diasporas, writers try to come to terms with this fact either by acts of rebellion or by acts of resignation. This is particularly true of the writers of Indian diaspora. A common pattern that runs through their work is this double response to the problem of alienation in diaspora- active rebellion and resistance spilling into political action or passive acceptance and resignation pressing into existential inaction. This is the context against which the poetry of Sujata Bhatt stands out. If one can mark out one single, predominant emotive response in the whole body of poetic work of Sujata Bhatt to the problem of alienation as a diaspora, that would be, astonishingly, her sense of openness to and positive enjoyment of the alien spaces she has faced constantly in her long life of exile in many lands. The poetics of embracing alien spaces, practiced by Bhatt, yields significant insights when we read her poetry with the help of postmodern theories of space.

Bhatt's poetry is primarily the poetry of self and place. Almost every poem Bhatt writes is a graphic capture of her own self in distinct, various places- house, street,

garden, temple, bookstore, or train. Diaspora, likewise, is essentially a spatial category. In order to make sense of how Sujata Bhatt turns the alien space of diaspora into intimate space, we need to see how Bhatt ‘perceives’ those places in the first instance. There lies the efficacy of a phenomenological approach to discern the spatial practice of Bhatt.

For Heidegger, “in becoming aware of our homelessness, we become aware of our constant tendency to flee into false homes and false identities, away from the true home of silent openness. Homelessness and alienation are symptoms of a lack of self-understanding. When we are able to recall who we really are, we are home again. And by coming home, we become capable of taking wise steps toward dwelling appropriately on earth” (qtd in Seamon 254).

“Dwelling”, according to Heidegger, “involves a wish to care for and preserve the things, people and events which join to make the place where one chooses to live” (qtd. in Seamon 243). Heidegger’s essay, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, which, according to Zimmerman, originally was given as a lecture in 1951 in the context of the severe housing shortage in post war Germany, is in fact his assessment of the fundamental predicament of modern humanity:

The housing shortage was, for Heidegger, a concrete expression of a far more fundamental and serious problem - the homelessness of modern humanity. World War II, the proximate cause of the destruction of so much German housing, was itself a symptom of modern humanity's disease of homelessness. We are not at home because we no longer understand who we are. One can live

peacefully or dwell appropriately only if one knows, at some profound level, who one really *is*. (qtd. in Seamon 249)

Heidegger's diagnosis that we are not at home because we no longer understand who we are holds particularly true to the people of diaspora in our times. Because it suggests as its inverse truth what we can do to feel at home in alien and hostile lands- feel at home. This fusion of inner being and its outer home, self and space, is conceived beautifully and powerfully by Sujata Bhatt in her works. The fact that she has been living in her later years of exile in Heidegger's own Germany, married to a German writer, living in its towns as if she is living in her own space, is probably no accident. Bhatt lives what Heidegger suggested. And how Bhatt lives is an invitation for anybody in diasporic estrangement to learn to feel at home in alien places. A brief analysis of a few select poems of Bhatt, where we can see her distinct way of articulating her being-in-the world, self and space, will bear attestation to this claim.

Sujata Bhatt's Poetics of Diasporic Space

The poetics of Sujata Bhatt intends to show how she has transformed the spaces of diaspora from a space of estrangement to a space of belonging. The question of identity as being part of three continents and being affected by the linguistic, cultural, geographical and social tides of these continents made Bhatt to express how she favoured these tides for the better understanding of her 'self'. The poems in this section focus on this aspect of her life. She incorporates her perceptions of the world, a phenomenological understanding of her presence in the world and converts these into a poetics of her 'self'. For Bhatt, it becomes a poetics of diasporic space. She through her

poems throws light upon these developments of the self and how to dwell in the diasporic space as one of the inhabitants than being a foreigner to those spaces.

“Sujata: The First Disciple of Buddha” is the first poem published in Bhatt’s first collection, *Brunizem*. Most of her poems resonate autobiographical elements, elements of herself in it. The name ‘Sujata’ explicitly referred to in this poem is one such connection that shows how her poems talk or refer to her own life. She refers to herself as the first disciple of Buddha. She explains how she served him: “I took him home, fed him fresh yogurt and bread. / Then, I bathed him, shaved his face clean and smooth” (21). She asks him “And how did you get this way” (21). His answer is that he has been thinking all the years. As she pulled out the knots of his hair, he fell asleep after these many years holding on to her fingers. Next morning before the world rose and before her family could stop her, the man took her “to the wide-trunked, thick-leaved bodhi tree / to the shady spot where he had sat for years / and asked” her “to listen” (22). The idea of enlightenment is one of the main facets of Buddhism. Being a disciple of Buddha, Sujata, the poet is introduced to the mode of enlightenment. He asks her to “listen”. But what was expected to be listened to, the world around her or her inner self? The latter seems adequate as one of the ways to enlightenment is to listen to the rhythms of one’s own self. Only when we find a way to listen inward, to oneself, we can perceive the world in a better way. For the poet, the perceptions of the world, her experiences are the matter of her poems. This can be one of the reasons why she began her first poetry collection with this poem. The idea of being able to see oneself, able to listen to oneself is one of the ways to understand the self’s progression. Sujata Bhatt knows how to express one’s self and that is what her poetry is all about – becoming to see oneself.

Her poetics, act of writing poems or the act of creation itself is grounded to her subjective experiences in the world and how one unfolds it in many possible ways. Bhatt reveals her innumerable worlds, whether physical (her journeys to places) or psychic (her journeys through memories) through her poetry. “Poesis is a project of creation which through either practical or critical experience can radically alter the manner in which we see the world subsequently unfold and how we articulate these unfolding” (Yeung 1). Our experiences alter our way of seeing the world and poetry is one way to articulate these experiences. Hence, one’s need to listen carefully to one’s inner self is essential if one is to write about these unfolding. As Bhatt mentions somewhere else in one of her poems, the task is to “relearn our own selves” (548). This relearning of oneself begins with the process of listening, to oneself and then to the world.

In most of her poems, Bhatt uses animal imagery such as that of lizards or monkeys which is keenly presented as belonging to her life or even more closer, to herself. In “Lizard, Iguana, Chameleon, Salamander”, she expresses how one’s identity is questioned. The lizard personified as a ‘she’ in most of her poems asks: “*Who am I?* Lizard whispers / *Who am I?*” (278). The question of one’s identity is one of the issues addressed by the poet in most of her poems. Her condition of being a diaspora and the fleeting sense of identity are addressed in this poem too. But she comes out of this confusion and ambivalence and states:

What does it matter

as long as I can change

into any colour

What does it matter
 as long as I bring luck
 to every place I visit. (278)

She is not being doubtful about her identity, her inner self. She is quite sure that she bears her self within her and is reflective enough to her own life. She can be anyone, she can assimilate into any place without disrupting her sense of identity. She can choose any colour according to her situation and she says she brings luck with her to every place she visits. This adaptive nature of self towards any place makes the poet's self a cosmopolitan self. As some critic noted: "cosmopolitan mobility is an important part of the lived experience and the "self" (Thurston and Alderman 258) represented by the poet through her poems.

This poem can also be read along with the title poem of her collection *Pure Lizard*, where she says how the "inbred" lizard, whose ancestors are monkeys and who is also part chameleon, is a "pure lizard" for her. This metaphorically refers to how the diasporic self is seen as 'pure' and the poet redefines what it means to be one. The poet explains:

She is
 part lizard, part woman
 and one of her ancestors
 must have been a monkey.

Her skin is pure lizard.

Perhaps she's also part chameleon. (494)

As explained in the previous poem, the lizards are in a way represented as the ones closer to the poet's self. The persona in the poem is "half lizard and half woman" (494) and also has connections to monkey and chameleon. Thus the idea of other breeds and multiple facets of identities vested in one single self is seen in these lines. As the lizard from the previous poem talks about how it does not matter as she could bring luck with her to any place she visits, here the lizard is considered as 'pure'. This inbred feature of the lizard makes it pure for the poet. The one who can change into any form or colour, this pure lizard reflects the inner consciousness of the poet who in the diasporic situation turns to her inner experiences to make sense of her estrangement and displacements. This poem is a recollection of an event she saw in her childhood and this desperation of the pure lizard that stood on a wall, who cries out to the people that face her is registered in the inner psyche of the poet. The poet yearned to talk and move closer to the woman but she says: "I am pulled away / told that it's time to go home" (494). The irony that runs in these lines is that the poet who is away from her home was taken away from the event when she wanted to stay there and listen to the woman. Now, she yearns for that voice, for that woman who she thinks is a 'pure lizard'. The poet says: "Who was she? Who is she? / Where is she now - ? / My very own Sibyl –" (494). The self of the poet has identified a resemblance with that voice, the shrill voice of the old half lizard, half woman. The poet now wants to seek her because she has come to that position of being a 'pure lizard', an inbred of lizard, woman and monkey with a part of chameleon. These refer to the multiple vocal positions of her self and how she tries to find a similarity

between that voice she followed and her own, revisiting that memory to make sense of her present self. “My very own Sibyl” (494) can refer to how the prophecies that the pure lizard told the people then have come true in the case of the poet. She considers this ‘pure lizard’ as her Sibyl, part of her self that prophesies the future for her.

Sujata Bhatt’s poems explicitly refer to her idea of selfhood and subjectivity and she in a way connects this process of creativity or poesis through many female painters and writers. She has dedicated a whole collection, *A Colour For Solitude*, to two women sculptors in Germany, Paula Becker Modersohn and Clara Westhoff Rilke. She also has dedicated or written poems appraising the paintings of women painters such as Georgia Okkeffe and Frida Kahlo. Bhatt in her poems tries to draw a resemblance between her and the women painters or poets that she addressed in her poems. Bhatt conveys the reason for this connectivity thus:

“Part of the reason I have poems about women’s experiences...is because I tend to write my own life – it is my life that I am trying to understand. In many poems I have changed things or put in a lot of fiction: often I have a female character who is not me, but an imagined woman in a different time and a different place. Of course, in some way these imaginary women are connected to me” (Williams 45).

The connection she draws is something that sustains her act of writing and it is this self referential aspect that Bhatt tries to foreground in many of her poems.

“Nothing is Black, Really Nothing” is a literal translation of the diary entry of Frida Kahlo and Bhatt tries to address the colour black as one of the significant one to address female creativity and self-knowledge. She notices and elaborates the use of black

colour in the paintings of Kahlo and wonders what it really takes to understand real black. The act of poetics, creation of poetry here runs parallel to Frida Kahlo's representation of black in her paintings. Bhatt's act of poetic narration takes residence in the creativity of Kahlo through the colour of black. She narrates one of the events that happened in her daughter's life where the daughter was teased by the blond children. She says: "she was only angered / by their inaccuracy" (220). Her daughter makes it clear: 'This is not brown!'" (220). Bhatt continues, "'It's black! / My hair is black, black - / Not brown!'" (220). Her daughter was so adamant about the colour of her hair, a way of reasserting her inner self. It is a self-understanding from the part of the child. Bhatt says "Now I keep returning to you, Frida" (220). She refers to the artistic creation of Kahlo as an expression of herself. As Frida expresses her self through the colour of black, through "different black strokes", Bhatt conveys how such artistic creation can heal and express one's self better:

how many different black strokes
 you found (when nothing is black)
 to pull out every shade
 of blackness
 from your hair, your self- (220)

As Nerys Williams notes, "Bhatt returns to the opening image of Kahlo and places black in a context of female creativity and self-knowledge" (45). It is how Bhatt weaves connection to the lived experiences of women.

Language is a medium of expressing one's self. In the act of poesis, it is language that conveys the meaning to the readers. Bhatt's "Search For My Tongue" can be seen as an inner quest that she has undergone in her diasporic context to retrace her roots back to her home, language and herself. Tongue's "slippery like the lizard's tail / I try to grasp / but the lizard darts away" (48), she says. This connection to lizard is one of the recurrent imageries Bhatt incorporates when she talks about her poetic self. In this poem, she traces both her mother tongue (Gujarati) and the learned tongue (English). But she doesn't know where to begin the search. She goes near riverside and searches but says:

I know it can't be here

in this dry riverbed

My tongue can only be

where there is water. (50)

This imagery of water or mainly ocean is something that the poet persistently uses in many of her poems. This also resonates the idea of life around water and it is this liveliness the poet looks forth to find through her language. She expresses her knowledge of two tongues and how her mother tongue "rot and die" in her mouth. But whenever Bhatt thought that she lost her hold of mother tongue, "it grows back, a stump of shoot / grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins.../ It pushes the other tongue aside" (52). This relation that lies deeply bound in herself helped Bhatt whenever she wanted to address in her foreign tongue. She even draws how places determine about one's language and one's self. The places can provide different comfort to the person and she says: "the stormiest sky in Connecticut / can never be / the monsoon sky giving rain" (53)

in India. She says how when she has lost her sense of self and could not know to address her self, her tongue, she listened to one of the tape recordings sent by her mother from her home back in India. She is not disturbed by the other sounds of the pedestrians and other people in her homeland. She misses all such sounds of her hometown, her street back in India. This provides her a sense of assurance to hold on to these sounds which help her to get back to her earlier self. As her mother instructs through the tape, she listens to the sound of tablas and she can't forget, she says. The sound of her mother in a way helped her to realize how the quest for one's language is tied to one's quest for a place that reflects one's self, a place that welcomes one.

As seen in this poem and many other poems, the conflicts or the discrepancies Bhatt faces while dealing with a new linguistic world is related to the inner selves of the poet. The poet in a way uses all these worlds to explore her multiple selves through her act of writing. As seen in this poem and many other poems such as "Augatora", "Udaylee", "Shantih" or "Telemann's Frogs", Bhatt incorporates the linguistic world that she carries within her selves. The cultural, linguistic and spatial elements of Sujata Bhatt's diasporic world coexist within her self. This coexistence is noted by Sandten: "Bhatt does not regard her different 'selves' as competing or divided identities, but all as part of her multiple poetic personalities and the 'diasporic condition'" (8). The different places in her life through the different languages complement her identity of being a diaspora. Gujarati, English and German blend in the poetry of Bhatt and this blending also refers to the correlation she has to her physical worlds/places which have formed a part of her own self.

Like language, one's identity is explicitly revealed through one's name. Sujata Bhatt's autobiographical impulse in her poetry as seen in most of her poems becomes quite evident in the poem "Suji" from *Pure Lizard*. The subtitle of the poem is "A naming ceremony" (525). The poem can be understood as an instance of the re-enactment of acquisition of the new identity as the wife of a German poet (Michael Augustin), and her new shift to a geographically, culturally and linguistically different world. The poem says how "Suji sounds just right" (525) which is not too short or too long for a name. "So Suji remained" (525), says the poet. She describes it as "Half English, Half Hindi, half joking" (525). The dilemma to let go of her cultural background and her linguistic one is clear in this line. She intends to retain English, Hindi and also looks forward to what life takes her to. But the persona questions again: "Isn't that what you wanted?" (525) which shows even though the name has been suggested by her companion, it was her choice to make. The poem ends with the words: "leaves of basil awaken your tongue" (525). The intimacy she has with her homeland and her new geographical arena is conveyed through the linguistic, culinary aspects of the place. The use of basil and past or red wine show that the poet gives meticulous priority to all these aspects that in a way define her. This self-reflexivity of her life and her 'self' is what Bhatt tends to convey through her act of writing. As Cecile Standon notes, in this poem Bhatt is expressing one of her versions of recreation of 'self' through her companion/poet-husband. She describes: "In this poem, Bhatt reflects on her own versions and creations of self through someone else ..." (10). She continues "...through this mode of naming and re-naming, also by way of extensive alliteration, the speaker has found, but also been allocated, her place 'in the [European, and more specifically, German] world'" (11). This connection of self and place is mostly

dealt with in her poems which also reflect how the place one inhabits leaves its trails and marks on the self of that person. Bhatt through her poems reiterates how place and self are interconnected and how one can trace the becoming of the self through the meticulous perception and reflection of our everyday life in our places.

Probably, the best theoretical frame to place the poetry of Sujata Bhatt has been provided by Gaston Bachelard. In his own work, he combined his concept of space with the philosophical method of phenomenology. *The Poetics of Space* mainly dwells in the phenomenological aspect of space which is one of the reasons why this work helps and informs the central argument of this project, the becoming of the self in space. As John R. Stilgoe writes in the foreword to the 1994 edition of *The Poetics of Space*, “it demonstrates to its readers that space can be poetry” (Bachelard 10). When the philosophy of science as seen in the theories of Euclid, Leibniz or Einstein treat space as an empty container and immobile, Bachelard transforms space into the rhythms of the inner psyche. His scientific understanding of space is reflected in the descriptions of space but as he says “Inhabited space transcends geometrical space” (47). Bachelard invites every reader to discover a new soul in every space that surrounds us through the domestic intimate spaces of a house. The immediate spaces that we ourselves situate, our house, is taken out and presented as a soulful being. As expressed in the foreword to the book, “house (becomes) a metaphor of humanness” (1) in this work.

In the introduction to the work, Bachelard makes clear his motive behind this poetics: a phenomenological study of the self and the world it inhabits. He begins from the space that is closer to the being, the space of the house. For the understanding of the poetics of the house, he demarcates spaces into cellar, attic, wardrobes, corners etc. This

does not follow a hierarchical structure, but an order of space or in his terms, the topoanalysis. “Topoanalysis”, as Bachelard explains in the first chapter, would be understood as “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” (8). This study bespeaks how Bachelard creatively converges two different aspects: the psyche (self) and the topos (space). This study is mediated through the poetics of the house which is the fundamental layer that helps in the creation of a human self. Thus the self of an individual is one of the prime concerns of Bachelard in this formulation of the creation of the space. Edward Casey refers to Bachelard’s topoanalysis: “The topology that matters for Bachelard is not that bears on Being but, instead, on our [own] intimate being” (290).

Bachelard explores the connection between the house and universe and its influence on the being that inhabits those spaces with reference to famous writers such as Charles Baudelaire, Bachelin, Rainer Maria Rilke, Henri Bosco, Andre Lafon, Georges Spyridaki (Bachelard 51) and so on. “The house even more than the landscape, is a “psychic state”, and even when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy” (Bachelard 72), says Bachelard on deriving from instances he charted out through these many writers. Bachelard’s attempts help in regaining the lost intimacies of the domestic space and internalizing the various spaces that we dwell physically and mentally. The physical and mental spaces are not approached in the understanding of the self but these spaces collide and converge in the self of a being. Our analysis of the poems of Bhatt amply demonstrate that her work qualifies to be placed in the group mentioned before, owing to her treatment of intimate places like house and garden in her attempt to capture the essence of her own being as manifested in them.

Many of the poems of Bhatt employ these spatial images and metaphors which essentially convey her irrepressible desire to move, from place to place, in her constant drive for becoming. As a final illustration of this manifestation of the self-in-space thematic, we may look into another interesting poem, “Gale Force Winds”, where Bhatt clearly imparts the idea of how spatial movement is an important part in her personal life. She in a way connects how the living and non-living things contribute in stimulating the need for a journey. Journeys are not just a physical exposure to one’s self, but are one of the ways to mould one’s self through connection with the world. The context of the poem is a windy day where the poet is busy refilling the jar of spices. The poet personifies her house as she explains how it shudders, groans and sighs against this windy morning. She even imagines the swaying of the birch tree outside her home as a bowing to her house. She closes her eyes to feel the spices that have been aroused inside her house. She says:

When I close my eyes

I feel as if I’m on a ship

already far out at sea.

I could be anywhere:

on the Indian Ocean,

in the South Pacific. (517)

It might be the strong scent of the spices that led her to believe or see herself in a ship travelling far out in the sea. She is not sure of the location; she says it can be anywhere, any place. But the travel is necessary, she continues: “Suddenly, I feel as if our

house could be a ship, as if / that were the greatest desire of our house: / to become a ship” (517). Her imagination about her house’s role tells a lot about herself. She feels the North Sea to be closer and finds herself anywhere, whether in Indian Ocean or South Pacific. These places in a way conjoin in her mind through this act of mental journey she imagines within her house. She also explains how the birch tree too calls out to her house:

as if it wanted to move indoors
and become our mast, and steady
our house against the wind, and help our house to sail
out. (517)

The journeys she experienced as seen in her poems are both physical and mental ones. Most of the journeys our mind takes part begin from our house. House shelters our daydreams and memories, says Bachelard and this poem is one of the finest examples to show how it is done. Her power of imagination helps her to fulfill her desire for the journey. She imagines the birch tree to help her house to sail safe and “fulfil itself, for surely today / it would find the North Sea / just around the corner” (517). These lines can reveal the poet’s wish to travel around with her house, her intimate spaces. The architectural space of the house serves as a ship metaphorically. The poet shows how such a journey is possible: to travel with one’s intimate spaces which define and reflect them. Here Bhatt makes use of the irony of carrying one’s house or travelling with one’s house. The idea of house is that it is meant to be ‘grounded’ to earth or a location. It is a physical, architecture and she does not use the term ‘home’ but she says ‘house’ all

throughout the poem. Here when she visualizes her house as a ship that is meant to ‘float’ than grounded to earth, she is ironically referring to her house as an anchored ship. She mentions how the greatest desire of the house is to be a ship and she wants this intimate space along with her to travel to places. This idea of carrying or travelling with one’s house is equivalent to how a hermit crab travels with its shell. As a hermit crab who carries their own shells and travels, Sujata Bhatt imparts her idea of journey with her house. The image of house as a ship beautifully captures the double orientation of spatiality in her self, constantly manifested in her life and poetry through memories and journeys.

In the diasporic poetics of Sujata Bhatt, every poem, every landscape, every single spatial image that she renders on page has its reference ultimately not in the world outside, but in her own self. In Gustav Janouch’s insightful work, *Conversations with Kafka* (1953), Janouch records the words of Kafka on his own sketches: “My figures have no proper spatial proportions. They have no horizon at their own. The perspectives of the shapes I try to capture lie outside the paper, at the other sharpened end of the pencil, in myself” (Rees 12). Reading Sujata Bhatt’s poems where she chooses to talk about her own life and her sense of being, we get to see how every word in these poems turns back across the printed page, to the other end of that sharp pen, where her poetic self pulsates incessantly in space.

Francine Prose, in her wonderful introduction to Rees’s translation of Gustav Janouch’s work, notes one incident that Janouch records while walking with Kafka:

Crossing a rainswept square, apropos of something or other, Kafka tells Janouch:

Life is as infinitely great and profound as the immensity of the stars above us. One can only look at it through the narrow keyhole of one's personal existence. But through it one perceives more than one can see. So, above all one must keep the keyhole clean. (qtd. in Rees 12)

As a writer, Sujata Bhatt has always paid attention to that one rule of Kafka – she keeps her keyhole clean, so she perceives the world out clearly and renders it beautifully in her own writings. This is in fact the key to understand how a phenomenology of space works out its beauty and meaning in the poetics of Bhatt.

The Thirdspace of Self-becoming

Arguably, the most enlightening articulation of this notion of self assertion in space is given by Edward Soja. In the chapter 'Trialectics of Spatiality' (53), Soja re-appropriates the discourse of space to define the concept of thirdspace. He follows the pathways of Lefebvre and reads Lefebvre's work along with Jorge Luis Borges' short story "The Aleph". Soja refers to this short story as an example to define the idea of thirdspace. In *Postmodern Geographies*, he implies to this story to study and evaluate Los Angeles as an every space that meets, collides and coexists together. Soja explores this story as "a point of departure, or better, as a first "approximation" from which to reinterpret *The Production of Space* and recompose its imbricated conceptualizations of Thirdspace" (54). The Aleph and Lefebvre's work expand the boundaries of space comprising all binaries, ideas, domains and yet more. It is heterogeneous in its full

vicinity and look out for more arenas for such a diverse coexistence. Soja opens up his concept of thirdspace based on this idea:

Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (56-7)

Thirdspace is the space that includes all other spaces, embracing the ontological and epistemological existences of the being. Nothing is left out and everything is added on to such a space. It becomes radically open and eclectic as far as it expands and extends within/beyond the human geography. The insertion of 'thirling' remoulds the earlier binary process that governed the existence of the being. This view of thirdspace, through the spaces shown in "The Aleph" and Lefebvre's, is never conclusive or manipulative over the earlier ideas. It can never approach the closure as this is a constant process, which moves beyond and over the conclusive understandings. Thus spatial knowledge is possible only when there is no compulsion to finalize and frame it in neat, clear cut compartments or boundaries. Thirdspace crosses over, overlaps, mingles and opens up to include new definitions and contradictions.

In the poem, "Distances", Sujata Bhatt expresses how she can belong to many places by being at a single place simultaneously. She is in "Conil, at the outskirts of Europe" (168), and she says; "once I'm in and swimming/ in this pocket / of the Atlantic

Ocean, / every place feels closer” (168). Atlantic Ocean is one such locator that Bhatt constantly refers to in her poems. She finds that “every place feels closer” when she is in the Atlantic Ocean. In “Sad Walk”, she ends the poem: “I want the Atlantic Ocean / to be a part of my garden” (550). Here, there is an intimacy that the poet has developed through her journeys to the ocean and its nearby places such as Conil. In most of her poems such as “After Dinner in Conil” (“We sit outside on the balcony/ overlooking the Atlantic” (308)) or in “The Woman they call Abuela” (“The Atlantic Ocean rushing through her mind” (331)), Atlantic Ocean appeared as a place which helps her to revisit and belong to all other places that she has travelled to. She continues:

Africa, America,

you are not far away

I touch you through the waves

Simultaneously. (168)

As she swims in this pocket of Atlantic, she finds as near to all the places, touching them through the waves. These waves “rush back and forth / crashing north and south / east and west” (168). The directions are crashed by the wind as the waves clash each other. The space where she swims becomes a point where “every place slides through / my fingers with the frothy / just breaking waves” (168). She finds this coastal side of Atlantic Ocean as a locator that brings her the sense of belonging to the places as a whole than segregating them into different territories. She through the simultaneous waves tries to feel at ‘home’ where she could be anywhere, any place that she would like to be at. Distances are crashed by the waves and she finds every corner of the world near

to her, being held together. But it is the opposite when it comes to the inner parts of the land. “Inland again, it’s different / All is separate, distant” (168). The poet finds it difficult when she travels to the inland, to the inner areas of the land. Everything seems to be away and separated not simultaneously belonging as it was in the Atlantic Ocean.

The atlas fills my mind

with its many borders, and this ocean

lies trapped on the page

like a gasping beached whale. (168)

She despises the atlas that divides the places as separate and with borders not to be opened to all. The condition of the people of diaspora as being able to travel only to those places that are allotted to them and according to their passport documents are scorned here in these lines. The land is divided by the borders while the Atlantic Ocean lies as a trapped being for the poet. It is never free in the atlas of the land. The maps or the atlases used as a guide for the poet on her journeys kept her away from the places that she wanted to travel. The borders drawn upon them make it difficult to be accessed by anyone who is interested to see the places. The poet expresses how the ocean helped her to be in touch with the continents that made her journey more valuable than the inlands. These multiple places in turn help one to know how these places define one’s selfhood.

Soja defines the radical openness of thirdspace with an allegory of “The Aleph” as “the space where all spaces are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space

that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an “unimaginable universe” (56). Thirdspace becomes a thematic thread to the liberating power of space and spatiality. It is a simultaneous space where anything and thought meet, collide, coexist and further transcend beyond, looking forth new directions. It is against the neat categorizations modeled on time and history. It is not linear and organized but rather crowded and expansive. Even the term as ‘third’ space does not mean it follows the early categories “but to build further, to move on, to continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known” (Soja 61).

‘The Aleph’ of Borges and the keyhole that Kafka wants us to keep constantly clean are two distinct metaphors of Soja’s Thirdspace, and Sujata Bhatt’s ‘Atlantic Ocean’ blends seamlessly with them. When she is in the Atlantic Ocean, every place feels closer to her self. Bhatt’s inner landscapes, which she meticulously draws out in her poems, are probably among the best possible poetic condensations of Soja’s concept of the Thirdspace.

The Geopoetics of Selfhood

The poetry of Sujata Bhatt has illustrated, in beautiful spatial images, how our sense of place will help us actualize our “‘pre-ontological understanding of the world’”, in Heidegger’s words” (qtd. In Casey 407), that is, to grasp the particular place we are in as the particular person which we are. The ongoing works of people like Edward E. Casey and Yi-Fu Tuan are constant reminders to us that a meaningful realization of our selfhood can happen only through our meaningful engagement with space. Casey remarks how Sack’s ‘thinned out places’ of postmodern world that surround us today put our self to test. The self, in a sort of mimicry, tends to become an indeterminate and indecisive

entity, following the tenuous character of the places it inhabits. Casey remarks that it is precisely the ambiguous moral of Tuan's sagacious *Cosmos and Hearth*: the skeptical cosmopolite, for all his or her unsettledness, learns much more about the larger world and becomes more reflective than does the person who refuses to leave the hearth (408).

These spatial engagements are what Kenneth White would call 'geopoetics', which is a cultural practice all of us could follow. The work of Kenneth White, the Scottish poet, academic and writer, is one of the best illustrations for our times to see how one may blend one's thinking and writing with one's own geography. As a culmination of his two decades long work in the interdisciplinary field of poetry, travel narratives and geography, in 1989, White founded the International Institute of Geopoetics to further promote research into this cross-cultural field of study. Of his geopoetics project, White says:

In these lectures, I will be talking about place, culture and world...Culture starts from where you are. And if your base, your centre, is right, you can move out from it in concentric circles. You don't get embedded in regional couthiness. With a wider field of reference, you expand. (http://www.hi-arts.co.uk/geopoetics_project.html)

A look at the composition of one of Kenneth's books, *The Wanderer and His Charts*, can give us some illuminating ideas as to how we may move in our own thinking through the trajectory of a spatially informed intellectual path. The first part, 'The Intellectual Nomad', describes White's practice of intellectual nomadism as a reader and explorer. The second part, which is a collection of his essays written based on particular

experiences of places, is titled ‘Space and Place’. The third part, which he calls ‘A Cultural Project’, is where he homes in on the cultural implications and effects of his exercises of wedding together poetry and place. That is the essence of ‘geopoetics’, for White.

Though not as clearly articulated theoretically as in White, we still can discern in the whole poetic oeuvre of Sujata Bhatt a spatial logic very similar to the geopoetics of White. All of her collections, right from *Brunizem* to *Poppies in Translation* have in fact an underlying scheme that dramatically yet logically welds together two distinct aspects of understanding being in place, self in space: memories, which are inner explorations of spaces, and journeys, which are outer expansions into places. The geopoetics of Sujatha Bhatt revolves on this double layered axis of memory and journey, which will be examined in depth in the coming two chapters. Bhatt’s spatial explorations of selfhood through her memories and journeys are her own unique way of practicing what Edward Soja proposes – the thirdspace of ontological self assertion, between the real and the imaginary; the geography of emancipation where one may fully realize the potentialities of selfhood.

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Chapter 2

Memories: Spatial Reconstitutions of Self

Memory ... responds more than it records.

– Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (89)

In this unique world, everything sensuous that I now originally perceive, everything that I have perceived and which I can now remember or about which others can report to me as what they have perceived or remembered, has its place.

- Husserl, *Experience and Judgement* (qtd. in Cerbone 12)

The poetic oeuvre of Sujata Bhatt is primarily built around places. But then, we can be more specific: her poetry is primarily about memories of places- places she inhabited, passed through, visited; places which still continue to shape her sense of the self through their memories. How places shape our selfhood, even bodily identity, is a philosophical concern of postmodern human geography. In the introduction to his highly insightful work, *The Memory of Place*, Dylan Triggs observes:

As bodily subjects, we necessarily have a relationship with the places that surround us. At any given moment, we are located

within a place, be it in the hallways of universities, the cockpits of airplanes, or lost in the forest at night. Over time, those places define and structure our sense of self, such that being dis-placed can have a dramatic consequence on our experience of who we are, and even leave us with a feeling of being homeless in the world. Equally, the memories we acquire of the places we inhabit assume a value that is both immeasurable and vital. Without the memory of places, memory itself would no longer have a role to play in our conscious lives. (1)

Bhatt's poetry is a constant reminder to her readers that we are a product of the places we were in. As we go about exploring this core belief of Bhatt at some length in this chapter, we will see how it emerges that, despite our commonsensical notion that we produce our surroundings, in fact, places exist independently of our interventions and that they ultimately shape us.

Sujata Bhatt's poetry sonorously discusses memory which can be regarded as one of her leitmotifs to express the inner journeys of the 'self'. Her use of memory as a mental transport depicts how the art of memory creates meaning and assurance to her own self in her world of ever-shifting locations. Most of her contemporaries like Meena Alexander show how the life of a diaspora is all about nostalgic interactions with their homeland, its culture, language and traditions. In Bhatt's poetry all of these are carried away not with a tinge of lament and loss, but with an assuring sense of coexistence with her new life and contexts. She explains loss but not in a way to unite with her homeland and its rich culture but how it has molded and mended her journey. Memory, for Bhatt, is

the locus through which she sees and combines her different worlds, places, spaces and people.

Space, Self and Memory

In the spatial theories of Gaston Bachelard and Henri Lefebvre, we could see how the everyday spaces of our home or society are produced by the people who inhabit the spaces. As we have seen, a being cannot be separated from its space. In any position, a being occupies space, either mentally (through imagination) or physically (through the body) and sometimes simultaneously crosses over and moves beyond the mental and physical processes of space occupying. The people of diaspora experience such a cross over; they cross the psychological and physical boundaries of space and time. The diasporic consciousness, collectively or individually, conveys the crossings they experience through their bodies and minds. It is something as Trinh T. Minh-ha puts “to be simultaneously ‘rooted and rootless’” (qtd. in Chambers 95). The people of diaspora, taken collectively or individually, are rooted in their memories while rootless or displaced through their continuous journeys. Hence, such a space cannot be drawn out of things or places, but can be experienced through their perceptions.

Thirdspace, as Edward Soja puts it, is such a subjective space. Edward Soja clearly vocalizes this idea when he conveys that his work is “an efficient invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives

that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable” (5). This postmodern concept, despite having a lot of implications and approximations in various other fields, breaks away the dialectical/binary mode of thinking, locating and understanding the spatiality of our everyday lives. This in a way frees us from the obsessive tendency of the human being to think in a biased way about every mode of practice we are part of. This understanding attains even more importance when it comes to the issues of the people who live in and move beyond borders, boundaries and countries voluntarily or involuntarily.

Memory plays an integral role in the understanding of the self. It is one of the ways to chart the development of the mental knowledge which has reflections on the self of the person. Memory is a kind of mental transportation to the life that one lived before. Memory is private and personal and it is only known to the one who does the act of remembering. Thus the mental mapping of one’s life can be possible by and through memory.

The presence of the self of the individual is a vital part in the memory process. Self and memory have a mutual relation as both constitute the everyday lives of an individual. Tulving has focused on this subjective notion of memory while formulating episodic memory, which according to him, “allows explicitly to recall the personal incidents that uniquely define our lives” (Schatcer 17). He argues that “remembering, for the rememberer, is a mental time travel, a sort of reliving of something that happened in the past” (17). This process of reliving the events that occurred in the past through memory helps the individual to understand her or him better. The self of an individual holds on to memories, especially episodic ones, to connect with their relations, positions

and locations that matter in their personal life. Memory supplements the becoming of the self of an individual.

The Spatial Memory

Every recollection is not just a matter of reverting back to time; it is also a matter of revisiting space. A memory does not intend to be the same for every individual but one aspect that cannot be separated from the memory is its spatial aspect. The episodic memory, as Edvin Tulving describes, is about the episodes of one person's life. Such kind of memory maintains the episodic events which denote the spatial aspect of the memory. When one remembers any event, more than the temporal linearity, the spatial or the geographical aspect stands out in it. The place where the event occurred, the spatial location or landscape, the person or people involved in it, the sensual component of the event etc can be included and understood as the spatial side of the memory. While memory denotes the time of the event that happened in the past, the event or the experience involved is equally important. The emotions one had in that particular incident or the people or the place one visited etc adds more meaning to one's present life and the self more than the time when that event occurred. Memory enables the person not just to recollect the time period of it but it also gives the person a way to navigate to the space in that particular memory. The space in a memory means all other connections one stored along within an experience. It can be seen as a reconnection to the people one knew at that time, the position or the relations one had, the emotions one shared etc come under the spatial component of the memory. Thus if memory can be realized in time, it can be conceived through space too.

Gary L. Allen's *Human Spatial Memory: Remembering Where* (2003), provides the scientific evidence to show the spatial aspect of human memory and the role of brain, mainly the lobe part such as hippocampus, in realizing this aspect in memory. It studies in depth about the processing of space in various environments, familiar and new, which vary according to the one who experiences or perceives these spaces. It states how "...the memory representations of space vary as a function of the specific experience(s) one has with the space" (311). The studies explain how the brain records and understands various spaces according to the experiences one has in a particular location. The everyday experiences of every person are bound to the spaces around. The home space, the work space, the space where we frequently visits, the personal spaces, the public spaces etc include both the real material spaces and the imagined spaces of our lives. We remember such spaces due to our movement, access of those spaces through perception. The main idea of perception is to be on the move, to move about and around the spaces. Thus the spatial aspect in each memory we possess is consciously created and represented thorough our senses. The events we create are recollected not in the temporal, linear order of the days or months we pass. It is recollected according to the order we want it to be recollected. Memory is one such way of ordering our separated lives in various spaces that surround the person. "Memory is part of the brain's attempt to impose order on the environment" (Schacter 52). The environment, which can be both real and imagined, occupies a prominent role in the day to day lives of a person. Thus in the memory too these spaces project beyond the temporal aspect of the event.

In this respect, if the spatial memory evidently exists, this aspect of memory can be understood to trace the spatial becoming of the self of a person. The threads of

memory can be incorporated to understand the self's becoming. The spaces one lives in, travels into and navigates in a routine basis have recurrent reflections on the sense of self of that person. It is hard to escape this spatiality, but when one tries to embrace this becoming through space, that will definitely provide a new outlook at looking and evaluating oneself. Thus space can be addressed as an alternative medium to time with which we can understand the evolution of the self of the person who does the act of remembering.

This leads to the argument that self, the personal identity can be mapped with the help of memories which are not just temporally realized but spatially too. The becoming of the self can be understood through the spatial content of memories. Space, like time can help in understanding the expansion of a person's self through the personal memories.

Memory and Place in Sujata Bhatt

Bertrand Russell notes, "Memory demands an image" (130) first, and only then the notion of this image being related to the past or time is important. Every image has a spatial feature in it. In the memory of an event, the event is represented through images. Images can be of the objects, people, things, places etc. In this manner, memory can be regarded as a mental image of the event that helps to recreate the event in the present lives of a person. Mental images or memory "represent spatial properties and relationships in a quasi-pictorial form" (Richardson 40). These spatial aspects relate to understand the inherent spatiality that bounds the lives of a person. The spatial memory

resembles these images that represent the spaces occupied, travelled, visited and inhabited by a person.

Sujata Bhatt in her poetry profusely uses spatial images and metaphors to express her memories such as, for instance, a tree, an echo sound, a hill temple, insides of a house, a room, an animal, people she met or spent/shared experiences with etc. Bhatt knows how spatial a human life is and she explores these spatial insights that make her memories more accessible to her immediate surroundings. She lives the life of a diaspora, away from her homeland and the land where she received her education and spent her early years with her family. But the farther she is, her memories bring her nearer to her lost surroundings and people. Most of her poems are autobiographical in which “Bhatt metaphorically and spatially goes back to her childhood memories” (Sandten 8). In this section, I would focus on the memories she narrates and draws attention to in her poems and how the spatial element in her memories shapes her self-becoming. The analysis will focus on the inner landscapes of a person’s space such as home, or house to the outer spaces such as the garden, village, city etc. This implies the cohabitation of the inner and outer spaces in the everyday life of a person.

Home, for Sujata Bhatt, is the epitome of memories, a space where all the events and incidents are crystallized. Most of her poems reflect the memories of home: the inside of her house, the people who occupied that space, her city and the village she travelled, the temples or markets she visited, the animals, the trees etc and show how they shape the everyday life situations of the writer. The memories line up as threads of narrative that she retells through her poems.

Home remains an emotion in all of Sujata Bhatt's collections from *Brunizem* to *Poppies in Translation*, awakening her in midst of all her travels to new lands, people and places. It is a space which is intimate and guards the person from the interferences of the outer spaces. Ali Madanipour notes: "Its integrity is of the utmost value in our lives" (64). She keeps returning to home, to her memories of home, the places which crawl up to her mind when she visits a new city, museum, room or garden. Home is sometimes a place, a city or a village or people for Sujata Bhatt. Or it can be understood as an emotion that cannot be translated to any language. But in all these definitions of home, space remains as the main structure that binds her presence to the memories. The events and the experiences recollected are shown in the poems through the spatial forms that govern these memories.

In the collection, *Pure Lizard*, the poem "Devibahen and Harilal in Pennsylvania" shows how a photograph can be a spatial image to bring back the memory about her grandparents. Bhatt begins the poem with an epigraph from George Lamming, "And for memory I had substituted inquiry" (Bhatt 578). The poem begins with spatial aspect of a home, a window. The photograph is a black and white one as she explains how her grandparents are "Reduced to their black and white existence / on my bedside table" (578). The people in the photograph, the poet tells, stare out through her window "at the colours / of a Pennsylvania October" (578). Here the poet shows how there is a coexistence of her past and present, her memories and her real life. The "black and white existence" (578) denotes the rooted memories in the form of the photograph which is juxtaposed to the present life, colours of the Pennsylvania. Rather than being a contrast image, poet juxtaposes both images of her life. Jeff Malpas quotes from Georges Poulet's

study on Proustian novels: “What is it to juxtapose? It is to place one thing *beside* another” (160). He continues “Juxtaposition does not replace one entity with another, but places the two together” (161). Here the spatiality of past in the form of a photograph juxtaposes with her new space of home in Pennsylvania. Malpas further notes: “only the exteriority of space can provide a frame within which a multiplicity of elements can be grasped as existing in simultaneous juxtaposition” (161). As seen in this poem, the outer space of her bedroom conveys both the interiority of her past through the photograph and the outsides of her home seen through the window. This image shows how only through the spatial frame of reference can one juxtapose multiple elements simultaneously. The event behind this photograph is not directly experienced by the poet but “I’m told” (578), she says. She remembers her grandparents and the situations of their life on that particular event of taking the photograph. It is a story narrated to her; she remembers and imagines them at the time the photograph was taken. The photograph she kept near her bedside reminds her of her connections to her family, their ancestral home in Ahmedabad. As a diaspora, her roots cling on to her in the form of memories. Bhatt traverses this feeling of loss into a reassurance of home as conveyed through the poem. The coexistence of the memory beside her life as a diaspora reassures her ‘self’. Even while living her life in Pennsylvania, she through the photograph travels to her home, her grandparents’ home. This image, a photograph, thus transcends the time and space: the season, the place, and the people. The spatial content of the event balances out the temporality of the photograph.

A key thinker in contemporary human geography, Edward S. Casey formulates the nature of such complementary exchange between memory and space exceedingly

well. Casey's conception of memory as a frame forms a surrounding border in which the scene of memory is perceived from the standpoint of the remembering subject. Since the exchange between self and world fluctuates, with world and self each emerging and receding in its intensification, the following claim can be formulated: *Sometimes it is the case that a place provides the defining character to a memory, such that the memory becomes inextricably bound with place, thus rendering it an event* (Trigg 53). The framed event in the poem becomes a totem for this kind of spatial intensification.

“At heart, our experience is personal, our memories and our pronouncements self-referential” (Pocock 16). This aspect of memory is what makes it more like the mental journeys of our life. Memory helps us to reconstruct the lost experiences. It stores our everyday particularities and our memory is what makes us what we are at the present. The poem “The Rooster in Conil” charts the poet's experiences when she lived in Conil. The poet begins with the narration of the house she stayed along with her daughter. As Bachelard puts it, a house “is our corner of the world. ...it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word” (4). Many of Bhatt's poems on memory revolve around her memories of her home. This poem's context is a house in Spain where she begins the poem narrating the windows of the house. The house she stays in has windows with three feet and she finds it as “a place to escape / from the sun” (169). This reflects Bachelard's idea of the house as “the non-I that protects the I” (5). The architecture of the house secures its beings from the harsh exterior. House protects its being. Bhatt continues her narration of the windows, asks whether it is made out of iron. Then she spills the memory the windows brought to her:

The bars and the window sills feel

as if some one had pulled them off
 my grandfather's house in Bhavnagar
 and stuck them on this whitewashed house by the sea. (169)

The poet attributes the window sills that she feels in the whitewashed house in Spain which reminds her of one of the houses she has inhabited before, her grandfather's house. The poet builds the intimacy she feels with this house through the spatial imagery of the window sills and the bars. The window reminds her not just of her grandfather's house. It reminds her of her home and the intricate association she has with space. The space she views through her bedroom window, she describes as:

Outside my bedroom window
 there's a sprawled out bush
 of night blooming white flowers,
 the addicting fragrance fingers my sleep,
 tricks my nose into believing I'm home. (169)

She views through her window, the uneven bed of white flowers with addicting fragrance that blooms in the night. It can be something like jasmine flowers as seen in her homeland, India. The fragrance of those flowers "fingers and tricks" her sleep and her body. It makes her believe that she is home. Here home is denoted through the fragrance of the white flowers as she finds at her home in India. Thus these flowers carry her to her intimate spaces of home.

The rooster is a tireless bird, one who wakes up the world. But the rooster crows so early, the poet tells, as if the sun has early risen just for him. She compares the rooster with the legendary Don Quixote's messenger who announces to the world what eats up his heart. The rooster never stops crowing even after the sun has gone. Here rooster in a way defies time. It defies the human time, its frame of structure, and its constructed feature. The rooster here crows when he pleases, long before the sun has any chance to show up and even after the sun has gone. To add to this sound, the poet says there is the sound of the sea, "the hush-hush constant / swishing whipped up sound of the sea..." (169). The sound of the sea rhymes as the background sound which accompanies everyone involved in this event. The poet, the rooster are all affected by the sound of the sea.

The poet heeds to the surroundings that refresh the senses in her body and it takes her to travel so far away to her own past. It is the house that unified all these memories under one common shelter. Thus space as a structure governs the memories of our life. It is the spaces that we experience help us to rebuild ourselves in any circumstances. "All the places and landscapes are individually experienced, for we alone see them through the lens of our attitudes, experiences and intentions, and from our own unique circumstance" (Relph 36). Thus space is one of the lens through which the poet understands her presence and her situation in this world. Space is not artificially drawn, but genuinely produced in the events and the experiences.

In one of her poems titled as "The Echoes in Poona", the sound of rhesus monkeys, a species of monkeys that she knew well from her homeland which she finds in the forest near to her house, echoes in her present house in Germany. The poem mediates

between the present and past spaces she shared with her families. Bhatt's daughter is just a child, her cries echo as the sounds of rhesus monkeys. This sound brings her memories to relate to her own younger self where she shared her feelings for those monkeys who were taken away from forest and locked away in cells for experiments. She begins the poem remembering how the nets those humans used to catch them left marks on their "pure, clean" bodies: "If you look closely / you can see where / the nets have left marks / across their fingers" (155). She explains how deeply monkeys are connected with their environments that when they were taken away she imagined that "Their tails still expect / to brush against leaves, green... / and their neck muscles / are not used to this sudden / lack of wind" (155). The poet is aware of the connection to the natural habitat and how these species taken away from their natural space felt about the new environment inside the cages. This can provide a glimpse of the life she leads when she has shifted from her comfort zones to new arenas. The feeling she has for the monkeys is not just limited to this poem but as the whole collection titled as *Monkey Shadows*, I would like to draw the light on how these shadows cast an eye on her self-becoming even when she is far away from her family. Her concerns for the respective spaces that shape and structure every being's becoming are shown in this poem. The poet extensively shares how these spaces are relived through the memories. The content of her memories weaves the spaces she shared and built through her experiences. She foregrounds the spaces these echoes made her remember such as her garden. She says "our garden / When I stand near the bougainvillaea" (155), she could hear their cries echoing, "their caged cries" (155).

The poem is an example of how memory becomes a spatial representation or, to use Henri Lefebvre's term, representations of space. As Lefebvre states it includes the

representations that define space to us. Space, reproduced through memory, is here represented in the form of an echo. Echo is a spatial concept. Echo means the reflection of the sound when it is produced in an enclosed place. In a cave or in a mountain valley or in a vacant room, echoes can be produced. Here memory becomes an echo not of the past (time), but of the spaces produced by the poet's experiences with the monkeys, her family, her surroundings. The place Poona, where she spent her lives while she was in India, which shaped most of her memories is called upon to her present home in another continent. Like these monkeys placed in a cage, she in her home, in an enclosed space receives the echoes that give her a sense of belonging in the different continent. The echo is produced because of the space, the structures of the space. Here it is not an echo, but there are several echoes that reach to her as memories. Bhatt refers to these memories as echoes not just any other sounds show the distinctive importance of space. She shares the feelings and spaces such as once the monkeys shared in the cage. She knows what it means to be denied your intimate space. She knows the pain of the sudden shift of space as she explains the sounds of the monkeys. She also shows how one makes the unknown space closer to her/him. She explains how the monkeys do it "their fingers work to search each other - / .../ as they reinvent their family" (155-6). She lives away from her family and her place but she lives with her new family in her new home in another continent. She like the monkeys reinvents her family. That reinvention is possible in the new unknown space as she has these echoes reverberating in her mind. These memories represent the spaces, the feeling of belonging to a community. The sounds of the monkeys brought to her mind the whole place of Poona where she spends her childhood with her family. She shows how space dominates the events of our lives and how these

retained memories can help us to relive those meaningful spaces that make us what we are.

The poem “Whenever I Return” deftly portrays how the experiences and the memories of it are place bound. The place or the “humanized space” (Tuan 54) dialogically enters the memory of the poet where she revisits or returns to one of her individual spaces: the garden. The poem’s title itself renders a glimpse to the idea that returning (memory) is always a returning to place (or space). E. C. Relph notes: “In particular the places of childhood constitute vital reference points for many individuals. They may be spatial locations and settings which serve to recall particular personal experiences ...” (37). There are locators in the individual spaces which enable the person to recall the experience once s/he had in such spaces. As Relph has noted, our childhood locators facilitate as the integral units of reference that even guides us in the life journey. Such settings where one created experiences bring those impressions back to them through new spaces. Here Sujata Bhatt notes how when she returns to this space of garden she is either ten or eleven in age but never older. She also specifies that “This time I come alone” (509). It shows that the accompany she had earlier whenever she returns to this place is not with her in this visit.

As soon as she enters the place, she describes it for the reader. She begins with the corner of the garden:

I find the corner

where I always sat:

a slab of stone beside leafy bushes.

From there I watched

everyone come and go- (509)

Here the poet ‘finds’ the corner, a spatial spot of her childhood where she sat while she came to the garden. This corner has a stone slab which is near the bushes. It is from there she saw the movements in the garden i.e. everyone who came and went through the spot. She used to watch the space around from childhood. She knows the spatial distance of the corner where she used to sit. She describes “Equidistant / from neem tree and tamarind tree / I stayed” (509). She calculates the distance in reference to the trees in her garden. A child’s connection towards the nature is quite evident in those lines. She narrates the other spatial aspects of this location. She writes: “The ground is cooler here. / Dragonflies skim over me” (509). She continues, “sometimes touch my hair / sometimes / brush against my face” (509). The poet is quite content in this space. She notes how the cool ground attracts dragonflies and how it brushes through her body. It reflects the place as full of life that she seeks in and through this memory. She expresses her well knowledge of the place: “I don’t need to count / the flowers – I know / they are all there” (509). She reassures her power of memory. She recollects the locations where her brother used to hide while they played hide and seek during such afternoons. She finds solace in her memory of the family members and how they enter her space. She from her corner of the garden, on her slab of stone narrates the spaces they create and fill in for her. Her memories are more about how people enter into her space and how they cohabitate her space. Her memories are vested upon these spaces which brings her back the early lives, moments and relations she shared with the people near to her. Space is not an abstraction; it is the structure, the frame of reference to which one keeps returning in

search of herself/himself. “Memory is rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image and object” (Janz 44). Memory is not just a matter of time, it is the event, the object, and the emotion expressed during the event etc that bridge as the spatial frame of reference.

Sujata Bhatt marks herself as an intense observer of places as well as people around her. In this respect, her perception is very much like the urban spatial concept of *flanerie* expounded by Walter Benjamin. The *flaneur* was the creation of Baudelaire, who was Baudelaire’s symbol of modernity, the anonymous man on the streets of nineteenth century Paris, drifting through the crowd, strolling through the city spaces as a detached observer. The *flaneur* is always in the crowd, but detached from it- ‘the man who could reap aesthetic meaning from the teeming crowd’, according to Baudelaire. While using *flanerie* as a way of seeing a place, Sujata Bhatt becomes the poet “who can reap aesthetic meaning and an individual kind of existential security from the spectacle” (Tester 2), but not of the crowd, but of the place.

The psycho-geography of the *flaneur* is visible in her poems like ‘Language’ and ‘Living with Trains’. “Language” is a poem dedicated to Johannes Bobrowski, a German poet and writer. This poem is narrated from the outside spaces of the city, landscape towards the inner spaces of the bookstore. The poet is very much fond of the natural spaces. Here she portrays two important places that shape her belonging in the present. She brings into life the spatial vastness of the Connecticut in America, which is the place where she spent her education and adult life. She narrates the shore of the Atlantic Ocean and then explains how the grass is still smudged and wet in the late morning. Her focus falls on the Connecticut sky, which is cloudless and has a clear blue all over. This is set against the huge granite rocks along the shore. She notices the sounds around: “The air

hums with the hearts of birds/ and insects” (335). The narration of the features of a landscape, the sea shore is brought out in integrity with the spaces that surround the shore. The poet leaves nothing unnoticed. From the sea to the ground and to the sky, she makes sure her perceived impressions are felt through the lines of the poem.

“Living with Trains” is a poem of memory; memory of Ahmedabad railway station, the train journeys of the poet in India and in Berlin as well as the memory about her family. The poet’s memory takes her back to the vivid sensory images she experienced during the event. The poet says, “Wherever I go / there are trains burning through my fingers” (40). Then she describes the trains featuring the lights, the sound, the smell of tar and soot and the people inside the compartments. She explains the lime green lights which tangled with train’s whistle. She continues: “Then there’s the smell of old trains, old metal, old narrow / tracks” (40). The smell of tar and coals burning rubber and this is the smell that she creeps into her silences now. She takes the readers inside the train: “Those wooden benches in the second class / compartment grimy with soot and sweat and filled / with the tired smell of hungry children” (41). She says, “That’s the noise / rushing beneath my eyelids” (41). Bhatt gives her readers a glimpse of the train journeys of her times. It is interesting to see how she constructs the entire space inside the train and the station with help of her memory. She recollects the sound of the train and the silence of the hot tracks just after the train has left. She brings in the lime green light and the smell of tar and coal while walking through the tracks of India. As Tester observes, “the dialectic of the poet is, then, one of the sovereignty of individual self-hood in synthesis with a situation in which the practice of self-hood is dependent on the contingencies of the spectacles of the places” (3). This poem also reflects on her sense of

place where she as a meticulous observer in childhood is being carried away with such observations in her adulthood too. Edward Relph notes that there is a living connection between the place and the person who observes the place. He quotes: “a living ecological relationship between an observer and an environment, a person and a place” is a source of self-knowledge and a point of reference that is possibly most important in childhood, but which can provide a centre of personal stability and significance throughout life. It is perhaps the ability to convey this quality”, writes Relph, “that characterises authors and artists with a ‘sense of place’” (66). He terms this connection as “genius loci” (66), as seen here: “wherever I go / there are trains burning through my fingers” (40). She as the title conveys is “living with trains”, they are a part of her life, both the past and the present lives. Her memories are reliving in her wherever she travels to. The connection she has with the places is carried within her self throughout her journeys.

The memory of the poet is not just the images. As Bachelard notes “we see images, we reproduce images, we retain images in memory” (33), Bhatt’s poem is full of different kinds of images about the trains, stations of Ahmedabad and Berlin. It is interesting to note how she could recall even the smell, the sound, the colours of the trees and people around in her train journey back in Ahmedabad. This is the spatial content that is genuinely being produced and constructed by memory and imagination.

“Here space is everything, for time ceases to quicken memory. Memory – what a strange thing it is!” (Bachelard 9). Memory, for Bachelard, happens in and through space. It includes time as he once wrote: “In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for” (8). In the poem “History is a Broken Narrative”, Bhatt compresses time into spaces/places. She uses memory as a way to condense time and

hold it inside the spaces she dwells, travels and visits. The poem can be regarded as a collage of her memory of learning a language that she feels closer with- the English language. She has written the poem in three sections. She weaves the poem in the form of a narrative or story. But the memories that she discusses in the poem are poignant ones.

She tells about how she got her language, the language in which she writes now. “I got mine in New Orleans. / In New Orleans, when I was five: / a whole new alphabet to go with the new world” (321). She migrated with her family to the United States in the 1960’s. Before migration, she along with her mother and brother accompanied her father for his educational purposes. She shares her memory of introducing to a new language and a new world in New Orleans. Here the place New Orleans is more important to her for this part of memory and her life with her family during that period. In this memory about the language, she recollected the place before her year of learning the language. She remembers how she felt for both the languages, her mother tongue, Gujarati and the new tongue, English. She shares her experience:

Afternoons my mother

led me through our old alphabet -

I felt as if the different scripts

belonged together: I felt them raw,

clotting together in my mind,

raw, itchy – the way skin begins to heal. (321)

She shares her memory of belonging in a new language, in the new space to which she is exposed in an early age. She felt them as raw and as clotting in her mind. She resembles the feeling of how the skin heals after the wound; how the skin cells clot and the new skin appears. Such was the feeling of the poet while introduced to the new language. She then recollects how she returned to India with this new language:

In an English convent school in Poona,

years later, the very very old Miss Ghaswalla

managed to change

my New Orleans style. (321)

She explains how the convent school's space in her hometown made changes in her style of language. The idea of language also represents the culture that is being processed in Bhatt's life. Her aspect of being multicultural has roots in such instances. When she says "I took my language from New Orleans" (321), she means how the place has been stored in her memory as the root cause that gave her an access to this new world of alphabets.

She never leaves out the details in her memory. She explains in detail the instances of her mother and herself in the place of New Orleans. As the title foregrounds, Bhatt's way of writing a 'history' of her own life with her memories is like a broken narrative. It has many pieces attached to it. Fragments that she arranged in her preference not in the order of time but the place and the people she has mingled with. "You take your language where you get it" (323), she says. The focus on "where" i.e. the place it

occurred is what matters to the poet most. Her memory is never an abstraction, but concrete, evident detailing of the surroundings, people and the meticulous nuances of the spatial behaviors of the place and the people. That is one of the ways how she transcends the alienating space of diaspora into a reassuring space. Diaspora is mostly viewed as a space of estrangement. “Diaspora inhabit liminal, interstitial spaces and their inter-subjective and intercultural experiences constitute them as hyphenated, hybrid subjects” (Singh 52). They try to assimilate to new cultures but are lost in between the process. But for Bhatt, as seen here, New Orleans as a place has provided comfort and meaning to her life there. The memory of language acquisition in a way details out her memory of acceptance in a new culture and place. For Bhatt this memory provides her with a new perspective to build one’s own place in such an inter-cultural space. Bhatt shows how her mother influenced the reshaping of her memory of New Orleans: “Somehow she has kept / her secrets burning – now and then she gives me / a new story, a different meaning to my memory” (322). Bhatt shows how our memories are being shaped through the stories we hear around. Her mother through the stories gives new meanings to the memories of the poet. She reinvents her experiences through her mother’s version of the experience too. Thus New Orleans and the memory of the place and the experiences are well foregrounded in the poem. As other memory poems, this poem does not elaborate upon the spatial peculiarities of the place but shows how the space structures her memory through the poem.

Edward Casey argues that more than re-collection, memory’s action consists in a dispersal, which is very much a spatial idea. He observes how even the ancient Greeks understood the art of memory in a spatial logic. Memory, accordingly, is a ‘method of

loci'. A locus is definable as a place easily grasped by memory, such as a house, a corner, an arch, or the like. Casey elaborates that a given place or set of places acts as a grid onto which images of items to be remembered are placed in a certain order. The subsequent remembering of these items occurs by revisiting the place-grid and traversing it silently step by step in one's mind (*Remembering* 183).

The adjacent poem in this section is "New Orleans Revisited". Here the poet lists out some specific recollections of learning the new language. This recollection occurs to her accidentally when she saw:

The sunlight

on the wooden benches

in the streetcar flashes

as the black children sat down. (324)

This scene brought her back memories of New Orleans and her learning of English. She says: "I should be able to see myself" (324) in this context. Then she tries to recollect her learning of the new language. What first comes to her mind is the natural space around. She begins: "The honeysuckle grew lush - / and there was the season of inchworms hanging/ from every tree" (324). These are the first images that her memory brings her, the nature, the space of the surroundings. But she asks: "And then?" (324), she could not continue this recollection. She says: "I have no memory / of learning English. / No sounds. No images" (324). She continues, "There's a blank space in my mind. / A true nothingness" (324). She explains the pain of not being able to recollect her memory of learning English. She describes what a memory is for her. It is the sounds, the

images, the space that build up as memories. But it is blank in her mind, an impasse of memory.

Here New Orleans, in both of these poems, acts as a place of memory where she learned her language or as she says “You take your language where you get it” (323). Edward Casey once remarked: “Places are congealed scenes for remembered contents; and as such they serve to situate what we remember” (qtd. in Janz 40). Places are prominent locators for our memories. A place can recall to us the inner depths of our senses we once experienced in them. They tend to situate the human experiences which are inherently spatial in its frame work. Such experiences turned into memories invoke how space aids in the understanding of one’s self. Jeff Malpas states, “Our identities are, one can say, intricately and essentially place-bound” (177). The poet provides her memory of how New Orleans is interconnected with her experience and everyday lives there in these poems. The integration she has with the place resonates in the images she recollects. Such integration with the places/ spaces through memory is what Bhatt practices mainly in these poems.

A query central to the projects of postmodern human geographies is: how do people encounter places, perceive them and endow them with significance? It is interesting to note that more than space, it is place which provides a profound centre of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties and is part of the complex processes through which individuals define themselves (Convery et al. 1). Such a psychogeography is very manifest in many of the poems of Bhatt where memories of places in her past are generative of her selfhood in the present. An interesting poem in this regard is “Zinzirritta”.

Sujata Bhatt concentrates much on the surroundings in her poems. Even when she writes about a person, an animal or an emotion, they are immensely related either to the landscape, the street or the city or to the surroundings of the house. As seen in “Zinzirritta”, she brings into the focus the birds, mammals and her memories of fear about the bats while as a girl in Poona. She watches at the sight of swallows, from her house in Germany, where they are engaged in the space around. She beautifully captures their movement in space:

I watch them as they circle

high above the rooftops -

now swooping down, now darting up, zipping by faster

and faster – my dolphins of the air. (545)

She compares them to the dolphins who move abruptly but in unified motion. They swerve around as they are familiar with the space between the houses. She tries to understand this energy of swallows in their attempt to catch every insect before the bats emerge and steal the space in the night.

The poet, unlike the swallows, awaits the emergence of the bats. She says it is the bats that she is trying to understand. Then she connects back to her memory in Poona where she was afraid of the bats:

As a girl, in Poona, I remember

running away from them, afraid

they would bite off my ears,
 or worse, that they would manage to squeeze
 themselves deep inside my inner ears, my head
 two at a time. (545)

This memory that she shares is of her fear of the bats. She remembers how in Poona, she used to run away from them imagining them biting her ears off or squeezing into ear ears. But now, in Germany, she waits for their emergence. It is from this fear of bats, the memory of her running away from them as a girl in Poona that her present urge is born that makes her now go in search of their varieties, their photographs etc. She calls them “zinzirritta, mesmerizing zinzirritta” (545). She searches for the roots of their names to see which name can hold their essence and true nature. She narrates how their young ones fly and compares them to “black leaves falling, falling – but then rising up / suddenly, as if caught by the wind” (545). She invokes the movement of the bodies of the bats and swallows in the open space. She enjoys how they fall and rise according to the wind’s direction. She does not hide her inner feelings; she tries to draw similarities between humans and these mammals.

How can the inherent spatiality that comprises our everyday lives be recollected through memories? Bhatt shows us how memories retain the spatiality that persists in our everyday life experiences. Space constitutes our understanding of the world around us. The events that are part of our realities gather a spatial structure and it is this spatial aspect that helps us to remember the events. Most of Sujata Bhatt’s poems revolve around this aspect of memory. In her memories, as discussed in the poems, she elaborates

the spatiality of that experience. It signifies how memory for her is not a revisiting to the past time, but to the experience and to the things, objects, people and emotions she experienced in such events. She draws a connection with the people she met before through her poems.

Michele de Certeau, in his seminal work, *The Practices of Space*, says that “the dances of our bodies haunted by the desire to live somewhere form a rhetoric of space” (131). Our varied movements and gesturations in places where we desire to live are our everyday practices of space. Certeau compares these practices to the mute experiments of the child who invents a foreignness wherever he is in order to create for himself his own space. What Sujata Bhatt seems to practice in her poem, “Lines Written in Venice”, is a spatial practice not very far removed from what Certeau suggests- inventing a foreignness in the everyday home and objects, or even in a street she visits. She makes the place her own like a child who engages in ecstasies in the window of a closed taxi. As Certeau remarks, “ceaselessly, we have always to pass by in order to be able to inhabit” (131). It is a poem about her visit to Mathilde Modersohn-Becker, daughter of Paula Modersohn-Becker in 1995. As seen in many other poems in this collection, memory is modified with the help of imagination and stories she heard through the people she interacted.

Bhatt opens the poem with a reference to the place where the memory happened: “Where else but in Venice / should this memory / be written down” (474). She remembers the details from her visit such as the “summer flowers” (474) she brought to Mathilde and how she did not expect to see Paula Becker’s painting near the window with those roses. She directs her readers through the insides of the house:

Your walls were covered
 with Paula's paintings – your rooms
 filled with Paula's things -
 porcelain vases, a decorated box -
 and the chandelier
 with a baroque angel. (474)

The surroundings, the things and the objects she notes are meticulously detailed for the readers. The poet gives a hint about how the objects, the creative artworks around reflect the creative mindset of the people involved in this event. Bhatt indicates how the space distributed inside the house bespeaks the spatiality of the people living inside the house. The arrangements of the flowers, vases, chandeliers etc show how they are intended to use the space that surrounds them every day. The objects inside one's house convey their intentions and minds and how they are open to the visitor's eye.

In another poem, "Worpswede, 2001", Bhatt connects back to her own lineage through the memories of Paula and her family. She recollects Paula and her paintings as she walks through the German spaces:

I walked past fields
 between museums, past so many trees,
 birches, oaks – remembering you, Paula -

your paintings, your colours

burnt in my mind. (478)

She tells how the spaces of museums, fields etc make the poet remember the paintings of Paula. She also conveys the pain that she has in thinking about the death of Paula. She also notes how later she along with Paula's grandniece looked through the album of Paula's family. The poet kept asking about each person she saw in the album. She ends the poem as:

That was Paula's brother

in Indonesia.

That was the woman

who loved him so much -

And who is that girl?

That was my mother. (479)

Here Bhatt finds her own mother in the old family album of Paula Modersohn. This can be poet's imagination to connect to the German art. The poet in most of her poem tries to draw a connection through the mother-daughter relationship as seen in the contents she chose to write in her poetry. In most of her poems, she relates to how she and her daughter are connected through the objects, the spaces, the people etc. Here too, Paula and her daughter are focused in the same manner. The poet in a way tries to connect back to her own lineage as explicitly she does in a few other poems. Lineage is

strictly temporal in the theoretical sense, but Bhatt reiterates the spatiality that is present in the search for lineage through memory used in her poems.

The ontological significance of space Bhatt invests in this poem is very much like Georg Luis Borges used to do in his writings on places. Memories are often deliberate reflections. What is in fact happening in the process of reflective memory is probably, as Bill Richardson suggests, in *Borges and Space*, that “we attempt to establish the nature of the relationship between the everyday objects and places we see around us and our sense of the vastness of the universe and the place we occupy in it” (56). Richardson observes that Borges invites us to sense the wonder that reflecting on life can offer, while appreciating the links that bind any one individual to a greater whole, defined in terms of space and time (56).

Borges maintains that we are not just who we are, but also the links that we forge with our circumstances, and in this respect, he reflects Heidegger’s ideas:

While time is a basic dimension of those circumstances, leading sooner or later to death, the spatial entities- the things- that surround us enter into a mysterious relationship with us, and we with them. They are not simply ‘external’ to us, out in the world and apart from the person we feel ourselves to be; rather, they have their own ineffable qualities and can constitute our inner, mental or even spiritual, being. (57)

In “Devibahen Pathak”, Bhatt interconnects memory and imagination as a search for the links to connect back to her lineage. The poem is also an example of how she tries to build up the two continents that run deeply as roots in her present life, India and

Germany. Devibahen Pathek, her maternal grandmother, is the whole focus of this poem. The poem is how Devibahen decides to gift her only daughter a gold necklace with a pendant shaped as swastika which enriches the Indian culture and tradition. She finds this necklace as an important part of their family and to preserve it through the coming generations. The context of the poem is when Bhatt imagines her grandmother and the context of the making of the 'swastika pendent necklace' in Ahmedabad.

I imagine the Ahmedabad sun, salty
 on the T.B. coughed up
 spittle stained, betel nut leaf slimy streets -
 A city where the water
 still tastes salty;
 land that was once beneath the sea. (125)

In the images Bhatt uses to narrate her poems, space turns up so subtly that it is quite natural of her style. In this memory, she imagines her grandmother in Ahmedabad. She gives the reader a nutshell picture of Ahmedabad and its peculiarities. The sun, the salty water, slimy streets with betel nut stained and T.B talk a lot more than the narration. It shows the immediate surroundings of the place. She also specifies how it was known before as a land beneath the sea. Here curiosity regarding the land and its spatial properties is quite evident in these lines.

Devibahen intends to convert "a small lump of gold she inherited" (126) into a necklace: "It was a way to give / the gold a more useful shape" (126). The shape of the

pendant was the result of a very thoughtful process, Bhatt explains. She draws out a whole section on how the decision was made. For poet's grandmother, "it was clearly the geometric sun, / a wheel for life and luck", she continues, "a four-petalled flower / twisting out of a circle, in turn encircled/ by a hexagon – for her" (126). The discussions of the shape are supplemented by spatial structures. Bhatt reiterates how space is one among the fundamental structures that define and constitute the relation between us and the outer world. Form sweeps into our daily lives. The shape of the room, the things which we use daily, the form we draw as part of our rituals etc are about our understanding of the space within us. It is how we intend to use and conceive the spatiality that surrounds our life.

I remember practicing drawing swastikas

as a child, with other children ...

Triangular Parvati

pointing earthward,

Triangular Shiva

pointing skyward.

Their bodies, sharp -

pared down to pure form.

Is that where truth lies?

In the shadow of a shoulder blade,

the corner of a triangle? (128)

The remembering of the forms, the practice of drawing the forms is narrated without erasing its spatial reference. Space is what we draw on, how we structure it in our lives. She segregates each circle, the triangular forms pointing the earth and the sky, the two spaces that are embedded in that symbol. She is doubtful whether there is any truth in it. But she, as her grandmother, finds it true to their lineage, their spatial form that connects the generations: “Something to present to her daughter / when she came of age. / Something for her daughter’s daughter’s daughter ...” (126). This link is what is retained in the form of that pendant, the swastika. The lineage is not something understood in time. Space dominates the trace of lineage, as Bhatt uses in the images in the poem. Space is not attributed, it is chosen, and it genuinely comes up in our everyday lives. Here Bhatt’s attempt to write down a poem on her grandmother and this ancestry connection and the pendant that still she keeps for her daughter is part of an attempt to understand her belonging in the place. The connection to land of Ahmedabad, the people, and the places is her way of tracing her lineage. Bhatt shows that when we trace back our lineage, ancestry we always reach in a place and its people. It is not particularly about the time, the historical links to look back in the past. It is the things, the places, and the people where you end up in this journey.

Bhatt does not hide the feelings she has for the swastika pendant. Even though it is inherited by her, she keeps it hidden due to the German link she has and she is worried how to pass it on to her daughter. “Oh didn’t I love the Hindu swastika? / And later, one day didn’t I start wishing / I could rescue that shape from history?” (129). She recollects the painful history behind swastika in Germany. This is the reason why she cannot pass it

over to her “German-born daughter”. She is confused: “What will you say? What colours will you / prefer? In what language / will you speak?” (130). This confusion of how to retain the only pendant of the familial lineage is drawn in these lines. The swastika which stood for a shameful history for the whole world due to the Nazi symbol and the symbol of swastika which Bhatt drew from her childhood as a part of her connection to her roots is questioned here. She cannot erase the history for she is in Germany. Germany and India are parts of her own personal space. Here Bhatt also shows how the belonging is better in terms of the spatial frame of reference than the temporal one.

What Bhatt attempts here is a telling example of what Sarah Menin describes as the use of memory against *atopos*. Sarah Menin observes how the use of memory in its acts of embodiments in places, as we can see in Bhatt’s, protects the persons in exile from an exhausting agony of *atopos*. The positive encounters of the mind and the material places that happen in acts of remembering have the power to resist the experiences of ‘atopos’ (literally, ‘no place’) that people in exile and in diaspora inescapably face. She believes that for the re-orientation, not to say correction, of these negatives we must re-find place – even if we may be searching materially and mentally for something that can, in some cases, be found only spiritually (Menin 2).

In another poem from *A Colour for Solitude*, Bhatt traces her connection with the painter and sculptor, Paula Modersohn Becker inside the space of a museum in Germany. “Was it the Blue Irises?” was first published in her first collection of *Brunizem*. The poem is written after her first visit to Germany while she studied at the University of Iowa. She visited Kunsthalle Bremen, an art museum in Germany in 1985. The poem is a recollection of the incident happened in the museum. Most of the poems written in this

collection are Bhatt's response towards the art works, paintings of Paula Modersohn Becker. Her life in Germany supplemented this search for more links to connect to her personally. As seen in the poem "Lines written in Venice", through the visit she made to Mathilde Modersohn Becker, the poet believes to have got personally closer to Paula and her works. This poem was written before this whole collection and before Bhatt's migration to Germany. It is this museum visit that instigated within her an interest in the works and in the life of Paula Modersohn Becker.

Bhatt begins the poem recollecting her visit to the museum, to the self-portrait of Paula Modersohn Becker: "The way I returned again and again to your self-portrait / with the blue irises / made the guards uneasy" (472). The poet is confused with what made them uneasy. She is confused whether it is the blue irises she carried with her or how the brown eyes of Paula illuminated by these flowers made the guards uneasy. Blue irises are personal to Bhatt: "How could you know, how could you feel all this / that I know and feel about blue iris?" (472). She in these lines connects to Paula intimately. She tries to draw a parallel between their intentions and feelings. She in a way finds herself in seeing the self-portrait done by Paula. Blue irises or the family of flowers known as iris is common perennial flower found in Europe and Asia. It is in the family of a rhizome, which is horizontally spread all over the earth. Here blue iris connects Bhatt with Paula. She imagines how these flowers have effects on Paula too. Bhatt could not stand away from the brown eyes of the portrait and she just rushed back to them while she was in the first floor with other paintings.

"The look that passed between us was full / of understanding so I could imagine living with you / and arguing with you about whether to put garlic in the soup" (472). The

space inside a museum where memories are preserved in the form of artworks, paintings and objects, here, Bhatt imagines a personal experience with one such portrait. This portrait is even a mark of common memory to the whole of Germany, but Bhatt creates her own space through this incident. She imagines the relation, the trace of herself that she can find in Paula's portrait. This experience makes her feel closer to this artist and imagines living together with her. Bhatt ends the poem by stating how furious she felt towards the guards who followed her in the museum and to her house being part of her personal space shared with Paula's portrait. The space of museum, the common space for memory can also provide space to personal memories. Museum is a place where things are retained to 'remember' and this space of museum reallocates a new meaning through the poem. The public space such as a museum is turned into a space of revelation, a personal revelation by the poet. It is in this space, even before her actual migration to Germany, she felt an acquaintance with the German painter Paula Modersohn Becker. The common, public space gives way to an intimate realization of one's interests which turns it into a personal space. This poem, through the recollection, shows how one can construe a public space into a more intimate personal space. Museum plays out its role as a metaphor of personal realization, a realization that she carried within her as a space of eventful memory. Here the commonly accepted space of museum is conceived by the poet as one of her private/inner landscapes where she feels at home.

In poems like these, Sujata Bhatt, in her poetic method, can be seen as making use of, in spatial terms, what Heidegger would call 'the ground'. In his 1948 essay, "The Essence of the Ground", Heidegger says essence is the feature by which something is what it is. Ground is that by virtue of which something obtains its essence (qtd. in

Cerbone 36). Though Heidegger uses ground as a metaphysical concept rather than a geographical notion, it is interesting to note how within the context of a postmodern human geography, the significant problem of obtaining the essence of our self-hood in fluid spaces can make use of the Heideggerian grounding. Space works as the ‘ground’ for human experiences which capture and constitute the essence of our being. Sujata Bhatt demonstrates, in these poems, a way of this kind of grounding. Gilles Deleuze, in ‘What Is Grounding?’ makes an argument that would very much support the poetic grounding project of artists like Sujata Bhatt. Like Keith Tester quotes Heidegger: “The real dwelling place lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell” (1). For Sujata Bhatt, memories are the ground. The sense of the grounding her poetry permeates is however more philosophical than physical.

In most of the poems analyzed, memories takes form in and through space. As Edward Soja once noted in an interview, it is not just the being (the human), but “becoming is spatial too” (Evans and McPherson 49). Sujata Bhatt, through her memories, shows how the process of realizing one’s self, the becoming of one’s self is possible spatially. She transcends the physical spaces through the mental journeys she partakes through her memories. The memories explain the “lived space” of Bhatt in her early places and environments. The home, the rooms, the gardens, the corners and the bookstore as reflected in her memories demonstrate how physical space can be injected with imagined or mental spaces. These physical spaces converge with imagined space to provide a glimpse of Bhatt’s lived space. This lived space, the space of diaspora, is turned

into a space of liberation and self- becoming with the help of her memories which are in fact her mental journeys, as evident in each of her poems we have seen.

Memory is essentially about places and events. When one recollects, it is the experience of the event that comes to the mind along with its locus. It is this spatiality that genuinely arises when one does the act of remembering. As seen in the poems analyzed, Sujata Bhatt shows how memory helps to trace the becoming of one's self in the shifting world of diaspora.

Sujata Bhatt, in her poems, reflects how memory is one of the leitmotifs that guide the poet in new landscapes that life takes her. Memory is one of the constitutive elements of the self. It helps to chart the development of one's self spatially and temporally. Becoming always happens in time as normally conceived but we have seen how it can be more spatial than temporal. Many recent studies show how even human memory can be spatial (scientifically there are studies such as spatial memory) and how spaces/places are essential to the creation of memory itself. It is this aspect of memory that has been analyzed with help of the selected poems by Sujata Bhatt. Here, for Bhatt, memory becomes not just a medium of connection with the homeland and the people but a way of reiterating one's existence in the new landscapes. The identities of the people of diaspora are fluid and eclectic as their travels and memories. It is the journeys, both the mental and the physical that build up the identities with this mobility. The journeys, physically and mentally, converge borders into fluid boundaries. Diaspora, for such people, emerges into a subjective space where the identities are supplemented with spaciousness.

For Sujata Bhatt, memory is an act of self expression. Her memories, as she records and portrays in her poems, convey a pathway into her inner mental journeys that chart the becoming of her poetic self. Interestingly, Bhatt always depicts the spatial contents of the experience while she remembers an incident. Time or the temporality of every memory is subsided beneath the spatiality that genuinely spirals every act of recollection. Mostly when she recollects an event the spatial structure or an image crawls up into it without an artifice. Memory, like her physical journeys, for Bhatt is mainly about how she reacts to the spaces that she consumes and produces throughout her life. Her poems on memory evidently portray the spatial contents, the spatial structures that constitute an event for her. In Bhatt's poems we can find various spatial images that she uses to express her sense of self. From the insides of the home to the space of the garden, from photograph of grandparents to the swastika pendant inherited from her mother, she shows how memories can be home to chart their selves for the people of diaspora. Space and memory, as seen in the discussed poems, are in a symbiotic relation, supplementing the becoming of the self.

"We long for place, but place itself longs. Human memory is encoded in air currents and river sediments" (qtd. in King 9). This idea of how the relation between memory and place (space) is interconnected reflects on the nature of human beings as spatial beings. Like being a socially oriented individual, every human being is space oriented in their own respective manners. Each person has her/his own way of narrating the memory. The self is created and recreated through the narratives of memory. Bhatt's poems are autobiographical in every sense even though the poet assumes different personas in her poems. Through her poems, Bhatt connects to different people such as her

own family members, poets, radio broadcasters, music composers, painters etc who seem to help her in locating and responding to her sense of self.

Cecile Sandten remarks on Sujata Bhatt's sense of ambiguity in a new landscape of diaspora as "she can always go back to her "mental landmarks" – people, friends, family, even smells, voices, sounds – all embedded in her memory while she creatively approaches new environments" (103). The landmarks essentially tend to provide a sense of belonging when one enters a new landscape. For Bhatt, these landmarks are the content of her memories: people, family, smells and sounds which evoke in her the inherent spatiality that sustains her present everyday lives. "How is the self of yesterday connected to the self of today and of tomorrow? Only by memory" (Olick and Daniel Levy 177). Thus memories, as Bhatt reworks in her poems, blend her old and new selves and this blending combines with her displaced lives in the new places. There are different kinds of memory reworked by Bhatt in her poems. In almost every memory shared, place is an integral medium that invokes the memory on to her mind. Space is not the background where the events occur, but space is involved in the making of every event.

Bhatt incorporates the images that surround her everyday realities and shows how essential these elements are in understanding one's roots. Most of her memories are about the domestic space of a home as seen in the poems "The Echoes in Poona", "The Rooster in Conil" and "Devibahen and Harilal in Pennsylvania". The corners of the garden (as in "Whenever I return"), the windows and rooms of the home (as in "The Rooster in Conil") are spaces where her memory has been preserved. These spaces inside the home transcend the architectural physical space of home into an imagined space where memories are preserved and selves are processed. Her 'self' is attached to her inner roots,

her memories. Being a diaspora, she in her poems travels through memories in search of the roots that carry her sense of self in the new arenas of her real and poetical world. Her memories aren't fragile but efficient enough to guide her in the new situations of her life. Home is one of the epitome spaces that she carries within her memories. As Bachelard puts it, "the more securely they (memories) are fixed in space, the sounder they are" (9), Bhatt's memories of home resound in her inner depth of the self. It is this spatiality of memory that helps her transcend the alienating worlds of diaspora.

The Geophilosophy of Memory

In a highly enlightening essay titled "Body, Self and Landscape: A Geo-philosophical Enquiry into the Place-World", Edward E. Casey examines the symbiotic relation between self and space in contemporary thinking:

It is a mark of late modern or postmodern thought to contest the dichotomies that hold the self apart from body and place... place is regarded as constitutive of one's sense of self: "place and self help construct and activate each other. Places require human agents to become "primary places" ...and these same agents require specific places if they are to be the selves they are in the process of becoming. Personal identity is no longer a matter of sheer self-consciousness but now involves intrinsically an awareness of one's place — a specifically geographical awareness. (Adams 405)

Casey adds, in the same breath, that any effort to assess the relationship between self and place should point not just to reciprocal influence but, more radically, to constitutive co-

ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is *no place without self; and no self without place* (ibid).

The interconnections between space, place and human memory we have explored through the poems of Bhatt ultimately bring us to this understanding- they are three distinct, essential and hence, irreducible markers that together shape the geography of our life. Space, despite being generic, cannot be reduced to a place, and memory, though temporal in nature, unfolds more in space.

When we turned to the beginning of this chapter, one of the assumptions that the chapter relied on was the spatial content of the memory and how this spatial memory turns the space of diaspora into a subjective space that one produces for her/himself. In the textual analysis of the poems Bhatt's memories explicitly disclose the spatiality it possesses and how she turns this spatiality as one of the spatialities of her becoming, self-becoming. This spatial memory or the spatial aspect of human memory can be referred to as one among the "trialectics of spatiality" (53 Soja) which can be referred to as "conceived space" or "secondspace" as reworked by Edward William Soja in his work *Thirdspace*. "Conceived space" is the term of Henri Lefebvre which is reworked by Soja to explain his conceptual analysis regarding the three inherent spaces that constitute our everyday spatialities. As mentioned before the concept of thirdspace as a subjective space can only happen when one understands about the first (real) and the second (imagined) spaces of their everyday lives. Soja understands "Secondspace is entirely ideational, made up of projections into the empirical world from the conceived or imagined geographies" (79). This secondspace is the 'conceived space' which is produced through the spatial workings of the human mind. He continues "...is the interpretive locale of the

creative artist and artful architect, visually or literally re-presenting the world in the image of their subjective imaginaries” (79). Sujata Bhatt in her poems discloses how her subjective imaginaries, her memories form her present life as a diaspora. She reconstructs her memories through her poems and the spatial content as seen in the analysis foregrounds her everyday life. This mental space, her imagined space is something that she has conceived through her experiences and perceptions during the events that occurred. It is, as Soja puts it, the “imaginative “poetics” of space” (79). Her memories are referents for her self-becoming in space. Her memories can be regarded as “‘cognitive maps’, mental images of space that we all carry with us in our daily lives” (79 Soja). These mental maps, her imagined geographies of selfhood constitute her space of diaspora. These memories are one of the essential markers that help her to turn the alienating spaces of diaspora into emancipatory and reassuring space.

In almost every poem we have seen, Sujata Bhatt reminds us that a “place is not simply a cluster of discernible memories held within the core of an individual. Rather, a place unfolds in the world, and does so against a backdrop of manifold influences, not all of which contribute to an individual’s attachment to that place” (Trigg 4). That being said, it is equally true of her poems that experiencing places through memories cannot be measured in objective, material terms. We can safely derive that it is the existential significance of space that Bhatt arrives at through every instance of memory. “Our phenomenological treatment of places as they unfold through memories has unambiguously shown that lived spatiality is not a container that can be measured in objective terms, but an expression of our being-in-the-world” (Ibid). As a method of understanding our place in the space of the world, phenomenology has helped us find the

“organic relations between subject and space” (Merleu-Ponty 293). Being in the world is, in actuality, being *placed* in the world, and this ‘emplacement’ of our self in space happens every day, in a continuous and organic process, through our memories. Every act of remembrance is an inner contraction of space in our very being.

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Chapter 3

Journeys: Spatial Extensions of Self

Where we are – the place we occupy, however briefly – has everything to do with what and who we are (and finally, that we are).

- (Benson 3)

The space of diaspora redefines to its people the roots (their homeland) and routes (the journeys to new lands) that determine their lives. These two concepts are central to the lives of the people of diaspora. It can be interpreted in two different ways as collective groups of diaspora as well as an individual part of the diaspora. While “...’roots’ might imply an original homeland from which people have scattered, and to which they might seek to return, ‘routes’ complicate such ideas by focusing on more mobile, multiple and transcultural geographies of home. On an individual level, ‘roots’ figure as a referent of belonging, the position and place of a person; and routes as a referent of the lack of fixity and evolving nature of belonging” (qtd. in Blunt and Dowling 199). As seen in the previous chapter, memory forms the base of the ‘roots’ that cling on to the imagination of the person even though s/he travels far away and settles in a locale that is culturally, socially and geographically different. Memory is revisited and reworked every time the writer recollects her experiences in the incident. The spatiality that structures the incident as seen in the previous chapter foregrounds the process of the

self's becoming in the space of diaspora. This chapter will focus on the theme of journeys which chart the expansion and the becoming of one's self in the physical spaces.

Journey, for the people of diaspora, is not just an act of movement in space. It is a movement away from the known world to the unknown world. This movement marks the crossing of borders and boundaries that the society, culture, nation and geography have drawn for each individual. It can be either a mass movement or a personal one leaving behind the nearest, intimate spaces and shelters of the homeland. The journeys of the people in diaspora span different locations. These multiple localities remain in their lives as markers of their self's expansion in the diasporic space. This is why in the space of diaspora, journeys too, like memory share an integral role in the formation of individual selfhood.

Journeys: Fluid Geographies of the Self

The act of becoming is more evident in the concept of journeys. Unlike memories, every journey is perceived as an event by the person as s/he travels to different places. The act of perception reflects in the act of becoming or realizing one's self. It happens along with the act of travelling to various landscapes. Journey can be regarded as an expansion of the self in space. When one visits or wanders in any landscapes, s/he comes in contact with the place materially and it leaves an impact on her/him physically and mentally.

The contact with the world (space/place) through the act of journey helps in building a connection between the self and the place. The geographical space is converted to an ontological space by the person's way of perceiving and experiencing the place.

Sensory impressions are essential to develop geographical understanding of the places one travels to. “The geographical perception”, as Paul Rodaway terms it, “is the perception of a world around us, of spatial relationships and the identification of distinctive places – to have a sense of place” (Tally 39). The sense of a place is created through the sensory impressions and perceptions of the person. The experience with the place in turn helps in constructing a bond with the place and the person. Edward Relph, a humanist geographer, explains this essence of places with the help of phenomenology. Phenomenology’s central concern is about “intentionality” which refers to “the ‘aboutness’ of human consciousness”(Cresswell 22). This “aboutness” is explained as one person cannot “be conscious without being conscious of something. Consciousness constructs a relation between the self and the world” (Cresswell 22). Relph is referring to this aspect when he notes: “the essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence” (43). It is this intentionality of the human mind that imparts the meaning to a place. The perceptions of a person are one among the ways to bridge out this relation between a place and the self. “The only way humans can be humans is to be ‘in place’. Place determines our experiences” (Cresswell 23). This bond is maintained as a way one connects one’s self with the space. Journeys in this way can be seen as one way to understand self’s expansion or realization in space.

The question of belonging is crucial to the people of diaspora. In such context, space is not just the physical entity to re-root oneself but space becomes one possibility to realize one’s home and self through memories (imagined journeys towards the self) and journeys (physical journeys of self in space). Mobility marks one key feature of diaspora

as the person continuously moves from one place to another. This mobility is reflected in their selves as these experiences in multiple locations constitute their own self understanding. Thus to belong in a certain place for a certain period of time has reflections in their respective identities. Belonging is not a plausible task for the people of diaspora. The journeys they partake in their life are a way to find home in these multiple locations. Home is not a single place or land for the people of diaspora. It is continuously shifting and remaking throughout their journeys. They find home in the self which is constituted through the imagined and real journeys. The space of diaspora is informed through these multiple intersecting journeys and this chapter concentrates on the physical (real) journeys that Sujata Bhatt attempts in her life and how the poems can be instances to understand the becoming of the self in this context.

Journeys become one of the motifs to understand the diasporic sensibility in Sujata Bhatt's poems. The poet's diasporic self reflects on how geographic expansion through journeys in a way expands one's understanding of herself/himself. The problem of belonging, exclusion and identity are linked with the position of being a diaspora. The physical migration is as difficult as the mental, imagined migrations that happen in the mind of the poet, Sujata Bhatt. Even these difficulties are re-imagined as ways that open to her a new world of self liberation. For Bhatt, her physical and mental journeys have contributed to understand her becoming in the spaces of diaspora. The memories and journeys are spaces of diaspora which help her to reconstitute the self. Such reconstitution is needed for the people of diaspora to belong in any places their life journey directs them to.

Journeys as Self-dispersals in Diaspora

Journeys represent the displacement and up-rootedness in the lives of diaspora. Sujata Bhatt discusses the uprooting of one's self from the homeland and that uprooting is fully understood when the new languages replace the mother tongue. The poems such as "Search for My Tongue" or "New Orleans Revisited" exemplify this situation where the native tongue is sidelined due to the influence of the language of the host land. Even though Bhatt ends the poems in a positive note, the pain of displacement and this uprooting from one's core space is evident in such poems. The journeys thus bring to her not just new locations and spaces to belong but also new tongues and roots to cling on to, being a diaspora. "The writers in the diaspora are a product of movement. They embody travel. The kind of language these writers use... conveys the variety of their translated lives. And in their writing they record the enormous richness, and pain, of displacement and loss" (qtd. in Sarwal 81). These 'translated lives' also represent their translated selves in the new languages and locations these journeys take them.

Sujata Bhatt's journeys from her childhood have influenced her to travel more in her later life. Her migration to America at the age of twelve along with her family and then later to Germany as part of her marriage, her life has been surrounded by these three main lands: India, America and Germany. In each of her poetry collections, we can see how these journeys become modes in understanding her position of being a diaspora. Her poetic landscapes explicitly relate to her experiences in the three continents (Asia, North America and Europe) where she has journeyed all alone, with her companion and her family. These journeys are ways of belonging for Sujata Bhatt. The places she travelled leave an impression on her and these impressions guide to locate her in this entwined life

of being a diaspora. The mobility of being a diaspora is well reflected in her poems which show the self's mobile, fluid nature. The self as the poet experiences and reflects upon is not rooted in one place but is constructed through her journeys to new places. The self as seen in poems is becoming through the journeys and memories of the events in her personal and diasporic life. Jeff Malpas, an Australian place philosopher notes about how a person's subjectivity is founded on the basis of the places one inhabits and travels to. Place and self have an elementary relation and it is this relation that Bhatt tries to build through her journeys. Malpas understands that:

Place is... that within and with respect to which subjectivity is itself established – place is not founded on subjectivity, but is rather that on which subjectivity is founded. Thus one does not first have a subject that apprehends certain features of the world in terms of the idea of place; instead, the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place. (35)

The poetical landscape of Bhatt's poetry shifts from a garden in Bhavnagar or Poona to streets of New England or Conil. Her poems examine spaces such as gardens, streets, rooms, bookstore, and cemeteries. In her understanding of these spaces, Bhatt tries to see how such spaces help a person to constitute her/his personal and social life in an alien land. The spatial features of the places she visits and inhabits are clearly observed in her poems. Bhatt's poems show how the persona or the poet herself is connected with the places and this connection is built through journeys. Journey or the act of movement in space is a predominant theme in Bhatt's life and poems. It is not synonymous with the unending turmoil of diasporic journeys as she willingly travels

around the world. She visits new places through her personal journeys or migrations. Her journeys in space lead her to engulf the diasporic loneliness and alienation she feels in the host lands. Journeys, for Bhatt, are a way to seek self integration in the unknown landscapes of her life.

In the first collection, *Brunizem*, Bhatt introduces this motif of ‘moving beyond’ the drawn boundaries that once defined her life. In the poem, “The Difference Between Being and Becoming”, Bhatt begins with a question “So where does the body house the soul? / Locked in the attic, / wings whirring against glass?” (23). Bhatt’s quest to find the difference between a person’s position of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ begins in this question. The answer is “No” (23), she says. Soul or self is not guarded securely inside one’s body but it is made through the acts or movements of the body in space. This self is constructed with the help of the senses that help one’s body to understand the world and one’s role in such a space. “These doors and windows are always open” (23), says the poet. This would likely mean how the body is not locked down but wide open to the world that surrounds us. The sensory organs in our body are open and seen as doors and windows which welcome the impressions that create the self.

Bhatt uses the word “beyond” to indicate the mobility she practiced in her childhood. From being a child, she learned to move across the space through intimating such spaces as her own or part of her growth. The phrases such as “beyond the house” (23), “beyond the well” (23) and “beyond the neem tree” (23) describe this act of mobility she exercised from her childhood. Her life from beginning was full of movements in physical spaces as seen here. She begins this theme of moving beyond or travel from the intimate spaces of a person slowly expanding it to the outer, real spaces.

This journey begins from the house, one of the intimacies of every being. Home is understood as “simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and social unit of interaction” (qtd. in Mallett 68). Being a spatio-social unit in determining a person’s role in the society, house is from where a person begins to occupy and evaluate the space that surrounds her/him. The movement from house to the well, another common space where the childhood plays happen, this becomes an act of new discovery to the persons. They understand the features of the space through the experience they have with the space. Then the movement towards the neem tree, another spatial spot for childhood plays also helps the poet to involve in the spaces outside her intimate world. This poem serves as a beginning point to understand the motif of journeys used by Bhatt in most of her poems: to understand the becoming of the self in space. The idea of becoming lies in movement or mobility. Being explains the static position of the person while becoming is an act of creation of oneself. This creation or making of the self in space is what Bhatt intends to explain through her idea of travel or journey.

There are different means of travels/journeys seen in the poems. Bhatt travelled in trains both in India and Germany (“Living with Trains”), and used roadways and waterways too for her journeys. Her life consists of such journeys which provide with different perspectives to negotiate her ‘self’ and the space that she engages with. She leaves a part of her ‘self’ in the places she has visited which helps her to remember the journeys quite well. This is evident in her poems which in a way traces these places to understand the self’s becoming that happened in such spaces. As being a diaspora, she tries to relate to her early spaces back in India along with her present life in Germany. These spaces are juxtaposed in such a way that her sense of loss is maintained by her

sense of belonging. The spaces of her childhood such as Bhavnagar, Maninagar or Poona are very much alive and vibrant within her conscious self in the spaces she travels such as Conil, Gale or Berlin. These spaces contradict in geographical, cultural and social terms but they coexist in her diasporic space, in her 'self'. Her poems trace these different modes of travels and it can be seen as a mapping, a cartographic method of self-becoming. A map making process or cartographic process intends to chart the places and here through her poems Bhatt tries to create a map of the places which have registered in her 'self'. It can be also seen as a "topoanalysis", which Bachelard defines as a "systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (8). The modes of travels used to trace different places tend to show Bhatt's different ways of charting the essence of her self's becoming through the journeys. A topoanalysis or a cartographic charting of the places is essential for the poet to trace her 'self-becoming. As Bachelard puts it "...we should have to undertake a topoanalysis of all the space that has invited us to come out of ourselves" (11), Sujata Bhatt's poems take this to a further step. Her topoanalysis, or the cartographic mapping intends to bring out the places that lie deep in her consciousness which mended, forced, tamed and evolved her self's becoming. The mode of travel she used in her poems can be understood as her way of mapping the self, arranging the places not in a chronological order but rather in a way she wants to express her self's journey.

In the poem "Living with Stones", Bhatt explains this idea of how the places she travelled coexist within her home, her 'self' irrespective of its differences and features. The poem talks about different stones Bhatt collected from the places she has visited. She begins with a geographical explanation of how continents have been formed. She says,

“The continents have rejoined each other / they’ve moved close together” (518). She continues, “...clasping each other like lost children” (518). These continents can be interpreted as the continents she has been to in her life. The continents have been brought together. But “they’ve split apart / bursting out into new formations”. It is not sure “where they want to be”. Oceans meet and “Stones / colliding, not knowing / which shore they belong to” (518). Like the continents, stones too are not sure which shore to reside in or belong to. They just collide and wander around.

“We’ve collected those stones” (518), She says. Then she describes line by line how these stones became a part of her own home, self and life. She explains this process of belonging:

At first, they merely slept

in our garden,

hibernated on the wooden floors

in our house. (518)

This conveys how the places that she once travelled to remained aloof to her new surroundings. They just stayed in the spaces they were kept, they were not being part of the home. But she assures, “Of course, they continued breathing” (518), they were alive. The process of belonging is gradual and she observes how “their souls began echoing sounds / from trees and ferns, / and from cats that would never go near the sea” (518). The stones or the markers of her travels around the world started influencing those objects and beings in the land. They started to belong together. Now, their presence has

spread over the entire house of the poet. “Now I see them everywhere:/ on our windowsills, bookshelves - / They’ve even taken over my desk” (518-19).

These stones began to cohabit in the intimate space of the poet’s home. She senses them in every corner of her house: windowsills, bookshelves and her desk. These stones become locators which help the poet to concur all her travel experiences into her home. These journeys live within her as this is one among the means to understand the becoming of the self. Self is created through the journeys she partakes in her life. These stones emerge as the markers that denote these journeys she completed in her life. But she personifies these stones to understand the dilemma to belong in a different place: “How do they feel, / living with strangers?” (518) This question in turn addresses poet’s own dilemma of being a diaspora and sharing the spaces with the people and places she doesn’t know. But she shows how comfortable such a living has turned into: “A huge, bluish grey stone from the Baltic, / with patches of milky white, / lies snug against / Connecticut granite” (518). She examines how the stones, from the European sea shore and the American coast lie together without altering the space they share. She lists down how these stones started belonging in her place- “smooth black stones / from the Pacific” (518) and “creamy yellow fossils / form Spain’s Atlantic cliffs” (519). She continues:

An inconspicuous stone

from the Yellow Sea

Startling white coral

from the Strait of Makassar

Somehow

they've learned to live with us. (519)

These stones, an ordinary one or a precious one, belong together as how they were before in this common space. They learned to live together in a different scenario from their respective homes. This space doesn't turn out to be an alienated space but a space of coexistence and togetherness. These stones have begun to enter the lives of the poet and her companion: "they've started to navigate / the mood of our silence, / the rush of our sleep" (519). These stones retain their own nature in this common space, or the poet's home. This shows how deeply the journeys have influenced the life of the poet. Each of the stones she has collected from her travels belongs within her in her intimate spaces, her home. They didn't tear down the home but added more colours and tone to it. They became part of home; they acquired their own spaces to belong. The poet ends the poem noting how these stones or in turn these journeys she has undertaken navigate her 'self', her pauses, her silences. These journeys helped her to understand her position being a diaspora. She has navigated through alien landscapes and shores and shared houses. But all such journeys, if one looks back, have helped her/his to understand them from a different perception. These journeys add different perspectives to one's life. They give more choices and reasons to see into one's self. She has described how slowly but definitely one can learn to belong with the help of the journeys one takes up in life. This poem becomes an instance to see how self and space are connected and this connection is essential if one is to understand one's self better.

The Geo-philosophy of Journey in Bhatt

Edward Relph has noted in his work how places are not just about locations or sites. He understands that “they are sensed in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual, routine, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for home, and in the context of other places” (29). It is a “chiaroscuro” setting which includes several shades and colours of other places or settings. The idea of a place is not an independent one; rather it is interconnected with a quite larger framework of places that one visits, the experiences one shares, the people one contacts, all of which find related in it. As seen in the earlier poem “Living with Stones”, the places the poet travelled come together and dwell in one of her intimate spaces, that is her home. As Relph noted, it is an amalgam of many things: the emotions the poet shared, the colours her journeys brought her, the experiences she created etc are seen through the stones which connect to the different places from which she collected them. The colours with which she describes each stone can also be seen as the vivid colours those journeys have brought to her mind. The places she engraved in her mind through her journeys belong with her in her home. This belonging brings to the poet a way to unwind her anxieties of alienation and isolation in a new land. These stones show her the process of belonging which is essential to one’s self understanding. As she notes in the beginning of the poem, the continent formation can be metaphorically referred to as self-formation through the journeys she attempted. “The continents have rejoined” (518), she says, which can imply how this situation of being a diaspora, the space which she handles while on these journeys has rejoined to form her own personal geography. As the title of the poem too suggests, Sujata Bhatt is “living” with these continents/stones she has handpicked on her journeys. This metaphor can denote how the

poet tends to see her individual process of belonging and becoming her 'self'. It can be referred to as her idea of geophilosophy which can be roughly described as to chart one's self-becoming through the geographies one travels through or the places one inhabits. Here as Bhatt does, there is an intense connection between the poet's self and the places/continents she has collected as part of her journeys. This is one of the processes by which Bhatt builds her own subjective geography.

Sujata Bhatt's poems take her readers to multiple landscapes and locations through various modes. Every act of travel, for Bhatt, becomes a way of finding not just solace in the places she visits. These travels register her body and mind binding them in the act of mobility. Her travels weave the connection between herself and the places. The places such as New Orleans as seen in the poems "New Orleans Revisited" or "History is a Broken Narrative" can be regarded as one of the places that she registered her becoming for a particular period of time. These places have become a part of her which cannot be understood separately. When she specifies that particular age of her's or that particular year or time, the place adds more value to the thought process and helps her situate or position her and her intimate people in the map of her life. She explores different means of travel in her mental and physical journeys. Walking in the street or beaches or the outskirts of country is one among them. Train journeys are also part of this means of travel where she brings the different journeys through train in different places. "Living with Trains", "Coffee" or "Bhagvati" etc. are poems that talk about the train journeys in India and Germany. She also talks about the mode of travel through water, which is also incorporated in her poems such as "We are Adrift", "She slipped through the Suez Canal" etc. These poems try to bring out the mode of travelling and how the act

of travel through any of the means supplements the whole situation of the poem. She takes her readers to the meticulous nuances of each of these journeys she has undertaken in her life. Her poems convey how her outlook to the places differs as her position as an individual changes from place to place. In Bhatt's poetry, nothing stays aloof; the narrative, the mode and the persona flow in unison.

"Baltimore" is one of Bhatt's poems which describe her experiences of walking in the city of Maryland, Baltimore. It is a recollection for the poet as understood from the beginning "I'm still living in that evening" (43) lines. She uses the mode of walking to know the city more intensely and her description of the landscape and the region of Baltimore provides the readers to know the intensity she shared on that evening during her walk through the port city. She explains how the sight of fireflies emerging out of the green lawns in that evening left her with a hope: "For the rest of the summer I waited / for everything" (43). During her walk, she found no flowers but dry grass all around. The poet noticed the changes that happened to the dry grass; it gave way to green lawn here and there. But to her astonishment, "then the fireflies swirled out / lime and mustard sparks" (43). The colours that were devoid in the season came back to her as a surprise. This urged her to wait the rest of the summer to bring such sudden changes that she wanted in her life. She does not explain the things she waited for but as she hints at the scenic surroundings that were brightened with the fireflies during her walk, one can understand how she was looking forward to such a magical change of circumstances in her life too. The place, Baltimore, brings to her mind this sudden burst of colours in the dry evening of the summer. She recollects: "the rest of that summer / spiralled into one dry evening" (43). Nothing changed in the rest of that summer for the poet, but it all got

penned down to this particular event that occurred in Baltimore. The landscape of Baltimore intervened in the life of the poet through the connection and the presence she made on that evening. This poem shows how the physical presence of a person can alter the geography of the place. This is one way of exemplifying Henri Lefebvre's concept of production of space. When Lefebvre considers space as being produced by the everyday relations of the social beings in their own respective places, he tends to focus on how the 'physicality' or the 'embodied space' of the individuals creates and generates space according to their needs. The bodily actions which include the perceptions of the individuals contribute to how they generate space in their everyday localities. As Phillip E. Wegner notes, in Lefebvre's theory, "space is itself never constituted as a singularity", but it is polyvalent and constituted by a "dialectically interwoven matrix" of human interactions" (Tally 118). It is the matrix of multiple human interactions that alter the nature of space and further generates its production.

The places one visits stay with one through different recollections. It may be the scenic beauty, or the people or the weather aspect that strike the mind of the perceiver. As Eric Dardel would put it, "a landscape is something more than a juxtaposition of picturesque details; it is an assemblage, a convergence, a lived moment" (qtd. in Seamon and Mugerauer 23). As seen in this poem, landscape assembles the place and the perceiver. The act of perception builds the connection between the poet and the landscape that surrounds her. This particular "lived moment" for the poet represents her presence in one of the places she has been to. This poem shows how a person becomes a part of the landscape that engulfs her/his presence.

The landscape that follows one wherever s/he goes is recorded in diverse manners through one's perception. As in the earlier poem, it became this promise of hope in the whole of summer for the poet and the place, Baltimore, is registered in her mind through this sudden burst of colours from the sight of the fireflies. These can be markers or tokens that one perceives when one enters a new or familiar landscape. The familiar landscape can also in turn provide new meanings and connection in every act of travel by its side. Landscape emerges as one of the essential features that intensify a person's relation with her/his surroundings. They are essential "because they harbor the place of our memories, because they are the visible matrix of where we live" (Seamon and Mugerauer 24). Every action that one undertakes in her/his life takes place somewhere. This is not a background where these actions take place but an influential and experiential element that forces us to perceive the inner voice of ourselves. Landscapes are in a way our own remembrances of how we have identified with ourselves and the world. The bond that one finds with any place recites this connection, the moment as explained by Edward Relph, the 'visible matrix' of how and where we live, travel and belong.

Sujata Bhatt through her poems charts the landscapes that she came across through her travels. When the poem, "Just White Chips" conveys the scenic beauty of the shore near the Baltic Sea, "Beyond Edinburgh" provides different travel experiences, shows how the landscapes are constructed and conveyed in her personal and poetic narratives. She describes seashells as "just white chips" with no specific charm in it. But she holds on to them as if comforting them and loving them only because "I found them between spinach gumboed seaweed / and giant lychee jellyfish / while I ran between thunderstorms/along the Baltic Sea" (171). She keeps them with her as a memoir for her

travel, she says “wanting them only / because of a certain day at a certain place” (171).

The place near the Baltic Sea which connects the main lands of Europe is reduced to the sight of these white chips, seashells for the poet. It can be looked into as her way of spatially condensing the journeys into memoirs or things that she can carry along within her life. Seashells become spatial contractions for that particular place for Bhatt. They are totems of travel that she likes to retain with her. It is her way of creating a geophilosophy of the self. Through these spatial contractions of journeys she undertook, seashells become relics that she can revisit to know herself. As William Blake wants us ‘to see a world in a grain of sand’, Sujata Bhatt’s seashells represent the journeys/travels through different places. She wants them because of the particularity it has, both temporally and spatially. Thus every act of perception is ingrained in terms of time as well as place. Both are mutual constituents in determining a person’s relation to her/his surroundings. Thus the landscape turns to be an assemblage of many details that fuse together to provide the poet a keyhole to her own self.

“Beyond Edinburgh” brings in the travelling experience of two modes: train (land) and boat (water). She begins with the train journey in which “The diesel fumes make me dizzy” (172) she says, “but the colour revives me, / keeps me surprised” (172). She describes how the colours of the fields of rapeseed spread beyond “the Firth of Forth” (172) and Edinburgh flashes away through the train windows. She blends in all the colours that she passes through and notices how these fields add paint to the “damp grayish / blues and musty duns” of the land that she travels by. This train journey is through the country of Scotland, the east and west sides of the country. She travels through the Firth of Forth and then to the Moor of Rannoch. She shares her startled

experience of being able to perceive such colourful fields in the one end of Scotland and when she comes to the Moor of Rannoch, it is “ the absence of buildings, the absence of people” (172) that shocks her. The place is covered with “sudden patches of dust” and it leaves her to wonder: “Didn’t someone once live here/and here?” (172). The anxiety shared by the poet relating her considerations to both the place and its inhabitants is because of her concern for the idea or sense of place that resides within every person.

Sujata Bhatt, from all her journeys in India, America and Germany has lived through the absence and presence of the places which lie deeper within her memories and self. She understands how integral is to belong to a place and one’s longing for a place. These travels, both migratory and personal, provided her a sense of place, where she knows to belong and inhabit and later long within her inner memories. “What is it to register a sense of place? It is, in large, to comport oneself to the world in a particular way” (Janz 136). This way of coherence, to comport to the places one visits is shown in most of her poems. “Beyond Edinburgh” ends with the boat journey in which she travels “beyond the Isle of Skye/ to the edge of the world I know” (173). This poem covers the main parts of Scotland, the eastern shore “beyond Edinburgh/ beyond the Firth of Forth” (172) and then “beyond the Moor of Rannoch” (172) the other way and lastly to the islands of Skye. She incorporates both land and water means of journey and shares its subtle experiences. The word “beyond” is referred to in the title of the poem and has been used along with the places that she travelled as shown in this poem. This moving beyond the expected places or thresholds is something that she urged from her childhood days. The poem “Difference between Being and Becoming” clearly portrays the meaning of this word “beyond” in the diasporic and personal context of the poet. Her consistent

attempts to move beyond the places through travels/journeys, become the very rhythm of her later life. As seen in this poem, the poet finds the boat journey as leading farther “to the edge of the world I know” (173). The sky’s colour revives the thoughts of the poet and “keeps” her “watching/for something more” (173). These travels that she did throughout the main lands of Scotland articulate how the poet and her ‘self’ are registered in the places. She, as seen in most of her travel poems, creates a sense of connection with the place, the people and its landscape through various modes of bodily and non-bodily perceptions. She perceives the nuances of the places she visits and tries to depict clearly in her poems. As Edward Casey puts it “to live is to live locally and know is first of all to know the place one is in” (18). Bhatt’s life as a traveler to several places and its representation in the poems shows that she knows the place through her experiences and her perceptions.

In one of the poems, “Belfast, November 1987”, she asks: “How does one begin/ to understand a place, a time?” (175) Sujata Bhatt’s travels are one of the modes she uses to understand a place through the intimate or personal experience one builds with the places. She insists on how difficult these journeys or travels are for an individual but still there is this constant urge that makes her to recollect the journey and long for more journeys to more places. Retelling a journey is urging to open the meticulous details bounded in one’s experience with the place, its landscape, people and the surroundings. A place, as Edward Casey notes “has the ability to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of where we are” (qtd. in Janz 40). Places, through the journeys one attempts in life, evoke in an individual the core element to find her/him. Places help one to identify and relate one’s presence in the

world. One's existence is spatially bounded as places are where one situates, inhabits and travels as part of one's life. This urge, this need is what can be understood from Bhatt's urge for the need to recall the experience of the journey she has done in/through the places.

Private Geographies of Self-discovery

Bhatt's poems reconstruct the places out of her individual experience. J K Wright notes how "the entire earth is an immense patchwork of miniature *"terrae incognitae"* – the private geographies of individuals" (qtd. in Relph 36). The place one lives and moves in is recreated in every contact one makes with the place. It is being recreated according to the need and perception of the individual. When Bhatt talks about any place, may that be Poona or Ahmedabad (as in "The Echoes in Poona", "Parvati Temple, Poona", "Maninagar Days" or "Whenever I Return") or Bremen/Germany (as in "At the Flower Market", "Mozartstrasse 18" or "Living with Trains") or Conil ("The Rooster in Conil" or "Distances" or "Gazpacho"), she tries to bring the connection and the cohesion these places have towards her. In all these poems, Bhatt has well constructed her "private geographies" out of her travels to these different places. She has been intensely involved with these places and their people that she knows the essential features that define each place. She takes objects such as seashells (Just White Chips) or stones ("Living with Stones") as memoirs that instill the very essence of the places she has been to. Her poems are indeed her "private geographies", geographies of a diaspora who chose travel as one of the means to find her true self. This concept of creating herself a private geography clearly welds with the idea of thirdspace, a subjective space. As Soja theorizes it, the real, physical space is one among the modes of his trialectics which comprise the thirdspace.

Journeys, as Bhatt perceives it, enable her to make her private geography. She creates her own space through her diasporic experiences as a traveler. Her self's physical expansion is mapped through the places that she travels to.

Stuart Hall echoes on how an identity of a person develops through the multiple spatialities and localities he or she shares due to situations. Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan's ideas of "topophilia" invoke in us how the affinity towards the place is subjective to each person. Tuan defines "topophilia" in his work *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* as "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (4). The term "couples sentiment with place" (119), states Tuan. For Bachelard "topophilia" refers to the place one loves or as he puts it "the space we love" or "*felicitous space*" (35). The principle that lies in both of their perspective is the attachment or the emotion one relates to place or location. Topophilia explains the intense connection between the individual and the place. This connection is profoundly personal and reflective. Stuart Hall's idea of identity linked with the places one travels to, both physically and imaginatively, brings in how this link is evident in the concept of diaspora. Diaspora as a position is spatial because of the travels and paths that have led the people to leave their "roots" and search for new "routes". Sujata Bhatt's migration is not a forced one but made out of the choices of her family. Her travels in search of new homes that reflect to her ancestral home in Bhavnagar/Maninagar/Poona are clearly conveyed in the poems like "The Rooster in the Conil". The urge to travel beyond is seen in the poems of Bhatt and in one of the poems, "Finding India in Unexpected Places", Bhatt connects to how these journeys led her more closer to find different ways to relate to her "roots" and self. She explains how she finds India in many places she has been to. She says:

A street in Bath,
 a bus in Medellin,
 a gesture in Gyeongju
 a yellow fragrance in Oaxaca,
 Oleanders on the isle of Skopelos. (542)

The way Bhatt notices the places is unique and she particularly points out the various things that strike her during her journeys. The places are parts of South West England, Columbia, Mexico, Greece and Korea. The places are not lined according to the dates she went for the journey, rather it is charted out through the things or places that came to her mind. “Memories distort geography” (542), she says. Her distortion of geography through memory is an act of altering the physical geography and creates a personal geography, a geography where she places her topophilic places which are more close to chart her self-becoming. These alterations can be seen as her way of spatially orienting her ‘self’ and its journey through the places. This geography is personal which she creates for her understanding of the places. This is how she expressed her idea of finding ‘roots’ outside her homeland through the act of journey. The journeys she undertook brought her more close to understand her nation which in a way might have helped her to situate her cultural and social position as a diaspora. As an individual, these things/objects/feelings she had during her journeys take her to relate her ‘self’ and how she remembered those moments as a way to reconnect to those places through her memories. This is one of the reasons why she remarked on the distortion of geography as her memory of the journeys itself has a map of geography as defined and guided by her

‘self’. Rather than losing India or her ‘roots’ as part of her new journeys, she discovered new ways of relating to her ‘roots’ incorporating her own self understanding.

Journeys for Sujata Bhatt are a way of asserting her self’s presence in her world. The journeys she held in India and to different parts of other places in a way are how she communicates to her ‘self’ spatially. A person’s self is not pre-given to the person, it comes from one’s own understanding and how this understanding helps to relate and identify the person with his respective surroundings, people and things. Place is an integral criterion to understand one’s own self. In such a way, Bhatt’s journeys are mainly the journeys of the self. As Relph’s concept conveys, it is her private geography, the geography of her private self.

Sujata Bhatt has maintained her interests for places and journeys in new engaging ways as seen in her poems. As she expressed her urge to “move beyond” the boundaries in the poem “The Difference between Being and Becoming”, she continues to interest her readers with new tales that justify her idea of journey to understand one’s self and belonging. In her recent collection, *Poppies in Translation*, she narrates how her poems communicate to her about its interests, needs and expectations. “Ars Poetica with Poppies and Birds” refers to the whole collection which describes poppies and birds along with the pictorial representation of the sections. This poem expresses the power of the narrative which demands the attention of the writer:

One day, the book says

it wants to be painted

not written.

The next day, the book claims

to be a garden. (20)

The whole process refers to how a book decides its tale to be written and the influence it has on the writer. The idea of journey to new places is one of the demands that the book might try to convey, says the poet. “Bring me some golden poppies/ from California” (21) or “I want to see/ those rare white poppies from the Alps” (21) etc. are the ways in which the book tries to demand her to take up new journeys, to interact with new places and surroundings to include in her “creation” as in her poems. This list of demands never ends as the book wants the poet to find, “the rarest of the rare,/ the most difficult to grow/ a blue poppy from the Himalayas” (21). “Go on’, it will urge you” (21), says the poet. This urge to travel, to cross one’s intimate places and to travel around in search of ‘rare’ things is what Bhatt has been doing as part of her writing poems. These travels that she made, physically and mentally, boost up her imagination and her sense of belonging.

Edward Gibson in “Understanding the Subjective Meaning of Places” expressed his views on the need of journeys to multiple places, a myriad of places to sustain one’s identity and selfhood. He says: “A mind shaped through travel and cultural change will embody in its idea of meaningful places a far greater area of the earth than a mind in the myopia of one locale and single ideology” (qtd. in Ley and Samuels 138). This idea of how a mind that travels and perceives new places understands the world and her/himself better is one of the motifs that is delivered in the poems of Bhatt. Here in this poem, the poet imagines that it is the book that urges to find and see new places and things, to

develop her book of translation. The main aim of the book as the poet understands, “the book simply wants you to go away/ so it can be a garden of birds” (21). To be a garden is to encompass a variety of species of plants, flowers and birds and to belong despite their differences in one single place. This idea of the book as a garden can be seen as one of the principles of Michael Foucault – his concept of ‘heterotopia’. “The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (25). Foucault explains this site of garden as a contradicting site where it is “the smallest parcel of the world and the totality of the world” (26). The idea of the book as a garden of birds explains how it demanded rare species of poppies from opposite corners of the world. California, Alps and even Himalayas come to coexist within the book of gardens. It is something that can attract the birds, the migratory birds which travel and convey to the book about the rare species of these flowers. The idea of journey and why it is essential in understanding one’s self is sustained in Bhatt’s poetry from the first to the last collection of poems.

Referring to such contradicting sites where the poet feels at ease and at home, there are many such places that she consistently refers to in her poems. The place names or some continents or some parts of the ocean are seen in all her collections in reference to journeys and memories. Sujata Bhatt finds places as intriguing as her memories. Her identity or the selfhood is not shaped by her homeland or host land alone, but through her journeys to different places along with her experiences and events that made these journeys turn into interrogating memories. “Identity has many imagined ‘homes’ (and therefore no one single homeland; it has many different ways of ‘being at home’ – since it conceives of individuals as capable of drawing on different maps of meaning and

locating them in different geographies at one and the same time – but it is not tied to one, particular place” (qtd. in Thieme 215). Stuart Hall’s words echo the multiple localities that shape the selfhood of a person. It is not a single place or location where the self is rooted but different places that one comes in contact with. These varied places can belong with the individual in any one particular place where the individual can correlate to all other places simultaneously.

Most of the poems that talk about the motif of journey have a deep geographical resonance. The poems such as “Point No Point” and “How Far East is it Still East?” give an altogether new perspective to the readers who look for the understanding of the geographical directions and positions of the places that lead us. The poet asks “How far east is it still east?/ And how far west is it still west?” (200-1). The concepts of east, west, north and south are marks that define a place geographically as per the cartographic understanding. But the poet urges a question that seeks answer beyond the cartographical positioning of the places.

Somewhere in the North Pacific

the waters part

only because we think they do

but how could the ocean

really be split in two? (201)

She urges to question again this idea of borders and possessions:

Where are your stars?

and where is your sky?

which way so the waters part

for you?

Which way will you let

the currents take you? (201)

These questions in turn are rhetoric as the poet clearly knows that the geographical space is beyond measurable.

Journey as Emplacement of the Self

The journeys of Sujata Bhatt in India, her homeland are in a way not just to claim her 'roots' but also to shape her belonging in the roots of her homeland. The journeys or the travels that she engages herself in the streets of Ahmedabad or Poona or Maninagar etc show how deeply she is connected with her native streets and places. There are a few poems which detail poet's train journeys through the southern part of India such as "Bhagvati" and "Coffee". These two poems provide meticulous references to the geographical specifications of those places. She also takes the readers to the nearby spots where she stepped by during her travels. The poem "Good Omens" talks about how she along with her companion visited an old step-well in Ahmedabad. She begins the journey with a question: "What is the meaning of a journey?" (505). This journey inwards the step-well to see the bottom is tiring for the poet. "I clung to pillars/leaned back against walls/ So afraid of falling in" (502), she says. She describes a peacock that flew when she stepped out of the well. They were startled by its beauty and stared at its movement from

one tree to the other. It is as if something has struck the poet, she feels “as if Truth / had suddenly appeared in every molecule / around us – and we could not go” (504-5). She repeats: “What is the meaning of a journey?” (505). Now she has known her roots, why the need to travel around. She came to see how the journeys help her to find her true self, reflecting in the things that surrounds herself in. “How long has it taken me / to speak of this / How does one continue? / How shall I - ?” (505), she says, and further asks: “And what about the tangents/ the detours?” (505). The journey to India has made her conscious of many truths that lie within her and her ‘self’. Even when she has moved out of India, the places, the things or objects that bind her to her roots lay deep within her ‘self’. The startling insight she had when she saw a peacock, the train journeys that invoked in her about the people and places that she has an acquaintance with etc. help Bhatt realize her sense of place, her own roots. “The sense of place emerges as a multisensory crystallization of what we value both within ourselves and in the world” (Janz 136). This experience she had during her visit to India summoned in her the essential need for journeys in her life and the detours that lead her always to the places where she can be at home with her intimate places and people.

“There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places we were born and grew up, where we live now or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world” (Relph 43). Bhatt through her journeys in India involve herself with these associations that led her to take detours in her lives and helps her to familiarize with the

places that she once has been to. She ends the poem with the banyan tree that has been there for a long time near the step well.

A tree so old, it has always
 been here, you said
 So many vines and trunks
 branches becoming shoots
 and new trunks – such a cluster-
 a shelter. (506)

She describes how this tree, its huge branches and trunks remind her of the cluster and shelter it provides. A shelter that she seeks all through her journeys and detours and it might be how she acquired this sense of belonging, secure in the places she visits.

“Go to Ahmedabad” is another poem that brings in another phase of her journeys in India. She accumulates many issues such as poverty, suffering of women and children etc into the poem and it also reflects how mundane is her experience in her hometown streets and how well she could capture it in the poem. She includes the stark realities of India and the migrants in America. She knows what suffering is, when she says:

And suffering is
 when I walk around Ahmedabad
 for this is the place

I always loved

this is the place

I always hated

for this is the place

I can never be at home in

this is the place

I will always be at home in. (81)

She airs her sense of contradiction about how the places that once she loved have turned to be the ones she hated. She always felt Ahmedabad as her ‘home’, but now she cannot even feel at home in Ahmedabad. She expresses how neither in India nor in America she could feel to be at home. Both the places in a way did not belong to her. She says this place is where she can’t be at home in, but lastly she brings the idea, corrects herself, saying: “This is the place / I will always be at home in” (81). The plight of the people suffering from epidemic diseases and of the migrants who try to keep up their status in foreign land is brought out clearly by the poet. She has seen both the extremes, in India and in America. But Ahmedabad echoes in her memories and experiences as one of her original places where she “can always be at home in” (81) than America. As Anne Buttimer has explained, “people *in situ* are the essence of place” (195). The essence of the place is within the poet who recognizes the pros and cons of being at her original place.

Sujata Bhatt's journeys as seen in these poems convey about the urge she has about the journeys and how these supplement her position as a diaspora. She addresses the problem of belonging and homelessness and defines to the readers what indeed is belonging for her and how she feels at home in the places she travels to. In the poem "Well, Well, Well" she recites the new meanings for the word 'gypsy' and 'witch' which is commonly said about the people of diaspora especially the women in diaspora. She incorporates geographical, topographical and cartographical details in the poem. She describes the map drawn by Arno Peters who according to her "rediscovered the world" (85). He has changed the colours of the continents in his map and she says "I'm trying to figure out how the waters stay apart" (88). She continues to lurk on the question of home. This is the question that she tries to address through her constant journeys:

What does it mean to feel at home?

Sometimes when you walk into a house

and wander through the rooms until you feel the doors

and windows snug around you,

when you walk across the wooden floors and feel

blood clots in your throat then you know

it's the wrong house. (88-9)

She looks for more answers through her journeys, what it is to be at home and not to feel at home in certain places. The poems discussed earlier also try to deal with the question of 'home'. But then she asks, "What if it's the wrong country?" (89). The

continents Asia, America and Europe have been a part of her life and her journeys redefine the relation she has with these continents. As she expressed in one of the poems “The Fourth Monkey”: “Don’t bind me for a touch of Asia, / a touch of Africa / I have the full DNA” (484). This idea of belonging to all these continents simultaneously is one of the motifs that the poet reiterates in all of her collections. Most of the poems that deal with recollection or her experiences during a journey bring in the places, the landscapes she has travelled in her life. Her poetical landscapes collide and correlate with the geographical landscapes of her life.

“How can she feel at home in so many places? / How do gypsies know when to leave?” (88), the poet asks. The idea of being a gypsy, being able to wander anywhere and disappear as she please, is what Bhatt relates herself with. Bhatt refers to Arno Peter’s rediscovering of the world as he paints it differently to show a new world being perceived by her as part of her journeys. The diasporic experiences of Bhatt, as a gypsy who is not welcomed at some places but who makes some places her own, are constituted in this idea of painting the world new. Her world, her own space where she seeks physical expansion of the self through her journeys, she indeed hopes to create or paint the world her own. Every diasporic traveler in a way carries this gypsy experience within.

The poet has referred to this word ‘gypsy’ in more poems. In her recent collection, *Poppies in Translation*, the poem “Crear” notes about her visit to Crear in Scotland. She says “In West Berlin they thought I was a gypsy, / a refugee – in East Berlin I was / only my passport, completely untouchable” (44). Her identity as a ‘gypsy’, ‘a refugee’ is welcomed by Bhatt as she knows to feel at home in all the places that she has visited and these places belong within her too. She knows when to leave a place and

when to return to that place. She has done these detours and journeys as part of knowing and defining her selfhood. In the previous chapter on memory, I have discussed the use of lizards and monkeys in her poems. The poet identifies her life with that of a lizard. In “Lizard, Iguana, Chameleon, Salamander”, the question of identity was taken up by the poet among these reptiles. “*Who am I? Lizard whispers / Who am I?*” (278). It continues:

What does it matter

as long as I can change

into any colour -

What does it matter

as long as I bring luck

to every place I visit. (278)

Her idea of ‘home’ is something that one creates out of the place one lives in. She has lived and travelled to many sides of the world and all these places, her trajectories of her ‘self’ is clearly portrayed in these poems. She has seen the agony, the plight of being an alien to the landscapes of her residing and she has been welcomed to, belonged and cohabited in these alien landscapes as her ‘home’ through her recollection and her travels to new places. These journeys have provided her with the utmost choices to relate and understand or situate herself in this world. In her autobiographical essay, Bhatt says “I consider myself to be an Indian writer, but I like to think of myself as living in the world as opposed to in any country” (qtd. in Sandten 100). Bhatt’s idea of ‘living in the world’

echoes her concept of belonging to all places, continents that reside within her lived spatiality.

“Your Sorrow” is one of the poems that discusses the idea of journeys and what will the end of every journey bring to the traveler. It begins with an epigraph “You take your sorrow with you when you leave. / However wide the sea or sky between, / the journey’s end will bring you no reprieve” (210). Bhatt tries to reallocate that statement to suit the condition of people like her for whom journey is one of the ways to understand and situate oneself. “But what if you can change / and your sorrow becomes / your memory, a broken bone, / a finger that heals strangely” (210). She tries to argue about the healing of the sorrow that one takes with her/him throughout their journeys. Bhatt continues:

Isn’t there a place
that would make you forget?
a sky that would make you disagree with yourself - ?
A sea that would toss
your sorrow back in your face
shattered into a hundred,
a thousand different questions? (210)

She looks for a denial of the epigraph, she asks whether the journey might make you forget of your past or it can question one’s integrity. Can’t the places, the sky, the sea

that you travel to make you or toss to you a thousand questions that you would not want to address? All of these can happen, says Bhatt. But she is not clear, she doesn't know. "Is it reprieve / the journey's end should bring?" (211), but reprieve from what all questions and sorrow. She provides with another way to see it:

Or is it enough

simply to have gone away -

to have gone away so far

for so long that finally reprieve

is too gentle a word, too one-sided

for what you need,

for what you've already stepped toward. (211)

Bhatt strikes the idea of how for people in diaspora, journey is a mode of existence and it is not relief that they find at the end of the journey. It is the will to go away, to find more places to belong to and connect them with the world. Every act of travel is an act of emplacement of the self in space.

Eleanor Wilner's epigraph says "There are always, in each of us, / these two: the one who stays, / the one who goes away" (191). This is how Bhatt begins her poem, "The One Who Goes Away". She begins, "But I am the one / who always goes away" (191). She admits that she never stayed back, clinging on to any places whether that be her homeland or her host land. She recollects "The first time was the most/was the most /

silent” (191). The first time when she left she did not answer to any who came to see her off. This denotes her first migration as a child to America from India:

I am the one/ who always goes away.

Sometimes I’m asked if

I were searching for a place

that can keep my soul

from wandering

a place where I can stay

without wanting to leave. (192)

Her journeys tell the readers her desire to see new places and the need for new journeys in her life. Her poems are her trajectories that record her life journeys. She never looked for a place to chain down her soul, but instead she wanted to leave, to look for new horizons. “Maybe the joy lies / in always being able to leave” (192), she says. It is this possibility of her life to leave whenever she wanted to, to look for more places to connect her ‘self’. “But I never left home. / I carried it away / with me – here in my darkness / in myself” (192). Bhatt imparts her idea of what it feels to be at home. Home for Bhatt is never an architectural building or a particular land or place; it is one part within herself. She says how she “managed to hide/ my home behind my heart” (193). The way she carried it within her heart shows the immense ability that one has within their respective selves. Even when the earth and the hearth called her to root down to them, she didn’t stay. She always went away. “Because I must” (194), she says,

with my home intact
 but always changing
 so the windows don't match
 the doors anymore – the colours
 clash in the garden -
 And the ocean lives in the bedroom (194).

How spatially has she put her idea of self and home in those lines! She always moved away because of her home, her self. It is not a stable thing but that becomes process by process. Her home is always changing, suiting the new colours, the landscapes, the sceneries that her journeys have brought her to. The colours of the doors and the windows clash in the garden and the ocean lives in her bedroom. Her spatial imagination of her home that stays within her 'self' is clearly portrayed in those lines. Her journeys have taken her to multiple places and all these places belong within her 'self'. Thus the doors and windows do not match as it should and the ocean is a part of her intimate spaces. It resides within her bedroom.

Spatial Practices of Self-expansion

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. (194)

Her conception of home is something that she carries within her. She modifies it according to the journeys she makes and these modifications are altered as she wants them to be. This home that she hid behind her heart, within herself is a metaphorical way of stating how she can encompass the lived spatiality of her 'self'. It is not the normal geography that we are familiar with. This is geography that she herself created and restructured for her multiple spatialities. Her lived spaces coexist within her through the journeys she undertakes in her life. These journeys are not bringing her relief or reprieve. It is this choice of belonging within any place as she carries her home with herself that she attains in her life through these physical journeys. Bhatt's idea of moving out from the home to the open world echoes Yi-Fu Tuan's idea of 'hearth' and 'cosmos'. In his autobiography, Tuan notes "...the life-path of a human being moves naturally from "home" to "world", from "hearth" to "cosmos" (2). It is this movement that has been mapped in the poems thematically arranged in this chapter. Bhatt's movement from her intimate spaces of her home to her exploration of self through her journeys, winding on how she develops her private geography, her own 'thirdspace' is what she manages to convey through her poems too. She has her 'home intact' within her; even though the colours of the walls and windows clash in her new places where she visits, she still finds way to belong in that place with her 'home'. Her way of journeying through the world is

not leaving behind one's intimate spaces, but carrying them all within her deeper self. It is how she feels 'at home' in many places.

Edward Soja notes how every individual is inherently spatial along with being social and historical that they participate in the construction of geographies, societies and histories (73). This construction of one's space can be very subjective in nature and also be collectively done. Here, as analyzed through the poems of Sujata Bhatt, the spatial images chart how she has been able to create a space of her own. Her act of journeying can be regarded as one of the modes of Soja's trialectics. The perceived space or the first space for Soja denotes the material spatialities which one can distinguish from other spaces. He lists these materialized spaces:

in the absolute and relative locations of things and activities, sites and situations; in patterns of materialized phenomena across spaces and places; in the concrete and mappable geographies of our lifeworlds, ranging from the emotional and behavioral space "bubbles" which invisibly surround our bodies to the complex spatial organization of social practices that shape our "action spaces" in households, buildings, neighborhoods, villages, cities, regions, nations. (75)

The perceived space or "spatial practice" is "directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description" (66). The journey as a motif that appears in most of the poems deals with the exploration of this physical, perceivable, material space. "The spatial practice of a society is revealed through this deciphering of

its space” (Soja 66). The perceived space is “presented as both medium and outcome of human activity, behavior and experience” (Soja 66). The travels Bhatt undertakes can be seen as a way of deciphering the space through one’s perceptions. Her spatial metaphors convey the poet’s choice to travel to more places (“I am the one who goes away”) which is a way of making sense of this first space or the perceived space. She traverses the material, physical geographies and this space contributes to her process of self-becoming. There are overlaps of the perceived and conceived spaces as the boundary drawn between real and imagined often blend. But even if taken separately, they continue to make sense. For Bhatt, these two modes of spatiality, her memories (imagined/conceived) and journeys (real/perceived), indelibly mark her self’s becoming in the space of diaspora.

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Conclusion

Where there is space there is being.

- Frederic Nietzsche (quoted in Lefebvre 22)

In the most elementary sense, Nietzsche's words convey one of the main concerns of this study: being and its space. To make sense of oneself, one has to make sense of one's place. The self of a person, the inner consciousness, is not a constant thing. It is an entity that is being created through one's different actions in the world. One's experiences constitute one's selfhood. It is not just the physical experiences; the psychological experiences too affect one's formation of selfhood.

Why is it essential to make sense of selfhood? No matter how things change, to provide meaning to one's life or situations, one has to refer to oneself. Thus, to exist and to be aware of a person's existence, one needs to have a sense of the self and what forms its becoming. Time and space are mutual referents that build the foundation to a human being's world. But normally the time is figured out to be the field of life as it always progresses whereas space remains constant. But space even though constant in nature can impact the beings that occupy it. When the understanding of a person's evolution is rooted only in time, it evades other possible fields that contribute to the evolution of an individual's self. Space, as one among the concerns that can help in charting the progression of a person's life, includes the temporal existence too. Space generates events that constitute the very lives of persons.

The becoming of the self in space is the main argument of the study. The study explored the possibility that self, which was conventionally understood in terms of temporality, can be assessed through the inherent spatialities that govern the lives of an individual. The relation between self and space is so complementary and transformative that the presence of space not only alters the creation of self but it is in turn affected by the presence of a person too. As seen in the preceding chapters, the main argument of this study was to see how space informs and transforms a person's self. The poems of Sujata Bhatt, a poet who inhabits the diasporic space, were seen as instances to see how a person incorporates the spatialities of her life to transform her present and past. As seen in the theoretical background for diaspora, the field of diaspora is a contested position where the multiple locations define the multiple selves of the individuals of diaspora. Their consciousness is deeply rooted in their spaces: home, streets, cities, countries etc. They weave their own selves through these localities that in a way define them. As phenomenologists look at it, only when one is aware of one's environment can one be able to make sense of one's self. This method of phenomenology, as seen through the lens of the confluence of self with its immediate surroundings, its spaces, has been used as a tool throughout this study. The postmodern spatial theorization of Edward Soja and other spatial theorists such as Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre and human geographers/philosophers such as Edward Relph, Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Casey too were referred to in order to analyze the poems of Sujata Bhatt.

The argument of the study was thematically explored in three chapters where the first chapter talked about the condition of selfhood and how self's creation is a process of 'geopoetics' - a creation that happens in and by space. In this chapter, the poems of Sujata

Bhatt were analyzed where the focus was on her poetics- her act of creating poems or poetic images as an act of creation of her own self. And the following chapters were conceived to chart how the poet's self-becoming happens through two modes of space: memory, as the field of reconstitution of one's self through imagination, and journey, as the physical expansion of self in space. Sujata Bhatt's diasporic condition, which influences all her poems, is focused in the analysis and the thematic selection of the poems. Being a diaspora, her memories and journeys are seen as two spatialities of her self-becoming through which she practiced and situated her sense of self.

The first chapter, *The Geopoetics of Selfhood in the Diaspora*, proposed to unravel the formation of selfhood being deeply rooted in geography. The chapter had a theoretical explanation of how self has been understood from the Kantian, Hermeneutic and phenomenological perspectives. The study proposed a phenomenological perspective in which the awareness of one's self is rooted in one's world or perception of the world where s/he lives in. The places a person involves in on a daily basis leave a sort of attachment and register a sense of place in her/him. Such places constitute the selfhood of the person. As an individual of diaspora, Sujata Bhatt explores an eclectic number of places through both her memories and journeys. When the space of diaspora is seen as an alienating experience, the poems of Bhatt as analyzed in all the three chapters prove the space of diaspora as a space of self transformation. "To become an émigré (or a person in exile) is to initiate a process of self-transformation" (Maver 46). The analysis of the poems in the chapter shed light upon how Bhatt's poetic images initiated this process of self transformation. Through the poetic images of house as a ship, and herself as a 'half-lizard, half-woman' as she specified in her poems, Bhatt's poems variously conveyed the

act of poetics as an act of self-creation. As seen in the light of Gaston Bachelard's concept of psyche (self) and space being interlinked right from the house one inhabits, Sujata Bhatt's poems reflected the essential grounding for her act of writing: self and space. The spaces she pictured through her poems such as houses, gardens, streets etc form her everyday spatialities that constitute her sense of selfhood. Her perception of the outside world is portrayed well through her writings. As seen in the analysis of the poems, her geopoetics is further analyzed through the two modes of spatiality: memory and journey to make sense of the process of her self-becoming.

Memory and journey have been the two recurrent themes in Sujata Bhatt's poems. These two themes are analyzed in the second and third chapters as spatialities of her becoming. By referring these as 'spatialities of her becoming', I focused on how these two referents are crucial in her poetics which constituted her idea of self-becoming. Memory, like self, was explored as a spatial recollection rather than just the temporality of its existence. The idea of spatial memory by Gary Allen as explained in the second chapter gave more scientific explanations to the concept of space as being an integral part of human memory. The connections between self, space and memory were explained with reference to the poems of Bhatt. In many of the poems analyzed, memory and place are welded together as Bhatt explores her diasporic life in different parts of Europe and America. The places of memories for Bhatt included the corners of the house, insides of the house, gardens, streets, bookstores, museums, cities, and countries etc which were constantly reappearing in her poems. New Orleans for Bhatt became a place of self-discovery and transformation from one culture and language to a new language. Her childhood places such as New Orleans, Bhavnagar, Poona, and her adulthood places such

as Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ahmedabad etc through her act of recollection are seen as coexisting within her present life in Germany. These sites of personal recollections are understood as contributions to her poetics, her creation of self. These memories, the spatial recollections of the events that occurred in her past manifest as spaces that determine and encompass her present self. The spatial analysis of the poems explained how, through memory, the spatiality that comprised her everyday life was reconstituting her selfhood. The poems clearly portrayed how, for Sujata Bhatt memory was all about places and events that constituted her life. As seen through the spatial practices of Bachelard, Lefebvre, Relph, Casey etc Bhatt's poems do convey how memory can be about the spatiality of one's life. Bhatt's poems reminded that every act of remembering can be regarded as a spatial practice of self-becoming.

Journeys, for Sujata Bhatt, as seen in her poems, are not just movements in places, but spatial expansions of the self. Diasporic experiences of alienation and estrangement are converted into experiences of self discovery and affirmation through her poems. Her idea of travelling 'beyond' which she practiced from childhood helps her to make more conscious choices of journeys which changed and influenced her life. She had collected stones and white chips from beaches and places during her journeys. These things could be understood as spatial contractions of those places which she stores in her house. Her poems show how the different continents and places coexist in her private space, her house. Her travelling experiences contributed to know more about her attachment to places and how these attachments develop a sense of place within her. Her individual experiences during her journeys made her to reconstruct these places as her private geographies of self. These multiple localities are seen as shaping her selfhood. Her

journeys to places such as New Orleans, Ahmedabad, Conil, New England etc charted her expansion of self in the physical space. Thus, thematically, her memories and journeys as explored through her poems mapped her self-becoming in both imagined and real geographies.

The poetics of Sujata Bhatt, her art of writing and expressing her 'self', has been analyzed spatially referring to different concepts that fall within the category of postmodern spatial theorization. Space could be seen as the main thread that integrates the becoming of self in the context of diaspora as shown by Sujata Bhatt. The study's focus has been on how self is reassured of its becoming in the space of diaspora. While diaspora is generally regarded as a space of estrangement and rootlessness/alienation, Sujata Bhatt's poems clarified how such estranging spaces could be turned into spaces of transformation or particularly, spaces of liberation. By liberation I intend the idea of being not rooted to one place or identity but rather, as seen in the poetic analysis of Bhatt, being able to 'go away', to journey beyond the boundaries that once defined you. This is how one can seek liberation for one's soul. Her memories are not even taking her back to her lost homeland but, if one could see in depth, they coexist within her present life. Her imagined and real geographies, her private geography of diaspora enable her to see through the alienating experiences. Here Sujata Bhatt's practice of space, her creation of such a subjective space for herself in diaspora comes close to what Edward Soja has theorized as 'thirdspace':

Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency,

mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (Soja 57)

The idea of thirdspace as Soja puts forward includes the real (physical) and the imagined (mental) spaces of our everyday life. His concept of “thirding-as-othering” (60) refers to how thirdspace disrupts the binary notion and incorporates “both/and” rather than “either/or” (ibid). Here, Bhatt’s poems envision this act of simultaneity where her self is seen sustained by both the imagined (memories) and the real (journeys) spatialities of her life. Both spaces exist simultaneously and the poems vocalize the interdependency of both spaces in her life. It can be this idea, to be open to diverse spaces and places that her life took her to, which made her to create her own subjective space, her ‘thirdspace’. Thirdspace, as Soja theorizes it, can be practiced by any individual if one has the heart to be open to all alternatives. As seen in the poems of Bhatt, her temporal existence too is contained in her spatialities. Memories for her are a spatial recollection in which time is always present in the space of that event or experience. Her self-becoming is rooted in space where time is encompassed within it. Diaspora, as Avtar Brah notes, is not just a physical displacement but a psychological one too. Only when one can transform these displacements into reassuring ones, an individual of diaspora can transcend the alien space of diaspora into a thirdspace. Sujata Bhatt’s poems can be regarded as an instantiation of envisioning and practicing diaspora as a thirdspace. Soja notes in his work: “Thirdspace retains the multiple meanings [...] It is both a space that is distinguishable from other spaces (physical and mental, or First and Second) and a transcending composite of all spaces” (62). Such a characterization suits the condition of Sujata Bhatt and her subjective space. Her mental and physical, imagined and real, spaces

are distinct in her own way but we can also conceive a space where both coexist, simultaneously. The spatial metaphors such as the photographs, the houses, the echoes of her childhood, corner of the garden, museum etc. refer to how her memory unfolds in space. These spaces constitute her imagined geography. The journeys act as physical expansion of the self in place. The spatial images such as stones, seashells, gardens, landscapes, idea of a gypsy, home etc serve as the ways through which Bhatt expresses her self-becoming through the places she traveled. The travels she has done in her life have visibly given her more meaningful realizations about herself and her relation to her place. The idea “one who goes away” carrying one’s home within conveys how the journeys for her are not dislocations of home but a continuous reassertion of her own immediate spaces. These two modes, her imagined and real spatialities, metaphorically captured through her memories and journeys, comprise her “lived space”. It is this lived space that she practices which can be read as the “thirdspace” as put forward by Edward Soja.

As Soja noted in his theorization of thirdspace, its restructuring begins from the ontological structure where such a simultaneous, encompassing nature of space defines the becoming of the self. Sujata Bhatt mapped her self-becoming which can be regarded as her way of individually producing/creating her spatial ontology, an ontological understanding of her self’s spatialities. Thirdspace becomes the condition through which her self-becoming can be possible as a space that radically opens to all spaces while simultaneously cohabiting her present and past spaces. The relation between one’s self and its space is fundamental and unique to each person. Sujata Bhatt’s way of charting

her 'self-becoming' substantiates how her space of diaspora can be understood as a thirdspace, a space of real and imagined geographies.

The intricate connections between being and space on the one hand, and place and writing on the other pose serious challenges as well as interesting possibilities for research in humanities now. This is indeed a thrust area in the field of postmodern human geographies. This study has been only a tentative step from my part in this direction. But the path is quite promising just as it is challenging. It is not very difficult to see that the only real conflict we face in contemporary postmodernity is the split between self and its environment, between being and space. The way forward for both philosophy and literature lies in bridging this gap. One tends to remember how, after a stay at the Bonaventure Hotel, Fredric Jameson famously evoked the schizophrenia of the postmodern individual who attempts to map spaces in which the real and hyperreal no longer coincide. Westphal observes that this sense of conflict is still the mark of postmodern subject's position in contemporary culture where the once familiar space is now a radically 'anti-anthropomorphic' space (Tally 160). The present study has realized in the course of its research that this split between the self and its place can be overcome, if one may take Soja into faith, by the emergence of a third, 'real-and-imagined' dimension of space. The exploration of such an ontological space is what humanities should turn to, and contemporary research in the field of geocriticism, in which this study has ambitiously attempted to partake, has a very significant role to play in the future of humanities.

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Diaspora as Thirdspace: Spatialities of Self-Becoming in the Select Poems of Sujata Bhatt

by Sandhya Ravindran

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