

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF
CITY IN THE GUJARATI GHAZALS ON SURAT AND INDIAN
ENGLISH POEMS ON MUMBAI**

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Contents

1. Objective
2. Research Questions
3. Method and Methodology
4. Conclusion
5. Key Findings
6. Scope for Further Research
7. Significance of the Study
8. Table of Contents
9. Works Cited

Objective

The objectives of this study are to explore how the city and modernism shape modernist poetry, focusing on Surat and Mumbai. It aims to understand the concept of modernism in Gujarati and Indian English literature and trace the narratives of these cities as depicted in their respective poetic traditions. By comparing Surat Ghazals and Mumbai poems, the study seeks to analyse how each city is portrayed within these forms, examining the evolution of poetic perspectives, treatment, and language across generations. Furthermore, the research delves into the factors contributing to the differentiation between these genres in their portrayal of urban spaces and investigates how the cultural and literary traditions of Surat and Mumbai influence their representation in ghazals and Indian English poems.

Research Questions

Reading a city through modern poetry offers a unique lens to understand the urban experience, capturing a complete interplay between modernism, city, and urban experiences that a poet distils to get the essence of rhythm and emotions. Modern poetry allows the poet to explore the city's soul, revealing the impact of urbanization on the urban experience and modernism in the expression of emotions. By engaging with these poetic representations of each city, i.e. Surat and Mumbai, we gain a richer understanding of the cities, their contradictions, development, and struggles, enhancing both the physical and psychological landscapes of urban spaces as experienced by the poet. In this exploration, this research delves into the questions:

1. How Surat and Mumbai developed with time, and how these changes are reflected in respective poetic forms – Surat in Gujarati Ghazal and Mumbai in Indian English poems.
2. How do the poetic representations of Surat and Mumbai differ in their portrayal of urban life, culture, and social dynamics?
3. What does the juxtaposition of Ghazals from Surat and contemporary poems from Mumbai reveal about the unique and shared experiences of these cities' inhabitants?
4. How do these literary forms reflect the historical, economic, and cultural transformations of Surat and Mumbai?
5. How does the shift in experience and perception of poets change across generations?

Method and Methodology

The research is conducted using a qualitative approach, focusing on a detailed textual analysis of selected poems. This method involves close reading to examine themes, motifs, and styles, particularly how urban experiences and modernity are reflected in the poetry. The study also incorporates historical and cultural contextualisation to explore the development of Surat and Mumbai, emphasising how urbanisation and modernity have shaped these cities and influenced the poets. Additionally, it investigates the literary traditions of the two cities to understand their impact on the respective poetic forms.

The research employs a comparative analysis to evaluate the themes, forms, styles, expressions, and influences of modernism in the selected poems. An interdisciplinary approach is utilized, integrating a theoretical framework from urban studies to analyse how the transformation of cities influences poetry, drawing on concepts from urban sociology, cultural geography, and postcolonial urbanism. Furthermore, the study applies theories of literary modernism to understand how the poets engage with themes of alienation, disillusionment, and fragmentation in response to urbanization.

Content analysis and archival methods are employed to collect both primary and secondary data. Content analysis is utilized to systematically examine and interpret selected poems, focusing on the representation of urban experiences, modernity, and the impact of city life on poetic expression. This method allows for a detailed exploration of themes, motifs, and stylistic elements within the texts, providing valuable primary data that directly addresses the research questions. Additionally, archival research is conducted to access original manuscripts, historical documents, and literary collections that offer crucial primary sources, as well as secondary materials such as critical essays, reviews, and previous studies on the poetic traditions of Surat and Mumbai.

The study focuses on Gujarati Ghazals that describe Surat and Indian English poems that depict Mumbai, both written after India's Independence. The selection includes works from various poets, spanning from the post-independence period to the present, regardless of whether the poets are still residing in that city. These poems have been chosen based on their thematic emphasis on the cities, reflecting the poets' engagement with the urban landscapes. In case of Gujarati ghazals, the researcher has translated them where needed.

Conclusion

Modernism serves as the central theoretical framework for this research, emerging from a dynamic historical period characterized by substantial transformations, innovation, and a distinct departure from traditional norms. This era witnessed profound changes across literature, architecture, and social landscapes, interwoven as society evolved. Cities functioned as vibrant hubs of modernity, facilitating rapid industrialization, technological advancements, and societal shifts. Urban centres, with their expanding populations and evolving infrastructures, became crucibles for new ideas, cultures, and lifestyles, reshaping socioeconomic paradigms. These dynamics influenced the urban experience, reflecting the multifaceted and nuanced interactions of individuals with the cities they inhabited. The concept of “lived experience,” encompassing personal thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, underscores the intricate and evolving relationship between urban spaces and their inhabitants.

The research investigates how the processes of modernity and urbanization have visibly influenced the literary landscapes of Surat and Mumbai, not only shaping the cities and their inhabitants’ lived experiences but also transforming poetic genres such as the ghazal and Indian English poetry. Anchored in modernism, the study argues that these genres uniquely mirror the culture, history, and societal dynamics of their respective cities. While the ghazal and Indian English poetry diverge in their responses to urban experiences, the distinctions between them are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural contexts of Surat and Mumbai, as well as the individual perspectives of poets interacting with these cities.

While the primary focus here is modernist literature, it is crucial to introduce the material and intellectual culture that shaped the context in which modernism emerged. Two key questions are central to this discussion: first, how modernity shaped the city, and second, how modernism, as a reaction, influenced the canon of modernist literature. Both questions revolve around the evolving city due to modernity and its impact on the individual’s changing experiences, in other words, both the physical city and what Park refers to as “the mental city.”

Modernity marked a break from the past and the rise of the "new," rooted in significant societal transformations. Economically, industrialization and the transition from feudalism to capitalism redefined production and wealth. Innovations in transportation and communication fostered the development of a new urban class, shaping a society increasingly detached from traditional norms. This new society became more open and expressive, and individuals grew more self-conscious, rational, and questioning of established religious institutions.

Concurrently, thinkers like Darwin and Freud introduced theories that challenged long-held beliefs, further disrupting traditional frameworks.

The Industrial Revolution played a particularly influential role, reshaping cities economically, physically, and socially. The rise of industries attracted migrants from rural areas, spurring urbanization. People sought opportunities in urban centres, often fleeing famine, war, and poverty. This migration created demand for necessities such as housing and employment, leading to the rapid expansion of urban areas. However, workers in industrial areas faced overcrowded, poor-quality housing with inadequate ventilation, noise, and pollution, leading to sanitation problems and the spread of infectious diseases. On the other hand, it deepened social and spatial divisions. The upper class was idealized as noble and refined, while the working class was stigmatized as uncivilized and immoral. This divide led to increased aggression and crime among the working class, with minimal interaction between classes reinforcing negative stereotypes of the latter as savage.

Critics such as Simmel, Lefebvre, and Soja have provided profound insights into urban life, particularly its psychological dynamics, highlighting the deep impact of city environments on individuals and social behaviour. They emphasize how the social and cultural narratives of the city shape its mental and emotional landscapes. In the metropolis, money plays a dominant role, prioritizing objectivity, and rationality over emotional connections, further influencing the ways people interact and experience urban spaces.

These societal and individual transformations were also reflected in various artistic and cultural movements. The experiences of modern society were incompatible with existing forms and styles, prompting the search for the “new.” This quest gave rise to artistic movements like Imagism, Cubism, Expressionism, and Impressionism, collectively termed Modernism. The city became a prominent theme for writers and poets, who captured the multifaceted transformations of urban life. Urban residents, unable to access promised opportunities, experienced frustration, alienation, and a sense of detachment from their roots. The tension between the fulfilment and unfulfillment of desires in the urban context provided fertile ground for literary expression. Scholars and writers explored the emotional landscapes, attitudes, and personalities of cities, enriching our understanding of their complexity and the lived experiences of their inhabitants.

In the Indian context, modernity and modernism are deeply tied to societal, cultural, and political transformations. Modernity arose largely because of colonialism, as colonizers implemented changes that disrupted indigenous ways of life. This shift created a tension in

Indian modernism between native traditions and foreign influences. Unlike mere imitation of European models, Indian modernism emphasizes autonomy and originality, drawing from distinct cultural and intellectual traditions to produce an authentic expression of the contemporary spirit. As a result, Indian modernism is a complex blend of global influences and local efforts to forge a unique modern identity.

The rise of modernism in India gained momentum after independence, driven by shifts in the socio-cultural landscape. This transition expanded the possibilities for poetic expression, addressing the complexities and challenges of modern life. Traditional forms were reimaged to resonate with personal experiences and societal changes. Similar to Western pioneers, Indian poets explored new forms and techniques, though not as a complete departure from the past. Many experimented with traditional structures to convey modernist themes, reflecting a balance between innovation and continuity. This raises a crucial question: how did modernism shape individual literary culture in India?

The impact of modernity and urbanization on Surat and Mumbai not just shaped the city and the lived experience but also transformed the poetic genres – Ghazal and Indian English Poem, under banner of modernism, which has been the central argument of the research. The genres, reflect the culture, history, and society of the respective cities, but in a unique way. Both the poetic forms diverge in response to their urban experience, the way modernism have shaped the genres. The research has point out these differences rooted in the cities' historical and cultural context, literature, and perspectives of an individual poet with the city.

Surat, a prominent trade centre since the Mughal era, experienced significant decline under colonial rule. Despite external influences, the city retained its traditional essence, limiting the impact of modernity compared to more cosmopolitan cities like Mumbai. Surat faced various socio-political uplifts and natural disasters like floods and earthquake, which was recorded by contemporary poets in form poems. These traditional *garba* form gives the detailed narrative account of every situation from its effects and reactions. With time, as the city changed, it developed various poetic forms, but ghazal remained most popular among Surat poets. Surat's historical and cultural milieu made it a fertile ground for the evolution of the ghazal as a favoured poetic form. This genre, deeply rooted in tradition, preserved connections to the past even as it adapted to modern contexts. Modernist poets in Surat skilfully integrated tradition with contemporary themes, experimenting within the classical structure of the ghazal rather than seeking entirely new forms. They employed the ghazal's fragmented

couplets to capture the duality of celebration and resentment toward urban life, illustrating both the richness and alienation of the modern experience.

While modernist influences encouraged urban sensibilities and new imagery, Surat's ghazal poets maintained a connection to traditional metaphors and symbols, balancing modernity with the enduring conventions of Gujarati poetry. Earlier poets like Asim Randeri and Bhagawatikumar Sharma celebrated Surat as a metaphor for love and belonging. In contrast, later poets, such as Bakulesh Desai and Dhwanil Parekh, critiqued the alienation and mechanization of modern urban life, reflecting themes of detachment and disillusionment. This evolution is evident in their departure from traditional pen names, a hallmark of the ghazal form, symbolizing a broader disconnection from both the city and its poetic traditions.

Poets use traditional ghazal metaphors, like separation and journey, alongside contemporary symbols, such as flats, air-conditioners, and skyscrapers, to express the suffocating effects of urbanization. The juxtaposition of these symbols highlights the fractured experience of modern existence, where people feel disconnected not only from others but also from themselves. The poets did not focus on specific aspects or parts of the city but instead addressed its general characteristics. Staying true to the tradition of the ghazal, they employed traditional language and vocabulary.

In contrast to Surat, Mumbai emerged during colonial rule as a city of immigrants, drawing people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Its lack of deep-rooted traditions allowed for the creation of a progressive urban culture that embraced modernity in both form and mindset. Mumbai's dynamic growth as a hub of trade, education, and entertainment makes it a vibrant city. However, alongside this vibrancy, crime and terrorism became inextricable parts of Mumbai's narrative. The relentless pace of life in the city turned it into a machine-like environment, where people were constantly rushing, leaving little time for human connection or reflection. This intense, hurried atmosphere became a defining feature of Bombay culture. These dynamics catalysed the rise of Indian English poetry, which absorbed influences from Western modernism while reflecting the unique realities of Bombay life. Poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Dilip Chitre, and Arun Kolatkar capturing the urban sensibility of the city. These poets drew inspiration from English poets, adopting their modernist framework while developing a style that resonated with the realities of Bombay. Their work was marked by a realistic and straightforward approach, transcending mere external descriptions to explore the deeper, often harsh "inner reality."

To convey these inner truths, Bombay poets embraced free verse, shedding the constraints of ornamental or overly crafted language. They often employed slang and even obscene language to reflect the raw, unfiltered experiences of modern city life. This shift, from Ezekiel to Jeet Thayil, demonstrates a move from general to specific perspective, focusing on the intricacies of everyday life. The emphasis gradually shifted to capturing the mundane yet poignant details of urban existence, including train journeys, unemployment, women's struggles, poverty, crime, and unfulfilled desires. This focus on the minutiae of human life made their poetry a vivid and authentic mirror of Mumbai's complex social and cultural landscape.

Mumbai's poets, influenced by the city's cosmopolitan nature, captured its dualities—its vibrancy and alienation, its opportunities, and hardships. Through detailed imagery of daily life, such as train journeys and slum conditions, they portrayed the sensory overload and emotional fragmentation characteristic of modern urban living. Unlike the traditional structure of the ghazal, the free verse employed by Mumbai poets allowed for a more expansive exploration of the mundane and surreal dimensions of city life, reflecting the city's overwhelming pace and fragmented realities. Poets prioritized imagery over metaphor to create direct, vivid, and concrete representations of experience. Instead of relying on metaphorical comparisons, they used precise, sensory images to evoke emotions and ideas. By focusing on images and straightforward approach, poets valued clear, sharp visuals and avoided abstract or ornamental language.

The study's comparative framework highlights the contrasting poetic responses to urbanization and modernity in Surat and Mumbai. Gujarati ghazals on Surat often reflect the city's historical and cultural legacy, using traditional forms to address themes of love, loss, and resilience. These poems, while adapting to modern contexts, retain a connection to the city's past, capturing both its beauty and its struggles. They began to explore themes of urban alienation, existence, and socio-political critique. However, the structural constraints of the ghazal limit its ability to depict the raw, unfiltered realities of urban existence.

Conversely, Mumbai's Indian English poetry, liberated from traditional forms, engages deeply with the gritty realities of urban life. Poets from diverse cultural backgrounds use free verse to explore themes of identity, alienation, and social fragmentation, offering a more nuanced and inclusive portrayal of the city's multifaceted nature. The diversity among Mumbai poets enriches their works, reflecting the city's pluralistic identity and its role as a microcosm of modern Indian life.

Key Findings

The research underscores how modernism, with its emphasis on innovation and rupture with tradition, shaped both the content and form of Surat's ghazals and Mumbai's Indian English poems. Surat's poets navigated the tensions between tradition and modernity, employing the ghazal to bridge personal and societal reflections. Mumbai's poets, by contrast, embraced the fragmented and chaotic nature of modern life, using free verse to articulate the complexities of identity and belonging in a rapidly changing urban landscape.

By examining these poetic traditions, the study sheds light on how cities influence not only the lived experiences of their inhabitants but also the literary forms that emerge from them. Surat and Mumbai, as sites of modernity, serve as both physical and psychological landscapes, reflecting broader cultural and ideological currents through their respective literary outputs.

In conclusion, urban life intensifies emotional experiences, shaped by the constant influx of external and internal stimuli stemming from the city's rapid pace and relentless activity. Through Surat ghazals and Mumbai poems, this study provides a comparative perspective on how poets from various cultural backgrounds and historical contexts portray their respective cities. By exploring their unique viewpoints and trajectories, it deepens the understanding of modernity and urban life of Surat and Mumbai, and its effects on respective literary traditions and poets. The unique culture that developed in the city, forms the behaviour of its inhabitants. Each poet offers a unique lens through which to examine the evolving urban landscape, reflecting the complex social dynamics and ideological currents of their time. Thus, the research demonstrates that cities are more than just physical entities; they are states of mind, profoundly shaping human expression and creativity. As Bhagawatikumar Sharma aptly notes, "The city [Surat] is an emotion turned into a piece of land." Through their poetry, the cities of Surat and Mumbai are immortalized as dynamic spaces where tradition and modernity converge, offering rich insights into the human condition and the evolving urban experience.

Scope for Further Research

An interdisciplinary approach to research offers a broader horizon for further research. Future studies can examine the interplay between English poems about a city and poetry in other regional or national languages about the same city, investigating how urban centres are represented differently across multilingual literary traditions. For instance, in the case of

Mumbai, one could compare its depiction in English literature with Marathi or Gujarati literature.

Incorporating perspectives from cultural geography, sociology, and anthropology can enrich the analysis by uncovering how a city's social, cultural, and economic transformations are reflected in its poetry. Researchers could also trace the historical records of a city through poetry, such as earlier poems about Surat, to contextualize its evolution. Additionally, exploring the poetic response to major historical events, such as the Bombay riots or Surat floods, and analysing their impact on the urban psyche offers another area of inquiry. Comparative studies of poems about different cities during times of crisis, such as pandemics or natural disasters, can highlight shared and divergent narratives.

Delving deeper into pre-independence poetry is another path to trace the evolution of urban themes, applying post-colonial frameworks to understand how colonial legacies influence the urban imagination. Furthermore, specific urban themes such as migration, communalism, environmental degradation, or urban resilience can also be examined to provide focused insights into how cities are represented in poetry.

Significance of the Study

The examination of Gujarati ghazals pertaining to Surat and English poems about Mumbai possesses considerable academic and cultural significance, especially in the context of genre comparison, the influence of modernism, and urban representation. It underscores the influence of linguistic and cultural circumstances on the articulation of urban life. English poetry frequently shaped by Western literary conventions, stands in contrast to the ghazal's profound origins in Indo-Persian and Gujarati literary traditions. This study demonstrates how each genre adjusts to contemporary urban themes while preserving or altering classic frameworks. The couplet structure of the ghazal frequently enables disjointed yet interrelated reflections, mirroring the fractured nature of urban existence. The study facilitates an examination of both shared and unique themes, like alienation, nostalgia, and belonging, which reverberate across the two genres despite their distinctions in form and language. The emphasis on Surat's ghazals adopts a less conventional approach, as this practice is relatively underexplored in Gujarati literature. Moreover, translating and interpreting Gujarati ghazals in conjunction with English poetry offers comparative insights and facilitates broader appreciation of regional literary traditions.

Table of Contents

Declaration	1
Certificate	3
Acknowledgement	5
Abstract	7
Table of Contents	11
List of Figures	13
Chapter 1: Introduction	
Connecting Concrete and Emotions: Reading Modern City Through Poetry	15
1.1 The Concept of Modern, Modernity, and Modernism	16
1.1.1 Historical Context	17
1.1.2 Industry and Technology	18
1.1.3 Science and Rationality	19
1.1.4 Modernism	20
1.2 Modernism and the City	22
1.3 Literary Modernism	23
1.4 Modernism in India	27
1.5 Modernism in Gujarat Literature	31
1.6 City: Growth and Development	34
1.6.1 Modern City	35
1.6.2 Society and Problems of Modern City	36
1.6.3 Postmodern City	41
1.6.4 City in India	43
1.7 City in Literature	44
1.8 Ghazal: Poetry from Persia to India	54
1.8.1 History of Ghazal	54
1.8.2 Ghazal in India	57
1.8.3 Phases of Ghazal in India	58
1.8.4 Gujarat and Gujarati Ghazal	59
1.8.5 Modernism and Experiments in Ghazal	61
1.8.6 City and Urban Sensibility in Ghazal	63
1.9 Indian English Poems	66
1.9.1 Poetry after Independence	69
1.9.2 City in Indian English Poems	73
1.10 Research Questions and Objectives	75

1.11 Hypothesis	76
1.12 Method and Methodology	76
1.13 Summary of Chapters	77
Chapter 2: Surat (The Sun City): Rise, Fall and Re-rise	79
2.1 Early History	80
2.1.1 The Pre-Mughal Era	80
2.1.2 The Mughal Era	81
2.1.3 During the British Empire	84
2.1.4 Post-Independence Era	89
2.1.5 The Twenty-first Century	90
2.2 Surat in Literature (Poetry)	92
2.2.1 Poems on Disasters in Stuart	97
2.3 Ghazals of Surat City	100
Chapter 3: Mumbai: Modern Among Moderns	121
3.1 Early History	121
3.1.1 The Portuguese Era	122
3.1.2 The British Empire	123
3.1.3 Post-Independence Era	128
3.1.4 The Twenty-first Century	130
3.2 Mumbai in Literature (Poetry)	133
3.3 Mumbai in Indian English Poems	135
Chapter 4: A Comparative Analysis of Poetic Representations of Surat and Mumbai	163
4.1 Socio-political Connections	164
4.2 Impact of Modernism	165
4.3 Poets' Diverse Background	166
4.4 Cities of Contrasts: Celebrations and Sorrows	167
4.5 Poetic Forms and Devices	171
Conclusion	179
Works Cited	187
Anti-Plagiarism Certificate and Report	197

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