

## Chapter 4:

### A Comparative Analysis of Poetic Representations of Surat and Mumbai

*Cities have always been remarkable for the extent of their internal differentiation - differentiation by trade, religion, ethnicity or neighbourhood - and as the bases for social differentiation have altered, so too have the means by which men and women express their discontent and struggle for power and for justice.*

- Brian Elliott and David McCrone, *The City: Patterns of domination and conflict.*

While a city's geographical location provides essential context, its unique character is primarily shaped by its residents' cultural and socio-political fabric. Understanding the interplay of these factors, including their historical evolution, is key to grasping a city's growth, decline, and overall character. The complex relationship between politics, economics, and historical events in shaping urban development highlights the need for a comprehensive approach. This involves considering both the tangible aspects of city life and the subjective experiences of its people and how their actions shape them.

This chapter will examine the evolution of Mumbai poetry and Surat ghazals through the lenses of historical, cultural, and political transformation (modernity) and literary trends (modernism). Historically intertwined, Surat and Mumbai exhibit a contrasting trajectory: Surat's decline coincides with Mumbai's ascent as India's economic and political epicentre. Post-Independence, Mumbai emerged as a magnet for those seeking economic and social opportunities, leading to its dominance in various spheres including politics, education, economy, and entertainment.

From bustling metropolises to quaint historical towns, each city possesses a unique character shaped by its history, culture, and inhabitants. The distinctive personality, culture, and identity of each city render it incomparable. Mumbai and Surat, for instance, are distinct entities. Residents of both cities share a special bond with their respective urban environments. This connection is reciprocal: inhabitants contribute to the city's identity, while the city, in turn, shapes the identity of its residents. While cities may not have literal personalities, they possess emotional qualities and urban imaginaries that contribute to their distinctiveness and shape the lived experiences of their inhabitants (Pile 2).

This study centres on the distinctive characteristics of Mumbai and Surat, examining their pivotal roles in urban development and literary evolution while exploring their influence on poets. It will compare the unique experiences and perspectives reflected in these poetic forms by analysing poetry composed for these cities. A comparative analysis of these two urban landscapes and their corresponding poetic expressions will illuminate the complex interplay between city, poet, and modernism.

#### **4.1 Socio-political Connections**

Surat and Mumbai were historically part of the same state until the bifurcation of Gujarat in 1960. These two cities share geographical and cultural connections. Both cities are situated on the western coast of India, along the Arabian Sea. This shared geographical location has influenced their economies, trade, and cultures significantly. The enormous land reclamation initiatives that defined Bombay's physical landscape, along with its relative seclusion from the Indian mainland, cultivated a colonial view of the city as a *tabula rasa*. Unlike established urban centres like Delhi, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, or Pune, Bombay appeared devoid of a substantial pre-colonial urban history that the British might have felt compelled to overwrite (Minerva 19). Surat, however, boasts a more ancient history, with references dating back to the thirteenth century. Its prominence preceded Mumbai's, but the latter eclipsed Surat as a trading hub during British colonial rule. The East India Company relocated its headquarters from Surat to Mumbai in 1686, marking the year Mumbai surpassed Surat as the primary commercial hub.

Post-independence, Mumbai rapidly transformed into a metropolis symbolizing modernity, attracting people from across India. This influx fostered a cosmopolitan culture, challenging traditional social norms. In contrast, Surat maintained a relatively slower pace of change, preserving many of its customs and traditions.

Both Mumbai and Surat have been crucial centres for literary production. Post-independence, Mumbai supplanted Calcutta as a literary epicentre. The city's rich cultural tapestry and linguistic diversity provided a fertile environment for writers. This is evident in the works of Salman Rushdie and Vikram Chandra, who masterfully blended Hindi and Mumbai's colloquialisms into their English narratives. Mumbai's robust publishing sector and its close relationship with the Hindi film industry further impelled aspiring authors. Moreover, the city has seen the emergence of several literary groups led by renowned poets.

Surat, too, has made substantial contributions to the literary sphere, nurturing a dynamic literary community.

Both cities have cultivated distinct literary genres. Mumbai became a crucible for modern Indian English poetry, exemplified by the pioneering work of Nissim Ezekiel in the 1950s. Ezekiel's poetry represented a departure from the prevailing imitative style, delving deeply into the complexities of the Indian experience. Mumbai's cosmopolitan atmosphere and intricate social dynamics offered a fertile ground for poetic innovation, enabling the infusion of Indian linguistic and rhythmic elements into English verse. Ghazals achieved prominence through Mushairas, traditional gatherings where poets recited ghazals and other poetic forms. Originating in Rander, a part of Surat, these literary events later spread throughout the region. Randeri and Sharma are recognized as the foundational figures in establishing the ghazal tradition in Surat.

Culturally, Mumbai and Surat exhibit distinct characteristics, influencing their literary outputs. Mumbai, a bustling metropolis, cultivates an individualistic and liberal spirit. Despite its high population density, the city prioritizes personal autonomy. In contrast, Surat offers a more relaxed lifestyle with a strong emphasis on community and interpersonal relationships. While sharing Mumbai's commercial dynamism, Surat maintains a less frenetic ambience. Mumbai, a microcosm of India, is a city of dreams and aspirations that often transforms into a harsh reality for many. While it stands as India's pioneering metropolis, boasting modern infrastructure, it also grapples with stark social and economic disparities, evident in the juxtaposition of opulent high-rises and sprawling slums. The city's rapid growth has been accompanied by challenges such as poverty and crime. In contrast, Surat, though less developed, has experienced relatively fewer socio-political upheavals.

#### **4.2 Impact of Modernism**

The impact of modernism in Gujarati ghazal and Indian English poem manifests differently due to variations in languages, culture, and historical contexts. Both forms engage with modernism's themes of alienation, urbanization, and fragmented identity, but they adapt these themes uniquely to their respective traditions. Like their western forerunner, Indian English poets often break free from traditional forms, embracing free verse, fragmented structure, and new techniques. They adopted a more open perspective and expression, addressing themes deeply rooted in contemporary situations and personal experiences.

Contemporary Gujarati poetry, as noted by Topiwala, replaced English paradigms with indigenous ones. During sixties, Suresh Joshi began modernism in various ways. “The continental models, instead of English ones, became dominant. Violations of traditions, formal innovations and excessive experimentation took hold of the whole affair” (92). Poets like Adil Mansuri, Manahar Modi, Rajendra Shukla are pioneer in using Ghazal form to reflect a modernist sensibility. On other hand Gulam Mohammad Sheikh started free verse; Sitanshu Yashaschandra employed *Akhyan* style for writing poem “Jatayu” based on *Ramayan* and Chinu Modi retold the story of Nala in “Bahuk” based on Mahabharat to symbolise struggle of modern metropolitan man (Jhaveri 104).

However, Ghazal integrates modernist concerns into a form deeply rooted in tradition. The language, imagery, and themes remain connected to local culture, making the modernist expression more accessible to native audiences. The use of the ghazal form allows for a balance between innovation and tradition, preserving lyrical beauty while addressing contemporary issues. Its strict formal constraints, provides a unique canvas for modernist expression. Poets work within the constraints of rhyme and refrain (*radif* and *qafiya*) while infusing each couplet with themes of dislocation, loss, and resentment. The fragmented nature of the ghazal form itself resonates with modernist aesthetics.

### **4.3 Poets’ Diverse Backgrounds**

A poet’s choice of form and language is far from arbitrary; it is a deliberate reflection of their unique perspective. To fully appreciate these choices, one must consider the historical and cultural context of the language, as well as the poet’s personal background. In the case of Surat, the poets who wrote about it were intimately familiar with their city, having lived and grown alongside it. Their deep-rooted connection to Surat and the rich tapestry of Gujarati literature undoubtedly shaped their poetic expressions.

Unlike Surat, where poets were deeply rooted in the city’s cultural fabric, Mumbai’s literary landscape was shaped by a diverse array of voices. Many of the city’s renowned poets, including Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, Jeet Thayil, and Amit Chaudhuri, were migrants from different parts of India. Even those born and raised in Mumbai, such as Ezekiel, Jussawalla, and Gieve Patel, often had English backgrounds. This cosmopolitan character, exemplified by the Progressive Artists’ Group, was a defining feature of Mumbai’s artistic and intellectual life. However, this migratory experience also posed challenges. As Bruce

King observed, many Mumbai poets struggled to authentically capture the essence of Indian life and conditions:

...the poets were more likely to be well educated, middle class and part of or aware of the modern westernized culture of the cities, universities and professional classes. They often had been raised in families where English was one of the languages spoken, attended good English-language schools, fallen in love with English language and its literature, and been either brought up in a cultured environment or by their university days had friends with an interest in the arts and ideas. (1)

In contrast to the migratory experiences of Mumbai's poets, Surat's literary scene is predominantly composed of poets deeply rooted in the city. Figures such as Bhagawatikumar Sharma, Asim Randeri, Nayan Desai, and Bakulesh Desai are quintessential examples of poets who have witnessed Surat's evolution firsthand. Unlike many of their Mumbai counterparts, these poets often come from non-literary backgrounds, underscoring the organic growth of Surat's literary culture.

#### **4.4 Cities of Contrasts: Celebrations and Sorrows**

A love-hate relationship is a recurring motif in urban poetry. Poets often oscillate between celebrating a city's transformative potential and lamenting its shortcomings. This emotional complexity is influenced by factors such as time and generational perspective. Surat's early poets, such as Randeri and Sharma, exhibited a profound attachment to their city. Randeri's poetry is imbued with a passionate love for Surat, which he idealizes as a haven of youth and beauty. His work often conflates the city with his beloved Leela, enhancing Surat's allure. In contrast, while Mumbai's poets also express a deep connection to the city, their attachment is frequently intertwined with feelings of disillusionment and alienation. This is often manifested through poetry that mourns the city's rapid transformation and the loss of its soul.

Randeri's departure from Surat for Mumbai precipitated a profound nostalgia, evident in his poetic odes to even the most mundane aspects of his former home. From blossoming buds to forgotten graves, Randeri's poetic gaze embraced the entirety of Surat, a city he carried with him in spirit. Despite the allure of Mumbai's progress, his heart remained firmly rooted in his birthplace. In contrast, Melanie Silgado found solace in the familiarity of London, expressing discomfort with the cacophony of Mumbai. The stark difference in their

responses highlights the subjective nature of urban experience and the complex interplay of personal history and geographic location in shaping one's attachment to a city.

A common theme in both Mumbai and Surat poetry is the stark contrast between nature and the urban environment, often leading to feelings of discontent. While Mumbai's poets frequently lament the city's detachment from nature, characterized by the absence of green spaces, polluted air, and the overwhelming presence of industrial structures, Surat's poets, though to a lesser extent, also grapple with similar issues as the city modernizes. Dilip Chitre's depiction of a sunrise obscured by textile mills and Sharma's confinement in a flat devoid of fresh air exemplify the urban poets' yearning for nature. This longing often manifests in dreamlike escapades, as seen in Ezekiel's fleeting vision of a serene morning walk or Kolatkar's contemplation of a sky transformed into a natural canvas. The latter's poem, "Temperature Normal; Pulse, Respiration Satisfactory," encapsulates this retreat into nature as a respite from the urban cacophony. He sees, "the whole city / gone under / i look at what remains / my eyes take up the slack of the twilit sky / i count a crow and three sparrows / each flying according to its light." Similarly, Chitre finds solace in the rare glimpses of the sea, a symbol of freedom and openness in "The View from Chinchpokli."

Nayan Desai's inclusion of the peacock as a dreamlike figure underscores the shared yearning for nature found in both Mumbai and Surat poetry. However, the underlying motivations for this longing differ. While Mumbai's poets often express a nostalgia for a rural idyll, contrasting it with the harsh realities of urban life, Surat's poets seem to lament the erosion of a once-natural environment due to rapid urbanization. This shared fascination with nature, often presented in surreal or dreamlike terms, is a hallmark of modernist poetry.

A pervasive sense of dissatisfaction and unfulfilled longing characterizes both Mumbai and Surat poetry. This urban malaise is often depicted as a burning sensation. Ezekiel's iconic line, "Bombay like a passion burns," echoes a similar sentiment expressed by Bakulesh Desai, who describes Surat as a city initially offering hope but ultimately transforming into a consuming inferno (*Ek tanakho aashno chāmpē nagar, ne pachhi thi jindagi bāle nagar*). This metaphorical conflagration suggests a potent blend of desire and disillusionment that is central to the urban experience.

Mumbai's poetry often serves as a social commentary, delving into the complexities of urban life. Poets like Tara Patel and Gieve Patel have employed vivid imagery to depict

the harsh realities of unemployment and the squalor of public spaces, respectively. Arundhati Subramaniam's work further highlights the challenges faced by women in the city. This focus on the minutiae of daily life distinguishes Mumbai poetry from its Surat counterpart. While Surat's ghazals often address societal issues, they tend to adopt a more restrained and romanticized tone. The critical lens employed by Mumbai poets, characterized by its directness and intensity, is less prevalent in Surat's poetic tradition.

Modernist poetry's emphasis on the quotidian and the particular is evident in the detailed portrayals of Mumbai life presented by its poets. Kolatkar's *Kala Ghoda Poems* offers a particularly vivid tableau of urban existence, capturing the lives of diverse inhabitants, from street dwellers to professionals, within a single, dynamic space. Chitre's work similarly delves into the challenges of daily life in the city, including the oppressive weight of crowds, pollution, and a pervasive sense of unease. Arundhati Subramaniam's exploration of the female experience on Mumbai's local trains provides a powerful microcosm of the city's complexities. Her stark imagery of women as 'welded' together in a claustrophobic environment underscores the physical and psychological pressures of urban living – "we are welded – / dreams, disasters, / germs, destinies, / flesh and organza, / odours and ovaries" (5.46, Andheri Local).

Surat ghazals tend to focus on broader themes and emotions rather than the specific details of urban life. While they may touch upon aspects of city life, the emphasis is often on love, loss, and philosophical musings, rather than the gritty realities depicted in Mumbai poetry. This difference in focus is a significant distinction between the two poetic traditions.

Mumbai poetry often critiques the city's stark contradictions between affluence and poverty. Jussawalla's "Approaching Santa Cruz Airport Bombay" vividly juxtaposes images of opulence with scenes of deprivation, revealing the city's complex and multifaceted nature. This dichotomy between optimism and pessimism, between the city's elite and its marginalized, is a recurrent theme. Mumbai is not merely a metropolis of skyscrapers and amenities; it is also a city of slums, where the lives of beggars and hawkers unfold amidst its urban sprawl. This stark contrast between the privileged and the marginalized is a recurrent theme in Mumbai poetry, reflecting the city's deep social divisions.

Mumbai is often idealized as a city of dreams, yet its reality can be starkly different. Poets frequently contrast this idealized image with the city's harsh realities, evoking feelings

of disillusionment and detachment. The impersonal, fast-paced nature of Mumbai can foster a sense of isolation, as individuals become cogs in a vast urban machine. This alienation is often captured through vivid descriptions of crowds, solitude, and the difficulty of forming deep connections. The comparison of humans to “robots who are moving but emotionless” effectively captures the sense of detachment and mechanical existence often attributed to urban life. This image conveys the idea of individuals lost in the relentless rhythm of city life, their humanity seemingly compromised by the demands of survival and progress.

Mumbai’s poets often delve into the gritty realities of urban existence, capturing the city’s inherent chaos, contradictions, and the challenges faced by its inhabitants. While their work frequently reflects the city’s darker aspects, characterized by terms such as “sick,” “barbaric,” and “diseased,” a resilient optimism often permeates their verse. Ezekiel, for instance, exemplifies this spirit, his poetry imbued with a hope for a brighter future. This profound attachment to Mumbai, a city that has undeniably shaped their lives, is evident in their work. In contrast, Surat’s poets, while undoubtedly connected to their city, may not exhibit the same degree of complex engagement with its urban challenges or express a comparable sense of hope and resilience.

Poets often develop a profound sense of interconnectedness with their city, their identities becoming intertwined with its urban fabric. However, as the city transforms, this symbiotic relationship can evolve into a complex and often fraught dynamic. Disillusionment can set in as poets struggle to reconcile the city they once knew with its contemporary form. This sense of loss and detachment is evident in the works of many urban poets. Chitre’s shift from epic to ode and Sharma’s metaphorical transformation from bee to trapped inhabitant exemplify this evolving relationship.

The physical transformation of urban landscapes often results in a corresponding loss of human connection. Replacing natural environments with concrete structures can be seen as a metaphor for the dehumanization of urban life. Both Mumbai and Surat poets have explored this theme, with the latter perhaps offering a more intensified portrayal of alienation. Bakulesh Desai’s scepticism and Nayan Desai’s sense of identity loss exemplify the profound impact of urbanization on the human psyche. The ultimate act of suicide, contemplated by Desai, represents an extreme response to the overwhelming pressures of modern life.

## 4.5 Poetic Forms and Devices

Form, as Allen Tate described, is ““ordered intensification of experience in which a perfect relationship between the poet and his material exists”” (Joshi 25). The poet often chooses a form that resonates with their personal voice and best conveys their emotions and ideas. For modernist poets, free verse became the preferred medium as it allowed them to break away from traditional constraints and experiment with structure, rhythm, and language. It provided Bombay poets with a flexible medium to explore a wide range of themes, often centred on the mundane realities of urban life. A hallmark of modernist poetry, this focus on the everyday emerged as a departure from traditional poetic subjects. While early practitioners adopted a general lens on the city, subsequent poets delved deeper, examining specific neighbourhoods and experiences. Through their verse, these poets conveyed the complexities of urban existence, including feelings of trauma, loneliness, and struggle. Words like “troubled sleep,” “fragmented view,” and “crawl” serve as poignant indicators of the weary and frustrated lives depicted. Modernism's emphasis on clarity and directness allowed these poets to present stark and unflinching portraits of everyday life, employing accessible language to resonate with a wider audience.

The ghazal, a traditional poetic form, holds a special place in Surat, not only for its literary richness but also for its historical significance. Surat was the birthplace of the stage performance tradition of the *mushaira*, which played a pivotal role in the development and popularization of the ghazal. Over time, poets have continued to embrace this form, retaining its essence while experimenting with its structure and themes, ensuring its relevance across generations instead of abandoning it. Poets writing about the city find the ghazal to be an appropriate medium to express its multifaceted essence. The structure of the ghazal, with its independent yet interconnected couplets, allows for diverse reflections within a single composition. The fragmented nature of the form is defined by the spaces between couplets, which carry a profound role in the ghazal's aesthetic. The space between couplets works as a silence or pause that heighten the anticipation for the succeeding couplet.

In essence, ghazals function as a multifaceted art form that bridges personal emotion, cultural tradition, universal themes, offering both poets and readers or audience a means of connection, reflection, and aesthetic pleasure. Surat's ghazal tradition often delves into the city's collective experiences, particularly those marked by adversity. Poets have employed the ghazal form to chronicle the devastation caused by natural calamities, such as floods,

earthquakes, and plagues, as well as man-made crises like the communal riots of 1991. These works serve as poignant reflections of the city's resilience and the human cost of such tragedies. In contrast to Surat's poets who frequently address the city's ordeals, Mumbai's poetic landscape often overlooks such catastrophic events. Despite experiencing its share of floods, riots, and bomb blasts, the city's poets have, for the most part, chosen to focus on other themes.

Rhyme, traditionally associated with harmony and celebration, often proves inadequate for conveying the harsh realities and complexities of modern life. In contrast, modernist poetry, liberated from formal constraints, delves into the darker aspects of human experience, such as isolation and societal breakdown. Mumbai poetry exemplifies this trend, employing stark realism to expose the city's most unsettling facets, including violence and crime. The use of shocking imagery, as in the disturbing lines referenced, underscores the poet's intent to confront readers with the city's harsh truths. The lines "I return in the evening / I plot seductions and rapes" are deeply disturbing and constitute a graphic depiction of a heinous crime. Rape is a severe form of violence that inflicts profound physical and emotional trauma on survivors. Rhyme, with its lighter tone, is inappropriate for such content.

While often exploring themes of loss, longing, and disillusionment, Ghazals typically do so with a more restrained and refined approach compared to the often explicit and confrontational style of modernist poetry. The ghazal's formal constraints encourage a more nuanced and indirect expression of emotion.

Though the ghazal is often associated with expressions of love, longing, and spirituality, satire also finds a significant place in its tradition. Satire in the ghazal is an important tool for expressing dissatisfaction often intertwined with humour, irony, and sarcasm, and is used to critique society, politics, religion, and the hypocrisies of human behaviour. But the satire in ghazal is not just a play of metaphors or imageries, the placing of that words and metaphor in a couplet enhance the effectiveness of satire. Also, each couplet can have its own sub theme of satire. For instance, 'Anjum' Valodi's ghazal "Footpath par" (On Footpath) poignantly captures life on the footpath, evoking the harshness and yet, paradoxically, the semblance of life and dreams that exist in such transient spaces. The metaphor of the footpath serves as a vivid symbol of urban displacement, alienation, and survival. His last two couplets are satire on the reality of city life. One speaks of a person

afraid of walking on the road due to the fast-moving vehicles, but who now faces the “test” of surviving on the footpath – “*Je darine vāhanothi road par chāle nahi, / aakari teni kasoti thāy chhe footpath par*” ‘The one who fears walking on the road due to vehicles, / Is harshly tested on the footpath.’ Another couplet speaks of people who can never be found at home, despite all efforts. However, they can now be encountered on the footpath. This could refer to the disconnection between people who once had homes or social identities, but are now only seen in the public, exposed space of the footpath – “*Lākh yatne pan kadi jeo ghare malatā nahi, / temano bheto have thai jāy chhe footpath par*” ‘Those who, despite all efforts, are never found at home, / Now meet you on the footpath.’ Here, Satire is generated by posing a binary image in two different lines of a couplet. This subtlety and wit enable the ghazal to be both profound and playful, offering deep reflections on life while maintaining a sharp, satirical edge.

In Indian English Poem, the satire is made by creating a theme, metaphors, or symbols that can be a central throughout the poem. Many of the poems reflect a decaying, chaotic urban landscape, where progress is often superficial, and underneath, the city is falling apart. Some poems encapsulate the profound sense of existential crisis faced by individuals in urban environments, reflecting on the conflict between dreams and the harsh realities of life. In Ezekiel’s “A Morning Walk,” the speaker’s thoughts are disjointed, moving between dreams and reality, past and present. The recurring dreams and the crossroads symbolise the challenges, and a point of indecision or confusion. It represents the overwhelming choices and possible paths in the urban landscape, where the speaker finds himself lost and directionless.

The themes of dream and phantasmagoria in the above poems highlight the tension between reality and illusion, personal desires, and the chaotic, surreal experience of city life. The city is often presented as both a dream-like space filled with unattainable desires and a nightmarish landscape where sensory overload and disintegration make reality feel surreal. The repetitive, chaotic nature of modern urban life often feels nightmarish or dream-like in the poems, with commuters, workers, and citizens endlessly moving but never arriving at a destination, physically or emotionally.

The poets used the direct approach without any metaphor to show their criticism for the city. Ezekiel’s word ‘barbaric’ gives the sense of a lawless, uncivilized place, adding to the feeling of chaos and decay. Kolatkar openly declares “Bombay makes me a beggar.” The

crude language, particularly in the line “Bhakri you want motherfucker you blind cunt, she said,” starkly conveys the harsh, unforgiving reality faced by the speaker. The sudden outburst of obscenity shocks the reader, pulling them into the brutal and unfiltered world the speaker inhabits. The obscenities add an element of realism, depicting how people in these environments might speak to each other in moments of frustration or conflict. It creates an authentic voice, aligning the reader more closely with the speaker’s lived experience.

In comparison to Gujarati ghazals, Mumbai poems offer a rich and nuanced portrayal of day-to-day activities and routines, grounding the vast urban experience of Bombay (Mumbai) in specific, often mundane, yet evocative details. These details serve to emphasize the contrast between the harsh, overwhelming reality of the city and the inner emotional life of its inhabitants. The use of Bombay’s local trains and buses is a key element of daily life in several poems. The routines of catching trains, squeezing into compartments, and observing the crowds are meticulously described. Many poems describe intimate daily rituals that ground the characters in their urban environment, from waking up and hobbling to the sink to shaving and showering. Chitre, in “The View from Chinchpokli,” contrasts the luxurious experience of the speaker in his private toilet to the public defecation of the less privileged outside Byculla Goods Depot.

The stream of consciousness technique is evident in the Mumbai poems through the unfiltered, flowing thoughts of the speakers, capturing their inner monologues and often blending memory, perception, and the immediacy of urban life. This narrative style gives readers direct access to the characters’ minds, creating a vivid and sometimes chaotic portrayal of their experiences in the city of Bombay (Mumbai). Jussawalla thinks of many things in flight, literally and figuratively, above the cityscape, viewing the degradation below with a sense of dread and disenchantment. Kolatkar’s poem “Temperature Normal; Pulse, Respiration Satisfactory” is a feeling of detachment, letting the speaker’s thoughts flow between moments of introspective observation and passive acceptance. As the speaker leans back and relaxes, Bombay, the vast urban sprawl, seems to sink beneath the level of the parapet, an image suggesting both a literal and metaphorical immersion of the city. Through this stream of consciousness, the poem explores the fragility of connection and the isolation that arises from physical and psychological distance within the modern urban landscape. Kolatkar’s “The Turnaround” unfolds as a series of visceral, fragmented experiences encountered during a journey through rural Maharashtra. Each place the narrator visits marks

a step in his transformation, from destitution in Bombay to small acts of survival, bartering, begging, and finally self-discovery.

As a modernist poem, the pi dog and beggar serve as powerful metaphors, representing multiple layers of social commentary, especially focused on the marginalized aspects of urban life and the socio-economic disparities in Mumbai. The pi dog embodies those who are ignored and neglected in the city's narrative, those who exist on the periphery but whose lives are woven into the fabric of urban spaces. The beggar, much like the pi dog, symbolizes poverty and economic disparity. They are emblematic of the city's harsh realities, serving as constant reminders of the extreme divisions in wealth and status. The beggar's presence points to a darker, uncomfortable side of Bombay that is often overlooked or glossed over in more romanticized depictions.

Mumbai poems, in general, focus on the overall aspect of the city through employing modernist techniques which led to using new images and symbols that are easy to connect with the mundane life in a metropolis. Mumbai is a confluence of multiple cultures that makes it more modern and dynamic. The "metropolis" acts as a unifying force, drawing people of different backgrounds into a kind of "contemporaneous similarity," where cultural differences coexist and overlap. This dynamic can lead to a blend of individual identities that, while unique, still share a broader, common metropolitan culture. These cultural pluralities encourage democracy that promote equality and mutual respect among different voices, moving away from traditionally hierarchical structures that may favour elitist perspectives. In the poems, this democratic shift is reflected by a departure from classical or refined themes towards the celebration of everyday, even "vulgar" or "ugly" aspects of life. The idea that "vulgar is beautiful" and "ugly is beautiful" is significant because it indicates an aesthetic shift: metropolitan culture finds value in authenticity and rawness, recognizing beauty in ordinary or unconventional forms. This can be seen as a rejection of exclusive standards of beauty, giving voice and visibility to forms and themes that were previously marginalized or ignored. (Jhaveri 105-106).

Surat, on the contrary, still follows its conventions. Surat ghazals diverge from this portrayal of metropolitan through their reflections on the city's unique blend of historical and cultural influences. Surat ghazals instead often focus on themes of nostalgia, cultural continuity, and survival through crises such as plagues and floods that have historically affected the city. They are shaped not just by contemporary metropolitan ideals but also by a

layered historical consciousness, memory, and resilience rather than the raw embrace of “vulgarity” or democratic pluralism often seen in larger metropolises like Mumbai.

Every facet of the city may it be political, social, economic, or cultural, shapes its ideology and fosters a lived experience that contributes to the city’s growth, with these influences visibly reflected in the poetry of its poets. The tradition of ghazals centred on Surat is part of a rich tapestry in which poets have captured in the unique spirit, landscapes, culture and history of this city in Gujarat. The city has inspired poets to reflect on its beauty, social dynamics, and its significant place in trade and cultural exchanges. As with many ghazals tied to specific cities, ghazals about Surat often carry a tone of nostalgia. Whether it is the city’s historical significance, its transformation over time, or personal memories associated with Surat, poets have used ghazals to express their attachment to a place that feels timeless and ever-changing. The tradition of ghazals on Surat thus captures a protean view of the city, blending admiration for its physical beauty, respect for its history, and reflections on its cultural significance. These ghazals not only honour Surat’s legacy but also preserve the city’s essence through poetry, providing a window into the soul of the city and its people.

On the other hand, Indian English poems about Mumbai often capture the city’s essence, blending admiration, critique, and reflection on its complexity. Mumbai, as India’s commercial capital and cultural hub, inspires poets to explore themes like urban chaos, social disparity, resilience, and cultural diversity. Many poets depict Mumbai as a city bustling with life, yet burdened by congestion and pollution. Poems such as Arun Kolatkar’s *Kala Ghoda Poems* capture the disarray of Mumbai’s streets, markets, and bustling local trains, portraying the chaos of everyday life with vivid imagery. These poems often juxtapose the city’s dynamic energy with the weariness of individuals who navigate its crowded spaces, creating a narrative that celebrates and critiques Mumbai’s liveliness. Mumbai’s stark economic inequality appears frequently in Indian English poetry. From Dharavi’s crowded slums to the luxurious high-rises of Malabar Hill, poets like Nissim Ezekiel and Dilip Chitre explore the city’s social contrasts. They often use symbolic representations of locations in Mumbai to highlight class divides and the struggles of marginalized communities. As a melting pot of diverse communities, languages, and traditions, Mumbai provides poets with a rich setting to explore themes of identity and belonging. Eunice de Souza’s works, for example, delve into the lives of Goan Catholics in Mumbai, capturing the complexities of cultural identity in a cosmopolitan city. Mumbai’s diversity also allows poets to reflect on the challenges of

finding one's place within its bustling anonymity. Mumbai is frequently personified as a resilient entity, embodying the spirit of survival despite challenges like floods, bombings, and economic struggles. Poems that focus on Mumbai's resilience often celebrate its people's ability to carry on, using the city as a metaphor for tenacity and endurance. Thus, Indian English poems about Mumbai collectively create a nuanced portrait of the city, celebrating its beauty, critiquing its social structures, and capturing the emotional landscapes of its residents. The use of contrasting imagery and symbolic devices allows poets to explore the dualities of Mumbai—its dreams and its disillusionments, its resilience and its struggles, its vibrancy, and its solitude. Through these themes, Indian English poetry provides a critical yet affectionate lens on Mumbai, portraying it as both a microcosm of India's diversity and a unique, dynamic entity.