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GUJARATI NATIONAL SONGS' SOCIAL CONTEXT, 1885–1915

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The professional historians have now increasingly begun to accept that in the struggle for freedom that was undertaken to be free of British yoke in India, and the manner in which not only the political but even other cultural forces have played an important role to ignite a nationalist sentiment among the Indian people. Historians like Romila Thaper, Bipan Chandra, Ravindra Kumar, Stanley Wallport, David Hardimann, Ramchandra Guha and Sumeet Sarkar have shown that during the freedom struggle, the Indian society held traditional values, and the political consciousness was a result of such values.¹ This situation indicates that there were a large number of non-political elements that gave rise to the Indian political consciousness. These included those theories and concepts related to religion, social and economic ones. However, one may wonder how this became possible as most of the Indian people were illiterate, so how could the political and economic thinking and ideologies expressed in books could have greatly influenced the general public? Obviously, in this context, we have to turn to the idea that such intellectual thinking hardly affected, if at all, the people in general.

But on the other hand, the stage, mythological tales told to large audiences, devotional songs, Duha couplets and folk songs played a very significant role in shaping the opinions and patriotic sentiments of their nation among the Indian people. From this viewpoint, the central theme of this Thesis turns into an important chain in understanding the freedom struggle of Gandhian period. Of course a very large number of poems were composed during this period, but these days they are looked at as separate units. Dilawrsinh Jadeja has written a very useful book about the nationalist culture in Gujarat that we must consider in this context.² However, in our humble opinion, it is mostly a description and has been written with the background of literature in mind; it does not indulge into any sufficient historical analysis. That is why this Thesis is an attempt to examine and evaluate the songs written for the freedom movement in Gujarati in this context.

As we have noted right at the beginning, like the other parts of India, in Gujarat also the nationalist sentiment was ignited by a number of non-political trends and forces. The then society of Gujarat was also traditional, let us first understand its nature, and especially after

1850 AD what was the direction of the social reforms that were taking place, along with its own problems too.

THE PROBLEM AND DIRECTION OF SOCIAL REFORM IN GUJARAT

In 1818 AD when the British rule began in Gujarat, the society here was divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes, big and small religious sects and also lived under a large number of big or small native states. In spite of many undesirable traditions prevailing here, there had not been any attempt with determination or in any systematic manner for reforms. The main reason was that the leading castes also had accepted social ills as an innate part of the existence and lifestyle. The practice of Sati, and superstitious practices like even black magic to get a male heir were a part of common lifestyle. Such castes as Kunbis and Patidars, Jethwas and Jadejas, also indulged in drowning a newborn girl in milk; there were such horrible traditions as thumping of chest for indicating mourning after a death, high expenses for the dead, unjust practices to humiliate the untouchables, physical and mental torture met out to women, especially to the widows, child marriages, and immoral and evil practices of religious men were just a few of the ills that had become accepted traditions in the society. These practices were not considered as any 'problem' but as inevitable part of life. As there was nothing to prepare a practical or intellectual background for opposing the injustices of such traditions, these had continued to flourish in society for a long time.

Some historians and social scientists place importance on religious sects as the forces that brought a transformation in the traditional fabric of Indian society.³ Even before the British rule came to Gujarat, efforts had been made, while remaining in the Varnashram system for Society, to improve the ethical life in Gujarat. The sects provided opportunities for individuals to protest against and express disregard for his / her family and caste bonds. Providing a lesson in following the rules of lower castes, they tried to turn them into respectable ones. Among such sects, one can mention those of Kabir, Santram, Madhavnagar, Bijmargi, Pranami, and Swaminarayan sects.⁴ It is wrong to say that they used to indulge in frauds or treachery in order to gather followers for themselves. For example, the founder of the Swaminarayan sect, Sahajanand Swami, raised his followers by travelling in cities and villages of Gujarat in the early 19th century.⁵ In order to spread the principles of his sect, he used the basic local dialect, and enamored the people by his lovely stories, Bhajan and Kirtans, and even music for it all. He had thus won the confidence of the people through such means. The temples were constructed much later, but before this he had won over the people of the villages through full use of the services of Bhats and Charanas, Vahivanchas, poets and music composers. It is well known how Sahjanand Swami opposed the practices of Sati and 'Dudh-Piti'. It was not possible for him to reach out to the untouchables as 'untouchability' was ingrained in the base of the Hindu caste system and religious belief.⁶ Even then, in order to spread his sect, Sahjanand included the Shudras or the working class men and women in his service. Thus the sects like Swaminarayan provided an opportunity to oppose

the unjust practices of family or other social institutions. We may cite the example of Dalpatram. His father Dahyabhai was a firm Agnihotri Brahman who used to perform religious ceremonies for other hosts. If Dalpatram made any mistake in chanting these mantras or in his study of the Vedas, his father used to beat him mercilessly. Dahyabhai also drove away his wife to her maternal home as his punishment. In such an atmosphere of home, in his quite young age, Dalpatram left his family occupation of karma-kand or performing religious ceremonies for others, and took up Swaminarayan sect as his own religion. Dahyabhai was shocked at this development, but he could do nothing about it. In 1844 he was so disgusted that he took up Sanyasa. As even castes did not prevent the change of sects, Dalpatram took advantage and thus set up a tradition of 'angry young men' of Gujarat to indulge in protest against unjust and evil practices. To highlight this point, the above example has been cited here. However, one has also to accept that the form of such traditional

measures and effect were limited and they were not sufficient or effective for social changes on a large scale.⁷

The awareness of social change and reforms was a result of the British rule in Gujarat. The new government emphasized on the principle of individual freedom, and in addition it also developed such physical and practical equipment as printing press, railways, post and telegraph, and timepieces, etc.⁸ The timepieces and watches, besides the railway changed the Hindu theories of 'Yug' and 'Kala' or Time, and the theories of 'Knowledge' also changed. The aim of Knowledge was no longer individual 'Moksha'; and the attitude towards knowledge that became a means for social reforms changed and a new option of 'rational' knowledge was now available. This then made it easy to argue that such evil practices as Sati, 'Dudh-Piti', child marriage, dowry etc. were not to be abandoned because they were absent in ancient times or the caste is against its closing. They should be abandoned because they are unjust: they go against the principle of individual freedom and against human values. In Swaminarayan sect also we find the writings against Sati and 'Dudh-Piti' practices; and we also get such writing as how a 'good woman' let's go of her jewels when her husband is abroad and does not leave her home, that if a husband beats her she has to bear it without complaint.⁹ But the new values did not indicate any such disparity in them. The reason was that their base was not in religion or God, but in principles of social progress. The strength of protesting against social injustices had developed in European rather than in Indian society. There had been no place for checking or investigating classical traditions in the sectarian structure of Indian society. It could give space only to such ideas and principles as 'paap-punya' or 'karma' at best. By 1850 the progressive effects of British rule began to be visible in the society of Gujarat.¹⁰ Born in 1809 AD, Durgaram Mehtaji established 'Manav Dharma Sabha' in Surat in 1843 AD. In Ahmadabad, Gujarat Vernacular Society was set up in 1848 AD. Such social reformers came forward now from its middle class as Ranchhodlal Girdhardas, Karsandas Mulji, Bholanath Sarabhai, Mahipatram Rupram, Hargovind Kantavala, Kavi Dalpatram, Kavi Narmad, Navalram Lakshmishankar Pandya, Bahechardas Lashkari, and Behramji Malbari among others.¹¹ They did not adopt any sectarian standard for reform, but began their protest march against social evils based on social exploitation and injustices. For this they too set up printing presses and several institutions.

Unlike Surat, the reform movement was slightly more guarded in Ahmadabad. The reason was that in this city, a class of rich Jain and Vaishnav Banias was highly conservative.¹² However, as this class was in favor of education and even education for women, the reformers were able to raise all necessary funds for setting up schools. However, this class was highly against widow remarriage and also stood up for the tradition of child marriages. An industrialist like Ranchhodlal Chhotlal was once approached for funds for the work of widow remarriage. He too had to reply like this, "I would surely provide funds, but since due to my occupation of mills I have to deal with the Shethias (big merchants and mill owners) daily, so you tell me what should I do?"¹³ However, since many of those who set up mills were money lenders and traders, not intellectuals. Unknowingly, they were also raising a third class in society, viz. the labor. Ranchhodlal may have been conservative about social matters, but he was visionary enough by supporting the plans of gutters and water taps at homes to create new social forces as well.¹⁴ The attitude of the intellectuals was city-centric. Not one of the intellectuals in the 19th century took any active interest in social questions faced by villagers. However, they indeed wrote articles about the villages off and on. But, for instance, they did not reach the dire situation faced by untouchables and the tortures worked upon them by caste Hindus, to their readers to bring it to the level of even discussion. In fact, when in the early period of railway the caste Hindus had to travel along with the untouchables in the railway compartments, many high caste intellectuals wrote against this practice.¹⁵ They shouted their view usually, saying 'all men are equal'. This vocal expression

raised no fighter reformist and so this very important and huge arena remained without any players.

Many times, the reformist themselves became a source of entertainment due to their own dichotomy in words and practice. In 1860 when Mahipatram went to England the reformists had expected that he will not submit to 'purification' ceremony and so will not favor the conservatives that objected to crossing the ocean. Mahipatram had declared in public his unwillingness for it as well, but later he underwent the ceremony more than once as repentance.¹⁶ Similarly, the first class reformer, like Durgaram Mehtaji, who began a movement against widow remarriage, and while one of the widows of his own caste, named Mathuri, was ready to marry him, but when he had to marry again in later life, he married a child virgin girl.¹⁷ While Kavi Narmad in fact married a widow, but the conditions he placed before this second wife, Dahigauri, indicate sheer inequality between the relations of a husband and wife in those days.¹⁸ Thus, there remained a discrepancy between words and practice of the social reformers which proved to be so much that the ordinary people could indulge in deriding reforms as such, and believed that the reformers wanted the others to practice what they thought important.

In spite of all this, however, in historical analysis, we have to accept that the contribution made by these reformers in bringing about the social reforms was tremendous. The enthusiasm in favor of the reforms, the reformist institutions that they set up, their books and articles, and the lectures they gave covered a wide range and gives us an idea how they tried to shake and wake up the society, to make it aware of its ills, let go of conservatism and superstitions, and take steps by abandoning idleness. The early efforts of the social reformers were indeed praiseworthy.

The highest point of these efforts was the famous Maharaj Libel Case of 1861-62. A movement was begun by Karsandas Mulji against the pretentious and perverted lifestyle of Vaishnav Maharajs through his magazine. Finally Jadunath Maharaj, a Vaishnav priest, sued him for libel in a court in Mumbai. The statements that were recorded in this case included those of Dr. Bhau Daji, and Dr. Dhirajlal Dalpatram who were practitioners trained in Grant Medical College. The public came to know how Jadunath and other Mahants or priests were treated for syphilis by such practitioners; how they made the general public believe that they were incarnations of Lord Krishna, and tried to get money from rich followers by varied tricks. Jadunathji tried to avoid appearing before the court in a witness stand, saying that he was too big a person to do so. But the court ruled that a person may enjoy, however big a place in his field or work, he is equal to all ordinary persons in the eyes of law. Thus Jadunathji was forced to appear in the court, and this turned out a huge eye opener for his followers; a long standing tradition had lost a battle.¹⁹ Thus this incident became a landmark in the history of social reform movement.

The first phase of social reform in Gujarat ended at about 1880 AD. In the next phase, we find the protective reformist like Narmand and Manilal Nabhubhai Dwivedi, who began to review the reforms in context of new political awareness. Criticizing the 'activism' (Pravruttivad) of the West, they praised the Indian concept of 'Non-activism' (Nirvruttivad), and wrote that all social reform activity should be undertaken in keeping with Indian 'sanskaras'.²⁰ However, they failed in providing any satisfactory and practical explanation about their stand. In fact, they made ordinary problems also as intellectual ones. Especially Manilal wrote about the 'Protective Reformism' in such high language that it became difficult even for the educated to understand what he was trying to say. However, as it was, wordy arguments played a very valuable role intellectually and philosophically.

But gradually this 'Protective Reformism' lost ground in Gujarat. The branches of Prarthana Sabha that was set up by social reformers like Bholanath Sarabhai and Mahipatram were set up also in the villages of the Kheda and Surat districts. Its activities were later on

taken up by intellectuals like Ramanbhai Nilkanth. He arranged for some widow remarriages under the auspices of the Gujarat Sansar Sudhara Samaj. Under such circumstances, due to the efforts of Baheramji Malabari the British Government passed the 'Marriage Consent Age law' in 1891 AD. At this time also two diverse thought processes came into conflict. Manilal protested against the raise in marriageable age, while Ramanbhai began a movement in its favor.²¹ This historical moment was taken up by Goverdhanram Tripathi in his voluminous work 'Sarasvatichandra' tried to bind the two sides and history made it into a joke.²² Thus, when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi entered the social arena of Gujarat in 1915, an intellectual attitude had been already present here. Widow-remarriages had begun to take place, and child marriages had begun to wane in its strength as a tradition. With the entry of Gandhiji a new turn came in the progress of a social reform movement in Gujarat.

National Unity in Gujarat: Problems and Directions

Just as the awareness about the need of social reforms began to spread in Gujarat, similarly there also began the awareness about the sentiment of national unity here. Due to innumerable impressions of the British rule, in the second half of the 19th century we find such giant reformers and thinkers such as Kavi Narmad, Karsandas Mulji, Durgaram Mehtaji, Ichchharam Suryaram Desai, Behramji Malbari, Ambalal Sakarlal Desai, Hargovinddas Kantawala and Ramanbhai Nilkanth among them. These persons made sincere efforts to support and enhance the culture at political and national level. Indeed, most of them were admirers of the British rule as such, and were confident of spreading nationalist sentiment among the general public. However, on examining the national background of their times we can surely say these leaders, like Phirozshah Mehta, G.K. Gokhale, M.G. Ranade and Vyomeshchandra Banerjee, wanted that political reform should come slowly and with caution. When the Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 AD also obviously it began its activities as an organization which was loyal to the British.²³ However, this did not mean that everyone in the Congress held conciliatory attitude for the British domination. In fact the Congress had two different thought streams within it. Lokmanya Tilak, Lala Lajpatrai and Bipinchandra Pal were such radical leaders whose impact were also to be seen on some leaders of Gujarat. For instance, even before the birth of Tilak, the people of Surat had begun a protest movement against the Government tax on salt in 1844. The Company Government had doubled the tax on salt (a rupee instead of 8 annas) in Mumbai province and this was to be implemented from 1st Sept. 1844. The people of Surat, three days prior to this implementation, in 3 days of August, displayed a calm and firm non-violent protest. Around 3000 people gathered on 20th August for demonstrations, and the markets were all closed completely. Everyone, rich or poor, Hindu or Muslim, equally shared this same dissatisfaction against this step of the Government and their resistance lasted for full 3 days. The Government resorted to military action against it, but the people did not give up. The Government had to bow down to their wish finally. The local Magistrate (Remington) showed a presence of mind and welcomed the decision of the people to cancel the order. However, the provincial Government did not want to lose face and ordered the Agent to continue the tax. However, finally the Government changed its stance by issuing a proclamation on 14th Sept. 1844 to draw up a law for the tax on salt. This was indeed the first political victory of the Gujarat people.²⁴

Later the same city of Surat received the sharp writings of Ichchharam Suryaram Desai (1854–1912) in this attitude. Seven years before the setting up of the Congress, he had started a magazine named 'Swatantrata' and had greatly criticized the Government policies under his article titled 'Amane Rajkiya Swatantrata Apo' (Give us political freedom). Ichchharam had aroused the public opinion in Surat by such means. The Government had held 'Swatantrata' responsible for the riots of 1878 in Surat. He had aroused the protest

against the Salt tax and License tax that the Government levied. He began a newspaper named 'Gujarati' in 1880 in Mumbai, and he ignited the nationalist sentiment and protesting sentiments among the readers by his series of articles 'Hind ane Britannia'. The first edition of a book of collecting articles as 'Hind ane Britannia' appeared in the same year as the beginning of the Congress (1885). This book used a dialogue form to express the exploiting nature of British rule in such explosive manner that orders were issued against it and it was banned!²⁵ Besides Surat, political dissatisfaction was also rampant in Kheda district and Vadodara kingdom. During 1892 AD to 1904, when Aurobindo Ghosh was a Professor in the college in Vadodara, he had prepared revolutionary spirit among the youth under his care. Also, institutions like Arya Samaj of their nationalist movement also made this impact on people wherever it was present and it was very much present in Kheda and Vadodara. The partition of Bengal in 1904 also spread revolutionary ideas in politics in Gujarat by the Swadeshi movements. David Hardimann has made it very clear that in Kheda and Vadodara where the Patidar families were in large numbers, the impact of the Arya Samaj and radical forces was greater than that of moderates like Pherozshah Mehta or Gokhale. By 1908 we find young workers like Mohanlal Pandya, Narasimhbhai Patel, Dahyabhai Patel, and Pujabhai Bhatt who ignited dissatisfaction among the Patidars and Khedawal Brahmans against the exploitative revenue policy of the British Government.²⁶ Shirinben Mehta has also shown how even prior to the arrival of Gandhiji the farmer leaders of 'Anavil Brahman' caste in Surat district had already received this type of political thinking, and the leaders like Kunvarji Mehta, Kalyanji Mehta, Dr. Mohannath Dikshit and Dr. Anantrao Madanraji had already absorbed radicalism in politics.²⁷ Like Narasimhbhai Patel, Kunvarji and Kalyanji even published pamphlets showing the methods of preparing bombs. This however does not mean these Surat, Kheda and Vadodara had only radical impact prevailing there. The main point here is that besides the moderate thinking, in these areas we find also the prevalence of opposition by revolution in political affairs. In Ahmadabad however, merely the moderate 'obedient' and 'loyal' trend is to be seen among the people. Here a pure style emerged that served the mental make-up of the citizens of Ahmadabad, based on considerations of utility and smooth working methods.

The reason behind this was that after 1861 AD, the mill industry began to work in this city, which was supported by such intellectuals as Ambalal Sakarlal Desai, Lalshankar Umiyashankar and Govindrao Appaji etc. The merchant class and the intellectual class was joined with economic interests. This class of people was eager to see that industries based on the new technology may increase and thereby their economic interests would be served, and for this, naturally, they even tried to enroll the aid of the Government this class believed in not antagonizing the British but compromising with them whenever necessary.

Due to this conciliatory attitude, in 1884 AD a political institution was set up, named 'Gujarat Sabha' in Ahmadabad. Among its early and noted members were Becharadas Lashkari, Ranchhodhbhai, Mulchand Asharam Shah, Govindrao Appaji Patil and H.P. Modi, etc. Their meetings took place only 2 or 3 times a year and their activities were mostly silent. It indicated its exclusive devotion towards the Government this goes to show that the political attitude of Ahmadabad city was very different from that of Surat and Kheda districts.²⁸ They may be moderates or radical, but two leaders of the time were making great efforts to encourage industrial progress in India itself. They thought to stem the invasion of the industry from England, Gujarat will have to develop its own industries. This idea was first expressed in a poem of Kavi Dalpatram, 'Hunnar Khan ni Chadai' written in 1851. In this famous poem he had emphasized this point a great deal. Then in 1875 AD patriots like Ambalal Sakarlal Desai began the 'Swadesh Udyog Vardhak Mandali' (Association to encourage swadeshi

industries). Such associations were then also set up in cities like Surat, Navsari, Vadodara, Bharuch, Morbi, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Nadiad and Rajkot.²⁹

The above discussion definitely illustrates that even before the Swadeshi Movement (1904 – 1908) took place, Gujarat had already begun to move in that direction on a considerable scale. During the Swadeshi Movement the people had indeed become even more conscious and the trade and industry in Gujarat received a new force. Along with the cotton mills, it emphasized the economic steps like developing and increasing industries like sugar, matches, candles, etc. as even more important than political ones. Unlike Maharashtra and Bengal Gujarat may have been less talkative or expressive in political matters, but it surely contributed to the Swadeshi Movement in keeping with the traditional nature of its own.³⁰

The Young Nationalists of Gujarat

At the dawn of the 20th century there emerged new and university educated class with a political consciousness. A notable aspect of this development was that it also included development of women power. In 1900 AD two sisters, Shardaben Sumant Mehta and Vidyaben Ramanbhai Nilkanth became the first ladies of Gujarat to become graduates. They initiated the work of igniting social and political consciousness among women of Gujarat. Also, at this time Chimnabai, the wife of the Vadodara ruler Sayajirao Gaekwad also began to work in this field. Anasuyaben Sarabhai, the sister of noted industrialist of Ahmadabad, Ambalal Sarabhai, upon returning from studies in England began to work for the welfare of the labor class, especially their women and children.

Among their contemporary political activists were Indulal Yagnik, Shankarlal Banker, Ganesh Mavlankar, Dr. Sumant Mehta, Kanaiyalal Munshi, Ramanbhai Nilkanth, Kuvarji Mehta, Kalyanji Mehta, Dayalji Desai, Thakkar Bapa and Ravishankar Maharaj. Some of them had come under the radical and self-reliance ideas and Arya Samaj. Yagnik, Munshi and Mavlankar were such shining young men who had absorbed western ideas, but held the native cultural attitudes with great respect. One of the noted features of the leadership of this period was that the intellectuals of Gujarat mostly used to abandon Gujarati and wrote in English which they spoke in a peculiar manner. Those who did write in Gujarati used a very high and Sanskritized version, so that not many could really follow what they had to say.³¹

A new step was taken in Indian politics in around 1908 AD. The scholar from England, Dr. Annie Besant began the spread of Home Rule sentiment among the Indians through her Theosophical Society. She called out for Home Rule of the Indians and Gujarat also could not remain without its impact. The young leaders of Gujarat, like Indulal Yagnik, Shankarlal Banker, Dr. Sumant Mehta, Sharadaben Mehta, Narhari Parikh, Kishorlal Mashruwala and Kalyanji Mehta adopted this ideology and even started schools for it in Ahmadabad, Kheda and Surat.

The above discussion proves that after the establishment of British rule, due to its numerous influences, Gujarat made significant and speedy progress in social and political consciousness, which was a new and indicative process. Indeed, this does not mean that the entire people of Gujarat were affected by the new social and political thoughts that had begun to prevail. For instance, thousands of Bhils and Adivasis in villages continued to live in their own world as usual. Thousands of the untouchables still remained illiterate. In other words, the social and political reform movement in Gujarat was mostly at the middle class level. Only the higher castes and classes could taste the new consciousness and take its advantage.

This was indeed a huge limitation of the freedom struggle. However, if we take it as an exception, its one positive aspect was that when in 1915 Gandhi arrived, even before this, Gujarat had already developed a strong and solid intellectual class that was devoted to love of nation. Some of them have written and composed songs full of nationalist sentiments.

In this context we shall now turn to nationalist songs before the 1915 or arrival of Gandhiji.

The Poets in the time of Kavi Narmad: Dawn of Nationalist Sentiment

This segment is to help us understand the newly developed nationalist sentiment in the 19th century. The time of Kavi Narmad has been selected as 'Narmad Yug' because in this period Narmad (1833 – 1886) was very prominent in the literary and reformist activities of Gujarat. Besides, he also represented the social and nationalist culture. The scholars and literature of this period were trained in Indian culture and values as well as the western thinking on the principles of individualism and liberalism to some extent. Obviously they used to compare the British rule with the Mughal and Maratha rule. They firmly believed that in comparison, the British rule is undoubtedly progressive in many ways. Intellectuals and writers like Narmad, B.M. Malabari, Navalram Lakshmiram Pandya, Kavi Dalpatram, Keshav Harshad Dhruv and IchchharamSuryaram Desai praised the British rule and at the same time considered it necessary to arouse nationalism in India and Gujarat. We shall note later on that even when writers like Dalpatram and Ichchharam Desai created such works as 'Hunnar Khan niChadai' and 'Hind ane Britannia' they had on the whole praised the British rule. The point of this discussion is that the scholars and poets of the time of Narmad did not consider the duties of the Ruler and the Ruled as separate and conflicting with each other, but in fact helpful to each other, and they used to express these sentiments in their creations and poems.

From this viewpoint, Kavi Dalpatram (1821 – 1898) was the first among these as the poet of Gujarat. In 1848 he came in contact with a British official Alexander Kinlok Forbes. Before this Dalpatram used to compose poetry to please different native rulers and also about the Swaminarayan sect which he followed and wanted its support. However, after he came in contact with Forbes it proved a turning point for him in his thinking and writing. In 1851 AD he read his newly composed poem which was full of patriotic sentiment, 'Hunnar Khan niChadai' at the Andrews Library in Surat. Here we can see his awareness of our country's economic problems and questions, which found an expression for the first time in Gujarati literature. In those days, raw material was exported from India to England, while the ready-made goods were sent to India. The exchange was unjust and favorable to England rather than India. The resultant poverty was indeed something that needed to be elevated, and Dalpatram emphasized this in this poem. He declared, "O Indians! Find new Moons, employ western machines, create an Indian economic revolution!" We thus find that in this poem of Dalpatram, the argument for economic patriotism is presented with great emphasis.

However, Dalpatram knows that such economic, patriotic activities are possible only in the context of British rule, and should take place. He, like other poets, shared a deep faith in the British rule as well as its progressive elements. He expresses this feeling quite beautifully in some of his poems.³²

[The British rule is like a Sun... gives light in the form of education and even electricity...]

[We have left behind our enmities and tyrants... due to British rule.]

In comparison with Dalpatram, Kavi Narmada Shankar was more outspoken and aggressive opponent.³³ This poet of Surat had been impressed by the western history, politics and thoughts. While Dalpatram indicated a preference for 'reforms at a slow pace', Narmad advocated an impulsive beginning of work of patriotic activities. His poems thus are very different from those of Dalpatram. In his poem 'Sau chalojitavajang', we find that on one hand the heroes of the ancient Indian mythology, on the other the heroes of modern times, like Martin Luther, Columbus and Napoleon also are mentioned. Thus Narmad, by this poem, seems to hope to ignite nationalist sentiment among the people by combining the eastern as

well as western cultures. In his style and language he expresses what his own thoughts and wishes were. Let us have a look at it:

[Come, let us go forward together to win a battle for our nation... do not give any excuses... so many acts of bravery have happened in the past, in east and west... and these heroes have made their names by bravery...]

In his poem 'Jay JayGaravi Gujarat' Narmad is as impressive as in the above poem. Finding inspiration from the history of Gujarat he has passed it on with highly inspiring words in the hearts of the people of Gujarat. He says, "O people of Gujarat! Wake up, now that the delicate and fresh rays of the rising Sun has begun to lighten up the land of Gujarat. Wake up and begin with enthusiasm new activities for the welfare of our nation." This poem thus is like an epitome of the modern poetry of Gujarat with its nascent patriotic sentiment.

Kavi Narmad's patriotism was not confined to Indians only. He had discussed in numerous poems and essays the issue of unity of Hindus and Muslims. His broad perspective can be seen in these lines:

Join each other, O the educated and clever Hindus, Parsis, Jains,
And take along the Muslim brothers, make your thoughts one.

Narmad also believed that no one person or group actually owned Gujarat. Only the Banias and Brahmans could not claim it as their own, but this was a new Gujarat of everyone – poor and rich, men and women, elders and children, landowners and farmers – all. He has expressed these sentiments in his poem entitled "Koni Koni Gujarat".

[Not just those who are born in Gujarat or had their ancestors born in Gujarat, but those who followed the broad 'Arya Dharma' own Gujarat. Also, those foreigners who grew up here, and may follow a different faith, they too own Gujarat, as they are like brothers. So, join hands, show your valor and fight for motherland.]

While the poets of the Narmad era, praised the progressive nature of the British rule on one hand, they persuaded the Indian people to become active in the work of elevating their motherland. Through their poetry, poets like Behramji Malbari, Khabardar, Harilal Harshadrai Dhruv, Lalit MaganbhaiChaturbhai Patel and Jivabhai used to appeal and challenge the people of Gujarat and of India to shake off their centuries old idleness and be aware of modern life and its issues. Instead of covering all the poets of Narmad era, in this Chapter only some poets and their representative poetry have been considered, but in the brief report, we have paid keen attention to the thought processes prevailing in those days as well.

Behramji Malbari (1853 – 1912) was an active social reformer and patriot. In 1891 AD he played an important role in the Consent of Age Act that was passed that year, increasing the age of consent for marriage of girls and boys. So far a girl was, as a rule, married off before she attained the age of 10 years, but now the new law that he helped pass by the Government imposed the condition that the age of consent should be raised to 12 years for girls.³⁴ This law, however created a furor among the conservative men and women. Even the Frontline reformers like Lokmany Tilak and Manilal Nabhubhai Dwivedi opposed it. Malabari however, rested only after it was passed. So long as the social evils like child marriages are present the Indians cannot be considered as fit for Independence. This was Malbari's firm faith and he gave it his voice. Although he worshipped the old poetry, as soon as he entered the literary field Malabari presented six new-poetry collections in modern Parsi Gujarati poetry, viz. through his books entitled as 'Niti Vinod' (1875), 'Wilson Viraha' (1878), 'Sarod-e-Ittefaq' (1881), 'Aanubhavik' (1894), 'Sansarika' (1898) and 'Admi aneteni Duniya' (1898).³⁵

Malbari has composed a large number of patriotic poems, and the poem that gives voice to his reformist and overflowing nationalist sentiments was entitled, 'Gujarat nu Bhavi Gaurav'. Here we can clearly see his great concern and regret about the high population

growth rate and the poverty faced by the people. He puts up the question to the Indians, “Where has the past qualities of yours gone? Recall at least your knowledge of trade and commerce! How long will you go on talking about self-interest? Have you decided not to create even a few daughters and sons with great talents and good character? Do you just take pleasure in increasing your numbers like the cats and gods?”

Poem ‘Gujarat nu Bhavi Gaurav’

Like Malbari, AdesharFaramjiKhabardar (1881 – 1953) was also known for his nationalism. He was a poet who passed through the two generations – Narmad and Gandhian eras.

Born in 1881 AD the original surname of Khabardar was ‘Hingwala’ or ‘Postwala’, but due to the cleverness and accomplishments of his ancestors the surname he inherited was that of ‘Khabardar’. His primary education was completed in Daman. In 1891 he went to Bombay for further studies and shone as a clever student there. He used to compose poems in Gujarati as well as English. Although he studied only up to Std. VI, his attachment to literature was so much that he decided to spend his days in service of Gujarati language by composing poetry. Later on he had to move to Madras (Chennai) for trade purposes, but even in this occupation he continued his activity in poetry composition. He had written a number of poems that overflow with nationalist sentiment, and indeed his contribution in the awakening of Gujarati sentiments is invaluable.³⁶

Upon the arrival of Gandhiji in 1915, Khabardar wrote a large number of patriotic songs, and even his earlier compositions had begun to affect the public a great deal. He acquainted himself with contemporary literature through the study of works of Dalpatram – Narmad, Harilal Dhruv, various periodicals. His knowledge of English literature was also very wide. That is why in the beginning of the 20th century when he completed his twenties Khabardar stepped into a Gujarati literary field through poetry by his poem ‘Kavya Rasika’. During the drought of 1908 AD his family became almost destitute, and its impact can be seen in his poem ‘Prakashika’ (1908). The two hearts-touching poems of Khabardar are also very revealing. In his poem ‘Hind no Vijay Danko’ Khabardar addresses all communities of India – Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians, etc. and gives them the ‘Mantra’ of Unity – at a time when all these communities were divided by different heritage and ways of life besides different thought processes. Thus, this was a new type of message that Khabardar sent to all. We quote some of the stanzas of ‘Hind no Vijay Danko’ poem here:

‘Hind no Vijay Danko’

[Let the Nation be victorious, with all its sons of all faiths and communities showing their unity, courage and patriotism; so do leave your personal interests aside and together celebrate the rise of our Motherland.]

The poem ‘Gunvanti Gujarat’ written in 1906 AD was one of the everlasting ones for all Gujaratis. While ‘Hind no Vijay’ gave a message of national unity, and plants the seeds of hope, this poem indicated the beauty and love of Gujarat. Gujarat is not just a ‘sweet, attractive area’, but is full of virtues and high qualities. Gujarat with its fertile land that grows lovely crops of fruits and flowers, grains and other crops is a land of merit and action. Here we quote this Gujarati poem of nationalistic sentiments in full:

‘Gunavanti Gujarat’

Before the arrival of Gandhiji on the scene, a large number of patriotic poems in Gujarati as well as in other Indian languages were composed. In some poems we find high praises for popular British Viceroys like Lord Rippon and some Officers also. (However, this does not mean that in this period merely ‘loyal’ poetry that supported the moderate stance was composed in Gujarat.) From the viewpoint of freedom struggle, the activities and thoughts of such radicals as Lokamanya Tilak, Lala Lajpatrai and Bipinchandra Pal were also

very important. For instance, in his 'Hind ane Britannia' IchchharamSuryaram Desai praised Lord Rippon a great deal; but since the other parts of the book were so explosive in its description of the exploitative nature of the British rule, that the book was confiscated as 'traitor' and banned it. In this very book Ichchharam had included in its Introduction the praises of Rippon as 'Ripponashtaka'. Some may find the writing in its Introduction and writing in its main subject as contradictory, but this dichotomy was from a historical viewpoint neither weird nor unjustified. At this time the social reformers and national leaders also praised the British rule for encouraging progressive trends in Indian society, and at the same time hated the economic exploitation and racial discrimination policy the British practiced in India. Thus a love-hate relationship with the ruling class was a symbol of socio-economic characteristic of the times. We see the same attitude reflected in the compositions of the poets. When in 1904 AD the Bengal province was divided on administrative grounds, the people turned highly against it. This created a deep sense of patriotism among them, raised the hate of the British to unprecedented heights. At this time a well-known poet, Balvantrai wrote a poem with a title of 'Welcome, the Prince of Wales'-³⁷

The circumstances in which this poem was written one can say it was without real sense of welcome and was a dead poem. All this does not mean that in Gujarat poetry written before the arrival of Gandhiji was merely of praises of the British as 'loyal' subjects. A large number of poems were also written with radicalism as their theme. Since this aspect of Gujarat is also significant in this context, we shall discuss it a little more here.

Radical Poetry:

The radical thinkers and poets were quite conservative in social matters. They believed that such poets as Narmad, KarsandasMulji, Mahipatram Rupram and B.M. Malbari were merely blind followers of the west. These poets held firm faith in India's grand heritage, and like Dayanand Saraswati they believed that not by blindly following in the steps of the West but by reviving and accepting the ancient wisdom of Indian civilization can one work for the elevation of our country. Such writers and poets were not moderates but were radicals and bellicose in their thinking. That is why they expressed their heartfelt anger against the British and their exploitative policies. One of the shining examples of such writing is 'Subodh Chintamani' (1884) of Sheth Vallabhadas Popat from Mahuva. In this collection of poems, under a title of 'Angrej Sarkar', the author has used words that indicate the radical thoughts prevalent at the time. The British had employed free trade policy in favor of England on one hand that sucked away Indian wealth and on the other hand by holding wars like the Afghan wars they wasted crores of Indian rupees as well. This peculiar trait was also given voice by Indian scholars and economists like Dadabhai Naoroji and Vyomeshchandra Dutt. This is beautifully expressed in a poetic form:

This poem is full of vengeful sentiments against the British injustice to India in various fields. Thus, this was the manner of expressing the anger against a hated foreign rule. The British in fact believed in 'Divide and Rule' and acted in keeping with this principle to remain dominant. So, it was not enough to express the anger against the British, but it was as important also to emphasize that unity among people should be a fact. The following poem expresses this need of unity. The poem of Chandulal M. Desai (Vasant Vinodi) beautifully puts this need before its readers.

Chandulal Desai was a Brahmakshatriya who belonged to Bharuch. His father was a physician and had reached the high post of a Civil Surgeon in his Government service. Chandulal, born at Anand, took his education in Ahmadabad Government School and then joined Gujarat College. He studied up to Intermediate, and when he took ill at this time he was sent to England for a change of air. Here he studied dentistry, took the degree of M.D.S. Returning to Mumbai he began a practice as a dental surgeon. At the same time he was also a

great patriot. When in 1915 AD the Home Rule Movement began in India, he left his medical practice and entered this Movement. After Gandhiji arrived and he came into contact with him, he became a firm follower of Gandhiji. He set up a 'Seva Ashram' in Bharuch c. 1928 AD and thereby became very active in the service of the country.

From his college days, Chandulal had begun to write poetry under the name of Vasant Vinodi. Some of his poems composed in 1906 and 1907 had become quite popular. He was radical in his social reform thinking; he praised all the reform activities and helped them to go ahead. His two compositions, 'Kumarika' and 'Vidhava' are examples of this. In 1930 during the Satyagraha movement he began a weekly called 'Vikas' in order to propagate nationalist sentiment in Bharuch district. However, as he then joined the movement personally in 1932-33, this periodical stopped being published. His collected poems in 'Vidhva' (1906), 'Kumarka' (1919) and Takukar (1919) were representative of the contemporary social and political awareness that was rampant at the time.³⁸

The following poem of Vasant Vinodi had become very popular:

[Whenever we think of Hind (India) do not our hearts begin to sing and dance? This is a gentle, happy land, let followers of all faiths come and be at peace here together. If some threatens this land we shall fight him hand and foot; why should we be cowards and walk away from resistance? We shall sacrifice our souls, but will never turn away from protecting our land.]

The above discussion shows that while one section showed praises for British rule another attitude of hate and protest also existed simultaneously in another section. The third section was encouraging the unity of Hindus and Muslims, but nothing was sufficient. India was not just made of big cities like Mumbai, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Ahmadabad, Lahore and Lucknow. The real India lived in its villages. India was turning poorer and more wretched gradually and rapidly. The people themselves had begun to notice the daily injuries suffered by the nation's trade and commerce, agriculture, etc. The lifestyles of farmers and Adivasis indicated the terrible poverty they now suffered. One to draw, even before the arrival of Gandhiji, the real and heart touching picture of their condition was one Patel. The Patidars and the Kunbis of Gujarat are known for their agricultural skills. It is understandable that they had an unlimited love for their land, fields and even the cattle. The life of women in villages was indeed very pathetic indeed. The poet Jivabhai Patel expressed these sentiments in his 'Madi niJhumpadi' (Mother's Hut) (1906) poem. Born in 1876 AD at Karamsad in a Leuva Patidar family, Jivabhai studied in Karamsad for his Primary and Secondary education. In 1896 AD he took his degree of B.A. with Sanskrit from Vadodara and even earned the Dr. Bhau Daji Prize for the highest score in Sanskrit. Completing his law in 1898, he began to practice in Umreth. In 1908 he wrote a book entitled 'StrioniParadhinta' (Dependence of the Women). This indicates that he was an advocate with social concerns at heart. IN 1905 when the Viceroy Lord Curzon divided the Bengal province the entire nation rose in protest. Curzon and the British had made the country very poor, created a series of droughts by their policies. This entire scene was caught by Jivabhai in his poem 'Madi Tari Jhumpdi' and gave the Mother's Hut a beautiful simile as 'resting place for the troubled'.³⁹

'Madi Tari Jumpdi'

[The Mother's Hut that was once the resting place of the troubled soul is now totally deserted; the grass is no longer green, the forest is crying for water and for birds that fly away; Mother, you are a ghost of what you were once, even your clothes have been snatched off; You are the one who showed us the path of God, who was like a door to the Heaven, you are very dear to us, O Mother.]

Jivabhai Patel here showed a very pathetic picture of the poor economic conditions of the nation, especially when he said, 'even your clothes have been snatched away'. Another poet, Maganbhai Chaturbhai Patel on the other hand, gave a great boost to a state of hope and

enthusiasm for the future in his poem 'Ek din Evo Aavashe'. Maganbhai, a Leuva Patidar from Nadiad he studied school at Nadiad and college in Vadodara and then at Wilson College of Mumbai. He got his graduate degree in 1998 AD and in 1900 he obtained his LLB too. He started practicing law in Ahmadabad from 1901 AD and began to participate in the activities of the Congress with great enthusiasm. He took up many a work for the Congress Session of 1902 that was held at Ahmadabad. He had no interest in the stars in the sky, or waves of the sea, or even the sweet songs of the birds. He did not have any liking for poets who indulged in these ideas and such scenes in their poetry. That is why in his poetry collection, 'Kusumanjali' (1909) he wrote clearly,

"I think I will have to respond to a question here as I put this small book in the hands of the readers. In this book there is no miracle of a beautiful divine fairy dancing on the bed of flowers. The mountains are not mentioned and neither the stars have been brought on the earth to play for human pleasure. In these poems, no hero has been drawn who laments on the unhappiness of this world, or none is presented before the public someone enjoying a moment of dying in a sorrowful state of mind... I have examined a thousand times such moods of the mind and I have decided that such weak minded brainwaves must be totally abandoned."⁴⁰

This shows that this young man of Patidar community was not just a poet, but also one of the best thinkers of the time. Maganbhai Patel was, besides a poet and social reformer, also one of the best public speakers, and could always bring the audience into his way of thinking after his address. In the Swadeshi Movement that followed the Bengal Partition protests in 1905, he played a significant role. His poem 'Ek Din Evo Avashe' was also a reflection of the Partition of Bengal in literary form. In the lines quoted below the varied imagination of the poet can be seen, but behind these we find them pointing out the firm factual life and its new aspects. In the concluding lines he says, "O Indian people, do not indulge in the lamentations. Do not let go of Hope. India has produced many great men, but they had not spread out in the entire country. But surely even many more bright stars too will come." At this time Gandhiji was carrying on his work in South Africa but had not arrived in India. As if he was anticipating the arrival of Gandhiji, this visionary poet gave consolation and assurance of safety to Indian people and said that a day will come when India will transform herself and a number of patriots will be born.

'Ek Din Evo Aavashe'...

[Surely there will be born heroes on this Earth even during these difficult times, who will decorate the motherland and thus shame the gods in heaven.]

In 1909 AD when Maganbhai wrote this poem, Gandhiji was still in South Africa busy in his non-violent struggle for the rights of Indians there. No one could have guessed at this time that Gandhiji will soon make India his work field in 1915 AD and devote himself in guiding the people to fight for freedom.

But poets are dreamers, and even visionaries. Thus, this poem of Maganbhai, 'Ek Din Evo Aavshe' was like a prediction of the future trend of events, and it was a rare and creative composition. We can say it was a highly suggestive poem in the history of the nationalist songs of India.

CONCLUSION:

We have considered the different sentiments that were expressed in pre-Gandhi era for nationalist sentiment, and its historical analysis undertaken here indicates clearly that from 1870 to 1915 Gujarati poetry expressed these sentiments very well. The main features in their expression that we can notice are these:

1. The progressive aspects of British governance deserve nothing but credit.

2. Despair at its exploitative and dividing elements, as well as outpouring of rage and pain against them.
3. The importance of intercommunal harmony, particularly between Muslims and Hindus.
4. Descriptions of the extreme poverty that pervaded Gujarati communities.
5. A belief in a better future and a vision of it.

All these five sentiments were entwined with each other, and this point needs to be especially emphasized. One may see a great contradiction in the love-hate relationship with the British domination, but the manner in which the relations between the ruler and the ruled were developing shows that these contradictory sentiments were like two sides of the same coin.

The manner in which the poets of Gujarat presented their standpoint in their creations played a very important part in shaping and alerting the nationalist viewpoint among people. Like other provinces in India, at this time most of the people were indeed illiterate, and it was logical that such people cannot read and understand such scholarly compositions easily even from newspapers or journals. Heavy and scholarly volumes were like waste paper to them. Under such circumstances, poetry became a valuable weapon for the spread of nationalist sentiments. There was also an ancient oral tradition in Gujarat to recite, sing and listen in groups such poetry besides devotional compositions. We can therefore say that it was the poets by their easy yet pointed compositions, who made an important contribution in raising nationalist sentiment among the educated as well as uneducated public.

When in 1915 Gandhiji left South Africa and decided to live in India, the above tradition had been already in full form. The Gandhian era made it change its stance to some extent. We shall discuss the nuances of this change in subtle and material form in the coming chapters.

FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES

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