

Chapter III

Gujarati Dalit Writing

In this chapter, I present an overview of Gujarati Dalit writing, the historical conditions that enabled its rise and development and its present status.

With the advent of British in India, change became visible especially in the life of the Dalits. When the British launched English education in India, it was for the first time that the doors of knowledge were opened for Dalits. They took advantage of this opportunity and slowly raised their levels of education. In 1849 and 1851, Mahatma Phule founded a school for girls and Dalits, with his wife Savitribai among the teachers. However, across India until the beginning of the 20th century, there was no formal education available for Dalits. In Gujarat, however, some avenues to education opened up for Dalits. In Baroda State, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad had made primary education up to third standard compulsory for all the castes in 1903. Dalits of Gujarat used this opportunity well and educated themselves. Many educated Gujarati Dalit youth started to write about their oppressive situation in various magazines.

The central government had implemented national reservation policy in 1956 and thus the first generation of educated Dalits started to utilize the benefits of reservation policy in the 1970s. Their economic condition also started to change though not in a big way. However, they did not have to depend on the upper caste people for their economic survival. They had started to raise their voice against the caste oppression of the upper caste people.

The middle class (in whom no SC-ST members were included) launched the Navnirman agitation. As I have detailed in Chapter I, the students led by Achyut Yagnik and Manishi Jani on 10 January 1974 launched it. The agitation began when students and professors at Gujarat

University in Ahmedabad launched protests against the increase in the food bill of college hostels. The agitation continued for more than ten weeks. Under the growing pressure of the students and the opposition parties, Chimanbhai Patel resigned on 9 February 1974.

Dawn E. Jones and Rodney W. Jones point out that “The struggle in Ahmedabad initially reflected a consolidation of middle-class grievances and did not include participation by mill workers” (1012-33). Thus, I could say that Navnirman was an essentially urban-based middle class movement in which Dalits did not participate.

Navnirman agitation consolidated the middle class. This enabled them to rally against the implementation of the reservation policy. In their view, there should not be any kind of reservation policy. They wanted to retain their position of dominance in India. They wanted to curb the voice of the Dalits, which ultimately resulted into anti-reservation agitations. The first anti- reservation agitation was started in 1981 while the second in 1985. During these agitations, Dalits were harassed and tortured very violently. As the report of the Bhartiya Depressed Class League described, “Across Gujarat Dalits were marginalized and segregated. Their property was looted and burnt. Rapes and killings were committed by the upper caste Gujaratis with the help of police and government machinery. Dalits had to migrate from their homeland to the safe place” (26-65). During this period, Ambedkar’s ideas began to spread. The idea that every text must be accountable became an important inspiration for Dalit writers.

The spread of Ambedkar’s ideas in Gujarat has, however, a long history. Ambedkar, in order to develop Dalit consciousness, had started to publish magazines – *Mook Nayak* (31 January 1920), *Bahiskrit Bharat* (13 April 1927), and *Janta*. The first issue of the *Janta* was dated

30 November 1930, and Deorao Naik was its editor. In 1955, *Janta* was re-named as *Prabuddha Bharat* with Ambedkar's son Yeshwantrao Ambedkar as its editor.¹

Jyotikar describes the development and growth of Dalit journalism in Gujarat:

In April 1930, Dalit journalism commenced. Gujarati's first Dalit monthly, *Navyuvak*, was published in Ahmedabad under the editorship of Lallubhai Makwana. The very first page of the monthly carried this fiery statement: 'Dedicated men of action needed to regain our rights with cumulative interest.' The monthly was sent to subscribers living as far as Africa. It was in 1931 that the monthly stopped being published because of the death of its young editor Lallubhai Makwana, the man who made the Ambedkarite ideology available to many through journalism. (416-17)

Kachrabhai Bhagat and Madhvji Parmar jointly edited the monthly *Vijay* published during this time. However, at the end of two years, this monthly that talked of Ambedkarite ideology, came to a sad close. Another staunch Ambedkarite monthly *Bherubandh* was edited by Dhanjibhai Jogadiya and was first published in Bombay in June 1939. One of its headlines, "Hindu doctors do not treat untouchable patients," showed its strong Dalit perspectives. *Dalit Gujarat* published by Nagjibhai Arya from December 1939 onwards was also a representative of Ambedkarite ideology. Advocate Hirjibhai started a journal called *Challenge* in Bombay in February 1946, for the propagation of Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) founded by Ambedkar. This weekly, central to Dalit consciousness in Gujarat, stopped being published after a year. Karsandas Leuva in Ahmedabad started *Jai Bhim*, a weekly wedded to Ambedkarite ideology, in June 1946. The weekly carried news of Ambedkarite activities, Dalit problems, Dalit agitations and information on Dalit organizations from all over the state.

¹ For detailed information on Dalit journalism refer *Gujarat Ni Ambedkari Chalval No Itihas: 1920-1970*, a doctoral research of P.G. Jyotikar, published in 1991. My entries of all the journals, magazines and newspapers in this section is based on my reading of this book especially Chapter 11 *Ambedkarwadi Gujarati Samayiko*, p. 407-446.

V.T. Parmar started *Samanta*, a monthly, on 6 March 1951; he was also its editor. This was the first authorized newsletter of the Gujarat Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) and Municipal Kamdar Sangh. Unfortunately, even *Samanta* did not survive beyond four years. In 1952, Khemchand Chawda started *Tankar*, a fortnightly in Mehsana. It was an effective medium to give voice to Dalit pleas and oppression, but its publication was stopped in a short while as Chawda joined the Congress.

Sundarlal Patel started *Inquilab* in Vadodara in 1953 to bring Ambedkarite activities of Vadodara as well as the activities of the SCF to light. Thereafter, in March 1955 *Tamanna* was started under the editorship of Jayanti Subodh and it was noted for its fearless journalism, varied articles and priority to Dalit problems. Its exclusive coverage on the Dalit atrocities during the 1981 and 1985 anti-reservation agitations needs to be highlighted. Jayanti Subodh kept *Tamanna* going with his characteristic skill for decades until his death in 2005. *Jyoti*, a journal started under the editorship of L. G. Parmar in February 1957 carried the message of Ambedkar and Lord Buddha to the people. This Ambedkarite monthly survived longest and stopped being published after 21 years. *Mukti Sangram*, a journal first published by Karsandas Parmar, in 1958 was in print for few years only. *Garud*, first published in 1970 by Dr. Dalpat Shrimali soared to great heights by initiating “informative journalism”: “Gandhi Ashram or Hub of Corruption,” “Shameful Scandals of Gandhism” were some of the issues highlighted by the editor who was not deterred even when an attempt to poison him was made by his enemies. Dr. Rameshchandra Parmar brought out *Panther*, the Dalit newsletter, in 1975. Dr. Rameshchandra’s caustic pen opened new horizons in journalism. Publication of the journal was stopped after few years but it

was restarted in December 2000. Valjibhai Patel brought out *Dalit Mitra* in 1982 and this played an important role in the battle against injustice.²

Disha and *Samaj Mitra* were both started their journey in 1987. They made Dalit journalism of the last decade of twentieth century something to be proud of. In the *Dr. Ambedkar Birth Centenary Special Issue* (1991) of *Disha*, as well as other issues, one could find close inspection and analysis of constitutional rights and atrocities on Dalits. The publication of Dalit poetry is a unique feature of both *Disha* and *Samaj Mitra*. The *Dalit Literature Special* and lastly *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Poetry Special* are noteworthy issues of *Samaj Mitra*. *Disha*, is edited by Premilaben and Muljibhai Khuman while *Samaj Mitra* is edited by Rasilaben Parmar. *Chandarvo*, the only Dalit women's monthly was started in 1987 under the editorship of Kamlaben Gurjar.

Some of the magazines not only exclusively focused on Dalit issues published but also helped to accelerate the pace of the Gujarati Dalit literature. They are *Akrosh* (1978, ed. Naran Vora), *Kalo Suraj* (1979, ed. Dalpat Chauhan), *Naya Marg* (1970, ed. Bhanubhai Aidhvaryu and Indukumar Jani), *Akshay* (1984, eds. Harish Mangalam and Mohan Parmar), *Sarvanam* (1989, eds. Chandu Maheriya and Neerav Patel), *Hayati* (1997, ed. Harish Mangalam), *Dalit Adhikar* (2002, ed. Prakash Maheriya), and *Dalit Chetna* (2006, ed. Manoj Parmar).

Before the influence of Ambedkar on the development of Dalit writing through journalism in Gujarat, Gandhi had appealed to Gujarati literary writers to write about society and especially about the rural society of which they were part. He also appealed to them to write in the language of the common person. Thus, the literature written during the Gandhian period gave

² I would like to thank Dr. Rameshchandra Parmar, Valjibhai Patel, Raju Solanki, Dalpat Chauhan, Praveen Gadhvi, Harish Mangalam, and B.N.Vankar for sharing their views on the development of Dalit journalism and also for throwing light on their participatory role in these magazines and periodicals.

space to the voice of Dalits, exploited, labourers and rural communities. Literature received socialist thrust, which continued after the death of Gandhi up to 1960.

Before independence, some writers had enriched the Gujarati literature through their presentation of the Dalit life. These writing's were: R.V. Pathak "Dwiref"'s *Khemi* (1928), Zaverchand Meghani's *Yug Vandna* [Salute to Age] , (1935), Sundaram's *Koya Bhagat Ni Kadvi Vaani ane Garibo Na Geeto* [Bitter Language of Koya Bhagat and Songs of Poverty] (1933), and short stories- *Maja Velanun Mrutyun* [Death of Maja Vela] and *Pecard no Pravass* [Picnic in a Pecard] (1940), Umashankar Joshi's *Dhed na Dhed Bhangi* [Untouchable of Untouchables] (1932), Pannalal Patel's *Manvini Bhavai* [Bhavai of Human Being](1947), and Ishwar Petlikar's *Gramchitro* [Village Paintings] (1950). They presented lives of the Dalits but the depiction was not an experienced life of a Dalit but an imagination of it. Though one can find sympathy and compassion for the Dalits in these texts, they cannot be compared with Dalit writing. Upper caste writers, although sympathetic, could not transcend their own caste position to draw an authentic picture of the Dalit life in Gujarat as it lacked the self-experience—the core of Dalit literature.

In the seventh decade of 20th century, Gujarati literary writers turned towards experimentation of 'art for art's sake', and abandoned the Gandhian appeal of 'art for life's sake'. In the literature of the 1960s, one could hardly find the depiction of Second World War, Partition of India, Independence, and the assassination of Gandhi. The writers of the 1960s were more interested in the portrayal of strong human emotions, distorted personalities, and urban life. Suresh Joshi inaugurated the modernist movement in Gujarati literature. He argued that, "the dry portrayal of Gandhian feelings, sympathy for Dalits and exploited section, the enthusiasm for the realism, pretentious romance, short essays, romantic overflows of nature, and the humanism exploded out of Gandhism – the repetitions of these themes were piercing" (7-8).

In order to break the shackles of the Gandhian socialism and realism Gujarati literary writers broke their ties with their predecessors and turned towards the modern western writers. Their focus on literary forms had led them to create an absurd world, which did not allow the Indian common person to enter the literary scene. Thus, the 1960s and 1970s led the Gujarati literary scene to develop in an aestheticized modern way. At that time, the self-conscious literary creators of the Dalit society had started to create, as a part of the Ambedkarite movement, Dalit poems of social sensibility. That proved to be a very significant event. These poems gave new freshness to the Gujarati literature. Before 1981 anti-reservation agitation, the educated Dalits started to pen down the suffering of their brethren in the early 1970s. Neerav Patel, Praveen Gadhvi and Dalpat Chauhan and some other Dalit writers published their literary creations in the *Panther*. This literary trend fully flowered after the 1981 and 1985 anti-reservation agitations.

I now discuss in some detail the Dalit writing after the 1970s. I divide Dalit literature published after 1975 into broadly three sections: (i) literature written from 1975 to 1985, (ii) literature written from 1986 to 2000, and (iii) literature written from 2001 to the present day.

3.1: Gujarati Dalit Writing: 1975 to 1985

Poetry reigned supreme during the first decade of Gujarati Dalit literature. More than 100 poets emerged from all occupations: educated and semi-educated, peons, clerks, and mill-workers, from villages, towns and cities, mostly men but a few women too. As I have mentioned earlier magazines have played an important role in the foregrounding as well as in the development of Dalit literature in Gujarat. Two of these magazines were *Akrosh* and *Kalo Suraj*. The first issue of *Akrosh* was published in 1978. In this first issue, there were 29 poems of four poets – Neerav Patel, Praveen Gadhvi, Dalpat Chauhan and Yogesh Dave. The activist and editor

of *Naya Marg* Bhanubhai Aidhvaryu welcomed the publication of *Akrosh*. He had termed it as *Rudraveena no Zankar* [Jingling Sound of Lord Shiva's Flute] in his article and stated,

If the Dalits write poems on their situation then how will they be? Several Dalits started to study in schools and colleges. The condition, which was accepted as natural by the ancestors, has inspired them to revolt against it. On one side, there are tall ideals and imagination while on the other tough realities of life. Their heart cries out because of the difference between these two. They want to set this society on fire and want to create a just society from its ashes. The flower of fire that sprouted out from this cry and hue is *Akrosh*. (1981, 2)

All the 29 poems were in free verse. Neerav Patel's *Abhan Hot to Saru* [Better Illiterate] expressed the pain of hunger thus,

While studying science,
the falling apple of Newton
had first led me to think to eat it. (1980, 11)

Only three issues of *Akrosh* were published and then it was closed down because of state government's interference.

Kalo Suraj was the other magazine whose editors were Dalpat Chauhan and Praveen Gadhvi. It was started in 1979 and its publication continued up to 1986. Total 14 volumes were published and all of the issues focussed on one genre – poetry.

In this first phase, many collections on Dalit poetry were published. *Dalit Kavita* [Dalit Poetry] (1981) was edited by Ganpat Parmar and Manishi Jani. There are 139 poems of 63 poets. *Dalit Kavita* followed by *Manas* [Human Being] (1982), a poetry collection edited by Vasant Purani. In 1984, four edited poetry collections were published. They were – Chandu Maheriya and Balkrishna Anand edited *Visfot* [Blast], Harish Mangalam edited *Boongiyo Vage* [Drum Beating], Chandu Maheriya edited *Asmita* [Identity] and Shankar Painter edited *Vyatha Pachisi*

[Description of Pain]. In 1985 Raju Solanki edited *Mill Chhootyani Vela* [At the Closing Time of Mill] was published.

Apart from these edited poetry collections, a few individual poetry collections were also published during the first phase. They are K. B. Pandya's *Chingari* [Spark] (1982), Dalpat Chauhan's *To Pachhi* [Then What] (1983), Babaldas Chavda's *Atyacharo Thava Do* (Let Oppressions Be Done] (1984) and Praveen Gadhvi's *Bayonet* (1985).

The poetry collections either edited or individual portray the Dalit life, untouchability, varnavyavastha, atrocities, and social, economic and cultural inequalities as they have been lived and felt by the Dalits, which is not seen in mainstream Gujarati literature. Because of untouchability and varnavyavastha, Dalits have had to face poverty, helplessness, slavery, insult and pain in their daily life and Dalit poets have depicted this in their poetry. In the following poem *Tamari Gandh and Ame Asprushya* [Your Stink and We Are Untouchable] Neerav Patel has presented how Dalits are considered untouchable because they have cleaned and are still cleaning the filth of the upper castes. Instead of getting reward for cleaning the society they are insulted as an untouchable.

...

When they start cleaning

With their brooms

Dust of the whole village

Is collected in their lungs!

...

While doing drudgery of your cattle

They are regarded as Dalits!

Because of your filth who became filthy

You regard them as untouchable! (1978, Vol.1, 13)

The Dalit poetry is seriously engaged in its mission of constructing a new identity called ‘Dalit Identity’ for the Dalits and Dalpat Chauhan’s poetry is a part of this mission. In the poem *Asprushya* [The Untouchable] Dalpat Chauhan talks about the angst of an untouchable who wants to be an educated human being:

The first step in the School
 Was an interview with cataclysm?
 On the slate, the trembling hands traced no alphabet,
 But on my chest, that throbbed like the scorched sand
 of some desiccated desert,
 I put my last name.
 Since then, I am untouchable
 (1980, Vol.5, 8)

Praveen Gadhvi’s association with the Gujarati Dalit literary activities from 1975 is still vigorous and fresh. At present, he is also the President of the Gujarati Dalit Sahitya Akademi, Ahmedabad. Though Praveen Gadhvi does not belong to Dalit community, his active association with the Dalit cause led me consider him as a Dalit poet. In his poem, *Shastra Sanyas* [Farewell to Arms] Praveen Gadhvi tries to destroy the distinctness between Dalits and non-Dalits and puts the universal conditions appropriate to the universal being.

....
 Let us abolish reservation law from the constitution.
 Our Maganiya – Chaganiya Shall ‘Compete Open’,
 But will you admit them in your convent schools?
 Let us tear away the pages of the Schedule,
 But will you let us be Dave, Trivedi or Patel?
 Let us say farewell to arms,
 and plough the country’s fertile soil together,

Will you give us half share of the harvest? (1980, Vol.5, 9)

The prime goal of the Dalit poet is to rescue and remind the Dalits that they are as good as anybody else. They have to bring out Dalits from their sense of victimhood and get them ready for fight and sacrifice. Thus, the Dalits will establish themselves as a respectable citizen of this country. So, that Dalits can become co-equal with everyone else.

Madhur Anand describes the poor condition of a Dalit thus in his poem *Suraj Ugyo Chhe* [The Sun Has Risen] which was compiled in *Asmita*

What do we have?
Clay hut
Broken vessels and broken pot,
Knife, broom, and loom
Hereditary drudgery imposed on us. (45)

These poor and terrible living conditions have led the Dalits to rebel against the society and its hereditary impositions and social norms is the another characteristic of Dalit poetry of this period.

Madhur Anand shows how the powerful upper caste people have crushed the untouchables. Look at the following lines of the above-mentioned poem:

You need a leather bag for your crops
so you have made a tanner.
To cover your body
you made one of us a weaver.
To clean your filthy streets
you held a broom and made a scavenger. (45)

These lines clearly show how the upper caste people oppress the Dalits to fulfil their daily needs. Not only this, while fulfilling their needs, Dalits have not only lost their societal status but also self-respect. They receive rebukes and insults for their services.

He exhorts educated Dalit youth to raise their voice. His poetry rings with a prophetic tone:

Now our successors of the coming century
 Will leave this hereditary occupation,

 But don't you forget
 Self-respect is our birthright
 If you will not give us
 We will snatch it.
 Look there,
 A black sun has risen in the cemetery. (45)

The poet presents the indignation quite powerfully. Dalits try to clean the excreta of upper castes' psyche, which they cannot bear. If they believe that, the Dalits are their servants and have to serve them like a bonded labour then it is their big mistake. Now, Dalits are aware of the value of self-respect and they will get it at any cost. The black sun represents the debacle of the upper caste Brahminical ideology and its followers.

Shankar Painter has edited Sahil Parmar's collection of poems *Vyatha Pachishi* in 1984. In one of the poems *Sama Bhog* [Equal Enjoyment] Sahil Parmar presents the same revolt as well as the change in Dalits psyche thus,

Now the pools, which have tanned leather
 Have started to tan words,
 Our loom, which has woven cloth
 has started to weave words.
 Now our broom
 has started to clean
 the dust lying on
 the words. (1984, 5)

The new generation of the Dalits have started to rebel against the traditions and refused to do the work assigned traditionally to them. Tanning, weaving and cleaning are replaced with writing. This is new Dalit awakening and the poet is making an attempt to spread this awareness to the masses through this poem.

Dalit poetry does not accept the varnavyavastha and untouchability as they treat human beings as slaves. Humanity is at the centre of Dalit poetry and the freedom of man is its aim. It talks about the empathies of a Man instead of nature and its components of imaginative world. Neerav Patel talks about creating such a world where every man will be treated on equal terms in his poem *Self-introduction*,

We can love each other
if you can shed your orthodox skin.
....
Come and touch, we will make a new world
where there won't be any
dust, dirt, poverty, injustice, oppressions. (1987, 35)

Here, the poet not only talks about removal of untouchability but also of creating a just world where everyone enjoys equality, liberty and fraternity. The creation of this world is possible only when the upper caste people will change their psyche.

Dalit poetry often invokes a better future. It visualizes a future where the prevalent unjust and unequal social structure would be dismantled and it dreams of a happy world. Neerav Patel presents such optimism in his poem *A Collegian Shabari*,

....
Alas, history can't be changed.
We will change the future.
We will change the history of the future. (1987, 32)

Sahil Parmar's *Pathikruto na Sonnet* [A Sonnet of the Wayfarers] also hopes for the better future.

The new generation will move on this road

And its radiance will spread in the world. (1984, 2)

Dalit poets do not care for the oppressive and unjust present but always strive for a blissful world and they struggle to achieve this goal without losing their hope.

Though poetry has dominated the first phase of Gujarati Dalit literature, other genres such as life sketch, criticism and drama were also published. Life-sketch is a genre in which fiction and real life overlaps. In Gujarati Dalit Literature Joseph Macwan is the leading personality who has used this genre the most to portray Dalit life. Macwan's style and treatment are simple, but sensitive and evocative. *Vyathana Veetak* [Stories of Uneasiness] (1985) is the first collection of life-sketches of Joseph Macwan.

The first life-sketch is titled as *Hati Tyare Mare Tran-Tran Ma Hati* [Once I Had Three Mothers]. In this life-sketch, the author talks about his mother whom he lost at very young age. His mother's photograph is saved in his memories. When his father remarries, his aunt Ladubhabhi gives him love of a mother. When Ladubhabhi becomes a widow, the writer insists on going with her to her maternal village. She is ready to take him along with her, but the society disallows it. Afterwards she manages to take Joseph with her. However, she commits suicide, as she could not bear pain of parting with her daughter Heta. The author is miserable when his aunt Ladubhabhi dies and he has written, "My second mother—my real mother; has made me once again a child without mother" (*Vyathana Veetak*, 51). The author roams here and there in order to have love of mother but he could not find anyone but Ladubhabhi. In the end, he writes, "If I will get a chance then I will abandon my mother who has given me birth and accept Ladubhabhi as my mother" (53).

In another life sketch *Bhagvan na Manah* [Man of God], the author has minutely depicted Scavenger vas, Tanner vas and Weaver vas. He depicts a world in which the places to fetch water from the well were separate even for the tanner and weaver community. The scavenger community cannot touch the well at all; they have to stand far from the well and request someone from tanner or weaver community for water. Here, the author has exposed the internal casteism observed by the Dalits. Once Kasna – the scavenger’s wife took help of the author (as a child) to fetch the water from the well and she touched the well. The father of the church saw Kasna’s wife at the well. Kasna was fined five kilograms of *Bajra*. When this act of injustice was carried out then the father of the church was present there with the Bible in his armpit as a ‘witness of truth’. Here, the author presents not just the internal casteism but the role of Christianity in the consolidation of untouchability.

It is for vignettes like this that B. N. Vankar has stated “ Because of richness of experience, skill of expression, matured talent, beauty of style and painful but variegated lives, *Vyathana Veetak* is a high priced capital of folk life and literature” (99).

With regard to criticism, the first work of critical writing regarding Gujarati Dalit Literature is *Samviti* [Equal Suffering] (1984) by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam. They analyzed the sociology of Dalit poetry. In this book, they have talked about the definition of Dalit poetry, the factors responsible for beginnings of the Dalit poetry, the direction in which the Dalit poetry is moving through the analysis of eight poetry collections. Keeping the sociological attitude at the centre, they have analyzed the poetry as examples of a new Dalit aesthetic. They have suggested that Dalit poetry should be analyzed with new contemporary parameters instead of age-old aesthetic criteria. However, they are critical of Dalit poetry as well. They argue that because of absence of variety in the subject of poetry, the poetry too lack in the variety of

feelings. They have also pointed that the poetry moves in the outer Dalit world, which makes it loud and shallow. It also lacks fresh symbols. Both critics have played an important role in validating Gujarati Dalit poetry as well as setting up new directions for it.

In the 20th century, plays in regional languages were written on *Puranas*, *Folktales*, legends, characters of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, kings and the upper caste society. In these plays, Dalits could not find space. In the tradition of Gujarati Drama, we also find the same situation. In Gujarati Dalit drama, Dalit characters who became victims of injustice of the upper caste society in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are presented in a new avatar with a new orientation. Hindu ideals are questioned in Gujarati Dalit drama.

Shrikant Sharma has written three one act plays in his book *Triveni Sangam* [The Confluence of Three] (1977). These one act plays are based on the life of Veer Mayo³, Sant Rohidas and Swami Tejanand. All the three legendary persons have talked about evils of untouchability and the victimhood of Dalits. Shivabhai Parmar has written two plays. His *Manavtani Jyot* [Light-Flame of Humanity] was published in 1978. It is a three-act play. The aim of the play is to develop the feelings of equality and fraternity among the Dalits. It is based on the life of Savashi Degama a leader and well to do person of the weaver community. His second play is *Mayani Mahanta* [Greatness of Maya] (1980) is a three-act play which consists of three stories. The playwright has used historical, social, political, and religious references. In this play, the stories of the previous birth of Jashma Odan and the legend of the Dalit Maya, love story of Ranak Devi and Ra'khengar, covetousness of Siddharaj Jaisinh and generosity of Maya's father

³ Gujarati Dalits worship 'Megh Mayo' as the first martyr for their cause. Siddharaj Jaysinh, an illustrious king of Solanki dynasty in the 11th century build a lake called Sahastraling. However, there have not been springs of water in the lake. The story goes that according to the soothsayers, a human sacrifice was needed to have springs of water in it. Megh Mayo, has offered himself for the sacrifice on condition that the humiliation of the Dalits should be reduced.

are interwoven quite intrinsically. The play ends with the sacrifice of Maya for the betterment of his community.

Dalits of Gujarat have faced the anti-reservation agitations of 1981. The reasons and responsible factors for this agitation have been discussed by Raju Solanki in his street play *Bamanvad ni Barakhadi* [ABCD of Brahminism].⁴ During the 1980s, the cotton mills of Ahmedabad faced severe crisis and many of them closed. Because of the closure of cotton mills, thousands of mill workers became unemployed. Dalpat Chauhan has presented the problem of an unemployed man in his *Hu Manas* in 1985.

The street play talks about the contemporary problems. In *Hu Manas* [I am a man] Dalpat Chauhan has talked about the problems of working class. The street play begins with a couplet:

“He is a man like a man,
Ordinary though, he is a man.” (1985, 23)

There are five characters in the play. “A” represents the worker of a mill while the four characters namely 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person and 4th person represent the capitalist upper class as well as upper caste group. When a group of four people catches “A,” he talks about his past life. He talks about his life as a mill worker, his wife and his three children but the four persons are not ready to believe him. They continuously try to prove him wrong and want to convict him as a thief, a wild man, a murderer and a ruffian.

1st Person: You are telling a lie. You steal the cotton, which is stuck to you, is stolen by you. Tell us truth, about your torn clothes.

All Persons: Tell us truth, how are your clothes torn?

A: Just because my mill has been closed. Closed mill! Have you understood sir, closed mill...

1st Person: Hey! How are your hands blackened?

⁴ I have presented a detailed study of *Bamanvad ni Barakhadi* in the Chapter 4 of the thesis.

A: I have gone to extinguish fire in a Muslim's house. While extinguishing the fire

2nd Person: How are your hands bloodied?

A: Because I have taken a man to the hospital who was injured by the bullet of the police.

...

All: No, No, you are a ruffian, you are not a man. (1985, 25)

Towards the end of the play, all the workers and farmers come with sticks and scythes. "A" tells the four people to run away otherwise the mill workers and farmers will kill them. The play ends on a positive note where mills are reopened and start work, the farmers plough the farms, and the roads are built. There is a sloganeering also.

Worker unity... Zindabad

Farm labourer unity... Zindabad.

Worker farmer unity... Zindabad

Dalit unity... Zindabad.

A: I could see everything. I could hear everything. I could see the fat welded on your tummy. If we will not get our rights, we will snatch them. I am the true man. We warn you... We are coming for workers, for farmers, for each poor man. I am at the front.... I am a man.... I am a man. (1985, 31)

The play ends with the same recitation of the couplet with which the play has begun. Thus, in this street play, Dalpat Chauhan has exposed the capitalist class and their vicious plays of converting a common person into a notorious and mischievous man.

3.2: Gujarati Dalit Writing: 1986 to 2000

Gujarati Dalit poets became even keener to write about their life experiences after the anti-reservation agitations of 1981 and 1985. These agitations raised questions of identity. The focus of this period is the Dalit share of national development both economically and socially. Dalit poets replied to upper caste violence with their pen. Gujarati Dalit writing acquired a new

vitality and fresh energy in the second stage. This stage is also dominated by poetry, as was the first. If Gujarati Dalit writing developed only in four genres in the first phase, in the second stage, along with genres of the first stage, it developed its oeuvre through the genres of short story, fiction, and autobiography.

In this stage, as Pathik Parmar observes, “there are total 58 poetry collections of which only six were edited and 52 were individually published.”(2010, 154-155)⁵

Pravin Gadhvi conveys the anguish of Dalits in his poem *Padchhayo* [Shadow],

O, wood cutter,
 Cut my Shadow.
 I can be Hindu,
 A Buddhist,
 A Muslim
 But this Shadow
 Shall never be severed from me.
 The spittoon has gone,
 The broom has gone,
 But the Shadow
 Still stalks me.
 I can change my name,
 My job,
 My address,
 My surname,
 But the shadow

⁵ Among these 58 collections, the major are – *Padchhayo* [Shadow] (1986, Praveen Gadhvi), *Shramik Kavita* [Poetry of Labourers] (1986, ed Rameshchandra Parmar), *Prakamp* [Earthquake] (1991, Harish Mangalam), *Anauras Surya* [Bastard Sun] (1991, Kisan Sosa), *Ame Andhare Ugela Padchhaya* [We Are the Shadows Rose in Darkness] (1991, Yashavant Waghela), *Ek Rakabi Footi* [A Saucer is Broken] (1991, Sahil Parmar), *Bhoonsata Manas Ne Ghoontu Chhu* [Darkening an Disappearing Man] (1992, Bipin Gohel), *Kyan Chhe Suraj?* [Where is the Sun?] (2000, Dalpat Chauhan) and *Ovarna* [Blessings] (2000, Chandraben Shrimali).

Will never leave me alone.

.... (2006, 1)

It is not difficult to understand the substance of the poem. An untouchable expresses here his peculiar position in the society, which has not changed even after independence and after arrival of modernity. The poet's identification with the psyche of the Dalit is evident here. It is difficult for him/her to get rid of the shadow of untouchability even fifty years after the independence. If a Dalit converts to Buddhism or Islam, the appellation of Dalit continues to chase him/her. Among Hindus, s/he cannot escape his/her caste identity because Hindu identity is a caste identity. Even though, the spittoon and broom are removed but the disgrace of being born in a particular caste has not left a Dalit yet. It is a shadow, which Dalit can never overcome. It persists.

In his poem *Parakiya* [The Others], Dalpat Chauhan criticizes Hindu deities and various evils like idolatry that has come to be associated with them. He has written,

Even I'm exhausted
 tormented Born
 in this "other" culture.
 Come,
 O my heart ... and you too my love.
 Let's fling
 These ubiquitous places of worship
 into whirlpools.
 Let's toss
 our naked children
 into the abyss.
 Bloody Shankaracharyas call them cursed.....

they would say

Better off in trenches than in this life.

.... (2000 a, 86)

Dalpat Chauhan opposes religion, social structures, and traditions in his writings. The protest implies that society should be based on the doctrines of equality, democracy, and humanity. Hinduism obstructs the creation of a casteless society. Though Indian independence implied that the Indian citizens become free and all basic human rights are given to them but these have never actually materialized. There was no change in the life-style of the Dalits. Law is made by power and is breached by power. Law is constantly violated, as those people policing it are the elite, castists and traditionalists. They patronizingly advise the poor Dalits to be better citizens. In his poem *Chor Kotwaal Ne Dande* [A Thief Fines a Policeman] he talks about this,

....

Just stay clean

Quit your filthy vocations

Abandon your disgusting food!

Leave your behavior and beliefs

Leave especially your stink,

Tanning pool's stink,

Manhole stink,

which attracts the dogs.

Do

Rites, rituals

Chants, gospels

Flabber - blabber

Dots and Crosses

Evening prayers

.... (2000 a, 86-7)

Earlier the Dalit poets questioned the upper caste notions of identity. Rupalee Burke and Darshna Trivedi have translated Shamat Parmar's poem in which he thanks God for making him a Dalit:

I am proud of myself

I am extremely grateful

to God for making me a Dalit.

If God had made me a Brahmin

(according to the Varnashrama)

I would have deceived the people

by my appearance and

false chanting of *shlokas*,

....

Thank God that he made me a Shudra

and liberated me from all these sins.

I am proud of myself. (2000, 73)

This is the new consciousness and new spirit. The new generation of the Dalits questions those who say our identities are better than yours are. The poet termed the upper caste people as cheaters, debauchers, dishonest, devoid of any human values. Why should they be considered superior to Dalits who are hardworking, honest, living on their own labour, believers in human dignity and human fraternity?

The Dalit poet is not interested in art for the art sake. He is aware that his community is yet not respected adequately by the caste Hindus. He is also aware that although because of his superior education or ability he has earned a place in the larger

society, his less privileged brethren in villages do not have adequate opportunity for education and economic progress. Hence, it is his duty to use poetry as a weapon to fight, as an action to achieve certain objectives. However, their prime objective is to raise Dalit consciousness in the minds of the readers. To them literature is rather a discourse than an art. Harish Mangalam mentions in his poem *Prakamp* [Earthquake]

....

The fingers so far busy making mud huts,
have been waiting at the roof – tops – bobbing up from below the tiles.

(To pick up pens and slates)

It is easier to wander about in the fairy land.

The wings to fly may naturally come to you there.

But

Come alone with me to tread the thorny path.

Stop mounting the horses of clouds.

Here are the Children who want

slates and pens

staring at you.

Can you realize a voice for them through the patterns of your words? (1991, 1)

Harish Mangalam in his poem *Replace Thashe?* [Will it be Replaced?] forces the Dalits to look back at their terrible past. The poem is a rebuke to the Dalits who live like dead men amidst the monstrous evils of society. The poet invites the Dalits:

Come,

Let us bury ‘the corpse of the freezing processes;

Before it buries

Me-you-us. (1991, 14)

The Aesthetics of Dalit writing is very different from the mainstream Gujarati writing. The Aesthetics of Dalit poetry is realized through the amalgamation of its unfamiliar content, its special means and mode of expression and humanist ideology. They work together to yield aesthetic value to the works of Dalit poetry. There is but only one major theme – the social evil called casteism – in Dalit poetry. The major themes traditionally identified with poetry like love, beauty of nature, adoration of divinity may occur in Dalit poetry only with their reference to deprivation, oppression, distortion, exploitation. Dalits are rarely allowed to enjoy and celebrate the luxuries of life called love and beauty of nature and spirituality in any normalized way.

The first phase of Dalit poetry, which struck the Gujarati literary scene with a note of revolt, anger and impulse in free verse, started to adopt new forms of expressions in the last decade of 20th century. The Dalit poets brought with them the forms of Geet and Ghazal to Gujarati Dalit poetry. These forms were now pressed to the service of Dalit content. This radical transformation of traditional poetic forms is a marked characteristic of Gujarati Dalit poetry. The Ghazal has two types of couplets called *sher*; closed couplets are the ones that exist independently in the Ghazal, with the meaning of its own. Those contributing to the overall meaning of the entire Ghazal are called open couplets. The thematic potential of Ghazal has undergone a sea change. It has been liberated from its gilded, pseudo-romantic confines, and revitalized to express the agony, the ecstasy, the hopes and the frustrations and the struggles of oppressed humanity. Key writers of this form include Kisan Sosa, Pathik Parmar, Dan Vaghela, A. K. Dodiya, Bipin Gohel and many others.

Kisan Sosa, in his Ghazal *At the Crossroads* (1991) which is translated by K. M. Sherrif, writes:

At the crossroads, the caravan comes to a halt;

Turn left for the river, for the desert turn right.

....

Here my hearth and home, there the peace of graveyard.

Turn left for the river, for the desert turn right. (22)

The Dalit poet applies this Ghazal form to create feelings of both mundane and philosophical when forced migration is the lot of Dalits. The couplets are linked to each other and help build up the decisive mood when the migrating caravan of Dalits is at the crossroads. The technique of contrast is used to its utmost : left and right, river and desert, swim or submit to tide, century and instant, valleys of joy and sorrows unknown, hearth and home and the peace of graveyard. The poet guides its suffering community that if you take to left, there is river. The river is a source of life, source of civilization. In addition, if you take to right, there is a desert an area, which does not allow growth.

Rupalee Burke and Darshna Trivedi have translated Purushottam Jadav's *High and Low*. This poem creates a meaningful content out of the mythical legs of the Shudras, whereas here the sobriety of the *shers* (couplets) is not restricted strictly to the fates of the Dalit. Nowhere in the Ghazal is there the slightest allusion that it refers to the travails of the Dalits only. The specificity of Dalit content or Dalit milieu is completely absent and the reader has to stretch his imagination to know that it might pertain to Dalits as well.

O these fools have started walking !

Do something !

O these fools have started running !

Do something !

We had shut the door and locked it properly

But

O these fools have started entering !
 Do something !

 We had gained superiority, become corrupt
 But
 O these fools have begun awakening !
 Do something !
 We had created divisions of high and low
 But
 O these legs have begun pulling down the walls!
 Do something! (2000, 72)

As per the myth of origin of *varna*, the *Shudras* are born of the feet of *Adipurush* – Brahma. Taking this allusion from the myth, the poet has written a wonderful piece of Dalit poetry. Both the form and techniques of the poem are a unique example of what an able poet can achieve. Afraid of the progress these legs have made despite innumerable hindrances, the high-caste heart is burning in each couplet. These legs were shackled for centuries. They thought they must have forgotten walking, leave aside jumping and running. High-caste men are worried that these fools have started walking and running. The personification technique employed by the poet is also admirable. The poet gestures towards the mythical legs of *Shudras* and untouchables who have made progress with the help of new constitutional provisions of upliftment. In addition, upper castes are both frustrated and angry at the advancement these ‘legs’ have made. How dare these dirty legs compete with the lofty head, the seat of brain and mind called Brahmins, the brave hands of the Kshatriyas? Even the thought is unbearable to them. They wonder how this could happen – that too when all caste-based obstacles were in place. Moreover, they check on the obstacles created to hinder the progress of the Dalits. How can they come out in the open sky

when the door was fully shut, when the fire was lit to burn them? How can they abuse, retort and stand upright when all sorts of punishments were prescribed in the scriptures? When watertight compartments for their segregation were erected? This poem illustrates ill will of the so-called upper castes Hindus who are unable to accept the Dalits on par with them. The new generation of Dalits – which is awakened, enlightened and assertive, has been taken as a threat to their hegemony and dominance.

There is also a tendency to parody folk songs and Bhajans, ruthlessly debunking their idyllic settings and nostalgic reveries. The result may be devastating satire, as in Neerav Patel's *Maro Shamaliyo* [My Dark Skinned Lord] which turns a legend about the Bhakti poet, Narsinh Mehta on its head. Kantilal Makwana Katil's collection of poems is titled on the Bhajan note: *Sat Re Bolo Nahitar Mat Bolo* and in this collection there is a Bhajan titled *Shri Krishna no Chhello Sandesh* [Last Message of Shri Krishna]

Krishna of Gokul
 Once got an experience of untouchability.
 The one who sang ' glanir bhavati bharat '
 Got belly-ache due to thirst.
 'what caste you belong to ?'
 Was the question he faced at the village water-tank.
 ...
 People are worshipping dead stones
 And despising the living god!
 The people whom I made make me a fool
 By observing untouchability in my temple.
 Why should I come here again?
 To honour my call in the *Gita*

Better is my Gokuliyu village. (24)

The use of the Bhajan form in disseminating the message that untouchability practiced against the Dalits is ungodly and inhuman is profoundly ironic. In fact, the use of myth is a recurrent technique of Dalit poets.

The poem proves that any form, traditional or modern and not necessarily free verse and any technique is competent to express and convey or to render Dalit content. It all depends upon the talent of the poet and his/her commitment to the Dalit cause. The new Dalit poet turns the tiny non-Indian forms like Haiku into Dalit poetry. Harish Mangalam, Hari Paar, Arvind Vegda and Priyanka Kalpit have written Haikus.⁶

A good example of Haiku writing can be found in Priyanka Kalpit's work. She has conveyed the damage caused by caste to a Dalit's identity in her Haiku thus,

Like a burning coal
caste persistently
blazes me. (30)

Poetry has reigned supreme during the first decade of Gujarati Dalit literature. As I have mentioned earlier that Gujarati Dalit literature, mainly poetry was published in magazines like *Panther*, *Akrosh* and *Kalo Suraj*. Many collections of poems appeared as a protest against the caste system. However, a phase came when some of the writers found that their themes were too large to be accommodated in the relatively small canvas of the poetry. Though they had no poetic inclination, they were good at storytelling. Their focus hence was on the short story and novel. During this phase, two genres – short story and fiction – developed immensely.

⁶ Haiku is a short Japanese poetic expression of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five, traditionally evoking images of the natural world.

Gujarati Dalit Varta [Gujarati Dalit Short Story] (1987) edited by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam is the first collection of short stories.⁷ Broadly speaking, *Gujarati Dalit Varta* attempts to provide a platform to writers of Dalit short stories. It is an attempt to establish social values and bring to light certain hidden aspects. The description of customs, the way of life as well as the hopes and aspirations of the Dalit community was given a new shape in these stories. The new Dalit short stories successfully adopted the short story of the traditional mould to novel experimentation. The writers have examined various possibilities of presenting short stories in an innovative manner.

Critics have appreciated the stories published in this collection for diverse reasons and readers have hailed them with equal admiration. It is worth noting that fifteen different critics evaluated the fifteen stories in the *Gujarati Dalit Varta*. Critical remarks on the collection also have appeared in the collection. Jayant Gadit has noted in his essay

Most of the stories lean heavily on events, but it is the writers' efforts to portray human emotions in the context of events rather than a mere narration of events which is complementary. The depiction of details, word choice, symbolic expression of thoughts or emotions, the focus on the characteristics of the Dalit community more than on grassroot facts of Dalit life is an evidence of the awareness of the writers. Mohan Parmar's 'Nakalank', Dalpat Chauhan's 'Badlo', B. N. Vankar's 'Vilopan' and Harish Mangalam's 'Dayan' are really commendable. (1987, 231)

⁷ After the publications of *Gujarati Dalit Varta*, Gujarati Dalit Literature has received number of collections either edited or individually written. They are *Dalit Gujarati Varta* [Dalit Gujarati Short Story](1995) ed. Ajit Thakor and Rajendrasinh Jadeja, *Pratinidhi Dalit Varta* [Representative Dalit Short Story] ed. Harish Mangalam (1997), *Vanboti vartao*[Untouched Short Stories] (2000) by Dalpat Chauhan. Apart from these three collections, a special issue was published by *Naya Marg* in 1990 on *Pratibaddh Varta Visheshank* [Special Number on Representative Short Story] Many individual collections were published in the second stage. They are *Sadhna ni Aradhana* [Worshipping Accomplishment](1987, Joseph Macwan), *Aaglo* [Wooden Bar](1991, Joseph Macwan), *Nakalank*[Blotless] (1991, Mohan Parmar), *Pannabhabhi* (1992, Joseph Macwan), *Kumbhi* [Small Jar of Leather] (1995, Mohan Parmar), *Antarvyatha* [Innergrief] (1996, Praveen Gadhvi), *Sankal* [Chain] (1997, Dharambhai Shrimali), *Chanibor ane Beeji Vartao* [Small Berries and Other Stories](1998, Chandraben Shrimali), *Sambandh* [Relationship] (1999, Raghavji Madhad), *Adrashya Diwalo* [Invisible Walls] (2000, Mavji Maheshwari), and *Janmotsav* [Birth Anniversary] (2000, B. Kesharshivam). *Hayati* has also published a special issue on Gujarati Dalit Short stories in 1999 which was titled as *Dalit Varta Visheshank* [Special Number on Dalit Short Story].

More than the other Gujarati Dalit literary forms, the short story vividly touches the various problems of Dalit community. The Gujarati short stories are a minute study of Gujarati Dalit society, Dalit locales, dialects, customs and historical injustice done to them. The issues of social, economic, and political conditions like poor access to education, inequality, poor wages are also dealt with.

Mohan Parmar has remarked in his article with emphasis on the abundance of prose writings in Dalit literature:

We need to approach the genres of the short story and the novel if we wish to bring about a social revolution or abolish rigid customs. It is more so the novel which provides ample scope for the establishment of the values of human life. The short story on the other hand is more effective as far as subtlety of expression is concerned. This is responsible for the spurt of Gujarati Dalit short stories in the last two to four years. (1987, 185)

Jayant Gadit has classified the short stories into three types based on the themes. These three types are “(1) sexual exploitation of helpless Dalit women by the upper caste people (2) Ingratitude of the upper castes; and (3) poverty of the Dalits and situations born out of it” (1987, 230).

Kanti Malsatar has also classified all the Dalit short stories in his book *Dalit Kathavimarsh* into ten groups based on the themes depicted in the short stories. These ten sections are: “(1) untouchability, (2) ingratitude of the upper castes, (3) child psychology, (4) political exploitation, (5) Dalit women’s sexual exploitation, (6) upper caste intolerance towards Dalits’ economic mobility, (7) economic exploitation, (8) relationship between Dalit men and women, (9) revolt against exploitation, (10) Others” (113).

I analyze here stories based on Dalit women’s exploitation and on revolt of Dalit women against their exploitation. I have chosen these two themes as Dalit women are the most severe

victim of untouchability as chastity of the Dalit women is always taken for granted by the upper castes men. The short stories *Meli Matharavati* [Deceitful Intention] (Raghavji Madhad) and *Rakhopana Saap* [A Snake That Protects] (Arvind Vegda) depict Dalit women's sexual exploitation.⁸ Both of these short stories were published in the first compilation Gujarati Dalit short stories *Gujarati Dalit Varta*.

Meli Matharavati is a tale of Dalit girl Ganga. She is the protagonist who is a farm labourer. She works in the farms of the upper castes farmers and earns money for her house. Her father is an asthma patient so cannot work. Her mother does the domestic work. Thus, the economic burden of the house is totally borne by Ganga. She is young and beautiful. She is an object of lust for the upper castes. She does not even have money to cover her body and she has to wear torn clothes. Though she is poor, she is quite keen to protect her chastity. When Magan Hirawala tries to molest her, she replies quietly but strongly,

“This is not such a Ganga, what do you understand? Find another home!”

Magan Hirawala replies,

“Bastard...! If you are daughter of landlord then don't do daily wage work. You have to stay at your home on the swing!” (1987, 112)

From this day onwards, Ganga stopped responding to verbal and physical molestation. She has to surrender because of her poor economic condition so she can feed her loved ones.

Her poverty ultimately leads her to become a victim of rape. Mukhi –village headmen – sexually exploits her while she was working in his field. She suffers the pain of exploitation though she was strong enough to beat the Mukhi. However, she visualizes her asthmatic father, a

⁸ The other stories that also depict the theme of sexual exploitation of Dalit women are: *Kalan* [Marshy Land] by Mohan Parmar, *Adhuro Pul* [Unfinished Bridge] and *Lakhu* [Birth-mark] by Madhukant Kalpit, *Bhaat* [Rice] *Dazvute* [To Burn] and *Navee* [New] by Dharmabhai Shrimali, *Chhagan ne Na Samjata Sawalo* [Questions That Can't Be Understood By Chhagan] by Joseph Macwan, *Ek Chhaliya Daal ne Khatar* [For a Bowlful Daal] by Vasantlal Parmar, and *Bheens* [Clasp] by Maulik Parmar.

panicking mother, and the Mukhi who pays her money whenever required. She thought Mukhi is a kindhearted man who understands the poor but she could not see the lascivious person in Mukhi who exploits her,

“After coming back to home, she cries a lot. Her mother inquires a lot but she could not speak word before her mother.”

“The experienced mother understood everything as she had also such experiences.” (1987, 114)

Though it is Ganga who is exploited, everyone considers her as a woman of no character. They consider her as a harlot who depends on the Mukhi to feed her family. Mukhi worries about his reputation. Therefore, he suggests to the elder people of the village to convince Ganga’s father to get her married off soon. He also offers her father financial help for the marriage.

When Mukhi goes to Ganga’s house along with the elders of the village, one of them says, “Why don’t you keep a watch on your daughter” (1987,116)? When Ganga hears this comment she could not control herself and angrily answers, “Hey! The man who talks about keeping watch on me, you better tell that one to your Mukhi” (1987, 116)? Everyone along with the Mukhi was stunned at Ganga’s response. They leave Ganga’s house.

Her father advises her, “You are absolutely right... However, we are low caste people... who will believe us? We will receive nothing by just abusing them... we will die because of hunger” (1987, 117). When he says this, Ganga’s father assumes that she is sleeping but she has left the house without informing anyone.

Here, the author has not shown that whether she has committed suicide or left the village. Ganga is not a submissive person but her poverty makes her so. She cannot accept her forced submissiveness or her poverty so she has to take an extreme step.

“Rakhopana Saap” [A Snake That Protects] is a short story by Arvind Vegda. The zamindar Jilubha exploits Virji and his family physically as well as economically. He considers

himself as a patron of Dalits but he exploits them. Virji and his wife Rudi has to work forcibly on the fields of Jilubha as Virji has borrowed two thousand rupees from him. Rudi is beautiful. Jilubha desires her. Sometimes he tried to harass her when Rudi was working on his fields. Rudi does not like it. She is furious but she cannot speak. Once while working on the threshing-floor Virji starts vomiting and he has to go to home. Rudi has to continue her work. Rudi worries about Virji and she leaves the farm in the dark and moves towards her home. While going home, she is accosted by Jilubha and raped. The author depicts the incident of rape very subtly.

According to Varnavyavastha, it is suggested that the Shudras and Untouchable have to serve the upper castes. In return, of their services, the upper castes will fulfill their needs. i.e. they will be their patron. In “Rakhopana Saap” Jilubha behaves like a patron and shows that he really cares for Virji and his family. Actually, his friend Raisingh brings tea laced with poison. It is because of this tea, Virji starts vomiting and is sent home. Rudi is kept back only to be raped.

Here, it is upper caste Raisingh, friend of Jilubha projects himself as a patron. However, for Dalits, these patrons/protectors are snakes who always bite. The writer exposes the upper caste and their ideology quite subtly. The snake is used as a symbol at two levels. Snake is considered as a protector and it represents lust too. When she reaches home after being raped, she hears the cries of her mother-in-law, “What has happened to my son, Vira” (1987, 73)? On hearing the cry, Rudi replies “Rakhopana Saap” (A snake that protects) (1987, 73).

Shirish Panchal, a leading Gujarati critic, observes that “Arvind Vegda’s style of storytelling recalls that of Chunilal Madia” (1987, 226). On the other hand, Sadubhai Shah remarks that, “the way the writer has remained cautious in the portrayal of character and events of the story, he should have kept that caution for language also” (1987, 152). Both the critics have paid more attention to the artistic part of the story which is important but not at the loss of

the Dalit content and in my view both the writers have aptly presented the exploitation of Dalit women.

In both stories, Ganga and Rudi are exploited physically because of economic deprivation. With Ganga and Rudi, all the norms of untouchability are observed by the upper castes. The characters are continuously reminded about their caste identity. Ganga when she went to have buttermilk at the Patel's house Sakar Patlani the wife of the Patel spoke, "You, if I see your face in the morning then my whole day goes in vain... go bastard, I don't want to give you buttermilk" (1987,108)! In another incident, "Sakar Patlani brings buttermilk from utensil which is meant for he-buffalo and pours it in Ganga's vessel from as high as a distance she can" (1987, 109). "Come... Viriya come. Why are you not seen these days? He brings out a bunch of Khakhi bidies from his shirt and throws a *bidi* (a hand-woven cigarette) towards Virji and said..." (1987, 66).

However, when it comes to the extraction of labour in the field, it does not matter at all that the seed is planted, the crop tended and the grain harvested by the same untouchable as reported by both the authors whose protagonists are farm labourers. The same applies in the case of rape as social revenge / punishment / coercion. As far as labour, lust, and prestige is concerned, the untouchable becomes touchable (socially) in many ways. Bela Malik has written in her article that, "While it is true that Dalits in general are oppressed, Dalit women bear a disproportionately higher share of this burden. Given the division of labour within the household, women have to suffer more from the lack of access to water, fuel sources, and sanitation facilities, exposing them to humiliation and violence" (323).

The writers represent Dalit women as the means that upper castes have to humiliate the lower caste men. The caste system has termed Dalits as a low status group. So the upper castes

people believe that the Dalits should not have any qualities of upper caste male i.e. courage, valour, potency etc. The upper castes also consider women as their property. (As one could easily see an example of this in the myth of Satyawadi Harishchandra and Yudhisthir's use of Draupadi in gamble in *Mahabharata*). They consider Dalits as their slaves. As slaves do not possess property, they consider slave's wife as their property. Thus, the upper caste males try to exploit the Dalit women as their property as is proved by the two short stories discussed.

Apart from stories of upper caste sexual exploitation of Dalit women, a powerful thematic of Dalit short stories of this phase is that of revolt against exploitation. One important story is B. Kesharshivam's *Rati Ranyan ni Ratash* [Redness of a Ranyan] is a short story based on the life of Dalit woman – Keshli⁹ which is published in a *B. Kesharshivamni Nari Chetna ni Navlikao* edited by Rupalee Burke. Keshli is a beautiful married woman. An upper caste young man named Dipo regularly harasses her. Once Dipo harasses her while she is passing through the market. He utters, "If you come for just one night... Then it will be as good as to bath in Ganga" (2). When Keshli hears this, she becomes furious, catches Dipo's shirt collar, and dares him, "If your mother is strong enough then take me as your wife. If not, then you are son of the impotent man, so suck my breast, touch my legs and call me Maa; and then leave" (2). Keshli's attack stuns Dipo but he cannot speak anything. He apologizes, "Please forgive me Keshli, I have made a mistake. Now, I will not harass you" (2). However, Keshli is not ready to forgive him. She says, "If you do not have courage then why do you trouble me? No, either you make me your wife or suck at my breast" (2). Further, also she reiterates her words in anger. Dipo's friend, Poonjiyo

⁹ *Darbar* [Royal Court], *Nyay* [Justice] *Na Khape* [Not Useful], and *Bhookh* [Hunger] by Dalpat Chauhan, *Pagdandi* [Walkway] by Harish Mangalam, *Radh* [Perseverance] by Mohan Parmar, *Dharavai* and *Vantol* [Whirlwind] by Dharmabhai Shrimali, *Mankoda* [Vertebrae] *Jail na Rotla* [Food of Prison] *Jogni* and *Sher'ni Vahu* [Bride of the City] by B. Kesharshivam, *Somli* by Hari Paar, *Maare Cha Pivee Nathi* [I Don't Want to Drink Tea] by Mangal Rathod, *Shekeli Boti* [Baked Meat] and *Jaat* [Jati] by Dasharath Parmar also depict the theme of revolt against exploitation.

also tries to save his friend and tells Keshli to behave like a decent woman. However, Keshli replies him also. “Yes I will keep it in mind. Why do not you keep in mind social norms? You have to control your friend” (3). Veeho Bhagat an elder person of village interferes in the matter and tells Dipo to apologize. At Veeho Bhagat’s suggestion, Keshli’s anger abates somewhat.

Here, B. Kesharshivam’s protagonist is courageous and self respectful. Ramanlal Joshi has explained Keshli’s character, “Keshli’s character is live like a red *Ranyan* –a yellow juicy fruit. She is red as her anger; and she is also red because of her gorgeous beauty” (2). Harish Mangalam has also commented, “The depiction of reality sparkles because of proper application of language. No equal will be found to Keshli’s pride” (2012, 160).

Mohan Parmar’s *Thali* [Threshold] is a tale of Revi, a Turi woman, who is sexually exploited by Mansinh, Thakor of the village. Revi’s son is Dhulo. Her husband, Chaman works in a *Bhavai* company so he stays outside most of the times. Chaman’s friend Mansinh who however misuses his friendship and forcefully exploits Revi. He considers Revi as his mistress. Once in a drunken state Mansinh comes to Revi’s household and starts shouting and calls Revi to move with him. Revi begs him to go away. Revi is in pitiful condition and says, “I will come tomorrow to your farm” (2000, 138). She is forced to promise this. Mansinh insults Revi in her neighbourhood and her position in society is totally ruined. Her mental condition is reflected in this statement, “I am entangled in the cracks of the wall. There is no one to save me” (2000, 139). She even tries to commit suicide.

Revi is highly respected by her brother-in-law, Jetha and sister-in-law Takhi. They were not been present when Mansinh had come to the vas. Now, she is worried about her social position and thus she decides to teach Mansinh a lesson for her public humiliation. She is furious because of the everyday ignominy. She crosses the threshold of her house and goes to the farm of

Mansinh with a sickle in her hand. Here, crossing of the threshold is used as a metaphor. A woman who crosses the threshold is not considered chaste but here Revi has to cross the threshold to gain her lost respect. She moves out with a sickle as if she is going to kill him. However, she takes a new path to teach him a lesson. Mansinh is eagerly waiting for her at the farm. When he sees Revi coming, he is excited. The talk between Revi and Mansinh reflects the firmness of Revi. Mansinh tells her,

“Now come on silently! If my wife comes then the whole game will be spoiled.”

“I am waiting for your wife.”

“Why?”

“Because I want to marry you and stay in your house.”

“In my house” Mansinh trembles.

“Yes, yours! It is better to stay together forever rather than in fear... Then you and me... No fear at all.”

“It cannot be happen.”

“Why?”

“Because you are a Dalit and I am Thakor! You cannot stay in my house...”

Revi answers him furiously.

“What a man you are! You have been exploiting me for the last five years. Now when I want to marry you, you suddenly remember my caste.” (2000, 141)

Mansinh responds in a typical upper caste manner, “Revi, keep aside this madness and the way our relationship is going on, let it be” (2000, 141). But Revi is quite firm, “No, I cannot bear this everyday torture. I am coming to your Darbar Vas. I wish to be your wife” (2000, 141). Revi’s firmness wounds Mansinh’s ego and he loses his courage. He thinks, “I haven’t left anything in insulting her. Now she is quite adamant. Today she will not stop until I am

humiliated. If she comes to my home, sits, and declares herself as my wife then I will lose my prestige. Once I lose my prestige then who will marry my young daughters” (2000, 141).

Although he loses his courage still hopes that he will convince Revi. However, Revi once again declares her intention to marry him quite loudly. Mansinh tells her to speak softly. Nevertheless, Revi replies, “When you come and shout in my neighbourhood then you do not think about my prestige. You do not think that the whole neighbourhood is listening. However, Mansinh shuts her mouth and makes a pitiful request, “I will not harass you. I will do whatever you say. But you leave me.”

Revi pushes him aside and asks,

“Will you come to my Vas?”

“No, I will not”.

“Will you harass me on the road.”

“No I will not”

“Promise that you will not harass me.”

“I promise”.

“If you will ever harass me a little I will directly enter in your house.”

“Mansinh wants to move away from Revi’s eyes so he runs hurriedly towards the wooden stand.

On seeing Mansinh’s run, Revi laughs. She cries joyfully like a free bird” (2000, 141).

Thus, Mohan Parmar’s protagonist Revi protests against her exploitation and finds a way to solve the problem. She could have killed Mansinh or committed suicide. More importantly, the exposition of the upper castes psychology for the Dalits will not take place. Mansinh wants to have sexual relationship with Revi but does not want to marry her, as his caste does not allow. Untouchability enters only in sacred institutions and thus the author questions the sacredness of such institutions.

Joseph Macwan continued writing life-sketches during the second phase. *Janamjala* [Problems of Life] (1990), *Vahalna Valkha* [Vain Efforts for Love] (1991), *Mari Bhillu* [My Playmate] (1995), *Manas Hovani Yantrano* [Problems of Being a Human] (1995), *Na Ye Chand Hoga* [This Moon Will Not Be There] (1996), and *Ramna Rakhopa* [Protected by Ram] (1998) are some of his collections of life-sketches. Apart from these, Chandu Maheriya edited a collection of life-sketches titled *Madi Mane Sambhare Re* [Remembrance of the Mother] (1994). In this collection, there are 21 life-sketches presented by Gujarati Dalit Writers on their mothers. Here they narrate their mothers' love, and how they were gifted with common sense. Dalpat Chauhan describes his mother in a life-sketch titled as *Madi Madhmaithu Gothimadu* [Mother-Honey-sweetened Somersault]¹⁰:

“Mother never tells her tragic tale to anyone. She is always unshakable in this. She hits her forehead with her hand, when she loses her temper. She blames none. When father comes in drunken state, she does not talk to him. She threatens to commit suicide, but all her protest proves to be fruitless.”

“When we talk of wine in our home she will be angry. It is difficult to describe her feeling shown in her eyes, and then she describes the reason why does their father drink wine, ‘You find fault with your father for drinking. However, do you know why does he drink? Today Hathaji has hit Mano Miyor. None has dared to speak against him, and if anyone has dared, his bones would be broken. Your father has gone to Chora and has abused him there in a drunken state. He is here, so we are safe.’” (1994, 73)

Here the author paints a complex portrait of his mother as a loving and tolerant woman who at same time scolds her husband for drinking and defends him for the same before the children.

¹⁰ Other Dalit writers have also written on their mothers in this collection. They are Neerav Patel, Joseph Macwan, Shivabhai Parmar, Babaldas Chavada, B. N. Vankar, Harish Mangalam, Mohan Parmar, Yashvant Vaghela, Manilal Ranveriya, Madhukant Kalpit, Pathik Parmar, Sahil Parmar, Jasumati Parmar, Manubhai Makwana, Raghavji Madhad, Kishan Sosa, and Chandu Maheriya.

In this collection, all the writer's mothers are illiterate except Yashvant Waghela's. Almost all mothers believe in superstitions and suspicion. They have been married in early age and they have married their children in early age. They have worked very hard throughout their lives. When their children are grown up and are well placed, they wished to spend some happy days with their children as the days of happiness have come. However, their dream never comes true as their well-placed children often stay separately. The life-sketches are not only about their mothers but they also depict Dalit society and its problems. The authors describe the situations, which are the creation of untouchability, illiteracy, poverty, hatred. Shirish Panchal has noted in his column *Aksharni Aradhana*, "The picture of mother which is reflected in all of these like-sketches is a picture of an average Indian woman. All these life-sketches are rich in language, simple but sharp. It is not covered with artificial layer that covers more and exposes less. It is not idiomatic, journalistic and sparkling language. In some unknown pens also we could find beautiful life-sketches" (12 December 1994). Though he is appreciative to some extent, we can say that Panchal refuses to focus on the Dalit aspect of these sketches.

Autobiography is a genre, which deals with one's life. The writer presents his /her life himself / herself without fictionalizing the experiences of his/her life. However, it is not easy to accept writers claim correct or incorrect as it is his/her own story. However, it is very difficult to maintain objectivity and accept one's errors or wrong doings publicly. It is like shedding one's clothes willingly in the public.

Marathi Dalit autobiography has affected the literary scene of India a lot. It has led the literary stalwarts also to change their definitional aspects of autobiography. Inspired by the Marathi Dalit autobiographers, Gujarati Dalit writers have also penned down their lives and there are eight autobiographies written so far. In the first phase of Gujarati Dalit Literature, not a

single autobiography was written while in the second phase two autobiographies were written.

They are *Atmakatha* [Autobiography] (1997) by Lalit Parmar and *Mari Jivan Sadhana*

[Accomplishment of My Life] (1998) by Harishankar Purani.

Lalit Parmar's *Atmakatha* [Autobiography] (1997) talks about the writer's journey from his childhood to his ministership in the government of Gujarat. He has depicted his nourishment in the poor Dalit family, experience of untouchability as a schoolchild, higher education in the university, his entry into the government job and then entry into the politics and becoming a state level minister are all depicted minutely. He was a minister of the Gujarat Government from 1981 to 1985 when both the anti-reservation agitations took place. Dalits suffered badly in these agitations. He is certainly sad about it. However, his advice to the Dalit is sane:

Harijans have to give up their idleness. They have to educate their children. One generation has to sacrifice. You have to face hardships, but the new generation must be trained. Do not make new generation timid or cowardly. If you fail to give property as inheritance to your new generation there is no problem, but you must give them education. Give them strength of education so that they can settle down well in business or in higher jobs. That way they can be economically independent. If our children are economically independent, they can establish good reputation in society. They will not tolerate insult. They will not allow exploitation. They will not tolerate injustice. They will live sophisticated life and cultivate good manners. They will live good life. As a result, all people of upper castes will look at them with respect. So to become economically independent, be cultured, live sophisticated life and do hard work; these things are essential for Harijans. They must give priority to the task of educating themselves. Girls must not be deprived of education. 'Face all obstacles, but not to fail to educate and cultivate your children.' – This should be your slogan. (167)

By presenting the truth of their struggle in their autobiographies, the Dalit writers wish to teach their younger generation to advance economically and socially by hard work, self-confidence, and enthusiasm.

In the second phase of Gujarati Dalit Literature there are three major works on criticism. They are *Ansar* [Suggestion] (1989) by Mohan Parmar, *Vidit* [Known] (1989) by Harish Mangalam and *Pratyayan* [To Move Against the Flow] (1994) by B. N. Vankar.

Ansar (1989) is the first collection of critical articles of Mohan Parmar. In this book on criticism, the critic has discussed novels *Angaliyat*, *Badlati Kshitij*, *Ichchavar*, *Asuryalok*, *Khadki* and *Killo*. He has praised Joseph Macwan for his *Angaliyat* and its new subject. At the same time, he has courage to criticize the writer for not interweaving the language and the subject matter of the novel properly. In his view, the writer is not inclined towards artistic representation of the Dalits.

Vidit by Harish Mangalam is not only one genre of Gujarati Dalit literature but the critic has tried to present the whole spectrum of Gujarati Dalit literature. He has presented Gujarati Dalit literature in three critical essays titled as “Dalit Sahitya – Aitihasik Prapekshaya,” “Dalit Varta – Shesh-Vishesh,” and “Dalit Kavita – Mari Drashti Ae.” In these essays, the critic has talked about the development of Gujarati Dalit literature and its various genres from its beginning. In this book, there are reviews of five books out of which three are poetry collections. He has also critically evaluated three poems in *Vidit*. In the entire critical essay, the critic has tried to evaluate Gujarati Dalit literature through Dalit literary values and not through those of the mainstream.

Pratyayan by B. N. Vankar is divided in four parts. In the first part, there are eleven articles which discuss the role of Dalit literature in social change, social arrangement, and Indian cultural tradition. The soreness and unease of Dalits are discussed in depth in the first section.

In the second section, B. N. Vankar has discussed *Balut* (Daya Pawar), *Vyathana Veetak*, (Joseph Macwan), *Malak* (Dalpat Chauhan), *Bayonet* (Praveen Gadhvi), *Atyacharo Thava do* (Babuldas Chavda), *Nakalank* (Mohan Parmar) and *Samviti* (Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam). In this section, he has tried to present all the genres in which Dalit literature is written. In the third section, he has analyzed not only Gujarati Dalit poets but also the world poetry, which talks about the exploited section of the society. He has analyzed “Ame Kon” (Keshav Sut), “Jater Bajjati” (Nazrul Islam), “Hazaro Nadiyo” (Dr. B. Siddhalingaiyya), “Mari Matrubbhumi ma Punaragaman” (Aime cesaire), “Shahid” (David Diop), “Hu Pan Americana Geet Gaun Chhun” (Langesteen Hughes), “Hatyarao” (Leslie Pinckney Hill), “Pag” (Yashwant Waghela), “Sandarbh” (Sanju Vala) and “Damiyal Local” (Harish Mangalam) not only socially but also comparatively which fulfill the desires of the readers.

The proportion of Gujarati Dalit criticism is low in comparison to the Dalit writing in Gujarati. In such times, the three books on criticism by Mohan Parmar, Harish Mangalam and B. N. Vankar will help the readers as well as researchers for further enrichment of their knowledge of Gujarati Dalit Literature. *Ansar* and *Vidit* deal with the Gujarati Dalit literature solely and try to not only give an overview of Dalit writing but also present the weaknesses of the writers quite bluntly. *Pratyayan* surveys not only Gujarati Dalit writing but also compares it with other regional Dalit writings of India and other marginalized literature of the world. Thus, it is an attempt to present the whole panorama of subaltern literature of the world.

Many Dalit writers have written plays on Mayo's martyrdom as I have already mentioned earlier. They are *Veer Mahyo* [Brave Mayo] by Shrikant Varma, *Maya ni Mahanata* [The Greatness of Mayo] by Shivabhai Parmar, *Tipe Tipe Shonit Apya* [Drop by Drop He bled] by Krishnachandra Parmar, and *Patan ne Gondare* [From the Out-skirts of Patan] by Dalpat Chauhan.

Dalpat Chauhan's play *Patanne Gondare* is more interesting than other plays on Mayo as it raises Dalit consciousness more subtly. It is a three-act play. In this play, Mayo is portrayed as a revolutionary and a rational martyr. As per generally accepted myth among the Dalits of Gujarat, Mayo was a devotee of God Vishnu and voluntarily sacrificed himself as an act of devotion.

The dramatist says in the prologue:

We are told that the forefathers of Untouchable Mayo have migrated from Dhavalpur and settled down at the outskirts of Patan to earn their livelihood. In the 11th century Siddharaj Jaysinh, the king of Patan, built the Sahastraling Sarovara and Veer Mayo voluntarily sacrificed himself for the well-being of his caste-fellows. Voluntarily! Oh! dear brothers, who loves death? I am asking you audience I am asking you, 'would you like to die'? I am not saying that Mayo has not sacrificed himself. He has sacrificed himself. Not once but thousand times, I say he has sacrificed himself thousand times. But not as all of you are saying, yes, not as all of you perceive but in the way I say he sacrificed himself another way. The way I say. This is the truth. My talk is the truth. (2000 b, 61)

The drama presents the pitiable condition of the Dalits during that time. The king's order, especially for the Dalits, was announced thus:

Listen untouchables, Oh the Outcastes listen. You have to work for the state... You have to weave the clothes. You have to plough the farms. In exchange of your labor you can stay in the huts at the outskirts of the city. You can dig a hole in the earth to get water. You have to sleep on the

earth in your huts. Eat only the leftover food that is given by us. Our leftover food is your only food. Look after the farms. Those who are caught stealing unripe corn, their hands will be chopped off; those who harm the corn-plant will be buried in the earth. Those who dare to look up; their eyes will be plucked out. Do hard work for the mighty monarch Siddhraj Jaysinh and the citizens of Patan. Plough the earth, reap the crops, weave clothes, you are a bonded labourer.... a slave.... a scavenger, an untouchable. (2000 b, 64)

They enjoyed no human rights. Dalpat Chauhan's play is revolutionary. Mayo in this play asks his caste-fellows to protest against all injustice and oppression. He reminds them of the preaching of a saint who insisted on human equality: "We all are human beings. None is a scavenger, none is untouchable" (2000 b, 65). In the beginning, they do not accept his message. They argue among themselves,

Hemo : (ironically) are we human! How can we be called human? We have to slave until the last breath. Slavery we have to do, slavery.

Bhemo : The sun rises with our empty stomach.... How can the sun set with empty stomach? The hungry day.... Hungry sun....

Khemo : To endure hunger until intestines cry in pain.... Hungry children.... Hungry women Hungry is the place where we live.

Valo : We have to see with eyes wide-open outrages on our women. No complaints! Thus, we have to live. (2000 b, 64)

Khemo and Valo are representatives of the Dalits of that time. They cannot protest against any injustice and cruelty, they cannot even think of protesting. Here Mayo exhorts them all to try for the realization of their human rights. He knows the consequences of their protest. In spite of that, he persuades his caste-fellows:

Babaji says, fear is the mother of love. (Frighten the upper castes!) When the crops of the state ripen, set them on fire. We are starving. (Let them also be starved). Throw the dead cats and dogs in their wells and step-wells. Do they give you water? Do they? (2000 b, 66)

This kind of incitement strengthens the Dalits. They start dreaming of liberal human life. Collectively they protest. They rush in to the city with a cry for justice. The high-castes have to give them way because they are afraid of being polluted by their touch as also of being hurt by their furious attack. The soldiers also beat the Dalits, but they continue to advance to present their demand for human equality.

Later on, the king and Munjal Mehta, the prime minister of the state learn about the protest of the Dalit. Munjal Mehta smartly finds out the way to remove Mayo, the leader of Dalits forever. A conspiracy is hatching. It is announced that according to a soothsayer a human sacrifice is required to bring water in the dry Sahashtraling Lake. The state decides arbitrarily to offer Mayo as the sacrifice. He realizes that for him there is no option to death. Therefore, he turns the inevitability to good account. Through death, he thinks, he could mitigate suffering of his caste in a fair measure. Therefore, he lays down certain conditions. If the state agrees to comply with them, he would voluntarily offer himself as a sacrifice. The state agrees at once, and the town crier cries:

Listen Listen! He (Mayo) has demanded five promises. The Untouchables from now on will not tie a broom at their waists to wipe out their foot-prints from behind; they will not tie a typical piece of cloth on their heads to identify them; they will not keep the third sleeves to their shirts (as a mark of their identity), they will not shout posh posh..; from today. Untouchables are accepted as human beings..... They and we are equal... Listen to the order This is the order of the state Everyone has to obey ... Otherwise, penalty of the disobedience of the order is death Listen to the order.... (2000 b, 86)

Thus, the conspiracy to kill the Dalit-leader is given the fair name of religious sacrifice. The king could have easily killed Dalits and their leader, even otherwise. However, he refrains from doing so because without the Dalit-labor, the prosperity and welfare of the state is quite

impossible. Hence, the conspiracy at once to elevate and eliminate Mayo and to put thereby an end to the Dalit-revolt is smartly executed.

At the end of the play, Mayo enters burning flames. Dalits are shown rushing to see for the last time their beloved leader. They are obstructed by upper-castes. Nevertheless, furiously they push them aside to reach the place where Mayo is burning. However, when they reach there they find nothing but burning flames. Mayo has already become ashes.

Now Dalits realize that they are cheated. They fear that the king may not remain faithful to his promises given to Mayo before his sacrifice. Their fear is well based. The state forgets the promises. The Dalits feel cheated. However, they swear at the place of fire that they would strictly follow the promises given to Mayo. Thus, the play ends with open protest against the king's order.

Fiction

In the first phase not a single novel was published but in the second phase 13 novels were published. The first was Joseph Macwan's *Aangaliyat* in 1986.¹¹ Through his first novel, *Angaliyat* [The Stepchild] (1986) Joseph Macwan has established himself as a significant Gujarati Dalit writer. The setting of the *Angaliyat* is in a village of Kheda district. The novel covers a time-span beginning before independence and extending for a few years after it. Rita Kothari has translated *Angaliyat* into English as *The Stepchild* in 2003.

The Stepchild is a gripping tale of love, heroism, humiliation, revenge and death. It presents a vividly coloured picture of the lives of two neighbouring villages in the Charotar

¹¹ After *Aangaliyat*, 13 Novels were published till 2000 in the second phase. They are *Malak* [Homeland]1991, Dalpat Chauhan), *Neliyu* [Narrow Path] (1992, Mohan Parmar), *Tirad* [Slit] (1992, Harish Mangalam), *Choki* [Patrolling] (1992, Harish Mangalam), *Mankhani Mirat* [Wealth of Life] (1992, Joseph Macwan), *Shool* [Thorn] (1995, B. Kesharshivam), *Priyatama Bhag 1 and 2* [Wife Part 1 and 2] (1995, Mohan Parmar), *Mavtar* [Parents] (1995, Joseph Macwan), *Laxman ni Agniparkksha* [Acid test of Laxman] (1997, Joseph Macwan), *Mari Parnetar* [My Wife] (1998, Joseph Macwan), *Mool and Dhool* [Root and Dust] (1999, B. Kesharshivam), *Gidh* [Vulture] (1999, Dalpat Cauhan), *Astitva* [Existence] (2000, Ganesh Acharya).

district of central Gujarat. It also documents the politics of the pre- and post-Independence years, as seen from the perspective of the downtrodden. On the other hand, the novel portrays the relationship between the Dalit Vankar caste and dominant Patel caste, spurred on by two opposing ideologies, the Gandhian and the Ambedkarite.

The novel has also highlighted the tug of war within the Dalit community, which is the main hindrance in the achievement of Dalit unity and thus also for the success of Dalit movement. The tussle between the Vankar Panch and Teeha along with Valji is like that of conservatives and radicals. Although the elders of the Panch have become ready to inflict punishment on Bhikha and Ramji's family, they are not willing to oppose the Patidar community of Shilaapar.

Education and Ambedkarite thought are two key themes to be found in this novel. It is Master in this novel who is an enlightened being and who has the great impact of Ambedkarite thoughts upon his mind. Master feels extreme distress for his people and therefore he explains the Ambedkarite ideas of social equality to his community. The impact of Master's effort can be seen in Jeevan's speech addressed to the Panch that also sheds light on the differences between the elders of the community and its enlightened youth:

We have not interfered in anything that you elders have done. You have pulled us up for no reason, and yet we have never talked back but this time we must tell you-as far as the case of Teeha and Valaji's is concerned, if any of you is found allying with the upper castes, we will not think twice before humiliating you. I say this to you plainly. ... Those who wish to kill their own brethren and make money on the sly, watch out. We young men have jointly taken a decision. We have sworn that if we suspect anybody, we will not spare him from exposure, even if he happens to be a father. We will support Teeha till life's bitter end. (2003, 49-50)

This speech has not only expressed the rage towards the Patels but also it also warns those who play internal caste politics within in the Vankar society.

The Dalit weaver, the hero of the novel, Tiho, is brave and fearless. He always condemned cowardice and helplessness and is the symbol of protest. He lives in a small village called Ratanpar and sells self-woven cloth. He is brave enough to protest against any injustice. He speaks against Shilapur Patels who have robbed their crops, taken away mangoes from their trees, burnt their haystacks and molested their women as a matter of routine. When Methi is eve-teased by Patel youth, he warns them, “Listen fellows! I won’t let this man off in one piece today. I say this to you all now. If anyone here wants to stop me, be prepared to lose an arm and a leg. If you are true sons of your mothers, I suggest you keep out of this. This bastard has to pay for his deeds” (2003, 16)!

His protests of this kind are the beginning of caste-conflict between Dalits and Patels. The Master makes the community aware of their exploitation. The Dalits supported by Master have decided not to remain silent about outrageous kidnapping of Methi and the death of Valji who tried to save her. They file a complaint against the culprits. By the end of the novel, we arrive in the post-independence India. Tiho has become a father to children by Vali. Still the Patels have have not forgotten the old enmity. At the end of the novel Tiho refuses to give his woven cloth to a Patel. Consequently, Patels who are present at the event beat him to death. Thus, Valji and Tiho both lose their lives because they raised their voice of protest against the injustice of upper-caste.

Angaliyat is a critique of the Gandhian ideas of “Swaraj”. It becomes clear when Thakor of Shilapur supports Methi and warns Meghji Patel and other Patels, the Patels threatens Thakor in the sixth chapter, “Don’t forget Thakor, this authority will last only as long as the British rule.

Once we have Independence, you will have to bow down before us” (2003, 32). Since the upper-caste people have played the major role in the freedom movement, it is the matter of great worry for Master to consider the imminent “Swaraj” as an ideal state. After the independence when Master feels sad due to the passive reaction of D.S.P and other governmental officers in the 25th chapter, he says, “This is our Swaraj and this is our Ramrajya” (2003, 229).

The dominant Patels are shown to be shrewd enough to shift their strategies and tactics in tune with changing social reality. For instance, Delavala has planned to crush the Vankars, but a letter from Sabarmati Ashram creates a problem for him. However, he converts the problem into an opportunity and stages a five-day fast as repentance for the attack on the Vanakarvas. By doing so Delavala regains his reputation and recovers the lost political ground. However, after the getting elected as the M. L. A. he stops all the government officials who seek to help severely injured Teeha. Thus, the double standard mentality of such so-called upper caste people is revealed on such occasions.

The Gandhians used to arrange the meetings to eradicate untouchability as a part of the Gandhi’s Harijan uplift movement. However, the upper castes also have had meetings in which they discussed the weakening of their grip over the societal structure. Macwan has depicted one such meeting in the novel. The Patels have organized it to consider the issue of Dalit protest. One of them has said,

The padres have incited the bloody dhedhas. The English government has a hand in conversion. If we have to live in fear of them, then that’s the end of us. I say we squash them well and proper. They will learn the lesson of a lifetime. The country belongs to Hindus and will remain so. Those who wish to live here, must live the way we have been living for generations.... Gandhi’s obsession with the lower castes has gone to their head. (2003, 101)

This is how, the author has rightly pointed out how the mass-movement of Gandhi's ideas have been subverted. This also showed how Gandhi has failed miserably in his mission of 'change of heart.' The upper caste Hindus do not want at all to consider the Dalits as Hindus. For them as the novel shows Dalits have separate identity. There are references in the novel that show that under the British rule Vankars secured a hearing and some justice unlike the later period of self-rule and independence as Macwan has vividly described.

The word Angaliyat (hooked to a finger) means a woman's child by the first husband who when she contracts another marriage comes holding her finger to the second husband's home. Generally, a woman would not remarry if her children are very young, or if possible leave them at her first husband's place. If neither of these courses is possible, she brings them along to her new husband's home. These children are addressed as Angaliyat and have lower social status in the new house. They are treated as second-class citizens and ridiculed, not only at home but also in the village. The institution of Angaliyat is found mostly among the lower castes, including Dalits, in Gujarat. Strictly speaking, there is no case of Angaliyat mentioned in the novel. Methi's son Goko is by Chunthiyo is called Angaliyat. However, Methi did not remarry anyone there. One wonders if Macwan implicitly considered the entire Vankar caste as an Angaliyat. Are the Dalits the Angaliyats within the social structure of the village as well as of the region? They get second-class treatment, are ridiculed and barely tolerated. They are used, exploited and suppressed.

With its success in exposing the *Savarna* exploitation and depicting Dalit struggle for a life of dignity, *Angaliyat* is a pioneering work that inspires other Dalit writers and the community as a whole.

3.3: Gujarati Dalit Writing: 2001 to the Present

In comparison to second phase, more poetry collections have been published in the third phase. Some of Gujarati Dalit Poetry is richer and more complex.¹² It is much more nuanced. In the first decade of 21st Century poetry one could easily see the change as far as the language and treatment of theme of poetry is concerned. Poets are now concentrating more on Dalit ideology and are less interested in the depiction of anger and revolt which were the central themes of the first phase. *Over Bridge* by B. N. Vankar is the best example of this change. *Over Bridge* is divided in 12 sections –Identity, Curse, Contemporary Problems, Agony, Revolt, Existence, and Honored Identity to name some of them. Thus, poet has classified the Dalit world and accordingly addressed it. He has presented not a bitter picture of our society but a bleak reality. He appeals to the society to come out of the irreligious style of living. He does not use artistic language but uses simple language across the collection. This collection has provided new directions to the Dalit poets and settled down the sea of revolt into a set of ideological warfront.

The poem *Over Bridge* from which the title of the collection gains its name is a bitter attack on the Brahminical ideology:

This cow
has never walked

¹² In 2001, B. N. Vankar's *Overbridge*, Chandraben Shrimali's *Mijaj*, Madhuvir Solanki's *Bhim Kavya Saurabh* were published. In 2003, Arvind Vegda's *Pageru*, A. K. Dodiya *Masiha* and Pathik Parmar's *Bahiskrit* and Sarup Dhruv's *Sahiyara Surajani Khojma* were published. In 2004, B. N. Vankar's *Anubandh*, A. K. Dodiya's *Zankhanama Surya*, and Sahil Parmar's *Mathaman* were published. In 2005, Samant Solanki's *Sankalp* and *Yaad Karo Masihane*, Neerav Patel's *Bahiskrut Phulo* and Bharat Vala's *Antarnaad* were published. In 2006, Bhikhu Vegda's *Apno Paras Aap*, Narendra Vegda's *Tatkshan*, Samant Solanki's *Veer Maya Vandana* were published. In 2007, Maun Baloli's *Samay Vachale Hun* and Bharat Vala's *Gunjan* were published. In 2008, Chandraben Shrimali's *Valonu* and Kanti Makwana Kantil's *Katil Kavita* were published. In 2009, Madhukant Kalpit's *Tarjumo*, Nilesh Kathad's *Aantarnad* and Praveen Gadhvi's *Kavino Avaaj* were published.

Apart from these individual collections, five edited collections were published. In 2001, Shobhna Parmar and Jyotsna Macwan edited *Heer No Hinchko* and Dalpat Chauhan, Harish Mangalam and Praveen Gadhvi edited *Dundubhi* were published. In *Dundubhi* there are 85 poems of 59 poets. Pathik Parmar and Harish Mangalam edited *Dalit Geet-Ghazal* was published in 2006 in which 117 poems of 54 poets were published. In the same year Harish Mangalam edited Praveen Gadhvi's poems were published as *Dalitvani*. Neerav Patel edited *Gujarati Dalit Kavita* was published in 2009.

has never mooed
 and
 also not has given milk
 in our homes.
 Then
 why to debate and distress?
 to cross the Vaitarni
 we
 will build an over bridge. (95)

The poet has used very simple words to attack the Brahminism that is responsible for the worst state of Dalits. The religion, which exists on the support of *Shastras* and the *Shastras* demands the donation of a special breed of cow to the creator of these *Shastras* that is the Brahmin. Thus, the poet decides against the donation of a cow that will help to cross the Vaitarni – the mythical river. The poet as a Dalit does not want to cross the river on the basis of Brahmin agency but wants all of the Dalits to cross it and so he suggests building an over bridge over it to enter heaven. The poet does not want to cross it with the blessings of the cow. He also knows that a poor man cannot donate a cow. Dalits may not be economically sound but they are physically strong enough. In this poem, the poet denies god, *Shastras*, donation, pretentious character of the society and rituals and celebrates Dalit agency.

In the opening poem of the collection “Olakh” (Identity), the poet writes

I grow
 The Alps my identity in my palm.
 I invite... the new era ! (1)

In this poem the poet wants to break away all the tags of identity whether nationality, religious, sectarian or racial. He wants to create a universal identity of human being and world

where no difference exists. Moreover, for such a creation of human being he invites a new era. The poet and the Dalit poetry both want to establish human as a human and to eradicate other identities that are tagged to him.

In *Dying Declaration* the poet says,

You forced me

...

To build house and temple

To till farms and wells

To weave clothes

To tan leather

To clean streets and toilets

Then you hated humiliated

And enslaved me

....

Instead bearing silently

your ugly tradition

if I had roared

the rebellion once

then

today

there was no need

to note down my

dying declaration

to history. (72)

Here the poet strongly believes that the Dalits had to revolt in the very beginning of untouchability so that it could not have become the terrible facets as do we find and a Dalit is not killed or burnt alive. Once again, he makes an ideological attack for the betterment of the Dalits.

In another poem *Swargtokti* [Speech For a Heaven] he searches for a heaven,

In the dark jungle of
Injustice
I search for
Heaven of equality. (9)

Dr. Pathik Parmar is a dedicated Dalit scholar. His contribution is unique to mainstream Gujarati literature as well as to the Dalit literature of Gujarat. He has given beautiful lyrics and Ghazals. *Bahiskrut* published in 2003 is his collection of Gujarati Dalit poems.

In his lyric *Gokuliyu Gam ane Kaniyo* [Village Gokul and Kaniyo] Pathik Parmar presented a contrast between the village and the Dalit colony outside the village. In the poem, he has presented a picture that because of untouchability in the village Gokuliyu Dalits are segregated. Upper caste people do not touch them. In his words:

In a little village named 'Gokul'
In which Kaniya lives in his vas*
His vas is totally different.
The whole village thrives on cattle
And when Kaniyo skins the dead cattle,
makes konkani* from the carrion

* Vas is an area where Dalits are forced to live especially on the outskirts of a village. Across India, we find Dalits residing in this kind of vas.

* Konkani is a meat of dead cattle. When cattle are skinned, their meat is cut and dried into a shape of a cord. Dalits have to do it forcefully because of upper caste segregation. Dalits store and use this dried meat as their food whenever required.

the village folk could not breathe.

....

The village folk eat butter and sweet milk,

Kaniya's home lives on the carrion.

.... (1)

In this lyric, the poet has presented two opposite poles of an Indian Village i.e. upper castes world and Dalit world and the lives lived in those sections. By contrasting two sections of the Indian society, the poet has presented the uneasiness of a Dalit. There are two persons having same name Kaniyo. The upper caste Kaniyo i.e. Krishna is quite happy and enjoys riches in his house. In his house, there is plentiful milk, and peacocks are singing songs and white pigeons are flying. But in the house of Dalit 'Kaniyo' which is separately located far away from the village is filled with the barks of dogs, crows are flying, Kaniyo is a victim of caste inequalities and he has to perform unclean duties against his will and no option has been left to him. Therefore, he drags the dead cattle, skins them, makes kokanis of the carrion of the dead cattle, and passes his life with carrion. Thus, the poet has exposed the evil side of the caste system. Even the birds which are associated with the life of a Dalit i.e. crow, eagle and vulture all eat dead cattle.

When the Dalit Kaniyo brings the dead cattle in the vas, then the whole vas lights up. Here the poet has used word "enlighten" when dead cattle comes to their vas, as they will get plentiful meat to eat. So there is a light of happiness. Dalits are not rich enough to light a lamps with oil or kerosene they light it with the fat of the dead cattle. Therefore, when cattle die they will literally enlighten their houses with its fat when there is no fat in the house they live in the darkness.

After skinning the cattle, the Kaniya's body is reddened with the blood of the cattle. He goes to bath in the river along with his son while, bathing, he urinates also in the river. The urine

mixes with water of the river and the so-called upper caste people drink the urinated water happily. Those who consider the touch of a Dalit polluting publicly satisfy their thirst with this water.

Dalit poets are aware of the obstacles that disintegrate the formation of Dalit identity. They repeatedly warn of the danger of internal casteism. The high-castes among Dalits behave like the upper caste Hindus. It is an irony of the situation and a sad fact that they are arrogating their caste superiority among the low-status Dalits and at the same time complain about their inferior social status in the caste Hindu hierarchy. This destroys the amity and unity of the Dalits and weakens the struggle to their professed goal of human identity. In his poem, *Aa Vakhte* [This Time] A. K. Dodia discusses the same fissure:

....
 Forgetting internal casteism
 this is the time to draw near each other
 This time is the time to open the eyes
 to see the obstacles coming in the way of unity. (44)

Arvind Vegda has talked about untouchability and its modern nuances quite subtly in this Haiku.

Be cautious,
 Termite has reached
 Up to the head. (78)

Narendra Vegda talks about Hinduised Dalits who are opportunists and do not raise their voice against exploitation but keep silence. His poem *Sthalantar* [To Change Residence]

From the Ambedkarnagar
 Beside 'Panchvati' Bungalows
 A Poor 'Sudama' has

Vacated his house
 Now he
 Stays in a rented house
 In Gokulnagar. (2010, 54)

Here to leave “Ambedkarnagar” and to stay in “Gokulnagar” is the change that can be visualized in a Hindutvavadi opportunist Dalit.

Based on the study of all the three phases of Gujarati Dalit poetry I would certainly say that it has strongly established itself in this period and has created its own space and status. Honesty and the self-experience are key factors. More than 100 poetry collections have been published that shows its strong presence. In the beginning, the mainstream critics rejected Dalit poetry by calling it “too loud”. Today they discuss its artistic and aesthetic merits which has attained the artistic and aesthetic standards. From a more prosaic idiom, it has become more nuanced, drawing among other resources.

Short story writing has further consolidated itself during the third phase.¹³ In the third phase, stories which are based on theme of untouchability and ingratitude of the upper castes in return of obligation of the Dalits seem to have become prominent. Stories based on the theme of

¹³ The edited collections of short stories of this stage are – B. Kesharshivam *ni Dalit Chetna ni Vartao* [B. Kesharshivam’s stories of Dalit Consciousness] (2004, ed. Bhargav Omguru), *Dalit Varta Shrushti* [World of Dalit Short Story] (2005, Ed. Mohan Parmar), *Vartalok* (2008, Eds. Harish Mangalam, Dr. Pathik Parmar, Madhukant Kalpit, Arvind Vegda), and *Gujarati Dalit Toonki Vartao* [Gujarati Dalit Short Stories] (2009, Ed. Dalpat Chauhan)

Some individual short story collections were also published in this phase. Some of them are – *Talap* [Desire] (2001, Harish Mangalam), *Parkhu* [Test] (2001, Dashrath Parmar), *Poth* [Bullock For Carrying Load] (2001, Mohan Parmar), *Rati Ranyan ni Ratash* [Redness of Red Ranyan] (2001, B. Kesharshivam), *Vilopan* [Destruction] (2001, B. N. Vankar), *Sakhi Sabarni* [Friend of Sabar] (2003, Vithalrai Shrimali), *Chaku no Var* [Bridegroom of Chaku] (2003, Chandraben Shrimali), *Bheens* [Being Pressed] (2003, Maulik Borija), *Narak* [Hell] (2003, Dharmabhai Shrimali), *Madhpoodo* [Honeycomb] (2005, B. Kesharshivam), *Lisoto* [Scratch] (2003, Amrit Makvana), and *Dar* [Fear] (2009, Dalpat Chauhan).

untouchability acquire a new centrality in this period “Narak” by Dharmabhai Shrimali is an example of such a story.¹⁴

Narak [Hell] talks about Ratan who is a scavenger. From her childhood, she does not like the work of scavenging. In her childhood when her mother tells her to remove a carcass of a dog, she goes but could not complete the task because of the stink of dead dog. She comes back without doing so. After her marriage, her husband, Somo who is attracted by her beauty does not like her for the cleaning work in the municipal corporation. However, after she becomes mother, his attraction for Ratan recedes and he starts drinking liquor. Now, he wants Ratan to take up municipal cleaning. Ratan joins the work. The contractor under whom she works harasses her and she refuses to obey him. The contractor therefore gives her work in the dirtiest area where people defecate. Ratan is forced to clean this area. Her mental condition is wretched and she says, “This is a hell... a hell... I am tired God, because of this life as a scavenger” (1). However, her husband is not able to understand her feelings and this hurts her more. He says, “You do not like the work as you do not want to work” (4).

Kantilal, another character, shows a documentary film on the work of manual scavenger. In this film, there is a scene in which a mother and daughter who carry human excreta in an iron tin. The tin is broken. From it, the human excreta drip out. The human excreta flow to the face from the head and down the neck. Ratan who is watching the film, cannot bear it. When Kantilal

¹⁴ To have in-depth analysis of the practice of untouchability in Gujarat readers are requested to read these stories. *Safe Distance* by Mavji Maheshwari, *Sado* [Putrefaction], *Uzardo* [Scratch on Skin], *Bhog* [Oblation] and *Aadvaat* [Story Within a Story] by Dharmabhai Shrimali, *Pag* [Leg], and *Ozatva* [Shadow] by B. N. Vankar, *Bandh Ghadiyal na Kanta* [Hands of a Stopped Watch], *Ambubhai, Madhpudo* [Bee-hive], *Creameelayer, Simantonayan* [Purificatory Ceremony], *Ramli*, and *T.D.O.* [Taluka Development Officer] by B. Kesharshivam, *Laxmanrekha* [Line Not to be Crossed] by B. N. Vankar *Varadh* [Bronchitis] by Baldev Patel, *Yakshprashna* [Puzzling Question] by Naikal Gangera, *Lisoto* [Scratch] by Amrut Makwana, *Dalo Urfe Dalsinh* [Dalo Alias Dalsinh], *Talap* [Desire], *Zol* [Flame], *Abortion* and *Prem Ae ja Satya* [Love is Truth] by Harish Mangalam.

asks audience, “Why do you live such a pathetic life?” an old woman replies, “Sir, nothing should be asked... this is a hell in which we live... but we have to work to fill our belly” (6).

The turning point of this story comes at the end. The scene of mother and daughter has also moved Somo, who is also watching the film. Ratan thought that her husband would shout, “Look, you were shouting about the work, but see...” (6). However, when Ratan looks at Somo, “he was crying and his eyes were full of tears” (6). Ratan who believes that her husband does not understand her is now proved wrong and thus, the couple now understands each other and this unification of couple makes the story more interesting.

Bipin Patel, a critic has remarked in his article, “The incident shown in the documentary film takes the story towards an unexpected end” (26). Parul Kandarp Desai has also marked the value of the unexpected ending (35). The end suggests the changing mentality of manual scavengers. Thus, the story offers a possibility of changing the world of the scavengers, turning it into a heaven from the hell.

Another story with a similar theme is *Gidhanubhuti* [Experience of Being a Vulture] by Dashrath Parmar. The story is told in the first person. In the beginning of the story, a vulture sits on the chest of the protagonist and it starts to poke his right eye. He tries to push aside the vulture but cannot. Therefore, he requests his neighbors living in the vas to help him. However, no one comes to help him. He runs and stands in the shadow of the neem tree and cautions the Dalits of the vas, “This vulture has sat on my chest for so long time. It does not allow me to live and it will not skin me alone but also all of you. Today, it is my turn and tomorrow it will be yours... and one day the whole vas will be destroyed” (101). However, no one listens to him. He runs towards the village streets but here also no one helps him instead they laugh at him. There he sees a temple. He has heard about the charisma of the Goddess Fulan Devi. He enters the

temple in order to seek help from the Goddess. However, his wishes are not fulfilled but there come a mob of vultures that start beating him. Here the real intention of the vulture is exposed.

Then he runs towards the city as he has heard that there are no vultures in the city. But when he enters the city he experiences the presence of vultures. When he asks for water to cool down his thirst from a woman in a bungalow, she ridicules him and then laughs at him. Even the tea vendor threatens him and forces him to run away. Everyone in the city rebukes him. Neither the hermit nor the police helps him. A violent mob of vultures follows him and he has to run away from the city. Towards the end, a man of different religion offers him conversion as a solution. However, he rejects the solution as it will not help his whole society. He also wishes to rename the city as a city of vultures. In the end, the protagonist cannot save himself and the vulture now begins poking his left eye.

Mohan Parmar has rightly remarked, “The act with which the story opens it ends also with the same act i.e. poking the eye. The repetition of the act is very important part of the story” (2005, 148). Some of the critics have criticized the writer for weak treatment of the theme and symbol of vulture. Parul Kandarp Desai has also marked on the treatment of the symbol of vulture in her article, “The way the image of vulture has to be developed, it is not done here” (38). Bipin Patel has also marked the weakness of the writer in his article, “The main symbols of the story ‘vulture’ becomes alone and the anxiety of the protagonist is also expressed in a colloquial language” (31). Both the mainstream critics –Parul Kandarp Desai and Bipin Patel – have highlighted on the weaknesses of the story while the Dalit critic Mohan Parmar has talked about the strength of the story. This shows that the attitude of mainstream towards Dalit writing has still not changed. The writer is successful in the depiction of helplessness, anger against the upper castes and uneasiness of the protagonist.

The theme of ingratitude of the upper castes in return to the obligation of the Dalits is depicted in many stories in this phase. I will discuss Dalpat Chauhan's *Thandu Lohi* [Cold Blood] and *Dayan* [Midwife] by Harish Mangalam as representative examples of this theme.¹⁵

Thandu Lohi [Cold Blood] is a tale of an educated, cultured and emotional Dalit youth who wants to have a prestige and status. He is a doctor and changes his name from Dahyo Parmar to Devendra Parikh so that he will not have to face caste-based insults. When upper castes people know that Bhola Parmar's son has changed his name and surname, they make fun of him and insult him publicly.

Your son has become a doctor, isn't it?

Which surname did he keep?

'Parikh.'

'Hmmm! Parikh Saheb? You became Bania Brahmin! Isn't it? You are now no more a Dhed!¹⁶ now come to the *chora*. I will give you a cot. Come on father of a doctor saheb.' (2002, 138)

This is the scene where Hemraj Chaudhari ridicules Bhola Parmar. However, we can also see upper caste anger at the upward mobility of the Dalit. When Hemraj Chaudhary's son falls ill and has an epileptic attack, he is forced to go to the Dalit vas and said, "Doctor Saheb ! My son Parthido ! Please save him. Something has happened to him! In the midnight, where will we take him? Why don't you come to my home?" (2002, 139)

Devendra Parikh immediately goes to his house and saves Parthida. When a son of a relative meets with an accident, he operates on him and donates his blood to save his life. However, after operating the patient and donating blood the upper caste's mentality still does not

¹⁵ The stories *Badlo* [Revenge], *Aeruzanzru* [Snake or Other Poisonous Animal] *Kator* [Weapon for Hunting] and *Ganga Ma* by Dalpat Chauhan, *Utantiyo* [Whooping Cough] by Harish Mangalam, *Faraj* [Duty] by Shirish Parmar, *Goru Chandan* [Bezoar Stone, Kind of Medicine] by B. N. Vankar, *Koh* [Leather Bucket] by Mohan Parmar also depict the theme of ingratitude of the upper castes in return to the obligation of the Dalits.

¹⁶ A slang used for weavers, now banned by the government.

change. When Devendra Parikh asks them to have food but all of them refuse. They even refuse to drink water and reply, “We are not thirsty” (2002, 140). They leave his room, go to the water tap, and start drinking water. Dr. Devendra Parikh can see them from the lobby of the hospital. This incident upsets the doctor.

He cannot sleep in the night. He recalls the words of Hemraj Chaudhary, “We are not thirsty” (2002, 133). He feels, “This world is now planning to go on the moon but nothing will be changed here.” He also looks his face in the mirror and says, “What is wrong with me. I look as good as they do. Then, why this?” (2002, 133). He says the people of the city did not ask anything, then why are not people of my village ready to accept my new name: “Shall I have to stay forever Dahyo, can I not become Devendra” (2002, 134). This question is not only of a single Devendra but it represents our complex rogue culture and the problems created by it.

Early in the morning when the Maharaj serves him tea, “Devendra is still in the thoughts of the night. The tea is cold now. He removes the cream of the tea and there is cold tea! Suddenly the tea’s colour changed and it became red, dark red. It is cold and frozen red blood” (2002, 136). In the end of the story when Devendra looks the dripping tap and it sounds, “tip...tip...” (2002, 139) but Devendra feels that his own blood is leaking from the tap and he cannot bear it.

Darshna Trivedi and Rupalee Burke have commented that “The story presents a moving account of a man living with burden of caste. The use of ‘stream-of-consciousness technique’ and ‘interior monologue’ is a brilliant achievement of the writer. The tragic finale of the story leaves the reader stunned” (2000, 8).

Harish Mangalam’s *Dayan* [Midwife] is a famous short story. Benima who is a midwife comes from Dalit community. Whenever the upper caste women face a problem in the delivery, Benima successfully delivers their child without any problem. Her skill as a midwife is greater

than a doctor. However, the upper castes have never shown their gratitude towards Benima. In fact they have always insulted and ridiculed her. Benima is a widow and sells mangoes to run her house. She is illiterate but she has a vast experience and expertise in the field of midwifery. Though she is poor, she does not take a penny from the women to deliver their children. Whenever doctors fail to deal with the complexity of the delivery, Benima manages it successfully.

Once when Manek Doshi's daughter-in-law, Pashi could not deliver her child, her sister-in-law Dali comes running and asks Benima to help. "Yes Benima, I am Dali... my sister-in-law is in labour, we have also called Doctor Paresh Patel and he has left after giving an injection. He said do not worry within two hours the baby will be delivered. But even after four hours of the injection, the baby has still not been delivered, please come fast" (1987, 22). Benima successfully delivers the child and saves both lives.

However, after a year and three months Pashi stops her son from touching Benima (1987, 25). When Benima hears this, "Benima's hands—which are lengthened to bless Pashi's son—have an attack of paralysis and her trembling hands are hanged in the air" (1987, 25). Benima is shocked as the readers are shocked at the behaviour of Pashi. How can people so easily forget the obligation just because she is a Dalit? Benima leaves Pashi's house and comes out. When Dali, Rukhi and Manju see her, they also come out and started talking. "Pashi is very fortunate – because of Benima she is saved... But someone else said Pashi was saying that she is saved by the oath of Ram-Kabir" (1987, 25). Benima cannot bear this. When Pashi has been in a critical state, they have not called the god Ram-Kabir to save her life. The upper castes cannot accept the fact that a Dalit woman has saved Pashi and her son. Even the doctor who has taken fifty rupees for an injection is also not remembered for his failure as he comes from the Patel community.

However, Benima's successful efforts of delivering a child are forgotten but not her caste. Caste has ruined her expertise and experience.

In the end, Dahyo who also has been delivered by Benima some four years ago insults her. She is shocked at the behaviour and she looks at the sun. The sun has not been red hot today but it is covered with black clouds. Here, the writer has presented the upper castes' belief (which is scientifically wrong) of caste superiority as the black cloud which is strong enough to cover the sun which is a symbol of truth and knowledge. Thus, Harish Mangalam has artistically presented the problem of untouchability and the severe crisis through which almost each Dalit has to pass. The writer has also successfully crafted the story in the Mehsani Dalit dialect.

The writers who are able to use Dalit dialect because of their strong rapport with the Dalit society and vast experience of writing have written remarkable stories. Mohan Parmar has mentioned in his talk with me that, "In the last three decades, the Gujarati short story has changed its path and the contribution of Dalit short story is immense in changing the path of the Gujarati short story. Dalit short story is developing in the direction of aesthetic, adulthood, and maturity."¹⁷ From the above discussion we can see that the Dalit short story today is more inclined towards the social and psychological analysis of the characters.

In Gujarati Dalit fiction, the third phase is dominated by Joseph Macwan. Important novels of third phase include *Dariya* (2002, Joseph Macwan), *Amar Chandlo* [Mark of Immortality] (2003, Joseph Macwan), *Dahya Pashani Vadi* [Farm of Dahya Pasha] (2003, Mohan Parmar), *Shosh* [Thirst] (2003, Daxa Damodra), *Sangarsh* [Struggle] (2004, Harishkumar Solanki), *Patni* [Wife] (2004, B. Kesharshivam), *Diwalina Divaso* [Days of Diwali] (2004, Pragji Bhambhi), *Bhalbhankhlu* [Dawn] (2004, Dalpat Chauhan), *Kidie Khonkharo Khadho* [To

¹⁷ In a telephonic talk on 8 April 2014.

Show Courage] (2005, Dinu Bhadresariya) and *Gebi Timbo* [Unseen Hillock] (2006, Kantilal Parmar). The emergence of a woman's voice marks this phase.

Daxa Damodara is the only Dalit woman novelist. So far she has written two novels *Shosh* [Thirst, 2003] and *Savitri* (2008). *Shosh* opens with Madhavi's frustration, disappointment and anxiety. Lying in the bed before arrival of her husband Purandar in the bedroom, she thinks; "How many times, the dead are dying, again and again...." (2003, 1). Her husband is more interested in her body than her soul. She thinks wrapped in the white clothes she is lying flat in the bed as if dead. However, Purandar pulls her to him and enjoys her body.

Madhavi's misery begins with her birth. She is the unwanted child of her father. Her father is a well-known Chartered Accountant. Before Madhavi's birth when her mother was pregnant, his father had wished a male child. So he frequently says; "If proper education and training of life is provided then even girl-child can live like a son" (2003, 7). Her hunger to get human love from her father does not materialized. Though her father says, "What is the difference between a male-child and the female-child?" (2003, 7), his behaviour is partial.

Madhavi knows it. She says to herself,

Papa, you tell lies...! You perceive a great difference between a male-child and a female child, especially to you...Why do not you shower your affection on me... Why have you kept it safe for a male-child who is not yet born? If you have a compassion for me, mercy for me, why don't you love me wholeheartedly?...I want your affection, Papa.....if you can givethen give your compassion and mercy. (2003, 7-8)

There was no human atmosphere at her home for arts—painting and poetry. She is fascinated by imaginative world of poetry and painting. Madhvi inclines towards Rajendra Makwana, a Dalit boy, who was also a potential painter like her. She wishes to publish her poems but her father does not allow her to move ahead in arts. Her father also wishes and

commands; “Will you be a Chartered Accountant? Will you sit... after my death.....on my chair....?” (2003, 10). Thus, she has to strangle her love for painting and poetry. She felt; “father how I can live without painting?” (2003, 10). However, in front of her father she is unable to protest. She always tries to make him happy. However, she fails in every effort. Her thirst for human liberty, human love makes her barren from within.

Madhavi’s elder sister’s inter-caste marriage increases problems for her. So she is always conscious of wanting to please her father. When her father gives her admission form for F.Y.B.A., She observes disgust of her father towards her as she has failed in fulfilling her father’s desire of her becoming a chartered accountant. Because of that she feels, “Somebody is weeping within herself. Weep...secret weeping as after somebody’s death...it does not go away from Madhavi. Madhavi sometimes loudly cries, while weeping she laughs too” (2003, 11).

Her mother consoles her, “Do not weep dear.... You have cleared the exam, that’s enough. If you fail to become a chartered accountant then what, you have not lost your life” (2003, 12). However, the pacifying words do not touch her. From within she feels, “I want to cry for someone....But forget the name....Thirst sticks to my throatdo not know for how many ages!” (2003, 12) Thus, she is shattered from within. She feels extreme thirst, the thirst for human life as naturally as everyone wants. She is not allowed to express her sensibilities. She feels continuously suffocated. Because of that, she becomes schizophrenic.

When Madhavi is in second year of the college, her marriage with Purandar is arranged. Purandar is an executive in the private firm. He is a football player. Wine and women are his weakness. Purandar’s attitude for woman is materialistic which leads the couple to have a hot discussion. Madhavi strongly replies, “Husband and wife’s relation, does it mean like a relation

of political leaders and the voters? When a sexual intercourse like an election ends, what is the importance of identity of the voters to the leader” (2003, 21).

Thus, she feels her husband does not wholeheartedly love her. After marriage, Madhavi has to become Purandar’s pet puppet. She tries to set her human identity but she fails even before her husband. He reminds her duty thus; “You are a housewife. A mother of a child....and somebody’s wife. Don’t forget it” (2003, 51). Her inner hollowness makes her restless. She is satisfied when her son Rahul paints. Rajendra is now a celebrated artist. He has arranged an exhibition of his paintings in the city. She meets him to show the paintings of her son. The old friendship with Rajendra becomes fresh. However, her husband wrongly evaluates it. Though Purandar knows that Madhavi is fascinated by Rajendra’s art, he raises questions on her character. He uses bad languages for the artist and his art. He says that woman is not safe when she meets other man, she is safer in four walls of the house. In response to that Madhavi cries out,

“Safe.....?In four walls.....? What a kind opinion! Woman’s safety lies in her infanticide, and abortion. The four walls are created for a woman to become a victim of lust of her father-in-law or brother-in-law. Four walls....if you enjoy with other woman is known as adultery....and if it is done against the desire it is a rape....Four walls are made to fulfill the rights of husbands to rape their wives. ” (2003, 56)

The scene of action in second part is largely Kutch. Something within her mind kept pulling her towards the arid land. When they reach to Kanthkot, Rajal emerges in her mind. Rajal is a Rajput damsel. How the love story of Desal-Rajal is developed is artistically presented by the writer. The prince of Bhadreswar goes to Kanthkot with wedding proposal to Rajal but she refuses him by making comment on his poor knowledge of poetry. She said she loves the man who is expert in poetry and bravery. To take revenge of his insult a Dalit named Desal, is selected who is brave as well as poet also. Desal goes to Kanthkot, wins the heart of Rajal. Rajal

comes to know that Deshal is not a Rajput but a Dalit, death sentence is declared for deception.

After, Deshal's death, Rajal feels guilty. She feels that she has killed him.

Next day Madhavi goes alone to Kanthkot. Among the broken buildings of Kanthkot her disturbed mind stirred extremely. Rajal and Madhavi's personalities are intertwined and Madhavi feels Deshal has been killed because of her error. Gradually she slips into a coma. Thus ends the novel. Thus, the story oscillates between two lives in a surrealistic manner. When the author narrates the story of Rajal-Deshal, her language becomes different. It assumes the tone and dialect of Kutchhi folklore. There is a feast of Kutchhi poetry, all spontaneous and very touching. But when the author pens down Madhavi-Rajendra-Purandar story, language becomes refined and modern. The change is natural. When Madhavi's consciousness is metamorphosing into Rajal's, she becomes a different woman, with different consciousness, culture, and language.

Harish Manglam has rightly pointed out in his introduction titled as "*Samaj na Kanthe Valgela Shosh ni Katha*" *Shosh* manifests various interpretations. It represents the thirst caused by painful social injustice, cruelty, social hierarchy, untouchability, and exploitation of women and Dalits, Madhavi's heart is thirsty for love while the earth of Kutch is thirsty for water, the thirst has stuck to the throats of Madhavi and Rajal for their beloved, and many other interpretations are emerging" (2003, xvi). In my view, though it is the first novel by a Dalit woman it successfully deals with the problem of caste discrimination of the present era; not only this but it also provides an historical account of it through the story of Rajal, Deshal and Duda Shah.

The genre of drama has further consolidated itself during the third phase. *Harifai* [Competition] (2003, Dalpat Chauhan), *Bahishkar* [Boycott] (2003, Mohan Parmar), *Razalpat* [Wandering] (2011, Harshad Parmar) and a special issue of *Hayati* on one-act plays in 2001 are

the major publications of this phase. *Diwalo* [Walls] by Dalpat Chauhan talks about the caste discrimination which was published in 2003 in *Harifai*. The protagonist, a Dalit youth named Abhijit wants to create a heaven by marrying an upper caste girl. However, there are walls between the untouchable and the touchable society, which are gigantic. The walls are hardened by pouring lead of societal customs between the layers of concrete. Look at the dialogues of *Diwalo*,

- Ranglo :(Sitting near Abhijit) Calm down brother..... calm down, what happened, please tell me.
- Abhijit :The demon came with its mob. They have beaten me with hockey and stick. I was saved. I told them, though I am a shudra..... an untouchable... My love is pure..... Nobody believed me. They did not hear my complaint. They left me and also threatened me off to be imprisoned for this act of inter caste love. Oh.....
- Ranglo :Here you cannot create your heaven?
- Abhijit :(Angrily) Why can't I? I am Abhijit. If Abhijit can become Vishwamitra, then why can't I? Are you Brahminic?..... May I create new world with new with new caste hierarchy.
- Ranglo :That's why your heaven can not be created. You are not Abhijit but Trishanku. You want to enter the heaven with your body. You want to break Brahminism. There is no meaning of your heaven. (2003 a, 26)

Abhijit is not able to break the forts that are stuffed with the differences of castes. He cannot become Vishwamitra. He becomes Trishanku.

This is where we can see the role of a Dalit writer. He wants to break the caste system that is the main cause of all the problems faced by the Dalits in India. According to the playwright, the route of love that is taken by Abhijit is not a proper way because the walls that are broken are going to be repaired very soon as the following dialogues suggest,

- Ranglo : To open the door, break the wall.
 You will get nothing after breaking the wall.
- Nat-1 : The broken walls will be once again constructed.
- Nat-2 : Humans will be injured once again.
- Nat-3 : In following Trishanku he will wander on the way. Break the locks of the caste system. (2003 a, 26-27)

Thus, there will not be any revolution. Dalpat Chauhan wants to have a revolution that could change the entire face of the Indian societal structure so that the future generations will have a casteless and classless society.

The vicious cycle of religion can only be interrupted by interrogating religion. Hence, it is necessary to analyze the legendary heroes and the religious figures that have been pompously presented as harbingers of idealism. Through the traditional Indian play *Satyawadi Raja Harishchandra* (The Truthful King Harishchandra), Gandhi has been moved and he has modulated his ideology on the basis of this play. This play endorses human trading which is exploitation of the highest kind. This story is an example of the false claims made by non-Dalits, which Dalpat Chauhan dwelles upon in his play *Sanjay ane Chhagan* [Sanjay and Chhagan]. In his view, time does not change for Dalits in India. Though the world says, change is inevitable but in India, everything is stagnant for the Dalits. In this play, when Sanjay wants to visit and see whole of India like Gandhi, Chhagan replies satirically that there is no need to visit India completely – it is good enough to visit only one village. In his view, one village represents whole of India as the society and sociological condition is same in all the villages of India. In each village, one will find tenants, serfs, atrocities on Dalits and women, problem of dowry, untouchability. Everywhere the exploitation is same. Thus, it is wastage of time and energy both

if one wants to visit India concisely. Thus, he has rightly brought out socio-economic and political situation of the Dalits.

At a tea stall, Sanjay spotted a boy whom he thinks he has seen earlier. The following conversation takes place at the tea stall.

Sanjay : What is your name?

Boy : Rohit

Sanjay : Rohitkumar! Yes. That has reminded me. I saw you earlier at the banks of the Ganges in Kashi, in a Slave – Market. Someone was buying you. A man and a woman have surrounded you. Am I right? Who have been they? Your parents
.... Yeah, Rohitkumar Harishchandra Satyawadi.

[The boy keeps on staring]

Boy : Saheb, do you want more water?

Sanjay : and I have still not forgotten that face.

Chhagan: Sanjay, he is not cursed like you.

Sanjay : He is cursed. I carry the curse of excessive knowledge; he has the curse of excessive burden. He has to carry the burden, and become oppressed! How many epochs have passed! Yet this boy has moved only from a slave-market to a tea-stall.

Chhagan: I do not think the boy remembers anything.

Sanjay : He is Rohit. Rohit, the son of Satyawadi Harishchandra, who has sold his wife to a prostitute and sold himself to a Chandal. Slave Markets and human trading seem to be eternal. Swine.... They are all, monsters. This is the cruel truth.

(2003 b, 106)

In this play, Sanjay and Chhagan are the main characters. There are four minor characters also. When Sanjay meets Chhagan, he remembers only past and not present. The conversation between them throws light on the relativity of time and human existence. There is a reference to

Draupadi also. She cries for help but nobody comes forward to help her. In this play, also a voice talks with Draupadi. The talk between Draupadi and the voice is pinpointed. The Voice points out how a woman has been considered as a commodity in the *Manusmriti* and Yudhisthira's use of Draupadi as a property in the gamble. When Draupadi hears this religious dictum she is furious. Here Dalpat Chauhan wants to say that Draupadi faced only one public insult and she replied violently, what will be the condition of a Dalit who faces such insults throughout his/her life. When Dalits demand justice and human rights upper caste people react violently. The anti-reservation riots of 1981 and 1985 are an example of the upper caste people's psychological attitude towards Dalits.

Thus, the Dalit playwrights have very consciously presented the society in which we are living. They have not only presented our society and its problems but also awakened us towards the societal bleak realities. They have tried to bring both the strata –Savarnas and Avarnas, rich and poor- together so that the upcoming generation will have such a world where everybody is living quite peacefully and happily.

In the third phase, the Gujarati Dalit writing became richer than the second phase in the field of autobiography. In this phase i.e. from 2001, five important autobiographies have been published. They are *Jivan Sangarsh* [Life Struggle] (2001, Dahyabhai Dinbandhu) *Purnasatya* [The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth] (2002, B. Kesharshivam) *Atit na Anrea Sansmarno* [Unique Memoirs of the Past] (2005, Khemchandbhai Chavda), *Thor nu Phool* [Flower of Cactus] (2007, P.K. Valera), and *Bajta Jaye Ektara* (2009, Vitthalrai Shrimali). Gita Chaudhari has translated *Purnasatya* as *The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth* in 2008.

Purnasatya vividly describes the hardship, particularly socio-economic, faced by B. Kesharshivam and his community. The description of his childhood memories is very touching.

In his early childhood, the economical condition of B. Kesharshivam's has been better in comparison to the other members of the community as his father has been a '*kantrati*' (contractor). However, in the course of time, it became very bad as his father has started drinking. Therefore, B. Kesharshivam has to work hard as a child to help his family. B. Kesharshivam writes in "Signature of Existence," "There were many restrictions: ban on education, ban on listening to religious discourse, ban on wearing good clothes...The only thing which was not banned was hunger" (2008, xii).

He has worked as a boiler cleaner in a factory, which is a difficult task even for a man. He says, "I developed blisters on my hands from constantly using the hammer...my palms hardened and even today I can feel the hardness. It is a constant reminder of not nightmarish past but of its reality" (2008, 21). Even as a young boy B. Kesharshivam faces lots of difficulties but never compromises with self-respect. B. Kesharshivam says "The religious leader had the crutch of a begging bowl but I never resorted to begging to satiate my hunger. I have gone to bed hungry but have never asked for alms from anybody" (2008, xiv). Even at the quite young age, this temperament indicates his role in future and due to this kind of temperament, he becomes able to bear the tensions that he has to deal with as a government officer.

His childhood was spent among bones in the bone mill where his mother worked. He describes his games with bones in the bone mill. In addition, he gives a very touching description of the incident of the death of his companion girl child in the bone mill. B. Kesharshivam has also described an incident at bone mill where a worker tries to sexually exploit him. The first part of the autobiography also highlights the social customs and the life of the people of the community, their beliefs, superstitions, and some supernatural elements. Whatever events B. Kesharshivam has depicted, they are depicted with such vividness that we get a very touching

picture of the lives of the Dalits; from births, weddings, religious ceremonies, *bhavais* to *mushayaras*. This shows the collective life of the Dalit community and how they are united in adverse circumstances. In addition, not only that but it also shows what forces has nurtured young Bhikha's mind.

As a student B. Kesharshivam was clever and active, he took part in extracurricular activities, particularly in drama. Even many of the upper class teachers loved him. However, wherever he went, whatever he does, the inferiority complex remained with him. As a child, he always felt fear while dealing with the outsider. In the first part of his autobiography, B. Kesharshivam had described an incident of picnic. He went to school picnic. After taking food, everyone threw the leaf plates in a pit; the beggars were collecting the leftover from the plates. But the beggar woman threw the plate, "She threw my plate as if it were a live wire or filled with poison and cried out, 'Hai, hai he's a dhed'" (2008, 113).

The second part of the autobiography deals with B. Kesharshivam's life as a government officer. Even after becoming a government officer, he has to suffer at every step of life because of his Dalit identity. In Dholaka, where the author was posted as a 'Mamlatdar', he could not get house on rent in good locality. In this part, we can see B. Kesharshivam's devotion to Ambedkar and to his own community. B. Kesharshivam continued his efforts to be helpful to his community at any cost. We can see how he suffers while helping others. As a government officer, he performs his duty bravely. He suffers lot while he allots '*Gochar*' to the landless Dalits. B. Kesharshivam writes, "If you were to knock on the words of pain, you would hear the sound of truth; if you were to press the words, you would find drops of perspiration oozing out; and if you were to dig into them, you would find blood streaming out" (2008, xvii).

While talking about his duty in the Governor House he compares his present life with the earlier one: “I was destined to lead a very contradictory life. As a child I had experienced a childhood hankering for a piece of *rotlo* and as an adult, in my job at ‘Raj Bhavan’, I had food cooked referring to the cookbooks that costs Rs. 200 to Rs. 250. I had a huge staff of separate cooks for vegetarian and non-vegetarian food” (2008, xviii).

B. Kesharshivam feels that the governments and social reformers have made many efforts to remove untouchability but still it has not been completely removed, it is always present in one or another form. The Dalits share the same country, same religion, and same language but due to their identity, they are forced to live within their own boundaries creating their own subculture. Even after so many years of independence, to some extent the Dalits are treated in the same way as earlier. Decolonization of mind and heart is yet to take place.

As in other phases the Dalit autobiography of the third phase links the stories of their community to the stories of their own lives. By means of writing, these writers break the silence of the Dalit communities. They as individual writers articulate Dalit experience that until now was hidden, repressed, and concealed. These writings are not just about finding voice but also about the revelation of the most inner life of a community in a public or a kind of confession.

Criticism in the third phase of Gujarati Dalit Literature became quite strong. Total 17 books on criticism of Gujarati Dalit Literature have been published after 2000.¹⁸ *Ekvachan* (2003) is a critical work by Harish Mangalam which consists of 19 articles including “Gujarati Dalit Novels” and “The Origin of Dalit literature.” Harish Mangalam says that “According to mainstream critics, Dalit literature started its journey in the postmodernist era of Gujarati

¹⁸ Some of the critical works of the third phase are: *Ekvachan* [Singukar] (2003, Harish Mangalam), *Samyak* [Proper] (2003, Yashavant Vaghela), *Navonmesh* [New Opening] (2003, B.N.Vankar), *Padchinha* [Footprints] (2004, Dalpat Chauhan), *Pratibaddha* [Committed] (2005, Bharat Mehta), *Dalit Sahitya* [Dalit Literature] (2005, B. N. Vankar), *Dalit Samvedana and Sahitya* [Dalit Sensibility and Literature] (2006, Dr. Nathalal Gohil) and *Pratyaksha* [Present] (2008, Madhukant Kalpit).

literature but he states that post-modernist era in Gujarati literature began with the Dalit literature” (2003, 15). *Samyak* (2003) is a remarkable critical work by Yashavant Vaghela who traces the history of Dalit movement in Maharashtra and Gujarat with critical analysis of Dalit poetry.

In 2003, B. N. Vankar has produced three collections of critical essays. They are *Yathartha*, *Navonmesh*, and *Ranadwip*. *Yathartha* [Actual] consists of critical reviews of 45 Dalit poems from Gujarat, India and other countries of the world. *Navonmesh* is a collection of 32 critical articles where B. N. Vankar discusses Indian Dalit literature and Afro-American literature. He discusses the works of Tony Morrison and Namdeo Dhasal among others. In *Ranadwip* the critic introduces 31 Gujarati Dalit writers, their works, and impetus of their creativity.

Padchinha (2004) is a collection of 19 articles by Dalpat Chauhan. It is not a book of criticism in strict sense but is a book of appreciation for the best that has been written in Gujarati Dalit Literature. *Samprat Dalit Sahitya Pravah* [Contemporary Stream of Dalit Literature](2004) is a notable critical work by Dr. Pathik Parmar containing critical articles on Dalit poetry, short story collections *Kumbhi* and *Jeev*, novels such as *Dahya Pasha Ni Vadi* and *Shosh* and reminiscences such as *Madi Mane Sambhare Re*.

Paryay [Equivalent] (2004) is a collection of articles by B. N. Vankar divided into three parts –ten literary articles, twenty-one poems, appreciation and two interviews. With *Pratibaddha* [Committed] (2005) Bharat Mehta stands out as a discerning critic in Gujarati criticism today. He has discussed Dalit literary works focusing on Dalit problems. The critic in this book discusses commitment in literary works. He also examines their aesthetic worth. *Dalit Sahitya* (2005) is a book by B. N. Vankar discussing the upsurge of the Dalit literature in social

and historical context. He has also discussed Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil Dalit literature.

Darpan (2005) by Arvind Vegda contains eleven critical articles, two introductory articles on two Dalit writers and three appendices. There is objective analysis and maturity in these articles.

Pratidhwani [Echo] (2006) is a collection of critical articles by Harish Mangalam. The book contains articles like *Dalit Disgrace of the Hinduism*, *The Authentic History*, *Gujarati Dalit Short Story*, and many others. This work is a testimony of his matured insight and commitment.

Suryayan (2006) is a collection of appreciation of 40 poems by B. N. Vankar. All these poems

are committed to different social concerns. *Dalit Samvedana and Sahitya* (2006) is an authentic

critical research work by Dr. Nathalal Gohil. It focuses on Dalit folk literature, Dalit Saint

Literature and Dalit Bardic literature. It shows that Dalit saints are the important torchbearers of

Hindu mysticism and bhakti traditions. *Dalit Literary Tradition in Gujarat: a Critical Study*

(2007) is a doctoral research by M. B. Gaijan. This is the first doctoral research on Gujarati Dalit

writing in English. Gaijan has critically evaluated all the prevalent genres of Gujarati Dalit

literature. *Pratyaksha* (2008) is a notable critical work by Madhukant Kalpit containing 15

articles and 3 appendices. Profundity of insight and critical appreciation are the special features

of Kalpit's criticism. *Dalit Kathavimarsh* (2010) is a doctoral research of Kanti Malsatar. As the

title suggests it is an extensive study of only two genres– short story and novel.

Thus, Gujarati Dalit literature began its journey with poetry; soon mastered other crafts of literary expressions namely short story, novel, drama and autobiography. The Gujarati Dalit writers filled the gap created by the *savarna* writers who had portrayed Dalits' lives in their literature based on their own imagination. Due to the absence of the authentic experience of Dalit life, they failed to bring out the extreme self-consciousness and fighting instincts of Dalits.

Gujarati Dalit writers held that their experience inspires them to write. The Gujarati Dalit writing

constituted a challenge to the mainstream institutional narrative by presenting their experiences in various literary genres. Thus, Dalit literature discussed in this chapter worked as a vehicle for revolution, change, to raise Dalit consciousness, and social commitment for justice.

3.4: Translation in the Context of Gujarati Dalit Writing

Tejaswini Niranjana rightly pointed out how the scholar and translator William Jones, who was responsible for the most influential introduction of a textualized India to Europe, had sought to use translation “to domesticate the Orient and thereby turn it into province of European learning” (12). By using the examples of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man Niranjana points out that translation has close relation or inclination towards the power structure. Translation of the cultural products of the colonized provided colonialist administrators with the necessary knowledge to manage the local populations. This is why large-scale translation movements, whose aim was to transcribe the local culture for the new rulers, usually accompanied colonialist enterprises. The translated texts did not present a neutral view of the text but they presented the text through the glass of the colonizer. Thus, it had ultimately positioned the colonizer as the master. This exercise was undertaken to occupy the dominant place in the field of knowledge. The British as a colonizers were able to do this because they had power. Their capturing of ‘power’ went hand in hand with transformation of knowledge. Before colonization one can say that the Brahmins had captured ‘knowledge’ and thus ‘power’. In a way one can argue, both the colonizer and the Brahmins were doing similarly ruling the subordinated. The British subordinated Indians while the Brahmins subordinated Shudras and the Dalits in social and other spheres.

Texts for translation were selected from two languages Sanskrit and Arabic. Both of them were the court languages before the British invaded and expanded their empire in India. Jones

being a judge in the court wanted to understand the language of power so he selected only these languages deliberately. The British as did the Sanskrit pundits also found that vernacular literature against their hegemonic power. This I can say on the bases that the most democratizing moves have drawn close to the vernacular. The first attempt to democratize spiritual teaching was Lord Buddha who preached to his disciples and also delivered his sermons to the mass in the language of mass i.e. Pali. Second, Bhakti Literature, which was the most significant medieval attempt to diminish the influence of Sanskrit and to promote the language of the mass was also born of a democratizing impulse which promoted an intimate personal connection between God and man. After the demise of Lord Buddha and the end of the Bhakti movement, once again the Sanskrit regained its power as its propagators were still well connected with the court. The British targeted these languages because they wanted to establish an alliance with the court and thus with that power through English.

Warren Hastings the then Governor of the East India Company believed that the Indian populace had to be ruled by their own principles and institutions. He also wanted to convince people in England of this orientalist way of administration and for this purpose a code, a text- in English- was required. The result was an English translation of a legal text, *Vivadarnavsetu* (*Across the sea of litigation*) as *A Code of Gentoo Laws or Ordinations of the pundits* (1776), by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. It was not directly translated in English but from Sanskrit into Persian and then into English. The book was initially meant to be a private edition published by the East India Company. To theoretical jurists and historians of civilization the *Code* became the fundamental source on Hindu laws and customs.

Charles Wilkins was the first European translator to translate directly from Sanskrit. He translated the Sanskrit grammar as *Grammar of Sanskrit Language* and the *Geeta* as *The*

Bhagvad Geeta (1784). William Jones had read various references to the *Manusmriti* in the oldest works on law in India. Jones had read it in the process pursuing his vocation as a judge, Jones felt confident enough to undertake its translation himself. For Jones translation of *Manusmriti* was important because he wanted to break the monopoly of the Brahmins on the indigenous knowledge through translation from Sanskrit to English i.e. from one language of power to the other language of power i.e. English. Moreover, he undertook translation himself to maintain the 'purity' of the text.

Jones also translated *Abhignanshakunatam* in 1789. Translations before *Abhignanshakunatam* had exposed the West to the legal, spiritual, and philosophical aspects of Indian civilization. Through the translation of *Abhignanshakunatam* Jones introduced the literary side of India to the West.

Up to 1816, almost all the British carried out the translations. Translations from Sanskrit, which had begun in the eighteenth century by the British, gained momentum in the hands of Indians. These ranged from well-known treatises to poetry and drama. The first text translated into English by an Indian was from Bengali. Rammohun Roy translated first Sankara's *Vedanta* into English, *An Abridgement of the Vedanta* and then *Kena* and *Isa Upanishads* in 1816. In 1856, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar's essay on *Marriage of Hindu Widows* was translated. In 1859, Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated *Sermista: A drama in five Acts*. Dinbandhu Mitra's *Nildurpan* was translated in 1860. It was a socio-historical document about Indigo planters in Bengal. The play also addressed the racial exploitation by the British. Because of such representation of the British everyone associated with the play either original or translation were punished. *Nildurpan* presented the political scenario under the British and not the glorification of

the Indian past as one could find in the previous translations of other texts. R. C. Dutt translated Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in a condensed form in 1910.

Thus, the earliest function of the translation was an administrative then it had become a tool to 'discover' India when we had Jones' *Abhignanshakunatam*. In the hands of the Indian translators, translations acquired a different significance, that of a tool for self-definition and revision of history.

Niranjana based on her readings of the translations of the colonizers concluded that translation in the colonial era was a political action and which always favored the colonizers to appropriate its powers. Extending the logic of translation and its power-centric relationship to Indian writing either ancient or modern, it exposed Indian Brahminical ideology in the representation of the Shudras and the Dalits as the 'other'. The literary scene after independence remained the same. The Indian Writing in English and Indian Writing in Translation confirmed and accepted what Niranjana claimed for the translations of the British rule.

The British have presented Indians as 'mystical', 'childish', 'sexual', 'primitive', 'mendacious' and above all as subject to British rule. Niranjana has suggested to rewrite all the translated texts by the British. In her views, the rewriting will decolonize the colonizer's impact and will present actual Indian society. The mainstream writers have presented the Dalits as 'mean', 'uncultured', 'ugly'. The Dalit writing makes an inquiry into being of 'mean', 'uncultured', and 'ugly'. Thus, Dalit writing is an attempt to present the society, which is oppressive and exploitative which always, tries to glorify it. Thus, it exposes the hypocrisy of the upper caste writers. Dalit Writing is a process of asserting an identity and creating a self.

When we consider literary translation in India, both mainstream and Dalit, we find there is a discrepancy. Far fewer Dalit works are translated compared to mainstream writing. As we

know a major part of Dalit literature is available only in regional languages. Then the only access to Dalit literature in different languages is through English. It is surprising to see that only very few books are written and translated in English by Dalits themselves. Dalit texts, written by one Dalit and translated by another Dalit, are very few in Gujarat. Translation of Dalit texts into English is not only an empowerment of Dalit writers but it is also definitely enrichment of literature in English. It opens a world of actual knowledge of the oppressed, their animosity, their obligation, and their engagements. The translations fill up major gaps in Indian writing in English, which has not been able to hold the voices of the socially and economically marginalized sections.

In order to strengthen the Dalit Movement across India it is necessary to have a pan-Indian Dalit voice. This can be achieved only through translation of all the regional Dalit literature into English and also in other intra-state languages. Though the translation of Dalit writing into English is not moving on a good pace but still there are some books which are translated into English. Even in the academia also Dalit writing is still not able to become a separate course of study in any university in Gujarat and thus it is unacceptable in the canon of translation studies paper too.

Dalit writing through its very presence contests the Brahminism inherent in the canonical literary formations. The augmentation of Dalit literature in translation itself is a representation of Dalit empowerment, which can be associated with the Dalit movement. The initiation has come in 1992 when Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot have translated Marathi Dalit poems as *An Anthology of Dalit Literature*. In the same year, Arjun Dangle, one of the founding members of Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra, has edited *Poisoned Bread*. It is a collection of prose, autobiography, poetry, etc. This is followed by the publication of Laxman Mane's *Upara* as *The*

Outsider in 1997 and Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchalya* as *The Branded* in 1998 by Sahitya Akadami. After a long gap of 7 years, *Karukku*, an autobiographical novel written by Bama in Tamil in 1992, won worldwide acclaim only after Lakshmi Holmstrom has translated it to English in 2000. Kishor Shantabai Kale's *Kolhatyacha Por* translated as *Against all Odds* in 2000. Vasant Moon's *Vasti* is translated as *Growing up Untouchables in India: A Dalit Autobiography* in 2002. Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* is translated as *The Outcaste* in 2003. Urmila Pawar's *Aaydan* is translated as *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir* in 2003. Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* is translated as *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* in 2003. Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha* is translated as *The Prison We Broke* in 2008.

In the paragraph given below, I have listed out the texts, which have been properly translated into English up to 1987. I have selected year 1987 because the flow of the Dalit literature in India as well as Gujarat has gained pace after 1985.¹⁹ Rita Kothari has given a list of books that are translated from Gujarati into English in her book,

The first proper translated text into English from Gujarati was the translation of Gandhi's *Satyagraha in South Africa* in 1928 by Valji Desai. Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth* was translated by Mahadev Desai in the second and third decades of twentieth century. Gandhi's collected works was translated and published by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India in 1958. *Selected Stories from Gujarat* translated by Sarla Jagmohan was the first literary text apart from the Gandhian writings in 1961. C. C. Mehta translated his play *Aag Gaadi* as *Iron Road* in 1970. *Contemporary Gujarati Poetry* translated by Chandrakant Topiwala in 1972. Shiv Kumar Joshi translated his *He Never Slept so Long* in 1972. H. M. Patel translated *Jaya Somnath* of K.M. Munshi in 1976. Jhaverchand Meghani's *An Earthen Lamp* was translated by Vinod Meghani in 1979. Dahyabhai Patel translated *Devotional Songs from Gujarat* in 1981. *Gujarati Short Stories: An Anthology* was edited and translated by Sarla Jagmohan in 1982.

¹⁹ For detailed information on the history of translation in India refer Kothari, Rita. 2006. *Translating India*. New Delhi: Foundation Books Pvt. Ltd.

Swami Mahadevananda translated Narsinh Mehta as *Devotional Songs of Narsi Mehta* in 1985.

Sneharashmi translated his haikus as *Sunrise on Snow Peaks: Haiku of Sneharashmi* in 1986. *Love Poems and Lyrics from Gujarat* was published in 1987, which was a collection in which many translators contributed. (89-91)

As far as Gujarati Dalit Writing in translation is concerned, the first translated work is by K. M. Sheriff as *Eklavyas with Thumbs: Selections from Gujarati Dalit Literature* in 1999. This shows the literature, which is published in abundance after 1981, has received English recognition almost after two decades and that too by a Tamil speaking lecturer and translator who worked in Gujarat for few years. After a year, Gujarat Dalit Sahitya Akadami has undertaken the task of translating Dalit literature and two books on poetry and short story are published separately in 2000. Rupalee Burke and Darshna Trivedi have translated both these books. The poetry translation is titled as *The Silver Lining* while the short story translation is titled as *Tongues of Fire*. Rita Kothari has translated Joseph Macwan's *Angaliyat* as *The Step Child* in 2004. Harish Mangalam and M. B. Gaijan have edited and translated an anthology of Gujarati Dalit writing as *The Pristine Land* in 2008. Gita Chaudhari has translated B.Kesharshivam's autobiography *Purnasatya* as *The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth* in 2008. Praveen Gadhvi has translated his collection of poems in 2008 as *The Voice of the Last*. He has also translated his two collections of short stories as *Black Pain* and *The City of Dust and Lust*, which were published in 2010. My translations of Praveen Gadhvi's poems as *Poet's Voice* and Chandraben Shrimali's short stories as *Gujarati Dalit Short Stories* have been published in 2013 and 2014 respectively. There has not been any sustained attention to these translations. Thus, the Dalit literature in Gujarati is still not very well received by the academia, publishing houses and the society.

The next chapter “First Anti-Reservation Agitation (1981) and Dalit Writing” presents a detailed study of the first anti-reservation agitation of 1981 in Gujarat and the response of the Gujarati Dalit literary writers to this agitation.