Chapter-IV

Gujarati Dalit Poetry: A Study from the Socio-Cultural Perspectives

Gujarati Dalit writing came into existence much after Marathi Dalit literature. In Gujarat, Dalit literary trend has started around 1970s. Slowly and steadily, the Dalit literary trend in Gujarat has become a national literary trend. The publication of *Aakrosh*, a poetry journal of Dalit panthers on the 14th April, 1978, can be considered an important milestone. Thus Gujarati Dalit literature began with poetry. It has been observed that Marathi Dalit literature stemmed from the socio-political ideologies of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule, whereas Gujarati Dalit literature germinated from the anti-reservation agitation, communal riots. And thus the way for Gujarati Dalit literature was paved in around 1975. Today Dalit literature in Gujarat itself has established as a genre which can never be ignored.

Most probably in the 8th decade, the Gujarati Dalit poetry became a part and parcel of Mainstream Gujarati Literature. It became a chorus for a few writers who were busy to dignify their poetry being a part of the Ambedkarite movement. Their poems of social sensibility proved to be a significant event which gave a new freshness to their literature. Poetry comes first followed by other kinds of writing such as autobiography, drama, criticism, etc. It is not just modern, but a new kind of writing in terms of experience and sensibility. To quote the words of Rupalee Burke in this reference,

“Gujarati Dalit literature in its first phase became synonymous with Dalit poetry as it were and the themes that inspired Dait poets to wield their pens were revolt, protest, revenge, resentment and disgust against upper caste oppression and exploitation, unjust and enslaving social customs and traditions, most importantly the appropriation of these by the upper castes.”

(Burke, 179)

Gujarati Dalit poetry is basically the articulation of the experiences and feelings of an entire community. It is this endeavor of theirs through poetry that leads to a discernment
of an identity building process. The Dalit poets strive to cleanse the stated values of life and culture. This is how they try to bring progress in the lives of the ignored classes through their poetry creations. In fact, their poetry is a mass movement, a cultural revolution against Brahminic superiority. The versatility of these poets is amazing and originality of theme is the hallmark of their poetry. These poets are having definite motive, goal, direction and commitment. They in giving voice to their struggle against discriminating upper castes are giving shape to the Dalit identity which is located in Dalit unconsciousness. These poets are committed to the noble cause and thus they are the custodians of the castle of Dalit literature.

Initially their poetry remained untouched and unknown by the mainstream at Gujarat and national level. But they did not bother about not finding a place of mention in the histories of Adalit (non-Dalit) literature. The fact is that it has grown stronger over the last three decades because the way it has wielded the mindset of the readers as well as critics. Their message is loud and clear. In all the poems, the poets have longed for Dalit’s acceptance and existence as the citizens of India. They struggle for their identity, anger and anxiety against caste discrimination, Dalit women issues and search for identity are the remarkable aspects of their collections. The writers are committed to raise their voice against injustice and cruelties. The writers strongly desire the equalitarian Republic India where none is high, low is none, none is exploiter, exploited is none, but all are equal.

Their poetry has been influenced by the philosophy of Phule, Kabir, Buddha and Ambedkar. These Dalit poets are devoted to a noble cause i.e. social awakening and ready to eradicate social evils. Their poetry has become a social document of aesthetic experience of being exploited. Their poetry has been the story-teller of their own anguishes told after getting the first-hand experience. These religious, social, economical and political upheavals caused the Dalit poets to think beyond their narrow domestic walls. These poets have got inspired by the saintly figures and thinkers like Saint Kabir, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther, Narsinh Mehta, Karl Marx, Ravidas and many more. In the poetry of Kabir, Ravidas and Narsinh Mehta, the voice of the oppressed has been heard in one or the other way. Even it is also the fact that in Gujarati literature, the Dalit
poetry came from non-Dalit poets first. In the poetry of Karsandas Manek, Shridharani, Sundaram and Umashankar Joshi, the voice of protest against unjust practices of society is heard. However, before we move on with a detailed analysis of Gujarati Dalit poetry existing after independence, it would be in fitness of things to have a bird’s eye view over how it emerged before independence.

**Gujarati Dalit Poetry before Independence:**

Since Dalits were not allowed to participate in mainstream spiritual activities, they founded alternative Bhakti sects as a parallel to the mainstream Bhakti tradition in Gujarat. Many Dalit saints have sung their resistance songs to the mainstream traditions; and have strengthened the Dalit folk traditions by articulating its resistance dimension alongside the spiritual one. In Gujarat, Dalit traditions are related to occupations, folk performances and most recently with literary movement. Art of weaving and making leather goods, art of singing, acting and playing musical instruments are related to Dalit cultural traditions. The recent emergence of Dalit literary movement has also created a significant folk literary tradition and has made a mark alongside the mainstream literary activities.

Dalit castes like *turi, nat, bharathli* and *targala* are traditionally engaged with folk performances like playing musical instruments, singing, performing *bhavai* etc. Dalits folk traditions have both social and spiritual dimensions. Dalit spiritual tradition in Gujarat has its root in the Bhakti movement of the fourteenth century. Many Dalit saint poets were influenced by the pioneers of the Bhakti movement -Ramanada, Raidas and Kabir spread the Bhakti cult in Gujarat among the lower castes. There is no doubt that the Dalit folk traditions, both in their social and spiritual aspects, have influenced the modern Dalit literary movement. Nathala Gohil‘s *Saurashtra Harijan Bhakt Kavio* [Harijan Saint Poets of Saurashtra] (1987) and Dalpat Shrimali‘s *Harijan Sant aue Loksahitya* [Harijan Saints and Folk Literature] (1989) have documented Gujarati Dalit folklore traditions and presented them before the modern audience. By bringing the folk from the oral to print and from scattered to compiled form, these publications have certainly provided a chance to literate Dalits to ponder over their rich folk traditions.
During the medieval period, literary activities were confined only to limited people, particularly the Brahmins and very few upper caste people. Literature was mainly oral, and was hardly in written form. The storytellers, Bhajan singers and Kathakars mostly belonged to the upper caste communities. Access to the mainstream religious activities was limited to the three upper castes—Brahmins, Vaishyas and Kshatriyas. Shudras were strictly denied entry into the premise where such activities were organized. It was hardly possible for untouchables to avail the oral traditions of the upper caste Hindus. It was considered as an offence for a member of Dalit community to speak or use a cultured language of upper caste community. Further, on account of untouchability and illiteracy, the written literature was also not within their reach. However, in spite of adverse social conditions of insulation and segregation, the Dalits had enough potential to cultivate and nourish their own singers and listeners. The Bhakti movement in India created an atmosphere of spiritual interaction through various oral forms like bhajans, padas, chopais (quatrain), chhappas (six line satirical verse form) etc. The influence of the saints of untouchable community such as Kabir and Raidas on Gujarati untouchables gave unique identity to their spiritual oral literature. To quote the words of Dr. Gaijan,

“Gujarati spiritual literary and folk-literary traditions, which began right from the medieval times, remained alive up to the end of the twentieth century. The tradition is mainly expressed in bhajans, padas, folk-tales and folk-songs.”

(Gaijan, 25)

Dalapat Shrimali notes that much of Raidas’s spiritual literature is preserved in Gujarat among Dalits in their oral traditions. Raidas was a disciple of Saint Ramanand, one of the pioneers of the Bhakti movement. Being a social reformer of his times, he was one of the disciples of Ramanuja and the Acharya of Rama Sect. He was known for communicating in vernacular and accepting disciples from all religion and castes including Gujarat. Kanaiyalal M. Munshi notes in this reference,

“He protested against social and religious evils. The Vedas, Brahmans, rituals, inequalities of caste, the grossness if idolatry, and
even Samskrta came in for his iconoclastic zeal. He stood for God, humility, and equality of men. His teaching proved very popular among the lower classes of Hindu and Mussalmans. His principal disciples including Kabira, a spinner, Raidas, a tanner, Sena, a barber, Sadna, a butcher and Naraharidas, a Brahmana. Kabira, a Hindu brought by a Musalman, was catholic in an age of orthodoxy; and his *padas*, songs, appealed equally to both communities. He created a great impression in Gujarat and the *Kabirpanth* gave rise to sects which claimed numerous adherents.”

(Munshi, 20)

This is how Ramananda started creating a revolutionary fervor in Gujarat. Kabir and Raidas and Swami Tejanand from Gujarat were his followers. Cooperatively, they started spreading messages of human equality, brotherhood and compassion without any barrier of caste and creed. Narsinh Mehta was another strong force in medieval period (fifteenth century). Though he belonged to Brahmin by caste, he was the frequent visitor of the areas inhabited by untouchables in order to sing *bhajans* with them. Due to this he was cast out from his caste. But he was never anxious of his being expelled from his society, because he never believed in the division of mankind on the base of difference in the caste. Having lost contact with the member of his caste, he lived a secluded life and thus became a motivational source for the Dalits.

After this development, particularly, in Uttar Pradesh, Raidas‘s followers started the *Adi Hindu Movement* and reversed the Aryan Theory of race and attempted to establish the notion that the Untouchables were civilized and peaceful original inhabitants of the country who were subjugated and enslaved by the Aryan invasion. Swami Achutanand (1879-1933) made Raidas his base and tried to bring various Dalit castes under one roof, under the Adi-Dharma. Later, the *Raidas Katha* was proposed to replace the *Satynarayan Katha* of Brahminical Hinduism as a sign of detachment from the Brahminical traditions. In 1956, when Ambedkar converted to Buddhism by rejecting Hinduism totally, many Dalits all over India followed him, but those Dalits who were connected with different Bhakti sects did not feel any need to convert to the Buddhism. They found many
similarities between Buddhism and the Bhakti sects, particularly in the notion of nirgun tradition; and they were already occupying an anti-Brahminical position in following the Bhakti sects. For example, in Maharashtra, some Dalits who were engaged actively in the Bhakti sect of Raidas were reluctant to join the movement with Ambedkar. The impact of the Bhakti movement was so enormous that it was rather a difficult task to draw the followers of these various Bhakti sects into active social movements.

The influence and impact of the Bhakti movement was apparent on both upper and lower caste spiritual literature. The Bhakti movement gave rise to various spiritual schools and sects. In Gujarat, there were various spiritual schools and sects like Vaisnav, Swaminarayana, Nath Sampradaya, Pranami, Kabirpanth, Shakt Sampradaya, Swadhyay Parivar etc. These sects attempted to oppose Brahmanical values in spiritual activities. Many of these sects attracted people across the caste line. For instance, the originator of the Swaminarayan sect, Swami Sahjanand came to Gujarat along with Ramanandi sadhus (Saintly figures) in 1804. His followers were mostly recruited from the lower castes and his teaching spread the message of equality to destroy the rigidity and domination of the caste system. They became powerful and prestigious at home and attracted a large number of OBC, Dalit and tribal middle-class families to their fold. Hindus of all castes, Muslims and Dalits were allowed into his spiritual activities. Later in 1970s, along with the Swaminarayan Sect, Swadhyay Parivar also flourished. However, due their Western connection, mostly due to the Gujarati diaspora, the Swaminarayan sect became more powerful, even though the other sects also had their share of dominance.

Medieval Gujarati mainstream poets like Narsinh Mehta, Mirabai, Bhan, Gangasati, Premanand, Hariram, Pritamdas, BhojaBhat, Raghunathdas and Dhirabhagat were some of the major bhajan singers and they belonged to the upper caste communities. Many of them were highly influenced by the Bhakti poets and saints of north India. They were also influenced by different sects like Gorakh, Ramanujacharya, Ramanand, Kabir, Nanak, NamDev, Jaydev etc. The upper caste bhajan-singers and their groups perform their activities generally in the chowk of a temple or at the home of a devotee.
The major torchbearers of *Bhakti Movement* in Gujarati Dalit spiritual traditions are Dudo Shah, Ratanbai, Orasiyo Meghval, Tejanand Swami, Trikam Saheb, Bhim Saheb, Dasi Jivan etc. and in the folk traditions are Badmal, Nakar, Devayat, Man Bhatt, Savo, Moti, Alraj and Nathu Barot. These saints and poets provided spiritual poetry to the illiterate masses in the regional as well as in caste dialects. They composed many *bhajans, padas, dohas, rasas, arjas* etc. They also sang with traditional musical instruments like *ektara, tamburo, majira, kartal, tablas, bhungal* etc. However, *Bhajan* was the most preferred form for all the Dalit Bhakti poets.

*Bhajan or pada* (short *bhajan*), a kind of hymn, is a poem meant for worship to almighty. Generally, it deals with themes of devotion, spiritual wisdom, renunciation and dispassion from worldly affairs. The composers of *bhajans* did not care to realize the brilliancy of style and diction, yet their language has realized the touch of the basic truth and beauty. *Bhajan* is not suited to the written form; it is basically an oral form. To write a *bhajan* is considered as a lower kind of activity than singing. The tradition of singing and listening of *bhajans* in Gujarat developed among both upper and lower castes with some linguistic and thematic differences. The singers of different sects and spiritual schools express different content in this devotional form of poetry. The group of singers and music players is generally called *bhajans mandali*. It is believed that till the 17th century, *bhajan*-singing was not a group activity, but later it acquired a form of a collective singing-listening activity with chorus and various musical instruments. Generally, such *bhajan mandalis* perform their traditional singing in the silence of night. *Bhajan mandalis* also visit different places when they are invited to perform. Generally, the *bhajan mandalis* perform on the auspicious occasions, on full moon days, on the event of death rituals etc. The content of their *bhajans or padas* is mostly spiritual but many saint poets also address social issues in their spiritual songs.

In Gujarat, Kabir’s Hindi mixed Gujarati Bhajans are well-known. Though he was not Gujarati Dalit by birth, he had created a profound impact over Gujarati Dalit spiritual poetry. In eighteenth century, In Gujarat, *Ravi Bhan Sect* came into vogue. This spiritual sect revived the principles of Kabir. Bhan Saheb was a Guru and Raviram was an apple of his eye. Both of them were not Dalit by caste, but they made disciples from Dalit caste.
They roamed different parts of Gujarat. This sect remained active till the middle part of the twentieth century. Dasi Jeevan is one the leading Gujarati Dalit saint poets whose *bhajans* are still popular. Most of the Dalit saint poets have composed in Kabir’s style encompassing mystic divinity. To name a few among them are Nathu ram, Lakshami Saheb, Akkal Das, Das Vagho, Karman Bhagat, Balak Saheb, Pitho Bhagat, Arjan Das, Kala Bhagat, Rukhi Ram, Uga Ram, Jetho Kapadi, Tilak Das, Balak Das, Mulji Bhagat, Devayat Pandit, Lakhirama, Deshal Bhagat and Mamma Deva and many more.

**Gujarati Dalit Poetry after Independence:**

Gujarati Dalit poetry fully flowered in post-independence era. But this time this poetry sought a huge diversion: a diversion from its earlier spiritual touch to the expression of social problems. It has been observed that these poets are committed to realism. They write about social matters, they have written about what they actually have known. They have lost an imaginative or creative touch. They have delved deep into the Dalit consciousness. The poems composed by Dalit poets are totally different from those of the non-Dalit writers. Portrayal of ‘self’ was an important element in their poems. They write with a definite rationale which they try to fulfill at any cost.

Gujarati Dalit poetry after independence is seen as protest against the establishment. The poets have been committed to inculcating new values aiming at a new order. There are in it a lot of anger, a lot of frustration and a lot of hopes too. It breathes freedom. Its protagonist is usually projected as a rebel standing against subjugation, humiliation and atrocities and also shown singing the songs of the dawn of a new life. Exploitation, more cultural than social or economic, is manifest in every page of it. It is an untold story of the people who have already remained in the darkness, unheard and unsung with a burden of thousand years’ history on their backs.

Gujarati Dalit poem is distinctive in the sense that it forms its structural pattern out of Dalit sensibility. It is unusual and exceptional in terms of expression and experience. It transfers the themes of isolation, alienation, protest, revolt, struggle for survival, freedom from all sorts of bandage, exploitation, indifference, estrangement and uprootedness, a search for new identity and a longing for human dignity. It is thus poetry of protest.
voicing its opposition to all that is orthodox, traditional and conventional. It addresses itself to its readers in terms of differently molded myths and metaphors.

Gujarati Dalit poets cooperatively worked and collectively became a part of conscious team work. They started projecting their pains, sufferings and agonies. They want to break the strong structure of orthodoxy. They have used poetry as their weapon to be used to fight against their immeasurable miseries. Harish Mangalam says in this regard:

“The feeling of dedication to the society fully flows in the Dalit poetry. The Dalit poets have continuously done the job to split the web which is the hurdle in the social uplift. Racial theme-caste exploitation- in their poems is like a red color in the blood. With the social reality, poet’s self-connection is presented. So to understand and enjoy their poems the social reality of their community plus poet’s financial, cultural and social situation must be known.”

(Mangalam, 142)

The publication of Gujarati Dalit poetry in the early period was through magazines like- Aakrosh (The Anger), Garud (The Eagle), Panther, Kalo Suraj (The Black Sun), Dalit Bandhu, Ajampo (Unrest), Mukti Nayak (The Messiah) and many more. The poets like Dalpat Chauhan, Pravin Gadhvi, Neerav Patel worked hard to enrich Gujarati Dalit poetry at an early stage. They have worked hard to project themselves at state and national level and thus made their sincere efforts to put themselves on the map of mainstream literature.

The first sign of Guajarati Dalit poetry was unfolded in the anthology entitled Dalit Kavita edited by Ganpat Parmar and Manishi Jani in 1981. Many more anthologies followed. Many Dalit poets have published their own poems then like Visfota (The Explosion) edited by Chandu Maheriya and Balakrishna Anand in 1982, Asmita (Identity) edited by Chandu Maheriya in 1983, Sankalan Geet (Collected Songs) in 1986, Eklavya no Angutho (The Thumb of Eklavya) edited by Nilesh Kathad in 1987, Manas (Human Being) in 1992, Dundumbhi (The Big Drum) edited by the trio- Dalpat Chauhan, Harish Mangalam and Pravin Gadhavi in 2001. These anthologies are filled with the unique
expression of their life-experiences and social evils that they have suffered since time immemorial. The widespread Hindu social structure was mainly targeted. Not only their anthologies were enthusiastically received but also critically appreciated by a number of poets, who further made readers familiar with anthologies through their writing. The Dalit poets thus channelized their anger against orthodox prejudices and discriminating religious ideologies of upper caste Hindus. This has been combined with a sincere attempt to create a just and humane society by reaching down to the last man of the society and awaken them to their rights, self-respect and human dignity. These poets are proud of the fact that Dalit writers have carved out a path for themselves without resorting to imitation.

Pravin Gadhvi is one of the most prolific poets in Gujarati Dalit literature. His voice of Dalit protest emerged onto the Gujarati Dalit literary scene in the mid 1980s. He is a potent voice of Dalit protest who depicts the tough life of Dalits. His vitality and vivacity of expression is so sublime and exquisite that he deserves to be ranked among the radical voices of protest in Gujarat. His collections of poetry are Bayonet (1985), Padchhayo (1996), and Tunir (2002), The Voice of the Last (2008). These volumes are available into English translation. Pain, anguish, utter poverty, deprivation, starvation, loneliness, hellish life of man, woman, children and almost all marginalized sections of the society have been captured in the poetry of Gadhvi. His poetry speaks for Dalits and is addressed to the Dalits, so it is down-to-earth and realistic. His love for the downtrodden and the people living beside dung heap and hell remain running undercurrent. In one of the poems titled I am the History of the Nation, he says the Dalits must not be segregated as they are also a part and parcel in making the history of the nation:

“There are prints of my steps on every stream of this nation
There is fossil of mine under every rock of this nation
The unreadable script of Mohen-jo-daro throbs in my blood,
You cannot bury me as an untouchable.”

(Gadhvi, 13)

The lines quoted above represent a section of Indian society that has been differentiated on the name of caste. The poet says that it is that section of the society which is a class of
toiling people, working hard to make the lives of the people easy and comfortable. Cleaning the filth and dirt with their own hands, they themselves have been treated for centuries as filth and dirt. The Sanatan stream of Indian society has kept them at the lowest step of Varna hierarchy, maintaining an unbridgeable gap between them and the rest of the society. They have to serve the higher ups in the Varna system, bearing all sorts of insult and hatred. The poet also represents the plight of the Dalits in one of his short poems:

“I was born on the earth
thinking it heaven,
but what did I see on the earth?
Fiery flames of wars
fathomless oceans of blood,
sky-high screams of atrocities on the downtrodden,
endless deserts of starvation
inexhaustible streams of hot tears…
seeing all this I am forced to be a poet.”

(Gadhvi, 53)

The poem is so straightforward that it does not need more explanation. The earth of the poet’s vision must be a place of heaven is nothing but full of atrocities, starvation, violence and miseries. For this reason, he plans to raise his voice on the behalf of the downtrodden section of the society. The poet thinks that he should take initiative to remove the turmoil faced by his fellow beings with the help of his poetic art. He thinks it to be his duty to show his protest and demand for the paradise which has been snatched from their hands by high caste people. In this reference the poet declares this earth as a meaningless revolving planet:

“For one who has a house for shelter,
the earth seems home.
For one who has a slice of bread,
the earth seems sweet.
For one who has a shawl to wrap,
the earth seems warm,
For one who has a sweetheart in embrace,
the earth seems charming.
For one who has a glass of wine to drink,
the earth seems like a dream.
For one who has none of these,
the earth is only a meaningless revolving planet.”

(Gadhvi, 47)

In both these little poems, one will find the poet protesting against injustice and inhuman treatment meted out to the Dalits by high caste people. He raises voice against the small things that are the signs of living not made available to each man inhabiting the Earth, the planet for our common inheritance. The main question the poet has in his mind that why man belonging to particular caste is denied the means of living? Who deprives him of these little things that make up ‘life”? The protesting poet turns to awakening those that are still snoring:

“It is indeed very difficult to wait for sunrise.
When there is deep darkness in the forests,
and the whole sky is cloudy,
one has to climb the mountain alone.
One has to awaken the sea sleeping after
a heavy drink in the cloudy night.
One has to shake the sleeping trees.
One has to kindle the birds in every nest.
One has to fondle the flowers of bloom.
Then there will be some light.
The stars like armed guards will become visible
One has to imbibe the suffering of the birth of the sun.

The birth of the sun is not so easy to enlighten the whole universe.
One has to speak few words to the tormented mother earth.
One has to endure.
It is very difficult to wait for sunrise.”

(Gadhvi, 26)

The poet in the above mentioned poem is absolutely right: the Sun that can illuminate the entire universe is not an easy thing when there is too much darkness. But the metaphorical message the poet intends to give to the Dalits is very clear. To dispel the ignorance, all oppressed are required to get awakened and chant the Ambedkarite slogan: educate, agitate and organize, only ‘then there will be some light’. The prosperity and peace is not an easy task: all Dalits are required to work for it. They need to get united to enlighten their lives. It is also being concluded that only the Dalits can unshackle their brethren from the clutches of the upper and ruling classes. For this they must first understand the historical and cultural background of the underdogs and underprivileged masses. All favorable historical records and literary evidences have failed to attract the attention of the chroniclers. For this reason, the disadvantaged were condemned to endure the life of slavery and serfdom in a state of utter negligence. They were denied the dignity which a human-being deserves as being a part of human-community in general. This became a big challenge for the Dalit intellectuals as they could not think deeply but could also translate the pain of downtroddenness into words. This is what this poet wants his fellow human beings to do: “One has to speak few words to the tormented mother earth.” He wishes from his brethren to pen down their pain which aroused from such discriminating social handling and appealed to their brothers not to take things lying down, the way their forefathers have done. In fact, he wants them to transfer their thoughts into a concrete shape who should explode the neglected aspects of life. He is of the view that apart from the political leaders and social stalwarts, men of letters should start realizing the concept of Dalitism which implies the harsh circumstances of suppression on all fronts, i.e. political, social, cultural, religious, literary and economic.

In another poem titled Brainwash, Gadhvi goes on criticizing Manusmriti bitterly which has divided man from man on the basis of caste:

“Please give me a cake of detergent.
I want to wash each cell of his brain.
I want to remove thoroughly the rust from his consciousness
Deposited since centuries.
This is his center of hearing.
Along with the hymns of Vedas,
Meters of Valmiki,
Verses of Upanishadas,
The stanzas of Manusmriti are also taped here.
Dear Bhudev, you are allowed to chant Upanishadas on the bank of
the Ganges in the early morning,
But, there is no need of venomous curses of Manusmriti,
This is centre of vision which gave me Black identity since
centuries.
...
I want to wash each and every cell of your brain thoroughly.
Dear Bhudev
Even if curd remains unattended for a long time, it rots, it stinks.
Your brain is as it is since Vedic times.
See it has rotted. It is dirty. It is foul odoured.”

(Gadhvi, 39)

Here the persona of the poem openly revolts against the authority of Brahmins who according to him are responsible for their exploitation. He believes that it is because of caste system Brahmins are considered to be superior and Shudras as the inferior of all. Because of the Varna System the Brahmins are worshipped and reverend. The Dalits consider the Brahmins as the root cause of their suffering. The persona in the poem is so much frustrated against the dominating caste that he desires to wash off the age old conventions prevailing in the mind of people belonging to upper caste. The anger among the Dalits and the sense of revolt is observed at the end of this poem.

The poet’s bitterness in this poem is quite understandable. This poem is unique in the sense that it is poetry of protest, voicing its opposition to all that is orthodox, traditional and conventional. Hindu scriptures and social structure prevent the Dalits from receiving education, training and knowledge. The poet is aware of the division of the Hindus into
two main groups, the *Dvija* i.e. twice born and the *Advijas* or *non-dvijas* that is, one time-born is man-made and unnatural. Division of the *Dvijas* is into three groups, namely the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas who are supposed to be high caste Hindus. In addition to that, Brahmins were conferred the sole right not only to govern the Hindu people but even gods. In Sanskrit, there is appropriate hymn which describes as to how Brahmins controlled and dominated the gods.

The *Manusmriti* therefore asks Hinduism and Hindu kings to maintain *Dharma* and that *Dharma* means caste system in which Shudras are not allowed to get education and rise to the status of gaining human dignity and honor. This has therefore created a ‘Dark Age’ of thousands of years for Dalits in the past even though there was no race other than the upper caste Hindus. Because of this inhuman treatment meted out to them, Gadhvi showers curses on *Manusmriti*. Even in another poem titled *Awakening*, Gadhvi expresses his anger for the composer of *Manusmriti*:

> “Let us incinerate with petrol, 
> The corpses of several Manus, 
> Who sealed our ears with lead, 
> Sowed seeds of venom betwixt men.”

(Gadhvi, 31)

The same feeling with same intensity of shame, pity, anger and disgust has been highlighted in his another poem *Don’t Enter the Temple*. The poet is seen abusing temples and comparing them with slaughterhouses because their ancestors have sacrificed their lives for the service and safety of the temples but even then they are not allowed to take entry into those temples and thus their sacrifices prove to be meaningless:

> “They have covered the bloodstained walls with sheets of gold 
> They have made the golden peaks of the temple touch the sky, 
> The corpses of our ancestors are buried under the pillars of 
> That temple, they groan, 
> Stop, 
> Don’t step into that slaughterhouse.”
The above mentioned poem is replete with bitterness suffered by the Dalits for more than three millennia. The prevailing social order seems to have crushed these people to an extent beyond repair. The poet here brings the very feeling of dejection that these people suffered from when they were denied their fair share of social justice and human rights. They have been projected in a very derogatory manner. It is because their culture, history and all those essential ingredients which give them existence have been buried under the edifice of Aryan history and culture. Perhaps the poet may have some questions haunting in his mind: if we all are the children of the same God, then why are we subject to discrimination on the basis of certain man-made rules? Why is it that the Dalit people are branded as untouchables if they really belong to the same culture? Why is it that they are not allowed into the temples for worship if they belonged to the same religion? Does it not hurt deep-down-inside somewhere? If we are people belonging to one nation, one culture, one religion, one political system, then why are some denied their share of self-respect? We have umpteen number of such sufferers. Let’s take yet another noteworthy example of his poem We are Black, You are White in which a pitiful condition of these poor and downtrodden has been depicted by him:

“We suffered the pains of the earth
We were open to the sky,
You were in the graves
So that we are black and you are white.”

The state of affairs of these dejected people has not changed in this digital age. They are being deprived of their right to live like the common citizens of India. They have to work in scorching heat under sun and bear all hardships. So their skin becomes black. These are the days when unemployment has been one of the biggest problems and challenges these downtrodden people are facing. The laborers who are brought from villages to lay roads and railway tracks are later used for menial jobs. Even in this digital age, the manual scavengers have been integrated into the sewage and cleaning departments of most municipalities in Gujarat. They still form a recognizable part of every urban space
and still live in confined urban areas. They are out of sight and out of mind of most Indians. The lives of these people are more miserable than we can imagine them to be. The words used by Gadhvi in above mentioned lines reflect deep inner pain in the face of poverty, destitution and the humiliation his people suffer from. Their destitute condition is revealed in his following poem titled *Barter System*:

“She had no village,
She had no religion,
She had no language,
She had no dignity,
She had no modesty,
She was guilty
Because she was untouchable by birth.”

(Gadhvi, 33)

It is said that Dalits are legs of Lord Brahma and they have been walking since time immemorial but they have no dignity and respect. They are feeling like orphans in their own land. Meaning thereby is that they are often considered merely a non-entity in the total framework of society. They are fed up of the disgrace inflicted on them. They have suffered social as well as religious maltreatment. The following poem titled *Let Me be a Human Being Only* throws light on his perception of caste and untouchability:

“He asked my caste
I was hurt
He asked my sub-caste,
I was offended
He asked my inner sub-caste,
I was disgusted.”

(Gadhvi, 41)

Dalits are at the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy based on ritual purity and occupation. They have been oppressed throughout the record history of India, relegated to doing toiling and polluting tasks like agricultural labor, disposing dead bodies, working with
leather, cleaning toilets and sewages, etc. their work is for maintaining the purity of the upper caste Hindus and they themselves become impure in the process. This society depends on them for their survival but does not wish to be reminded of them. They have been stripped off their dignity and denied to human rights. They are untouchables- so much so that others would get polluted not only by their touch but also by their shadows. And to avoid this they have been segregated and denied access to community facilities like school, temple, water etc. Centuries of such oppression resulted in severe poverty and its associated problems among the Dalits. Their marginalization is indescribable. For this reason, the poet in the above mentioned lines feels hurt when somebody asks him the details of his caste. Once again, he cries out in one of his poems *My Shadow*:

“O, woodcutter
    cut my shadow.
I may be a Hindu,
I may be a Buddhist,
I may be a Muslim,
Nevertheless,
I am not able to cut my shadow.

Now there is no spitting goblet hanging round my neck ,
Now there is no broom on my back.
However,
I am not able to leave my shadow.
I may change my name,
I may change my work,
I may change my place,
I may change my caste,
This shadow does not leave me alone.

I may change my language,
I may change my dress,
I may change my history,
This shadow does not disintegrate,
I may write smriti,
I may write the constitution,
I may enact laws,
I may be in reserved category.
Whatever the circumstances,
I am not able to erase this shadow”

(Gadhvi, 38)

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 technical advancement. 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 label of Dalit continues to chase him/her. Among Hindus, he or she 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. In his another poem, *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?”

(Gadhvi, 37)

Dirty game of politics in which marginalized are further oppressed has been criticized by the poet. He is against the discrimination based on caste, religion, *varna*. His poetry is
engaged in carrying out two main functions: ‘demolition’ and ‘reconstruction’. On the one hand, it is keen to destroy what is considered as deadwood, the decaying components of the existing social and cultural order; on the other hand, it is anxious to transform the social reality in the direction of total freedom, equality and human dignity. His revolutionary vision is expressed by him in his poem *Awakening* as following:

“Let us awaken friends!
Take the earth by storm, wipe out from its face
Temples untouchable…
Let us drench the soil in red,
With the blod of Huns-
Who swooped down from mid-Asia
Onto our fertile land, green…”

(Gadhvi, 31)

This poem is seen as a product of this new consciousness. It presages a new caste system, overthrowing the dominance of the so-called middle-class conventional norms and standards. These poems composed by Pravin Gadhvi expose the foibles and prejudices of the high caste society towards the Dalits. They instill in them a new consciousness and prepare them for a change of heart. Examining in general, Gujarati Dalit poetry has shouldered an immense responsibility. It is not a pleasure giving literature of fine sentiments in the normal sense. It is a purposive, revolutionary, transformational and laboratory literature.

Neerav Patel is also one of the pioneering figures in the Gujarati Dalit literary arena. His advent at the literary scenario changed the very face of Gujarati Dalit poetry by filling it with a note of revolt against the existing socio-cultural and economic order of the society. His poetry attacks the rampant social evils like injustice, atrocities, inequality, poverty, violation of human rights etc. and presents the pitiable plights of the downtrodden section of the society. His poetry is also an enlightening discourse for the Dalits of all hues. It is a discourse of revival and awakening. In his poem *It would have been better if I were Illiterate*, he depicts a miserable life of his fellow beings. He is of the view that though half of the century has passed since India became independent; Dalits have seen no
significant changes in their lives. It means to say that though several amendments are made to uplift the downtrodden section of our society, there have been no changes in their lives. There has been a widespread feeling among the Dalits that all institutions ultimately do nothing concrete for these poor people. It is for this reason that they have lost respect and faith in such reformers and institutes. There are several evidences in the history of human kind that whenever they dared to quench their thirst from the common pond, they have met with severe tragic ends. For this reason, whenever the poet sees the pot full of water, he does not feel quenching his thirst. Contrary to this, he is full of detestation. Quoting lines from his poem *Curse of Literacy*:

“While controlling thirst  
Watching the water pot at the outskirt of the village  
The first thought that I had  
Was to raise one leg like a dog and piss in it.

(Patel, 69)

The lines cited above show the innermost wrath of the poet. Further in another poem, the poet says that discrimination is practiced not only with Dalit fellows, but with their animals also. If they breed animals like dog, then those creatures also become untouchable. The poet does not forget to satirize this tendency of the *Savarnas* for not allowing these downtrodden people to show their talent. Neerav Patel satirizes this tendency in his satirical poem titled *Kaliya* in which one can see the denial of right of raising voice to the oppressed. The poem is all about a Dalit dog Kaliya who kills Moti, a pet dog of high caste and the humiliation and inhuman treatment given to the dog belonging to the Dalit in the form of reaction shown by the society. There is a satirical beginning in the poem: “Poor Kaliya how would he know we cannot become bold.” The entire village has gathered around the dead body of Moti and there follows a prolonged discussion on this matter. The remarks given by the village people in the discussion show their typical mindset. One of them says bitterly: “Come one and all. See even dogs have become bold.” Here the word ‘Even’ shows the effect of discrimination they observe with the downtrodden section of the society. If these people do not allow the poor to raise their voice, then how would they allow their animals to do any harm to their pet animals? That
is why all these village people ran after Kaliya with spears and sticks in their hand but could not catch it. They still had fire in their hearts burning for taking revenge. Now when they could not grab hold of Kaliya, they started thrashing trees, the Dalit Goddess and abusing them who ultimately had to go for seeking their forgiveness by folding their hands. The poet describes this scene in the following lines:

“Kanba and Koli, Bha and Bapu,
The spears and barchhi, danti and stick,
And there was whole army and the battle.

... 
The sticks fell on the roof
The neem tree and the peepal tree were thrashed
Thrashed the temple of shikotri!, broke the pot of ancestors,
Thrashed Methli and thrashed Mandi
Thrashed Dhuliya and thrashed Parma.
Please, stop, please forgive us, fathers,
Kaliya is only an animal
While you are the human-gods.
How would poor Kaliya know that
We should not show our strength.”

(Patel, 62)

This poem in a truer sense depicts through a sharp contrast the freedom enjoyed by the Savarnas and the eternal bondage of the Dalits. The high caste people are hunters and the Dalits are their preys. The predator can move in the endless directions, whereas the prey seems to be eternally damned and grounded in a way that makes it impossible for any change to his deplorable and static life in death or rebirth. Human suffering is one of the central ideas in Gujarati Dalit poetry revolves around as suffering is accompanying with the Dalit life since ages. Suffering created by Nature is incurable. But the suffering created to human beings by fellow human beings is the most tragic aspect of human life. One crucial aspect of human existence is that man-created agony is far more strong and hurting than the suffering caused by nature. Sometimes human beings feel outraged and
think that when they will learn to live the way human beings should live. One can pity the ignorance and short-sightedness which govern the life of man—the noblest creature on the earth.

Human history is a record of suffering and unspeakable violence caused by man to his fellow human beings. In the ancient times, the kings fought wars to expand territories of their kingdoms and the innocent people suffered on both the sides. In the medieval period, exploitation of the peasants in the hands of feudal lords continued without any sense of remorse on the part of oppressors. Modern history has also produced power-hungry people like Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and so many dominating figures of totalitarianism who have been bent upon ruining humanity by bringing large scale destruction. How can we forget the killing of millions of Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War? Can we justify the violence which continuously threatens the very existence of mankind on this planet? In this reference, we are reminded of the initial poetic lines of W.B. Yeats’ magnum opus creation The Second Coming:

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”

(Yeats, 170)

It appears that we have accepted violence as a part of our life. Where there is violence there is suffering and this violence in our times springs from so many sources. Mostly, this violence emerges from divisive forces and imperialistic mindset. Social inequalities on the basis of caste, class, race and gender too breed violence, and this violence is completely a man-made phenomenon. This vicious circle of violence goes on endlessly engulfing the life of innocent people. In India more than one-sixth of its population continues to suffer neglect and humiliation simply because they are born in depressed class or Dalit caste. Historically, Dalits were outside the hierarchical Hindu system, more specifically they were ‘outcastes’. Thus they were excluded from the participation in the social, economical, cultural, intellectual and political life. This caused the Dalits to live in utter poverty, life full of superstition and at the mercy of the upper caste. They did not
have their own identity nor do they possess any self-esteem. They were denied education and kept away from the process of development in all walks of life. The suffering they undergo is man-made and hence more painful and unfortunate. Today we live in an age of science and technology and we talk of the ideals like free society, welfare state, egalitarianism, socialism, freedom, prosperity and equal opportunities for all. But can we envision an egalitarian society as long as there is an existence of ill-treatment and suppression of one class by the other on the name of caste or creed? For Dr. Ambedkar, caste is the monster which crosses our path wherever we go to. In *Annihilation of Caste*, he puts forward his argument in the following way:

“This is only another way of saying that, turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster”

(Ambedkar, 31)

The suffering undergone by this depressed class went unnoticed by the mainstream literature in Gujarat until 1970s and 80s as the literary artists hardly captured the indignities and inhumanity suffered by the Dalits. The mainstream writers would have tried to depict the suffering of this unhappy lot, but they could not have been able to capture the anguish born out of the unjust social order based on caste inequalities. But a panel of Dalit poets during this period took a pen in their hands and started creating revolutionary fervor against these unjust practices. Neerav Patel expresses his wrath for this in his poem *This Tradition* in the following words:

“This tradition
Sets fire
To the suppressed unrest within me
To form an army of common men
Pleads, for good
The last riot for communal harmony
Against ‘the army of serenity’ for ‘law’ and ‘order’.”
In another 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!”

Neerav Patel’s poetry does not accept the *Varna System* 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.”

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 the just
society is possible only when the upper caste people will change their psyche. His 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 is a committed poet. He uses a powerful and pungent language of resistance. Anger, pathos and irony are the largely used devices. It has explicit and serious messages to give to the readers. It does not design to bridle the readers and the audience to concede to what pre-exists. It just wants to stimulate his brethren to transform the society. In one of his long poems, He proclaims the revolution:

“You all forgot
That only yesterday you were all having a spittoon
tied at your neck
and broom lied at your back?
Forgot you were all eating carrion-
and now you have become lions?
Forgot you were holding the horns
and you were holding the legs
and we were dragging the carcass
and enjoying the feast?

Those were our bad days.
Someone took a spade
and someone took an axe
and someone took a spinning rod
and someone took a broom.

You forgot how we were harassed those days?
and even today we are insulted equally bad.
We are still for them
Children of devdasis- children of the temple prostitutes.
…
How shall tell you
You are all born to my womb –
all real brothers
Forgot so quickly
Your Baba’s Advice?
Educate, organize and agitate?
They will send you in jungle once again.
Read your Baba’s will again.”

(Patel, 16)

The poem is quite a long one which has a different way of lodging protest. Here the protest is not to provoke and incite but to persuade and empathize. The poet remembers the sad part of their history. The bitter conditions under which the Dalits lived are brought to the light to his fellow beings. Some with their unclean traditional occupations like tanning, sweeping, scavenging, carrying dead animals, burning dead bodies in the cremation ground. The central message is given in the last part of the poem. ‘Baba’ here is none else but Dr. Ambedkar, and his children are none else but all Dalits. The poet asks all the Dalits to unite and treat one another as their brothers. Their emancipation is collective and not individual. The poet is of the view that the fraternity among them and solidarity are the only weapons against the oppressors. The prime goal of the 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. So that Dalits will establish themselves as a respectable citizen of this country. So that Dalits can become equal to everyone else.

It is one of the ugliest realities of Indian society that Dalits have been discriminated against socially, economically and politically though Indian society has been one of the largest democratic ones in the world. With the onset of freedom struggle movement, many great leaders and reformers drew attention of the people to this bitter reality of Indian society. With their efforts and with the awakening of Dr. Ambedkar on the political scene, there came a tremendous awakening among the Dalits regarding their miserable condition and their human rights. During the past two-three decades we have been confronted with so many Dalit writers in Gujarat creating a revolutionary fervor
among their brethren. Poetry is one the dominating genres these writers adopted as their medium to express their sensibilities. They effectively deal with the trauma of caste atrocities and its aftermath. The mode of realism adopted by these poets will be successful in challenging the narrative strategies of mainstream writer. The colonial mindset of the mainstream tradition is that all valid works are free of any conflicts, contradictions and prejudices. Here the ‘self’ (of the writer, of the writer’s culture) has the power to define the ‘other’. For them reality has been anti-human or anti-aesthetic. They consider the Dalit poetry full of contradictions, conflicts and prejudices. The Dalit poets’ narrative strategy is an outcome of hatred by upper caste people. One can see new language, new experiences, new sources of poetic inspiration, and new entrants in a field previously dominated by high caste. In their poetry they have shown how divided their society is along the fault line of the caste presenting the reality of caste-based hierarchical injustice. They are also busy in thinking how to rectify all this through poetic expression. 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 Untouchable Dalpat Chauhan talks about the angst of an untouchable who wants to be an educated human being:

“The first day in school,
the doom’s day.
With trembling hand I did not write
One, two, three…
I wrote
On the fireland of burning desert,
My chest,
My caste.

Since then
‘I am untouchable, untouchable, you cannot touch me’,
Echoed in every atom of my existence.
It was an introduction to pain caused by hundred scorpion bites.”

(Chauhan, 41)
The Dalits are supposed to live a miserable life. They cannot mingle with others, cannot enjoy a normal life as others are living. Such kind of bitter truths of life were taught to the poet when he entered the school. He feels humiliated when he was introduced this and thus feels his first day of school as a ‘doom’s day’. The pain he feels is indescribable and thus is compared with the pain “caused by hundred scorpion bites.” He cannot understand that why he has been discriminated with others. On what part of body has it been written that he is untouchable? Such kinds of questions have been raised by him at the end of the poem which show a deep cry felt by the poet:

“O god of hate
I search till day
On what part of my body
Are written the riches of untouchability?
That’s why, o giver of name untouchable,
I ask you
Where is the name that you gave me
Which has tortured me all my life?”

(Chauhan, 41)

The poem reveals the evils of caste system according to which Brahmins are placed higher and others are given lower status. It leads to social discrimination. The poet urges the Almighty to give his people equal status and individual dignity in their society. The source of all discrimination and exploitation of whole community of Dalits is the caste system. The Dalit poets like Dalpat Chauhan do not believe in religion. They reject the hegemony of religion. They want to destroy religion. They are in favor of secular society. According to them, religious deities lead to class wars, caste wars, communal wars, party wars and crusades. For this reason Dalpat Chauhan criticizes Hindu religious deities in his poem *The Others*:

“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.”

(Chauhan, 201)

Dalpat Chauhan wants a society in which there will be no place for religion. He knows that the Dalits have suffered and are suffering a lot in the name of religion. They are treated as loathsome. So he asks his men to destroy all religions, their preachers and their holy books which fill people with contempt for other religion and create havoc in the lives of people. He believes 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 been actually materialized. There has been 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, casteists and traditionalists. They patronizingly advise the poor Dalits to be better citizens. In his poem 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.”

(Chauhan, 7)

Dalpat Chauhan has a vision for the society which would not discriminate man on the basis of his caste and birth. He discards the ideology in which man is branded with caste. He never wants to let the people of his caste forget the atrocities and suffering inflicted upon them. He reminds them their brutal condition in his poem *No Grave* in the following way:

“Like a hawk I encircle the skies:
Where, where am I?
Do you chance to know?
But:
Pale naked children playing;
Both mine hands, left and right
Grapple with many others
To grab at a rotten chiku
Fallen from a wheel-barrow
Passing through the tar-black street.

This is why I am powerless
My own grave I fail to build.”

(Chauhan, 22)

When a fruit falls from ongoing vehicle, there happens a competition among the Dalit children to catch it. The poet points out the destitute condition under which they have lived and still are living. The poet is conscious of his commitment as a poet and therefore
through his poems he wants to make his people aware of their social and cultural status and their pitiable plight in this unjust social order. One more example of their pitiable picture is drawn by him in the poem titled *A Ray of Hope*:

“Into the world when I stepped;  
I realized I had no shadow.  
I perspire just as you do.  
In our perspiration lies their interest.  
...  
Go dig - go pick – go beg:  
Words they have spelt.  
Triumphant they have emerged.  
...  
Ransacked in an earthen bowl is my hunger.  
They dine in vessels carved in Iran.”

(Chauhan, 24)

Here the picture of two lives has been drawn. One is a ruling class, ‘triumphant’, which is dominating over the less privileged. The less privileged are powerless dominated by powerful men. It is apparent from the above lines that Dalpat Chauhan favors socialism and maintains that the real struggle is not amongst the castes rather it is between the two classes i.e. the rich and the poor which at certain times becomes apparent in the form of caste struggle. On the one side, there is a class of people who possesses everything and does not know the meaning of deprivation while on the other hand; there is yet another class which is deprived of even the ample resources to carry on the strings of life. Another such contradictory picture has been drawn by Sahil Parmar in one of his poems *India is my Country*:

“When on Janmashtami  
You left in your car with your family  
Busy I was mending my daughter’s torn frock.  
Ever since she has come of age  
Full five fairs have come and gone.”
I have not brought her
A toy car that can be wound.
A stone came flying
From your terrace one day
During the reservation riots.
And hit me hard on the temple
Instantly drawing blood.
A flaming torch followed
And reduced my house to ashes.”

(Parmar, 50)

The image of four-wheeler ‘car’ and a ‘toy car’ shows difference between the riches enjoyed by high caste people and poverty endured by the low caste people. A poor father is not in condition to take his daughter to the fair and bring her a toy car, while rich people enjoying all whatever is offered by the Omnipotent God. In addition to this, Sahil Parmar reminds us of one of the historical incidences: Anti-reservation stir. Several Dalits were brutally treated during those riots. The poet in the above mentioned poem expresses the painful condition of the deprived ones. For this reason only he becomes furious and wants to create upheaval in the society. He tries to create feeling of revolt among his comrades and persuades them to start writing and make others aware of their situation in the following poem by him titled Equal Enjoyment:

“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.”

(Parmar, 5)
The poem reveals a sense of rebellion created among the young generation. They are not prepared to bear any injustice as has been tolerated by their forefathers. They are not ones who will carry forward hereditary business; instead they will create awareness among them through writing. For them writing will be their weapons with the help of that they will destroy the existing evils.

A note of protest against the contemporary order is also quite apparent in the poetry of Shamat Parmar. Injustice done and atrocities committed against Dalits filled his heart with pain and agony for the sufferer. Gradually the accumulation of these feelings turned into a protest. Though the whole Gujarati Dalit poetry is full of the note of protest, Shamat Parmar is known for the use of strong tone and harsh and sardonic language which indicates the depth of anguish filled in his heart. In one of his poems *Self-Pride*, he has attacked all high caste people:

“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,
Frightened them in the name of religion
Feeding on delicious food at ceremonies
On good and bad occasions.

If God…
Had made me a Vaishya
(According to the Varnashrama)
I would be making profit
By dishonesty and hoarding
By creating artificial shortage
And intellectual theft.
By distributing I would gain
By selling I would gain
(the partition of India)

If God…
Had made me a Kshatriya
(According to the Varnashrama)
The king of a small kingdom would I be
Enjoying wine and women.
And looted eighteen times
The temple of Somnath.
Armed fully with weapons
Failed to protect this nation
I would have watched it
Becoming a slave.

Thank…God…
That He made me a Shudra
And liberated me from all these sins.

That is why I am proud of myself…”

(Parmar, 58)

The poet has called all high caste people as dissolute, immoral, dishonest, corrupt and devoid of any values. This is the new consciousness and new spirit. The new generation of the Dalits questions those who say their identities are better than that of Dalits’. Why should they be considered superior to Dalits who are hardworking, honest, living on their own labor, believers in human dignity and human fraternity? The same bold voice is also heard in another poem titled The Volcano:

“\text{Yes, now you stop your claim to be human being,}
Stone is in everyone’s hand, neither Geeta nor Quran?”
As many religions different, Gods different too,
So a man is different from his fellow being.”

(Parmar, 85)

The poet in this poem is found rebuking everyone including God also for their indifference. The poet is also satirizing the hypocritical nature of human beings. They, according to him, are not holding religious scriptures in their hands but stones. Had they lived Geeta or Quran practically in their lives, they would have been generous human beings having sympathy and humanity in them.

Harish Mangalam has contributed to give a voice to the silent sufferers in the society. The publication of his anthologies gave a new direction to the Gujarati Dalit poetry. Its revolutionary form and fiery presentation are unique in themselves. The portrayal of people, leading a hellish life like those of worms in the utter darkness is thought-provoking and compels the reader to think about the injustice done to this marginalized section of the society. He is aware that his community is yet not respected by the caste Hindus. He is also aware that although because of his higher education and ability he has earned a place in the larger society; his less privileged brethren in villages do not have opportunity for education and economic progress. Hence, he has poetry as a weapon to fight, as an action to achieve certain objectives. However, his objective is to raise Dalit consciousness in the minds of the readers. In his poetry, he makes his sincere efforts to promote humanitarian values in the Savarnas for the Dalits. Harish Mangalam is trying to create a sense of self-respect among the Dalits in his poem Prakamp (The Tremendous Tremor):

“'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? (Mangalam, 1)

In his another poem *Will it be Replaced?*, he asks all his brethren to look back in their past and rebukes for bearing the miserable life still today. This is how he rebukes:

“Come, Let us bury ‘the corpse of the freezing processes; Before it buries Me-you-us. The feeling of co-existence Has stiffened in the joint-family net. … From centuries it has been pining and will continue to pine. But will our blood ever be replaced?” (Mangalam, 19)

The same anger is reflected in his poem titled *I will Hang Him*:

“Someone please bring down the scorching sun From the top of the coconut –palm-lush gree. Burning it is from years. My green, green oceanic blood; My green, green grass keeps boiling. Immunity it has developed against Injections of consolations. … Here or there
coming or going
if I happen to meet God,
I will perhaps in a similar fashion,
Hang him before the sun.”

(Mangalam, 17)

So the revolt is there but it is not only against the supremacy of Brahmins in Indian Hindu society, but it is also against God. The Dalits have been bearing all kinds of miseries since time immemorial due to caste order. The ‘sun’ seems to be scorching to the downtrodden people. Due to this anarchy, the Dalits have been the victim of abject penury, unrequited labor, starvation, deprivation, humiliation, desperation, helplessness, sexual exploitation and so on. All these vices have become synonymous with the status of Dalits. For this reason, the poet becomes vehement to the ‘Creator’ of this segregated earth. So the revolt is reflected in the poetry of Harish Mangalam. It is the revolt against domination. The motto of this uprising is to bring a social order in which all classes and castes will work together in cohesion to destroy the rungs of the ladder and create a new world. The feeling of revolt can also be seen in the poetry of Kisan Sosa. In his poem titled *The Inheritance*, he talks of the wretched and dismal life the Dalits have inherited. He says this in the following words:

“The stale old air we have inherited
The helpless prayer, we have inherited.
As a ceiling we got rusted tin
The wall of fear we have inherited.
The back got the dried river of sweat
And the eyes had inherited the empty well.
The thirst in the corridor and in the house hunger
The mind had inherited the desire for a silent cry.
Where the self-esteem is wounded and screams,
Lying in a bleeding corner, we have inherited.
Wherein so many snakes move and move
that black box, we have inherited.
Come on, let us turn into a sun and set a fire
The night that is nightmare, we have inherited.”

(Sosa, 75)

The feelings of deep agony and pain are reflected in this poem. The poet notes that the Dalits have inherited nothing except anguished life. Their gloomy life is projected in the phrases like ‘stale old air’, ‘rusted tin’, ‘wall of fear’, ‘dried river of sweat’, ‘empty well’, ‘in the house hunger’, ‘a silent cry’, ‘a bleeding corner’, ‘nightmare’. The Dalits have not gained fresh air to breathe, a clean house to live in, and enough food to eat. They are deprived of the basic essentialities of life- roti, kapda aur Makan (food, clothes, shelter). In addition to this, they are also not given due place in the society. They have continued to remain neglected and ostracized in the Hindu society. The ancient Hindu scriptures have imposed a series of social, political, economic and religious restrictions of the lower classes, making them completely dependent on those above them. They have been relegated to menial occupations, forced to live outside the village. They have lived a life full of physical filth, insults, social anguish. The poet expresses their physical condition in the line: ‘The back got the dried river of sweat’. Kisan Sosa, being a champion of the downtrodden mass, is not in a position to let them continue living in such pathetic condition. He is impassionate to take revenge which can be seen in his following lines of his poem You Too:

“We have driven the chariot on this earth with equal grace
It’s different that my head is bare without umbrella.
You wear a peacock crown hiding your bald head here.
Here a totally innocent understanding has crossed the sea.
I will burn here and there you too will turn into ashes
You have awakened me with a flame, I, who is unflammable.”

(Sosa, 77)

It does not require much intelligence to feel the pulse of the Dalits’ problems. That humiliation and sense of nothingness which is associated with the status of the deprived people is a chief characteristic of the Gujarati Dalit poetry. The poets cannot forget how they have to keep on standing with folded hands in front of their masters and their
begging. The pages of their poetry are filled with their servile and slavish condition. One another prominent Dalit voice, Raju Solanki highlights this image through following lines of his poem titled *To Walk on the Feet Mattered Most*:

“
You came, conquered and enslaved us.  
Can history be so simple?  
You might have come on horses and fought with iron  
Was every epoch of progress full of pain?  
Let us ask  
Unknown frightening past  
Whose present is as frightening, too,  
Was slavery of man by man predestined?  
We too had danced with zest,  
Worshipped, Shivlinga, mysterious and meaningful,  
We too were afraid of the unknown land  
Where questions begin and reason remains without any answers.  
Perhaps your almighty could have showered compassion on us, too,  
By giving us  
A small boat to rescue ourselves from this man-made disaster.  
But his doors remained shut, which was inevitable.  
We continued to sweat among the pyramids  
Got frightened by the moored ships on the seashores  
We were separated from mother, wife and children, dearer than life,  
Sold in foreign lands.  
…
Exploitation, injustice, oppression.”

(Solanki, 64)

Raju Solanki puts forth a very apt question in the very beginning of this poem before the so-called upper caste- ‘Can history be so simple?’ for the depressed people, the past is ‘unknown’ and ‘frightening’ because they were forced to live in a dark, dingy and unhygienic place. There is hardly any light from the dim and flickering lamp blown by
the Savarnas. The poet again asks an unanswerable question: ‘Was slavery of man by man predestined?’ or is it a ‘man-made disaster’. The latter is the answer because the God has made everyone equal, but it is high caste people who separated man from man. They have ‘conquered’ and ‘enslaved’ them so as to establish their supremacy. It is not their past which was humiliating for them, but also their ‘present is frightening’. The line ‘We continued to sweat among the pyramids’ shows the hardships these people have undergone throughout their life. For example, they have to bring water from a spring flowing miles away. They have to do lowly jobs like breaking of rock in a scorching heat, spreading of coal tar on the roads or selling bundle of firewood to get basic need.

This is their everyday experience. It closely ties them to prevailing social conventions, justifying their appalling living conditions in the name of culture and tradition. The poet is quite familiar with the fact that his society has been imprisoned for a thousand years in the dark mist of cruelty and discomfort. He knows that Indian social system is strange. It keeps inventing ways and means to exploit and oppress those who are at the bottom of social hierarchy. In order to get remedy of this, several Gujarati Dalit poets have tried to put an end to their agitation for a better tomorrow. They have put across their point of protest through their poems. Their poetry is a voice of protest against this unjust system. A Gujarati Dalit poet believes that the roots of all ills faced by his community lie in Vedic epics, Hindu scriptures. Therefore he begins by subjecting these classics to a severe test. A celebrated Dalit poet Arvind Vegada in of his popular poems, Dharma, attacks on the Vedic classics in the following way:

“This darkness is stifling
Shrieking and wailing among
charred human bones
the hypocritical Shrutis
continue to torment the darkness
in the name of the sun.

Bundles of unfulfilled desires
Caught in the darkness of flames
to anoint stone idols whirling
in the beads of Manuvian chaplets
continue to lash with whips.

For centuries someone’s Khandav forest
has been blazing.
The crepitant fire emits darkness
and torments half – burnt Takshakas.

Numerous thumbs continue to be severed
and yet, to enkindle the bushfire
raging in the multi-hued airrette
of wish-fairies at one’s command,
the sun, remains to be pierced.”

(Vegada, 230)

It was the time when the sun was revered and is still revered in shlokas as the destroyer of darkness and creator of light. The same sun has been unkind and cruel to the half-burnt Takshaks. Takshaks are the original inhabitant of this nation before Aryan invaded India. Another meaning of this poem is that God created this earth with a noble purpose, made everyone equal. But some people became more equal than others. They became power-hungry like Aryans who wanted to expand their horizons at the cost of the suffering of marginalized section of the society. The Dharma of the Dalit poets is to pierce these kinds of power-crazy people in the society. Such is the case with the movement that Dalit writers started in 70s. The reality of their life is too hideous and shocking beyond the capacity of fantasy or imagination. Their tragedy is known to everyone, trampling them down and disfiguring their humanity. Their bitterness is quite understandable. They have been subjected to the worst atrocities. A young man’s thumb may be amputated just so that he does not become a better archer than a man of high caste. Arvind Vegada abuses the white wolves who favor the practice of untouchability in his poem Hadselo. At the end of his poem, he says:

“He is a man,
We are not human beings
Because we have lifted up the dead bodies
Of our shadows on the shoulders and we
Have not learnt to push the air aside.”

(Vegada, 5)

In India, there is a multiplicity of endogamous and mutually exclusive caste and sub-caste groups. They are hierarchically structured, in a graded inequality, based on ritual polity. Dalits are the economically oppressed, culturally ostracized and politically marginalized in modern India. To view such state of Dalits, consider the following poem titled *Self Exile* by Jeevan Thakor:

“Story am I of the land of myths
People whip me mercilessly
in the middle of the square.

I desire the self-exile.

Black clothes you have given,
Why do you not give me a horse?

Fiery-eyed stones cross the dark
and arrive before man does.

I tremble and desire self-exile.

Only yesterday I had gone to drink
at a well full at the brim.

Mercilessly the people fell upon me
and thrashed me with shoes.

The Prince on the horse
watched with perseverance.

Tied and burnt I was by people.

I desire self-exile, I- story of pain!”
A deep cry of agony for being untouchable is seen in the above mentioned poem. Even as late as the early part of the twentieth century, the untouchable had no access to public facilities such as wells, rivers, roads, schools and markets, etc. The most heinous rule was that which compelled the untouchables to tie an earthen pot around their neck so that their sputum did not fall to the earth and pollute others. Another demeaning practice was the compulsion to tie a broom behind them so that their footprints would be erased before others set their eyes. If such rules were broken then a victim would get a severe punishment. One can see a proof of this in the line: “Mercilessly the people fell upon me and thrashed me with shoes.” For this reason, the poet wants to be oblivion. So that he can escape from this kind of harsh penalty for no reason. He wants to get liberated from these bondages. As the poet says in another poem The Curse of Untouchability:

“The shadow of untouchability
Follows me day and night.
If my humanity someone honors;
Liberates me from the curse of touch,
Announcement in the village
Shall I make and sacrifice
My life.”

The liberation of the Dalits is the only sure way for the liberation of the Indian people. The primary motive of the Gujarati Dalit poetry is the liberation of the Dalits in particular and the liberation of the oppressed in general. It is fundamentally a cultural activity coming under the broad movements of Dalit political liberation. It is cultural politics. It takes the form of protest. A voice of resistance is also heard in the poem Battle Cry by Sanju Vala:

“Continue the battle, continue!
On the oath of your untouchable blood.
Retreat do not-
Weave garland of swords
Blow trumpets so deafeningly
That the pillars of their mansions
which stand on our houses are shaken
From the foundation and
The hide of their pet calf comes apart.

Beat high-sounding drums
That it may be split into two.
The only means to prevent
Its menacing head from growing
Is to blast its armor into fragments
And the navel under the armor.

Announce that this hand is not meant
To beg for buttermilk and bread.

It can also be raised.

Continue the battle, friends.”

(Vala, 61)

Here the poet wishes to create revolution in the society where they are marginalized. He wants to shake the pillars of the edifice created by high caste on the name of caste. Blowing the trumpet of revolt, he wishes to get justice for his brethren. The poet thinks that war on the battle will only be the option to get rid of the injustice and degradation they have undergone for ages. The phrase used by the poet ‘its menacing head’ means the tyrant and monstrous caste-based ideology created by the Savarnas. The poet aspires to diminish it by raising weapons and bluntly asks all to join this battle to fight for righteousness and integrity. A vehement rebellious tone is found in this poem. The mood of the poet in the poem shows that he is totally dissatisfied with what is offered to him by his society. The discontented poets like him soon lose their faith on the God. They can never forget and forgive the Almighty for the destitute condition they have been tendered. As Jayanti Chauhan expresses this in the following lines of the poem Can I Forget You?:
“Ritual thread tied to the peepal tree
Cling round the neck of the broom
While being swept away in the gutter.
The holes in my broken cot were mended.
Lord can I forget you?
The lowered flag went to pieces which
Passed through the culvert mouth
Were interwoven in my torn mattress
Lord can I forget you?
A pot of lemons, laddus at the crossroad
Was bitten at the rim by a dog
The bottom became my eating vessel
Lord can I forget you?
Singing hymns in praise of Hari
I push the heavy garbage chariot
Futile is your Rathyatra now
Lord can I forget you?”

(Chauhan, 65)

Here the poet describes the destitute condition of the weak, low caste and downtrodden. The God seems to be merciless to this section because of the situation they have been living. The line- ‘the bottom became my eating vessel’ shows the despair and misery. The raw imagery describes the lives of the Dalits who have been a victim of exploitation and savagery. A sense of gloominess can be seen in the phrases like ‘swept away in the gutter’, ‘broken cot’, ‘culvert mouth’, ‘torn mattress’, ‘the heavy garbage chariot’. Today we have entered the new millennium but still caste discrimination that dehumanizes continues to be practiced. The following poem Waiting by Meena Kamle reflects the deep inner pain in the face of poverty, destitution and humiliation the people of Dalit community suffer from:

“How like skin my caste sticks to me!
Sometimes when I can’t help scratch
It flies like ash all around me
But comes back and settles on me
Like my second self.”

Would I be able to mislead people
Even if I disguise myself?

They would delve deep and
Discover my origin from anywhere.

What should I do with this caste?

Should I cast it into
Some bottomless ocean?

But these folks would do
Samudra manthan.

And retrieve my caste from
The ocean depth.

Now I am only waiting for
A Neelkanth who can swallow
My caste…”

(Kamle, 66)

Here the poet expresses annoyance that she feels due to her low caste. She compares the caste with skin. The way skin sticks to a human body, the caste is also inseparable to the Dalits. It is like an alter ego, ‘second self’, which comes along with them wherever they go. Even if they disguise, people would recognize them and thus they would have no option except bearing unpleasant and unlikable identity. The poet is fed up with this unbearable situation, so she asks an unanswerable question: ‘What should I do with this caste?’ Even if these oppressed mass cast their caste into the ocean, the upper caste fellows would sail the ocean and get them back this ill from the depth of the ocean. Like
Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, the poet is waiting for a supernatural being to save them from the ocean of miseries. Mohan Parmar also weaves the chapters of hope of redemption from this agonizing condition in the following lines of his poem *Saga of Suffering*:

“Since long I am searching
For eternal solitude.
I want to find an alternative
For feeble voices
Piercing sturdy walls;
fading into oblivion.

Long-lived I want to be,
engrave it with tears.
Nevertheless,
I have battled
perennially against tears.”

(Parmar, 26)

The two times use of the word ‘tear’ expresses the feeling of melancholy. The poet wants to find a permanent solution for the sorrowful state of Dalits who are ‘feeble voices’. The poet feels sympathetic for the tearful faces of his community and thus he would like to fight against those who make them so. But one may raise question-who makes them so feeble, mild and meek? According to Shankar Painter, it is a high caste *Sarpanch* (a village head) who makes them weak and ineffectual. If anyone in the village raises any objection, he is brutally treated. See this image in his poem *Monarch* by Shankar Painter:

“What makes you prodigal, you fool?
You dare challenge me openly?
And that too fearlessly?
Go and ask in your vas who I am?

You will know it was I who thrashed
Your father mercilessly and hung him
On the neem tree?

Old women from the mohalla came
To plead for his release.

Just dare to come in the village
With a pot to buy buttermilk.

I shall announce in the village
Let me see who gives you work?

The police is mine, mine sarpanch is,
The talati mine, mine minister,
Mine village entire, fozdar mine,
Whole district, chief minister mine.

Famous my name in Delhi,
Who is yours? Who is yours?
Who is yours? Who is yours?

I can shoot you if at all I want.

What makes you prodigal, you fool?
You dare challenge me openly?
And that too fearlessly?”

(Painter, 46)

The rudeness and brutality of a high caste man towards a low caste one can be best seen in this poem. No Dalits can raise any objection against the Savarnas, otherwise the result would be disastrous. The question ‘who is yours?’ asked by a high caste man is heart-throbbing. It is very difficult for a miserable soul to answer this, because no one is his. Even members of his community are also not his as they are made mild and meek by the so-called Hindu society. According the Indian constitution, everyone is equal and free, but freedom is not granted to this section. The laws are there on the paper, but in practice there is only inhuman treatment meted out to this downtrodden section. They cannot
claim openly that they are free citizens, because they do not enjoy freedom as others are enjoying. If they try to enjoy freedom, they are tortured making them feeble.

It is said that all human beings regardless of their caste and creed at the end have to sublime in the lap of nature. The process of cremation can be different but all have to face one God. After going through the experiences of these Dalit writers it pricks one how these notions have been made? What is unlawful? It is according to their point of view and others can differentiate their views from them. In this way the same can be both lawful and unlawful. What is impurity? Is it physical or spiritual? A down-caste has the same physical and mental status as the dominant caste. Their feelings and emotions are similar to that of the dominant class people. Then what makes them untouchable? It is the mentality of high caste people who create these differences to govern over others and show their superiority. In the quest of getting a superior identity they tend to grab others’ identity and blame their fate for it. It is a common notion of society that proletarians face oppression and humiliation because of sins committed in their past life, but this concept of past life is mythological, which is not supported by many religions. According to the Christian religion, all are sinners and need God’s grace to purify themselves. The questions arise here are that being a sinner how can one point out the sins of others and contempt them? By what right the upper caste people claim to be different from the rest and proclaim their supremacy over others by assigning a supreme caste on them and call others down caste? It is a mere sociological concept which has its roots embedded in the creation of the society. Orthodox had divided the Indian society for the convenience of the people and it was a mere division not categorization. Few people of the society have changed this concept of division and brought an eternal suffering for the Dalits. Even though numerous laws have been passed to bring equality and social justice for the downtrodden section, yet the mentality of people has not been changed.

In such condition, a group of poets in Gujarat in the middle part of 70s started writing to eradicate the old mentality and they have tried their best to make their brethren aware of their identity in the society they are living in. They have got united to end the tyranny of the caste system. They very well know that their brethren still continue to suffer and thus they must work with determination. A strong feeling of unity is pervading their poetry.
Protest, anger, aggression, and discord are the outer expressions of the inner reality of their poetry. Gujarati Dalit poetry not only subverts the old canons but also creates new ones. It attempts to create a new paradigm, a new set of values adding up to the contemporary cultural scenario. It brings out the dichotomy which existed between the ‘high’ and ‘low’ castes. It stands for a new ideology which includes all sorts of remapping of a social territory which had several lapses and therefore needed to be recognized. Gujarati Dalit poetry thus not only deals with protest and rejection but also with the reconstruction of the past. It is based on the fundamental values like individuality, liberty, equality and fraternity. These poets themselves are victims of social injustice and humiliation. Their suffering is not just the suffering of the individual, and there is nothing romantic about it. Their problem is neither spiritual nor philosophical. They do not believe in established poetic beauty. Similes, metaphors and symbols are not important. The reality of their life is too shocking, beyond the capacity of fantasy or imagination. Their tragedy is universal, trampling them down and disturbing their humanity.

It is said that direct experiences of suffering by the author himself render more authenticity in the expression of pangs and arrows of atrocities. Political environment also welcome Dalit and assure their equal status in India. Since very freedom of India, the views of common people were starting to change the very notion of casteism however the speed of it has been less. Even Dr. Ambedkar was elected as council member and had liberty to contribute his esteemed thoughts in the reconstruction of India. The constitution was designed in sense to create India with modern attitude. But still here is not much change in the destitute condition of the Dalits as it was desired by the framer of the policies of the constitution.

Thus Gujarati Dalit poetry can be seen as a product of new consciousness. It presages a new social system, overthrowing the dominance of social conventional norms and standards. It breaks new grounds in terms of experience, sensibility and expression. It is revolutionary in terms of idiom, diction and style, opposing the established aesthetic norms and literary criteria. For example, if there is choice between truthfulness and elegance, a Dalit writer chooses to be truthful rather than being elegant. They shatter their
poetry to pieces. They fill it, adding indecent expressions, with deliberate distortions. It is nothing wrong to say that their poetry is born out of a social situation, out of social context. It is an outcome of social compulsion as well as of individual creative urges. It is social document in the sense that it is experience-based. It is societal rather than an individual in character. It sustains itself on liberal, humanitarian ideology mainly drawn from such sources as Dr. Ambedkar’s and Mahatma Phule’s writings, Marxism. The stunning, heart-rending, traumatic experience it treats shakes the readers’ consciousness. It destroys the readers’ fake sense of self-assurance and self complacency and finally brings him out of his ivory-tower existence. It wounds his pride by giving expression to its author’s fury and frustration but heals the injuries inflicted on him by presenting a vision in which all-encompassing love and humanity.
Works Cited


