SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ON GUJARATI POETRY

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The object of this thesis is to trace and establish the influence of English on Gujarati poetry from the middle of the nineteenth century down to the present time. The thesis is divided into two parts; the first of which is intended to provide the background to the far-reaching and revolutionary changes in the life and literature of India, inclusive of Gujarat; while the second is devoted to a detailed examination of how this influence affected and transformed Gujarati poetry in its spirit and forms since 1852.

PART I: THE BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I
East and West: India's Receptivity and Genius for Assimilation

An attempt is made in this chapter to show how in her chequered history, India has seen - and survived - the onslaught of many invasions, cultures and civilizations without losing her spiritual identity or cultural individuality, presumably because India has a genius for absorbing and assimilating all exotic influences without being submerged or blown off her feet by any of them. A comparative assessment of the Dutch, Dane, French, Portuguese and English influences is attempted with a view to suggest that the English influence was the most formidable and enduring of all and still abides in a variety of direct and indirect ways on the life and literature of India. The influence of English on Gujarati poetry is related to the country-wide and all-pervading influence, which the English exercised on India more tangibly and effectively on all walks of life, after they consolidated themselves politically in this country.

CHAPTER II
Historical and Political Background

An attempt is made in this chapter to show how after the disintegration of the Mogul Empire since the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the British gradually filled in the political vacuum and finally consolidated themselves after the Battle of Kirkee in 1818, and how the British regime gave to the people of India the rule of the law and order and in course of time, induced in them unprecedented sense of security. This, in turn, gave them a psychological feeling of relief and enabled them to devote themselves to their work in an atmosphere of peace. The pioneers of modern Gujarati poetry worked in this atmosphere and produced a body of new poetry, reflecting these changes.

CHAPTER III
The Indian Renaissance

The Renaissance in India, which was the result of India's contact with the West through English, brought in its wake a new social awareness, much spiritual ferment and new literatures in all the major modern Indian languages by about the middle of the nineteenth century. The Indian Renaissance had its two phases, the
first of which was characterized by an impulsive admiration for everything English or Western, while the second was distinguished by an intelligent attempt at assimilating the best of both the East and the West. In Gujarat, the first phase of the Indian Renaissance saw the introduction of the Western type of education and the many-sided movement for social reform. Its second phase saw the birth of new poetry and prose, religious ferment and cultural assimilation.

CHAPTER IV
The Introduction of the Western Type of Education and its Effects

A distinctive feature of the British connection with India was the introduction of the Western type of education through English, which gradually replaced the indigenous system of education in India. This was achieved, in varying degrees, through the efforts of the Government, Missionaries and private Indian agencies. Schools and Colleges in Gujarat, as elsewhere in India, grew in number and the Universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were established in 1857. Young men, who were introduced to the Western arts and sciences through English, were the pioneers in the field of social and religious reforms. All the leading poets in modern Gujarati poetry and prose were the beneficiaries of English education and produced a body of new poetry under the impact of English thought and poetry.

CHAPTER V
The Social Background and the Movement for Social Reform

The impact of the English type of education to which the young Indians were introduced, set many of them thinking on the causes of the rot which had set in the social life of their community and on the steps to be taken to arrest its decadence and restore it to health. Many of these were also writers, who used their writings for sociological purposes. Most of the modern Gujarati poetry of the third quarter of the nineteenth century was preoccupied with the problems and details of social reform, which had its three phases of action, reaction and assimilation.

CHAPTER VI
Religious Ferment and Cultural Synthesis

The religious and cultural life of the people during the second phase of the Indian Renaissance after the establishment of the Universities, was marked by a new development, when the fascination for Western culture and everything English was modified and moderated by the renewed love for India's own ancient culture and classics. Western culture then found its correlative in the culture of the land and the two, in course of time, operated on life and literature in India, not as rivals, but as complements to one another. One of the features of this correlation was the religious ferment and fervour it generated and the synthesis of the best of both Indian and Western culture, which began to be worked out in the cultural life of India. The religious ferment in Gujarat expressed itself in the foundation of the Prarthana Samaj in 1871, Arya Samaj in 1875, Theosophical Society in 1875 and the attempt at cultural synthesis brought forth several reformists, revivalists and visionaries, who used their writings for this purpose. Hanalal, in poetry, and Goverdhanraaj, in prose, were among them.
Modern Gujarati language, which is derived through certain intermediate stages from Sanskrit, had its old and Mediaeval poetry before its modern phase under the influence of English poetry began. Old Gujarati poetry mostly in the hands of the Jain sadhus, was religious in character, didactic in intent and objective in its representation. The poetic forms then in vogue were the 'Rasa', 'Phagū' and 'Baramasi'. Mediaeval Gujarati poetry (which in the history of Gujarati literature is taken as beginning from the fifteenth century and extending up to 1852), was partly narrative, as in its 'Akhyanas', and partly lyrical, as in its 'padas' or songs, but what distinguished it from the earlier Gujarati poetry was its growing note of subjectivity, which reached its most musical and lyrical expression in Dayaram, who died in 1852. Though there was also some poetry of a secular nature, Mediaeval Gujarati poetry was generally of a devotional type. Religion played a very vital role in the lives of the people then and hence their poetry was also dominated by religious motive. The subjective note, heard in the devotional poets of this period, was a natural expression of the very concept of 'Bhakti' or devotion, which is nothing if not personal. This note, which was first heard in Marsinh Mehta and Keera in the fifteenth century, grew more and more pronounced till a stage was reached when the poet Akha, in the seventeenth century, was resolved to write only what he himself felt and experienced. That poets were not inclined to take things at their face value is evident from the quantity of satirical poetry produced in the years prior to 1852.

The absence of epic or dramatic poetry in early Gujarati poetry was its limitation. The 'Akhyanas' of Premanand and others do not strictly belong to the epic and since neither the stage nor dramatic literature is known to have existed in those days, the absence of dramatic poetry stands self-explained. But in other respects Gujarati poetry prior to 1852 produced a considerable amount of narrative, lyrical and satirical poetry of both religious and secular type, in form, ranging from the old 'Rasas' and 'Akhyanas' to the 'padas' and 'garbis', in both subjective and objective vein. Yet, all this poetry was generally limited in range and forms and essentially different in its forms, contents, diction and spirit from Modern Gujarati poetry, written directly or indirectly under the influence of English poetry since 1852.

PART II

CHAPTER VIII

Introduction

The year 1852 marks the end and the beginning of the new order in the evolution of Gujarati poetry, which since then came increasingly under the influence of English poetry. This also synchronizes with the Indian Renaissance, which had brought in its wake the sprouting of new literatures almost simultaneously in all the major modern Indian languages around the year 1852. In view of the fact that neither the poetry of Dayaram (who died in 1852) nor his predecessors bears any evidence of the influence of English poetry or language on it, the changes in the form and spirit of Gujarati poetry since than are decidedly far-reaching and revolutionary. Between the gradual disappearance of the earlier poetic traditions and the emergence of new Gujarati poetry of a distinctly English complexion, was
the inevitable period of translation, which included the work of the poets of the

twilight, till the whole process of action, reaction and assimilation, spread
ever from 1852 to 1952, resulted in a new type of Gujarati poetry, which carries
a clear stamp of English poetry on it.

CHAPTER IX

(A) The Age of Transition

The first sign of a new departure from the earlier poetic tradition is
found in the poetry of Dalpatram, who served as a bridge between the old and the
new Gujarati poetry. He is an instance of how a poet, who knew little of English,
could yet be affected by the prevailing social and cultural climate sufficiently
to write new poetry, which linked itself with the new poetic movement, which was
social, secular and subjective in approach. Several of his poems reveal this new
approach, while his elegiac poem on the death of his friend, Forbes, was the first
elegy of the English type in Gujarati poetry.

CHAPTER X

(2) The English Conception of Poetry at Work : New Approach,
Themes and Representation

The English conception of poetry first appeared in the form of 'Josso' or
passion in modern Gujarati poetry with Narmad, who unlike Dalpatram, was the
product of the English education. This was derived partly from Hazlitt's definition
of poetry as an expression of passion and partly from Wordsworth's principle of the
spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, as revealed in Narmad's essay on 'Poets
and Poetry ' and illustrated in his own poetry. His lyrics of love, patriotic poems
and poetry of nature are nearer to the English type of subjectivity, spontaneity and
intensity of emotions. A strain of romantic melancholy, so characteristic of the
English poetry of the Romantic Revival, also made its first appearance in his poetry.
The first attempt at writing an epic of the English type, as also the quest for a
suitable epic metre in Gujarati, began with him.

CHAPTER XI

(3) More Attempts and Adaptations : Experiments in New Elegiac Poetry

The lead given by pioneers - Dalpatram and Narmad - was followed by other
less prominent Gujarati poets. There were more attempts at adapting Gujarati poetry
to the English model. Among these were the translations and adaptations from English
poetry. Dalpatram's adaptation of Aristophanes's comedy, Narmad's translations from
Wordsworth and Scott, J.N. Petit's adaptations and translations of the poems by Ben
Jonson, Cowper, Longfellow, Thomas Moore, Southey etc., Bapalal Bhatt's adaptation
of Cowper's 'John Gilpin' are some of the examples. There were also more experiments
in the English type of the elegy since Dalpatram's elegiac poem on Forbes. Among
these are Behrangi Malabari's 'Wilsonvirah' and Kashishanker Dave's elegies on
Dalpatram and Narmad. The first infructuous attempt at the epic of the English type
by Narmad was followed by Bheemrao's heretic poem 'Prathurajrasa' which carried a
Prologue, based on Scott's 'Harp of the North' in 'The Lady of the Lake'. 
CHAPTER XIII

(2) New Narrative Poetry, Tragic View of Life and Romantic Lyricism of Love

Subjective lyricism of the English type found another exponent in 'Kant' whose romantic lyricism of love was, like most of the English romantic poetry of the 19th century, more than tinged with romantic melancholy. Romantic melancholy which had appeared earlier in modern Gujarati poetry, assumed almost the character of a tragic vision of life, which was close to that of Hardy and the ancient Greeks. His long narrative poems which were objective in form but not a little subjective in style, were an interesting amalgam of several English poetic forms, such as, the dramatic lyric, monologue and idyl. His poems on friendship which struck a new note in modern Gujarati poetry had Shakespeare's poems on his friend as a model.

CHAPTER XIV

(3) The Poetry of Personal Experience, Romantic Melancholy and an Epic Fragment

The subjective note in romantic lyricism of love, heard earlier in modern Gujarati poetry became almost autobiographical in Kalapi's poetry. The influence of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, among others, affected Kalapi's poetry, while his longer narrative poems were a further development of the new narrative poetry, which was a combination of the dramatic lyric and the idyl, essayed earlier in modern Gujarati poetry by Kant. Another attempt at the epic of the English type in Kalapi's 'Hamirji Goheli' ended abruptly in a fragment, which is, in effect, nearer to Walter Scott's romantic tales of chivalry than to an English epic. Kalapi's poetry marks the beginning of a decadence of the English type of subjective lyricism where unrestrained emotions and romantic melancholy turned most of this type of poetry tearful and spineless.

CHAPTER XV

(4) Romantic Idealism, Lyrical Exuberance and Lyrical Playe

Modern Gujarati poetry, which was generally influenced by English poetry of the Romantic Revival, reached its high-water mark in the lyrical exuberance of
Nanalal, whose romantic idealism was akin to Shelley's and whose views on love, marriage, the relationships also his diction were influenced by Tennyson. The reaction against romantic melancholy and pessimism was found in its most determined form in the poetry of Nanalal, who resolved not to sing sad or mournful modern. In his emphasis on the joy of living and optimism, Nanalal's poetry was close to Browning's. With him also came a new poetic form - the lyrical play - though not in regular verse. Nanalal's plays, with their doubtful fitness for the stage, belong to the type of Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound' and are composed in a 'rhythmic style', which is neither verse nor prose; and which was presented by him as the Gujarati substitute for the English Blank Verse. His epic poem 'Kurukshetra', claimed as belonging to the type of Milton's 'Paradise Lost' was one more attempt at writing an epic of the English type in Gujarati, which in effect is, however, a long lyrical poem.

CHAPTER XVI

(5) A Change in Poetic Attitude. Emphasis on Thought in Poetry, the Sonnet and a successful Experiment in Blank Verse.

A change of poetic attitude manifested itself in its reaction against the excesses of the poetry of personal emotions and in favor of a more objective approach in modern Gujarati poetry through Thakore, who maintained that the less personal a poet was, the greater was his poetry. The poet was advised to travel beyond his ego and seek more extrinsic sources of inspiration for his poetry. The emphasis in poetry was then sought to be shifted from emotions to thought. Thakore's own poetry, though not lacking in emotions, was dominated by thought and generally conforms to the neotraditional ideal of Matthew Arnold.

Modern Gujarati poetry had adopted several English poetic forms, such as, the lyric, song, ode, elegy, but the sonnet still remained to be adopted in Gujarati poetry, which was done very effectively by Thakore. The search for an equivalent of the English Blank Verse in Gujarati, which began earlier, led to Thakore's innovation of the unrhymed continuous verse in Gujarati.

CHAPTER XVII

(6) Poetry Directly Derived From English: More Sonnets and Metrical Experiments

Though all the modern Gujarati poets were, in varying degrees, influenced by English poetry, none of them was so much under its debt as Khabardar was. Most of Khabardar's poetry was directly and bodily derived from English poetry, which he looked upon a 'treasury' to loot without apology. Several of his poems are either translations or adaptations of different English poems. The sonnet, which had entered into modern Gujarati poetry rather belatedly, found one more prolific writer in Khabardar, who claimed his sonnets as the authentic ones, since they were written according to the traditional rhyme - scheme of the sonnets in English poetry. Among the many metrical experiments, based on the several permutations and combinations of Sanskrit and indigenous Gujarati metres, under the impact of English poetry, were Khabardar's metrical innovations, sometimes based on the English principle of stress and accent, which he presented as equivalents of the English Blank Verse in Gujarati. His chief distinction is, however, in his patriotic and heroic poetry, in the best tradition of English poetry of the same variety, and in his parodies in verse, which he added as one more poetic form from English to modern Gujarati poetry.
Modern Gujarati poetry before 1930 was more or less a purely poetic movement, unaffected by any local factors, beyond the social ones in its earlier stages. The case with Gujarati poetry since 1930 was different. A number of local factors then began to affect it inwardly and outwardly. Of these, the upsurge of nationalism and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi’s ideology were the most powerful. Intense patriotic fervour and an acute national consciousness, very much in evidence in Gujarati poetry of the ‘thirties and a part of the ‘forties, made Gujarati poetry of that period truly contemporary and representative. The ideas of universal peace, universal love and brotherhood were very much in the air of those days and they also got into most of the Gujarati poetry of that period. Gujarati poetry of the ‘thirties, like English poetry of those years, was the poetry with a purpose and programme, which found its expression in humanism, progressivism and Marxism. Several angry young men then raised their voices in sympathy with the underdog to protest against social and economic injustice and inequity. The former insistence on grand subjects and style was relaxed, if not abandoned, and Gujarati poetry of the ‘thirties, and a little beyond it, would any subject, however, apparently insignificant, that came within its reach.

This development in contemporary Gujarati poetry was in line with what had then happened to English poetry, as was its later development, when Gujarati poetry of the ‘Forties, in a sharp reaction, turned to Neo-Romanticism, which had no sociological purpose. The poet then looked out of the window or dreamt. The counter-reaction then followed and once again, the Gujarati poet of the ‘fifties, like his counterpart in England, began talking of human predicament in the Atomic Age, of disintegration, frustration and dislocation of sensibility. This anxiety and poetic neurosis were expressed through the technique of Imagism, Symbolism or Existentialism, in a poetic diction which reflected the inner spiritual disturbance in its semantic disturbance.

Gujarati poetry of the present time is as unclassifiable as the present-day English poetry. It is confronted with the same charges of obscurity, ambiguity and ugliness. It shows a marked preference for shorter and whispered utterances and for pictures, which are often surrealistic. Most of the contemporary Gujarati poets, besides being well-acquainted with English poetry, which they learnt at the University are also know to read and discuss in a group latest English poetry. Present day Gujarati poetry has discarded old poetic diction and forms, and all but discarded traditional metres. A Gujarati poem written in 1962 has almost nothing in common, for instance, with that written in 1852, but the influence of English poetry which began in 1832 continues to work more effectively, though less loudly, on Gujarati poetry, which is closer to English poetry at present than ever before.
The influence of English on Gujarati poetry began gradually with the introduction of the English type of education in Gujarat. Those who had studied English poetry in their schools and colleges were the pioneers of modern Gujarati poetry. The English conception of poetry was first seen at work in the poetry of Narmad. It was then adopted as an ideal for Gujarati poetry by Narsinhrao. The model, for years, was largely English poetry of the subjective lyrical variety, particularly of the time of the Romantic Revival. Almost all the characteristics and forms of this variety of English poetry are found in Gujarati poetry, written since 1852. These characteristics are—subjectivity, spontaneity, intensity of emotions, romanticism, idealism, naturalism and romantic melancholy. The poetic forms are mostly lyrical—the ballad, song, ode, elegy, dirge, sonnet, dramatic lyric and the lyrical play—most of these domiciled in Gujarati poetry. Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Tennyson, Browning and Dante Rossetti were among the English poets who affected the approach, style, diction, representation and contents of Gujarati poetry for about three quarters of a century since 1852, and several Gujarati poets confessed to their poetic taste and conception as being nurtured on English poetry.

Several metrical experiments, particularly the Blank Verse, in Gujarati, as also the tendency to make Gujarati poetry recitative rather than singable or musical also came through the influence of English poetry. Some attempts, mostly inconsequential, at writing epic poetry of the English type were also made. Wordsworthian and Tennysonian attitude towards Nature was adopted. Nature, seen in relation to Man, was used as a background to human emotions, or approached for its healing power or educative value. Spring, suggestive of Renaissance, was used symbolically, till it was all but replaced by Autumn and Summer in more recent Gujarati poetry, to reflect its existentialist attitude towards life.

A parallel development was the new narrative poetry of the English variety, which was first assayed in the 'episode'—poems of Kant. The objective correlative to subjectivity of emotions was found in the poetry of Thakore, whose ideal was the 'neatato' classicism of Matthew Arnold.

The distinction between classicism and romanticism, objectivity and subjectivity, maintained for years in Gujarati poetry since 1852, is gradually disappearing in Gujarati poetry of the present time. Gujarati poetry, like English poetry, of the 'thirties was sociological; Marx and Freud gave it, as they did to English poetry, a new perspective, till in the 'forties, again like a part of English poetry, it took the colours of a New Romanticism which merely dreamt or looked out of the window. Then in the 'fifties; Gujarati poetry expressed its 'dislocation of sensibility' and its concern with the human predicament in the Atomic age of Anxiety through new Imagism, Symbolism, semantic disturbance and disregard for traditional poetic forms and metres.
Gujarati poetry from 1852 to 1962 is influenced by English poetry. The transformation is so complete that a typical Gujarati poem of 1962 has little in common with that of 1852. Gujarati poetry since 1852 was gradually moving closer to the English conception and representation of poetry; Gujarati poetry of 1962, in both these respects, is closer to English poetry than ever before.

Appendix

Bibliography