Chapter No. 2.
GUJARATA AND IT'S CULTURE

The nature of life, literature and arts of a region depends upon (1) its geographical peculiarities (2) the economic conditions and (3) the cultural changes which are influenced by the political and religious institutions. These determinants impose a national character upon its people, their activities and their multi-folded expression. The diverse characteristics which make the sum-total of social and cultural life of the people of Gujarāta has to be seen as an inter-related, inter-dependant and integrated whole. I would briefly explore here the social, religious and cultural life of the people of Gujarāta in a non-political setting.

The older Gujarāta comprised Saurāṣṭra, Ānarta and Lāta (1) (2). Ānarta forming the northern and Lāta the central and southern parts of present Gujarāta. By medieaval period these became Gujarāta, Saurāṣṭra and Kutch. Today all these three areas go under the name of Gujarāta, one of the twenty three states of India. From no where in Gujarāta the Arabian sea is more than a hundred miles. So there has been a constant touch with the foreign countries, giving rise to maritime activity and trade with Mediterranean world since the early centuries of christian era. This also prompted the
coming of various ethnic and linguistic groups of people, who came here as traders, settlers and conquerors.

From the early period of history, Gujarāta has occupied an important place. Though Kṛṣṇa was born in Mathura, he settled in Dwāraka. Manu's son Saryati inherited a part of Saurāṣṭra and the region came to be called Anarta. He ruled over Kusasthāṇi which was later destroyed by the Puṇyajana-s in the times of Raivata-kurumdi and who in turn were demolished by the Yādava-s. Anarta was later called Aparānta and Saurāṣṭra was known as Saurāṣṭra.

Historically from the excavations of Lothal and Rozadi we have evidences of civilization contemporary of the Mohenjo-daro and Harappa cultures. Lothal perhaps is the most ancient town of India. Only in Saurāṣṭra we have found about seventy-five sights parallel to Indus valley civilization which definitely suggests existence of well developed society in Gujarāta from those times. The finds at Lāṃghaṇḍa and Pedhameṇḍi puts Gujarāta in the proto-historical period.

In the early historic and the early medieval period, Gujarāta had been an political annex or an outlying province of bigger empires of Northern and Western India. The three rock-engravings found at the base of Mount Girnāra provide the evidences of the imperial grandeur of Candragupta Maurya whose powerful forces conquered the earliest states of Gujarāta.
These engravings by Ashoka, the great Mauryan ruler have left an ever lasting memorial of his spiritual empire. On the decline of the Mauryan rule, there was a Greek invasion led by Demetrius and the evidence of contact with the Hellenistic world is seen by the numerous Greek and Roman coins found in the region. The Ksatrapa-s who were outsiders ruled from 1st to 5th cen. A.D. They adopted the local language and religion. Rudradamana (150 A.D.) a forceful monarch and other Saka dynasty Kings had mostly Sanskrit names, and accepted it as their official language. Thus all those who came here as rulers, settlers, traders accepted the local life style and culture.

The Guptas replaced the ksatrapa regime and they ruled over for about seventy years only. Senāpati Battaraka, the Maitraka general of Gupta-s, established himself at Vallabhipura in Saurāstra. The Maitraka-s of Vallabhipura developed a sufficiently big kingdom which incorporated large areas of modern Gujarātā. Vallabhipura was not only a seat of powerful kingdom but boasted of a well-known city of learning. In last twenty years, about thirty temples of Maitraka period are found in Gujarātā and Saurāstra which provide important material in the history of temple sculptures of India. Maitraka rulers encouraged various aspects of religious teachings and the sun-worship was given prominence. We have many Sun temples in Gujarāt, at Thāna, Modherā and so on.
The worship of Rāḍalā, the wife of sun, is a common and popular practice amongst the women of Gujarātā mainly to receive the gift of a child.

The Cavādā-s, Rastrakuta-s and the Pratihāra dynasties ruled over different regions of Gujarātā for a number of years. The capital of Gujarātā became Anahilawāda Pātaṇa in times of Vanaraja Ḍavaḍa and Jainism became widespread. The Śolāṅkī or Çulukkis got the thron of Gujarātā from 942 A.D. with Mūlārāja as the first ruler. The cultural unity was consolidated into political unity by the Śolāṅkī-s and widespread the glory of Gujarātā. The centre of culture transformed to Anahilawada Pātaṇa from Bhinnamāla, and there was a consciousness of Gujarātā being one unit. With comparative political tranquility during the Śolāṅkī reign, there evolved regional school of sculpture and miniature paintings. Jainism gained immense popularity with its principles of non-violence. The palm leaf mss. with exquisite miniatures of that period are still preserved in the Jaina bhāndāra-s. The Vaghela dynasty, after the Śolāṅkī-s, was noted for successful administration and art of temple building reached a zenith with the marble temples built at Ābū, Delwādā, Kumbhārīā, Girānārā, Setruṃjayā. Karana Vāghela was the last ruler, who forever lost the Rajput hold over Gujarātā against the superior forces of sultan Allāudin Khilji. Muslim domination of Gujarātā began with downfall of Vāghela rule about 1300 A.D. extending for over 400 years. Another hundred years of Marātha
rule and the Britishers came. Their rule continued for about two hundred years. The oppressive rule, unstable political situation could not give rise to great artistic activities.

In mediæval Gujarāta, the middle class of the serious commercial type increased rapidly in wealth and importance. It was a time of new financial success and enriched tradesmen. This class patronised painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, music and dance. The guilds of craftsman and workers were established. This middle class was known as Mahājana and was influential and powerful in the political and cultural life of Gujarāta of this period. After the king and the priests, they were the most important. The dramas, romantic stories and poems written during this period had them as subject matters. The influence of these Mahājana-s permeated the cultural life for over a thousand years. The end of mediæval period saw the end of the age of monumental tradition of architecture and sculpture. The vernacular art of the Doha, nāpya and chanda took its place.

The history reveals a state of prosperity and there are many factors contributing to the development of various branches of study, be they the classical sanskrit literature, science of politics or the plastic and performing arts. Gujarāta had social and cultural entity from the earliest times which is reflected in the traditions that grew here. From the ancient times the literature has formed an important aspect of the cultural life.
of Gujarati people. The Aryans brought their dialect in the proto-historical times. By about 9th cen. A.D. the Western Rājasthānī or Apabhramśa became the popular language of Gujarāṭa-Rājasthāna tract, with local shades, and by 15th cen. A.D. we have the beginning of what is called as Gujarati language today. Innumerable treaties have been written, covering a wide range of subjects by scholars like Ācārya Hemchandra, Poet Megha, Bhojadeva, to name a few. These books, dramas, poems, provide the knowledge of historical and social customs, norms and changes. The amount of literature written during the Solankī period is over-powering. During the invasions the Jain Bhandara-s preserved the manuscripts, well known amongst them are the ones at Pāṭaṇa, Khambhāta etc. We have drama-s, poetry and classical texts, in Apabhramśa and in the Gujarātī languages, read by all and one. The Ākhyāṇa, Rāṣa-s, Pada-s and Bhajans have reached the hearts and minds of people through singing and narration, thus became the medium of communications.

The literature of last hundred years reflect the social and political changes through poetry, stories, philosophical and thought provoking drama-s, Baddha and Anibaddha pada-s and so on. The freedom struggle and its intensity, the movement of Swadeśī and Gāndhian philosophy has inspired all the forms of literature. Along with the written tradition, there has existed an oral tradition through the folksongs of unknown poets, folk-tales and myths in the poetry and singing of Ārana-s, Bhāta-s, and Maṇabhata-s, and in the songs of
village women who have been singing from morning to night, making each activity interesting and each social and religious occasion colourful.

Along with the native Dravidians, the successive migration of Aryans, Hunas, Sythian-s, Mongols, Pathana-s and Mughal invaders have given rise to many racial varieties in Gujarata. 'Kal Paraj' is the early aboriginals and tribes where as the 'Uja Paraj' is the fair skin invaders. The Bhils and Kol-s believe in evil-eye, witchcraft, worship the tiger god and the mother-goddesses, allow polygamy and widow marriages. The Brâhmin, Vânia, Rajput, Kanârai, the pastoral and craftsman classes worship the Brahminical gods. But they also operate in magico-ritual rites, worship natural forces and mother goddesses. The immigrants were absorbed in existing castes or formed their own new groups (Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. IX. I).

Between the 5th and 13th cen. A.D., Gujarata gradually absorbed the strangers in the Hindu population. Buddhism and Jainism accepted and at times admitted the foreigners in the highest places in the community. To retain power over these religions, Brâhmin-s rewarded high position and honour in the caste and also with marriage and adoption to the white Hunas, Gurjara-s, Mihira-s etc, during 5th to 7th cen. A.D. The Brâhmin-s increased their numbers by accepting Greek girls in marriage (Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. IX).
Khurdabda (950 A.D.) states that Brāhmaṇa-s took Ksatriya daughters in marriage. From 100 B.C. to 100 A.D. the outside priests and magicians were accepted as Brahmins and new elements in the worship of sun, Śiva and Śakti were introduced. (Bombay Gazetteer Vol. IX, Appendix A. Page 438) Siddharaja Jaysimha conquered the Bābara Bhuta and converted his followers to Hinduism. Mularaja II converted the Musalmans of Sahabuddin Ghorī's army to Hinduism. (Ranchodji Diwan, 'Takikh-i-Soratha).

The Mohomedans came to Gujarāta to conquer, loot, trade and many settled here. From 13th to 17th cen. they came in search of military service, trade, as refuges and slaves, by land and by sea, from central Asia, Persia and Khurasan, adding considerably to the Muslim population of Gujarāta. Other immigrants who found home in Gujarāta were Pārsī-s who accepted the external Hindu customs, retained their own religion and there was no cause for conflict. (Studies in Parsi history, Hodiwala, P. 74).

The occupation and marriages were restricted to the same caste only from 9th cen. onwards. The Brāhmaṇa-s were at liberty to take occupations of lower caste in addition to their own. After 9th cen., probably the first two higher caste took to agriculture along with the Sudra-s who were principal cultivators. The Vaisya-s following Jaina and Buddhist faiths abstained from it altogether. Thus agriculture became permissible to almost
all. The Brāhmaṇa-s and Vaiśya-s were allowed to share the profession of arms with the Kṣatriya-s. It appears that the caste was not made into dead conventions, but was a guiding force in the society with elastic rules to deal with changing occupations. Even today the caste system exists to an extent but there has been a lot of inter-mingling at all levels.

Apart from agriculture, trade is the second main occupation of Gujarāṭa which existed from historical times due to open sea-coast and flourishing ports. "Gujarat's geographical position has made it the gateway of India to the Western World from the earliest known antiquity. The chief occupations of its people have been trade and manufacture in a degree unequalled by other parts of India." (Mirat-i-Ahmadi, Vol.II, G.O.S. no. XXXIV). The Bānjara-s carried the inland trade on pack animals and wheeled carts filled with dyed cloth, opium, sugar, grain, oil seeds etc. into plains of Gujarāṭ and Saurāshtra, down the hills of Dungarpur and returned with salt, tobacco and sea-borne produce. The Gujarāṭ-s possess a remarkable spirit of enterprise which led them far in search of wealth and adventure - to Java, Cambodia, to Siam, China, Ceylon in 6th and 7th centuries, to Africa and now to U.S.A.

Most of the village communities had, and still have the carpenter, potter, blacksmith, stone-mason, weaver, dyer, tailor, shoe-maker, drug-seller, sweet-meat maker as the recognised members of the society who made the village communities
integrated whole as seen from these two Garba songs. (3^A)( B ).
Gujarat was supreme in cotton manufacturing till the end of Mughal empire in the world trade.

The dying and printing (Rañgarez and Chipagar) are popular crafts. Most commonly used ±a	cotton of various colours and prints. The brilliant colour appeals to the people. There is a bewildering variety of costumes. Each caste has its distinct colours, patterns and texture. The beauty of embroidered, woven and printed cotton and silk textiles is to be seen and worn to feel the vibrations. The patola, tie-dye Bandhani need exquisite skill and highly developed aesthetic sense which makes them fine-arts.

Though the basic unit of organization is village in every part of the country, there have been a few rich and famous towns popularly known for their seats of scholarship and trade. They arose near strong natural forts, on the river banks, near harbours, on trade routes, in holy places. The village life is more communal with each caste preserving their individuality where as cities tend to be cosmopolitan and all comprising. The rural communities are mainly agriculturists and pastorals whereas the urban population in general comprise workers engaged in trade and industry and other professionals. The villages, to an larger extent remained undisturbed by changing political rules. Though the Islam or Britishers economially seized the political capitals, and the peasantry was blighted, the villages retained the Hindu life style and culture in
midst of turbulent forces of power.

Each village has a central square or Cotara, the centre of activity with different communities residing in their own areas. The village well is a colourful active place. Samala-Bhatt's poem gives the glimps of economic conditions and social structure of the contemporary village life. In the cities, the middle classes were the centre of activities and supported artistic pursuits, influenced the Kings and Sultans by landing them money and advice.

The harmonious co-existence of different religious sects, beliefs and practices is a distinct character of Gujarāta. Along with Śiva and Viṣṇu worships, the Buddhism and Jainism, the sun-worship, the worship to numerous Mother-goddesses and natural forces have survived in cities and villages. The simple and strict rules of Buddhism and the high standards of morality failed to secure a hold over the people. The Jainism survived with its democratic constitution though it was also a movement with a set purpose to reform and purify the social and religious orders of the ritualistic Brāhmīns. Jaina ascetics, being the men of knowledge, took up Deśabhāṣā as the vehicle to propagate the religion. As a result, they succeeded in impressing the people. But the medieval resurgence of Bhakti cult swept away the masses to the all human, loving, adorable Lord Kṛṣṇa. The worship to mother goddess was a common practice, which still continues. The Jaina are great
worshippers of Devi in the form of Yaksi or Sasanadevi. Apart from these sects there are rituals connected to local gods and goddesses. The new Vaiṣṇavism taught the non-violence of Jainism but believed in the enjoyment of worldly blessings. The Vallabhacarya's Puṣṭṭhī Sampradaya, Swāminarāyana sect permeated certain classes. Women observed vrata and prayed to mother-goddess for nine nights of Navaratri. Even today the religious life of Gujarāṭa operates on different levels with inter flowing cross-currents.

Such diverse religious, political and social conditions have given rise to a number of performing arts which are the living traditions, surviving amongst the people, in sculpture, painting, and textiles, in poetry and stories, in folk tales and folk songs. The Lāsyā variety of dance being taught to the women of Saurāṣṭra has lost its classical character of definite and stylised symbols, postures etc. but its inherent quality of grace, is seen in almost all dances of Gujarāṭa, be it a Tippanī of Chorwada, or Dāṅgī nṛtya or the ever popular Rāsa group of dances which enfold the Garbhā, Garbhā and Rāsdā.

The Sanskrit tradition of drama has survived in the folk theatre form of Gujarāṭa, the Bhavā, with 'Dagalo' as the Viduṣaka, and singing, dancing, dialogue delivering actors. It has been continuing for almost 800 years now in oral tradition and from generation to generation. With almost no other means of entertainment, the Bhavā performances were eagerly
looked forward in rural communities. The whole night performances by professional male actors, the worshippers of Devima achieved instant support with the audiences. They acted as mass education media with their satire on existing social, political situations. With the revival of Kṛṣṇa-cult, the Dhādhīḷḷā-s were also performed in village squares and in Vaiṣṇava Haveli-s. The Havelī Sangeet is, practiced mainly in Vaiṣṇava Havelis is part of the rich Bhaktisangeet of Gujarāṭa. Singing Bhajan, Kirtan, narration of Akhyans by Bhāta, Carāṇa and Māṇabhata are part of the cultural traditions of Gujarāṭa. During last fifty years there have been tremendous changes with people being influenced by Western culture and ideology, blind imitation, change of occupations etc. have directly influenced the survival of these arts. As the arts are dynamic and not museum pieces they definitely would reflect the society and its thinking. But now there is an awareness in people of the individuality and beauty of these Gujarāṭī arts, which will help preserve as well as continue their flow. Till we worship in any form and love Kṛṣṇa for all that he is, the Rāsdās and Garbā-s, the Bhavāi and embroidery will continue.
REFERENCES

1. अनन्तर्जुला उपवन - भोज्याय आधुनिक संरचना: | अध्यात्म भेद के \(|\text{अर्थ: अर्थ} \text{भेद के}||\)
   - Brhat Samhita: chap. XVI

2. पारितेजसुकुमारी हेरुत्रत्देश: | अन्य अलंकरणसूत्रधारणों नाट निर्देश: | अर्थ: दृष्टिकोण रूपो दृष्टिकोणपद: ||
   - Jayamangalak, Commentary on 'Kāmasūtra' of Vatsyayana.

3. ह मात्र गर्भावस्था न रहे वस्त्राधेषा: अन्य अध्यात्म गर्भावस्था रहे हो तो अन्य अध्यात्म गर्भावस्था न रहे।
   - Similarly
   - Sonidā - Jāliā
   - Ghanidā - Dīvel and so on.

4. अध्यात्म भेद के अन्तर्गत चार, तीन तथा चारों विंक्लों में चार
   अध्यात्म भेद के अन्तर्गत चार, तीन तथा चारों विंक्लों में चार।
   - Similarly:
   - एकुदार, दोकाद तीनकाद चारकाद न नाम न रहे।
   - एकुदार, दोकाद तीनकाद चारकाद न नाम न रहे।
   - एकुदार, दोकाद तीनकाद चारकाद न नाम न रहे।
   - एकुदार, दोकाद तीनकाद चारकाद न नाम न रहे।
   - एकुदार, दोकाद तीनकाद चारकाद न नाम न रहे।
   - एकुदार, दोकाद तीनकाद चारकाद न नाम न रहे।

— Bahuls pataki of Somchakat.