Narmadashankar Lalshankar: Towards History and Self Knowing

"I am the trumpeter of the army of reformers."

"Oh Arya! Rid yourself of foreign thoughts and become pure, rid yourself of all doubts, become faithful and do your duty."  

Narmadashankar Lalshankar (1833-1886) made these statements at two different phases of his life. These capture the divide between Purva Narmad and Uttar Narmad. Narmad by his own admission was a 'radical' reformer. He wished to do away with the old and usher in the new. The new was inspired by the Western influence. But the same Narmad became 'a liberal conservative,' and urged his people to follow svadharma. This essay attempts to understand this process of transformation. It is by capturing this process, it is hoped that we can gather some insights into the movement for social and religious reform that the second half of 19th century Gujarat witnessed.

In the year 1866, at the age of thirty three Narmad wrote his autobiography, Man Hakikat. This was an unprecedented event in the history of Gujarati language and literature.

Narmad was the first one to write an autobiographical narrative in Gujarati "For someone like me to write his own story and moreover to print and publish it during my lifetime itself, may appear disrespectful to our people. I am not a learned man, nor a warrior, nor a religious leader, nor am I a wealthy philanthropist." Despite this awareness, Narmad chose to introduce
a self-conscious break with the past. He is not doing this act “either to be famous (I am already famous) or to amass wealth or position”, but because the autobiographical act would allow him to gaze at his own life and this process would provide encouragement in the future. Narmad is aware that autobiography is essentially an inward looking gaze, it is a private act. He says therefore that “I am writing this narrative not for others but essentially only for myself.”

This self conscious act also allowed him “to institute the practice of writing the autobiography which does not exist among us.”

Narmad must have been aware that before him Durgaram Mancharam Mehta had written autobiographical notes. But these notes written between 1843 and 1844 were in the form of records of discussions in the Manav Dharma Sabha. Despite the fact that they contain certain self narratives, these notes are essentially like a record of the proceedings of the sabha. There is no attempt to narrate one’s own story. The notes do not for example tell us about Durgaram’s life before he established the sabha nor do they record his life subsequently. More significantly, the records/notes are not informed by a self conscious autobiographical gaze.

Narmad wrote and printed the account of his first thirty three years. Narmad records that he printed around 400 copies of the autobiography. Two of his closest associates have argued that Narmad had printed about five copies of the autobiography. These were not for sale or for circulation, but essentially as a record. The full text of the autobiography was published as per his desire, after his death. But Narmad’s own records suggest otherwise. He records that he printed about 400 copies. It is argued that he had in fact printed the copies as recorded but had preserved only a few copies and destroyed the remaining. Narmad’s own jottings in the autobiography about the process by which he printed and published his works is suggestive of his attitudes towards the printed word.

Narmad says that he never waited for the entire text of any of his works to be written completely before printing them. As pages were written he sent
them for printing. He writes; “I find it more profitable to retain printed pages as compared to handwritten ones. Printed pages are easy to preserve and read; more over the temptation to correct and rewrite can also be resisted. Till date I have never printed any book after it was written fully, I write and send the pages for printing. I like writing but I find it tiresome to make fair copies. It is also not easy to find able persons who can make good copies. Therefore, What I write is a draft and the printed version is its copy.” He further clarified that the autobiography, although printed should be considered “incomplete” and “a draft”. It is incomplete because he chose not to include certain incidents which may hurt the sentiments of his friends and family. It is a draft as “It contains unreflected and hasty thoughts (I write and immediately print it) which may be proven wrong in the future.” This was true not only for the autobiography but most of his other writings as well. He did not have the patience to wait for his thoughts or writing to mature or be reformulated.

Unconcerned about his own preparation and competence he wrote, if he was not entirely satisfied with what was written and printed he introduced changes in the subsequent editions. There are also instances of the same work being reprinted, with minor stylistic changes, while the earlier copies still survived.

It appears that Narmad was unburdened by the permanence of the printed word. He regarded printed texts as draft manuscripts which may or may not be revised. This confidence towards the printed word, made Narmad the “first amongst the moderns” in Gujarati literature. There is nothing of the orality about Narmad’s literature. Even if a poem was to be recited or a lecture delivered, his normal practice was to read from a printed text. Narmad essentially wrote and printed for an audience which was not an immediate presence.

This attitude towards printing is difficult to fathom. It may have been the result of his close proximity to the world of printing and the easy access he had to that world. Narmad’s father Lalshankar and his grandfather Puroshottam were both Labhjas (writers, literally). Purshottam earned his
livelihood by making copies of texts for circulation, before printing became prevalent in Gujarati. Lalshanker spent a large part of his life working in the printing section as a ‘writer’ in the education department in Mumbai. His task was to ‘write’ books for printing. Lalshankar was regarded as one of the finest Gujarati ‘writers’ of his times and books ‘written’ by him were highly valued. He also ‘wrote’ some of Narmad’s early works like Pingal Pravesb and ‘Mandli Malvathi thata labh”. It is possible that the exposure to the world of printed books from an early age allowed Narmad to view the print technology and the printed word as a facilitating tool without attributing values of permanence and ineradicability to them.

Narmad spent his early childhood travelling between Mumbai and Surat. At the age of eleven, in the year 1845 Narmad joined the English School of the Elphinstone Institute, in Mumbai. He took fancy to geometry and algebra and did study history with some interest. In the autobiography he does not dwell much on the experience of being a student.

In 1850 he moved to the college department of the Institute and secured a scholarship of ten rupees. That was also the year in which Narmad began his public life. Narmad alongwith some friends started a society “Juwan Purusbo ni anyonya Buddhivardhak Sabha” (A society of young men for the mutual advancement of intellect, literally). Here Narmad gave his first lecture, Mandali Malvi thi thata labh (Benefits of forming a society). Buddhivardhak Sabha as the society came to be called became in some years one of the most important forums for the new graduates of the University. The sabha also started a journal Buddhivardhak Patrika, which is in publication even today. Narmad could not participate in the proceedings of the sabha much longer. Narmad had acquired another passion; women. He writes; “In the September of 1850 passions of youth began to come forth . . . . I started smelling women.” He tried to satisfy his desires by closely following the activities of the women in the neighbourhood. Concerned about the morals of young Narmad his father and father-in-law decreed that he should leave Mumbai for Surat and start conjugal life with Gulabvahu with whom he was married in 1844. He left
Mumbai in 1851 February with “Character Certificates” provided by his former teachers.

There was no work available for Narmad in Surat. He spent his time alone thinking melancholic thoughts. His mind found “solace when companionship was formed with one wise women from a good family.” He does not make any reference to his relationship with Gulab. The only reference to his conjugal life comes in form of a sentence, “In this year my wife miscarried after three months of pregnancy.”

In 1852 he managed to get a job, as a school teacher in Rander, a village near Surat. Narmad spent roughly eight months teaching at Rander. When the School Inspector visited the school unannounced Narmad was found sleeping. In this year his wife delivered a girl child who died within two weeks of her birth. In 1853 his wife also died at the age of 16 or 17 after yet another miscarried pregnancy. He describes his relationship with Gulab in a footnote in the autobiography. It was an unhappy marriage, more so for Gulab. Narmad says that “My feelings of love for her were weak.” He managed to get a post of a school teacher in Surat. Narmad was not interested in the work, “I felt bad that no one respected a school teacher.” After the death of Gulab there was no compulsion to be in Surat, he resigned his job and left for Mumbai in January 1854.

The period between February 1851 and January 1854 was the sole uninspired, unmotivated phase of his life. Narmad was direction-less, and not even perturbed by it. He describes his slumber; “Between 19th February 1851 and 2nd January 1854 I did not read a single book neither in Gujarati, nor in English ..... I wrote nothing for Gyanisagar ..... I drank bhang, ate intoxicating substances and roamed amongst women. When alone I used to dream of becoming famous (not rich) and think thoughts of love.” Even when poet Dalpatram visited Surat and recited his poems Narmad did not bother to attend the events. On one occasion that he attended a recitation, he did not pay attention, he says, “I was intoxicated by the passions of youth.” He was also
unconcerned about the debates on reform raging around him. Reform movement had not yet managed to capture his imagination. Thinking thoughts of fame and glory he reached Mumbai and rejoined the Elphinstone Institute as a student. Narmad did not take well to being a student, at the time of writing the autobiography he could not recollect the names of his teachers or what he studied. He lived in the world of his imagination, hoping for fame and glory. Writing English poetry he thought was one way of acquiring glory. In 1885 he composed a poem in English. “I recollect that I wrote about hundred lines in English on various unrelated subjects and showed them to Mr. Read, he looked at them and laughed.” Narmad strived in vain to control his mind and passions, to emerge out of his slumber. He turned to writing poetry. His self-initiation into writing poetry is described in most dramatic fashion in the autobiography.

“In September I chanced upon some stanzas of Dhira Bhagat, I kept reciting them all the time. The ideas contained in those stanzas matched with my ascetic nature. After four or five days an idea struck me, I should also compose something in a similar vein... I decided that I should immerse myself in thinking of poetry and enjoy the pleasure of expressing those sentiments. I also thought that others get happiness by studying, working, getting fame or with women, while I feel happy writing poetry, I should do only that. Food etc. will be taken care in any case. In this manner on my 23rd birthdate I started writing poetry. I do not remember when I wrote my first poem. But my birthday was around that time, so I decided to mark the occasion of my writing poetry by associating it with my birthday and that is how I count the years of my poetic writing – the date was September 23, 1855.”

This description captures the sense of melodrama and grandeur about himself, with which Narmad lived and worked. Narmad, the poet rejoined the Buddhivarta Sahba. His poetry found an audience and he acclaim. Narmad says that Mumbai did not have a poet at that time, people did not know much about poetry and even some one like Dalpatram was also not a known name among the educated classes of Mumbai. He started composing poems in the
style of Dalpatram, “One eyed man became the king of the city of the blind” that is how Narmad described himself. He had doubts whether what he composed and recited was poetry. From an essay published in Buddhiprakash he became aware about Pingal Sbstra (Poetics). He searched for texts and teachers.

He found some prakrit texts in Surat, which he copied and studied. In 1856, Narmad married again. His bride was Dahigaun. Narmad till this time was enrolled as a student in the Elphinstone Institute. He did not want to carry on the charade of being a student. He decided to withdraw from the Institute, also because he had no hope of winning any scholarship. Apart from this he was a poet now, “and the passion for poetry and dreams of being a great writer, in sanskrit, Gujarati, and English”19 prompted him to opt out of the Institute.

In 1857 he wrote Pingal Pravesb and took up a job as a school teacher. He continued to write and print poetry and other works related to poetics. By 1858 he had published four books including two volumes of poetry. His fame had spread; he was now the secretary of Buddhwardhak Sabha and the editor of its journal, Buddhwardhak Granth. He had also moved to a better job. He was now an assistant teacher in the Elphistone Central School, with a salary of Rs 40/- a month. Just as he was not a serious student, he was also not a committed teacher. His hopes were to be famous as a poet, a writer. One day, without consulting any one he resigned his job and resolved to live by his pen. He describes this grand gesture thus; “I came home and looked at my pen with tear filled eyes and urged that “From today I am at your mercy.” 20 Narmad kept his resolve for most of his life, even in times of great hardship he lived by what his writings and admirers provided. Unencumbered by schedules of a job, Narmad decided to travel in Gujarat in search of patrons, without any considerable success.

In 1859 he established himself as the most popular poet of Mumbai by engaging Dalpatram in a poetic duel. The literate classes of Mumbai organised poetic recitations between the visiting poet Dalpatram and local hero Narmad. Some local newspapers carried news reports while some drew cartoons. Narmad did ensure that Buddhwardhak Sabha reversed its intention of
refuses this charge. He argued that Premanand “wrote on social issues, his thoughts are average, that is they are not high” and hence his language is easy to comprehend.

On the other hand he felt that Gujarati language was inadequate to allow him to express his “high and complex” ideas sufficiently well. He agreed that he wrote prose with greater facility but any inadequacy in poetry cannot be attributed to himself. “Gujarati does not have sufficient vocabulary, moreover it is being used for an uncharted subject like reform, and hence it is not as impressive as my prose. This is so not for any fault of the poet, it is as fault of the language itself.” A few years later in 1868 Narmad was forced to re-examine the issue again. Some of his friends and critics maintained that Premanand was a better poet than Narmad. Narmad wrote a note titled “My views on my poetry” and made a detailed comparison of the two poets.

Narmad makes this comparison on three ground; a) quantity b) language c) sentiment. It is significant that Narmad wants to use the quantity of poems written as a measure. For him quantity is also a measure of the commitment both to poetry and the life lived as a poet.

Therefore, Narmad felt the compelled to explain why his poetry did not compare well with Premanand, Samal or Dayaram in terms of quantity. The classical poets had spent a lifetime in composing poetry, while Narmad had only eleven years and three months to match them. He says; “If I had not written prose, grammar and the dictionary – if I did not have to check proofs, if I had not published compilation of my works, if I did not have to take care of household and did not have to face shortage of money all the time – I would have written poetry at ease... Still I have written atleast half of what Samal, Premanand and Dayaram have written.”

Narmad was deeply concerned about his language. He was aware that his language resembled the language of his prose and that it was “difficult.” This anxiety had prompted him to compile a dictionary and he made it a habit to
add explanatory notes to many of his poems. He argues his case from three positions. He argues that his language is 'pure' because of his caste, his education and also because he is a city dweller. Premanand is described as ‘Deshi’ (vernacular, rustic). Narmad says; “I am not a villager, I am a city dweller, I belong to a high caste, I keep high company, and I have been speaking pure language since birth, then there is no reason why my language should not be pure?”

Here Narmad makes the distinction between bhasha (language) and boli (dialect), and suggests that he wrote a purer form of language while Premanand wrote in a language, which was closer to a boli. He further argues that the Gujarati language is evolving with his poetry. He has brought in new concerns and the older language is inadequate to capture new moods and sensibilities. Moreover, he says I am a learned man and the language of the learned is good language. He writes; “The language of the learned is correct and beautiful language...I am the first one to use refined Gujarati, and people with old mentality and with new ideas both like my language. How can my language be called impure and faulty? And since I am charting a new course even if my language is faulty can it be considered in any way inferior to Premanand? No. No.” He also believes that the sensibilities of people are not yet cultivated. As time goes by and they read more of his works they will certainly come to appreciate it.

And finally, he argues that there is no relationship between poetry and language. He says; “what is the relation between language and poetry?” By this statement Narmad appears to be suggesting that grounds of appreciation and criticism of poetry should be other than language. Narmad is confident that if other yardsticks were to be employed he would emerge superior.

While describing the essential between him and Premanand, Narmad lapses into English. He argues that he has drawn more pictures than any other poet and that his descriptions are more sophisticated.
He writes in English; “Picture-Real and ideal, poetical – many and more than other poet in our language.” He describes his poetic pictures as “Still Engravings” while Premanand and Dayaram painted pictures with “natives colours.” Since Premanand is vernacular and native in imagination is limited by his context; he is not “universal”. Narmad by comparison is universal – he says again in English; “Universality – I can write on any subject, because I see poetry in everything.” Having established the superiority of his imagination Narmad declares that his “Originality is unprecedented.”

He elaborates the difference in a long paragraph written in English.

“Mine is Sentimental. Poetry – ideas rising far above the common place – his airs are affecting... his language is uniform throughout, mine is not... language is now-a-day newly formed on account of new ideas being introduced into our language.

Premananda does not abound in so many and so vivid pictures as mine. His beauty is in the true descriptions of manners and human natures (indicative of reflections) – in expressions and coloured pictures liked and understood by the mass. Mine is in the description of human natures and external nature with sentiments and ideal pictures understood by the learned and men of experience by whom they are conceived. These pictures cannot be put into popular language, they can be put into poetical language – Premanand has nothing to suggest. Pleasures from suggestions being hard won, is more exhilarating; mine has much to suggest. His is jolly beauty, mine is Melancholy.”

When Narmad started writing poetry; ragda as he called them, he had no knowledge of either the poetic tradition or the poetic norms. He composed his early works copying the style of Dalpat, Samal and Manmohandas Zaveri. He had chanced upon poetry and he desired to make it his vocation. This desire was not necessarily based on the assessment of his capability and preparedness. His overwhelming need at that point was to be famous and poetry was a means to that end. Underlying his early poetry was not the passion of natural
capabilities, he was being propelled by a "desire for fame and glory." But very early he realised that what he was composing was not poetry but *ragda*. He was not aware about *pingal* (metrics), *alamkara* (rhetoric) or *rasa* (theories regarding feelings and sentiments).

He considered writing to Dalpatram to request him to teach *Pingal*. He did not write to him but wrote to Manmohandas and requested him to "hold his hand and take him on the pilgrimage of pingal." He did not receive a favourable response. In Surat he found a Prakrit text, *Chandramatavah* which he copied and taught himself basic rules of metrics. At this time Dalpat was writing his book on Pingal, challenged by his father Narmad wrote *Pingal pravesb* in a short time and published it. He became the first one to write a book on *pingal* in Gujarati. He was hailed as a major poet. Dalpat acknowledged his contribution, "In Gujarati language there was no text on the art of writing poetry. Bhai Narmadashankar of Mumbai has just written and published one such text... He must have worked very hard to write this book. This is the first book of its kind." Mahipatram welcomed the author in the ranks of the well known poets of Gujarat. "This text is very useful and is written in a mature style. With this its learned author enters the ranks of our well known poets." 35

Thus it was a book on poetics and not poetry that brought Narmad the fame and glory that he desired. Encouraged by the success of *Pingal pravesb* Narmad published in quick succession two more commentaries, *Alamkar pravesb* and *Rasa pravesb*. Both these texts are largely based on Vishwanath's *Sahitya Darpan*. The publication of these three texts is also indicative of Narmad's attitude towards printing. He says in the introduction of *Alamkara Pravesb* that "I was eager that I should be the first one to introduce a new subject to Gujaratis. Moreover, considering the first edition to be proof sheets, I had published the text in a hurry." He had published five hundred copies of a book, which by his own admission was in the stage of proof sheets.

He visited Pune and requested Balashstri Dev a known scholar of Sanskrit poetics to correct his three books. The second editions were published
with these corrections. Narmad in his eagerness to be the first one to introduce new subjects to Gujarati language decided to write four more texts to cover all aspects of poetics. These four texts were *Nayika Vishay Pravesb, Natak Pravesb, Kavyantvechan pravesb* and *Gadhya Pravesb*. Of these he wrote *Nayika Vishay parvesh* based on *Sahitya Darpan* and some Marathi and Hindustani texts. This was written in 1866. The entire text was written in ten days, while he was confined to the house because of illness.

He could not write the three remaining texts given his other commitments. These texts are important not because of Narmad's insights into the realm of poetics as all are derivative texts. Their importance lies in their being the first of their kind in Gujarati. They also indicate the preparation that Narmad underwent to be a poet.

Narmad was the first thinker to provide a broader conception of Gujarat in modern times.

His central concern was reform. For him reform went beyond changes in rules of behaviour prescribed by a particular caste or community. Reform for him entailed rethinking about basic norms around which a society was constituted and life was lived. This aspiration was that all people will rise above their particular conditions and contribute towards a common good. Narmad was keenly aware that in order to do so people must feel, and feel passionately he argued, about identities which were broader than what caste could provide. These identities could either be a linguistic - cultural unit like Gujarat or could be an abstract notion like country. It is only by subscribing to larger formations that a sense of being one people could be forged.

Narmad, both through his poetic compositions and essays endeavoured to provide a cultural sense of being one people. In what is perhaps his most enduring poetic composition, "Jay Jay Garvi Gujarat" (Hail, thee glorious Gujarat) Narmad sought to provide a sense of pride in being a Gujarati to his people. The poem describes the cultural icons familiar to most Gujaratis. He
evoked the idea of Gujarat through centres of pilgrimage — Temples at Ambaji, Somnath and Dwarka — and the main rivers — Mahi, Tapti, Narmada. He gave hope to his people that dark clouds were lifting and a new dawn was about to emerge. \(^{37}\)

In an equally significant but lesser known work Narmad asked the question: “Who does Gujarat belong to?” \(^{38}\) In response Narmad listed all the narrow identities of caste, community, religion, sect and stated that Gujarat does not belong to any particular group.

He wished to provide a ground which could encompass all parochial formations without destroying them. For Narmad such a ground was language and pride in belonging to a linguistic community. In the poem he says that Gujarat belongs to all those who speak Gujarati. Not satisfied with this he clarified himself further that Gujarat belongs to the non-Hindu, specifically Parsis and Muslims and non-savarna communities who speak Gujarati and have enriched the language.

Narmad hoped that around such cultural imagination a people and a sense of belonging could forged.

In his essays he elaborated these ideas. He wrote three significant essays. Swadeshbhabhiman \(^{39}\) (National Pride, 1856) Gujarati Sibiti \(^{40}\) (The condition of Gujaratis, 1888-89) and Apa Deshjanta \(^{41}\) (The people of our country, 1870). In these essays for the first time in modern Gujarati social thought Narmad provided a clear conception of the idea of a national and of being people of one nation. He was the first one to use, and repeatedly so, the terms desh, swadeshbhabhiman and deshjanta in Gujarati.

In the essays Swadeshbhabhiman Narmad attempted to define what constitutes pride in one’s country. He beings the essay by stating that for us it is almost natural to take pride in one’s family or caste. We not only speak of these two categories with pride but also strive to make them better and glorious.
Pride in one's country he says, is as natural as the pride in family or caste. But he laments that we as people never think of the country. The questions before him is in what terms could one think of the country, and what constitutes taking pride in one's country. He answered these questions in the following terms: "Gentlemen belonging to all castes should endeavour towards the welfare of one's family, caste and the city, but at the same time they should strive for the betterment of all people so that all become equally happy. Efforts whereby to the rich become prosperous, poor earn their livelihood with respect, more and more industries start in the country where goods of good quality are produced in plenty and are sold abroad and in the country where they are scarce, knowledge and industry expand and reach out to more and more people like the widening circles made by a pebble thrown in a pond; to endeavour to make conditions for those to be possible and to strive towards their realisation is called national pride." He emphasized that only those who work for the good of all people can claim to have national pride. He blamed the absence of such feelings for the plight of the country. He said that our attitude towards our country is one of indifference and total absence of thought about the state our society and country.

He revisited the theme some years later in the essay *Apni Deshjanta.* He attempted to describe what constitutes being one people. He argued that just because we are born and live in the same land and have similar problems we do not by that fact become one people. People have to pursue common goals for betterment of all people to acquire the feelings of being one people. "It is not sufficient to belong to one country to be one people, but to have pride in belonging to the same country makes us one people." This pride can come only with an awareness that we are all children of same motherland and hence we must strive unitedly for its welfare. "This awareness alone can give us a sense of national pride and inculcate in us a worshipful attitude towards the country... these can give us the best form of happiness." He elaborated the idea of being one people further. It does not only consist of feelings. "Country, language, religion and state are the principle constituents of being one people."
He proceeded to analyse the state of each of these elements. We are divided on religious lines, argued Narmad. This has made us acrimonious towards each other. The state of language is no better. We make no attempt to learn each other's languages and in absence of one commonly spoken language, we are further divided on linguistic lines. We live under foreign rule and as people we have little understanding or interest in how we are governed. He concluded that although there were stirrings of national pride our development as one people was in very early stages and in danger from divisive forces.

He therefore suggested measures we must adopt to form the feelings of oneness. He advocated that all of us must learn a language other than the mother tongue. And we must adopt devnagari as a script for our various languages. This he hoped would enable us to understand each other better.

The question of religion was more difficult to resolve. Narmad proposed a solution which must have appeared radical to his people. He asked people to believe in a creator who was formless, omnipotent and omnipresent. He advocated adoption of the ideas of Brahmo Samaj as the common mode of religious belief and practice. "We should all adopt the part of religion as taught in Bengal Keshavchandra." He did not address the question of British rule in any depth. Narmad was convinced about the goodness of British rule, he even described it was "a light of a lantern." He advised his people to wait for political rights but preserve the identity as people. Narmad was aware that he had so far defined being one people as being Hindu. He submitted that in his conception being one people also included Muslims and Parsis. They belong to this land and are nourished by it and hence they are brethrens of Hindus. He urged them to join hands with Hindus to strive for the betterment of the country.

The essay, Gujaratiom Stithi has historical dimensions. Narmad proposed to understand the condition of the people of Gujarat historically, at the same time it was an assessment of the reform movement. More significantly perhaps it also presents an agenda for the future reform. Consequently, the essay is divided in three parts, the agenda for the future being the most articulate
section of the essay. He is categorical in his condemnation of Gujarat before the British presence and the first moves towards reform. He condemns the earlier era as having no sense of national pride. The people not only did not show any valour they were weak in spreading knowledge also. They could not produce a single text of any worth related either to poetics, history, philosophy or politics.

Narmad is satisfied at the progress of knowledge after the advent of the British and establishment of native schools. The new education gave rise to the reform movement in 1850s. Narmad does not pause to take stock of its contribution instead he appears more concerned about setting the agenda for the reform movement in decades to come. He feels that if the reform movement continues at the present pace some changes could be expected in fifty years, if it were to gain momentum changes could occur within the next thirty years.

He felt that Gujaratis will make considerable progress in the realm of education, some learned man will also become capable of independent thought. But he is also aware that their scholarship will not measure up to that of the European scholars. He advised youth to study not only English but languages like Hindi and Marathi so that knowledge of these languages could be made available to people. On the social front he hoped that the practice of child marriage would disappear and widow re-marriage would become an accepted practice. He was more hopeful on the economic front, he saw the community becoming more prosperous through industry and commerce, which he hoped would gain much by more and more people travelling overseas. He also hoped that people would become less rigid in religious matters in the decades to come. The reliance on gurus and sects would decrease and so would the ritual practices. He also hoped that idol worship will also become less.

More noticeably he hoped that political ideas of people would mature, they would become conscious of the laws and their implementation by the
officers of the British government. He visualised that people would form themselves in political associations where they would discuss in the native tongue the acts of the government and would acquire sufficient maturity to petition the Crown’s government in England for redressal of grievances.

All these he cautioned, will not become possible unless people acquire certain ‘passions’. These passions according to Narmad were there: Freedom, Pride or Self Respect and National Pride.

Freedom for him is an essential human impulse which does not necessarily have to be cast in political terms. Subjecting one self to one or another political force is a necessary for maintenance of order within a community. This subjection however does not take away freedom. He defined freedom thus: “In their striving for happiness all human beings have equal natural rights; and people endeavour to gain them. The desire to be free from bondage, to be free from sorrows is called freedom. It is desirable to cultivate such a passion.”

In absence of a desire for freedom people cannot rise above their present condition. The second passion that of pride or self respect is contingent upon the first. Narmad, emphasised again that all human beings are equal and their natural rights are similar. They differ in so far as conditions of life make human beings different from each other. Only when people realise this fundamental equality that they can take pride in their own condition and strive to better it. But the highest passion for Narmad is pride in one’s country. People must realise, he argued, that their common good is similar, only when they act with this awareness the condition of the country and all its people shall improve. He said National pride “fosters freedom of the countrymen... National pride unties people as one, unity gives strength and this strength can defeat the foreign enemy. The glory gives rise to industriousness through which conditions for happiness of all are created.” Narmad is pained that the people in whom he is attempting to raise passions are indifferent and undeserving. He describes Gujaratis as ‘people with cold blood’, without
learning, dogmatic, cowards, emasculated and indulging in flattery.”4 He says despite this he will continue to write and appeal to them because “I feel passionately for them, and I know that if they were to pay attention to my passionate writings, my Gujarati brethren will rise in some years.”5

He feels diffident in face of the power of the caste system. The caste system comes in for a radical critique by Narmad. He holds the caste system responsible for all the misfortunes of his country and its people. Caste system according to him does not recognise the fundamental equality of all human beings. This lack of recognition is at the basis of all social deprivation and lack of cohesion and unity in the Hindu society. He says; “The bondage of caste did not help the spread of knowledge, it in fact arrested the spread of knowledge. Brahmans became owners and custodians of all knowledge, they did not allow the Vaishyas to study the Vedas. The Vaishyas were allowed to study but not teach. The Shudras were denied all learning. Are the Shudras so fallen that they have no rights whatsoever? Where they not fallen when they were used for someone’s self-interest? . . . It is correct and just to grant rights to those who are learned and possess valour, but is it not a grave injustice to grant privileges to undeserving progeny of Brahmans-Kshatriyas and Vaishyas and to deny rights to the deserving Shudras, because they are Shudras? . . . If the Shudras were allowed to learn would they not have attained glory?”5

Thus Narmad takes the agenda of reform further than reform of particular caste rules, of ritual practices. He seeks to provide for a new morality and a new principle around which the society could be reorganised. This principle was the recognition of the fundamental equality of all human beings. Narmad called for a new shastra. The older shastras for him had no validity or purpose. He had repeatedly denied that the shastras were either created by the gods or gifted by the gods. He denied their permanence. He said; “The shastras are created according to the particular conditions and demands of a specific time. Therefore we must reject all those shastras which are not suitable to our conditions and aspirations.”52
Narmad called his countrymen to come forward and fearlessly fight for truth. He cited examples of Socrates, Galileo and the countless ordinary protestants who gave up their life for what they believed to be true. He asked “why should we not come out openly to proclaim the truth. Truth which benefits the entire country?” He said it was the dharma of his countrymen to strive for freedom, pride in one’s country, to work towards the spread of education.

Thus Narmad through his interventions sought to forge one people. A people who shall be proud of their cultural heritage but who shall not hesitate to denounce any unjust practice. People he argued could be forged only when one recognises the fundamental equality of all human beings. The idea of one people cannot be forged Narmad argued in a society which does not recognise this principle of natural justice.

Narmad appears to be moving further from the reform movement and its particular agenda. His aspiration now is much larger than denouncing or upholding a practice or a norm. He aspires to lay a new ground, a ground that would make possible forging of a people.

In 1859, Narmad wrote Vaidharyachitra. At the time Narmad wrote this, his wife had died. He had re-married but his new wife had not come to cohabit with him. He thought of himself as a widower during this time. He says that he had suppressed his sexual desires as he did not want to commit “immoral acts” He suffered a great deal due to this lack. At such a phase in his life his attention was drawn towards the situation of widows. He decided to write poems on their condition and hoped that “while describing their plight, I will also be able to pour out my sorrows.” Impetus was also provided by his desire to compete with the poet of a stature of Dalapram. “I was encouraged by the idea of competing with Dalpartram. When he came here, he had brought along poems written over many years. I have been writing poetry only for last few years. I felt that I should continue to compose new and different poems and keep up the competition.” He therefore, decided to introduce shrngar the poetry of social reform and the result was Vaidharyachitra.
This poem is divided in two parts. The first part has four sections and the second part has fifteen sections. All of them describe the various stages of a widow's life, her pain, suffering and suppression. The poem urges the society to institute the practice of widow remarriage. The various sections of the poem deal with episodes in the life of a Hindu widow; the pain of a child widow, the suffering of widowed women in the homes of their parents and parents — in-laws, desires of a widow to experience pleasures of life which are denied to her are described very poignantly. One of the sections deals with the pain that a woman experiences when she is forced to shave her head and adopt the clothes of a widow.

But the constant refrains linking all the sections are two: the desire of a widow to experience and enjoy the pleasures of a married woman enjoys, most specifically the fulfillment of her sexual urges; the second is derived from the first. Since the "widows are not allowed to remarry, the fulfillment of sexual needs takes immoral forms, either by consent or coercion. This makes society more immoral." 58

Almost all sections mention the sexual desires of a widow, how they are deprived of pleasures and the manner in which they either lure other men or are coerced and seduced by relatives. He describes the miseries of a widow who is impregnated as a result of an illicit alliance. The fate of a widow who finds herself pregnant is described in great detail, her attempts — sometimes successful, mostly disastrous — to abort the foetus, pain and suffering involved in abandoning a new born child, the social outcry at such acts, the attempts at suicide by widows and the desire of the parents to murder widowed daughters who bring shame to the family are described in great detail.

Narmad appears to be foregrounding the sexual deprivation of widows. Suffering and deprivation of other types is described but the narrative inevitably leads to the sexual desires and the consequences awaiting widows who become pregnant. Narmad makes an attempt to jolt the society from inertia. One could also interpret this as a result of his own preoccupation with
sexual deprivation. Narmad states quite clearly that the only option before the society is to promote widow re-marriage. He makes a powerful plea for this. He argues that nothing should come in way of this act of social reform. He is not concerned about questions of tradition or shastric validity. He asks, if our forefathers have been stupid, is it desirable that we continue to be likewise? This he says would be a sign that we have the “intelligence of a donkey.”

On the question of the shastras he is unwilling to entertain the argument that the shastras derive their validity from the fact that they are divine creations. He argues that the shastras are created by men, and are valid only so far as they promote good conduct. When they cease to do so they become not only invalid, they also promote immorality. He also argues that if the shastric injunctions have validity for all time, why has the contemporary society ignored many of them. If some injunctions are not followed then one can also not follow the imperatives of the shastras on the question of widow remarriage.

In the poem he also argues for equality of norms between men and women. If men can re-marry, why cannot the women do the same? He argues that question of higher and lower sexes are absurd. The only measure for human worth can be human conduct. Narmad begins the poem in a voice of despondency, pain and suffering. Towards the end, the poet shows signs of hope, he is certain that the widows will be able to free themselves of the chains which bind them. He ends the poem with a “song to be sung on the occasion of a widow’s remarriage.”

He returned to the question of widow remarriage time and again in his prose writings. His essays like Punar Vivah Vishe, Stree Kalavani, Vyabhibar Nighedhak deal with the question of widow remarriage. In these essays the argument that he had formulated in Vaidhyacharitra remained unaltered.

Hindu Ni Padii is perhaps the most ambitious poetical work that Narmad wrote.
He described this poem as a “Bible of Reform”. Comprising of 1500 stanzas the poem has ambitions of an epic. He realised that an epic required apart from a historical or a fictional hero, leisure and concentration from the writer, which he found himself incapable of. Instead he wrote *Hinduo Ni Padti*. The poem is divided in three parts. The first part describes the fall and degeneration of Hindu society. The second part aims at reminding the Hindus of their past glories through stories of valour. The third part titled *Asha* (hope) delineates the future of Hindu society. This poem was written over three years. The first part was composed in August 1884, the second in October 1866 and the last part in December of 1866.

In an introductory note to the poem he described the epic he could not write. He had decided to use a fictional hero to write his epic on reform. Historical heroes were available to him from the *Ramanuja*, the *Mahabharat* and the stories of Rajput valour. He chose not to conceive his epic around these familiar icons because he felt that people may not be able to judge his efforts adequately and dismiss it on the ground that as the foundation was solid, the poem can not be but good. Moreover, poems on these familiar themes were available in many languages. Therefore, to write an original epic he conceived of a fictional hero ‘Sudharditya’. He realised that it was not given to him to write this epic. Narmad therefore provided a skeleton of the issues and chapters and hoped that some other poet will write the epic of ‘Sudharaditya.’ The epic was to be conceived as a battle between ‘Sudharditya’ and ‘Vahemjavan.’ Sudharditya symbolised reform and civilisation while Vahemjavan, the demonic powers of superstition. As long as Sudharditya ruled Hindustan, the country prospered. He was opposed by Vahemjavan, who succeeded in dethroning him and Sudharditya was forced to seek shelter in Europe. He returned from Europe with renewed vigour and finally defeated Vahemjavan despite early setbacks.

The other epical hero he conceived was a Rajput king, Jivraj. Jivraj and Kiritiba, his queen ruled, but were forced to seek asylum in a country like England, from where they returned with renewed sense of National pride to re-established his rule.
It is significant that both Sudhharditya and Jivraj have to leave the country and seek asylum and refuge in Europe. Europe becomes the source of regeneration. It is Europe which inspires them to seek reform of their society. Narmad was echoing the widely prevalent belief both among the reformers and among those who opposed them that reform was necessarily a western impulse.

The first part of *Hindu Ni Podi* describes seven aspects of social, political and religious life which were experiencing fall and decay. These seven aspects are knowledge, religion, tradition, superstition, native states, foreign rule and morality. In the opening lines he prays for the vision and imagination to write an epic like the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana.* For Narmad the decay of Hindu society was caused by its preoccupation with religion and other worldly concerns, "it was as if the night had descended at mid day and the daughter in law was widowed in her youth."  

For Narmad brahminical castes are responsible for this downfall. They have forsaken learning and enjoy privileges due to them by birth and not merit. They for Narmad symbolise the degeneration of society. The society has lost its ability to be dynamic and adapt itself to changing times. A society that hold on to its past disregarding the imperatives of present times can not but be unhappy. This inability to creatively respond to changes is best reflected for Narmad in the state of knowledge in the Hindu society. The *varna* system, with its inequality and unequal access to knowledge and learning is responsible for the state of knowledge. "Manu preached that justice lies in inequality", says Narmad. As a result only brahminical knowledge came to be valued.

For Narmad a path shown by the unlettered is a path shown by the blind. The stagnation in knowledge traditions have affected the ability of the society to comprehend newer forms of knowledge and hence cannot participate in industry and commerce. This also affected the understanding of religion. People gave up the path of knowledge and adopted superstitious beliefs as the basis of religion. This lead to the subordination of the path of
knowledge to devotion, which in turn resulted in the establishment of various sects, idol worship and domination of religious practices by rituals. Narmad says that so long as knowledge remains subordinates, idol worship will persist, as “the learned worship only the formless, and not some idols.” He is extremely critical of the new sects like the Swaminarayan and the Vaishnavs. These sects he says are for women, their texts and rituals are such that they appeal to the uncultivated sensibilities of woman. Since women are drawn to them men also follow.

Lack of knowledge according to Narmad also allows for the tyranny of the shastras. As people are not able to understand them their validity remains unquestioned. Many beliefs came to be regarded as shastric injunctions. Narmad elaborated the injunction against consumption of alcohol and non-vegetarian foods in a footnote. Consumption of non-vegetarian foods cannot be supported on grounds of non-violence. He argues that taking life for good can not be considered a sin. And if it were a sin, why do Brahmins in some areas like Bengal consume them, he argued.

Narmad believes that the validity of tradition emanates from the unquestioning attitude of people. People regard the traditional as valid and resist all attempts at reform. He speaks of the practices of child marriage, the injunction against widow re-marriage and the ban on crossing the seas as examples of traditional practices which have caused irreparable damage to Hindu society. The sorry condition of women is also due to the power of traditional practices. A society which ill-treats women can never be happy says Narmad. Women according to him are treated as “living dead.” The practices of child marriage and prohibition of widow remarriage compounds their misery. Society according to him is governed by superstitious practices and beliefs; which claim validity either from shastras or from tradition.

Narmad is most perturbed by the condition of the Native states. The natives states with their illiterate and unjust rulers, treacherous administrators and cunning ministers symbolise for Narmad the loss of vigour and pride of
the people and their leaders. Narmad gives detailed description of the debauched lives of the native rulers, the life in the zamana and the grip of the administrators on the state. He describes palaces as “garbage heaps, open sewages and hell.” The native states show complete disregard to norms of governance, idea of justice is alien to them. The welfare of people is of no consideration; hospitals, roads, post offices and institutions of learning do not exist. Life and property of people living in the native states are not guaranteed. People and their rulers have no contact with the outside world as newspapers and printing presses do not exist. The misrule allows the political agents of the British Empire to interfere in the administration. Morality has no place in either governance or the conduct of daily life.

This decay has allowed the foreigners to rule over India. Narmad prefers the rule of the Mughals over that of the British. Mughals rulers made India their home and mingled with the people. The British show no desire to be one with people. Narmad says that the people who rule over us are not the best representatives of the British society. Most of those who come to India are from the lower classes, do not have good education but by the virtue of their race they become rulers, and their sole aim is to plunder the society.

Narmad criticises the rules and laws by which they govern and denounces the practice of dual system of justice as unjust and unethical.

Despite such all-round decay people appear to Narmad satisfied with their condition. Narmad feels that Hindu society is one of “eunuchs.” Narmad feels that the way out of this degeneration lies in people taking pride in their country. Without love for and pride in one's country the Hindu society will remain enslaved to tradition, superstition, illiteracy and continue to be governed by foreign rulers. Narmad calls this sense of pride and love for one's country as “Prem and Shaurya” (Romance and Valour). The second part of the poem is titled “Prem Shaurya”. This part aims at reminding the readers of the heroes of the past who had shown exceptional romance and courage for their land. This part is based on Col. Todd’s Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan and
A. K. Forbes' *Rasmala*. It is a poetic retelling of stories of valour and love. By reminding the people of Kshatriya valour he calls upon them to participate in the battle between Sudharaditya and Vahemjavan.

The third part is titled *Asha* (hope). *Asha* unlike the earlier section uses Europe as a referent. He narrates stories of Greek valour and hopes that India too would awaken to a dawn where reform has triumphed. In a country of his dreams he does not want Indians to have their own rule. He feels that Indians are incapable of self rule. He hopes that the English would become 'natives' and rule over the country. As natives they would comprehend the needs of people better and grant such rights as felt necessary.

His dream for India is that a member of the British royal family would settle in India and rule as a monarch, like the mughals some members of the English Royal family would become 'natives'. That day this country would regain its past glory.

It is significant that for Narmad the decline of Hindustan is caused by factors which are internal to Hindu society. The society and people who were capable of romance, valour and glory also contained seeds of self-destruction. In the poem, and the two epics that he wanted to write cause for decay is always integral to the native society.

The past that he wishes to resurrect is the Kshatriya past. In the story of Sudharaditya and Vahemjavan, as well as in the story of Jivraj and Kirtiba the backdrop is of the Kashtriya romance and valour. In *Hindu Ni Padi* it is the Kashtriya ideal of romance and valour which is projected as an ideal for the society in distress.

But Kashtriya Valour by itself is not perceived as capable of regenerating the society. It also has lost its vigour. The valour and romance of the Kashtriya past requires to be mediated by the European presence. The West is seen as having the power to re-form and reinvigorate a decayed society.
Sudhargaditya and Jivraj both require to be exiled in the West. They return from Europe renewed and are able to rescue their society. In *Hinduo Ni Padti* also the West acts as a referent.

Narmad displays remarkable ambivalence towards the British presence. He is critical of their rule which he describes as unjust and immoral. He attributes this misrule to the low birth and inadequate education of the rulers. As also to be unwillingness of the ruling race to mingle with the native. He would like the British royalty and aristocracy to rule India, in their lies the hope for its regeneration.

Along with his poem “Jay Jay Garvi Gujarat” Narmad is perhaps best known for a newspaper that he edited and published. This fortnightly newspaper was called *Dandiyo*. Narmad published it for five years, from September 1864 to December 1869. Its publication ceased twice due to financial difficulties. Between December 1865 and March 1866 and again in May, June, July of 1867 *Dandiyo* was not published. In all Narmad published sixty three issues of *Dandiyo*. Narmad’s idea was to form a club of native reformers. He felt that just as the Europeans gather at a club and “drink tea, coffee, and wine and indulge in ‘table talk’, reformers should also gather for informal ‘table talks.’ Although he could not establish a club he did form a ‘literary association’ where he indulged in ‘table talk’ with his friends. The outcome of these talks was *Dandiyo*. This became his trumpet in the fight against superstition. It also provided to Narmad a platform from where he could declare his views, opinions, prejudices and preferences. Narmad was also accused of indulging in ‘Yellow Journalism.’ Narmad’s own model was ‘The Spectator’. Narmad did not use *Dandiyo* for any serious debates, of his essays are brief, superficial. It also had a space for personal acrimony. Dalpatram and Manipatram came under repeated attacks in the pages of *Dandiyo*. Narmad’s iconoclast attitude found unrestrained expression earning him popularity as well as enemies. One of the first to take up the cause of reform in Surat was Durgaram Mehta through his *Monav Dharma Sabha*. Even he did not escape Narmad’s ‘humour.’ Durgaram did prayaschit to seek re-entry into the caste.
Narmad was unforgiving. He wrote; “Mehtaji saheb, it is not for the likes of you to uphold a pledge, those are cast differently... Mehtaji saheb, we are very sorry that Dandhjo did not have the good fortune to gaze upon your face smeared with cow’s dung and urine.”

Despite its mocking tone Dandhjo became an important vehicle for spreading the message of reform. It also records Narmad's own disenchantment with the reformers.

Narmad showed marked ambivalence towards the British presence in India. The British presence appeared to him as a source of regeneration; as an opportunity which can allow the Indian society to emerge from a state of decay and degeneration. The British rule also appeared to him as good and desirable. It was seen as providing stability, as ushering in normative and legal structures with which the society could modernise itself.

Any attempt by the Indian community to assent itself was seen by Narmad as deserving punishment. This is borne out by the poetry he composed during the uprising of 1857.

In a poem composed during 1857, he prayed to the god to defeat the ‘trouble makers’. He described the leaders to uprising as “proude, sinful, evil and debauched.” He hoped that the god would help the British vanquish them so that the “rule which gives happiness will become eternal.” He expressed the hope that the pride of ‘evil, unreasonable mutineers’ will be defeated and the British flag shall remain ever victorious.

Narmad gave reasons for his prayers for British victory. The English rule brings happiness and stability, it also brings with itself new energy and industriousness. More significantly Narmad views the British rule as just. The rule also unites, and “allows wolves and lambs to coexist”.

He describes the rulers as moral and concerned about the well being of the natives, and pleads that such virtuous and generous rulers be protected.
Narmad hopes that “the rule of the Queen shall be eternal” and this he says is not only his sentiment but “all people old, young, women and children” are praying for the “glory to the ruler”.

After the victory of the British he composed two poems in 1858 echoing similar sentiments. Narmad expressed his gratitude to the god for “granting victory to the good English” and defeating the mutineers who were “not true to their salt.”

He hoped that the Queen will continue to govern with pity so that “the people shall be ever grateful and loyal.”

He condemns the mutineers as “demonic” and wonders whether the demons of the old times had taken re-birth. The mutiny he said “was a blot on the entire people.” In 1858 he composed a poem in praise of Queen Victoria. He says that people are ever grateful for the day she was born, the day she became the Queen and more so on the day she proclaimed her self as a ruler of India. This country required a ruler like her as “all civilized lands are ruled by the English.” He says that Lord Indra should be grateful to her because she was the harbinger of “wealth and happiness”. He states that her virtues make her equal to all the acharyas.

Narmad also composed a poem to express his sorrow on the death of Prince Albert. In this composition he prayed that the God will grant Victoria strength to rule the world and take care of her own household. He also wrote a poem to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales and hoped that he shall rule India as justly as his mother.

The occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India was also celebrated by Narmad in a long poem which he composed in both Gujarati and English. He wrote; ‘All hail to thee! Most noble Prince …….. but for a welcome meet, what can we render, but our loyal love…” . He took this
opportunity to not only 'cheer and greet' but also narrate in “words of praise with love sincere” the “blessings of the British rule”

He says,
“Lo! Female education, once not known
Has taken root and speeds with rapid strides
By favour of the Gracious British rule;
Now see the female by her husband's side
Share his concerns, increase the bliss of home
And bless in happiness the British rule.”

In 1882 he composed another poem to express his gratitude to the god for saving the Queen from an assassin's bullet. He again expressed the sentiment that the Queen will continue to rule forever. Narmad not only composed poems on the British royal family but also on their representatives to India. In a poem written in 1884 he described Lord Ripon as “Upholder of Morality” and stated that it was because of moral and virtuous rulers like him that the British rule shall stay for ever.

In *Hindo Ni Padi* Narmad is critical of the British rule. He describes it as unjust and immoral. But for him this is not the essential character of British rule. He attributes the mis-rule to the low and uncultivated class of people who govern India. The solution for him is not native rule but rule by a member of the British royal family. In the final section of the poem *Asha* he describes Indians as incapable of self rule. He hopes that a member of the British royal family will rule India directly and not through their representatives.

Thus for Narmad the English presence is a source of deep ambivalence. The English encounter is seen by him as a source of reform, regeneration and a new energy which can be used to recast the essential character of native society. His discomfort with the British rule arises not so much from the
character of that rule or the normative structure being prescribed but is based on the reluctance of the British to nativise themselves.

Indian rule or attempts at assertion by native populace are for Narmad signs of anarchy, misrule, decay and stagnation. It is only the British presence, which can for him ameliorate the condition of India.

In 1865 Narmad decided to write *Kavcharitra*. This was an early attempt to write the history of Gujarati poetical literature through the biographies of significant poets. Narmad did not complete this work but nevertheless published his notes. From the introduction and the published notes we get some idea about the proposed work.

Narmad says that biographies of famous people are 'pleasing to the heart instructive to the mind.' For Narmad poets belong to a special category of people. "Reading biographies is useful, but benefits of reading biographies of poets are innumerable. Poetry mirrors the society."  

He laments the absence of biographical or historical narratives in the vernacular tradition. He says, "This is a major defect of Indian scholars. In Europe the practice of writing autobiographies is quite old." He hoped that his attempt would institute the practice amongst us. He appeals to scholars and famous men to make notes of their own lives and lives of other important people known to them, this he hoped would furnish authentic information to the future biographer. Narmad also appealed to scholars to take up this work and extolled the rich to support these endeavours. Narmad himself could not work on this idea systematically. He made lists of poets and at times wrote some biographical notes on them. These notes were written on basis of "what the people remember of the poet, the poetry itself and my own thoughts about them." He made a classificatory system according to which the biography could be composed. This classification is instructive as it also shows Narmad's struggle to develop rudiments of critical vocabulary by which the work of a poet could be understood and judged.
An example of his notes will illustrate this point. Narmad’s entry on Narsinh Mehta reads as follows: 80

1) Time: 1450-1550 (Vikram Samvat)
2) Poet: Narsinh Mehta, Junagadh, Vadnagara Nagar
3) Characteristics of: More breadth than depth (the category of a short woman), his language but solid
4) Quality: Very easy but only a hint of smoothness
5) Complexion: Beautiful woman of a wheatish complexion; her Zanzars (footbells) ring.

This clearly shows absence of critical categories for Narmad. Sanskrit poetics was available to him, but he choose to not utilize its categories or language, but instead he tried to use vernacular expressions to describe the qualities of a poet. In this uncomplete attempt Narmad sought to write the history of Gujarati Literature through the biographies of poets. This was to be a chronological narrative of different poets, at the same time Narmad wished to establish some coherence by describing the specificity of language, its quality and subjects dealt with.

In 1860 Narmad started compiling a dictionary of Gujarati Language. This Gujarati-Gujarati dictionary, called Narmad Kosh 81 has become a landmark event in the history of Gujarati lexicography. In 1862 and 1863 Karsandas Mulji and Shahpurj Adelji had compiled two English-Gujarati dictionaries for students. Before that in 1808 Rev. R. Drumand had provided a short glossary of Gujarati words as an appendix to his grammar of Gujarati language.

These earlier efforts were no doubt important but they were intended to provide English equivalents to Gujarati words. In 1865 Hirachand Kanji published a Gujarati – Gujarati dictionary.

Notwithstanding these pioneering efforts Narmad Kosh has come to be regarded as a point of departure largely because Narmad through his compilation laid the rules of or creating a lexicon in Gujarati.
Narmad was moved to compile a dictionary from a sense that he had introduced a significant break in the language of prose and poetry. Narmad did not believe that his poetic expression was 'difficult.' This he attributed to the fact that he had introduced new subjects and emotions to Gujarati poetry. New themes required that he invent a new expression. Narmad believed that the difficulty that his language posed came in the way of the appreciation of his poetry. To make his poetry more accessible he decided to compile a list of difficult words. Describing this process he says, “School students used to find it difficult to comprehend some of the words in my poems. Hence, I decided to compile a 'vocabulary' of all such words by arranging them in alphabetical order. When I started the compilation I realized that such words were far too many. This motivated me to create a dictionary which would contain majority of the words in Gujarati language. Dr. Dhirajrami endorsed this idea and on the 10th November, 1860 I started this compilation.”

Like some of his other efforts Narmad had little idea about the effort and preparedness required to undertake the task. “When I began I had thought it was easy to create a dictionary. What effort would be required in just collecting and arranging words. But as the work progressed I realized how difficult it was.”

As with his other works Narmad started publishing parts of the dictionary as they were compiled. Between 1861 and 1866 he published four parts. Sometimes he did not even have the patience to complete all the words in a particular alphabet, and he published sections. Narmad tried hard to find support and sponsorship for his project, without much success. Plagued by financial insecurities he abandoned the idea of compiling a comprehensive dictionary around 1866. But the original purpose of making his poetry more accessible stayed with him. He introduced the practice of providing footnotes to his poems where meanings of difficult words were given.

By 1868 he recommenced the work of compiling the dictionary which was finally published in 1873. This work was dedicated to the people of
Gujarat and as a dedication he composed his most memorable poem, “Jay Jay Garvi Gujarat.”

While he was compiling *Narma kosh* Narmad started writing on a dictionary of historical personalities. He selected characters from the *Mahabharat*, the *Ramayana* and the various *Puranas*. He wrote brief biographical notes on each. He had hoped that these notes would provide instruction on the cultural heroes as well as on the specific texts around them.

Giving reasons for undertaking such an exercise he wrote: “Our people are familiar with some incidents from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharat* and the *Bhagvat*. But they are largely ignorant about the peculiar personalities and histories of the characters there in. The practice of hearing the recitations of *Puranas* is on the decline and the new generation has neither the inclination nor the means of acquainting itself with those characters…. If we comprehend the characters of great people and the themes of these epics in the right context it provides us with various aesthetic delights as well as instructions about righteous and virtuous conduct. Through them we also came to understand the power of logical and discerning knowledge that gave our ancestors eternal glory. It also imbues us with pride about our country, our native states, our religion and social practices. Realizing the need for I have created this book.”

Created with the awareness about its cultural function *Narma katha kosh* was the first of its kind in Gujarati language.

In 1866 Narmad wrote one of his early historical narrations. It was the ‘history’ of his native town Surat. This narrative is called *Suratni Muktesar Hakikat* (A brief account of Surat). The text is interesting not because it provides a historical account of Surat. Infact it gives very little information or insight into the making of Surat. This account is one of the early forms of historical prose writing in Gujarati. It demonstrates the struggle to arrive at a historical method. Narmad’s essay tries to combine orality with historicity,
description with creating a listing, a register. The narrative is divided in 15 chapters or 'Bab' as Narmad calls them. The structure of the narrative demonstrates Narmad's quest to acquire a historical perspective and a method of writing history. Narmad provides details about the geographical locations of Surat and a brief description of the important landmarks. One of the chapters provides a list of all the important and interesting locations that a visitor ought to be acquainted with. The narrative moves from location, description and listing to the stories about origins of the city. Not having access to 'historical data' Narmad relies on collective memories. He is aware about the tensions between omni and historicity and hence he calls it 'fictional account.' It is only while dealing with the period between 16th and 19th century that Narmad describes his narrative as 'historical'. He makes an attempt to follow linear time frame. Even while dealing with the period which is available to him in a historical manner, Narmad shows great hesitation in interpretation and analysis. He prefers to record. It is as if the interpretative aspects would deny his narrative recognition as a 'historical' prose.

This desire to be factual and historically accurate may have its source in his intimate knowledge about Surat. This proximity binds him to facts and events. Narmad felt no such compulsion to be the 'historical' and 'factual' while writing a narrative on the history of Mevad. This essay was written in 1867, a year after he wrote the history of Surat. Narmad did not know Mevad at all. This unfamiliarity creates an expectation that Narmad would be more circumspect in his narration and make greater effort to be historically correct. The text is quite to the contrary. The structure that he had adopted for the history of Surat is abandoned, he is not even bound by the linear time scale. The history of Mevad reads like a series of interwoven stories. These are stories about medieval Rajputs valour and is motivated by the same impulse which informs his long poems, *Hindno Ni Padṭi*. The purpose here is to celebrate and posit Rajput valour as a desirable cultural characteristic. Its impulse is not to record and inform but to inculcate in his readers a sense of pride.
These two short essays indicate Narmad's earliest grappling with historical narration. These are marked not only by a desire to come to terms with historical method but also by confidence in discarding historicity for the sake of creation of culturally desirable constructs. Two other efforts that Narmad made around 1870 were also inspired by a similar impulse of educating and cultivating his people about historical figures and cultural texts.

In 1870 Narmad wrote a long essay called 'Mahapurush Na Chartro' (character sketches of great men). This text is closer in its structure to Narmad's *katha kosh*. It provides short biographical sketches of great men. Narmad says that biographical details of great men are instructive on two grounds. One, it provides a glimpse into the history of their times. Two, they act as exemplars. Narmad arranged these biographical sketches according to the sphere of activity. These categories are instructive. Narmad lists five such categories; kings and warriors, prophets, philosophers and scholars, law givers, those who discovered countries and poets. The last three comprises of only one sketch each, Moses, Columbus and Homer respectively. These short biographical details do not indicate depth of understanding, they represent an engagement with history. An engagement which was not limited to his surroundings or his own past. It is a much larger involvement, it is civilizational in its orientation. He is concerned with questions of how a people are forged, how they rise above their limitations and what causes change to occur.

These early historical writings which by themselves appear disjointed, hasty and at times immature together represent an engagement with the idea and method of history with which Narmad was struggling. Narmad published them as independent essays or books. But in a sense these are like rough notes and early drafts that Narmad was given to printing. They together represent Narmad's preparation to be a historian. The represent the process by which Narmad acquired the sensibilities of a historian. This sensibility and preparation culminated in a grand pioneering effort, a history of the world in Gujarati.
Between 1871-76 Narmad wrote his most ambitious work, *Rajyarang*. It was the first ever attempt to write the history of the world in Gujarati. It is in this text that Narmad grapples with the idea of history and of civilizational changes.

Narmad is aware at the magnitude of the task before him. He is aware that this is an unprecedented act for Gujarati intellectual history. History at one level could be a story of rise and fall of kingdoms and peoples. He says “In different ages Kingdoms and states were forged and they declined. How they were forged, how they prospered and withered, in what manner the new once were forged for them to prosper and decline; the multifaceted narration of these transformation is *Rajyarang*.” Narmad is not satisfied with a narrative account of transformations. For him this transformative process has aesthetic possibilities, and it is these that he wishes to explore. Power for him is an aesthetic category as well. “Of all types of beauty, the finest is the beauty of power. The beauty of the state is supreme.” Narmad goes on to explicate his idea of power and its aesthetic delight. “The people of some area are under the power of *dharma*, some are governed by both *dharma* and force, while some only by force. The bigger the community of people and the greater its power, the state it creates is also larger. Those people who are well endowed with the riches of body, intellect, wealth and force do prosper more than others, and they are also more radiant. But the power that they submit themselves to has more splendour, elegance and grandeur, and that is how it ought to be.”

The power and the aesthetic delights that Narmad refers to is the divine power. That divine power for Narmad is one which manifests itself through the multitude and transformations of history. Narmad begins his introduction thus; “There is one, it is multiple, it ceases, it commences, it delights, One has many meanings, One is seen through many acts, one is manifest in many religions, its love nourishes, and its glory shines, It is victorious: - eternal *Srirang*.” For Narmad the act of writing history becomes a form of the search for the divine. It is an act which he hoped would allow him to comprehend the workings of the divine. History thus becomes for Narmad the...
mode by which he would be one with the creator. It is not for everyone to comprehend the divine “who’s hita is unknowable, whose power is eternal and whose knowledge is unfathomable.” But Narmad hopes that in his “childish pratter” he will be able to capture some of its play. Rayarang is caught between the need to narrate the story of kings and their empires and the desire to search the divine. Narma’s attempt is to do both. He has to develop a method which would allow him to chronicle the world and search the divine power.

He does this through the organisation of time and its meanings. Then history is divided in 16 Darshans. The term darshan is employed in two different ways. At one level it signifies a system of philosophy, while at the same time it also denotes a system of dividing the narrative without the need to cohear it in a system of thought. This 16 danshans are divided in two Mahadarshan, a more encompassing systemic classification. Each of the two Mahadarshan is sought to be subsumed under two different philosophical systems. One is the idea of Chaturyuga, of four fold division of time in Sat, Dwapar, Treta and Kaliyuga. In this Sankhya, conception time is seen as a movement from luminosity to darkness. The ‘Cyclical’ nature of time denotes not only degeneration and disintegration but it also encodes the possibility of regeneration, and thus eternity of time. The notion informs the first Mahadarshan. But even within this four fold division, Narmad introduces notion of linear time. This becomes clear if we examine the division as given by him.

**Mahadarshan:1**

- Darshan: 1 Satyug 2234 BC – 2188 BC
- Darshan: 2 Tretayug 2100 BC – 1600 BC
- Darshan: 3 Dwapar 1600 BC – 1000 BC
- Darshan: 4 End of Dwapar & Kaliyug 1000 BC – 600 BC
- Darshan: 5 500 BC – 400 BC
- Darshan: 6 3, 2 1 Centuries BC
- Darshan: 7 AD 1st – 5th Century.

But in the second Mahadarshan 2 Narmad abandons the Chaturyuga conception and adopts a linear notion of time.
Narmad is aware of the tension of employing two different conceptions of classifying time. To overcome this tension he employs an overarching category. This category is that of Kalaswarp (the Image/form of the time). Different segments of time and different social formations are sought to be represented by the kalaswarp. Different historical periods are characterised by the dominant forces which shaped the societies and guided the people and these are called Kalaswarp by Narmad. To characterise different times Narmad employs the idea of Purushartha. Purushartha here becomes not only a vocation to be perused but also an analytical and classificatory system. Narmad divides the first Mahadarshan in three categories.

1) Dharma Murtikala: upto 776 B.C
2) Kama Murtikala: upto 241 B.C
3) Artha Murtikala: Upto 476 A.D.

The second Mahadarsha is divided in two categories.
1) Dharma murtikala: 5th to 15th Century AD
2) Kama murtikala: From 15th Century to 1858

Narmad does not provide any reason for the division of time such as he made in his Purushartha classification. The two Mahadarshans are largely...
concerned with the chronicle of the empires, their formations and decay. Here Narmad becomes the narrator, trying to comprehend large sweeps of times. It is while discussing the Kalaswarap that Narmad grapples with underlying meanings, with thematic unites which he hoped to discern. He is concerned with structures of thoughts, of beliefs and practices. By trying to comprehend structural changes and constants across peoples and cultures over epochal time frames Narmad hoped to comprehend the process of transformation. By separating the Mahadarshans from the Kalaswarap, Narmad introduces a division between the political changes and changes at level of social practice, beliefs and systems of thoughts. Narmad becomes conscious of the relationship between political power and its structures and modes of thought and practices which hold the life and the community together. From his method of dividing time we also discern an understanding about the duration of transformations and their impact. While discussing the realm of the political Narmad deals with comparatively shorter spans of time. For understanding the Kalaswarap Narmad prefers to deal with long durations and their transformative potential.

The Dharma murtikala is described as “a period where Dharma reigned supreme.” It is a period where communities were formed around the idea of religion and its practices. Peoples and their rulers conducted themselves with reference to a principle higher than themselves, religion became the point of validation for authority.

The Karma murtikala is described as one where people were governed by desire. Desire to prosper, to acquire, to enjoy fruits thereof and thereby bring glory to self and people. It also manifested itself through a desire to forge one self in to larger communities. The Artha Murtikala was characterised by an overpowering desire to acquire material possessions, to expand the kingdom into empires.

Narmad’s concern was to understand structures. His description of kalaswarap brings out this concern. He describes notions of authority, its principles of validation and legitimisation, the nature of jurisprudence and
judicial systems, forms of worship and rituals, and systems of social organisation. Narmad does not concern himself with the economic life. Modes and methods of production, relations of production and creation of wealth finds little mention in his descriptions. The economic realm is largely absent in Rajyarang.

Having described the three Kalaswarups, Narmad makes an attempt to form a view, which integrates all the three swarups in what he describes as Mahakalaswarup. Hence he moves to the cosmic and the eternal. He describes the three Kalaswarups in brief. Having done this he states that all attempts to arrest the movement of time have failed in fact time itself has not been able to determine its own course, as it was being propelled towards its destiny of being one with the eternal. He says, “Men of religion and men who wielded great power tried with great determination, force and intellect to ensure that one unitary form was created and preserved, but they could not do so even in movements of creation and points of repose they encountered destruction. Even the great time which created and destroyed while manifesting itself as Dharma, Kama and Artha finally merged and became one with the eternal”.

In the first Mahadarshan Narmad begins with ideas of cyclical time with attendant notions of luminosity and darkness, makes a space for linear time but wishes to subsume both under the idea of Kalaswarup. The Purnsharthas are used as metaphors to characterise the nature of social formations, and brings it to a conclusion by invoking the eternal principle and suggesting that our destiny as that of history and time itself is to merge and be one with the eternal principle.

The part two of Rajyarang deals with what Narmad describes as the “modern history”. The second Mahadarshan describes the period between the 5th Century AD to 1858. For the modern period Narmad abandons the earlier scheme of classification. There are no darshans which divide the text. Instead the Mahadarshan covering roughly 15 centuries is divided in two Kalaswarups, Dharma Murtikala (5 to 15 Century AD) and Kama Murtikala (15th Century to
present). He also abandons the linear periodisation that he had used for the earlier *Mahadarshan*. Instead, these long durations of time are sought to be understood from a civilizational perspective. He describes China, India, the Islamic world, the Greco – Roman world, the Christendom and Europe is dealt by examining at Germany, France, England, Spain and Portugal. He adds a chapter on United States of America while dealing with the contemporary period. There is little attempt at either description or analysis in this section. The history of China between the 3rd century and the 15th is covered in a paragraph of twenty lines; the history of England to which he had greater access is deal within two and a half pages. Notwithstanding this paucity, the section is suggestive of Narmad's desire to grapple with the idea of civilization as a unit for historical understanding. This emergence of civilization as a category to be analyzed is the chief merit of this exercise. Perhaps, this perspective emerges out of Narmad's earlier classification itself. He experimented with cyclicity and linearity, abandoned both to arrive at a notion of *Kalaswarupa* which allowed him to grapple with structural transformations over long durations. In the second *Mahadarshan* Narmad does employ the notion of *Kalaswarupa* but does not in any way reformulate the earlier notion, nor does he feel necessary to explain the reason for non inclusion of the third category, *Attha Murtkala*, in his classification.

In concluding section of the second part Narmad describes the period between the 15th and the 19th century as the age of freedom. He describes the emergence of the idea of freedom thus. "Thousands have lost lives, many thousands have been oppressed, great damage and loss has occurred, but as a result freedom has come to rule over our intellect, our religion, our states, and our societies; even those who do not enjoy political freedom are being illuminated by the idea of freedom." Narmad is aware that this idea of freedom is restricted in the sense of being free from bondage. He states; "Large part of humanity is unhappy. The passion for freedom is increasing but people crave for only bodily comforts." The hope that the idea of freedom would come to encompass the universe within is unstated. Narmad leaves that hope for the finale of his treatise.
The final section of Rayarang is called Sarparang, in which as its name suggests Narmad’s attempt is to create an overarching perspective. Narmad takes the Samkhya view of gunas. According to this view all existing beings have a predominant attribute or quality (guna), which is the essence of their prakrti, (Nature, Svabhava). The Samkhya system divided the gunas in three basic categories. Sattva (goodness, virtue), Rajas (Passion, foulness), Tamas (darkness, ignorance).

Narmad argued that these categories are applicable not only to individuals but also to communities and people belonging to a country. He further argued that these gunas are constant, the flow of time does not alter in any essential sense the basic attributes of a people. He says; “Over time the human condition has altered fundamentally... the earliest people formed states by their qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas, these qualities are to be found in the people inhabiting those lands even today, the original qualities might have become impure, but its essence has remained unaltered.”

Thus Narmad finds a constant category by which to comprehend the changes that have occurred from the beginning of human history. The idea of triguna becomes for him an all encompassing explanatory framework. Narmad argues that the societies created by different people, at different historical times are also conditioned by their guna. He says; “The civilization achievements of people with satvaguna are more permanent and of a higher order, the achievements of people with rajasguna are impressive and higher and the acts of people with tamas guna appear to have wrecked destruction and havoc from time to time.”

Narmad goes on to classifying peoples, their languages and their religion with the help of the notion of guna. He only provides a classification but no explanation for it. He says that the people who speak and spoke Sanskrit language have Sattva as a predominant quality, while those who speak the semetic language have rajasguna.
Narmad enumerates the five major religions of the world. Hindu, Buddha, Islam, Christianity, Melecha. The category of melecha include for him people who follow “primitive religion.”

He argues that people have followed different religions because of their gunas. The aryans with their sata guua have followed Hindu religion, the semetic people with their rajas and tamas have followed Christianity, Judaism and Islam. He makes religion a function of gunas suggesting that religions have been developed by people to suit their essential nature. He states “it is apparent that different religions emerge because of the gunas, and people of different gunas have followed religions according to their qualities.”

If religion is contingent upon the gunas then morality (Niti) also is a function of gunas. Narmad argues that notions of morality change from people to people and time to time. These transient moralities are a specific response to the existing external conditions. But that there are certain moral frame works which are universal. They remain valid for all times and all societies. Following the concept of gunas Narmad argues that the niti of the satvaguni are universal and eternal because, “Satvaguni is always thoughtful, a rajas guni at times acts without thought, one with a combination of satva and rajas does act without thought and at times their actions are manipulative.”

Thus the desired ideal for Narmad is to uphold the morality of the Satva guna as for them morality and religion are the same. Narmad describes this external morality as Narita dharma (an engagement with the world with a sense of equanimity and detachment). The transient morality is pravrta dharma (an active, attached engagement with the world).

Narmad argues that the people of Asia are Satva and hence “are broad minded, have concern for the welfare of others, and they are satisfied with their station in life, they are saintly, detached and proud of their religion and family.” Their action enhance Narita dharma. People of Europe on the other hand have rajas and tamas gunas, they therefore are, “narrow minded, selfish,
greedy, manipulative and have attachment with material world and follow *pravriti dharma*.” Thus according to Narmad, the civilization of India is permanent, constant and virtuous, while that of Europe with all its glory can only be a transient and its achievements are not desirable. He says; “Asia has advocated *nivriti dharma*, their engagement with the world has been in accordance with its principles, they have followed this eternal *dharma* and Europe, while respecting the eternal *dharma* of Asia has followed the transient and ever changing *dharma of pravriti*.”

Narmad has no doubt that although the *pravriti dharma* of Europe has been ascendant, it can only be transient in the larger sense of historic time. He urged people to follow the eternal value of *nivriti dharma*. “All human beings have held one eternal *dharma*, that is of *nivriti*, engagement with the world ought to be with the awareners and knowledge of *nivriti*, all *pravriti* should also lead us towards *nivriti*.”

Even this *nivriti* for Narmad is transitory and insignificant, because it is all a part of human play and its destiny. It at the most gives us a glimpse of the eternal *Lila* of the unknowable. The ultimate destiny of *Nivriti* itself is to merge with the One without “a beginning and an end.”

With the invocation of *Shanti* Narmad ends not only his history of the world but his own life long search for historicity.

In an essay, *Sudhara ane Sudharawala*, written in 1881 Narmad attempted to reconsider and reexamine the assumptions on which the reform movement had based itself.

When societies undergo transition differences as to what the direction of change should be, how that change should be brought about and most importantly what of the old should be retained and what should be reformed arise. Such moments create ruptures within the society.
The shape that society will take depends upon the manner in which the patterns of the old and the new interact and merge with each other. Narmad lists four possible patterns.

a) The new replaces the old completely.
b) The new modes dominate, but the old ways survive.
c) The old accommodates elements of the new.
d) The old rejects the new entirely.

Narmad defines reform in the following terms:

"Reform consists of purifying or re-moulding what is polluted or is disorganised. Reform also means to engage in thoughts or actions relating to the process of reform."

He classifies the reformers into two groups. Those who provide the ideological and philosophical foundations of reform are Sadhak Sudharak, (the ideologues of reform), these may or may not engage in acts and programmes related to reform. Those who follow the sadhaks are Sahay Sudharak, it is these who assist and carry out the process of reform. This hierarchy among the reformers is based not only on the nature of their engagement but also on the realm they wish to transform.

In terms of the priority, those who provide new formulations about dharma are considered of higher value than those who seek to reform the realm of the political or those who are concerned with moral and religious life.

Narmad classifies the reformers into four categories. These categories are dependent upon the view that they take about the various combinations of the new and the old. These are: a) Radical; those who want the old removed root and branch, b) Liberal; those who want to retain some elements of the old but give primacy to the new, c) Liberal conservative, those who wish to retain the old in a large measure but accommodate some elements of the new, and finally d) conservative; those who wish to retain the old in its original form.
According to Narmad the reform movement seeks to reconstitute the society and its ideals. For him the value placed on sacrifice and selflessness by the Hindu society constitutes its core. This is not only true for Sanatan Hindu Dharma but also for various sects and religions, which arose in defiance of Hindu practices, like Buddhism and Jainism. He calls the contemplative and selfless values and *Nirrtidharma* and its opposite is *Prauritidharma*, one which seeks to engage with the world to enhance bodily comforts. “Hindus have traditionally believed that *Nirrtidharma* is primary and *Prauritidharma* is secondary.”

The attempt of the reform movement has been to alter this and give primacy to *Prauritidharma*. The radicals among them want *Nirrtidharma* to be eradicated. This is attempted on the basis of a belief that what is tangible and experiential is true and what is beyond the realm of the senses is untrue.

Evaluating the impact of the reform movement he states that the reformers, though very vocal are few in numbers. “Large parts of our population disregarding the noise of reformers continue to follow their religion, just as their ancestors had been doing. Those who have come under the influence of reform, continue their old practices in the household or the caste with some reform modification but do not join hands openly with the reformers.”

Narmad believes that the major contribution of the reformers has been that “They have not allowed the Christian preachers to gain ascendancy.”

But at the same time their impact on those who have come under their influence has been disastrous. “They have created divisions within the society” he says, he further adds, “They have sown seeds of doubt in some people, they are loud mouthed, do not practice what they preach, they are debauched, and under their influence people have become untrue, have lost all sense of limits. People consume alcohol, are more debauched and have become more selfish and narrow.”

This is due to “the company of reformers who are indifferent to morality and who praise inanimate forces.” The colonial cultural encounter has also created deep doubts and ambivalences within Hindu society. He argues that people of Europe pursue these worldly desires. They give primacy to *pravritti* and condemn Hindus as ‘effeminate and impotent.’ This he argues is only true for those who have come under the influence of
reform and given up traditional values of selflessness and sacrifice. Hindus, he believes, can regain their potency only by following the principles of sacrifice and *Nruita*.

Concluding his broad assessment of the reform process the says, "The reform movement was initiated by in experienced youth, who were ignorant of their own religion and were enamoured by the foreign religion. I see that time is bringing back traditional Hindu values, in the end the Sanatan Hindu religion will accommodate only minor reform modifications within its fold." 114

Narmad also takes stock of the activities and issues raised by the reformers. According to him the period between 1851-1861 witnessed an effervescence in the movement. The issues raised by the reformers can be broadly classified under five categories. These are

1) Superstition  
2) crossing the seas  
3) women’s education  
4) widow remarriage  
5) religious practices

Narmad believes that the good of the people and the society lies in following the traditional values of *nuritalarma*. He declares that his endeavour has been to teach these values. Assessing his own transformations Narmad says; "Narmadashankar was a liberal, later he became a radical in all respects and after writing *Kajjaranga*, he is a liberal conservative." 115 According to Narmad the reformers have failed in the realm of the political. The reformers should understand, he says, that people can be happy in all respects only in a state which is native, where religion of the people is protected and upheld. Therefore, the aim of the reform should be to ensure that ‘even if it takes time, the Hindus should rule over this country. The reformers did speak of ‘national pride’ but they did not have the courage to say that national pride should be cultivated for self-rule. Instead, they argued that national pride should be cultivated to reform the society. They felt that distinctions of caste, religious beliefs and practices were an impediment to cultivating national pride, and hence they tried to form new religious beliefs and practice. According to
Narmad such a strategy has caused harm to the society and has in fact resulted in a loss of national pride. He says, “From thirty years of experience, I can see that the national pride as understood and advocated by the reformers has endeavoured to denounce and destroy, root and branch, the superior, age-old native pride in one's own religion, morality and social practices....Hindu people give importance to Narmadharma and do not respond to new-fangled national pride, nor do they consider new religions worthy of respect.”

He believes that reformers have to realize that foreign rule, however beneficial and benevolent it may appear to us at present, has to be replaced by native rule. Anarchy under native rule is more preferable than peace and order under foreign rule. He laments the fact that there is no one among the reformers who thinks of the nation in these terms. He sees the reasons for this in the Hindu worldview. According to him Hindus have been primarily concerned with preserving their religious identity, even under long centuries of foreign rule. He says, “Hindu people are primarily concerned with preserving the state of their religion not the nation — state.”

Despite this, he considers it a major failing of the reform movement. The reform movement was concerned with spreading the idea of this wordliness, the most important of which is the realm of the political. In this realm their efforts have been “pitiable and comical.” Reform movement had spent a lot of energy on reforming the household and the family. Narmad is extremely critical of the reformers, for according to him they have sown seeds of division within the society. According to him the strength of Hindu society has been the unity of nation, family and religion. The reformers have attempted to denounce all the three, thereby creating disjunctions within the society. The reformers themselves have not been united in their thought and deeds, because of their efforts “the condition of the people is more fallen than before.” The root cause of the failure of the reform movement according to Narmad is that reformers have tried to attack and alter the basic character of the people, without ever having understood them. It tried to take people away from what was their own. And it is for these reasons they represent destructive forces.
Having been a reformer himself Narmad in 1881 reformulated his life's mission. He declares; "My initial endeavour along with other reformers was to make Hindu pravriti stronger and robust on the lines of European morality. I realised later that this plan was divisive and harmful. Now my endeavour is to make Hindu naiti stronger, if this were to be achieved pravriti will also become stronger as a result of it."120

And how is this to be attained? For Narmad there is only one path. Svadharma has to be followed. People, who have lost their faith in it, must regain it. It is only by remembering what is one's own, by reclaiming it and reaffirming it that Narmad hoped to make his people higher and stronger. He calls his former companions to join him in this mission, as it is the only correct path.

In the same year Narmad wrote a short essay, Samajik Ane Sanatan Dharmasthithi 121 (The societal and eternal condition of religion). The essay became a medium for him to express the values he had once cherished; but now had deep reservations about. Giving an account of his earlier beliefs he states: "There is one creator and he is omnipotent and possesses all virtues. The various names that people call him by are indicative of the virtues. The Vedas are neither created nor inspired by the gods Vśata, Japa, Tirtha are meaningless and bring no results. Purity of mind is important. Shraddha is a meaningless ritual. God is formless. Idol worship must be stopped. There is no life after death, all human beings are equal, there is no need for caste distinctions. One is not polluted either by eating with members of other communities or religion, nor does consumption of alcohol and non-vegetarian food results in loss of one's religion. There is no need for religious practices. All rituals performed at the time of marriage and death are useless. Marriage is an exchange of promise between consenting adults. The realisation of one's immoral acts is the act of repentance."122

Narmad describes these beliefs as a loss of one's religious identity. This state according to him lasted for about sixteen years, after which he regained
his faith in the ideals of one's own religion. "After remaining in a fallen state regarding one's own religion, I came to believe the principles of own religion as true. People realised that my views had changed, between 1876 and 1879, I lectured on Nivriti – Pravriti, and in 1879, I published a leaflet about observances during an eclipse." 123

He also advised people to continue to follow the age old religion. He recognises that there is disorder but exhorts people to continue their practices inspite of attacks on them.

In the same year he wrote there other small essays, one on marriage and two on the subject of national pride. His attempt in these essays is to chronicle the issues raised by reform movement and also to clearly state his own position on these subsequent to his regaining the faith.

The reform in marriage was one of the central concerns of the reform movement. It was argued that as long as the institution of marriage is not reformed, and the condition of widows not improved, the household can not be reformed. For the societal reforms to succeed reform in marriage had to take place.

There were specifically two areas where reform was sought, child-marriage and the condition of the widows. It was argued that the practice of child-marriage was at the heart of many social evils. This practice not only caused great harm to the health of the child bride it also resulted in weak progeny and early death of the women and children. The practice of child-marriage also did not allow for the education of young girls. The practice of child-marriage was also seen related to the condition of widows. The reform movement sought to change this by seeking to increase the age of marriage , they also sought to introduce the idea of consent in marriage. On the other hand they advocated for widow re-marriage. Reform was also sought in the rituals surrounding the marriage ceremony.
Narmad was one of the principle advocates of reform in the marriage. He had tried to draw the attention of the society to the pathetic condition of the widows by composing poems like *Vaidhavyachantra*. He was also at the forefront of reformers trying to ‘arrange’ widow re-marrriages.

He says that the idea that the condition of women needs betterment came to the reformers by understanding the respect and freedom that women in Europe seem to enjoy. They also realised the condition of widows was most pathetic and required urgent intervention. They had believed that without improving the condition of widows attempts of reforming Hindu society will not succeed.

Even after having changed his opinion on the desirability and efficacy of the reform movement Narmad was not willing to alter his views on the practice of widow remarriage. He is no longer an enthusiastic supporter of that call but is willing to encourage the practice nevertheless. Giving account of the change in his position and giving reasons for that change he says; ‘As one of the reformers my view was that the practice of widow remarriage should be encouraged and my sincere efforts were in those directions. But, later considering various issues like re-birth and the idea of karma, the element of destiny even after the re-marriage of a widow, the higher ideals of love, the sin of foetal deaths committed by widows by terminating pregnancies, the sin that men committed by their debauched behaviour with regards to widows, questions regarding purity of the Hindu household after the introduction of the practice of the widow re-marriage, doubts about *shatrūr* sanctions for such practices and having observed the life of couples who have taken such a step has prompted me to rethink my views. My views are no longer firm and unambiguous. At the same time I do not advocate that widow remarriages should be stopped. Such marriages should take place, with all rituals after proper deliberation and with an idea of upholding the dharma of the householder.’

At the same time he states that re-marriage for a widow is an imperative of the time, it is to be seen as an apaddharma. The ‘eternal’ value that a widow
should uphold is *brahmacharya*. He introduces a normative consideration. The ideal that a widow should uphold is *brahmacharya* and those who follow this norm will have a higher value than those who remarry. Once a widow remarries she should have an equal right to participate in rituals and ceremonies. Moreover, he introduced two other conditions for a widow to remarry. First, such a woman shall not leave her husband and second, a widowed woman should remarry only once, in the eventuality of the death of the second husband, the woman shall not re-marry. He hopes that more widows shall remarry, out of their free will and lead a life of high morals and virtues.

It appears that Narmad is ambiguous on the question of widow remarriage. He is not ready to condemn it, nor is he willing to grant his unequivocal support to the cause. He introduces a normative ideal of eternal values of *brahmacharya* and sees widow remarriage as a need arising out of the times and the condition of widows. He qualifies his support by placing conditions on them.

In the essays on national pride Narmad's attempt is to delineate what constitutes national pride in the Indian context. He states that there are five elements that constitute the idea of national pride.

First is an idea that foreign rule should not exist in our country and we should have our own rule instead. Narmad believes that there is no effort in this direction. Even at the level of an idea this has not gained acceptance or even understood by the large mass of people. People only desire peace, order and justice under any ruler, and even if this does not exist people continue to lead their life under adversity. Narmad believes that in the remote possibility of the British Empire becoming weak and being faced with a rebellion, the rulers of India will not come together moved by an idea of national pride. He does not see the possibility of people coming together to drive away the foreign rulers.
The second element consists of trying to improve the condition of the local people within the frame work of British rule. Narmad believes that such efforts can be made only because of the liberal policies of the British rule and the benevolence of the Queen who allows such freedom to her people. These efforts are being made through two instruments, associations and newspapers. Narmad sees associations as the product of exposure to English education, most of its members, he says, are rich and some learned. Narmad is critical of the associations. The associations mostly engage in petitioning the rulers on various issues, the government listens to them but takes no action. For Narmad, people are not mature enough to form themselves in associations which can be effective, he therefore says, 'to hope that Indian natives will seat, like the Irish or the Canadians, in the British parliament is futile.'

Narmad, who himself had edited and published a journal, understands the role of news journals and the reach of the printed word with greater clarity. According to him the newspapers inform people about events taking place not only in one region but in other regions as well. This gives its readers a wider perspective and imbues them with a sense of belonging to a larger unit. It also helps in forging common opinions regarding policies, acts and other significant happenings. In the modern sense, Narmad, assigns to the newspapers the role of forging a people.

Third element is to make efforts towards ensuring that local industry flurishes and the wealth of the nation is not drained out. Narmad sees it as a hopeful sign that some local leaders have realised the importance of supporting local industry, artisans and enterpreneurship. But he believes that their efforts, although very beneficial to people, will take a long time to bear fruit. For this he blames the greed of the people. People take pride in using objects made in foreign lands, they have become greedy for such things. As a result native goods and industry does not find encouragement. The policies of the British Government of India are also inimical to the growth of native industry. Therefore, although desirable, the endeavour to create national wealth and retain it, is not likely to meet with great success in the near future.
The fourth consists of advocating that people must unite, the distinctions of caste and religion should not become obstacles in efforts towards national unity. Narmad believes that these ideals have been used by the reformers and especially Prarthna Samaj to attack the Hindu religion, its various sects and social and religious practices. Since the efforts were to destroy the foundations of Hindu social and religious organisation, they have not met with much success.

According to Narmad the fifth area is that of religious and social reform. It is in this area that most efforts have been made. For Narmad, these efforts have been both misguided and disastrous. Instead of fostering national pride, they have caused dissentions and disunity. People have been made suspicious of their own practices, which has resulted in a loss of faith about one's own tradition. Narmad advocates that reforms should instead encourage people to follow tradition, that would be the most desirable method to ensure that people take pride in themselves and their society.

Narmad brings to fore one more issue, that of language. If we were to be one people we would require a set of common languages. He feels that people are not sensitive to this need and not much thought has gone into this. He believes that Hindustani and English can become languages that allow people from different regions to communicate with each other. While at the same time people must make efforts to strengthen the regional languages and all social and ritual practices must be carried out in the regional languages.

Narmad feels that the people are not yet ripe enough to speak of national pride. His plea is that people must be patient and have faith in one's tradition. "By following the morality of others we will not acquire strength, to acquire strength we have to follow our own morality. Therefore, the first thing that we need to do is to give up our infatuation with the religion, morality, social practices and objects of the other; we must recognise our self identity." Narmad thus comes to believe that pride in one's own identity, one's own traditions, one's own religion and morality is a precondition for the feeling of
national pride to emerge. Without this even if we were to acquire self rule it will be short lived. He elaborates this point further in the second essay. He states that Hindustan belongs to all those whose birth place it. And since Hindustan is our motherland we take pride in its traditions. Without the pride in our own identity we can not call Hindustan our land. At present, he claims, that people do not have any clear idea about what constitutes national pride, but people are talking about the need to forge unity among diverse peoples.

In 1882 Narmad wrote a long essay titled, *Aryaksharsha*. The chief concern of this essay was to understand how the Indian people can rise above their present state. What constitutes the welfare of the people and how it is to be attained are questions which are part of the larger concern of raising the countrymen.

Narmad says that aim of any such endeavour should be ensure that people understand the *Purushartha* of human life and achieve a higher order of living in terms of dharma, artha and kama.

Such an endeavour would require determination of the goals of human life. Is the human life primarily understood as furthering this-worldly desires and pursuits or does it engage with concerns of the other world and contemplates on the meaning and objectives of life, these are the questions before Narmad. Narmad believes that such questions should be posed and answers provided which would remain valid for long durations, the measure of time for such concerns can not be the present but it should encompass the past and the future as well. Narmad poses questions regarding raising the people also on ‘eternal’ and ‘constant’ referent.

Narmad says that the principle objective of life appears to be that of attaining otherworldly bliss, happiness in this world is only one of the means of attaining that, therefore, dharma permeates all endeavours. Artha and kama without the modulating presence of dharma is not an ideal to be followed or encouraged.
Those who have come under the influence of English education have posed questions before this notion of life. They have the support of the English rule. Their endeavour is to establish norms which follow English morality. This new morality teaches them that this worldly pursuits and happiness in this world are primary, the aim of life has to be attainment of these.

Narmad says that the minds of people have become unsteady and unclear about goals of life under the influence of reformers. Narmad describes the condition of society thus: “There are very few among the ascetics, brahmans or kshatriya who have the objective of other worldly bliss fixed before their minds. The upholders of dharma are indifferent to their responsibilities and obligations and are immersed in this worldly pursuits. The English educated and those who associate with them are doubtful and cynical about one’s own religion and are enamoured of the religion of the other. They have fallen from their own religion. Despite this, large part of our people, till today are following Svadharma. But their feelings about it are not strong.”

Narmad does not see any need to alter the eternal and constant values of life despite the doubts raised about them. He sees that many people are regaining their faith in their own tradition and religion. Given this Narmad believes that all attempts at raising the state of Indian people must be done in a manner which furthers the eternal values. It is only by supporting these values that welfare of people can be attained.

Those who are concerned with the welfare of people have to uphold one truth. It is by upholding this truth that welfare of the people shall be gained. This truth is at one level simple. The good of the people can be attained only by following Svadharma, it is only by adhering to Svadharma that happiness both in this world and the other world can be attained. Following the religion of others, Paradharma, can only lead to destruction. Narmad is pained that it is not the paradharmis who are trying to destroy the Svadharma of Hindus. It has been done by the reformers and the followers of prarthna and brahmo samaj. It is by seeking to destroy their influence that Hindu people will
be able to regain their faith and pride in Svadharma. Narmad says; “The unity of Hindu society has been breached not by the followers of other religions, like Muslims and Christians. It has been breached by its own people. The reformers and the samaj have through their lectures and the use of newspapers spread the teachings of other religion amongst our people, we must denounce them -- and in denouncing them the strength that we shall gain will once again purify and unite the society.”

The teachings of the reformers were moulded on European morality, which gave impetus to this worldly pursuits, they denounced all values, created doubts regarding the validity and efficacy of ritual practices and religious observances. The followers of Brahmo and Prarthana Samaj moulded their practices and beliefs on Christianity and sought to proclaim their faith as Vedic. Narmad believes that many of the reformers have come to realise their error and have turned back to their old faith. The samaj have lost their efficacy as they are not able to practice their beliefs, their role has come to be limited to “singing prayers”.

Narmad appears most perturbed by the reaching and practices of Aryasamaj. Aryasamaj and Swami Dayanand Saraswati come under his most severe attack. Narmad believes that Dayanand Saraswati is misleading the people by proclaiming a return to the Vedas and wanting to establish a society on vedic lines. They do not believe in any text after the Vedas. With that all avatars, ritual practices, social distinctions are denounced. They are attempting to further this worldly pursuits under the disguise of spreading vedic religion.

Prarthana and Brahma Samaj do not believe in idol worship and rituals. Arya Samaj shares the contempt for idolatry and rituals with them. The Brahmos and the Prarthana Samajis do not believe in Vedas, caste distinction or the idea of life after death. Arya Samaj believes in all the three, and hence is closer to Hindu beliefs. But the purpose for which this is done is despicable according to Narmad. “Their belief is treacherous, improper and misleading; and other two samaj are free from such faults.” Narmad publicly announced
his break with Dayanand Saraswati with this. There was a point in time when Narmad had declared Dayanand Saraswati as his guru. Announcing his decision he wrote, “By mistake I had made him my guru, later I realised that he is also a reformer, his objective is not yoga etc., I am breaking all relations with the arya-samaj and its founder and I am declaring this to the public.” He also urged authors to write farcical plays on this episode.

Narmad exhorts people to adhere to their old practices, as only by following them that the Hindu society and religion can protect itself from attacks from the outside. The social organisation and notions of ritual hierarchy which emerge from the Varnashramdharma has to be protected.

Narmad argued for the preservation of caste hierarchies and resulting notions of ritual purity and pollution. These have to be followed he argues because birth in a particular caste is a result of karma. All the movements which sought to eradicate caste hierarchies have caused damage to Hindu society. He says that, “Aryas before the advent of Buddhism were the most superior.” By upholding caste hierarchies Narmad wanted to counter the claim made by the reformers including Dayanand Saraswati that all human beings were equal and any distinction should be based on capabilities and not on birth. Narmad argued that all castes should follow the duties ascribed to them in the Varnashramdharma. He wrote; “It is possible that amongst the Bhtls there be some one with the intellect of a brahmin and amongst the brahmans some one with the intellect of a Bhil. Despite this, both in this world and the other world a brahmin is superior and the bhil is inferior. This is correct. It is wrong to argue that a brahmin and a koh have equal status as human beings in the affairs of the world.” Narmad divided the history of religious thought and practices, in three parts. In the first phase the dnya varna led their life by the ideals of dharma. The emphasis was on acquisition of knowledge, worship took the form of Yajna and except for the Shudra communities idol worship was not the prevalent norm.

The second phase was represented by the domination of Buddhism, after the Mahabharat war. This saw gradual fall in the brahminic practices. It also
gave rise to elaborate practices of social segregation and ritual practices and idol worship became more prevalent norm.

The third phase began with Shankaracharya’s attempts to re-establish supremacy of brahminical Hindu religion. This phase saw the proliferation of castes. People lead their life according to norms prescribed by their castes. People have varying degree of awareness regarding the formlessness of the creator, most prefer to worship a form, an idol. It also saw the emergence of various religious sects.

For Narmad the earliest phase represents the purity of religious thought and social and ritual practices. The phases after this represent gradual erosion of that pure state. Despite this erosion and acceptance of varied ritual practices Narmad argues that the core of Hindu, Vedic religion has remained constant and eternal. What has altered is the external expression of the religious practices. He expresses a hope that the followers of the samaj will realize this even if it is on account of the good deeds of past life – that their welfare lies in regaining their faith in the vedic religion. Dayanand Saraswatu, who attempted to reform Hindu religious and social practices by establishing a ‘true’ vedic religion, should realised, says Narmad, that “Vedic religion ought not be like the one Pandit Dayanand wants it to be.”

Narmad clearly is of the opinion that present times are not favourable for having public debates on issues like idol worship. He argues that idol worship is in any case not central to Hindu religious life. In the vedic religion it is the path of knowledge which is primary, rituals are secondary. Idol worship is only one of the forms of ritual practices and hence, it is even more subsidiary. Idol worship is not considered as a path to moksha, nor are those who do not perform idol worship considered outside the fold of Hindu religion. Considering these Narmad says; “To start a debate on this issue and in such adverse times is stupidity. Before we introduce reform in this area, before we alter the state of things, those who are seeking reform and those who are supporting them and the public at large should regain their
faith in *svadharma*. Only after this at an appropriate time the debate should be taken up.”

The error that the reformers committed according to Narmad was that they described all that was native and sought to foster a sense of national pride on basis of foreign values and morality.

For regaining pride in one’s traditions Narmad provided a five point action plan. This comprised of; 1) To follow one’s own religion, 2) To observe all rituals ordained by the religion, 3) All castes should follow their duties as prescribed by *vārmasthram dharma* 4) To engage with the world with equanimity. 5) only a few wise men should engage in the political realm (p.110-111). He advises people that it is not yet time to speak of national pride, “Aryajana should remove from their minds any ideas about national pride, and should strengthen the ideas about protecting *svadharma*."

Narmad believed that Hindu society and religion has been able preserve its essential character mainly because it has not engaged with the political realm, even under foreign rule. He concedes that the least desirable rule is the rule of a foreign ruler who also professes a different religion. Because such a ruler attacks the native religion, morality and justice and moreover drains the wealth from the native land. Although the British rule has in his estimation has done some good deeds, in the long run, “its policies will never be for the welfare and good of natives.” According to Narmad English education is an instrument of governance. It not only prepares natives to assist the government in administration but more importantly it gives the natives an alternative view of the world. If offers its own morality and religion as a more higher and desirable forms of belief. Infatuated by these the natives, lose their faith in *svadharma* and denigrate their social institutions. English educated natives thus become the supporters and defenders of English morality and hence help perpetuate the British rule in India. The British rule is assisted also by the presence of Christian missionaries who according to Narmad are attempting to establish Christ as a saviour of all human kind. In Narmad's
assessment the Christian missionaries are not likely to succeed as those who have not come under the influence of the English education are following their svadharma and are not likely to be enamoured by the Christian message. "The English educated do not believe in religion itself, then why will they believe in Christianity?" 136

According to Narmad there have been three responses to the British presence in India. The first response sought to recast the native identity on foreign lines. It hoped to attain unity of all people by reforming their traditional identity. The second response consisted in trying to forge a unity and identifying on the basis of vedic religion. The third response has been to strengthen the faith of the people in svadharma and native traditions.

Giving an indication of his own trajectory he says. “Earlier I preached the first mode. (1851-69). Then I spent seven years searching for answers to questions of svadharma – parasharma, navrit – paravriti and the endeavour was to clarify these issues for myself and for my country. And since 1876-77 I have been advocating the third mode.” 137

Narmad’s principle argument is that without svadharma one can not speak of one’s identity and pride it.

He is forced to reconsider his earlier views on the British presence. He appears to be moving towards a view that the British rule, “can never be for the welfare of the people.” He sums up the British view of Indian people thus: “1) They are (i.e. the British) selfish and protect only their self interest. Due to racial pride they want the natives to be ever subservient. 3) They fear that natives can not be trusted, and given a chance the natives might come out in opposition. 4) when people show discontent, they fear riots and rebellion and 5) at the slightest indication of unrest they want to suppress it with force.” 138 In Narmad’s view people are largely tolerant and to an extent indifferent to the British rule. Narmad does not see the possibility of the British rule ending in the near future. But he is certain and emphatic that “it has lost its moral strength.” 139
For Narmad the period under the British rule is one of moral decay. Those who have come under the influence of English education have alienated themselves from *svadharma*, their efforts to embrace alien morality have not been fruitful. The reform movements inspired by the English influence also eroded the faith of people in their own religion, morality and identity. The way out of this general decay for Narmad lies in *svadharma*. It is only by following *svadharma* that people can lead a moral life. The endeavour therefore has to be to allow and persuade people to reclaim their *svadharma* and morality.

In 1879 Narmad wrote an essay *Dharmajignasa* (An enquiry into Religion). This essay has been written in the form of questions and answers. Narmad appears to be anxious to put across his views in an unambiguous manner and hence adopts a mode which allows for clarification and counter argumentation.

The chief concern of this essay is to explain what form the religious and the social life should take in times when new ideas about religion, morality and social organisation supported by the colonial rulers are entering the lives of the people. Narmad begins the dialogue by probing the question about the possibility and desirability of a universal religion. He believes that it is neither possible not desirable to have a universal religion. He argues at the same time that each society has its own religion, the principles of which must remain ‘eternal’ and ‘constant’ through time. He says; “The eternal religion of all people in a country for all times can only be one. Moreover, the eternal religion of one country is different from the eternal religion of another country, and therefore different countries have different religions.”

Narmad deals with the question of authenticity of religion, refuting the argument that the older the religion, more valid it is, he argues that the authenticity of a religion is contingent upon the believers. For the believers, it is not the ‘ancientness’ of a religion that is primary but their faith. Narmad also refutes the notion that the form of religious practices and belief should remain constant and unaltered through the ages. His belief is that it is the essence of
religion which does and ought to remain constant and eternal and not its manifest forms in terms of ritual practices. Having established the ground, Narmad seeks to deal with some of the central questions on the religious life as raised by the reform movement.

One of these questions was of conversion. Narmad is against conversion of an entire people from one religion to another. But at the same time he allows for individual exercise of intellect on the question of belief. He states that one may alter forms of religious beliefs and practices through the exercise of pure intellect. He appears to be tolerant of conversion. But he qualifies his statement further by stating that one may adopt a different practice, “within the fold of the main traditional religion.” Thus he opens up the religious question to internal critique and accommodates exercise of individual desire without accepting the validity of conversion to an entirely different faith.

The other important question was the issue of monotheism. Narmad argues that vedic religion was a monotheistic religion, the conception of different gods and goddesses was a manifestation of different virtues of a formless creator and idol worship has to be done and is done with an awareness of one formless creator. Narmad argues that the anxiety surrounding the worship of many gods and goddesses is as a result of the British encounter. The Christian missionaries gave the argument that Hindu practices are pagan and heathen and Hindus have no conception of monotheism. Those who come under the influence of the English education accepted this charge and argued that the chief reason for the decay of Indian people and society was the worship of multiple godheads and they sought to abolish these practices.

Narmad appears to be far more tolerant of the locally prevalent beliefs and practices. He argues that the idea of incarnations is false but is also true in so far as people have faith in the idea of incarnation. Similar tolerance also informs his response to the question of simultaneous worship of different
gods. He states that it would be incorrect to assume that prevalence of multiple worship patterns and belief systems results into religious anarchy.

Narmad's attempt thus seems to be to introduce reform modification but at the same time to do so while respecting the practices of a large number of people. His attempt is to accommodate the local, the native beliefs in the religious systems.

On the question of idol worship Narmad takes an Upanishadic position. Idol worship if performed with an acute awareness of the formlessness of the creator can be appreciated. But he says, that worship of idols as gods is a sign of "patent foolishness, it is lifeless and is not capable of doing any good to people." 111

Narmad argued that the central concerns of a religion remain constant and eternal while its manifestations alter with the passage of time. Narmad defined the eternal core of vedic dharma thus, "The belief that there is life of for death, and the belief that there is only one creator of the world, those who have faith in this knowledge and those who follow the practices which emanate from such belief, is considered to be a follower of vedic dharma. 142

Questions of reform of the household was closely bound to the question of religious reform. Narmad therefore sought to clarify his views on social reform and especially on the woman's question. The reform movement had sought to introduce two ideas. The first was of equality between men and women. And the second one, though derived from the first was more central for the reform movement. These were the questions of child marriage and widow remarriage.

Narmad is unwilling to discuss the question of equality. He states that, "men are higher than women." 143 A woman who argues that they are equal to men, can not be an arya woman. He criticises the movement for women's education by arguing that women have become doubtful about svadharma and
stradharm as a result of education. "In terms of immoral conduct and debauched life women at present are sixteen times are immoral and debauched than earlier women." This he blames on wrong education. Education, he argues, gives women 'desires' and not lessons of religion and morality.

On the question of child marriage his ambivalence becomes apparent. He considers the practice harmful, but also supports the argument that a girl should be married before the onset of menstruation cycle. Though the age of cohabitation should at least be 13 for girls and 16 for boys. He also describes the practice of older men marrying young girls as 'fallen'. He gives conditional and qualified support to widow remarriage. This practice for him is an imperative of the times and social needs. But not all widowed women can or should remarry according to him. "A relative should give kanyadan, if a girl has not yet started menstruating. For menstruating girls, they should find a husband of their choice. Those who had cohabited with their husband and are without children or had children who subsequently died should also find a husband of their choice." But not all widows should remarry. Women above the age of twenty five should not remarry, those who have children should also not remarry. In case of a remarriage if the second husband were also to die the women should not marry for the third time, nor is divorce possible for a woman who has remarried.

In 1884 Narmad wrote an essay titled "Muktatantra." The purpose of this essay was to ascertain the goals of human life and their attainment.

All human beings desire happiness, but the idea happiness and the norms by which they ought to be realised differ. Each society should determine for itself what constitutes Mukti (Freedom).

Narmad argues that in any consideration of freedom, questions about goals of human life have to be answered. Therefore, it is not possible to conceive freedom without religion. Since, ideas about freedom and the modes of attaining them are specific to a society Narmad gives an account of how the
pursuit of freedom has been understood in the Indian Society. Narmad argues that the pursuit of freedom and what constitutes that has remained constant in Hindu society through the ages. In the period between satyuga and dwapar yuga freedom was cast in terms of being one with the One and all and there by attaining supreme bliss. Later freedom was understood in terms of advita, of being one with Brahma. Even in idol worship the desire was to one with the form of the god. He says that these quests have come under severe questioning because of the critique of Hindu beliefs given by Christian missionaries and also doubts about svadharma raised by those who have come under the influence of the English education. Under their attack some people have lost their faith in the traditional norms. Despite this Narmad asserts that; "people do not pursue happiness in this worldly objects and desires." Not withstanding this Narmad accepts that Hindu mind is faced with a crisis. "Large part of our people follow svadharma, but they are not adhering to norms strictly. Our religious teachers are ignorant of svadharma, the rich are debauched, the ascetic is proud... the English educated and their relatives are doubtful of svadharma, but they are no adhering to norms strictly. Our religious teachers are ignorant of svadharma, they are infatuated with paradharma and are propounding amorality." The Hindu society is experiencing chaos and disorder under the influence of paradharma. The result of this foreign influence has been that some people have made attempts to define freedom on the basis of foreign morality. In this context freedom is understood in terms of this worldly pursuits and desires.

According to Narmad, the principle objective of the reform movement was to make people this worldly. They sought to do this by raising doubts about the other worldly orientation of Hindu religion and rituals. They sought to alter the structure of family by introducing ideas of equality between men and women and advocating the rights of women.

Narmad exhorts his people to take pride in their own religion. Unless they are able to say that "even without its former glory our religion is our own," Hindu society and religion can not acquire strength to fight the
foreign influences. On the question of social reform Narmad introduces an idea about the primacy of religious and political reform over social reform. The debates in the reform movements did raise this issue. A large part of reformers believed that until the condition of women is raised, the family cannot be improved, without the society, polity and religion cannot be reformed. For them improving and reforming the condition of women was the basis of societal restructuring.

In a small but significant section in this essay Narmad seeks to repudiate this argument. Narmad gives primacy to religious reform, that is strengthening the belief in the traditional forms of belief and rituals. A rejuvenated religious community will be able and ready to engage with the political realm.

In one of his early essays written in 1876, titled *Aryadarshan* Narmad made an attempt to examine the historical forces with which his society had to contend with and also how these right shape the future.

Narmad begins his historical narrative by giving an account of the various invasions that the country has faced. It is as if the history of his country is a history of successive invasions. This preoccupation with invasions stems from a concern about the virility of his people and their ability to cope with alien influences. Narmad states that "The defenders of Aryashatra are not cowards." This statement is derived from his contention that despite all odds aryag *Svadharma* has been able to retain its essential character. For him the real strength of Hindu society lies not in military prowess but in their capacity to be indifferent to *Paradharma* and follow the *Svadharma*.

Narmad is doubtful about the ability of the Hindu Society to retain its character eternally constant in the future. The religious life will alter in form and belief. Narmad believes that the society will lose something of its religious life but at the same time will acquire new dimensions in forms of its thinking about the nation. The most significant change though will be in the realm of the nation-state. He says; "This is the first phase in the history of aryas that
people of this country are engaged with society and worldly concerns, they are yet to experience the benefits of an independent nation state, it appears at this stage that in the future, concern about nation will have primacy over religion.”

Having stated this he does not wish to make any predictions about what form the nation state might assume in the future.

These essays written between 1876 and 1884 form the most crucial document for understanding Uttar Narmad (Later Narmad). These overlapping essays are the outcome of a new historical awareness that Narmad acquired in the process of preparing himself to write Rajyarang and the act of writing it. These essays are informed by this awareness. Awareness regarding what constitutes the essential core of a people and anxiety surrounding its possible loss govern these essays.

Narmad comes to an understanding that the real strength of Hindu society is its structure of worship, ritual observances and norms governing notions of purity and pollution. This constitutes svadharma of Hindu society for him.

It is this svadharma which has faced increasing erosion due to the British presence. Narmad realises that Christian missionaries and British rule by themselves can not possibly erode the legitimacy of svadharma of Hindus. It is a section of the Hindu society which has become doubtful of the traditional beliefs and observances. These doubts arise, according to Narmad, by the acquisition of English education. Those who have acquired English education also acquire values and morality informed by British view of the world and Christian faith. For Narmad the essential core of this morality is preoccupation with the material world. It is an engagement which understands welfare, freedom and goals of human life in terms of increasing the bodily welfare.

This concern with understanding the aim and fulfillment of human life in terms of bodily welfare is called pravriti dharma by Narmad.
The Hindu view of the life and the world is governed according to N/mtidharma. Nvnttdharma does not necessarily imply withdrawal from the physical and social space. People continue to engage with it but this engagement is seen as a means towards attaining merit for the otherworld. This engagement is also sought to be modulated by the varnasbrandharma.

The reform movement, according to Narmad made an attempt to fundamentally alter the balance between Nvnt and Prvnti by posing engagement with the world and bodily welfare as goals of human life. The reform movement argued that the other worldly orientation of Hindu society, with its emphasis on rules of conduct and rituals, coupled with the hierarchy of the varna system had caused the decline and decay of Hindu society. Their attempt was to alter the character of the society by introducing ideas of monotheism, purification of ritual practices and of equality between men and women. These measures, it was hoped, would make Hindu religion and society more worthwhile and prepare people to be higher and stranger than they were. By cleansing the society and religious practices of all ills, unity was sought to be forged. This unity, it was argued, will result in national pride.

Through the essays of Dharmavchar Narmad questions the logic of the reform movement. His argument is that national pride and sense of being one people can not be infused in a people who are doubtful of their traditions and the past. Moreover, he argued that sense of pride in being one people can not be acquired through norms, codes of conducts and world view which are foreign and at opposition to the view held by people, upon which the edifice of the society and religious beliefs rests. Narmad's plea in this essays is to regain one's svadharma. It is svadharma which gives character to a people, it is svadharma which provides a pattern for social and religious pursuits.

If this svadharma is replaced by paradharma, the ground for national feelings is denied to people. This is Narmad's central critique of the reformers and the reform movement.
At the same time Narmad shows marks of ambivalence on specific agendas of the reform movement. The question of widow remarriage illustrates this. Narmad casts the question of widow remarriage in terms of *apaddharma*, it is a contingent necessity arising out of the specific imperatives of the times of transition. He argues that *brahmacharya* is the desired normative structure for widows, but he accepts the necessity for widow remarriage. His support for it is not unequivocal as before. He gives a conditional support and approval to be practice.

Moreover, Narmad shows awareness about the changes that have already taken place and the modifications that the future will bring. All though calling for *svadharma* Narmad does not aspire an imagined or frozen past. He is aware that a pure form of social and religious organisation as it might have existed in a distant past is neither available to him and his society, nor will it be a desirable objective to peruse. His historical awareness informs him that societies and their norms undergo transitions and it is not possible always to arrest these. Each society has to search for an appropriate form for itself. Societies can and should retain and guard what constitutes the central core of their *svadharma*, as this gives them a self sense and links them to the past and the future. Thus *svadharma* has to be constant and eternal. He says that its manifestations will alter, the forms that social and ritual practices assume will also alter. It is because of this awareness that Narmad does not call for a return to a past that is not available. It is due to this understanding that he advocates reform modification.

He also shows a keen awareness about nature of the encounter with the English rule and its culture. His opposition to the British rule stems not only from a newly acquired belief that as a nation, India should acquire self rule. For Narmad, the encounter is primarily a cultural encounter. This encounter has provided as legitimate and desirable modes of behaviour, rules of social and spiritual life which are governed by a morality alien to people. The instrument of English education legitimises the new norms, it creates doubts and ambivalence in the people. For Narmad the English presence has to be
resisted on grounds of culture and religion. Narmad sees this encounter as robbing people of their self sense, their svadhbarm.

Simultaneously he does not deny the significance of the political realm. He is aware that finally the encounter has to be resisted on grounds of national pride. It is sense of being one people that would make it possible for people to resist the political and cultural presence of the British in India.

Between September 1882 and October 1884 Narmad maintained one of the most curious of records. He recorded verbatim his conversations with his wife Dahigaun. In 1860 thirteen year old Dahigaun started her conjugal life with Narmad. This was Narmad’s second marriage. His first wife Gulab had died in childbirth. The relation between Narmad and Dahigaun appears joyous till 1866, in that year Narmad dedicated his book, *Nayika Vishay Pravesh* to her. But in 1865 a strange incident took place. Narmad brought home a widow Savitagauri. Narmad did not marry her. It has been argued that Narmad had given refuge to Savita out of his conviction regarding widow re-marriage. The fact that Narmad chose not to marry her refutes the argument about reformist agenda influencing Narmad’s choice.

We do not know what were Dahi’s reactions to this. She might have tolerated Savita’s presence in Narmad’s life because Dahi lived with Narmad in Mumbai while Savita lived in Surat.

In 1869-70 Narmad brought home another woman Narmadagaun or Subhadragauri as she was called. She was a widow. Narmad married her. In 1870 she gave birth to their son Jayashankar. Dahi was sent to Surat while Narmadagauni lived with Narmad in Mumbai.

Dahi spent almost a decade living away from Narmad. It appears from the notes maintained by Narmad that during this period Dahi had become
addicted to bhang. It also appears that she might have had relationship with other men.

The dialogues recorded by Narmad are about the possibility of Dahi living with Narmad. The act of maintaining a detailed record of these conversations is perplexing. The impulse which must have informed this act is not discernable. Narmad not only wrote down the conversation, he used to read them out to Dahi. Dahi was also at times made to sign the records.

This kind of 'authenticated' record keeping is not part of the act of maintaining notes and diaries. Narmad's mode of questioning along with the need for authentication make them similar to a cross-examination in a judicial trial. The list of questions reproduced below supports our hypothesis.

"How did you spend your time?"
"Were you in the habit of bathing on the banks of Tapi?"
"Were you given visiting temples?"
"Did you meet your relatives often?"
"What did you talk about?"

It is clear that Narmad is engaged in a process of cross examination. His purpose is to get some sense of Dahi's life during the decade he did not live with her. He was also trying to ascertain for himself the validity of rumours about her other liaisons.

Narmad questions her about individuals, incidents, events and her role in those. Narmad's suspicion and cunning deviousness are evident in the manner in which he suddenly seeks vital information as part of a question apparently unrelated to the sought information. This point is evident in the following exchange:

"Narmad: What all have you got with you?
Dahi: I will not show you this bundle."
Narmad: It must contain *bhang*, or a letter written by someone or even a piece of jewellery given by him. When was your last menstruation?  

During the course of this interrogation Narmad gave three choices to her. “I told her that she should decide on one of the three options:  
1) She can live on her own, not in this house though, she can hire a house either in Surat or in Mumbai or at any other place. I will send her 5-7 rupees every month. As my situation improves shall send her more.  
2) She could stay under the protection of someone, I will send her 5-7 rupees.  
3) She could stay with us, bear the brunt of my passions and suffer.”  

Dahl tried to understand the nature of the choice involved. She appears uncertain. As the dialogue proceeds it becomes clear that Narmad was not offering her a real choice. Dahl wanted to know what suffering will be involved in bearing the brunt of his passions. Dahl wished to try various options before finally deciding on one. Narmad is not willing to allow this.  

“You decide which condition you wish to experience, bearing the brunt of my passions or being on your own. But once having decided to be on your own be certain that I will not accept you back, as by that time you would be a fallen woman.”  

Dahl decided to stay with Narmad and suffer the brunt of his passions. After this decision was made Narmad guided the conversation about the nature of her sin and her duties towards him. Narmad also tried to rid her of the addiction. ‘Bearing the brunt of passions’ meant suffering bodily punishment. Dahl appears not very perturbed by beatings, but she could not deal with the routines of interrogation. She says; “You can punish my body but please do not ask too many questions.” Narmad said that his intention was to reform her and purify her mind. This process of reform also included beating her, Narmad records instances when he punished her. Narmad decreed
that Dahl must go through the process of ritual purification - prayaschit - before he would accept her. The negotiations about the nature of her sins and hence the nature of prayaschit are recorded in great detail. The last entry is in Dahl's handwriting. It contains the full text of the pledge she had agreed to take as part of the prayaschit. The text is reproduced below:

"I confess before my god that I have disobeyed certain desires and commands of my husband. There were several reasons for this, but I have committed a breach of my dharma, I seek mercy from my god and my husband, and I pledge that I shall not even think of doing anything which might displease my husband. If I do so it would be a blot on my truth. I shall be a pativrata in my thoughts, words and deeds. The command of my husband is like a vrata for me. I shall not disclose private matters of the family to anyone. In short, I shall obey my husband, in this everything else is contained. I bow before my husband and urge that please accept me and love me as before." 156

The document ends with this pledge. It is obvious that a large gulf separated Narmad's thought and his life. Narmad appears to be deriving pleasure out of this agonizing exchange. But even this evident pleasure does not fully explain the act of record keeping. Clearly for Narmad this conversation is an act of interrogation. Hence, he maintained records of a private trial of Dahigauri.
Notes
1. Narmad, *Narmagadnya*, part 1, (ed.) Ramesh Shukla, (Surat: Kavi Narmad Yugavart Trust, 1996), p. 288 All texts of Narmad Cited here have been published by the Kavi Narmad Yugavart Trust and edited by Ramesh Shukla. Unless stated otherwise all translations are mine.
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
7. Ibid,
8. Ibid, p.21
10. Ibid, p.31
11. Ibid, p.40
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. Ibid, p.41
15. Ibid, p.41-42
16. Ibid, p.42
17. Ibid, p.44
18. Ibid
19. Ibid, p.45
20. Ibid, p.50
21. Ibid, p.56
22. Ibid, p. 81
23. Ibid
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28. Ibid, p. 84
29. Ibid, p. 83
30. Ibid
31. Ibid
32. Ibid, p. 84
33. Ibid, p. 45
35. Ibid
36. Ibid, p. 92
38. Ibid, p. 100
40. Ibid, pp. 36-44
41. Ibid, pp. 45-107
42. Ibid, p. 28
43. Ibid, p. 43
44. Ibid
45. Ibid
46. Ibid, p. 40
47. Ibid, p. 90
48. Ibid, pp. 66-67
49. Ibid, p. 67
50. Ibid,
51. Ibid, p.75
52. Ibid, p. 74
53. Ibid, p.81
55. Ibid, pp.72, footnote
56. Ibid
57. Ibid
58. Ibid, p.85, footnote
59. Ibid, p.100
60. Ibid, p.16-71
61. Ibid, p. 19
62. Ibid, p. 22
63. Ibid, p. 24
64. Ibid, p.30
65. Ibid, p.36
67. Ibid, p. 141
69. Ibid
70. Ibid, p.107
71. Ibid, p.109
72. Ibid, p. 110
73. Ibid, p. 111
74. Ibid, p.112
75. Ibid, p. 118
76. *Narma Gadya*, part 1, op.cit., p.159
77. *Ibid*, p. 160
78. *Ibid*, p. 169
79. *Ibid*, p.164
80. *Ibid*, p.164
82. *Man Hakekat*, op.cit., p. 58
83. *Narma Kosha*, op cit, p. 86 footnote
85. *Narma Gadya*, part 2, op. cit., pp. 415-466
86. *Narma Gadya*, part 1, op.cit., pp. 227-302
88. *Ibid*, p.22
89. *Ibid*
90. *Ibid*
91 *Ibid*
92. *Ibid*, p. 302
93. *Ibid*, p. 354
94. *Ibid*, p. 465
95. *Ibid*
96. *Ibid*, p. 468
97. *Ibid*
98. *Ibid*
100. *Ibid*, p. 473
101 *Ibid*, p 474
102. Ibid, p. 480
103. Ibid
104. Ibid, p. 503-504
105. Ibid
106. Dhanna Vuhar, op.cit., pp 163-198
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108. Ibid
109. Ibid, p. 165
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111. Ibid
112. Ibid
113. Ibid, p. 166
114. Ibid
115. Ibid, p. 167
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120. Ibid, p 177
121. Ibid, p 199-201
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124. Ibid, p. 205
125. Ibid, p. 209
126. Ibid, p 212
127. Ibid, p. 85
128. Ibid, p. 86
129. Ibid, p. 89
130. Ibid, p. 91
131. Ibid, p. 96
132. Ibid, p. 99
133. Ibid, p. 100
134. Ibid, p. 111
135. Ibid, p. 115
136. Ibid, p. 120
137. Ibid, p. 122, footnote
138. Ibid, p. 124
139. Ibid, p. 130
140. Ibid, p. 67
141. Ibid, p. 65
142. Ibid, p. 75
143. Ibid, p. 76
144. Ibid, p. 77
145. Ibid, p. 145
146. Ibid, p. 146
147. Ibid, p. 140-41
148. Ibid, p. 136
149. Ibid, p. 51
150. Ibid, p. 56
151. Mari Hakikat, op. cit., 'Concerning Dahigaun', pp. 94–119
152. Ibid, p. 100
153. Ibid, p. 102
154. Ibid, p. 103
155. Ibid, p. 109
156. Ibid, p. 119