

Chapter

2

AN OVERVIEW OF MODERN GUJARATI LITERATURE AND POPULAR FICTION

Popular culture plays a significant role in the field of cultural studies, offering a rich terrain for analysis and examination. As an academic discipline, cultural studies seeks to critically explore the complex relationship between culture, society, and power. By focusing on popular culture, cultural studies scholars investigate the ways in which cultural practices, products, and representations shape and are shaped by broader social, political, and economic contexts.

The inclusion of Popular Culture and Literature Studies in the research project is justified by acknowledging the significance and value of popular vernacular literature within Gujarati literary studies. The project aims to shed light on the neglected aspects of popular literature, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the Gujarati literary landscape. The longstanding neglect of popular vernacular literature in both Gujarati literary studies and English studies in India calls for attention and rectification.

Popular culture and literature capture the lived experiences, aspirations, and imagination of the masses. They encompass the subtleties of everyday life, address the concerns of ordinary people, and often serve as vehicles for social commentary and critique. By focusing on popular vernacular literature, the research project recognizes the richness of

literary traditions that have been marginalized and overlooked in favor of canonical and elite works.

The neglect of popular vernacular literature within Gujarati literary studies can be attributed to a historical bias toward high culture and literary elitism. The dominance of canonical texts and a narrow focus on specific genres or literary forms have marginalized the diverse range of popular literature in Gujarati. Similarly, within English studies in India, the emphasis on colonial and postcolonial literature has often overshadowed the exploration of popular vernacular literature in regional languages.

By addressing this neglect, the research project aims to challenge existing hierarchies and broaden the scope of literary studies in both Gujarati and English languages. It recognizes the importance of popular vernacular literature as a means of cultural expression, social reflection, and historical documentation. The project seeks to amplify the voices of marginalized literary traditions, explore their thematic and narrative richness, and analyze their cultural and social significance.

Engaging with popular vernacular literature aligns with the principles of inclusivity, diversity, and representation within literary studies. It acknowledges that literature extends beyond the confines of elite circles and recognizes popular literature as an integral part of a society's cultural fabric. By examining popular vernacular literature, the research project aims to challenge the notion of a singular literary canon and foster a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the literary landscape in Gujarati and English studies in India.

Popular culture encompasses a range of phenomena, including mass media, entertainment, fashion, music, literature, and everyday cultural practices. It is characterized by its accessibility, wide circulation, and appeal to diverse audiences. Cultural studies scholars approach popular culture as both a site of contestation and a powerful agent of meaning production. They examine popular culture to understand how it influences social norms, ideologies, and identities.

One key aspect of popular culture analysis in cultural studies is its examination of power dynamics. Cultural studies scholars explore how popular culture can reinforce and challenge existing power structures, including those based on gender, race, class, and sexuality. They investigate how representations in popular culture can either perpetuate or subvert dominant ideologies, reinforcing or contesting inequalities and marginalizations.

Moreover, cultural studies scholars recognize the agency and active engagement of audiences in the consumption and interpretation of popular culture. They emphasize that audiences do not passively receive or accept popular cultural products but actively negotiate meanings and identities through their engagements. This perspective emphasizes the multiplicity of interpretations and the ways in which popular culture can be appropriated, resisted, or transformed by different individuals and communities.

Cultural studies also examines the globalization and commodification of popular culture. It investigates how popular cultural products circulate and interact in transnational

contexts, leading to cultural flows, hybridization, and the formation of global cultural identities. Scholars analyze how popular culture is produced, distributed, and consumed within capitalist systems, exploring issues of cultural imperialism, commercialization, and the tensions between cultural authenticity and market demands.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, an Indian literary critic and academic, made a significant contribution to the field. Her notable book, "The Twice Born Fiction," published in 1971, analyzed the profound impact of colonization on Indian literature. Mukherjee delved into the emergence of a distinct Indian literary voice, shedding light on the intricate dynamics shaped by colonialism. Partha Chatterjee, an Indian political theorist and historian, has made notable contributions to the field. His influential work, "The Nation and Its Fragments," published in 1993, delved into the complex interplay between nationalism, colonialism, and postcolonial identity. Chatterjee challenged conventional Marxist interpretations of class struggle and developed the concept of "subaltern studies." This approach focuses on marginalized and subordinated groups within postcolonial societies, uncovering their agency and perspectives.

Benedict Anderson, a renowned political scientist and historian, has significantly contributed to our understanding of nationalism. His seminal work, "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism," published in 1983, revolutionized the field. Anderson explored the notion of nations as socially constructed and imagined communities. He examined the role of print capitalism, language, and cultural symbols in fostering a collective sense of belonging and shared identity among diverse populations. Anderson's work has had a profound impact on the study of nationalism and its influence on modern societies.

In conclusion, cultural studies recognizes the significance of popular culture as a vital field of inquiry. By examining popular culture, scholars aim to uncover the complex ways in which cultural practices, products, and representations are embedded within and shape social structures and power dynamics. This analytical lens allows for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of popular culture and its influences on individuals, communities, and society at large.

Popular literature presents two ambiguous terms, popular and literature. Both terms have a long history of changes and alterations. Literature which was considered all written books and materials gained the notion of 'imaginative' quality associated with it after the rise of romanticism. (Ross, 16) Same term was used to describe writing which breaks from the traditional structures and puts emphasis on experimentation as Pound's maxim 'make it new' (Pound) in the modern age. Similarly the term popular has been used in different senses. Raymond Williams has defined 'popular' as: 'well-liked by many people'; 'inferior kinds of work'; 'work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people'; 'culture actually made by the people for themselves' (Williams, 237).

In the case of popular literature all four meanings are applicable. A work of popular literature is often marked by its 'popularity'. This popularity is different from the popularity various classical texts enjoy, as popular texts gain that quality of being popular in relatively less time and as a general rule (as seen in majority of cases), also loses it quickly. General examples of popular fiction are series like *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), individual novels like *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) and non-fiction like *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) etc.

To understand the workings of popular culture, it is necessary to delve into popular culture studies. Before its emergence popular literature was not considered part of academia, a reason for which can be seen in how the notion of popularity is seen. As John Storey suggests, a way of defining popular culture is ‘the culture that is left over after we have decided what high culture is.’ (Storey, 5) This kind of binary structure led to an inferior position of popular culture. This binary of ‘high culture’ and ‘low culture’ may seem straightforward. Though primary reading of any culture may reveal otherwise as this chapter attempts to do in case of Gujarati literature and culture.

Popular literature, also known as popular fiction, encompasses a wide range of literary genres that cater to a broad readership and prioritize entertainment value over literary or artistic merit (Radhakrishnan, year). Although often marginalized in academic circles due to its commercial nature and association with mass-market appeal, recent studies have started recognizing the cultural and social significance of popular literature, leading to a reassessment of its academic value and critical examination. This section explores the characteristics and reception of popular literature within the context of Gujarati literature, drawing upon relevant scholarly sources to support the discussion.

Popular literature is characterized by its accessibility, engaging narratives, and broad appeal to diverse readerships. It encompasses genres such as romance, thriller, science fiction, fantasy, and crime fiction, often featuring formulaic structures, predictable plotlines, and familiar tropes that cater to readers' expectations and offer escapism from everyday life. While

popular literature may not always be regarded as highbrow or literary in the traditional sense, it cannot be dismissed for its cultural significance and impact. Radhakrishnan asserts that popular literature serves as a mirror of society, capturing and representing the concerns, aspirations, and anxieties of its readers, while also shaping popular imagination and providing a platform for exploring and addressing pressing issues.

The Frankfurt School, a collective of intellectuals affiliated with the University of Frankfurt, developed critical theories that approached popular literature from a Marxist perspective. According to their analysis, popular literature was considered an integral part of the culture industry—a mass-produced commodity aimed at manipulating and controlling the masses. The standardized and formulaic nature of popular literature served as a tool for social control, diverting attention from critical thinking and reinforcing dominant ideologies within capitalist societies.

Theodor Adorno, a prominent member of the Frankfurt School, emphasized the commodification and standardization of cultural products, including literature. He argued that popular literature primarily served the purpose of entertainment and diversion, rather than challenging the existing social order. Adorno critiqued the lack of originality and creativity in popular literature, highlighting its reliance on clichés and familiar tropes that perpetuated the status quo. This standardized approach stifled genuine innovation and subversion within popular literature.

Additionally, the Frankfurt School scrutinized the influence of mass media on popular literature. They posited that popular literature, as a product of the culture industry, reflected and perpetuated dominant ideologies disseminated by mass media. The Frankfurt School also explored the impact of the culture industry on individual subjectivity, asserting that the standardized and formulaic nature of popular literature hindered individuality and creative thinking. By conforming to market demands and catering to mass tastes, popular literature constrained critical engagement and active participation in shaping cultural experiences.

The Frankfurt School's analysis of popular literature brings attention to its commodification, standardization, and its role in reinforcing dominant ideologies. Their critique challenges prevailing notions of popular literature as a source of genuine artistic expression and encourages a critical examination of its societal effects. The Frankfurt School urges us to explore alternative forms of artistic expression that foster independent thought and genuine innovation, moving away from the conformist and distracting nature of popular literature within the culture industry.

Ken Gelder, an Australian scholar, has made significant contributions to the study of popular literature and culture. His theoretical perspectives offer insights into the analysis of popular literature, focusing on its cultural significance, reception, and the role it plays in shaping collective identities.

Gelder emphasizes the cultural value of popular literature and its capacity to reflect and shape social identities. He argues that popular literature serves as a site for the negotiation and

construction of cultural meanings. According to Gelder, popular literature provides a space where readers can engage with narratives, characters, and themes that resonate with their own experiences and desires (Gelder, 2004). This perspective suggests that popular literature is not merely a disposable form of entertainment but a meaningful cultural practice that actively participates in the formation of collective identities.

Furthermore, Gelder highlights the importance of studying the reception and consumption of popular literature. He emphasizes that the meanings and values attributed to popular literature are not fixed or universal but are contingent upon readers' interpretations and engagements. Gelder argues for the recognition of readers as active participants in the production of meaning, shaping the significance of popular literature through their interactions with the texts (Gelder, 2004). This perspective invites scholars to consider the diverse ways in which readers engage with and make sense of popular literature, acknowledging the agency of readers in the reception process.

Gelder also underscores the interplay between popular literature and broader cultural, social, and historical contexts. He argues that popular literature is not isolated from the larger cultural landscape but is deeply entangled with social discourses, power relations, and historical processes. Gelder suggests that popular literature both reflects and responds to societal concerns and anxieties, providing insights into the cultural climate of its time (Gelder, 2004). This perspective encourages scholars to situate popular literature within its historical and socio-cultural contexts, enabling a nuanced understanding of its significance and impact.

It can be said that Gelder's theoretical perspectives offer a valuable framework for the analysis of popular literature. His emphasis on the cultural value, reception, and contextual embeddedness of popular literature provides a nuanced understanding of its role in shaping collective identities and reflecting societal concerns. By recognizing the active role of readers and the interplay between literature and broader contexts, Gelder's perspectives invite scholars to engage with popular literature as a dynamic and meaningful cultural practice.

Problems of 'Popular' literature in Gujarati

In the context of Gujarati literature, the reception and critical appraisal of popular literature have been subjects of contention and negotiation. While some literary scholars marginalize popular literature as inferior or lacking artistic merit, empirical studies of the Gujarati book market present a different perspective. Translated works, especially those belonging to popular genres, often witness higher sales figures and sustained readership, challenging the notion of excluding popular literature from the critical apparatus of Gujarati literary discourse.

To better understand the reception and dynamics of popular literature in Gujarati literature, the concept of refraction, as proposed by Lefevere, becomes relevant. Refraction refers to the transformative process through which a literary work evolves in translation and interaction with different cultural and linguistic contexts. Translated popular literature introduces diverse themes, literary techniques, and marketing strategies from other literary traditions into the Gujarati literary space, enriching and challenging its insularity. This infusion

of external influences fosters intertextual dialogues and creative innovations within Gujarati popular fiction.

Popular literature holds a significant place within the literary landscape, both globally and within the specific context of Gujarati literature. Acknowledging its accessibility, mass appeal, and cultural relevance, scholars can analyze its reception, explore its interactions with other literary traditions through translation, and identify its contributions to the broader literary system. Embracing a nuanced and inclusive approach to the study of popular literature enhances our understanding of Gujarati literature and its position within the wider world literary framework.

This distinction between high and low is often a result of various social distinctions, mainly class in western world and class and caste both in Indian context. Popular entertainment forms of music and performance before print culture reveals this pattern to be diachronically, where classical music, singing based on ragas and dance forms presented and performed in kings' courts are considered as classical forms. In contrast to that, forms which were performed for the general public like *bhavaai*, tamasha and *rama-mandal* are considered as popular art forms. It is evident that this distinction has survived in popular literature after print culture marginalized popular art forms as folk.

In the realm of Gujarati literature, an extensive and varied heritage unfolds, its roots stretching deep into antiquity. This scholarly exposition endeavours to furnish an academic

panorama of the formative epoch in Gujarati literature, charting its origins, evolution, and seminal literary luminaries from ancient to medieval eras.

In the primeval period, Gujarati literature began crystallizing its essence with the advent of the "Bharateshwar Bahubali Rasa," a Jain narrative poem that harks back to the 6th century CE. Authored by the sagacious Shalibhadra Suri, this opus bears the imprint of both Sanskrit and Prakrit literature, which held sway during that epoch.

Jain literature assumed a pivotal role in the nascent development of Gujarati literature. An exemplar of this influence is found in the "Shantinatha Charitra" penned by Hemachandra in Apabhramsha during the 12th century CE. This work not only illustrates the transformation of the Gujarati language but also heralds the dawn of prose in literary expression.

As the medieval era unfolded, the Bhakti movement left an indelible imprint on Gujarati literature. Narsinh Mehta, an eminent Bhakti poet of the 15th century CE, regaled audiences with his devotional verses known as "Padas," which extolled the divine exploits of Lord Krishna and reverberated with themes of spiritual ardor and devotion. These lyrical compositions embody the profound impact of the Bhakti movement on the literary landscape of Gujarat.

Another momentous development during this epoch was the ascendancy of the Akhyana tradition, a narrative poetic form. Manharbhai's "Pruthviraj Raso," crafted in the 17th

century CE, offers a vivid portrayal of the life of Prithviraj Chauhan, while Premanand Bhatt's "Sudama Charitra" retells the tale of Sudama, Lord Krishna's cherished childhood companion. These works serve as testaments to the widespread acclaim and artistic virtuosity of the Akhyana tradition in Gujarati literature.

Within the tapestry of Gujarati literature, numerous literary luminaries have indelibly etched their mark. Narmad (1813-1886), also known as Narmadashankar Dave, holds the distinction of being regarded as the progenitor of modern Gujarati literature. His oeuvre, epitomized by works such as "Karana Ghelo," confronts pressing social issues and champions the cause of women's rights, all while promoting the vibrant use of the Gujarati language. Narmad's writings embody his steadfast commitment to social and cultural progress in Gujarat.

Dalpatram Dahyabhai(1820-1898), another influential figure of the 19th century, left an indelible imprint on Gujarati literature through his satirical compositions. Works such as *Kamalakanta* (1860) evince his incisive critique of prevailing societal norms and pressing political concerns of the era. Dalpatram's satires, resonant with astute observations, underscore his role as a discerning social commentator.

Thus, the early history of Gujarati literature unveils a tradition that burgeoned under the sway of Jain literature, the transformative power of the Bhakti movement, and the enduring contributions of towering literary figures like Narmad and Dalpatram. These literary milestones laid the cornerstone for the subsequent growth and diversification of Gujarati literature, cementing its rightful place as an integral facet of India's literary heritage. Delving into the

formative epochs of Gujarati literature bestows invaluable insights into the cultural, linguistic, and social tapestry of Gujarat's bygone eras.

The twentieth century cast a transformative spell upon Gujarati literature, ushering in a new era of literary movements, experimental endeavors, and an exploration of social and political vistas. This scholarly note endeavors to furnish an overview of the salient trends and influential figures that adorned the tapestry of Gujarati literature during this eventful century.

Sudharakyug (Reformation era) which remained prevalent until the end of nineteenth century, saw various literary figures like Narmad(1833-1886), Dalpatram(1820-1898), Nandshankar Mehta(1835-1905), who used literature as a tool for social reformation. 'Sudharak' word itself means a reformer. Gradually, new forms emerged as English Literature become widespread in British India. As *Karanghelo*(1866) was first novel, first essay *Mandali malva thi thata labh*(1851) by Narmad, First modern poem *Bapa ni piparu*(1845), First autobiography *Mari Hakikat*(1866) by Narmad and first short story *Shantidas*(1900) by Ambalal Desai appeared during this era. As Sarla Jag Mohan notes Dalpatram and Narmad "were first to introduce subjects of common life". (Jag Mohan, 103)

The early decades witnessed the ascent of the "Adhunik" or modernist movement in Gujarati literature. Writers aligned with this movement sought liberation from conventional literary mores, daring to venture into uncharted artistic realms. They embraced Western literary techniques and embarked on a journey of form and linguistic experimentation. Among the luminaries associated with the Adhunik movement stood Jhaverchand Meghani (1896-1947), acclaimed as the trailblazer of modern Gujarati poetry. Meghani's verses, housed within the

anthology "Pankhi," resonated with innovative fervor, charting an audacious departure from the realms of traditional poetic stylings.

Every form gradually evolved in *Pandi-tYug* (1885-1915) which literally means Scholar's era. Govardhanram Tripathi (1855-1907) experimented with the novel form and wrote *Saswatichandra* (1887-1901) an epic social novel dealing with modernity in Gujarat. First comic novel '*Bhadrambhadra*' (1900) by Ramanbhai Nilkanth (1868-1928) published during this age. *Purvalap* (1923) by Manishankar Bhatt (1867-1923) is a landmark in poetry. Drama also flourished as new experiments were done and look for by audience. Political background of this era is turbulent. After absence of many years, Gujarat started having political views, especially after annual session of Indian national Congress in Ahmedabad which was held in 1902. That was the time when Mumbai was very far for provincial states. Ahmedabad had become a nexus of cultural exchange, enriching itself with various activities.

After 1915, the rise of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) in public life affected literature and Gujarat Vidyapith became a centre for literary activity. Gandhian ideology was reflected upon, discussed and digested through literature in this time period. Various publications started publishing pamphlets and magazines.

Gandhi himself was a prolific writer of prose. *Hind Swaraj or Indian home rule* (1909), *My Experiment with truth* (1925-28), Translation of *Unto This Last* by John Ruskin are among his main works. His *Hind Swaraj* (1915) became a pillar text for ideological stand to be taken in the freedom fighting. Education was becoming a necessary tool for the fight against social problems of the time. He also edited several newspapers. Various writers made contributions to the newspaper and pamphlet activity. This age was of abundance output. In poetry

Umashankar Joshi (1911-1988), Sundaram(1908-1991), Zaverchand Meghani (1896-1947), etc contributed and made it '*lokbhogyā*' (consumable by public). In Joshi, we can see Sanskrit tradition in his poetry collections like *Nishith* (1931) and *Gangotri*(1933). He also translated Sanskrit texts like *Abhigyan-Shankutalam*, *Uttar Ramcharit* and *Ishavaya Upanishad*. This age saw other literatures of the world very closely and some authors went on to bring devices, plot structures and genres from other literatures. K.M Munshi(1887-1971) a Mumbai based lawyer wrote novels depicting historical characters with tight knitted plot lines and extensive use of romance and suspense. His other novels like *Verni Vasulat*(1913), *Patanni Prabhuta*(1916) and *Rajadhiraj*(1918) etc can be traced as first instances of popular literature on a large scale in Gujarati literature. Zaverchand Meghani worked with a very different scenario. Manubhai Pancholi (1914-2001) wrote novels which combined the psychological style of the age with the message of world peace of Gandhi and Tagore.

Moreover, the form of short story evolved very swiftly in this era. As Shirish Panchal notes, 'Dhumketu seems to have mastered the art of short story. His tales had rural setting but it was an ideal society. In contrast to that Pannalal Patel shows us the grim realities of the rural life.'(Panchal 174 Translation mine) As it was an age of abundant literary production, writers tried their creative hands at various genres. Dhumketu had tried on various genres like parables, folk tale, myth, historical and science fiction. Other such writers are Sundaram and Joshi, who dealt with psychological aspects of characters and also experimented with Subject matters like homosexuality and social taboos with subjects like social realities and modernity.

After 1940, poetry became chief literary form for next fifteen years. Poets who brought modernism into poetry experimented with it. Niranjan Bhagat(1926-2018), Venibhai Purohit (1916-1980), Rajendra Shah(1913-2010) etc contributed. When India became independent in

1947, it created an atmosphere of freedom in all the areas including Literature. Modernity covered it as science and technology became the new direction for development. Introduction of phenomenology, modernism, structuralism etc gave literary activity various dimensions to look upon itself. As Panchal says 'Modernity became unpopular as we struggled on how to integrate the philosophical [aspects]. Some tried to go with tradition, some went against it. Some activities had a mature understanding of the process, some had not.'(Panchal 177 translation mine)As Independence became inevitable, authors started looking towards other issues. Moreover, they started looking beyond their society and perceived literature as an art in itself. This kind of aesthetically inclined approach started in this decade. This decade also saw communal violence reaching its peak. Also, regionalism was provoked by various groups of people which as Ramcharan Guha notes, 'shows uncertainty with idea of one India'(Guha, 60). It was a mammoth challenge to unite people into one nation. But India became independent and remained united.

Another watershed moment in twentieth-century Gujarati literature was the bold exploration of social and political motifs. Writers turned their pens toward the pressing concerns of society, employing literature as a potent tool for social commentary and critique. A notable figure in this regard was the revered writer and activist Chunilal Madia (1922-1968), whose literary works portrayed the plight of the marginalized, championing the cause of social justice. Madia's short stories served as a poignant indictment of caste-based discrimination, shining a searing light upon the struggles faced by the lower castes within Gujarati society.

Furthermore, the feminist movement found its resounding voice within the realms of Gujarati literature during the twentieth century. Writers such as Kundanika Kapadia (1927-

2020) defied entrenched gender roles, embarking on an exploration of women's experiences through their literary endeavours. and Kapadia's novel *Saat Pagala Aakash ma* (1984) delved into the realms of women's empowerment, patriarchy, and gender inequality. These works emerged as potent catalysts, fostering dialogue and heightening awareness regarding gender-related issues within Gujarati society.

The partition of India in 1947, followed by the dawn of independence, reverberated profoundly throughout the realms of Gujarati literature. Writers, their hearts weighed down by the socio-political upheaval and the emotional aftermath of partition, channeled their sentiments into their works. Pannalal Patel's magnum opus "Manvi Ni Bhavai" provided poignant insights into the experiences of displaced individuals and the harrowing trauma inflicted by partition. Patel's evocative portrayal of human suffering and resilience resonated deeply, etching itself within the collective memory of the partition.

Literature after 1955 shows an intense engagement with modernist European literature especially in English translation. It can be seen as result of works of world literature influencing Gujarati literature. Now, imagination expands and philosophical streams are explored. Harindra Dave (1930-1995), Manoj Khanderia (1943-2003), Nalin Raval (1933-), Chinu Modi (1939-2017), Adil Mansuri (1936-2008) etc brought various European movements into Gujarati. This resulted into expansion of poetic forms. With rise of many commercial magazine and newspaper prose became a common medium and it helped in evolution of essay form. The Novel reached its peak in terms of experimentation with Suresh Joshi (1921-1986) Raghuveer Chaudhri (1938-), Chandrakant Bakshi (1932-2006), Madhu Rye (1942-) etc and made it distinct and vivid. Bakshi is particularly known as 'King of action'(as described in biography

on Gujarat Sahitya Parishd's website) who wrote stories which depicted people living in metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad. Rye was a contemporary of him who experimented in theatre and short stories. He advocated minimalist style in theatre against the absurd movement. Suresh Joshi is important writer as modernist in Gujarati literature as he made Gujarati prose fiction modernist as per European standards. He put emphasis on form and tried to make action and plot as minimal as possible.

Various changes came into social and political scene as movement for language based state. Mumbai was a more prominent centre for cultural activities, especially drama and literature committees. It went into newly formed Maharashtra state, which made Ahmedabad the new capital of Gujarati culture. Metropolitan culture started having western influence. Writers like Dhiruben Patel(1926-), Saroj Pathak(1929-1989) brought the new genres into novel form and made it popular.

The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed a flourishing of literary experimentation and innovation. The "Nai Kahani" or new story movement emerged, challenging the confines of conventional storytelling techniques and narrative structures. Writers like Labhshankar Thakar and Chandrakant Bakshi forged new pathways, breaking free from traditional molds. Thakar's anthology of short stories, "Sharma Paddhati," dared to defy narrative norms, unraveling novel approaches to storytelling.

Here we can see popular form emerging from shadows and claiming place as a parallel art in Gujarati literature. It became possible only with the rise of private publications which had little affiliations with academia and rigid norms of literary conventions. Vajukotak(1915-

1959) was one of the first such writers with Gunavantray Aacharya(1900-1965) who started writing fiction in as written in European magazines. Kotak started magazine *Chitralkha* which became one of the most read magazines in Gujarati. His magazine helped to spread this kind of stories to wider range readers. This new readers were not Gandhians or traditionalists. They were more of newly educated class for whom reading was a status symbol. Also, as the world opened up with translations of foreign work local writers like Kotak needed to make bold move. In contrast to Suresh Joshi, his novels went on to become more focused on action. Themes from thriller and science fiction were borrowed. His works like *Doctor Roshanlal*(1952), *ChundadianeChokha*(1954), *Ha ke Na*(1955), *Ramakadavahu*(1955)etc brought element of social novels and combined them with thriller genre, romance and suspense. After Kotak, Harkishan Mehta (1928-1998), a journalist of *Chitralkha* started writing novels in episodic form. This practice is no stranger for novelists who write in popular genres. As popular or generic novels (as they are called in some parts of the world) don't get publisher until they prove that a wide readership will consume it. Many of the classics in Gujarati literature were published in serialized form first. But popular magazines changed the scene as they were aimed for reader from every part of the society. It was both an economically profitable and revolutionary step towards making the language free from elite class.

More writers came to write these kinds of novels and made the popular form a large body of work comprising of various genres. It begun in 1950s and still is a growing body of literature in Gujarati language. These new kind of writing had some distinguished features:

- 1) They were being written in episodic form, so it became necessary to add some kind of cliffhanger which can make reader wait for next 'Installment'.
- 2) These novels did not have certainty that they will be published in book format.

- 3) These novels were written with aim of gaining more popularity, therefore readership for the magazine. Therefore, they were to be tested against feedback sent by readers. If a novel would get less favorable reviews it had the danger of scraped from the magazine serialization.
- 4) These novels usually had less rigid plot structures. Many of popular novels were expanded due to their popularity among audiences.
- 5) These novels were seen as 'low' literature by literary critics, thus there was no review system or theoretical assumption which can be used to critique this large scale practice.

Arrival of Ashwinee Bhatt (1936-2012) impacted the popular literature, especially the novel form. His early novels like *Lajja Sanyal*(1979), *Shailja Sagar*(1979) and *Nirja Bhargav*(1979) were published in Sandesh, a newspaper instead of a magazine. As Dr. Kanti Rami notes Bhatt novels had increased the selling of Monday's edition. (Rami, 5)

By the time he was an established novelist, there was quite a change in the status of a novelist. Ashwinee Bhatt and Harkishan Mehta became top novelists writing in popular form with large fanbase. When their novels came into book format, words like 'Bestseller' were used for the first time for a Gujarati novel. Both writers tried their creativity with different genres and plot structures. Mehta's novels used to be longer, generally running a combination of more than three plot lines. He used to have larger cast of characters, which means he had to attend most of them every week. Bhatt's plots were preplanned and had less plot lines which enabled him to expand his prose into a beautiful description of the characters and scenes. It made his style very unique and helped him depict action scenes which were done never before in Gujarati fiction.

Bhatt and Mehta share some similarities in terms of their subject matter, themes and character types in the stories. They both present well-informed and skilled protagonists who can steer the way amidst life threatening challenges and critical conditions. The protagonist of the *Lajja Sanyal* (1979) is an actress who runs from the law in order to prove her innocence in relation to a murder case. Also, Mehta's *Jad-Chetan* (1984) also features such protagonist. His three-volume novel *Lay-Pralay* (1995) centers around preventing a national emergency from occurring. Similar plot device is used in *Aakhet* (1999) by Bhatt where story starts as a simple love affair between daughter of a wealthy man and a con-artist; concludes as a narrative on 'Operation Vijay', an Indian military operation that led to freedom of Portuguese provinces in India.

They internalized the elements of thriller and established the format in Gujarati culture. Bhatt set out to establish thrillers as respectable stories by using various traits. He used high caste characters (to win favors of his primary readership), rich and diverse language to realize various characters, locations outside of Gujarat (Mumbai, Bhedaghaat, Arab countries etc.) to make a template that might appeal a larger readership.

Ramanlal Soni (1908-2006) was a children's author. He authored an array of children's literature, encompassing original works as well as translations and adaptations. His creative repertoire included stories, poems, rhymes, plays, and biographies tailored for young readers. Numerous stories and poems penned by him found publication in the esteemed *Zagmag* column of Gujarat Samachar during the 1990s. In 1999, he released his autobiography titled *Rakh nu Pankhi*. Notably, he undertook translations of Bengali literature into Gujarati, including renowned works like *Gora*, *Chokher Bali*, and *Rajarshi* by Rabindranath Tagore, as well as

Shrikant by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. Additionally, he rendered translations of literary masterpieces by Tarashankar Bandopadhyay and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. His translation of Tarzan became popular. He converted Burrough's ape-man into an icon for children.

After 1985, a new era has risen in Gujarati literature. Globalization, advancement in technology and communication has changed literature very much. Methods of printing and publishing have also changed. Online platforms like private blogs and Matrubharti(an online reading platform) are expanding boundaries of Gujarati literary system. Popular culture seems to have distanced itself from literature, as it seems to have grown its relation with films and television and recently with social media. Gujarati literature has reached to a stage where its communication with Indian English literature and other Indian regional literatures contributes to its development.

Translation is a way of communication between two literary systems. Gujarati literary activity increased, the activity of translation also increased. Sudharak-yug sees translation of books from Sanskrit and English knowledge system. Also, Narmad had translated Bhagvad Geeta and Iliad. Pandityug saw translation from English as well as from Indian languages mostly from Bengali, Marathi and Hindi. All kinds of forms and genres were translated. (Luhar 6) Gandhi yug brought out many more translation from around the world but it refracted them radically to be accepted in the era. After independence translation activity increased and popular text from world literature were translated heavily. Some of them were translated more than one time. Moreover, post Gandhian era show inclusion of depiction of violence into popular culture. Many new genres were introduced.

The twentieth-century tableau of Gujarati literature bore witness to the dawn of the modernist movement, the courageous exploration of social and political terrain, and an unwavering commitment to experimentation and innovation. The contributions of luminaries like Jhaverchand Meghani, Chunilal Madia, and Jyotirmoyee Sarma reverberated, giving voice to concerns of modernity, social equity, and gender parity. The partition of India and the subsequent attainment of independence left an indelible imprint on the literary landscape of Gujarat. In its entirety, the literature of this epoch reflects the ever-evolving socio-cultural tapestry of Gujarat and the diverse concerns that found expression within the hearts of its writers and readers.

The literature of the 21st century witnessed a remarkable transformation in Gujarati, as it stretched its horizons to incorporate popular genres inspired by the West. Crime fiction and romance novels, once foreign to its essence, now grace the pages of newspapers and magazines, receiving warm embraces from Gujarati readers. This essay embarks on an exploration of the emergence and embrace of these genres in Gujarati literature, illuminating the factors that have contributed to their soaring popularity.

In this epoch, Gujarati literature has undergone a shift, embracing popular genres like crime fiction and romance novels. While not entirely alien to its realms, these genres have risen to prominence, finding acceptance on various literary platforms. Authors have eagerly embraced these genres as a means to forge connections with a wider audience, adapting to the evolving preferences of Gujarati readers.

Numerous factors have propelled the ascent of crime fiction and romance novels in Gujarati literature. Foremost among them is the escalating exposure to Western literature and media, which has profoundly shaped the expectations of readers. Through translations, adaptations, and the infusion of global literary trends, Gujarati readers have developed a taste for the allure of crime fiction and the enchantment of romance novels.

Furthermore, the innate human yearning for entertainment and escapism had kindled the demand for these genres. Crime fiction offers readers enigmatic puzzles to unravel, while romance novels beckon with tales of fervent love. The availability of these genres in newspapers and magazines has made them easily accessible, their words dancing before the eager eyes of readers, thus contributing to their meteoric rise.

The response of Gujarati readers to crime fiction and romance novels has been overwhelmingly positive, their hearts embracing these genres with open arms. The readership has reveled in the diverse narratives, captivating plots, and emotional depths that these genres offer. The popularity of crime fiction and romance novels is evident in soaring sales figures, their recognition in literary festivals, accolades, and the vibrant discussions that unfold within book clubs.

Moreover, the inclusion of these popular genres has ushered in a fresh wave of readers, individuals who may have remained disinterested or unaware of Gujarati literature otherwise. This widening of the readership has breathed new life into the literary ecosystem, creating an environment where authors can boldly experiment with diverse genres and styles. Rather than

eclipsing other genres, the triumph of crime fiction and romance novels has contributed to the kaleidoscope of diversity and the opulence of Gujarati literature.

Gujarati literature in the 21st century has embraced the allure of popular genres, drawing inspiration from the West, particularly crime fiction and romance novels. The wholehearted embrace and appreciation from Gujarati readers affirm their readiness to welcome these genres into their literary embrace. The rise of crime fiction and romance novels can be attributed to factors such as heightened exposure to Western literature, the universal human desire for entertainment and escapism, and the ever-evolving preferences of readers. This expansion of horizons has added vibrant hues to the tapestry of Gujarati literature, inviting a multitude of voices and narratives to intertwine harmoniously.