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'Gandhi ni Kavad & Ragdarbari' as Political Novels: A Comparative Literary Review

"By a political novel, I mean a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role in which the political milieu is the dominant setting." - **Irving Howe**

Introduction:

The novel gives the portrait of a perfect human being; of course human being as such is not perfect. He is incomplete and imperfect but he learns to perfect himself through three principles. As an imperfect human being, man gets carried away by appearances because of innocence and ignorance. Through experience, he learns to make a distinction between appearance and reality. He learns to see beyond and through things. Because of experiences of life, he moves from innocence to experience from ignorance to knowledge and appearance to reality. The more he grows the more he learns about the reality of life which makes him an experienced and knowledgeable person.

The novel normally asks a question what is man? In what condition he is? What type of freedom he has? What type of relationship he has with himself and society? What makes his life better or worse? In 18th century, someone like Henry Fielding asks: 'Who is a true Christian in his Joseph Andrews?' How can he make himself a 'true Christian'? So we have Picaresque novel, where after a marathon struggle man becomes an active member of society at the end of the novel. Gothic novel says that man is surrounded by evil spirit, man struggles with the evil spirit in the night and overcomes them, and it is a day break.

In 19th century the novelists talk about man's relationship with society and its institutions. Man comes in contact with other men and gradually with the entire society. At every level, he interacts with other men and women and these interactions define and redefine him. The institutions of society are made to make man's life better on this earth. So there are institutions like family, education, law and order. In search of his identity, man learns to have dialogue with various institutions of the society. So we have dramatic novel, naturalistic novel, realistic novel, historical novel.

By the time we come to 20th century man finds himself divided between private and public life. Psychological novel talks about private life of man, political novel talks his public life. Do we have an ideal portrait of a man in public life? We can think of only two persons; Lord Rama of Valmiki's **The Ramayana** and **Mahatma Gandhi**.

Gandhi ni Kavad:

Gujarati novel took much inspiration from English and European novels. It has tried to give the portrait of a man in public life 'Gandhi Ni Kavad' of Harindra Dave (1930-1995) reminds one of Dostoevsky's 'The Idiot' where Dostoevsky says that in the later part of the 19th century Russia Christ would not be acceptable to people because human life has degenerated completely. This kind of degeneration has taken place in the Post Independence-Post Gandhian era where with the help of the propaganda of Gandhian ideology, politicians have made money and secured high level positions in government.

There are very few Political Novels in Gujarati Literature. Harindra Dave, an eminent Poet, Novelist and Journalist, wrote this novel in 1984. This novel has a special place because such types of novel are not written in Gujarati Literature. The novel depicts the decline of values in political sphere as well as excellently presents the tragic life of the modern man's corrupt practices. This novel serially published in Gujarati Magazine namely Navneet Samarpan. This novel became famous at the time of its publication. It is about how a true Gandhian follower has been made scapegoat by the politicians of

our life. Karunashankar is true Gandhian and Jagmohan is the most corrupt person of the society. Gradually he wins the favour of Karunashankar's wife and son and finally that of Karunashankar and uses and abuses, his name for his utterly private and corrupt gains. Soon after joining with Jagmohan, Karunashankar realizes that he has made a mistake; it is proved in the court that Karunashankar has gone mad and finally he is sent in to mental hospital. The novel covers all episodes of the modern day political maneuvering like bribery, hypocrisy, uses and abuses of law and order, scams, dramatic scenes of riots, conspiracy, terrorism, torture of innocents, misuse of police force, booth capturing and malpractices related to casting of votes etc. 'Gandhi ni Kavad' talks about roguish politicians who play so many tricks to attain power and maintain their hold on power. I mention one of the tricks here which is to implicate a comparatively clean a pure person. Karunashankar is a close friend of Gandhiji and freedom fighter. Keeping in view the metamorphosis of this character, the writer has derived the subject matter from the politics of the seventies and tried to present tragic picture of the political life of the time. In this Karunashankar's mental frame is in the centre who gets trapped in the corrupt practices of roguish politicians. Gandhiji's character has been depicted suggestively here. The novelist has made use of satire, flashback technique. In mental hospital, Karunashankar meets a lunatic who tries to lift the kavad. Kavad is difficult word to translate. But Kavad is invariably associated with Matru-Pitru Bhakta Shravana of Ramayana. Shraavan put his parents in Kavad and took them for pilgrimage. Here it is said that in one part of the Kavad, there are Indian people and in another part of the Kavad there is chair. One after another politician comes and occupies the chair and the chair is heavier than the masses.

Ragdarbari:

A Prolific writer Shrilal Shukala (I.A.S) (1929-2011) has written '*Ragdarbari*' in 1968. It has a place of pride keeping in centre a village; the novel depicts the life after independence. Just like 'Godan' and 'Mela Anchal', '*Ragdarbari*' is also a best-seller, means very popular and much talked / read novel. This novel has been the subject of discussion in the seventh decade of the previous century. Its impact remained on the minds of the people for a decade or so. This novel has been awarded by Sahitya Academy, Delhi. Politics and government are the two main themes of the novel. The author exposes how politicians, businessman, criminals and policeman collude to exploit society for selfish reasons. The title itself alludes to the political emphasis of the plot. Written in suggestive style, in *Ragdarbari* the author has honestly presented the role of cruel and disgusting political parties. This novel has been serially screened on the Door Darshan. Although on one level this novel is rural centered still with the reality of countryside, through the decline of values and decline in social, moral character of modern Indian life in unsparing way. Along with the story of post independent village life, the novel also tells the story of the exploitation of all classes. This novel has created its place in the novels of last two decades for this the responsible elements are suggestive narrative style and its architecture. Raag Darbari is one of the most majestic melodic modes used in Indian classical music. It literally means the melody of the court. In the novel, it refers to the melody sung by the courtiers of a contemporary raja that is a village politician, Vaidyaji. His sitting room (Baithak) is the 'Darbar' of his camp-followers.

The story is set in Shivpalganj, a fictional village typical of the Raibareli district. A Youngman called Rangnath comes to stay with his uncle Vaidyaji to recover after an illness. Whatever he observes about the life-style of Vaidyaji is the story of the novel. Vaidyaji is patriarch who controls the grain co-operative and the intermediate college and is at the top of village's feudal structure. The novel is devoid of a main plotline and merely comprises of several sub-plots. There is no hero, or anti-hero for that matter. So on and so forth.

Similarity and Difference in the Novels:

- Post sixty Indian novel have made political life their main subject in which they talk about the cruel, disgusting practices of politicians and political parties.
- Both the novels depict political problems and corruption. Especially the spread of corruption in post independent political parties.
- Both the novelists take theme and characters from his region.
- Both the novelists present the character of political leaders rather satirically.
- Both the novelists present the political turmoil of rural areas.
- Both the novelists present the election scenario in the same manner/style.
- The beliefs regarding the politics of generation after generation is same in both the novelists
- Both the novels have political conspiracy as the theme so both the novels present the same level

of corruption, scam, and political maneuverings.

- The narrative of both the novels is different from traditional novel. So the form and the narrative attain new dimension.
- Both the novelists work under the impact of Indian and Western thinkers.
- Both the novelists make use of the word of English, Sanskrit, Urdu, Arabic, Persian language.
- In spite of development and progress, in Post Independent India we see failures at every level: these two novels removed our illusions regarding development and progress.
- Both the novels are important in that they try to present contemporary political of the nation and along with it they highlight the burning social issues of our time.
- Both novels have very characteristics theme. In 'Gandhi ni Kavad', hypocrite, cunning politicians uses many techniques like to make a spotless image of pure sincere man a stepping stone to achieve power. Karunashankar was close companion of Mahatma Gandhi and a sincere freedom fighter. He normally criticizes the policy of government. To prevent him to criticize the Government and to encase his spotless image to gain political power Jagmohan make misuse of Karunashankar. This is very lucidly narrated in Gadhi ni Kavad. Raag Darbari has its focus on one village Shivpalganj. Author depicts its various problems in nerve-disturbing manner. Author himself has experienced the gradual changes of Indian village as well as Poverty. He described the total loss of values in our villages.
- In both the novels there are hardly any women characters. Women are presented as minor characters. And major characters or heroes are presents as villainous heroes.
- Both the authors have received Sahitya Academy Prize.
- In both the novel we come across two languages or two types of languages. One satirical or sarcastic language and regional language or local dialect.
- Both the novels have something to say about the regional politics in India and especially both try to uplift the human values at national and international politics and try to project the sentiment of unity, brotherhood and humanity.

Conclusion:

One can learn about nation and its times through literature. The novelist can easily reach to the heart of his readers. In post-Independent era, politics was not the politics of ideals and values but it was the politics of power, property and governance. In Post-independent India, the novels have been written on these issues but along with it they started probing into the nature of social issues. Basically the aim of a Political Novel is to install the changing values (human values) in the midst of changing times, and it is (the political novel) supposed to emphasize and put on the fore front (at the national and international level) the ideas of brotherhood, unity and humanity. Both these novels very succinctly tell us that the politicians are type of people who not only exploit their social relations but exploit their kindred relation for their selfish aims, for power, money & position. From all this, we are forced to surmise that politics is a dirty game and it is totally and absolutely corrupt.

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Mr. Montukumar A. Patel

PhD Scholar (Gujarati)
Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar