



MAHIPATRAM

R. L. RAVAL

**Makers of
Indian
Literature**

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Mahipatram

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King – Siddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonka, 2nd century A. D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

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R. L. RAVAL



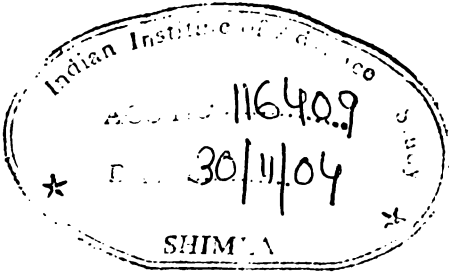
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(1) Results

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(2) Conclusions

(3) References

Socio-Cultural Background and Early Life

Mahipatram was born in Surat on the third of December, eighteen-twenty nine. His father was Rupram and mother, Girijagauri. His Vadnagara Nagar Gruhastha family was known by the surname, Nilkanth. Mahipatram lost his mother when he was hardly one and a half years old. At the age of four he was engaged to Parvatikunvar, a three years old girl. And after two years, their marriage took place.

Mahipatram's ancestors were economically sound but that was not the case with his father. Mahipatram's wife, Parvatikunvar, inherited courageous traits from her father, Sahebrai, who not only had courage to oppose his caste-fellows but also defied the defunct authority of the Peshwa, as the then Nawab of Surat under the Peshwa was completely over shadowed by the political control of the English.

This was the period when the city of Surat was passing through the vicissitudes of economic, social and cultural life. From the latter-half of the eighteenth century onwards trade and commerce of Surat were on decline as Bombay was emerging as an important trading port and city. Poet Narmad (1833-1886), Mahipatram's friend and the first modern poet of Gujarat, had deplored the decline of the prosperity of Surat in his poem – *Surat Sonani Murat* (Surat with a golden face). During the first half of the nineteenth century a large number of people from Surat district went to Bombay in search of employment. They were of all classes and occupations. Many of them maintained their social connections with the Surat region.

Even after its decline in prosperity the upper strata of the Surat society maintained their traditional extravagant life-style. Insolvency had become a symbol of prestige! There was a sort of moral laxity in public life. People were addicted to liquor, opium, hemp and such other intoxicants. Orthodoxy and superstition held sway over the society. Extravagant habits and economic decline created a contradictory situation, which in turn, generated discontent among the people. As a

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result, some administrative and economic measures adopted by the government were resisted by the people. In 1844, a riot took place as a consequence of the imposition of a new duty on salt. Shopkeepers observed strike for a few days. Later on, in 1848, the people of Surat, once again, resisted government measures of introducing the Bengal standard of weights and measures. It was this mood of protest, along with an exposure to the western ideas through Bombay, which, on the whole, shaped the mental wake up of a newly educated class.

Mahipatram had initial elementary education in a traditional 'village school' in Gopipura area of Surat. For primary education he joined one of the two Gujarati schools, started by the government in 1826. This school was known as Pranshankar Mehtaji's School. Later on, he joined the Government English School of Surat. Henry Green, the headmaster of the school, was known for his agnosticism. As a rationalist Green encouraged free thinking and reform activities initiated by Durgaram Mehtaji (1809-1876), a teacher with an inquiring mind, in the other government primary Gujarati school. Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar, an another rationalist and a brother of Dr. Atmaram Pandurang (the founder of the Bombay Prarthana Samaj) was transferred to this English school from Elphinstone Institution of Bombay. In Bombay Dadoba was closely associated with a group of reformers including Jagannath Shankar Shet, Balgangadhar Shastri Jambhekar, Bhau Daji and others. Dadoba's next appointment at the Government English school became thus, a propelling factor for the reform movement in Surat. During his school days Mahipatram was deeply influenced by Durgaram Mehtaji and Dadoba Pandurang. Later on, he dedicated one of his books, *Durgaram Charitra (1879)* to his teacher, Dadoba Pandurang.

As a high school student Mahipatram attended the weekly meetings of the *Manav Dharma Sabha*, the first reform association in Western India after the establishment of the British rule. It was started in 1844. Dadoba was the president and Durgaram Mehtaji was the moving spirit behind it. Durgaram initially, had crusaded in favour of widow remarriage but from 1839 onwards he was compelled to stop it at least in public, *Manav Dharma Sabha* echoed the spirit of humanism with One God, One Religion and universal brotherhood. In the weekly discussions of the Sabha Durgaram exhorted his audience to cultivate a capacity to discern true from false, what he called *Paramhansa Vruti*, in religious as well as social matters. He spoke against idol-worship

and ridiculed those who cherished a hope for liberation after death. He emphasised the social accountability of the religious sects and criticized those religious leaders who styled themselves as-God. It may be noted that Durgaram and Dadoba, at that time, had no information about the Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta.

Mahipatram as a high school student did not seem to have grasped the core of these discussions; nevertheless, the *Sabha's* activities deeply influenced his mind. He was also a witness to an attempt of assault on Durgaram Mehtaji by a crowd which did not like Durgaram's public meetings to challenge and expose charlatans and cheats who claimed to be *mantra shastris*. At the English school, Nandashankar Tuljashankar (the first novelist of Gujarat) along with Mahipatram and poet Narmad (Narmadashankar Lalshankar Dave), a reformer of note, were his contemporaries.

Life and activities : Bombay and Ahmedabad

Being political, administrative, economic and cultural centre of Western India, Bombay attracted people of Gujarat from all walks of life. Thus, Bombay became the pivotal place for generating new socio-economic and cultural forces informed by the introduction of English education, which was impregnated with liberal and scientific culture of the West. New education radiating from Bombay spread gradually in important cities and towns of Gujarat, Kutch and Kathiawad.

In Bombay Mahipatram joined Elphinstone Institution in 1852. In 1855 he was appointed an assistant teacher at Elphinstone School. He was closely associated with *Gnan Prasarak* (Ganean Parasarak) Mandali and *Buddhivardhak Sabha* started by Parsi and Gujarati students of the Elphinstone Institution respectively. In the year 1856, he was appointed as the secretary of the *Buddhivardhak Sabha*.

Mahipatram, along with Karsandas Mulji (1832-1871) and Narmad, was in the forefront to attack social evils, including the perverted life-style of some Vaishnav Maharajas of Vallabh sect through the weekly, *Satyaprakash*, edited by Karsandas Mulji from 1855 onwards. Mahipatram was also incharge of *Satyaprakash* for about ten months in 1857.

Mahipatram made education as the vocation of his life. In 1857 he shifted to Ahmedabad. Here he was appointed as acting headmaster of a government school. But immediately after that he was made a deputy educational inspector. Since then Mahipatram made Ahmedabad his permanent home and the centre of his multifarious activities. He was one of the members of the text-book committee, which prepared standard Gujarati text-books known as Hope - Series.

The year 1860 was a turning point in his life. In that year Mahipatram was selected by the Educational Department to visit England to get the advanced training in the British normal schools. Earlier, this offer was made to Mahipatram's friend, Nandashankar

Tuljashankar, who was not prepared to face the wrath of his relatives and caste – fellows by crossing the ‘black waters’.

Mahipatram consulted his wife, Parvatikunvar, for his proposed visit to England. Parvatikunvar not only gave her consent but encouraged him not to miss this opportunity and to face the consequences of it. Later on, in his *Parvatikunvar Akhyan*, a biographical-cum-autobiographical account, Mahipatram has narrated hardships faced by the couple in aftermath of his visit to England. He finally decided to take up this challenge, as the very act of visiting England would in itself be a part of his reform activities.

Moreover, as an educationalist he was convinced by the advice of T. C. Hope, his superior, that right mind-set for the social change could be created in students trained by the teachers having the first – hand knowledge of the British educational system.

For sometime, the couple kept this proposed visit a close-guarded secret. However, when Mahipatram was about to leave for England, the news was spread like a wild fire all over Gujarat and Kathiawad, as this was for the first time that a high caste Nagar was crossing ‘black waters’! Mahipatram was given a threat of excommunication by the Nagar community. Only a few Nagar reformers like Bholanath Sarabhai (founder of the Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj in 1871), Narmad, Durgaram Mehtaji, Nandashankar Tuljashankar etc., supported him. His forthcoming visit to England became a topic for discussion among the Brahmins and Banias of Gujarat also.

Mahipatram left Bombay on 27th March 1860. He cared to take with him a Brahmin cook, and during the course of his voyage, he took food prepared by his wife. He returned to India in April, 1861. In 1864, he published a book, *Englendni Musafarinun Varnan* (Description of Travels in England), a first important book in Gujarati on travelogue. Mahipatram’s visit to England, in a way, gave a boost to the reform movement among the middle class of Gujarat. Reformers from all over Gujarat and Bombay hailed this event. Some poems were written on it. But Mahipatram had to face ostracism by his caste. In Surat, his hometown, he could not procure service of a ‘low-caste’ servant. As compared to Ahmedabad the Nagar community of other towns of Gujarat and Kathiawad was highly critical of him. In Surat he was not even allowed to perform religious rites after the death of his father. From 1862 onwards, he settled permanently in Ahmedabad. He

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was appointed the principal of Training college.

Though Mahipatram and his family were excommunicated, he was not in favour of deserting his caste. He believed that to introduce reforms in the caste it was not necessary to remain away from it. Therefore, he sought for a compromise. In order to get readmitted in the caste Mahipatram went through a series of intricate expiation rituals thrice during the period between 1862 and 1872. Many of his reformer friends including poet Narmad were critical of his compromising approach. Mahipatram remained excommunicated nearly for twelve years. This was a period when all the members of his family passed through a sort of identity-crisis. But it was due to the cool and courageous temperament of his wife, Parvatikunvar, that they could weather the caste ire.

Mahipatram's main task, besides his reform activities, was to organise and impart training to the school teachers on the British model of educational system. He edited (1862 to 1878 and 1887 to 1891) *Gujarat Shala Patra*, a monthly, to spread ideas of new educational system. School teachers were made acquainted with new teaching methods in different subjects. *Gujarat Shala Patra* helped to provide educational information from all over Gujarat, Kutch and Kathiawad. Due to Mahipatram's efforts a female normal class was started in 1870 in Ahmedabad. It was known as Mahalaxmi Training College since 1874.

Being closely associated with the reform movement, Mahipatram had become a guiding force to most of the reform associations of Ahmedabad, including the Gujarat Vernacular Society, a pioneering association to promote Gujarati language and literature; *Vidhava Vivaha Uttejak Mandali* (Widow re-marriage association); *Bal Lagna Nishedhak Mandali* (Anti-child marriage association), *Hindu Sansar Sudhara Samaj*, *Anjuman-e-Islam*, Ahmedabad Municipality and such other public associations and institutions. It may be noted that he helped Bholanath Sarabhai, a reformer of note, to start Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj in 1871. And after Bholanath's death, from 1886 onwards till the time of his death he was president of the Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj.

Despite his own constraints, which were infact the characteristics of the transition period of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Mahipatram gave momentum to the reform movement through his multifarious activities. And non-traditional institutional structure

Life and activities : Bombay and Ahmedabad 7

made it possible for him to spread ideas all over Gujarat through his literary works . He was awarded titles of Rao Saheb and CIE by the British government. He died on thirtieth May, eighteen-ninety-one.

Western Cultural Impact on His Writings

With the establishment of the British rule, the Indian Society was confronted with entirely a different kind of heterogenetic cultural and literary tradition. It was marked by the features like liberalism, individualism and experimental attitude towards all the facets of individual as well as collective life. Based on legal rationalism the modern Western tradition recognized a contractual – individualistic relationship between man and society. As against status and hierarchy it encouraged the value of equality, equity and universalism. The new administrative and political set-up, reinforced by new modes of transport and communication along with government's economic policies, created a new middle class in Gujarat like other parts of India. This urban middle class, which took an advantage of new education, championed the values implicit in it. The new education gradually reflected the Western social cosmology based on the newly emerging social grammar, as a consequence of the Age of Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution in the western part of Europe. This Western social cosmology aimed at changing the traditional concept of social space, time and knowledge as well as the nature of relationship between man and man, and man and nature. Therefore, when a newly educated class came in contact with the English ideas and literature it was shocked as well as excited.

Mahipatram, one of the early products of this cultural impact found the traditional social and familial relationship most suffocating, as social and religious traditions of Hindu society, supposed to be based on the scriptural authority, were not to be challenged. There was no social space for an individual to live, think and act freely, as physical as well as mental horizon of the society was very limited. Therefore, reform activities of the new middle class tried to generate awareness in the society through associations and literary expression. Thus, reform movement, in a way, became complementary and supplementary to the

newly emerging literary forms like prose, essay, novels, travelogue, plays, romantic poetry etc. An emerging tone of the Gujarati literature harped on the place of an individual in the society and about his/ her freedom and equality in the social and familial relationship. In the traditional Indian society modern concept of an individual did not exist. Person was known only by his/ her familial and caste-group relationship. Therefore, he or she did not have his/ her independent social existence or identity. As a result, in the traditional mind-set free and individualistic literary expression was more or less absent. He/ she could not have a free encounter with even nature, except through the prism of religious beliefs. The medieval Gujarati literature, mainly in its poetry form, some times criticized the defunct social structure, remained on the whole otherworldly. But from the second-half of the nineteenth century onwards, structural changes in the forms of Gujarati literature started taking place. And side by side attitudinal change, though very slow but perceptible, was felt in the familial as well social structure. That is how both these changes became complementary to each other. Thus, changing mental perception at varying degrees pertaining to socio-cultural structure affected the literary structure of the period in its various forms. Against this back drop the literary works of Mahipatram will bear their relevance.

Travelogue

Mahipatram's first work – a travelogue entitled *England ni Musafarinum Varnan* (Description of Travels in England) was published in 1864. As mentioned earlier, his visit to England gave a new impetus to the reform movement in the sense that new education encouraged inquisitive temperament with an exposure to new ideas, institutions, land and people. Even before Mahipatram set for his voyage, Karsandas Mulji, his reformer friend, without mentioning Mahipatram's name, wrote an article (January 1860), with a caption, *A pilgrimage to the British land*. Kavi Dalpatram praised Mahipatram's courage to visit England in his poem published in *Buddhiprakash*, a monthly (April 1860). In the same issue of *Buddhiprakash*, an article was published about the ignorance of the people of Gujarat regarding the social conditions prevailing in England. Even a few native rulers of Kathiawad made queries to the visiting English dignitaries about the caste like Brahmins, Baniyas and Rajputs in England. They were under the impression that the East India company was a lady ruling over India! Therefore, one of the objectives of Mahipatram to write this travelogue was to make people aware about the culture, land and people of England.

Mahipatram set on his voyage to England on 27th March, 1860 and returned to India on 13th April 1861. His narration is a conscious effort. Keeping in mind his readers and audience before him Mahipatram has taken care about the details of his impressions. A mixture of the sense of wonder, adventure and a grief of his separation from family gives to his prose a sort of spontaneity. His description lifts even his present day reader to shift his mental horizon to mid-nineteenth century. His description of the first few days of the voyage makes a sympathetic reader to share a feeling of his first encounter with the vastness and turbulent waters of the sea. Mahipatram goes through all the details about the furniture and comfort provided in the steamer. His description about the co-travellers and calling ports and towns with

their historical background includes Aden, Cairo, Alexandria, Malta, Gibraltar and finally his dream land, Southampton - England. Mahipatram introduces to his readers new terms and names like hotel as house meant for sojourn of the travellers. His prose in the first few chapters lacks an urban flair, for a simple reason that Gujarati prose writing was still in its inception.

On 29th April, he landed on the soil of England. He writes that he has no words to express his joy as something has happened which is hard even to dream. Unconsciously, along with a sense of wonder and excitement, his colonized mind feels elated for being in the home land of the rulers. He gives a graphic description of Southampton, its town-planning, houses, roads and other facilities attuned to a cold climate of the country. Next day (30th April) he reaches London, the capital of the mighty British Empire on which the sun never sets as it was believed by the loyalists in the nineteenth century.

He devotes a separate chapter on the city of London. In London he stayed nearly for four months (May to August). He writes that more he moved in London more he was excited and wondered. But he has no complimentary or sympathetic comment for the poor people living in slum areas. He is highly impressed by the mart place of London with spacious shops containing goods of varieties from all over the world. The city with a population of more than three million souls is, perhaps the most prosperous city in the world. Its prosperity is reflected in its wide clean roads with an arrangement of lights at night, and buildings and houses with luxurious furniture. He finds people almost running to reach the destination of their work with tense face. He appreciates the industrious and hard-working nature of the people. But he complains about an unpredictable weather and pollution created by smoke-emitting chimneys of numerous factories.

He keeps his students and teachers in his mind while describing the public places like zoo, London Museum and Crystal palace exhibiting varieties of rare antiques from ancient lands giving a glimpse of the old civilizations. He visits London Tower and has a glimpse of famous *Kohinoor*. He also mentions the public buildings including the building of Royal Exchange and Bank of England, the Church of St. Paul, Westminster, Parliament House, Downing Street, Buckingham Palace etc. He notices residential areas of the rich separated from the slums of the poor.

While writing on the British parliamentary institutions, Mahipatram takes a special care to convey to his readers ideas about the working of the democratic system in both the Houses of the Parliament and the constitutional position of the British crown. In

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Indian context, he explains how it differs from the conventional autocracy of the native rulers, and sarcastically hints at the British officials in India who imitate the native rules while exercising their power and position. He explains that in England there is a rule of law and equality before the law irrespective of the social and political position of the subjects; while in India the same is not applicable to the British officials. He gives details of the composition and functions of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. He also emphasises the importance of the participation of the English people in day to day administrative affairs of cities, towns, counties and boroughs. They do not look upon the central government to solve their local problems. Thus according to him, this type of democratic decentralization has become a cultural trait of the English people. Administrative officers and police respect an ordinary man in the street. People in England never think that the government is their *maa-baap*. On the contrary they expect the elected government to serve them.

Mahipatram has special words for the patriotic spirit of the British people. In the context of the current political tension between England and France (Napoleon III was the ruler of France) he praises the queen and the people who are prepared to sacrifice every thing for the sake of their country. He exhorts Indian people to cultivate this spirit of patriotism by setting their house in order and acquiring the knowledge of the outside world. He appreciates the role of the English press for keeping a watch on the accountability of the government to the people.

He visits London University and narrates the working of the University, on whose model three universities in India were established three years back (1857). He attends a prize distribution function of the University College where a Parsee student was awarded a prize. He describes the composition and working of various types of educational institutions and schools including those meant for the rich and poor students.

After the four months stay in London Mahipatram went to Chaltanham. Here he stayed nearly for another four months. He gives an idea about the structure and working of the educational institutions of Chaltanham, at college as well as school level. A variety of subjects with a practical training were being taught in these institutions.

During his stay in Chaltanham Mahipatram visited other towns, including Gloster and Birmingham. Birmingham was one of the most important industrial cities of England. Here various types of machineries and metallic appliances of daily use as well as weapons were manufactured. Mahipatram visited Rugby town and was very

much impressed by the working of its famous school, which, according to him, was considered as only next to Eton and Harrow.

From Birmingham Mahipatram went to Manchester, which by that time had become a thriving centre of textile industry. He has narrated his visit to a textile factory. He does not seem to have any idea about the woes of the women and young boys working in the factories including this textile mill, as he uses adjectives 'stupid' and 'rustic' for their rough behaviour, though he makes a reference to the laws passed by the British government to improve the condition of the factory workers. Mahipatram also visited Bolton city famous for manufacturing textile machinery. He visited one such factory where machinery meant for a Bombay textile mill was being manufactured.

From Manchester Mahipatram went to another famous industrial city, Liverpool. As an important commercial centre Liverpool was considered only next to London. Mahipatram is very much impressed for its varieties of industrial products. It has an excellent harbour and it boasts to have a navy school.

Mahipatram returns to Chaltanham on 18th October, Here he stays till the end of January, 1861. His regular visits to Chaltanham Training College and other local schools make him acquainted with teaching and examination methods as well as school management. He meets Monier Williams, a famous Sanskrit scholar, who happened to stay at Chaltanham at that time. He was introduced to some English families and learned about their social etiquette. He also visited Strinster, famous for its agricultural institute, known as Royal Agricultural College. He narrates his experience of English winter and people, enjoying skating and sliding.

Mahipatram's next stay was at Oxford. For the whole month of February, 1861, he was in Oxford. He considers Oxford a very beautiful town of England. He visited the famous Oxford University and was highly impressed by its rich libraries and about twenty colleges with their exquisite architectural designs. He discusses about the devotion of the teachers and students, and subjects taught in the colleges. He once attended a students' debating society. He often met Prof. Monier Williams and Prof. Ovan at Oxford, and through them he could meet other scholars but their names are not mentioned.

On 28th February, he returned to London and stayed there for a week. He went to Paris on 8th March and on his way to France, he appreciates the courtesy and helping nature of the crew of the boat. Mahipatram deplores that such courtesy and help are awefully lacking in India.

In Paris he met two French scholars. One of them was well -

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versed in Sanskrit and the other, in Hindustani language. He visited famous Institute de France. Here he was introduced to a few other French scholars including Francois Guizot, a noted French historian and a minister for foreign affairs during the regime of Louis Philippe (1830-1848) for a few years. During his eight days stay Mahipatram saw almost all important places of Paris including churches, public buildings, palaces, theatres, museum, libraries, gardens and other historical places. He visited some factories also..Mahipatram is simply charmed by the city of Paris. He considers it as a dream city on the earth. He has no words to express its grandeur. He quotes a few lines from Kavi Premanand, a famous medieval poet of Gujarat, who compares the beauty of Shri Krishna's Dwarika with *Vaikunth* on the earth. At the same time, Mahipatram comments that if Kavi Premanand had visited Paris he would have surely compared Dwarika only with Paris. Mahipatram feels that even Premanand's imagination falls short of what he actually has seen. He could not believe whether he was on the earth or in heaven.

Mahipatram has special words of appreciation for the French people. He considers them superior to the English for their courteous manners and unassuming approach. He feels that English people have cultivated a sense of social aloofness and more so in India. He narrates his own experience, when on his way to Marseilles from Paris, two Englishmen known to him shared with him a common railway compartment. They were returning to Bombay after their vacation stay in England. The moment he got in his compartment both of them vacated their seats and sat in another compartment. They repeated the same at Alexandria while boarding the steamer in which he was also returning. He felt insulted due to their arrogant behaviour as if they were ashamed to share a seat with a native Indian whose country they have subjugated! He simply condemns their 'civilizing mission'. One is not sure whether Mahipatram would have expressed openly his feeling of human dignity and self respect had he not visited England and tasted the liberal democratic set-up of the upper – class of the English society and its institutions. But one thing is certain that as a sensitive intellectual and reformer Mahipatram does not approve of the overbearing racial superiority of the ruling class, and as a government servant he must have known that his unsavoury comments on the ruling class might not be palatable to his superiors when they became a part of his book. Like Mahatma Gandhi in the initial stages of his life, Mahipatram does not seem to have objection to the English rule but he would definitely expect them to treat Indians on par with them as British subjects. But it may be noted that the British were not still out

of the hang-over from the upheaval of Eighteen fifty – seven.

On 19th March 1861, Mahipatram left the shore of Europe from Marseilles with a wish to have a second visit. He reached Bombay on 13th April 1861.

Mahipatram has specially devoted two chapters of his travelogue on his observations and reflections of the English society. As a background of his observations it may be noted that by the mid-nineteenth century England had taken strides in economic and political fields. In the thirties of the nineteenth century Britain had launched political reforms and humanitarian programmes. The impact of the Industrial Revolution was felt in all walks of life. Important changes in transport and communication had taken place by the forties which gave boost to her industrial production, market and capital, making England the industrial leader of Europe. This in turn, gave momentum to socio-cultural changes as reflected in the literature of the period.

Mahipatram discusses the English family system of the middle and upper middle class of the Victorian age, in which parents take special care for the upbringing of their children. Governess is generally employed to look after the needs including an elementary education of the children. After a few years, children are sent to either private or public school. Rich parents spend from about five hundred to one thousand rupees (in Indian currency) for the education of their daughters. Girls not only study the subjects like mathematics, geography, history but a special care is taken to teach them English prose, poetry and other European languages. They are also made familiar with painting, music and dance. He reminds his readers that child marriage does not take place in England. Boy and girl at mature age select their life partner. Immediately after the marriage couple live separately from their parents. As there is no joint family system conflicting situation, particularly between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, does not arise. There is no social pressure on parents if a daughter remains unmarried. English women enjoy social freedom in contrast to their counterpart in India. But according to Mahipatram, English wives generally follow their husbands in their social as well as family matters. That is to say, a wife as an individual did not have equal say with her husband. Nevertheless, she enjoys social freedom as compared to a semi-slave position of a Hindu wife. Mahipatram points out to his readers that there is no caste system in the European society as against the rigidity of the caste structure in the Hindu society. Though he criticises the status consciousness of the Victorian society.

Mahipatram discusses about the characteristics and qualities of the English people. This according to him is the greatest experience

that he gained by visiting England. He reminds his readers that English people are the leading nation in the world in wealth, prosperity, polity, education, technology, commerce, industry, military might and many other fields. He asks his reader to ponder over the factors which contribute to the enviable position that this nation enjoys in the world, despite some of its limitations. It has not acquired the prestige and prosperity all of a sudden, due to a grace of God or fate. All peoples on the earth have their strength and limitations. But the English have cultivated over the years, the qualities of industrious nature, hard working tenacity, zest and positive attitude towards life with a sense of adventure. Because of these qualities they remain composed against heavy odds and maintain their freedom and self-respect. Their patriotic spirit inspires them to face any crisis.

Then Mahipatram goes on elaborating these qualities with some examples. He finds a quality of tenacity for hard work among all the poor as well as rich, whether they work in fields or factories or mines or office. They have cultivated an industrious temperament and a habit of swift working. As a result of that they produce more. They employ all their mental and physical faculties in that direction. Mahipatram deplors that people in India are mentally and physically sluggish. They are pessimistic and depend on their fate. Without putting up maximum labour they are satisfied with what little they get. And if they fail they give up their attempt and blame their fate. Because of this they are of diffident nature. Mahipatram is convinced that there is no substitute for hard work. This is true for any individual or nation. This is one of the reasons why England has produced many scientists, administrators, industrialists and soldiers of fame. Among the Hindus (Indians), according to Mahipatram, there are a few who are quite smart and mentally agile, but they do not possess an aptitude of continuous working. They work only if they find immediate result. While the English do not hanker after an immediate gains as they have cultivated a quality of patience and perseverance.

Second quality of the English, according to Mahipatram, is their adventurous temperament. They are always ready to learn and improve things. They do not like to be satisfied and live in the same condition. They explore and go to any part of the world and sell their manufactured products. They face sea storms and ship-wrecks, live in inhospitable lands and climates. As against this, the Hindus, who once upon a time visited distance lands, lack the spirit of adventure by living in one corner of their house like women in harem, shunning the outside world. *No coward race has ever become prosperous* asserts Mahipatram. "Every Englishman cherishes an ambition to excel in

different fields than his father or ancestors. While for a Hindu, this is considered as a disgrace. The English do not hesitate to abrogate laws framed by their forefathers if they find them wrong or inapplicable. While the Hindus believe that rules made by their ancestors should neither be examined nor changed irrespective of their relevance". This is one of the reasons according to Mahipatram, why one race leads a vibrant and vigorous life while the other lives in dire poverty and ignorance.

Mahipatram considers self-respect and freedom as special virtues of the English people. He is unable to find appropriate words or expression in Gujarati language to explain the core meaning and connotation of these virtues, because he feels that people in Gujarat are not habituated to think that way. He makes clear distinction between self-regard or self-respect (*Atmabhiman*) and egotism or arrogance (*Ahamkar*). If egotism or arrogance is considered as a vice self-condemnation and self-pity are its worst forms. One should not be ashamed if one is poor but if one always feels that he is no better than an insect or worm there is no future for him. Mahipatram thinks that the English possess the virtue of self-respect which the Hindus more or less lack. He cites an example (given to him by a priest friend at Chaltanham) of an official who returned to England after enjoying a high position for thirty years in India. He slapped a labourer for his accidental push to the former. The labourer retaliated. His argument in the English court was that though he was a poor person he believed in self-respect and would not like to be humiliated by any. The court declared him innocent. As an educationalist Mahipatram has given such examples to convince his readers that in England all are equal before the law of the land irrespective of their status or position. Thus there is equality before law and individual freedom in England which in turn inculcate the virtue of self-respect.

In contrast to this, as a witness Mahipatram narrates another incident which took place at Matheran near Bombay, when an English officer beat and kicked a coolie for his inability to carry the former's heavy baggage. Mahipatram comments that this is how many English officers and their native counterparts treat the poor. And most of such Indians do not feel insulted as their sensitivity for self-respect has been completely blunted. Moreover, no body would like to pursue the matter in the court of law. Mahipatram observes that a person without self-respect is not reliable as he is likely to tell a lie. "Genuine self-respect does not make a person arrogant, rather he becomes more courageous and industrious. He never tell a lie". Mahipatram considers the virtue of self-respect as the basis of English industries, good laws and liberty.

An English man knows that as a human being he is entitled to maintain his dignity and self-respect, and for that he does not want to depend on others, that is, he earns his own self-respect at any cost. In England, to call some one a liar would amount to challenge his dignity and self-respect. Mahipatram deplores that in Gujarat people as if do not understand the meaning of insult. "Real humility and genuine sense of discretion are the companions of self-respect. People without self-respect are normally flatterers, liars and dependent on others. They are arrogant and treat other in insulting tone". At the same time Mahipatram sarcastically remarks, "many of these English bureaucrats who come to India do not like native Indians if they also imbibe and practise good qualities of the English". But in England there are no people like bards and minstrels. There is no tradition of flattering somebody even when one is in dire need.

Mahipatram then dwells on the virtue of freedom among the English. According to him, those who are dependent on others for their family or country affairs can not be considered as free people because they do not exercise their authority to manage their own affairs. In Indian context he argues that those who do not think for themselves and blindly follow others in social as well as religious matters, are also not free people. But in England people are trained not to be dependent in family as well as in social matters on others. They cherish their political freedom and do not remain indifferent to the laws, once passed by the parliament, rather they keep a constant watch for their implementation. At the same time they take care to observe the rules and regulations of their country. While in India people are not used to observe rules and regulations unless some punitive measures are taken. But in England, on the whole, people would not create such situation because they love self-respect and freedom. And they nurture both these virtues by obeying the laws of their land. According to Mahipatram, general impression about the definition of punishment for violating law in India is that of imposing fine. If a policeman simply abuses or physically punishes a law breaker he is said to have shown 'mercy', but if he imposes fine he is said to have 'punished' him. As Englishmen love freedom they are sensitive to respect the feelings of others by showing courtesy in their daily affairs. And this is applicable to all public servants including police in England. Mahipatram has thus examined and elaborated good points of the cultural traits of the English to be imbibed by the Indians. At the same time he has no complimentary words for those English bureaucrats who rule India, as they remain oblivious of their own cultural traits in the Indian context and would not tolerate an Indian who expects the same treatment as their own

brethren in England.

Mahipatram repeatedly exhorts the people of Gujarat to cultivate inquiring mind and inquisitive temperament, and not to live in the narrow world of their make-believe. They should ponder over those points that have made the English a great nation, as each English man, under all circumstances, first thinks of his own country rather than for his personal gains. He urges upon the Indians to shun bad qualities of the English but imbibe their good qualities.

Mahipatram's reformer friend, Karsandas Mulji also visited England in 1863 and published his account in 1866 under the title, *Englandāno Pravas* (Travels in England). This new book on travelogue also created interest among the people of Gujarat to know more about the outside world.

Biographies

Mahipatram has written three biographies namely, *Uttam Kapol Karsandas Mulji Charitra* (1877), *Durgaram Charitra* (1879), and *Parvatikunvar Akhyani* (1881). While his *Akbar Charitra* (2nd ed. 1887) written in a simple prose, is a historical account of Akbar's regime – his conquests, religious policy and other achievements in cultural and literary fields. It is mainly based on Abul Fazal's *Akbarnama*, translated by Sir H. M. Elliot into English.

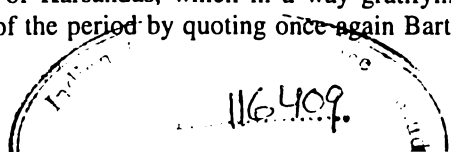
Through these biographies Mahipatram's objective is to present a historical account of the reform activities which took place in Gujarat. He himself being an active reformer, has vividly described the strong points as well as limitations of the movement in context of the social setting of Gujarat. His biographies are perhaps the most authentic narrations of the lives and works of those with whom he was closely associated, and who directly or indirectly moulded the course of the movement.

Mahipatram was the first Gujarati writer who gave a biographical form to Gujarati prose. Before that biographical narrations were not attempted as we understand today. His language in these biographies is simple, homely and occasionally humorous. As compared to his early writings in *Gujarat Shala Patra* and *England ni Musafarinun Varnan* language employed in the biographies is more lucid and eloquent with covert meaning,

(a) *Karsandas Mulji Charitra* presents a vivid picture of a small band of the urban Gujarati middle class fighting orthodoxy of the majority of the influential section of the Hindu society. It may be noted that the traditional Hindu society was somewhat tolerant of ideological dissent but highly intolerant of behavioural deviation. So long as the newly started reform associations restricted their activities to debates and discussions, the orthodox section did not take note of that. But the moment they tried to influence the public opinion through the print and exhort people to get rid of the tyranny of traditionalism they faced stiff resistance.

In *Karsandas Mulji Charitra*, Mahipatram as a close friend of Karsandas Mulji and one of the early crusaders of the reform movement vividly narrates the shocks given by Karsandas Mulji to the orthodox section and kept himself apparently cool while facing social ostracism from not only his own caste but also from the majority of the upper caste urban Hindus. Mahipatram's narration is almost at an existential level, as he himself has gone through such social ostracism, makes his prose more forceful and compelling. As a biographer he maintains balance and discretion and remains truthful to the events and circumstances. At the same time he has expressed his own views on certain decisions taken by Karsandas Mulji. But unfortunately Mahipatram presents Karsandas Mulji only as a public figure, rather than as a private person and a human being having his own ambitions, anxieties and emotions in the context of his family relationship. May be that he was not in a position to collect the views of Karsandas' family members and other personal friends as well as details regarding the feelings expressed by Karsandas himself to his close relatives.

The English title of the book is, *A Memoir of the Reformer Karsandas Mulji*. Mahipatram has dedicated this book "To The Rising Generation Who Emancipated Themselves From The Thralldom Of Ignorance, Superstition and Priest craft; Have Devoted Themselves To Promote The Elevation Of Their Country This Work is Inscribed By The Author". In the nineteenth century many of such biographies though written in the regional language contained English summary including preface. In the preface of this book Mahipatram quotes from an article, *The Baniyas*, published in MacMillan's Magazine (October, 1875), written by Sir Bartle Frere, the then governor of Bombay. Vehemently criticising the priests class called Maharajas of the Vallabh sect, a sect founded by Saint Vallabhacharya, Sir Bartle Frere praises the role of Karsandas Mulji for exposing Maharajas' perverted interpretation and practice of the sect. Mahipatram, at the same time, reminds his readers that what they go through, is the biography of a person who, in the words of Sir Bartle Frere, "went far to expose the practical horrors of the religion..... of the Vallabhacharya, effecting something, it may be hoped towards a thorough reform of its monstrosities. The whole history of the Maharaj trial is one of the greatest interest to any who takes an interest in the ancient and modern religions of India. It has been recorded by a man who would have been remarkable in any age or country as a social reformer and true martyr to his principles". Mahipatram in this biography weaves through various events, the saga of Karsandas, which in a way gratifying to him and other reformers of the period by quoting once again Bartle Frere, "But



though firm as a rock when his principles were at stake, I never met a man of more modesty or unassuming demeanour, with less self-seeking and more of the spirit of the true martyr..... I can testify from my own knowledge that Karsandas was by no means a solitary example of high moral excellence developed under circumstances which at first sight seemed sufficient to blight any thing like sound moral feeling”.

Mahipatram narrates the early life of Karsandas, his education and active participation in various reform associations of Bombay. As a child Karsandas was brought up by his mother's aunt after he lost his mother. He studied at Elphinstone Institution and participated in the activities of the *Gnan Prasarak Mandali*, an association started by the Parsee students of the Elphinstone Institution. In 1853, at one of the meetings of the *Gnan Prasarak Mandali*, the topic selected for debate was *Remarriage of Hindu Widow*. A wealthy Parsee, impressed by the debate, decided to offer a prize of rupees one hundred and fifty for the best essay on the subject. Karsandas decided to compete for the prize, wrote out a portion of the essay. However, his aunt, an old orthodox lady, learnt about this and drove Karsandas from her house. Under these circumstances, Karsandas had to discontinue his studies. For some time, he worked as a headmaster at Gokuldas Tejpal school. Unfortunately for us Mahipatram does not mention about the years that Karsandas spent at the Elphinstone Institution nor does he mention about the level of his studies. In 1853, Karsandas read a paper on “The advantages of foreign travels” at the meeting of the *Buddhivardhak Sabha*, an association started by the Hindu Gujarati students, with which Karsandas was associated since its inception. The subject of his paper was considered as a taboo by the orthodox Hindus. Therefore the *Sabha* got it published in the same year. This essay gave publicity to Karsandas in the Bombay circle of the reformers.

Mahipatram appreciates the boldness of Karsandas as a journalist as he started his own weekly, *Satyaprakash*, in 1855. In this venture he got financial support from a few wealthy Gujaratis. *Satyaprakash* remained Karsandas' important medium to express his views on social and religious anomalies prevailing among the Gujaratis. As mentioned earlier, when in 1857 Karsandas was at *Deesa* in north Gujarat, Mahipatram was in charge of *Satyaprakash* for nearly ten months.

According to Mahipatram, *Satyaprakash* by that time had become very popular as it spearheaded the reform movement among the Gujaratis of Bombay. Karsandas got an opportunity to expose the anomalies prevailing in the religious practice of the Vallabh sect. It may be noted that Karsandas Mulji himself was a follower of this sect.

His crusade against the sect ultimately culminated in the famous Maharaj Libel Case (1862). In this crusade, Karsandas was supported by other reformers who were directly or indirectly associated with the *Buddhivardhak Sabha*.

Mahipatram also reminds his readers that *Satyaprakash* was started at a psychological moment when in the year 1855, a controversy between the Vaishnav Maharajas of the Vallabh sect and the Brahmins of the Bhuleshwar Shiv temple in Bombay cropped up over an issue of the *Chhapan Bhog* ceremony. This ceremony was an important source of income for the Vaishnav Maharajas. The Shaivite Brahmins were also tempted to collect money by distributing the *prasad* to the devotees after performing the said ceremony. That obviously was not liked by the Vaishnav Maharajas. They alleged that the food served to Lord Shiva was prohibitory for the Vaishnavas. They, therefore, asked their followers not to patronage the Brahmins until they expiated their sin. However, a few Vaishnav followers defied the orders of the Maharajas.

The Maharajas, according to Mahipatram, had lost their moral influence on their enlightened followers, as they indulged in many vices and the Vaishnav temples had become hot-bed of religious evils and moral degeneration.

For Karsandas, himself a staunch Vaishnavite, that was an opportunity to expose the misdeeds of the Maharajas, the Vaishnav priests. The articles in *Satyaprakash* made the Vaishnavites and others fully aware of the degraded cult of the Maharajas. The Maharajas made all sorts of efforts to silence Karsandas by means of supplications, bribes and threats, but they did not succeed. In fact, Karsandas was not criticizing the Maharajas with a biased mind. He sincerely wished that the Maharajas should improve their moral standard and rightly guide their followers. Acrimonious articles written by the reformers to expose the misdeeds of the Maharajas made the Maharajas to bribe another newspaper, *Chabuk*, to defame one of the patrons of the reformers. As a result, a suit of damages against the editor of *Chabuk* was filed in 1859, that finally involved the Maharajas in the litigation. Mahipatram in his juicy style narrates how the Maharajas committed blunders one after the other. To avoid their personal presence in the court they prepared a document whereby, the signatories bound themselves not to write anything against them; nor attempt to procure their attendance at the Bombay Supreme Court. A threat of excommunication was given to those who tried to contravene that resolution. The Maharajas further decided to have legislation passed so as to get themselves exempted from personally attending the court.

In order to compel the Vaishnav followers to sign the document the Maharajas adopted all sorts of tactics and fully exploited the sentiments of the superstitious female followers, who, in turn brought undue pressure on the male members of their families. With the result, even many of those who held high positions in public life were finally compelled to sign the document. Mahipatram thus wants to draw the attention of his readers to what extent the Maharajas were wielding their influence on an important section of the society.

According to Mahipatram, one of the articles of the said document was meant to silence Karsandas Mulji, as it clearly indicated that any Vaishnavite who wrote or published anything against the Maharajas would be excommunicated. Reacting against that, Karsandas, in the next issue of *Satyaprakash* (January, 1859), blasted against the tactics of the Maharajas. Under the caption, "The slavery Bond", he criticized them for coercing their followers to sign the document. He dubbed the document as a slavery bond and warned the Maharajas that the reformers would not be cowed down by such black-mailing. The crusade carried against the Maharajas made direct confrontation between them and a group of the reformers inevitable. Hand-bills criticizing the 'Slavery Bond' and the tyranny of the Maharajas were distributed. Despite such scathing remarks published in *Satyaprakash*, the Maharajas did not dare to excommunicate Karsandas Mulji. As a result, the terms of the 'Slavery Bond' remained inoperative. The crusade carried against the Vallabh Maharajas reduced their prestige among their followers. It affected their income also. Karsandas carried the fight further in *Satyaprakash* by raising points on the divine authority of the *Shastras*. Mahipatram reminds the reader how the reformers wanted to make people aware of genuine as against fake forms of religion at intellectual level. The orthodox section and the small group of reformers came to a headlong confrontation with each other. Karsandas called the new religious sects, keeping in mind particularly the Vallabh sect, to be fraudulent, their priests to be cheats and debauch and their books to be morally poisonous. In an article, entitled "Original Hindu religion and the extant fake sects", in *Satyaprakash* (21st October, 1860) he made a frontal attack on the Vallabh sect. In that article Jadunathji, the high priest of the Vallabh sect in Bombay, was repeatedly mentioned by his name, which finally culminated in the Maharaj Libel Case (1861-62).

Nearly half of the portion of this biography is devoted to the background of the case and the hearing of the case. Mahipatram has vividly described the long legal battle in which a few courageous reformers supported Karsandas Mulji as witnesses against the majority

of the powerful orthodoxy. Leading businessmen of Bombay like Laxmidas Khimji, Mangaldas Nathubhai, Gokuldas Tejpal, Khatau Makanji, Mathuradas Lavaji and leading medical men like Dr. Bhau Daji and Dr. Dhirajram stood as witnesses in favour of Karsandas. Many of them were staunch Vaishnavites. They supported Karsandas at the cost of their being ostracized by their caste-fellows. The verdict of the Supreme Court was in favour of Karsandas on the main issue. This case, according to Mahipatram, made Karsandas a hero of the reform movement all over India. The Report of the Court became a topic for discussion in the Indian news papers. Karsandas was congratulated by the Indian Press from Ceylon to Calcutta. Twenty-one news papers published their opinion on the verdict. Thus under the leadership of Karsandas handful of courageous reformers thoroughly exposed the perverted character of some of the members of the Vaishnav priestly class in the name of religion and blind faith of the female followers, who submitted to the lust of these scoundrels.

Mahipatram highlights this legal battle by quoting the last paragraph from justice Joseph Arnold's judgement. Justice Arnold remarked that what was morally wrong could not be theologically right, that when practices, which sapped the very foundations of morality, which involved a violation of the eternal and immutable laws of right, were established in the name of the Religion, they sought, for the common welfare of the society, to be publicly denounced and exposed. Commending the efforts of the defendant (Karsandas) and his witnesses, Justice Arnold remarked that these men had fought determined battle against a foul and powerful delusion. They had dared to look custom and error boldly in the face and proclaimed before the world of their votaries that their evil was not good. He hoped that their courage and consistency would be rewarded by a steady increase in the number of those whom their words and their examples had quickened into thought and animated to resistance, whose homes they had helped to cleanse from loathsome lewdness and whose souls they had set free from a debasing bondage.

But according to Mahipatram, the curious fact remained that despite this legal victory against the orthodoxy. The *Buddhivardhak Sabha*, the main forum of the reform movement remained silent in this matter. Karsandas and those who had supported him as witnesses were not congratulated in public. Nevertheless, unlike other reformers, Dr. John Wilson and other English gentlemen honoured Karsandas by arranging a party at the former's residence. Khoja Muslim gentlemen also held a meeting to honour Karsandas, as some of them had been his students at Gokuldas Tejpal Vidyalaya. So far as the staunch

Vaishnavites were concerned, the judgement came upon them as a rude shock. The whole Vania Mahajan became furious at this victory of Karsandas. The Kapol caste, to which Karsandas belonged, had barring a very and few, absolutely no sympathy for Karsandas. Even Karsandas' father felt that his son's victory had brought about the loss of reputation of his family. Mahipatram is critical for the timid attitudes of the reformers, but at the same time he reminds readers about the hold of the caste system on the society. It may be noted that immediately after the heat of the Maharaj Libel Case was subsided most of those who supported Karsandas felt that they had gone too far. They were not prepared to assume the new role thrust upon them in the consequence of the legal battle. Thus, they were eager to diffuse the situation.

Mahipatram mentions about Karsandas' visit to England in 1863. Though his proposed visit to England was hailed by the reformers Mahipatram feels that the motive behind his going to England was not in itself a wise one. It was the period when due to the American Civil War, England was compelled to purchase cotton from India, with the result, the price of Indian cotton shot up to an enormous extent. It brought such a large influx of money that the Gujarati business community was tempted to make easy money, as it gave impetus to speculation business. Karsandas also found this as a favourable opportunity to earn more. Therefore, according to Mahipatram, Karsandas, descending from the dignified position of a leading reformer, sank into a clerk in Bombay trading firm, which had started its office in England. However, Navalram Laxmiram Pandya, Mahipatram's friend and the reviewer of this biography does not agree with Mahipatram's observation. According to Navalram, Karsandas as a school teacher at the time of the Maharaj Libel Case has got every right to earn more by changing his job. His place as a leading reformer in the enlightened society should not be confused or equated with his status as a clerk in the office.

Karsandas sailed for England in March 1863. In England he devoted much of his time in collecting materials for an account of his travels, which he published in 1866 under the title, *Travels in England*. But the ostensible object of the visit to England did not succeed, as he could not maintain good health in England. Moreover, he was misfit for the job assigned to him by the business firm. He came back within a period of seven months. On his return, his caste-fellows, who had already become his arch enemies, excommunicated him and his family from the Kapol Bania caste. Not only that, he was also excommunicated from the entire fold of Bania community. Nevertheless, some of his close friends supported him. On the contrary

according to Mahipatram, those who had promised him (when he was sailing for England) to take food with him on his return, broke their promise. Karsandas found it difficult after his excommunication from the Bania Mahajan to get even a servant. Despite this he refused to go through the purification ceremony as demanded by the leaders of the Mahajan. As a result, he remained through out his life excommunicated so far as the Bombay Bania Majahan was concerned. Mahipatram is critical of those who lived in their social mire of their refusal to admit Karsandas and his few supporters in their respective castes. At the same time, Mahipatram is not happy with his reformer friends, as many of them including Karsandas Mulji were drawn into the vortex of the speculation business during the American Civil War period. Karsandas suffered heavy financial losses. However, he was saved from utter ruin by his Parsee and European friends. Many of those wealthy people, who so far, had supported the reform movement also were ruined. This gave a jolt to the reform activities in Bombay among the Gujaratis.

Mahipatram devotes a chapter on the literary works of Karsandas. As mentioned above, Karsandas' '*Travels in England (Englandano Pravasi)*' in Gujarati was acclaimed as a better travelogue than one written by Mahipatram himself. In this book, Karsandas, as a keen observer, has graphically given the description of the English cities, towns, buildings, society, political institutions and industries with their statistical data. Exhaustive details pertaining to the various spheres of the English life with pictures are the strong points of this book. This book earned Karsandas money and fame. It was translated into Marathi. The book was patronized by government officials, Diwans of a few native states and many wealthy people. Karsandas wrote *History of the Vallabh sect* in English, narrating the development of the sect since the time of its founder, Vallabhacharya. Karsandas also got translated into Gujarati a Sanskrit book, entitled *Pakhanda Dharma Khandun Natak*, written in 1637. In the introduction of the translation he has focussed his criticism on the Vallabh sect. Karsandas wrote articles in his weekly *Satyaprakash*. According to Mahipatram, Karsandas' writings made people more aware of the social anomalies. His forceful articles gave shocks to those who did not wish to come out of their blind faith.

The last two chapters of the biography are devoted to Karsandas' work in the native states of Kathiawad. In March 1867, Karsandas visited England for the second time. This visit was in connection with a dispute between the Jain community and the ruler of Palitana regarding the Jain religious places on the Setrunjay Hill near Palitana, a small state in Kathiawad. Prior to that, he had visited Rajkot

and gave a lecture at *Vidyagunprakashak Sabha*, a reform association of Rajkot, on remedies to introduce reforms in Kathiawad. Therefore, after his second visit to England he decided to get a job in Kathiawad. According to Mahipatram, one of the reasons for that might be to remain away from Bombay in order to spare his family members from being pressurized by his caste-fellows, who had excommunicated them along with Karsandas. Karsandas was appointed by the Bombay government as an assistant superintendent under the Political Agent of Kathiawad at Rajkot. He served in this position nearly for sixteen months till March 1870 and introduced many administrative reforms. Mahipatram makes special reference to Karsandas' efforts to promote the idea of social reforms. He took keen interest in the activities of *Vidyagunprakashak Sabha* of Rajkot and started a magazine, *Vignan Vilas*. In 1870, Karsandas was transferred on promotion to Limdi, a small state in Kathiawad, as a Special Assistant. Due to his administrative status at Rajkot and Limdi, the Vaishnav and the Jain Vantias had free social intercourse with him and his family. Moreover, at Rajkot, due to his efforts, the Rajkot Vaishnav and Jain Vania Mahajans passed a resolution allowing all the Vantias to visit foreign countries without any social obstructions. Mahipatram narrates yet another interesting incident, but unfortunately the last act of Karsandas' reforms, when Karsandas played a crucial role in the marriage of Madhavdas Rugnathdas, a widower and friend of Karsandas with Dhankor, a widow from the same caste. This remarriage took place in Bombay in May 1871. Karsandas specially came to Bombay as a staunch supporter of widow remarriage. A marriage ceremony was secretly arranged under the police protection as there was a threat to Karsandas' life. Karsandas acted as Dhankor's guardian at the marriage ceremony and performed *Kanyadan* of Dhankor to Madhavdas. This marriage created a stir among the Vantias of Bombay. Karsandas escaped from a physical assault by his opponents and returned to Limdi.

In August 1871, a fatal malady overtook Karsandas. Mahipatram makes a reference of a letter written by Karsandas to his Parsee friend, Sorabji Shapurji Bengali, requesting him to look after his family after his death and also use his (Bengali's) influence to get his wife and children readmitted to the Kapol caste of Bombay. Mahipatram sympathizes with Karsandas as the latter was constantly under the pressure from his wife and other relatives to make compromise with his caste. Karsandas died on 28th August, 1871, at the age of thirty - eight only. A year and half after his death, his wife and children were readmitted to the Kapol Vania caste after paying fine

and performing penitential ceremony at Nasik.

The biography ends with tributes paid to the late reformer; the list of books authored by him and addresses presented to him in his honour by institutions, individuals and groups on various occasions and Karsandas' response to them.

(b) *Mehtaji Durgaram Manchharam Charitra – Part I* is a second biography written by Mahipatram. Mahipatram has dedicated this book to his teacher and an eminent reformer, Dadoba Pandurang, “who took the leadership of the band of reformers and attempted to dispel ignorance and superstition from their fellow-citizens at Surat”. As mentioned earlier, Mahipatram, in his formative years, was very much influenced by the reform activities of Durgaram Mehtaji and Dadoba Pandurang. As a young student he had attended the meetings of the *Manav Dharma Sabha*.

In the introduction of this biography Mahipatram clarifies that he be considered as only an editor of the book, as in the entire biography (of nearly one hundred and seventy pages) he has written only about twenty pages, covering thirty - five years of Durgaram Mehtaji's brief life – sketch. While the rest of the entire writing is done by Durgaram himself, under the heading, *Manav Dharma Sabhanun Daftar*- “A record of the Manav Dharma Sabha”. Durgaram handed over this hand written record to Mahipatram to get it published. The latter has done it with only spelling corrections. Durgaram's language and writing style has been kept intact. Unfortunately the latter portion of this diary-record was destroyed in the fire that broke out in Surat in 1837. Therefore, we are not in a position to get an entire picture about the activities of the Manav Dharma Sabha as this biography covers only the first thirty-five years of Durgaram's life and activities.

First two chapters of the biography are written by Mahipatram covering Durgaram's life till the time of the foundation of the *Manav Dharma Sabha*. Accordingly, Durgaram Manchharam Dave (1809-1876) was born in Vadnagara Nagar Brahmin family in Surat. Durgaram's father worked in the excise department. He did not wish that his son should adopt Brahmin's profession of performing religious ceremonies. Therefore he sent Durgaram to a village school for elementary education. Being bright Durgaram learnt reading, writing and elementary arithmetic including most of the multiplication tables by heart when he was only eight years old. At the age of eleven Durgaram lost his mother and was looked after by his aunt. He picked up elementary accounts and was employed in a business shop. In 1825, at the age of sixteen he went to Bombay. His inquisitive nature

prompted him to join a normal class just started for preparing teachers for new Gujarat schools. After a year's training he came to Surat and joined one of such schools. Mahipatram does not provide more information about Durgaram's fruitful stay in Bombay. He is silent about the people who influenced Durgaram. But one thing is certain that Durgaram's sensitive mind was quick enough to come under the influence of the Western cultural trends with his own indigenous understanding.

Mahipatram describes Durgaram's insatiable inquiring spirit. He read all Gujarati books that he came across, as he was not directly acquainted with the English language. A gifted teacher as he was, he made his school prominent in the city of Surat. His students were known for their intelligence. In 1840, when examination of all the Gujarati teachers of the Government schools was held in Bombay, Durgaram was proved to be the best in the lot. He had the courage of conviction and intelligent anticipation of coming reforms. He soon reasoned himself out of the several superstitious beliefs and caste usages then prevalent, such as the existence of ghosts and their exorcism by means of incantations.

Durgaram renounced orthodoxy and started vigorous campaign against superstition as well as social and moral evils openly especially after 1838. We do not get much information from the biography about his activities besides teaching from 1831 to 1838. Durgaram's first marriage took place in 1831. At that time, it was not possible for a poor Nagar Brahmin like him to spend money on such occasions. Moreover, a Brahmin widower had to face difficulties in getting a girl for marriage though there was no bar for marrying second or third time. At the same time, there were many young widows who could not marry. This made Durgaram to espouse the cause of widow remarriage.

Durgaram's eloquent advocacy in the support of widow remarriage was sharpened when his first wife died in 1838. He was already opposed by the orthodox section of the society on this issue, but he remained dauntless. However Durgaram had to face boomerang when Mathuri, a young Nagar widow, impressed by his advocacy for widow remarriage, proposed to marry Durgaram, now himself a widower. But Durgaram lacked courage. He was not prepared to face a threat of excommunication by his caste-fellows. Finally, in 1843 he married for the second time, a virgin girl of eleven years from his own caste. But he was compelled by his in-laws not to advocate the cause of widow-remarriage in future. Even though, convinced of his views on this issue, Durgaram had to put a stop on its advocacy in public.

Since then Durgaram took up other issues of social and religious importance. He seemed to have studied Sanskrit and could understand the essence of the Upanishadas, Gita, Puranas etc. There is no reference in the biography about the period when he gained knowledge of Sanskrit and the scriptural literature. At the same time he seemed to be in search for a wider reference group to put forth his ideas on social and religious reforms. He also needed an intellectual backing to reinforce his arguments in favour of reforms, as he lacked the knowledge of the English language. Luckily, he found in Dadoba Pandurang (1814-1882) a champion of the cause that he cherished.

In 1842, Government started an English school in Surat, and Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar was appointed as a teacher at this school. Dadoba was well versed in English literature. As a tutor to young Nawab of Javara State he got himself acquainted with the Persian language and Muslim culture. Later on, he joined Elphinstone Institution as a teacher. In Bombay he was in close contact with a group of reformers including Nana Janannath Shankar Shet, Bal Gangadhar Shastri Jambhekar, Dr. Bhau Daji etc. Dadoba's next appointment in Surat became thus, a propelling factor for the reform activities. As a biographer, Mahipatram has missed to give background of Dadoba Pandurang and his association with other reformers.

As such, Dadoba had come in Durgaram's contact in 1825 in Bombay for the first time. In 1839 – 1840 once again Dadoba came in contact with Durgaram in Bombay when Durgaram had joined the Teacher's Training Class. It seems that Durgaram was also in contact either directly or indirectly with Bal Gangadhar Shastri Jambhekar, a reformer of note and professor at Elphinstone Institution.

According to Mahipatram, Dadoba's presence in Surat encouraged Durgaram to start an association, which could give a concrete shape to his ideas on reforms. Dadoba was surprised to learn that Durgaram, despite his lack of the knowledge of the English language, held radical views on social and religious issues. Durgaram was also supported in his reform activities by Henry Green, the headmaster of the government English school of Surat. Green was agnostic. He did not go to church. He was very much impressed by Durgaram's intelligence as the latter thought rationally without any fear. Mahipatram refers to the core of the reformer group, which consisted of five 'Ds', as they were known in Surat at that time. They were Dadoba, Durgaram, Dalpatram Master, Damodardas and Dinmanishankar. They started *Pustak Prasarak Mandali* and brought litho press from Bombay in 1842. However, Mahipatram does not find the record of the activities of the *Mandali*. So far as the litho press was

concerned, it was not allowed by the chief magistrate to be started within the walled city of Surat. So, they started it outside the city. Later on, however, they brought it back to the city.

From third chapter onwards of the biography, Mahipatram presents the notes entered by Durgaram in diary form in first person with date and year. The first entry is on Friday, 27th January 1843. Durgaram puts his thoughts as they occurred to him. He mentions about the caste rigidity. He believes in the Family of Man, irrespective of caste, religion and race. He experiences constraints of irrational tradition. Durgaram narrates the day-to-day events – *happenings* that he encounters and takes notes of his own views on them. His comments are based on rational thinking, rarely done in that medieval social climate. Mahipatram has done a commendable job to present Durgaram's thoughts in his own language for the generations to come. It may be noted that Durgaram with a sense of history, makes remarks in his first entry, thus keeping in mind the future generations.

In 1844 *Manav Dharma Sabha* was started and it became the main forum of the reform activities in Surat. The immediate background of the establishment of the *Manav Dharma Sabha* could be known from the entries of Durgaram's diary. Accordingly, people were under a queer notion that on the day of *Vasant Panchami* (4th January 1843) the end of the world would take place. This absurd prediction, made a year before, turned people panicky. Therefore, Durgaram felt an imperative need to start an association with a view to discuss true nature of religion.

In one of the entries (10th February, 1843), Durgaram mentions that a small group of the reformers (Dalpatram Bhagubhai, Durgaram, Dadoba Pandurang, Naranshankar Chandrashankar, Balaji Pandurang and Dinmanishankar Ramshankar) met at the building of a school where Dalpatram Bhagubhai worked as a teacher. In this meeting a blue-print of the *Manav Dharma Sabha* was prepared. Durgaram made a proposal to start a forum for discussions among the like-minded people. On Dadoba's suggestion that such discussions be based on some principles, Durgaram, at once framed seven guiding principles. They were : (1) There is One God, the Creator of all this Universe., (2) All human beings belong to one fraternity., (3) Religion is one for all men; yet, if they follow several faiths each one believing in one's own, one is only following the bent of one's mind., (4) Men should be judged by the qualities they have; and not by their lineage (or caste)., (5) Men should act with discrimination., (6) The object of all the actions should be to win the grace of God., and (7) All should be taught the importance of the path to Righteousness.

To put these principles into practice, an oath was taken by each of those who were present in the meeting, except Dinmanishankar, one of the five 'Ds', who refused to do so as he was not prepared to advocate these principles in public.

After the framing of the seven principles (10th February, 1843) and before the establishment of the *Manav Dharma Sabha* (22nd June, 1944) it seems that informal discussions, based on the seven principles continued, albeit in a piece-meal fashion, in the group of the reformers. In these discussions Durgaram criticized those Sadhus and ascetics who claimed to be incarnations of God. He also did not favour the pilgrimage of holy places. Durgaram's main thrust was on the purity of mind. He decried a false pride among the higher castes like those of the Brahmins. He viewed that the scriptures which supported untouchability need not be relied on, as they were written by ordinary people.

Through such informal discussions, Durgaram's views on religion seemed to have been gradually crystallized. Therefore this group felt the need for a formal association in which such discussions could be regularised. Accordingly, signatures of those interested in such association were taken. From the list of the signatories (Dadoba Pandurang, Durgaram, Balkrishna Laxman, Damodardas Bhaidas, Ladkoba Atmaramji, Iswardas Hargovindas, Parvatishankar Durgashankar, Kahandas Tapidas, Parbhudas Talakchand, Pranannarayan Mayashankar, Sundarrao Moroba Prabhu, Modi Dadabhai Barjorgi and Anandarrao Champaji), it was clear that those who were associated with the *Manav Dharma Sabha* included Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Parsees etc. Later on, Muslims like Aga Husen Yavar also participated in the discussions. It was decided to meet every Saturday evening at some fixed place. Thus, *Manav Dharma Sabha* came into existence on 22nd June, 1844, when its first meeting took place.

Usually in these meetings, according to Mahipatram, the average number of those who remained present was between thirty and forty. Dadoba was the president of the *Sabha*. Durgaram seemed to be the main speaker. He initiated a topic and then discussion followed in a form of question-answer. Durgaram was supported by Dadoba, who though being a first-rate thinker, was not a good speaker. Mahipatram gives his own comments on some of the topics discussed and entered by Durgaram in the diary.

General thrust of the discussions was on maintaining the individuality of a person and his approach towards self-realization. Durgaram insisted that to cherish a hope for liberation after death was

futile. According to him liberation was possible only while living in this world. He ridiculed those religious leaders who styled themselves as God. He did not favour idolatry, which according to him was a sign of mediocrity. He exhorted to follow the Upanishadic religion. He told his audience that all the scriptures were the works of the imagination of wise men; they were not the creation of God. In one of such discussions, Durgaram criticized those pretenders in the garbs of religious leaders, who interpreted the Vedas and Upanishadas and carved out their own fortunes. He considers them as offenders of God, for, they divided the Family of Man by establishing their own sects. He decried the caste distinctions and pleaded that the *Manav Dharma Sabha* should strive to unite all men who believed in one religion based on humanity and the dignity of an individual. Repeatedly he criticized casteism and those who believed in untouchability and did not favour taking food prepared by so called low-caste people. For Durgaram, a Brahmin was one who led a virtuous life irrespective of his caste or birth.

Durgaram also cautioned his audience not to be misled by some ignorant people who thought that the *Manav Dharma Sabha* was working as an instrument to spread Christianity. He refuted such allegations. According to him, *Sabha's* object was to liberate people from their ignorance and superstitions that they practised in the name of religion. In these discussions, Ranchhodbhai Girdharbhai, Durgaram's own teacher in Bombay, also took part. On the whole, the *Sabha* maintained a high level of discussions. In one of the meetings, Durgaram exhorted his audience to cultivate a capacity to discern true from false, what he called, *Paramahansa Vritti*, to understand the true nature of religion. That is, to accept whatever was good in the religion and to discard the rest of the formal things. On another occasion he urged the audience to look upon the religions of the Hindus, Muslims, Parsees etc. with equal love and regard. He believed that Moksh-liberation was possible through right thinking, which included *Vivek*, *Vairagya* and *Mumuksha*. According to Mahipatram, such discussions were attended by even Dadoba's English school students, though they did not seem to have grasped the content.

Here, it may be noted that *Manav Dharma Sabha's* approach was, to some extent, similar to that of the *Brahmo Samaj* of Calcutta. However, it was not influenced by the activities of the *Brahmo Samaj*, which was reduced to a morbid condition after the death of Raja Rammohan Roy in 1833. It was only in 1843, that it was rejuvenated by Devendranath Tagore. It is, therefore, clear that Durgaram and Dadoba were not influenced directly or indirectly by the activities of

the *Brahmo Samaj*, as there is not a single reference in their writings about the *Brahmo Samaj* so long as the *Manav Dharma Sabha* continued its activities.

Mahipatram has his own comments to make so far as the high level discussions which took place in the *Manav Dharma Sabha*. He expects something more from Durgaram. According to Mahipatram, Durgaram should have put into practice the radical thoughts that he put forth in the meetings of the *Manav Dharma Sabha*. Had Durgaram dined with people belonging to other religions and had he married a widow he would have set an examples for others to follow like Raja Rammohan Roy and other famous reformers. That is to say, had he practised what he preached and thereby bravely faced the odds from his society he would have been in the category of Martin Luther, as he was projected as Hindu Luther by Henry Green, a head master of the government English school.

Manav Dharma Sabha's activities did not restrict to discussions only. Within five months of its establishment, Durgaram openly took up a challenge to dispel ignorance of people who believed in superstitions, magic and *mantra*. Mahipatram narrates Durgaram's method of mobilising public opinion and exposing charlatans. It was quite novel for the people of Surat. He pasted advertisement (23 November, 1844) on all important public buildings of the city. He also sent copies of the advertisement to all leading people of Surat and particularly to those who claimed to be the *Mantrashastris* and magicians. To educate public on this issue Durgaram gave wide publicity to his movement. Through the advertisement he challenged the pretenders by declaring to offer a prize of twenty rupees if they proved the validity of their claim regarding the existence of ghosts and such other superstitious phenomena on particular day and place. This created a curiosity among people. Four such Sunday meetings were held. The strength of the crowd in these meetings ranged from eight hundred to three thousand. For the first three Sundays no magician came forward to accept the challenge. But on the fourth Sunday (22nd December, 1844), which being the last day for accepting the challenge, magicians and Mantrashastris remained present in a large number. They compelled Durgaram to abandon the meeting by creating disturbances. A crowd of two hundred including the magicians tried to assault him. Mahipatram has described this incident as he was a witness to it. A well-built Parsee thwarted the crowd which followed Durgaram, and luckily Durgaram was saved as he, on the way, got in the house of Dadoba Pandurang. Finally, the *Manav Dharma Sabha*, through another advertisement, declared that any magician who wished

to prove his claim could do so, not in public, but in the presence of a few persons. As a result, Vajeram, who claimed to be an exorcist, made a futile attempt in this small meeting. As a consequence, a problem of law and order was created in the city. This in turn, according to Mahipatram, gave wide publicity to the activities of the *Manav Dharma Sabha* even outside Gujarat.

The biography ends with a tribute paid by the author to Durgaram. "Those who were criticizing and condemning the members and the leaders of the *Manav Dharma Sabha* as atheists and fallen from religion, were surprised and mellowed down after their victory (in these stormy meetings). These public meetings gave a shock to the superstitious beliefs in ghost, witch, sorcery and magic. Its impact on the young generation was healthy and positive, and those old people, who could think a little, also became cautious of such fake beliefs. There was a decline in the incidents of 'possessed' women from higher castes. Such a woman became apprehensive of becoming a butt of fun in public. By his praise worthy act courageous Mehtaji earned gratitude from his own people. His fame spread in all directions. Many people felt that he was a unique person. At the same time, one is not surprised when he was abused by those whose opinions were refuted and knavery was exposed by him. But those who had become victims of such cheatings placed complete faith in him. Even a few considered him a founder of new religious sect. Mehtaji applied his energy and zeal to make people free from the web of superstition and enlightened them on the true nature of religion and society. He not only addressed public meetings but fearlessly explained the truth of any matter to even a street crowd. He was thirty-five years old at that time".

(C) *Parvatikunvar Akhyan* is Mahipatram's third biography. This book in a way becomes a part of Mahipatram's own life story. It was published in 1881 after the death of his wife, Parvatikunvar in 1880.

As mentioned in the second chapter it was Parvatikunvar who encouraged Mahipatram to undertake his visit to England. It was a rare coincidence that an illiterate wife of that social climate, instead of becoming a hurdle to her husband's reforming zeal, made it possible for him to set an example for others to practise what he propagated. Nineteenth century middle class reform movement in Gujarat was mainly centred around women's position in the society. And here was a middle class woman who was courageous enough to face all sorts of odds including social ostracism and made her husband proud of being his life-companion.

Parvatikunvar Akhyan is a narration of courageous

temperament of Parvatikunvar who refused to succumb to any irrational belief or superstition. Though remaining in the back ground she became a model for other middle class women to see the reason of the day.

Briefly giving her parental background Mahipatram narrates how Parvatikunvar also inherited certain traits of courage, catholicity and steadfastness. As a six years old boy Mahipatram married to Parvatikunvar, a five years old girl. Parvatikunvar gradually became conversant with the traditional religious literature. Mahipatram admits that in the early years of their married life his short-temper made him autocratic and harsh towards his young wife. But Parvatikunvar's emotional maturity absorbed his anger. She played a crucial and complementary role in his private as well as public life, and as a well-contented life-partner she never became a cause of conflict in his life. As a reformer, Mahipatram, therefore, exhorts married couples to understand and appreciate each others' feelings and sensitivity. Mahipatram appreciates plasticity of Parvatikunvar's temperament as she was open to new changes. That is why, she was free from mental weakness pertaining superstitious beliefs. Mahipatram narrates an incident from their life. Parvatikunvar accompanied Mahipatram when he went to Bombay for further studies in 1852. During their stay in Bombay despite persistent persuasion from the ladies in the neighbourhood, she refused to succumb to a superstitious belief of performing some rites in order to have a child, as the couple, at that time had no issue. Thus she shared the rational traits of her husband. According to Mahipatram, Parvatikunvar remained like a rock when he faced a dilemma of his life while agreeing to visit England as a rare opportunity. Mahipatram admits that but for her courage he would not have taken a decision to visit England. Mahipatram often uses a term *Sati* for her to point out her complete devotion to him.

For nearly twelve years the family remained in social wilderness so far as their caste was concerned. But Parvatikunvar remained indifferent to these agonies and insults. She was at home in the company of the wives of Bholanath Sarabhai, the founder of the *Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj*, Gopal Hari Deshmuk, Satyendranath Tagore and a few Parsee gentlemen. Wives of English officials also joined this group of ladies and encouraged female education in Ahmedabad. Mahipatram takes a special pride in having Parvatikunvar's friendly contacts with the English ladies. This is much more in the tune of his reforming zeal that he exhorts the middle class women to get exposure of other cultural traditions and there by get rid of cocoon like living.

Mahipatram also mentions about his discussions with

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Parvatikunvar on social issues. She was convinced of the evil of child marriage and enforced widowhood. She took active interest in the activities of the *Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj* as she was free from religious taboos.

This biography is in a way a tribute paid by Mahipatram to his wife, who dies on 14th July 1880. Its main objective was to exhort parents and young women to adopt and adapt good qualities of life in the changing contexts to make family and society happy. This book is written in *Balbodh* script with bold letters and contains not more than forty eight pages. It ends with a poem as a tribute.

Novels

(a) Mahipatram wrote three novels, *Sasu Vahuni Ladhai* (Conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law), *Sadhara Jesang* and *Vanraj Chavado*. The first novel was a social one while the remaining two were historical novels. As mentioned earlier, Mahipatram's main objective of his literary works was to give impetus to healthy social changes and to create awareness about the evils in the society. These evils in the name of custom and tradition had crept into the caste system and familial relationship. *Sasu Vahuni Ladhai* is a social novel centred mainly on the relationship between the dominating mother-in-law and young daughter-in-law in a joint family set-up. This traditional conflict between these two family members handed over from generation to generation takes a form of exploitation of a daughter-in-law creating continuous tension in the family life. This was almost common among the middle class Hindu families during the nineteenth century. Even in our own times despite the fact of growing nuclear family system, education and economic independence of the female members, strained relations between them are not completely resolved.

Sasu Vahuni Ladhai is considered as the first social novel of Gujarat, though *Karan Ghelo*, a historical novel, authored by Nandashankar Tuljashankar Mehta was also published in the same year (1866). As such, the structure of *Sasu Vahuni Ladhai* should be considered as that of a pre-novel one if compared to the structure of a modern novel. Nevertheless, Mahipatram in the Indian social context deals with an important family issue within a rigid caste structure and for that he uses a new literary form despite its limitations. Instead of writing in a serious form of essay he intends to reach to the heart of his readers and touch their inner most feelings. He uses a novel form – an imaginary way of narrating stories to depict social reality. He writes, “My objective is to bring out good as well as bad customs prevalent among many castes, and to condemn bad and appreciated good ones”. Therefore, he urges upon the writers not to narrate imaginary stories of the imaginary world; instead, they should present concrete social reality

in the form of imaginary stories which would convey moral to the people in a much more palatable way. This is why, under the bold letters of the title of the novel he adds in small letters, "True picture in a Story Form : With Moral and Fun".

Being a social reformer the main issue before Mahipatram is that of tolerable freedom and equality of an individual in the joint family set-up, irrespective of the gender of a family member. He wants to make educated middle class sensitive about the overt and covert forms of violence being perpetrated in the Hindu joint family, though the British government had introduced many social reforms like the abolition of Sati and female infanticide, and allowing widows to remarry under the legal protection. Nevertheless, the grim reality was that structural oppression prevailed in the family relationship where mother-in-law and some time, husband's sister made the life of a daughter-in-law quite miserable. She was a beast of burden in the family. She was mentally and some times physically tortured, and this she would not like to reveal to her own mother or father lest they should feel unhappy. And even when they knew it they would resign it to their daughter's fate. Only course open to the wretched woman would be to commit suicide. This was one of the reasons why the birth of a female child was considered as a curse in the family. Moreover, the nature of relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law was such that just estimate could not be formed from an outward evidences. It was beyond the power of the policy makers to have free access to the Hindu families on account of the seclusion in which the females lived. Moreover, no male member of a higher caste would tell openly about the weaknesses of his family to the outside world. It was an accepted practice that a son would always side with his mother rather than with his wife, even though the latter was tormented.

In the novel Mahipatram depicts a picture of a higher caste Hindu family of the nineteenth century. (But at the start of the first chapter he gives a background of the story as if it happened in the first decade of the eighteenth century). In the revised second edition of the novel Mahipatram wrote an English introduction under the caption. "An Appeal To My Educated Countrymen", in response to two articles published in the Bombay Gazette (24th April and 27th May, 1873) pertaining to the same subject of domestic torture being perpetrated in the Maharashtra region. Mahipatram writes, "Believing that an appeal through the English language to such of my enlightened countrymen as can understand it, on the crying social evils exposed in this book, will be more effective for their removal and for rousing the sympathy of the educators and civilisers of this country - - - - Nothing I thought

could be better for my purpose then citing these two ably and truthfully written articles”.

Then Mahipatram cites from the first article, “One of the most remarkable and characteristics features of Indian female domestic life that we know is the relationship of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law - - - - when viewed in connection with the state of native society and the marriage institution in this country, it will be found that it is the relationship which more than any other debases the female mind and prevents the women of India rising to their proper level in the social scale. - - - - That men have something to do with placing the women in an inferior position is no doubt true; - - - - But these indefensible customs and prejudices are as nothing to the customs and prejudices which the women allow to operate injuriously upon themselves, and which are established principally by the mother-in-law. - - - - Aided by all the power of the household the mother-in-law can assert her authority without let or hindrance, and the life of the daughter-in-law is made just what mother-in-law may wish: it may be one of comfort and of ease or the reverse. - - - - Nor can the girl wife arrange her own course of domestic life. - - - - Violent and irritating language is far more frequent cause of domestic misery. - - - - If discontent seizes the daughter-in-law and the worm of regret pierces her soul, she may sicken and die or commit suicide. - - - - With all that makes marriage a lottery - - - -”. In responding to this article, Mahipatram writes, “ - - - - The position of the daughter-in-law in Gujarat is worse and her degradation and sufferings are greater than what has been so faithfully depicted above”. Mahipatram refers to “The hardships of the unfortunate daughter-in-law in the Patidar caste in the Ahmedabad and Kaira Collectorates and among the Anavala Desais of the Surat District are unparalleled”. Mahipatram cites the second article in which an account of domestic barbarity which occurred in the family of a Brahmin in Poona, is included. In the concluding remarks of his introduction Mahipatram writes, “Though our educated young men can not prevent infant marriages, they can improve the pitiable condition of their wives. They have full opportunity of talking with them in the bed-chamber after supper every day. Here a kind and considerate husband, by offering of his sympathies, can try to relieve the oppressed feelings of his wife suffering from the tyranny of his parent. He can engage her in useful conversation, enlighten her mind by instruction, inculcate principles of morality and in short, become her teacher and guide”. According to Mahipatram, the root cause of all this evil is early marriage and lack of female education. “Our endeavours to introduce reforms among our people will continue to be lame, and in a great

degree, fruitless, as long as our wives continue to be ignorant, oppressed and superstitious. Let us raise their position in society and their tone of morality. Let us increase their knowledge of the world. Let us acquaint them with their duties as wives and mothers and their duties to man and to God”.

With this long introduction Mahipatram in the first chapter, introduces the main characters of his novel with his own characteristic style, which would be more appealing to his nineteenth century readers. He presents to his readers the time and the place of the story. The time is around the first decade of the eighteenth century and the name of the place is Modasa, a prosperous town in north Gujarat. Its administration was looked after by a Mamlatdar, an official under the direct supervision of the Mughal governor of Ahmedabad. It had a substantial number of higher caste people. There were about fifty families of Vadnagara Nagar Brahmins. In one of such families a girl was born. Her name Sundar, was in match with her beautiful face. She was engaged at the age of seven and got married when she was nine years old. Mahipatram describes many good qualities of this loving little girl – the central character of the novel. Sundar learnt by heart many Sanskrit slokas and songs from her mother. Her sweet voice and generous temperament made the neighbours very happy. Though born to poor parents she was never tempted to eat good dishes. Hard working by nature, at a young age, she became well versed in the house chores including cooking. At the same time, she had her limitations also. She was too much fond of ornaments which her poor parents could not afford. She was very talkative. When the time came to visit her in-laws house, after her marriage, for the first time, she fancied that her mother-in-law and father-in-law would shower their affection on her, she would enjoy playing chess with her sister-in-law (husband's sister) and would become a darling of her husband, who would earn more and bring ornaments for her. But her dreams were to be crushed soon as this innocent girl was unaware of the hardships that she was about to face at the age of fourteen.

Another important character of the novel is Harinand, Sundar's husband. He was nineteen years old when Sundar came to her in-laws' house. Of course, he was not very bad by nature. Employed in a shop he earned sufficiently. He would not do injustice to any one intentionally, but he was easily susceptible to instigation if somebody wanted to play a mischief. And once he got angry he would be as bad as a wild animal. In the caste dinner as a glutton he would relish not less than two seers of ghee. His father's name was Ramanand. Ramanand exercised zero influence in the family affairs. Being good

for nothing he was completely under the control of his wife and Sundar's mother-in-law, Annapurna. Addicted to hemp Ramanand would kill time by continuously boasting and stuffing snuff in his broad nostrils, which scared neighbouring children. He had some influence in his caste, but if he ventured to advise his wife, Annapurna, he would get thrashing from her.

Vijianand was an elder brother of Harinand, the husband of Sundar. The only difference between Vijianand and Harinand was that the former could think a little bit independently. He had no faith in his mother Annapurna and sister, Kamala, as he was not easily influenced like Harinand. Being hot-tempered he would lash out at his quarrelsome mother and childless wife, Chanda. Kamala was Harinand's sister. She had inherited all the vices from her mother. Her weak and fickle-minded husband made her bold to cross all the limits of decency. Pampered by her parents she secured all licence after the death of her in-laws. Mahipatram finally presents a villain of piece, Annapurna, the mother-in-law of Sundar. She had cultivated all the arts of a crafty woman. She could easily impress others by her hollow words of wisdom, humility and specious temperament. But at home cold-blooded and cruel, she took it for granted that there was nothing wrong if she tyrannized her daughters-in-law, as she was tortured by her own mother-in-law. From her own experience as a daughter-in-law, instead of becoming sympathetic she became more wicked and sadist. When her mother-in-law died she loudly and bitterly wept to impress the outsiders but secretly in her heart she was extremely happy to learn that it would be her turn now onwards to dominate the family.

Mahipatram thus presents the background of the characters in such a way as to remind his readers continuously about the logical end of the story, which the readers can easily imagine. Only he has to add a few incidents here and there to weave the whole plot and thereby strengthen the sympathies of the readers for the victim.

Mahipatram presents two contrasting images of daughters-in-law, Chanda, the childless wife of an elder son, Vijianand, and Sundar, the wife of Harinand, the younger son. Mahipatram hints at the character of Chanda, who had learnt many ways and tricks from the experienced neighbouring women to escape from the tyranny of her mother-in-law. And soon Chanda became well-versed in adapting most of the innate characteristics of a crafty woman and thus succeeded in keeping her mother-in-law at bay. When required she would give gentle smile with a soft tone and easy gait. In case rebuked by her mother-in-law and sister-in-law she would give threats with loud shrieks to commit suicide either by falling in well or strangling her throat. To

avoid doing house-chores she would pretend to be sick and thereby even get sympathetic words from her husband. Sometimes, she would act as a possessed woman shrieking and violently shaking her body. As an experienced elder daughter-in-law Chanda advised Sundar to do the same. But Sundar by her temperament refused to adopt such defence-mechanism. She was too good to be a pretender. She accepts her fate, labours day and night, and bears insults from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. And almost twice in a month, under the instigation of Annapurna and Kamala, she will face abuses and physical assaults from her husband, Harinand. There was no body to take her side. And if she told her woes to her mother, as a helpless woman, she also would weep along with Sundar. Within a year Sundar lost her mother and father. Now there is nobody before whom she can give vent to her feelings. Despite all this she yearns to win over her husband; but fails. Once she picked up courage and urged her mother-in-law and sister-in-law in angry tone with tears in her eyes not to abuse her deceased parents and have mercy on her. This was too much for the quarrelsome mother-in-law and sister-in-law. They scolded Harinand for not keeping any check on his wife who dared to argue vehemently. Harinand got wild on hearing this. He pushes her down and gives thrashing to Sundar. As a result, she breaks her head and back, and becomes unconscious for some time. She is not asked for supper. She sleeps in her room unconsoled. And when Ramanand, Sundar's father-in-law, inquires about Sundar's absence in the kitchen, Annapurna shoots out volleys of abuses at him. The poor fellow after taking his food quietly pushes a big pinch of snuff in each nostril and forgets his wife's scolding.

Next day, the whole Nagar caste comes to learn about Sundar's head injury through Chanda, Sundar's sister-in-law. Harinand becomes a butt of fun among his friends for his 'bravery'. Most of them are addicted to wine and hemp. But one of them, a good one, advises Harinand to treat his wife kindly. He warns him that if she is not treated so she may go astray. In order to convince Harinand he narrates an anecdote. Mahipatram has added many such humorous anecdotes through out the novel as a part of teaching moral.

After a few days Sundar is surprised to find a perceptive change in Harinand's behaviour. She is overjoyed and thanks mother Goddess for that. But sadist Annapurna can easily make out such changes in the couple. So she pretends to be sick and instigates fickle-minded Harinand against Sundar, who becomes a victim of Harinand's blind wrath. Such incidents take place repeatedly as it was a social belief that a man cannot get a second mother but in case a wife dies he can procure a second one. Therefore, Harinand reposes complete faith

in his mother and sister. Moreover, Harinand's visits to his kept is another cause of Sundar's agony. In between Mahipatram adds a few songs sung by different castes on occasions as narrated in the novel, and through minor characters he criticizes some evil customs and the content of such songs. As against this, through the dialogue between the characters, he adds a few prayers written by Bholanath Sarabhai for the *Ahmedabad Prarthana Samaj*.

Meanwhile, Mahipatram adds other stories and anecdotes and describes intense carving for a child by Chanda who is without an issue. She performs many fake ceremonies and visits a fake Muslim Fakir. Chanda also persuades Sundar, who is fed up with torture from Annapurna and Harinand, to take help of Fakir to get rid of this situation. However, Sundar refuses to do so. But Chanda persists in her attempts. Here after, the story takes a sharp turn. Harinand, in order to please his kept, steals Sundar's ornaments at night and falsely accuses Sundar for the loss. Sunder knows this but she is helpless. Again there is a broil among the family members. Neighbours and caste-fellows instantly rush to watch the scene and get perverted entertainment. Harinand decides to teach Sundar a lesson. Annapurna pretends to commit suicide as a 'helpless' mother-in-law. She with shrieks abuses Sundar. Harinand gets excited and mercilessly beats Sundar to the extent that she becomes unconscious.

Next day, Sundar becomes desperate out of self-pity and succumbs to the advice of Chanda to visit the Fakir under a pretext of washing clothes at a pond. Both of them go to the pond and from there, escorted by the Fakir they are taken to the tomb of Jamala Pir to procure a charmed thread or amulet, which would help Sundar to have a control over her husband. Chanda and Sundar are seduced to take rest in separate rooms after performing a fake ceremony. But before their moral fall takes place the surroundings of the tomb are stormed by an infuriated crowd of Brahmins who suspected some foul play as Chanda and Sundar did not return home even after many hours. Sundar escapes from a back door and covers many miles during the night. She is completely exhausted. Next morning she is rescued by Hasankhan Pathan, the thanedar of Modasa. Here Mahipatram presents Hasankhan as a man of noble character and an honest officer. Hasankhan provides shelter to Sundar at his own residence. He arranges for her medical treatment also. Hasankhan's childless wife persuades him to marry Sundar. But he flatly refuses to do so. Meanwhile in-laws of Sundar are hackled and abused in the town. Harinand is imprisoned. Mahipatram presents a comic picture of degenerated higher caste Nagar Brahmins who become a butt of fun and an object of hatred. Sundar does not

recover and succumbs to the wounds inflicted by Harinand and dies. Harinand in custody soon realizes his follies for often being instigated by Annapurna and repents. His brother Vijianand also blames his mother and sister for this sorry situation.

After Sundar's death some of the caste-fellows refuse to participate in the feast to be given on the thirteenth day after the death of Sundar. So Ramanand and Annapurna go on fast at Atkeshwar temple. After two days of their fast leaders of the caste meet at this temple to take a decision regarding the participation in the feast. Mahipatram draws a caricature of these caste leaders who start gathering with their funny turbans and clothes on their half-covered bodies, mouth full of paan-supari and snuffed nostrils. In the meeting they are shown pushing back each other to occupy the front row in the overpacked space. There ensue in shouting tones allegations and counter allegations with a threat to reveal the black side of each other. The head of the caste is shown intervening in the melee. He advises the gathering not to expose their weaknesses, which are also common in all other castes. According to him, there are two alternatives to be spared from tyranny; one is to defeat the tyrant and the other is to deceive him. Thus to cover up the matter they decide to participate in this feast, with other binding conditions including giving caste feast after the release of Harinand from jail, and after performing religious ceremonies on the death of Sundar another feast should be given to a specific number of Brahmins and their wives. Ramanand, as the head of the family accepts these conditions.

On thirteenth day of the death of Sundar, men and women of Nagar Brahmin caste start flocking for the feast at the house of Ramanand. Women have put on ornaments. They are in mood of rejoicings; while men in only knee covered dhoti with a dinner kit including silken dhoti, jug and dry leaf-dishes hasten to reach the place. Some take bath at the street well making their whole body wet with only one tumbler of water. Mahipatram remarks that this art of one tumbler-bath is fast disappearing. The Brahmins sit in row eagerly waiting for the sweet items. They are completely oblivious of Sundar's tragedy. They profusely appreciate the sumptuous dish and generosity of their host. They start eating, but within a few minutes with drops of rain dust storm breaks out. Their plates with food are covered with dust. However that does not stop these gluttonous Brahmins relishing the food. But soon a few roof-tiles flung in air hit the heads of some Brahmins compelling them to leave their dishes unfinished. Annapurna considered this as a bad omen. She started beating her breast and deploring that the caste-fellows have to eat dust and desert the place

half-starved. Mahipatram sarcastically remarks, "Each of them must have swallowed at least a few ounces of dust!". The novel ends with comments of Vijianand that such things are bound to happen when a quarrelsome and wicked mother-in-law does not allow her daughter-in-law to live in peace even for a moment through out life, even nature would not spare to expose such family in the most ludicrous way.

The novel lacks a plot as it is limited to a story of one family in the absence of a broad social canvas with varieties of characters and incidents attached to the narrow confines of a caste structure. The author's focus is only around the main incidents of the family leaving aside the broader social context. Mahipatram creates melodramatic effect on the occasion of Sundar's death but it is not balanced by the concluding incident of dust-storm at the feast. Nevertheless, this dust – storm incident symbolizes the level of degeneration of a higher caste Hindu society as a whole. Mahipatram shows Annapurna bitterly deploring in open for the caste-fellows who swallowed dust and went away half-starved but she has absolutely no remorse for the tragic death of Sundar. Mahipatram has mentioned this in his English introduction. "A common saying among the mother-in-laws, to their eternal shame, is that 'the death of a daughter-in-law is of as little consequence as that of a female house-rat'." Thus Mahipatram presents through this family story a society which is fossilized, and new changes are about to be felt. At that juncture the author tries to uplift the society, which has already reached to its nadir; not by giving any formula or solution but by caricaturing it with a tragic end.

(b) Mahipatram wrote two historical novels. The first one is entitled *Sadhara Jesangh Athava Siddharaj Jayasimhani Varta* (Story of Siddharaj Jayasimha). It was published in 1880. The second one, *Vanraj Chavado* was published in 1881. Both of them are based on folklore and cultural history of Gujarat.

Sadhara Jesangh is dedicated to all his (Mahipatram's) friends, who not only supported him wholeheartedly when he was passing through mental torment given by the Nagar caste, but they also, for the sake of the good of country, had to undergo agony along with him. The novel is centred around the life and times of Siddharaj Jayasimha, the ruler of Gujarat from 1094 A.D. to 1143 A.D. He expanded his kingdom beyond the borders of Gujarat, Kutch and Saurashtra. Siddharaj's reign is considered as a golden period in the pre-Muslim history of Gujarat. In the folk-lore he is known as *Sadhara Jesangh*. Mahipatram has used historical-cum-literary works and popular stories to weave the plot of the novel.

From the start of the novel *Mahipatram*, keeping in mind the social evils and taboos of his times, gives an imaginary and rosy picture of the reign of Karnaray, the ruler of Gujarat and the father of Sadhara Jesangh. Accordingly, Karnaray's kingdom was free from evils like infant marriages. The king always detested flattery from his courtiers and bards. He looked after the welfare of his people and encouraged literary and cultural activities. His queen, Mayanalladevi, was a paragon of virtues. Sadhara Jesangh was born to such ideal ruler and queen. Sadhara inherits good qualities from his parents. After the early death of Karnaray Solanki his queen Mayanalladevi does not commit Sati, but as a responsible guardian of a young ruler she continues the cultural and literary tradition of her late husband. She does not encourage customs like giving feasts to Brahmins. She abolishes undue taxes at the places of pilgrimage. At the same time she takes special care to inculcate virtues and noble qualities of a true ruler in her young son, Sadhara.

After Sadhara's coronation, he is presented as a generous and ambitious ruler. Like his parents he does not believe in giving feasts to Brahmins, nor does he encourage superstitious beliefs among the people. As regards such beliefs *Mahipatram* modifies a popular episode associated with the life of Sadhara. The episode is about Jasama Od, a beautiful woman belonging to a lower caste. She is completely devoted to her husband. Both of them came as labourers to work on Sahasraling Sarovar being constructed by Sadhara. As the popular story goes Sadhara gets her husband killed. Terribly shocked by this gruesome act on the part of the king, Jasama commits suicide, but before doing that she bitterly curses the king that the lake will not hold water, it will remain empty. Worried Sadhara, in order to propitiate the curse, on the advice of the elders, apparently arranges to sacrifice a boy from a lower caste, but actually the boy is not sacrificed. Symbolically he gets only head injuries. This is how the effects of the curse are mitigated and the lake becomes full with water. As a part of this episode *Mahipatram* discusses against caste and family discriminations. Such distinctions of higher and lower are artificial and based on injustice.

Now Sadhara is shown embarking upon his territorial conquests. He fights with a ruler of Malwa, Yashovarman, and defeats him. *Mahipatram* gives a graphic description of such battles. In this novel his prose becomes more refined than that of his early writings. Sadhara is shown celebrating his victory after the imprisonment of Yashovarman. *Mahipatram* also makes a space for the description of romantic affairs of Sadhara with the princess of Ajodhya. Sadhara exchanges love letters with the princess and wins over her heart. He

marries the princess by Swayamvara, by excelling other princes from other parts of the country. Sadhara constructs the famous temple of Rudramahalak, known as Rudramahalaya at Shreesthal (Siddhapura), and declares himself as the ruler of Anahillpattan. He honours Jains and Brahmin scholars.

Sadhara is also presented as a conqueror of southern and northern territories of India. Mahipatram gives exotic description of these conquests. He narrates an imaginary kingdom of Mahobaknagar. The ruler, Madan Varma, indulges in all kinds of vices. People of this kingdom also are lazy and ignorant. They live superstitious life. There is no strong army to defend the kingdom. And there is a lurking danger of military invasion. Meanwhile Sadhara conquers the territories up to Konkan and amalgamates in his kingdom. At Sanjan (in present Valsad district) Sadhara is received by Dasturs of the Parsee community. He appreciates the qualities like simplicity, humility, generosity and religious nature of the Parsees. Sadhara is shown going up to Malbar and Madura. He subjugates the rulers of these territories, accepts tributes from them but as a policy does not want to incorporate them in his empire. Thereby he makes them his friends and allies. Meanwhile he invades the Sorath region in Saurashtra and lays siege to the strong fort of Junagadh, which continues for nearly twelve years. In the meantime he goes to Sindh. Its ruler surrenders to Sadhara. Sadhara is shown visiting Karachi and arranging for a strong naval force. Sadara visits Lahore incognito. He is pained to see the deplorable condition of the people of Punjab, who are under the foreign rule. He returns to conquer Junagadh. Ra Khengara, the ruler, is finally killed in the battle. Mahipatram here modifies a popular story about Sadhara and Ranakdevi, a beautiful wife of Rakhengar. Sadhara requests Ranakdevi, now a widow, to marry him. But Ranakdevi refuses to do so. She commits Sati near Vadhavan. (As popular story goes, Sadhara was actually charmed by the beauty of Ranakdevi. But Mahipatram presents Sadhara as a reformer king, who believes in widow marriage).

The ruler of Chitore invades Gujarat but he is defeated by Sadhara. Sadhara makes him his tributary. Then Sadhara visits Chitore and holds the meeting of all Rajput rulers. Mahipatram presents Sadhara as a farsighted Indian ruler who can unite all Indian rulers, in contrast to the rulers who live only in the narrow world of their territories and squander away their riches on sensuous pleasures and finally lose their political freedom to the foreign conquerors. Sadhara as a visionary exhorts the Rajput rulers to desist from their internal squabble and fight, and get united to face enemy from the Punjab and Sindh borders as he can clearly see the military danger lurking on the

region. Mahipatram, thereby, reminds his readers to learn from a page of history that internal discord and easy life among the rulers of India made them prey to the foreign invasions. Sadhara is presented as a model for the rulers who has got an all India vision and who inculcates the spirit of nationalism and patriotism. And for that reason, Mahipatram fancies that Sadhara does not outright annex the conquered territories of Kashi, Kanoj, Bihar, Bengal, Ajodhya, Delhi etc. At the end of the novel Sadhara is projected as an enlightened Chakravartin ruler who could visualize the political unity of India. During his long reign people were prosperous and happy. And so long as he lived there were no foreign invasions.

On the whole, the prose of the novel is lucid and narration is quite effective. But small stories and anecdotes interrupt the continuity of the story. Mahipatram makes anachronistic errors by mentioning the names of some modern towns and places, which are crept in his description perhaps unintentionally, while narrating the visits and conquests of the territories and towns by Sadhara.

(C) Mahipatram calls his second historical novel, *Vanaraj Chavado* (1881), an imaginary story based on some historical facts. He mentions that the love for Gujarat and its past glory has prompted him to write this novel.

Mahipatram traces the history of Gurjar Rajputs after whom this land is known as Gujarat, and gives a background of their invasion of Gujarat. He describes how the Gurjar Rajputs conquered the kingdom of Vallabhi which was on the coast of Saurashtra. Mahipatram presents a pathetic picture of the kingdom of Vallabhipur, which is on the brink of its downfall. Its ruler is imbecile. Its army is weak, as it is constituted of a motley crowd of mercenaries. All the sections of its society including merchants, peasants and artisans are lazy, timid, corrupt and devoid of morality as they have lost the vitality of their life. Here, a man has many wives and an old one, before his death, marries a young girl. Priests indulge in all sorts of vices and superstitions. Such a kingdom with a weak polity and demoralised society is bound to be conquered. Mahipatram, thereby reminds his reader how the Indian rulers in the eighteenth century were subjugated by the English for their shortsightedness, inefficiency and military weaknesses. They exploited their subjects, indulged in vices and fought with each other.

Mahipatram gives a description of prosperity of Vallabhi. He narrates one of those oft-repeated incidents from Indian history when an influential person for his personal ambition or grudges reveals all the weaknesses of his motherland to an enemy ruler and prompts him for

invasion. Here, in the case of the kingdom of Vallabhi such traitor is Kaku, who develops strained relations with the ruler and decides to take a revenge by inviting the Gurjar ruler of Punjab to invade Vallabhi and remove the King. Thus Vallabhi is invaded and the Gurjar Rajputs conquer it and gradually establish their hold all over Gujarat. They make Panchasar, in northern part of Gujarat, their capital. Here Mahipatram traces the history of the Nagar Brahmins, who accompanied Gurjar Rajputs as soldiers and settled at Vadanagar in Gujarat.

After a few years, the kingdom of the Gurjars reaches to its heights with prosperity and cultural activities under the Chavada ruler, Jayashikhar. Chavada Jayshikhar marries Rupsundari, a princess of Multan. She knows Sanskrit and has cultivated all the qualities of a mature queen. Jayshikhar is an enlightened king. He takes care of the poor and imparts justice impartially. He encourages art, literature and industry. He is a patron of poets and scholars. Kavi Shankar Barot is a leading poet in his court. Once Kavi Shankar visits the court of Bhuvad, a Solanki ruler of Kanoj. Bhuvad is very ambitious and miser ruler. In the court of Bhuvad Kavi Shankar in an exaggerated tone eulogizes the qualities of his king, Jayshikhar, and narrates the prosperity of the kingdom. Covetous Bhuvad becomes envious of the prosperity of Gujarat and invades Panchasar. He even gives temptations to Kavi Shankar to side with him, but Kavi Shankar, being patriotic and loyal to Gujarat refuses to oblige him. Bhuvad's army is defeated by Jayshikhar Chavada. Bhuvad repeatedly invades Panchasar without losing his patience, but he does not succeed in his object. Many soldiers lose their lives in the battles. Mahipatram describes the battle scenes and reminds his readers about the third battle of Panipat (1761). But finally Bhuvad brings very large army and besieges the capital, Panchasar. This siege continues for fifty-two days. Meanwhile many skirmishes between the Chavada army and Solanki army take place. Bhuvad gives tempting offers to Surpal, the chief of the Chavada army and brother-in-law of Jayshikhar. But Surpal with his patriotic spirit and loyalty kicks out these offers, "I will not desert my duty even for the sake of Indrasan". But finally the fortress is stormed and the Chavada soldiers fight till the last man. Jayshikhar also dies while fighting till the last drop of his blood. Mahipatram presents a saga of sacrifice and patriotism of the Gujarat soldiers, who though in a small number, gave a tough fight to the enemy's large army. At the same time, he sarcastically comments on those people of Panchasar who refuse to fight, as they being the followers of Buddhist and Jain philosophy of non-violence they do not have an experience to use arms.

Before the fall of Panchasar, Rupsundari, the pregnant queen of Jayshikhar is sent to forest incognito. She is escorted by Surpal. He as a guardian would take the responsibility of the future prince.

Now Gujarat comes under the control of Bhuvad. Mahipatram narrates a debate which takes place among the feudal lords of Bhuvad. Those who want to settle and rule over Gujarat argue that, soon the people of Gujarat would indulge in their petty quarrels over social and religious issues and there would be split in their casts and communities. They would take more interest in serving their religious Gurus and writing their account books and thus their spirit of patriotism would be easily wiped out. Therefore, there is no possibility of their revolt. While the other group argued, "There are many feudal rulers of Gujarat and they are loyal to the Chavada rule. They will resist our domination. And if they get support from wealthy, industrious and united people our future is doomed".

Bhuvad appoints his princess, Minaldevi, as the governor of Gujarat and he returns to his capital, Kalyaninagari. Soon after, the administration of Bhuvad breaks down. Gujarat passes through lawlessness and anarchy. Everywhere robbery takes place. Mahipatram comments that those who believed in non-violence were in pitiable condition as there was nobody to protect them. Bhuvad's officials also exploit people by taking bribes. Meanwhile Rupsundari protected by the patriotic Bhils amidst continuous search by the soldiers of Bhuvad delivers a child, who later on becomes a famous ruler of Gujarat. His name is Vanaraj as he is born in forest. The mother and the child have to change the places of their shelter very often as they are being hunted by Bhuvad's soldiers. Mahipatram gives a description of caves and dense jungles where Rupsundari and Vanaraj are hidden. They pass through all kinds of adversity. Rupsundari is shown singing lullaby. She has complete faith in the bright future of her child. By chance, Rupsundari and the child come in contact of Shilgunasuri, a Jain monk. Before he became a monk, in his early life, he was from a Chavada ruling family. Shilgunasuri could foresee in young prince all the characteristics of a powerful monarch. Later on, the mother and the son go to meet Shilgunasuri incognito. On the way both of them notice people believing in ghosts and other such superstitions. Mahipatram briefly describes such popular incidents. When the queen and Vanaraj meet Shilgunasuri, he explains to them that people wrongly take maladies like hysteria as being possessed by spirits. Mahipatram, thus, exhorts his readers not to believe in such superstitions. Therefore, whenever child Vanaraj falls sick, Rupsundari, despite pressures from

the Bhil women, does not apply *mantra* and magic but treats him with herbal medicine. She has complete trust in God.

Rupsundari teaches young Vanaraj reading and writing. Vanaraj is in constant touch of Shilgunasuri. He learns Sanskrit and listens many stories inculcating virtues like faith in God, truth, courage, compassion, adventure, benevolence, bravery, love for the country, politeness, humility etc. Mahipatram gives narration of such stories. Vanaraj is brought up among the adventurous Bhils. Often he faces dangers from his enemies, the soldiers of Bhuvad. He becomes expert in adventurous games. He gradually trains his body for any eventuality, and as a carefree boy does lots of mischief during the festivals like Holi. He quickly picks up handling various types of weapons. He chases thieves and punishes them. Once in a fight with a thief he is wounded by an arrow. So a special armour is provided to him by the Bhils. Once in a cave Vanaraj meets five robbers. Each of them tells a story to him. Mahipatram narrates these stories. Once he is shown as protecting Shridevi, daughter of the Nagarsheth of Shrimalpuri. The wealthy Nagarsheth recognizes him as his ruler and promises him to be helpful with his wealth and intelligence. Surpal, the chief of Jayashikhar's army and Vanaraj's uncle always accompanies the latter wherever he goes. Once both of them visit Girnar region. On the way, Vanaraj secures the friendship of Anahil Bharvad, a shepherd who becomes his bosom friend. Anahil Bharvad declares to dedicate his life in the service of Vanaraj. Like Shivaji, Vanaraj is shown as collecting his band of followers who act as his soldiers. They are fired by the spirit of patriotism. He makes inroads in the territory under the control of the soldiers of Bhuvad. People now easily recognize him as their future ruler. Fed up with the terror and misrule by the officials of Bhuvad they willingly support Vanaraj. He invades Kanakavali and Prabhas Patan. Vagher ruler also helps him. They succeed in the battle and control the territory around. A big fair at the Someswar temple is held. Thousands of pilgrims visit the place. They welcome Vanaraj, and Vanaraj declares himself a king of Dev Patan. Like Shivaji he conquers more territories with the support of the people who groan under the yoke of Bhuvad's men. Bhuvad's officials treat Vanaraj and his soldiers as robbers or rebels. They let loose their terror on those who support Vanaraj. But people express their unflinching loyalty to Vanaraj. Vanaraj brings one territory after the other under his control. Meanwhile the army of the Chalukyas-Solankis invades Abu and defeats Jaymal, the ruler of Abu. But Vanaraj comes to the rescue of Jaymal and defeats the invading army of the Chalukyas. Jaymal decides to marry his beautiful daughter, Sundarkeshi to Vanaraj. Sundarkeshi

and Vanaraj also are attracted towards each other. With this victory Vanaraj's military strength is increased. Meanwhile, Vanaraj's loyal guardian Surpal falls sick and dies.

Rana Pratap was helped by patriot Bhamasha, likewise Vanaraj gets help from a wealthy trader, Champo, who lays all his wealth at the disposal of Vanaraj to defeat the enemy of Gujarat. Champo also is shown as a wise counsellor of Surpal, who all through out his life had protected Vanaraj. Champo is well-versed in Sanskrit and Prakrit. At Pavagadh Vanaraj appoints Champo as his chief minister. Later on, a new settlement known as Champaner town was named after Champo.

From time to time Vanaraj is chased by the Solanki armies. Like Shivaji Vanaraj has to give a fight at different places. Bhuvad sends a fresh army from Kalyani to crush Vanaraj, and Panchasar, the capital of Jayshikhar is burnt down. Vanaraj's army is defeated and he has to take shelter in the forest. But he continues attacking the armies of the enemy. And finally he completely defeats Bhuvad's armies. Old Bhuvad by that time is dead. Vanaraj lays a foundation of his new capital on the bank of river Saraswati. It is known as Anahil Patan after the name of his friend Anahil Bharvad. At his new capital his coronation and marriage take place in 746 A.D. Mahipatram gives a description of both these events in the presence of his religious guardian, Shilgunasuri and mother, Rupsundari. Vanaraj marries to Sundarkeshi, the princess of the ruler of Abu, Jaymal.

Mahipatram depicts Vanaraj as an ideal king. As the first servant of the people he personally looks after the welfare of his people. He establishes law and order and reduces taxes. He encourages trade, commerce and new industries to make his kingdom prosperous. In order to expose some of the anomalies of the British rule in India Mahipatram reminds the readers to compare it with that of Vanaraj who takes a special care to see that the wealth of his kingdom, which is termed as Swarajya, is not drained away by sending it outside the territories, and in government offices and judicial courts, corruption and other procedural delays do not take place. Vanaraj, at the same time, gives employment to his people by constructing new buildings, temples, lakes, wells etc. He encourages the resettlement of the deserted villages and starts new settlements with proper planning. He reduces the tributes of the rulers who have accepted his suzerainty.

Mahipatram projects Vanaraj as a social reformer. For that purpose Mahipatram narrates short stories. He abolishes child marriages and such other evil practices which have crept in during the occupation years of the enemy rule. As an incognito he moves in his

kingdom, visits the places of pilgrimage and severely punishes those who indulge in licentious acts. He exhorts his subjects to follow genuine religion based on right conduct rather than emphasizing the external aspects like fasting and observing other hollow ceremonies. He encourages learning of art and literature. He encourages foreign travels, and in order to justify that he calls a meeting of *Shastris*. Mahipatram presents a humorous scene of this meeting of the orthodox pandits, well versed in various scriptures at superficial level, shouting against each other and indulging in hair-splitting of the grammatical rules with barren scriptural debates.

A prince is born to his queen. He is known as Yogaraj. Vanaraj takes a special care to impart good education and training to the prince. He starts a school at Anahil Patan to impart education to the princes of the rulers under him so that they shun vices and in future become ideal rulers. Thus Mahipatram indirectly exhorts the native rulers of Gujarat and Saurashtra to give good training to their princes and introduce administrative as well as other reforms in their territories. Thereby he points out the pitfalls of the present native rulers by giving descriptions of the early rulers who indulged in vices and were addicted to opium and wine. Vanaraj is shown punishing those who indulge in flattery and back-biting with their cooked stories, as many of the fickle-minded rulers become victims to such slanderous gossips, Yogaraj is given practical training also. Vanaraj takes him personally to be acquainted with the various sections and strata of the society. They visit many places in the capital and hear vulgar songs sung by women from different castes on the occasion of marriages. Yogaraj complains to his father that he is fed up with such songs as they indicate the degeneration of the society through the moral decline in the social position of women. Mahipatram thus has added many such songs in the novel. To get a better exposure Yogaraj travels not only in his father's territories but visits important cities and places of India. He is shown as visiting countries outside India including Siam, Brahmadesh, Shree Lanka etc. Yogaraj marries a princess of Shrinagar. Mahipatram gives a description of the marriage party from Anhil Patan reaching Shrinagar, and a grand reception arranged for them by the ruler and people of Shrinagar. Vanaraj after reigning about sixty years dies at the ripe age of one hundred and ten in the year 806 A.D.

In an epilogue of the novel Mahipatram expresses his hope that once again Gujarat and Gujarati speaking people would regain their lost glory by cultivating the spirit of true religion, patriotism, unity, brotherhood, learning, technology and industry. Mahipatram fervently wishes that the native rulers take keen interest in their people

and remove evil customs and traditions of every kind. He expresses his objective for writing this novel, " Let all the Hindus, Muslims and Parsees be awakened for the unified action of making Gujarat a great region".

As compared to his other works Mahipatram's prose has become more lucid and mature in this novel. As usual he has added a few short stories or humorous anecdotes to give emphasis to his point. Through this novel he gives a message of self-sacrifice and patriotism. He exhorts his readers to take a clue from the past that whenever rulers sink themselves into the vices they are bound to be defeated. At the same time he has extolled the sacrifices of Shilgunsuri, Surpal, Anahil Bharvad, Champo etc. who come from the different strata of the society and work for their genuine ruler to make the country great. As a social reformer Mahipatram repeatedly warns against the poison of the degenerated customs and traditions which saps the vitality of social life by lowering the dignity of the women folks. According to Mahipatram, it is the hard work, industry, exposure to an outside world, generosity and removal of distinctions based on caste, religion, wealth and false pride make people great and glorious.

Mahipatram's other miscellaneous writings include his collection on *Bhavai*, entitled *Bhavai Sangraha*. *Bhavai* is a farcical dramatic show. It is presented in colloquial, rustic and sometime vulgar language. It was being played in rural as well as urban Gujarat from the medieval period onwards, before the emergence of modern art of stage drama and plays. It was a cheap form of entertainment in the rural Gujarat. Mahipatram has taken a special care to preserve the old Gujarati language, literature and folk-culture through this collection.

Mahipatram also published a collection of *Garbis* (Garbi is a song sung by women in a particular mode of music). Such *Garbis* were composed by the poets of medieval Gujarat. Mahipatram has composed sayings of wisdom in poetry-form, entitled, *Bodhvachan*. In this collection of poems he has followed a pattern of Premanand, a noted medieval poet of Gujarat.

An educationalist by profession Mahipatram edited school text books, and from 1856 onwards he wrote booklets on Columbus, Galileo, Newton etc. He also wrote a new grammar of Gujarati language (*Gujarati bhashanun navun Vyakaran*) in 1883 and a book on etymology – *Vyutpatti Prakash* in 1889. As a principal of Ahmedabad Male Training College he edited *Shala Patra*, a monthly, to make school teachers familiar with the new teaching method in various subjects. As with a growing number of new schools it was not possible for many teachers to join the Ahmedabad Training College. Along with

the yearly activities of various schools all over Gujarat, *Shala Patra* published reviews of many important books on literature, art, history, science etc.

Conclusion

In order to get a clear perspective of Mahipatram's contribution to the social life and literature of Gujarat it may be relevant to mention briefly the contribution of the representative litterateurs who were his contemporaries. It has been already discussed that under the impact of the British rule the Indian society had to undergo changes at almost all levels of socio-economic and cultural life albeit in varying degrees. Therefore, the immediate issue before the newly educated urban middle class was to introduce changes in the social structure. They found incongruities between the traditional social and familial set-up and new widening perception based on individual freedom and justice. This sensitivity for change-reform is reflected in the newly evolving forms of Gujarati literature.

Dalpatram Dahyabhai (1820-1898) was one of the prominent literary figure and a friend of Mahipatram. Dalpatram, a Shrimali Brahmin, was a self-educated person. Brought up in the tradition of the Swaminarayan sect he had absolutely no background of the western education. Despite this lacuna his robust common sense made him more sensitive about the new changes taking place around. Therefore in him we find a fusion of tradition and modernity. His innate capacity for an adaptability is clearly reflected in his prose writings and large corpus of poems. For a pretty long time (1855-1879) he was an assistant secretary of the Gujarat Vernacular Society founded (1848) by an English official, A.K.Forbes, in Ahmedabad. This association was devoted to the object of spreading education and promoting vernacular literature of Gujarat. The Gujarat Vernacular Society and its monthly, *Buddhiprakash*, under the editorship of Dalpatram, became perhaps one of the most important vehicles for spreading new ideas conducive to social change in Gujarat. Mahipatram also was closely associated with this association, and from 1877 onward till the time of his death he was its honorary secretary. Rooted in the cultural tradition Dalpatram attuned his nativity to the newly emerging social values. A believer in a gradual change Dalpatram combined in his prose and poetry the

traditional as well as evolving modern forms and subjects. He may be considered as the first modern poet of Gujarat though this observation may be challenged by those who consider urbane Narmad, another prominent literary figure of this period, as the first and the foremost modern poet of Gujarat. Dalpatram's prose writing include essays, stories and a few plays. He was a very effective prose writer. But his forte was in his poems. His poems touched almost all aspects of social and cultural life, and nature as well. His religious background and worldly wisdom with a pragmatic outlook did not allow him to take a flight in the romantic imagination. His poems never lost simplicity. This accounted for his popularity. So far as his views on government and society were concerned his poems were mainly characterised by his advocacy of gradualism for introducing social reforms. His *Ven Charitra*, a long poem, supporting widow remarriage and abolition of child marriage could be considered as the Bible of the reform movement. His poems as well as his prose written in a very simple style with the use of traditional idioms and symbols, created a right frame of mind for people to be prepared for even radical reforms in normal way. His famous poem, *Hunnarkhanani Chadhai* (the invasion of 'King' Industry) portends as early as 1851, the consequences of new economic changes taking place in India on accounting the Industrial Revolution. And perhaps, Dalpatram's more enduring contribution towards the spread of new ideas was through poems that he wrote for the Hope School-book series (1857-58). As mentioned in the second chapter, Mahipatram also was one of the members of the text-book committee. Dalpatram's imaginative power to mould the mental make-up of the children was really a work of a genius. Dalpatram's perceptive mind could present modern ideas in the most indigenous way. Thus through his poems and essays he was remarkably successful in introducing subtle change in the outlook of the educated mass with the least conflict between tradition and modernity.

Dalpatram can be distinguished from the other equally important literary figure, Narmadshankar Lalshankar Dave (1833-1886), popularly known as Narmad. Narmad and Mahipatram shared the common socio-cultural background of Surat and Bombay. Both of them were the product of Elphinstone Institution of Bombay. They worked together in the *Buddhivardhak Sabha*, a reform association, and supported Karsandas Mulji in his crusade against the high priests of the Vaishnav sect. Narmad also had started his career as a teacher. But from 1858 onwards he gave up his job and completely devoted himself to Gujarati language and literature. As an angry urban young man, he had no patience of Dalpatram. He crusaded against the social and

religious anomalies by giving shocks to the orthodox sections of the society through his articles, essays, a play and poems. He wrote his autobiography, the first autobiography in Gujarati language. In the first phase of his life Narmad romanticized the reform movement and dreamt of ushering an era of enlightenment in the Indian society. True to his impulsive temperament and narcissistic outlook, Narmad did not maintain warm relations with Dalpatram. For many years, may be due to the difference in age and social background Narmad kept a mental distance from Dalpatram. He considered the latter as his rival in literary field. Both of them were keen in maintaining their public image. Both of them were having groups of their admirers. But their style, approach and perceptions were different. Narmad was a fighter and a non-conformist; while Dalpatram was shrewd and pragmatic. This was reflected in their literary works. As a first rate poet Narmad wrote romantic poems which were considered taboo for Dalpatram as well as for Mahipatram. Narmad praised and supported Mahipatram for his courage to visit England, but criticized him later for his humiliating compromise with the caste fellows in his fortnightly newspaper, *Dandio*. Unfortunately after a few years when Narmad, an unrivalled prose writer of his time, sent his book, *Narma Gadya*, a collection of his erudite articles, to Mahipatram for publication, Mahipatram as a chairman of the government book review committee, though published it but after making some changes in the language of the original manuscript and removing some important portion of it. As a result, the book lost its quality. Some critics attribute this action on the part of Mahipatram to his criticism by Narmad.

After 1870 we find a change in Narmad's approach to the social change. The same Narmad who had taken up cudgel with violent enthusiasm for reforms rejected them outright in the last years of his life. His study of world history convinced him that unless people internalised the change, superficial reforms rather would do more harm to the society. He wrote a book on world history also, this changed perception prompted him to write articles, the collection of which was published in book form, entitled *Dharma Vichar*. Narmad had a peculiar courage to disown his own fond beliefs. He wrote with the same gusto about the limitations of the reform movement. His later prose writings are more philosophical and mature. As a free individual, Narmad wrote profusely and enriched Gujarati language and literature. With his sharp intellect and flight of imagination he invigorated Gujarati language. Thus Dalpatram and Narmad became model for others to follow. Both of them created their own literary style. That is why, the first formative period of the modern Gujarati language and

literature is known as *Narmad - Dalpat Yug*.

If we examine the literary contribution of Mahipatram in the context of the 'Age of Narmad' he may not be considered as a major writer of the period. Though Mahipatram himself would not have even claimed for that. For, he was basically an educationalist cum reformer. Whatever he wrote he wrote with a definite purpose to introduce positive changes in the society. And for that he used literature, particularly its prose form, as a medium to express his ideas beyond his class rooms to reach the people at large. As mentioned earlier, his *Englandni Musafarinun Varnan* is the first book on travelogue in modern Gujarati language though Dosabhai Faramji Karaka is credited to have written a book on the same subject, albeit in Parsee Gujarati, as early as 1861. In his travelogue Mahipatram's literary expression is at existential level. From the moment he embarks upon his voyage new change takes place over him from an idealist teacher to one who undergoes his own mental metamorphosis, for, he knew the consequences of the risk that he had taken. At the same time his contact with the new industrial and democratic culture convinces him about his vocation as a teacher and a social activist. While Narmad in his early writings romanticises the reform movement, and Dalpatram writes much more like a professional one to please his audience and readers, keeping in mind the level of their understanding the message. Mahipatram like Narmad believes in giving shocks to his readers to make them aware about the changes that take place all around. Though Mahipatram himself admits that *Englandno Pravas* (Travels in England) authored by his friend, Karsandas Mulji, in 1866, is superior to his book. This is true so far as an exhaustive information and latest statistical data on trade, commerce and industry in England are concerned. The book also includes beautiful coloured photos and sketches of many public places and buildings of England giving a graphic idea about the various facets of the English society. Obviously, Karsandas visited England after Mahipatram's visit and wrote his book after the publication of Mahipatram's one. With this advantage he had definitely improved upon Mahipatram's work. Karsandas' book was acclaimed as the best one among the Gujarati readers. It was also translated into Marathi. But so far as the prose of the book and presentation of the ideas and subtleties about the English nation are concerned Mahipatram has fared better.

Mahipatram is the first Gujarati writer who attempted biographical writings. In this area his contribution to the Gujarati literature is noteworthy. As a conscientious writer he has done a yeoman's service by providing an authentic history of the reform

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movement in Gujarat. His second novel *Sasu Vahuni Ladhai* may not be considered as an important piece of literature, as it was still in its pre-novel stage. Nevertheless Mahipatram is the first Gujarati writer who attempted a form of novel for writing on a burning issue. But so far as his historical novels, including *Sadhara Jesangh* and *Vanaraj Chavado* are concerned, though written nearly after fourteen years of the first historical novel, *Karan Ghelo*, by his reformer friend, Nandashankar Tuljashankar Mehta (1835-1905), he has not improved upon the latter. Mahipatram has more or less imitated Nandashankar's narrative style. As such, *Karan Ghelo* does not have a compact structure of a novel, as it includes essay like writings on history, geography, moral science, religion etc. It has been stuffed with so much material on various subjects that it loses cohesive structure of a novel. Despite these limitations *Karan Ghelo* is a work of a person gifted with an inquiring mind, sense of wonder and subtlety of observation. Though as a literary piece it may be less creative, it reflects author's narrative ability to project his own contemporary society with its political despondency and moral degeneration by transplanting it to the historical past. Mahipatram lacks this gift. Though he has improved in his last years it falls short of our expectation. His anecdotes and stories intermingled in his novels lack literary flair of Nandashankar. May be that being a teacher-reformer rather than an artist he is susceptible to give overt advice through such humorous intermingling. As an activist and a victim of caste rigidity he has nurtured his covert angry feelings which are repeatedly reflected in his caricaturing of the events or humorous sarcasm. It may be interesting to note that in both of his historical novels he has emphasized the importance of political reforms and the virtue of patriotism along with his fond ideas on social reforms. This inclusion of political dimension might be the result of emerging national feelings among the Indians at their time, there by exhorting his readers in the fashion of Nandashankar's *Karan Ghelo* to learn lessons from history.

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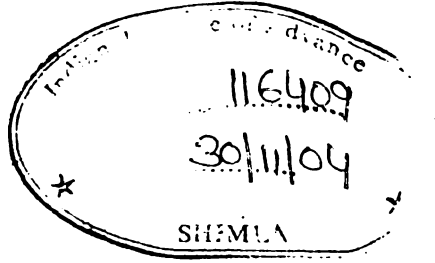
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An educationalist-cum-activist Mahipatram Rupram (1829-1891) was one of the leading reformers of Gujarat in the 19th century. Through his literary works Mahipatram made his reader sensitive about the new widening perception of individual freedom and justice. He was the first Gujarati writer who presented the burning social issues of the period in the form of novel. His travelogue, biographies and historical novels inculcated the spirit of social accountability and patriotism. Being a victim of the caste rigidity he nurtured his covert angry feelings which are repeatedly reflected in his caricaturing the characters and events with humourous sarcasm. His biographies present the most authentic picture of some of the important facets of the reform movement in Gujarat. As an educationalist he edited school textbooks and *Gujarat Shala Patra*, a pioneering monthly in the field of education. Through his multifarious activities Mahipatram enriched the cultural life of Gujarat.

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