

**Narasingh Rao** (1859—1937), poet, critic and philologist, is hailed as the 'Bhisma Pitamaha' of Gujarati literature.

His poetry reveals the deep sensitivity with which he responded to nature and man. He infused Gujarati poetry with vigour and refinement, variety of sentiment, and a certain philosophical content.

His literary criticism covers appreciation of poetry, metrical composition, use of language, its growth and development and other literary concepts.

**Sundarji Betai** (b. 1905), distinguished poet, critic and scholar in Gujarati, was a student of Narasingh Rao. He taught at the S.N.D.T. University, Bombay, and has been honoured for his writings. He wrote this monograph in Gujarati for the common reader.

**Sarala Jag Mohan** has rendered it from Gujarati for the benefit of the non-Gujarati reader.



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NARASINGHRAO



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# NARASINGHRAO

*by*

**Sundarji Betai**

(in Gujarati)

*Translator*

**Sarala Jag Mohan**

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## Introduction

MANY individuals have made memorable contributions to the cultural development of modern Gujarat. Of particular significance is the contribution of the literary stalwarts of the last century and the beginning of the present century. One of these outstanding figures of what is popularly known as the age of scholars (*Pandit Yuga*) was Narasinghram Bholanath, who was born on September 3, 1859 and passed away on January 14, 1937.

Narasinghram has been rightly described as the *Bhisma Pitamaha* of Gujarati literature. His lifelong devotion to literature and learning was something remarkable for one whose official duties as a district collector claimed much of his time. What he wrote and thought and conveyed through many of his lectures on literary and linguistic/philological subjects was of immense importance. Far from being of mere historical value, Narasinghram's writings have a lasting significance from the point of view of the growth and development of modern Gujarati literature. Whether in creative writing or literary criticism, philological study or even translation, Narasinghram has made solid contribution. He brought about a certain maturity to the Gujarati language and literature and shaped and influenced succeeding generations of poets and prose writers.

He was the son of Bholanath Sarabhai who was deeply religious and had an enlightened social awareness. In the constricting atmosphere of 19th century India, no person with such social awareness could avoid being a social reformer. Bholanath was one of the leading social reformers of his time. Narasingh Rao had inherited his father's sensibility and turned out to be a votary of truth.

He had an innate sense of beauty which was nurtured by his several visits to places of scenic beauty in the course of his official tours. Not surprisingly, many of his poems reflect this sense of beauty and love of nature.

Thus, innate, inherited and acquired traits combined in Narasingh Rao to become the elements of truth, beauty and goodness. His life and works provide ample evidence of these traits and elements. They also bear testimony to his firm insistence on correctness not only in matters like pronunciation and spelling, but also in matters of broader human importance. Being correct was his guiding principle in writing as well as his general behaviour, which was marked by warm qualities of heart.

If Narasingh Rao was a great scholar, he was an equally great teacher. He joined as professor of Gujarati in the Elphinstone College at Bombay after his retirement from government service. Those who studied under him were deeply impressed by his learning and warm affection which often alternated with terrible fits of temper.

Narasingh Rao's treatises are a living evidence of his tireless efforts to understand and explain. His poetry, though not always at grand heights of achievement, reveals the deep sensitivity with which he responded to nature and man. In his 'Rojnishi' (Diary) and character sketches of people he knew at different stages of his life we see Narasingh Rao's capacity to feel intensely.

Life had given Narasingh Rao many blows. His beloved and talented children and his very loving wife had departed one

by one, leaving him behind to mourn their death. These blows had rudely shaken him. At the death of his wife particularly, he momentarily lost his forbearance and cried out, "I wish I were shot dead!" But with each blow, his faith in God strengthened, as is evident in his poetic creations on these occasions. Some of the poems were imbued with such genuine quality and poignancy that people sing them even today.

Narasingh Rao never compromised on principles and did not hesitate crossing swords with his contemporaries. The fiery controversies between him and an equally firm-headed scholar and poet, Balawantrao Thakore, are well known to students of Gujarati literature. Both stood firm on their chosen grounds. But it left no bitter taste in the mouth of either combatant. On the contrary, both had respect and regard for each other.

He devoted his time and energy to the enrichment of Gujarati literature and language till his last days. He was indeed a great literary phenomenon of his times and has left not only an indelible mark on modern Gujarati literature but has been a lively influence on it.

## 2

### Poet

*"This instrument prefers to play the plaintive note."*

NARMAD and Dalpat, the two nineteenth century poets of Gujarat, had already launched Gujarati poetry on its modern phase when Narasingh Rao entered the field. These two poets, diametrically opposed to each other in their attitudes, gave new content and form to Gujarati poetry. However, of the two, Narmad can be truly considered the primogenitor of modern poetic diction.

Narmad was a romantic by nature. When he came in contact with English poetry, he was impressed by its subjective element, by its depiction of nature and the sentiment of love, that were its characteristic features. Being a man of quick impulses, Narmad even defined poetry in terms of "fierce passion" (*josso*) which often led him to overlook elegance and refinement.

Dalpat, on the other hand, believed in moving slowly and steadily towards a goal rather than be guided by impulse. He knew no English and his poetry reflected his exact approach and unhurried pace.

Both these poets, each modern in his own way, had their merits and limitations. With them, Gujarati poetry had acquired features that changed its very nature.

Narasingh Rao had seen both Narmad and Dalpat. Actually, Dalpatram had taught him Pingal at school. Narasingh Rao has paid fitting tribute to these two poets of "striking personalities," in 'Smaranamukur' which contains interesting character sketches.

### KUSUMAMALA

Narasingh Rao, like Narmad, was a keen and avid reader of English romantic poetry which touched him very deeply. The poetry of Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley evoked in him a lively response. In course of time, he was prompted to write poetry which clearly reflected this influence. The first result of this involvement was his collection of poems 'Kusumamala' (Garland of flowers) published in 1887.

In his introduction to 'Kusumamala' Narasingh Rao wrote :

This collection has been published with the worthy ideal of acquainting the discerning readers of Gujarat with the true form of poetry and exposing them to Western poetry which is qualitatively different from ours. This is sought to be done not through dry criticism but through illustration, and to direct taste to such poetry. Whether it succeeds or not depends on the invisible divine power.

It may be safely stated that the purpose was largely fulfilled. He infused Gujarati poetry with vigour and refinement by his metrical compositions, beauty of language, variety of sentiment, and a certain philosophical content. With the publication of 'Kusumamala' he introduced to Gujarat lyrical poetry depicting love and nature.

See for instance the poem of dedication in 'Kusumamala.' This poem is addressed to the saintly Narayana Hemachandra who had a benign influence on his poetry. Written in the metre, it is an example of rich sentiment, beauty of language

and possesses a poetic quality that touches one's heart. Indeed, it stands out among some of the great poems of dedication in Gujarati. The poem reads:

The river of poetry, rising unrestrained  
From the mountain of the heart,  
Flowed slowly downward, at times  
Bursting into speed.

Then in arid desert its slender current  
Suddenly stopped.  
However much I tried, its ripples  
Did not stir with joy again...

An amazing magician, an ascetic  
Wandering through many lands,  
Unexpectedly arrived. Finding the river  
Sunk into the desert,  
He recited a rare *mantra* and  
Struck his staff on hard stone. And  
Behold, the stream of water spurting forth,  
Flowed on and on...

That river of poetry began to flow again  
In the desert and has not yet dried.  
I go on uttering words of gratitude to you.  
What reward, oh ascetic, should I give  
For your benevolent act? Accept this  
Offering of river-ripples dedicated to you.

'Kusumamala' is a landmark in modern Gujarati poetry. Its novelty aroused interest among lovers of poetry. The collection was praised, often in very adulatory terms. At the same time, it was also subjected to criticism which was often harsh and scathing. Even as there were protests, there were imitations. In any case, 'Kusumamala' established Narasimghrao as an important poet of his times. And soon he came to be known as the father of modern Gujarati poetry.

It is hardly possible that all the poems in the collection of

any poet would be of the same standard. 'Kusumamala' is no exception. It contains some of the best poems of the poet but there are also some which are quite ordinary.

By present-day standards, we may not be able to rave over 'Kusumamala'. But Narasinghrao's contemporaries admired it. Poets like Dalpatram and Kañt and leading writers like Navalram and Manilal Nabhubhai Dwivedi as well as the author of the epic novel 'Saraswatichandra', Govardhanram Tripathi, had seen merit in it.

Anandashankar Dhruv, an eminent philosopher and writer of Gujarat, and a contemporary of Narasinghrao, admired his poems on nature. He said: "Narasinghrao has very beautifully expressed certain human emotions. But he excels more as a poet of nature."

Some of the noteworthy poems in 'Kusumamala' are "Megh" (Cloud) based on Shelley's "Cloud", "Chanda" (Moon), "Abhinandanashtak" (Eight couplets of Felicitation), "Sahasralinga Talao" (Lake with a thousand Siva Lingas), "Divya Tahuko" (The koel's Divine Song) "Kalachakra" (Cycle of Time), "Bahu Roop Anupam Prem Dhare" (Great Love acquires variegated forms) "Prem Sindhu" (Ocean of Love), "Phoolni Sathe Ramat" (Play with Flowers), "Asha Pankhidun" (Bird of Hope), "Vidhava Vilap" (The lament of a widow), "Kartavya ane Vikas" (Duty and Progress), "Vipadman Dharan Karnar Bal" (Power sustaining in Misery), "Samskarodbodhan" (Exhortation to virtuous life), "Tari Chhabi Nathi" (This is not your portrait), "Unalana Ek Parodhnun Smaran" (Remembering a summer dawn) "Madhyaratree Koyal" (The Koel at Midnight).

Here are a few extracts from some of the poems in 'Kusumamala':

"Come, sweet flowers, let us play and enjoy ourselves,  
Let us be together and happily pass at least a day....

I am a delicate flower among you.



Living in human company, my face has withered.  
 Fleeting from there, I have come to you.  
 You tender-hearted ones, do not consider me apart.  
 You have in you no guile nor cruelty,  
 Nor words of deception, yours is a very loving heart...  
 Come then, sweet flowers, let us play with joy

Let us spend at least one day in happiness and gaiety...  
 (from "Phoolni Sathe Ramat")

Thus the poet invites us to run away from the human crowd and find some moments of happiness in the company of flowers. In another poem he describes the vibrations after hearing the cooing of a koel in the stillness of the night:

Listen, dear, to the cuckoo singing  
 Among the trees a rhythmic song,  
 Look at the moonlight glistening  
 In the quiet night.  
 Look at the light clouds spreading,  
 Listen to the warbling in the soft breeze.  
 (The cuckoo sings a swinging song.)  
 It is calling you, Love !  
 One sweet creature takes to another of its kind.  
 Return the warbling with your delicate voice,  
 (The cuckoo sings a swinging song).  
 Listen, that coo coo is heard again  
 Bringing with it the sound sweet as nectar  
 The cuckoo remains hidden among  
 The trees singing its swinging song.  
 (The cuckoo sings a swinging song).  
 (From "Madhyaratric Koyal")

In Narasingh Rao's view, it was not enough to describe the beauty of the universe. It was necessary to have a theory of poetry that would reveal the inner forms of nature, its various transformations, and more than that, the subtle relationship between nature and human life, between man's emotional life and nature.

The following quotations illustrate this point :

That virgin River<sup>1</sup> flows carrying pure water.  
It runs away, rushes close and smilingly blushes.  
God's grace, indeed, has flowed through the river.  
Smiling, it showers love, closes you in embrace.  
Oh, you Patan<sup>2</sup>, mercifully it suggests

The passage of time may destroy  
human creations,  
But the river of my love  
Will ever flow unexhausted.

The Bird of Hope in a golden cage  
I have imprisoned.  
Like an evening cloud  
It wears many a lovely colour.  
How its slender beak shines grand  
Like a golden nail !  
The crest with rainbow colours  
Adorns its hand.  
But one day, alas, the bird flew away,  
Breaking the golden cage, and could not be held.  
It continues to sing and I follow it far.  
But though I cannot catch it, it lures me all the more.  
(From "Bird of Hope")

The poet is fascinated by the universe the divinity animating it and the grandeur of its creator. There is ample evidence of this in 'Kusumamala' though one cannot say that these elements always found a poetic expression. Nonetheless, the poems of 'Kusumamala' are certainly indicative of his poetic vision and the purpose he had in mind.

It is possible to take the view today that Narasingh Rao's dependence on nature and the philosophical contemplativeness enamating from it were not sufficiently advantageous to his poetic achievement. But his way has its own importance from the historical point of view. And, while assessing the

<sup>1</sup> The Invisible Saraswati

<sup>2</sup> A famous city of Gujarat

development of literature, we cannot ignore what is of historical importance. Hence, the significance of 'Kusumamala', the result of a pioneering effort of a poet who felt and thought intensely.

## HRIDAYAVEENA

Narasingh Rao's second collection of poems, 'Hridayaveena', appeared nine years later in 1896. Though following the same poetic diction and reflecting the same attitude as in 'Kusumamala', this collection marks an improvement over it. There is a stamp of maturity as well as thematic variety in 'Hridayaveena.'

As already mentioned, Narasingh Rao adored the beauty of nature, and in the course of his official tours, imbibed that beauty. In 'Hridayaveena' there are poems embodying the philosophical thought inspired by the beauty of nature. He often saw in it the presence of divinity.

A significant feature of 'Hridayaveena' is the number of poems devoted to women of misfortune. Quite a few poems are about widows. "Fashi Padelī Bālavidhava" (A child widow in trouble), "Kārāgrihamāni vidhava" (widow in prison), "Thagaeli Vidhava aṇe Tenun Mandun Balak" (Deceived widow and her sick child) are some of them.

However, the greatly acclaimed khandakavyas "Uttara and Abhimanyu" (Uttara and Abhimanyu) and "Matsyagandha aṇe Shantanu" (Matsyagandha and Shantanu) have been aptly considered Narasingh Rao's greatest contribution to Gujarati poetry. He certainly followed the technique of the poet Kant who originally developed the Gujarati Khandakavya into a nature poetic form. But these two khandakavyas have Narasingh Rao's own authentic touch in terms of content and sensitive approach.

'Garabi' is a poem sung in a 'feminine' mode. Narasingh Rao wrote some 'garabis' also and they are included in

'Hridayaveena'. They are lovely melodies which have been for years sung in Gujarat in tilting tunes. Some 'garabis' like "Oondi Rajani" (Deep Night) and "Sandhya Ghanadweep" are indeed very fascinating with lovely imagery and music.

With Narasinghrao's love for nature, it is not surprising that dusk, dawn, night, stars etc. recur in his poems in various forms. His vision of the beauty of nature is invariably linked with human emotion and thought, though that relation at times may appear far-fetched.

"Prakriti rahasya aṇe Manavbal" (Mystery of Nature and Man) "Kavi Hriday" (The heart of a poet) "Jaladhodh" (Waterfall) are characteristic of Narasinghrao's attitude to nature. Particularly so is the poem "Jaladhodh" (Waterfall), concluding stanza of which runs thus :

Then, (Oh Waterfall !)  
 You may continue to sing  
 Sorrowful songs,  
 But do not go dumb  
 Let the veena of my heart  
 Produce plaintive tunes !  
 This veena loves all the more  
 The tragic song.

'Hridayaveena' also includes some poems that are simple and sound like children's poems. But on the whole, it appears that the poet is fascinated by the mysterious and celestial aspects of the universe extending between the earth and the sky, a universe which inspires serious thought and exalted emotion. If his contemporary Manilal Nabhubhai Dwivedi wrote scathing criticism of 'Hridayaveena', Ramanbhai Neelkanth, one of the most eminent writers and an equally eminent social reformer, strongly defended it and highlighted its merits. Whatever one may say, there is no doubt that 'Hridayaveena' was Narasinghrao's genuine poetic response to nature and man's relation to it. As he himself said in one of his poems : "The veena is the heart of the poet." It is indeed the poet's true description of this collection.

## NUPUR JHANKAR

Narasingh Rao's third collection of poems, 'Nupur Jhankar' came out in 1914. His poetic genius which had found varied expression in 'Kusumamala' and 'Hridayaveena' had acquired maturer quality now. This collection is undoubtedly richer than the two preceding collections. Some critics had observed that 'Nupur Jhankar' belonged to a period when the poet in Narasingh Rao was disintegrating. A few illustrations from the collections would convince the readers that there was no ground for such cynicism.

The poet sojourns here as a grown up child of Mother Nature or the Muse of Poetry. Using the term 'toys' as a refrain, he writes in "Divya Ramakadan" (Divine Toys):

Who has stolen my toys ?  
I cry again and again.  
Scared by the frightful noise,  
I hide in a mountain-cave...

Mother Nature (says) "It does not  
Befit you to cry.  
You have passed the age of  
playing with toys  
Here lie your childhood toys,  
But changing their shade  
They have acquired mysterious forms."

After singing thus, Narasingh Rao composes poems like "Bhāvanā Srishti" (The world of Sentiment) with a meditative content which is at the same time melodious. This collection contains a poem like "Bhārata Jananini Ashru māla" (Mother India's Stream of Tears) with its tragic sweetness. Very appropriately this poem is based on the vision of the Muse of Poetry absorbed in song and music, with her eyes steadily looking upward to the sky. From it emerges the tender picture of the poet in prayer for his compatriots "blinded by darkness". The picture of India offering a garland of tears to the poet to remove the obstacles in the path of duty is moving.

The poems called 'Udbodhan' (Awakening) have a didactic content, but the poet's keen desire for a new life and the proclamation that truth shall prevail are well integrated. In any case, it cannot be said as a matter of rule that with didactic content poetry necessarily suffers.

During one of his official tours Narasinghrao came across the following epitaph on a grave near a fort in Ratnagiri district : "Here lie remains of Mary Sophia (26) and Ellen Harriet (32 days)... wife and daughter of Arthur Malet of the Bombay Civil Service. They with thirteen boatmen were drowned on the bar of the river Savitri..." It aroused his poetic response resulting in one of his most beautiful and poignant khandakavyas "Chitravilopan" (Obliterated Picture). It is one of the striking illustrations of Narasinghrao's favourite technique of relating human emotions with nature. The eagerness of the returning wife, the boat speeding across the strong current of the river flowing towards the sea, the glowing evening twilight and the sparkling Venus have been woven together in the most poetic words to create a lovely picture:

See the twilight playing with joy,  
Holding Venus in her lap,  
Staring eagerly at her Lord the sun  
Already sunk in the sea.

In a sudden sweeping storm, as the twilight faded, the boat capsizes.

In a flash the boat overturned,  
And the sweet happy visions were gone,  
Twilight and Venus both vanished in water,  
In the dark the ocean sang its gloomy songs.

This collection also contains a popular *garabi* called "Divine Hope."

I have descended from high heavens,  
I have my abode up there,

I am the Divine Hope  
I saunter scattering flowers everywhere.

“Viraginī Vēna” (Veena of a Recluse Woman) is a very touching description of the emotions of a woman recluse who has had more than her share of misery in the world and the veena is her only companion to help her forget the tribulations of human life. The beautiful woman, draped in a simple white dress is pictured sitting by the riverside with the veena in her lap. She coaxes her silent veena to break into music :

The ocean's waters roar,  
Gurgling flow of the river dances,  
The breeze sings varied tunes,  
The waterfall gushes forth.  
Imbibe those tunes and colours,  
Cleverly fill yourself with  
Various songs of life,  
And also the great tunes of Death.  
Sing those glorious songs  
Filling them with sentiment divine.

In “Deen Balak” (Poor Child) the poet expresses his love of God and conveys his sense of beauty with these concluding lines :

The image of enduring beauty  
Would not vanish once grasped ;  
This divine world of imagination  
Has been created for all times.

‘Nupur Jhankar’ contains three poems on death. One is the translation of “Poem on Death” from Sarojini Naidu’s ‘The Golden Threshold’. The second poem is the translation of the sonnet ‘Terror of Death’ by Keats. But the third “Mrityunū Maran” (Death is Dead) is original, written in the form of a *garabi*.

“Agnihotra” is a poem about the duties of the married man and woman in the arduous path of love. This theme is

carried to greater height in the khandakavya "Tadguna" (Transferred Epithet) which is in the form of a dialogue between Buddha and Yasodhara who has turned a *parivrajika*. In this poem Buddha explains to Yasodhara the sublime peace attained in the state of *nirvana* :

In the ocean of *nirvana*  
There never is turmoil,  
If it gives such an impression  
It is another kind.

Narasingh Rao has expressed the frustration of a poet's heart in "Ghuvad" (The owl). He himself has said that he was inspired to write this poem on the basis of the idea of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" which he had heard being recited by an English actor during his college days. But it is certainly not a translation of "The Raven." One is tempted to ask why the poet with such an abiding faith in God feels so frustrated. The poem "Goodh Kokila" (The Mysterious Koel) which was composed subsequently provides the answer. That poem has a tone of joyous hope that his soul would be at peace when he is able to hear the divine music. Perhaps "Ghuvad" is superior to "Goodh Kokila" in terms of diction and effect. But it is important to note here that the poet's love for the beauty of nature was so great that ultimately it did not allow him to be overcome by frustration.

These and other poems are beautifully rendered metrical compositions in which Narasingh Rao has used the metres Khand Shikharini, Khand Harigeet, and Vasantatilaka to great advantage. This indeed is Narasingh Rao's significant contribution to the growth and development of Gujarati poetry.

"Swechchasweekat" (Willing Acceptance) is a khandakavya which he conceived after seeing a painting called "The Choice" by the 19th century painter Sir Noel Paton. The poem is woven round the theme of man's power to free himself from evil. While appreciating the poem, the *rasika* or connoisseur is bound to be reminded of the sloka



(from the Upanisad) referring to *śreya* (Salvation) and *preya* (Worldly Pleasure).

"Pururavas ane Urvashi" (Pururavas and Urvashi) is again a poem in dialogue. It has a charm of its own and beautiful images of these two epic characters emerge through the engaging dialogue between them. This may be regarded as one of the most enjoyable and memorable poems in 'Nupur Jhankar'.

"Āvasan" (Death) is the concluding poem in 'Nupur Jhankar'. It is very touching in its expression of the resigned acceptance of Death as one state of being submerged in the deep ocean of silence. Its last two lines are :

If I wiped at any time a tear of yours  
I seek the mercy of a single tear.

No asertion or claim, but a simple plea for mercy. And that too from a poet who was considered arrogant ! The poem with its simple diction and sense of compassion leaves a deep impression on one's mind and speaks of his humility.

## BUDDHACHARIT

Narasingh Rao was probably the first to powerfully depict incidents from Buddha's life in Gujarati poetry. His 'Buddhacharit' appeared in 1934. It contains nine poems in the appropriate order of the chronology of Buddha's life. Apart from "Tadguna" (Transferred Epithet) there are poems like "Kisa Gotami" and "Mahābhinishkramaṇa" (The Great Departure). Though dealing with Buddha's life, each of these poems differs from the point of view of technique. Each stands out in individual charm, beauty and thought content, and leaves a lasting impression on the readers' mind.

"Mahābhinishkramaṇa" is a poem in a class by itself. Its serene quality and perfect rhythm combine to create a wonder-

ful poetic effect. The concluding lines of the poem, "He set out in the dark night/and walked along the path of Splendid Light" have long been cherished by readers. The poem depicts with simplicity one of the most significant events in Buddha's life and makes an aesthetic impact.

It is true that Narasingh Rao was inspired by Sir Edwin Arnold's 'The Light of Asia' which led him to compose those poems on Buddha's life. However, it should be noted that he was not unaware of the work of Aśvaghoṣa.

Among these nine poems, "Tadguna" and "Buddhanun Grihāgaman" (Buddha's Homecoming) are original. The rest are the translations dealing with some of the incidents depicted in 'The Light of Asia'. However, the choice of the incidents are an indication of the poet's personal inclination and also of his competence as a translator.

### SMARAÑASAMHITA

Narasingh Rao's 'Smaranāsamhita' (1915) is perhaps the greatest of his poetic creations. He was inspired to write this elegy on the occasion of the tragic and premature death of his son Nalinkant whom he regarded as his friend. The elegy as a poetic form had been cultivated, though inadequately before Narasingh Rao. But 'Smaranāsamhita' with its mature diction and touching quality of tragic sweetness and poetic charm is probably the first Gujarati elegy in the correct sense of the term. Genuine feeling, simple and moving reflection on the mysteries of life and death, subtle, aesthetic discrimination which appears natural to its structure, in short, the beauty and the inherent unity of this work as a whole lend it remarkable poetic dignity. The use of the khand harigeet metre adds to its appeal though other metres have also been used to great advantage.

"Mangal Mandir Kholo" (Open the Holy Temple) is a very touching song which till today is sung with solemnity as part

of the prayer for departed ones in many a family and at condolence meetings. Part of it reads as follows :

Open the Holy Temple,  
 Oh merciful Lord !  
 Open the Holy Temple !  
 I hurried through the jungle of Life,  
 Now I stand at your door, an innocent child.  
 Gone is the darkness, now shines the Light.  
 Instal this child in your heart,  
 Merciful Lord ! Open the Holy Temple !

Your sweet name was always on my lips,  
 Now talk lovingly to this child  
 Who has come with thirst divine.  
 Shower on him the nectar of love !  
 Merciful Lord ! Open the Holy Temple !

In 'Smaranasambhita', the tragic, the sublime and the devotional blend beautifully. Though shattered by the son's death, the poet is able to write :

What the Supreme Physician gave  
 For the benefit of my self,  
 Why not quietly take the medicine  
 With its seemingly bitter taste ?

He comes to realize that death is only another name for eternal life. He is thus able to sublimate his sorrow and writes :

If man understands  
 The true meaning of Death,  
 Seeing a door opening to new life  
 He would feel eternal delight.

Acharya Anandashankar Dhruv, the veteran scholar and great lover of poetry wrote the foreword as well as the commentary to 'Smaranasambhita' and compared it to Tennyson's 'In Memoriam.' They are eloquent testimony to the poetic

quality of this work. The "rays of devotion brightening the peaks of the Mountain of Knowledge" has been faithfully reflected in 'Samarāṇasamhita' as Narasingh Rao saw them.

### TRANSLATOR-POET

Many people have often referred to Narasingh Rao in derogatory terms by branding him a translator-poet. It is indeed true that translations form a considerable part of his poetic works. But he developed the art of translation to such a degree that many of his translations read like original creations in the Gujarati language. His translation of Cardinal Newman's, famous prayer "Lead Kindly Light" which he did at Gandhiji's bidding, and also that of Shelley's "The Skylark" are some of the examples of Narasingh Rao's competence as a translator.

Narasingh Rao was an innovator who gave Gujarati poetry a new content and colour. He adored and admired rhythm and melody of words in poetry. The student of Gujarati poetry would discern these attributes together with the serious thought content and reflective nature of his poetic works.

When Narasingh Rao completed 75 years, Maitravarunao, Narasingh Rao's pupils, the late Bhanushankar Vyas (Badaryana) and Sundarji Betai, paid him their tributes. Narasingh Rao, in a spirit of resignation, made the following reply :

The flowers have wilted,  
The strings of the veena have snapped  
The jingles of the anklets  
Now ring like hollow bells.

It was perhaps natural for the poet at that stage of his life to respond with a sense of despondency. But surely this does not reflect the position of Narasingh Rao in the field of Gujarati poetry. For, quite a few of the flowers in the garland of poetry ('Kusumamala') have not withered. Not all the strings of the veena of his heart ('Hridayaveena') have snapped and the jingles of the anklets ('Nupur Jhankar') do not sound altogether hollow.

## Writer of Creative Prose

*(Poetry is contained both in prose and verse)*

**N**ARMAD was the pioneer of creative prose writing in Gujarat. Other great writers of his time like Navalram Trivedi developed Gujarati prose to a considerable extent. But it was Narasingh Rao who brought a charming and at the same time serious touch to the Gujarati prose.

Narasingh Rao's prose writings can be divided into two distinct categories : (1) Essays which can be called creative and (2) Literary criticism.

It was in 'Smaranamukur (Mirror of Memories and 'Vivartaleela' (The Whirling Waves) that Narasingh Rao developed the essay as a literary form. 'Smaranamukur' was published in 1926. It contains the pen portraits of a number of personalities whom he had known from "my childhood till today" and "the impressions of Gujarat on my mind during the last fifty years." He had drawn these character-sketches not completely out of memory but depended upon his 'Rojnishi' (Diary). Apart from the author's own memories of those persons, 'Smaranamukur' also gives the cultural background of Gujarat in transition.

'Vivartaleela' was published in 1932. Originally, the nineteen essays collected in this volume appeared in the 'Vasant', a pre-

stigious journal edited by the veteran scholar Acharya Ananda-shankar Dhruv, under the pen-name 'Jnanabal'. In his foreword to the volume the author has quoted a couplet from Kālidāsa :

The wise who wish to  
Distinguish between the genuine  
And the fake should hear this  
Only by testing in  
Fire can one know whether  
The gold is pure or impure.

Next he has tried to persuade scholars that "such essays have not been written in Gujarati literature before." This shows that he was humble enough to value the opinion of the experts. At the same time it is suggestive of the significance he gave to his own effort.

Even though the author has made it clear that in 'Vivartaleela' he "has not aimed at the philosophical exposition of problems" and also that he "has casually touched upon the various problems without deeply thinking about them or studying them in detail," he has evolved through these essays a fascinating literary form. Nowhere do these essays give the impression of being the efforts of a novice. 'Jnānabal' appears to have attained full maturity as a prose writer.

'Vivartaleela' begins with the well known and highly philosophical quotation from Bhavabhuti : "The tragic is the only true rasa." At the end appears Narasinghrao's poignant statement : "I continue to live only in the hope of attaining great peace," which expresses at the same time his inherent faith in God. The concluding words in the book are : '*Om shantih shantih shantih*'.

The essays in 'Vivartaleela' have varied and fascinating themes which are delightfully treated. The author has used numerous but only necessary quotations from the vast treasures of popular devotional songs as well as from the Gīta and the Upanisads. He has also used many quotations from English books and poems. At the same time, the essays

do not seem to be unnecessarily pedantic. The collection includes a comic character sketch, the description of a memory game called 'dekhat bhūli' (which he had demonstrated to his undergraduate students in Elphinstone college) and countless illustrations, both serious and interesting, to fit the topic. There is a satirical piece on the poet Kant's well known khandakavva "Chakravakmithun" and scathing remarks on the veteran poet-critic Balwantrāi Thakore. There is a poignant story called "A Station with No Name" and serious reflections on subjects concerning the arts of poetry, music and painting. How then can some philosophical writing be excluded? Everything is clear and interesting without any trace of discussion for its own sake. 'Jnanabal's' observations on the various transformations of life are charming, yet serious.

Such a collection of essays was the first of its kind in Gujarati and probably the only one. There is, of course, 'Swairavichar' (Random Thoughts) by Ramanarayan Pathak, another great scholar and critic of Gujarat who came a few years later. But the essays in 'Swairavichar' belong to a different category altogether.

Narasinghrao's prose style and his treatment of subject were typical of his personality. This would become evident from some excerpts from 'Vivartaleela'. The following extract from the essays he wrote to counter the argument of light piece by Balwantrai Thakore on 'Chakravāk mithun' eloquently expresses his views on poetry :

"Is poetry deceitful, casting a magical spell? Would the divine vision accorded by poetry reveal the magic which is in fact unreal, maya? Would one be convinced of the truth when it is deprived of the blessing of the muse of poetry? In that case, the poetry which has the divine vision of truth and which reveals that truth with its extraordinary power should be banished from the domain of aesthetic philosophy by subjecting it to public disgrace."

This pungently worded remark reveals a particular aspect of Narasingh Rao's temperament, namely that he was prone to point out truth as he saw it without being overawed by anyone.

At another place in 'Vivartaleela' Narasingh Rao draws a comparison between speech and silence and explaining the value of both, expresses his view about high poetic quality. He says :

"Speech is a powerful means of expressing silent thought, but it is an inadequate means. Just as it is true that words do not adequately describe the Supreme Being, it is also true in the case of the highest truth, deep conflicts of human heart, emotions, and serious contemplation, though not to the same extent. The word deployed by the highest poetical movement has two forms—one conveying its strength and the other its limitation. And in its very limitation lies its strength, a power of beauty. The word of poetry conveys greater meaning by what it does not express rather than by what it expresses. Thus, one would realize the truth of the words silence is more eloquent than speech.' There is another silence more powerful than the silence of poetry ; the silence of music. The relation between speech and silence is the same as the relation between poetry and music. That relation can be shown in the following terms by using signs of arithmetic :

Poetry : Music : Speech : Silence : ...

Poetry begins where the power of speech ends, and its climax comes in unuttered suggestions. That is exactly the suggestive power of poetry."

Narasingh Rao had a very clear concept of poetry in terms of the beauty of sound and form. He writes :

After the ultimate communion, you may aim at the



supreme sound of Om or the eternal glow of white light. That greatly desired state of attainment is for the yogis. As for me, I am willing to accept the pleasures of form, sound and love with all their afflictions. Where would one find in the absolute non-existence of God that great phenomenon of the combined pervasion—beauty of sound or the beauty of form? In my view, when the pleasures of form and sound emerge from that harmonized beauty, there is poetry...”

Narasingh Rao seems to be fully convinced that a creator must necessarily have love for his creation and his creation can be beautiful only when that love exists. He writes :

“Shall we have a look at the beauty of this entire universe? It would not be surprising if the creator of that beautiful phenomenon is bound by love and attachment to his creation of this world of maya like the sculptor who sculpted the statue of Galetia. The supreme sculptor goes on creating eternally his phenomena, and remains bound by the bonds of love. That is exactly why beauty seems to flow uninterrupted in the phenomena of the universe. If the creator has no love in his heart for his creation and the process of creation, his creation can be only incomplete.”

Narasingh Rao's unflinching faith in the creator of the beautiful phenomenon of the universe is evident in several moments of his life. He is indeed happy to have that faith. He says : “I accept eternal childhood, and accept it with joy, in order to acquire faith in God and firmly abide by that faith.” He also says :

“In order to do this, it is not necessary to be a poet engaged in writing poetry. It is sufficient to have a poet's heart. I have known the art—not the art but the natural gift—of being an infant, a child with a child, being infatuated with the infatuated. Hence, when someone calls me an aged child, I continue to sojourn

along my path of happiness without bothering whether that is meant to praise me or ridicule me."

'Jnanabal' had faith in what he felt was the power of music. He said :

"I have great faith in this divine power of music. That power of music can annihilate the terribly harsh notes emanating from the feelings of attachment and malevolence, joy and sorrow of this tainted world. I do not know, I do not wish to know, why music, though created in this world, has the power to reveal luminous visions of the life beyond."

These excerpts from 'Vivartaleela' show the extent to which Narasingh Rao 'Jnanabal' developed the art of essay writing. They also show the wide range of his thoughts and interests.

## HIS DIARY

Narasingh Rao maintained a regular diary from 1892 to 1935. Except the entries for the year 1927-28 which are not available, all the entries have been compiled and edited by his close friends Dhansukhlal Mehta and Ramaprasad Bakshi, both eminent literary figures of Gujarat. The Diary, posthumously published in 1953, provides sufficient insight into Narasingh Rao's life and thought, his ideas about literature as well as many matters of social importance. The honesty and frankness that mark his other writings are even more evident in his diary. It is a significant work of autobiographical writing. However, it is not really his autobiography. It contains all the relevant material necessary for writing an autobiography or a biography. It is another matter that Narasingh Rao considered his life too insignificant to be written about. He wrote once in the diary : "The story of my life ? What is it ? Nothing." That indeed was his genuine feeling. But Gujarat does not consider his life so insignificant ; for there is a general feeling that Narasingh Rao's life as a man of

letters and as a man of the world had much that deserves to be known and remembered. From that point of view, whether or not his diary can be classed along with his creative prose writing is really not important. If autobiography can be called creative prose writing, this type of autobiographical writing also may well be termed creative.

What a variety of persons, episodes, personal as well as impersonal, have been mentioned in the diary for the delight of posterity! The entries reveal Narasingh Rao's love for music and painting as well. They also reflect, through references to innumerable sad and happy events, his religious bent of mind and his devotion to God.

Even though some people considered Narasingh Rao a high brow, his humanism made no distinction between high and low. In his diary there are references to persons ranging from a poor cobbler who mended his shoes to Gandhiji whom he called "Mr. Gandhi" and a political agitator at first, but came to respect as the Mahatma in course of time. When he went to attend the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931, he paid a handsome tribute to the Mahatma in terms of the following couplet based on a very popular sloka of the Gita :

Where Gandhi is the *Yogeshwara*  
And Vallabh is the supreme leader  
There, I am certain  
The great victory would be.

It would be no exaggeration to say that such an authentic diary is a rare phenomenon in Gujarati.

## CHARACTER SKETCHES

'Smaranamukur' is another of Narasingh Rao's unique contributions to Gujarati prose. It contains character sketches of important and interesting personalities drawn

with a view to recreating the history of five or six decades of the Gujarat of his times. Till this book appeared in 1926, this kind of writing was unfamiliar to Gujarati readers. Hence, 'Smaranamukur' was bound to arouse diverse reactions.

The birth of 'Smaranamukur' coincided with the starting of 'Gujarat', a monthly journal edited by K.M. Munshi and the character sketches first appeared in that journal at the editor's request. Narasingh Rao never intended to hurt or shock any individual or section of society by his character sketches. To some people Narasingh Rao appeared egotistic. Still, many felt he had given graceful and characteristic portrayals of individuals or sections of society.

Such writing being essentially subjective, it is always necessary to be careful about the danger of unwittingly harbouring or defending an untruth. Narasingh Rao has constantly and consciously attempted to be on his guard. Due to this vigilance 'Smaranamukur' has turned out to be a valuable work introducing various personalities of Gujarat in historical perspective.

Narasingh Rao has appropriately quoted from Akho, the 17th century saint poet of Gujarat in the introduction to the book: "This mirror reflects an endless series of forms of beauty." These words indicate that these series of articles reflect beauty in its myriad aspects. If there is the reflection of the personalities and their times in 'Smaranamukur', there is also the reflection of himself, as is inevitable.

Narasingh Rao has warned in his introduction, "some of the pictures, having a very distant background, may appear hazy, some may emerge with partly distinct outlines while some may stand out in their clear contours."

There is reference in the introduction to the "mother" who is not the mother who gave birth to him. Nor is it a reference to just another woman. Actually, it is an interesting and amusing portrayal of the person who was in charge of the children of the family.

This is immediately followed by the picture of his actual mother who departed for the abode of God, leaving him behind as a child of six. He sees his mother as a "grace of God that turned (me) away from the wrong path and brought (me) on the good path" and permeated his entire life. He sees his "Mamma" as a universal mother residing in a divine land.

'Smaranamukur' truly begins after this brief, sweet and lovely portrayal of his mother. Naturally his father Bholanath along with his wide circle of friends, flashes in his memory. Narasingh Rao describes his father as one of the leading figures in the cultural milieu of the Gujarat of his times. He was a deeply religious man and a dedicated social reformer.

Along with Bholanath, there are the inevitable references to his close associates like Ranchhodlal Chhotalal and Mahipatram Rupram who were also ardent religious reformers. Ranchhodlal was Bholanath's childhood friend who argued in every religious meeting at the top of his voice that "pierced through the ears of the passers by." On the other hand, Mahipatram had stood by Bholanath and assisted him right from the beginning of the Prarthana Samaj movement. He was Bholanath's right hand man.

This triumvirate had given great impetus to religious and social reform in Gujarat. Bholanath and Mahipatram had acquired equanimity after "conquering the demon of anger" of their earlier years. Ranchhodlal had mellowed down probably out of practical considerations.

Even while talking about Mahipatram with a sense of admiration and respect, Narasingh Rao has not hesitated to mention that the man who was excommunicated for defying the prevalent convention against crossing the seas ultimately succumbed to social pressures and agreed to undergo purification rites. This, he adds, was indeed a comedown for a man of extraordinary courage. He has also quoted Dalpatram's words in praise of Mahipatram as well as Narmad's words

of condemnation. Mahiptram's (expiation) did upset Bholanath but it did not interfere with their friendship.

Narasingh Rao takes note of Mahipatram's affection for him, mentions his orderliness, and has written about him with an innocent sense of humour.

Then comes the character sketch of Lalshankar Umiashankar who was a mathematician. He was a great inspiration for the Prarthana Samaj in Ahmedabad. His reformist ardour and keen social awareness made Lalshankar an important figure in the religious and social history of Gujarat.

'Smaranamukur' also includes pen portraits of Navalram and Ambalal, both of whom were not only religious and social reformers but were accomplished personalities in many ways. Both of them were men of great intellect and keen susceptibilities and possessed a zest for life. Narasingh Rao describes Navalram as a brilliant poet, scholar, literary critic, thinker. The author did not have much personal contact with him, but he was so overawed by his brilliance that he seemed to the young Narasingh Rao like a "a planet moving along its celestial orbit." Narasingh Rao notes that Navalram had influenced his literary activity in some mysterious way.

Narasingh Rao refers to Ambalal, the great teacher and strict disciplinarian who, with a certain magnetic charm on his face could establish a lively relationship with his pupils and hold them in a bond of affection, Ambalal was devoted to scholarly pursuits and was particular about the correctness of detail in everything. And last but not least, he was a man of extremely regular habits. Narasingh Rao pays a tribute to Ambalal who, as his teacher, had a direct and profound influence in the shaping of his mind.

Narasingh Rao has also written about Satyendra Nath Tagore who, like a meteor, shone in the Prarthana Samaj of Ahmedabad for a brief while. He quotes the words of his elder brother Bhim Rao adoring the fluent and scholarly discourses from "the preacher who looked like a foreigner."

He also mentions in this context the close relationship between Satyendra Nath and Bholanath. The purist that Narasingh-rao is, he cannot help referring to his father's "negligence of the subtleties of language." Narasingh-rao had once accompanied Satyendra Nath to the residence of Pherozechah Mehta. He was struck by the soft and mellow aspect of that "lion" whose roaring speeches he had heard from a distance in public places. But for Satyendra Nath, Narasingh-rao would not have seen the other side of the legendary figure that Pherozechah Mehta was.

Dalpatram and Narmad, the twin poets of Gujarat who are in striking contrast to each other, have been given equal importance in the literary history of Gujarat. Narasingh-rao has drawn their character sketches pointing out the merits as well as limitations of both.

It was Dalpatram who aroused Narasingh-rao's interest in other Gujarati poets like Premanand, Akho and others. Narasingh-rao mentions this fact with a sense of gratitude and rejoices in the happy memories of his life in these days. He also recalls the training given by Dalpatram which had prompted some Parsi writers to write poetry in faultless Gujarati.

For many reasons, Dalpatram and Narmad have to be considered together in the history of modern Gujarati poetry. Between them, Narmad has a greater claim to be called "the first among the moderns." This is because his poetry covered a wider range of subjects and had a more subjective element in contrast with Dalpatram's poetry which was marked by serious content and was quite often a mild satire on the conditions of his times. If Narmad's poetry had a certain impetuous tone, Dalpatram's poetry reflected his quiet temper and his belief in slow progress. Narmad's poetry contained most of the elements that we look for in modern poetry.

Narasingh-rao had the occasion to meet Narmad also. He accompanied Bholanath when the latter went to meet Narmad

at his house in Bombay. However, it was the Narmad of later years who had shed most of his earlier haughtiness and impulsiveness. It was the Narmad who had become mellowed after having written his renowned philosophical work entitled 'Dharma vichār' (Thoughts on Religion). Narasingh Rao was impressed by the expression on Narmad's face which reflected his extraordinary intellect, refinement and lofty vision. He regrets that he had no further occasion to meet that "valiant man who served Mother Gujarat and Saraswati with single-minded devotion."

'Smaranamukur' also contains the character sketches of Nandshankar Tulajashankar and Durgaram Manchharam who left their imprints on the history of religious reform in Gujarat.

Nandshankar had started life as a headmaster in a school, and after working in many fields, had ultimately risen to be the dewan of Kutch Bhuj. But all through he was known as Master Saheb which was a respectable term used for a teacher. He could competently translate from English into Gujarati and possessed remarkable memory. A man of few words, Nandshankar had a certain refinement and amicability. Narasingh Rao has described all these characteristics as well as his love of truth and sense of independence and mentioned his happy married life.

If Nandshankar, being a teacher of English, was known as "Master Saheb", Durgaram being a Gujarati teacher unacquainted with English was known as "Mehtaji" (a mere teacher)! Narasingh Rao felt as a child that Durgaram could not appreciate humour and was easily excitable. He was always suspicious and was incapable of holding a secret. However, Narasingh Rao did not then understand the mind of the man who was not only a great teacher but an equally great social reformer who waged a valiant battle against the superstitions prevalent in his times. In course of time, Narasingh Rao no doubt realized this as is evident from what he has written in 'Smaranamukur'.



'Smaranamukur' contains a sketch of Mansukhram whom Narasingh Rao indirectly came to know through Mansukhram's book called 'Shakespeare Kathasamaj' (Shakespearean Tales). He has also written about Ranchhodram Udayaram who was respected as the father of Gujarati drama. Ranchhodram disapproved of the obscenities then prevalent on the Gujarati stage but to Narasingh Rao's horror, he himself later wrote an obscene play 'Nindya Sringara darshak Natak' and also presented a copy to him.

Narasingh Rao has given a well deserved place in 'Smaranamukur' to the renowned poet Kant who had embraced Christianity, got reconverted to Hinduism and yet at heart had never ceased to be Christian. Narasingh Rao and Kant cherished mutual love and regard. Narasingh Rao gives a good appraisal of Kant as a poet. He rightly stresses the importance of 'khandakavya' as a poetic form and regards it as Kant's great contribution to Gujarati poetry. Kant was a poet with a vision and his poetic diction was orderly and neat. He was an equally impressive speaker.

Then there is an interesting sketch of Vrajlal Kalidas Shastri, one of the earliest authorities on linguistics in Gujarat. Narasingh Rao regards his two small treatises called 'Gujarati Bhāshāno Itihās' (History of Gujarati language) and 'Utsarga Mala' (Manual of Grammatical Rules) as landmarks in the field of linguistics.

'Smaranamukur' contains the portrayals of some non-Gujaratis as well. For instance, there is a sketch of Gopal Rao Hari Deshpande who delivered lectures at the meetings of the Prarthana Samaj and worshipped his idols at home! But Narasingh Rao says, "it was difficult to know if Gopal Rao had faith in idol worship or in anything at all". To Gopal Rao the whole universe seemed to be "an amusing toy". He was like a detached observer who looked smilingly at everything, at the entire world. Narasingh Rao remembers Gopal Rao as a powerful figure, shining with brilliance and always full of joy. In 'Smaranamukur' he comes alive with many facts.

Then there is a portrait of Gopalrao Hari Deshmukh who, though a Maharashtrian by birth, was a Gujarati per excellence, in spirit and inclination long before Kaka Kalelkar who has been so described. He was a man of unusual intellectual power and a firm believer in the dignity of labour.

Narasinghrao has also written in 'Smaranamukur' about Madhavrao Ranade, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Govind Vithal Karkare etc. However, the portrayal of Dr. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar is significant in more ways than one. He rightly gives importance to Dr. Bhandarkar's love and devotion to the Sanskrit language and his insistence on the imperative need of the knowledge of that language.

Apart from this, Narasinghrao has described the wonderful teacher-pupil relationship between Dr. Bhandarkar and himself, and has referred to Dr. Bhandarkar as his great guru. Dr. Bhandarkar had immediately noticed Narasinghrao's love for Sanskrit and encouraged him.

There is also a sketch of another scholar, Ganesh Gopal Pandit who was a private tutor but subsequently became a part of the Bholanath family. He too had become a Gujarati for all practical purposes and had learnt to talk in faultless Gujarati. He was such a devout man that Narasinghrao says "only at some blessed moments does God grant contact with such a one".

In 'Smaranamukur', the portrayal of Narayan Hemachandra is perhaps the best of all. He was a saintly man with many oddities as well as many endearing qualities. Narasinghrao had paid hearty and touching tributes to his greatness. At the same time, he has felt sad that at one stage in his life, Narayan Hemachandra betrayed his own greatness, having succumbed to sensuality.

Through his son Nalinkant, Narasinghrao had come to know Haji Mohammed of 'Vismi Sadi' (Twentieth Century) a renowned periodical which is a landmark in Gujarati journalism. Among Haji Mohammed's friends were eminent

personalities belonging to many fields. Jain sadhus and painters including the veteran Dhurandher, officials of the Office and the stage personalities of Bombay were in Haji Mohammed's intimate circle. Incidentally, Narasingh Rao also came to know many of them. It was Haji Mohammed's persistence that kept 'Vismi Sadi' going, against heavy odds. The character of this fabulous personality has been affectionately drawn.

Govardhanram M. Tripathi, the author of the epoch making work 'Saraswatichandra' occupies the highest place among the veteran writers of the *Pandita Yuga*. Narasingh Rao has brought out in 'Smaranamukur' his creative genius, his vision of life and his philosophy in appropriate terms and admired his great qualities of heart.

Included in 'Smaranamukur' is a brief sketch of his elder brother Bhim Rao who was the author of 'Pruthuraj Rasso' and 'Devaldevi Natak' and a few *garabis*. Bhim Rao had also translated 'Meghdoot' into Gujarati. He had great faith in Narasingh Rao's literary sense. When 'Kusumamala' was published, Bhim Rao wrote from his sick bed : "You have outdone me !"

Bhim Rao was so handsome that his schoolmates called him "lady of the lake !" He was very fastidious about cleanliness and neatness and was totally self-effacing. Narasingh Rao has drawn all these characteristics in his affectionate portrayal of Bhim Rao.

Narasingh Rao has paid in 'Smaranamukur' a most touching tribute to his son Nalinkant and daughter Urmila, both of whom always kept him company at prayer time. He has mentioned the deep bond of love between the brother and the sister. He has referred to Nalin's unflinching faith in truth and God and described him as an ardent member of the Prarthana Samaj. He has deeply regretted that he had not spared him from his sharp rebukes. He says that his son may have forgiven him but he has not been able to forgive himself. Nalinkant was Narasingh Rao's constant companion.

As a father, Naransinghrao did feel lonely at his premature death. But then he asked : "Am I alone in life ?" and prompt came the reply : "No, God has kept intact the heart that would share that loneliness. And I who say that 'you reveal yourself to me at every step' me not alone." This, indeed is an expression of Narasinghrao's faith in God.

Nalinkant's "dear sister" Urmila had departed from this world before Nalinkant. If 'Vivartalecla' ends with a reference to the death of his daughter Lavangika, 'Smaranamukur' ends with the mention of the death of Urmila. In both cases, there is a tremor of pathos and reveals the heart of the poet who had a keen awareness of tragedy.

He begins with the question : "Why was I keenly aware of my loneliness ?" and then quotes the following words from Burke :

They who ought to have succeeded me have gone before me ; they who should have been to me as posterity, are in the place of ancestors.

Urmila's sense of social service was so keen that in order to teach knitting to a blind girl, she had learnt to knit with closed eyes ! She had a good and natural understanding of music. She could translate from English into Gujarati and her two works 'Ushanandini' and 'Kamalini' were posthumously published.

The fact that the father had to write introductions to his dead children's books was as good as performing their funeral rites. How poignant that he had to conclude the 'Smaranamukur' with the words : "Oh, my son ! Oh, my daughter ! I am wandering through the desolate forest of life with your names on my lips !"

# 4

## Critic

*(The critic is only the twin brother of the poet)*

IF NARASINGHRAO was one of the significant poets who blazed a new trail in Gujarati poetry, he was equally significant as a critic and a philologist. He was ever vigilant about the correct usage of words and the craft of poetry in the Gujarati language. His articles on these subjects were published in the literary journal 'Vasant', edited by Acharya Anandashankar Dhruv. Even though the phonetics he adopted did not find wide acceptance, scholars did accept its scientific basis.

Narasingh Rao's critical articles included those on the appreciation of poetry, metrical composition, the use of language, the growth and development of language and, basic literary concepts. He made subtle and profound observations on these subjects. He considered in detail differing points of view, and firmly upheld only the view which he considered justified and scientifically valid.

His first collection of critical articles, 'Manomukur' Volume I, appeared in 1924. By that time, he had already been recognised as a literary critic of great eminence. Subsequently, three more volumes appeared with the same title. 'Narasingh Rao no Kāvya-vichar' (Narasingh Rao's concept of Poetry) compiled from the writings in these volumes, appeared in 1969.

With the exception of 'Smaranasanhita', Narasingh Rao himself wrote the commentaries to his poems. That was an indication of the fact that right from the beginning of his poetic career he had developed a critical and research oriented dimension too. Even in his own poems the critic in him is revealed in many places.

The first section of 'Manomukur' Vol. I consists of Narasingh Rao's book reviews and introductions to books written between 1883-84 and 1913-14. The first article in this section is about 'Sanyāsi', Narayan Hemachandra's translation of the Bengali novel by Deba Prasanno Roy Chowdhury. The article shows how thoroughly Narasingh Rao understood the art of fiction. The psychological workings of the characters and their individual traits, the incidents, the exalted vision of life as depicted in the work nothing escapes his attention. While pointing out the merits of this particular work despite the clumsy rendering into Gujarati by Narayan Hemachandra, he also makes a few critical observations about fiction in Gujarati.

This section also contains a review of the Gujarati translation of Bhavabhūti's 'Uttararāmacharitam' by Manilal Nabhubhai, an eminent Sanskrit scholar. While commenting upon the Gujarati version, Narasingh Rao has also written about the original Sanskrit play with deep insight into the mutual love of Rama and Sita. Narasingh Rao has pointed out the mistakes that have crept into the Gujarati translation because the translator followed the Bengali text. He agrees that if the original is not a well-knit work, the translator can do nothing about it. At the same time, he stresses that the translator must take care to bring out in his translation the beauty and charm of the original. In spite of these limitations he says that the total impact of this translation is favourable.

The third article in the section has been devoted to 'Vilasika', a collection of poems by Ardeshir Faramji Khabardar, a Parsi poet who wrote in pure Gujarati diction. Narasingh Rao begins by making a distinction between 'Parsi Gujarati' and pure Gujarati and also mentions Behramji Malabari, who was Khabardar's predecessor in the field of Gujarati letters.

Narasingh Rao has written at great length about a few traces of 'Parsi Gujarati' even in 'Vilasika'. The purist that he was in the matter of language, it was probably inevitable. He has also analysed the metrical structure of the poems in the collection and has described the poems as creations having an easy flow, great refuement and as being pleasant to the ear. On the whole, he has given a high opinion of the poetic quality of 'Vilasika', the cautious view that future generations would place Khabardar in the middle ranks of Gujarati poets.

Narasingh Rao mentions word and meaning as two components of poetry and figure of speech (*alankar*) as an element affecting both of them. On the whole, he feels figures of speech in 'Vilasika' appear to be in good taste, even though at places, they seem to have been used for their own sake. Narasingh Rao has given illustrations in support of this view.

Narasingh Rao says that Khabardar's poetic talent worked in such a way that it could not but contain the trends of the poetry of Dalpatram and Narmad as well as of the poetic trends of his times.

As a result of all this, he feels that 'Vilasika' is a collection of poems of uneven quality. He has also noted that there are a number of poems in 'Vilasika' that "follow the new path and acquire a charming quality by virtue of their imagination."

The second section deals with "rasa and an inquiry into the basic tenets of art". It contains seven articles on such matters as discussion on 'Vasantotsava,' "Gujarati Poetry and Music," and the "The fault of improbability in poetry," "The imposition of false sentiments." In reply to felicitations on his 75th birthday, he observed that "discussions of art and aesthetics has reached a point of dullness." However, his own competent treatment of the subjects in these articles is noteworthy and his arguments are likely to find universal acceptance. His logical approach, his ability to expound his views with detailed examination of all the possible points can be clearly noticed in these articles. Each of these articles also reveals his aesthetic vision and love for beauty and truth.

The next section is concerned with "the vision of life" in which Narasingh Rao has written about Narayan Hemachandra and Navalram Trivedi. Both of them figure in 'Smaranamukur', but in 'Manomukur' Narasingh Rao has discussed their writings in greater detail and at considerable length. He has described Narayan's oddities and clumsiness, his merits and lapses. But even the lapses of character like his liaisons with women during his later years have been accepted and forgiven by Narasingh Rao. In fact, he pays tribute to him as a simple-hearted man saying, "in God's Temple he undoubtedly has a higher position than many of our great men."

Then comes the very detailed appraisal of Navalram who was one of the early literary critics of Gujarat. Moreover, he was a poet and playwright and also specialized in linguistics. An enlightened editor of the journal 'Shalapatra' and a social reformer with a deep religious sense, he was a close friend of Narmad. About Navalram as a literary figure Narasingh Rao writes: "Navalram was first a poet and a scholar and then a critic. In other words, it should not be forgotten that he became a critic exactly because he was a poet and a scholar."

Narasingh Rao then goes on to describe how "the critic is only the twin brother of the poet." He says: "Both of them fly together in the realm of imagination and the world of sentiments. Both of them need to have the twin wings of genius and imagination." The only difference is that they function differently. The poet's function is to synthesize. The critic's function is to analyze. But the critic has to realize what he has to analyze". And that is, only the critic should have genius and imagination akin to the poet's. These words express most lucidly Narasingh Rao's views about the function of the poet and the critic. At the same time, they also reflect the regard and respect Narasingh Rao had for Navalram.

Narasingh Rao regards Navalram's approach in the field of "Deshi Pingal" as unique and admirable. He has stated that in Navalram's "Thoughts on Poetics" the relation between poetry and the concept of *maya* that emerges in it is the result of a "unique intellectual process." To Edmund Burke's



two ideals of the beautiful and the sublime, Navalram has added a third, the horrible, which seems objectionable to Narasingh Rao. Of course, he himself upheld the ideals of the Beautiful, the Sublime and the Grand.

According to Narasingh Rao, Navalram was not really an artist. He was, he says, a true 'rasika'.

As we said, Narasingh Rao, while recognising Navalram's poetic ability, also raves over his competence as a critic. He says : "On the whole, for a decade and a half, Navalram adorned the high but responsible position of a critic by his unmatched power and enthusiasm and a beautiful combination of fairness and generosity." He even goes to the extent of saying, "there was no critic at all before Navalram," which is indeed a historically valid statement.

The next section dealing with religion and philosophy also contains two articles : "Vishvarachana" (Creation of the Universe) and "Swechhasweekār" (Willing Acceptance). The first article begins with the question of matter and delves deep into the theory of the creation of the universe. The second article is a specimen of reflective writing inspired by the painting "Choice" by Paton. Narasingh Rao also wrote a poem called "Swechhasweekār" inspired by the same painting, to which reference has already been made.

'Manomukur' Volume I also has a section of humorous and satirical writings revealing the lighter side of this serious-minded and stern-looking scholar and author.

The last section of this volume contains two articles concerning language and grammar, the topics very dear to Narasingh Rao. The first article discusses forms of subject, predicate and ellipses and the second article goes into a discussion about the structure of the Gujarati language. Both these articles won fame for Narasingh Rao as a philologist.

The subsequent three volumes containing Narasingh Rao's literary writings appeared under the same title, 'Manomukur'

between 1936 and 1938. In these volumes there are appraisals of the works of contemporary as well as emerging writers. There are also his lectures delivered at a number of literary organizations. In fact, these volumes provide wide-ranging material on literary as well as non-literary subjects. They show Narasinghbrao's capacity for viewing things in their totality. They are not mere indulgences in journalistic play of words. Rather, they are the liberal reflections of a scholar who possessed a comprehensive intellect and who, all through his life, was guided by a deep aesthetic sense and devotion to truth. He has recognized merit, truth and beauty wherever he has found them even if the person concerned happens to be his rival. In his literary criticism, Narasinghbrao always highlighted the merits of the work under review. At the same time, he pointed out its shortcomings in unequivocal terms. He hardly ever failed to observe that the merits of the work were far greater than the shortcomings. He applied the same standard of judgment whether the work to be reviewed happened to be by a veteran or a newcomer. If he found any points of similarity between that particular work and some other work in Gujarati or in a foreign language like English, he did not hesitate to point it out. But he rarely went to the extent of charging the author with plagiarism. When K.M. Munshi wrote his renowned historical novels 'Patanni Prabhuta' and 'Gujarat no Nath' he was subjected to the charge of plagiarizing Alexander Dumas. It was Narasinghbrao who vehemently defended Munshi and showed the charge of plagiarism to be baseless.

Writing on "Inspiration," Narasinghbrao discusses its various forms and indicates the importance of the source of inspiration. If a writer has been inspired by the work of some other writer or keeping that work in view as an ideal has created something new after assimilating it well, or has intelligently imitated it, it is not an act of plagiarism. But bodily lifting the work of some one else and making a few alterations here and there and failing to acknowledge the source does invite the charge of plagiarism. In his view, the spring of poetry in the form of original source is common throughout the world, and the factors governing the human heart are the

striking resemblances of techniques. One poet, unaware of the creation of another poet, shines like a rare star in the literary firmament. This type of inspiration can be called communication. Whenever such communication is absent, whenever the particular subject is incapable of being the subject of communication like a part of the social material, no matter how clever the adaptation may be, plagiarism could be rightly assumed. This criterion of judgment is indicative of Narasinghrao's open-mindedness.

Narasinghrao also favoured translations and similar pursuits. He said that in order to attain success in poetic effort it would be advantageous to do first translations to be followed by imitation, composition, adaptation and finally, original verse.

This combination of the spirit of inquiry and insistence on truth coupled with his honesty is evident in his attempt to determine the period of the beginning of the new Gujarati poetry. He says: "The new poetry is not like the birth of the goddess Athene who jumped out fully equipped with arms and armour from the head of Zeus. It has come floating on the occult currents of evolution." As a result of Narasinghrao's thorough research, poets like Bhalan, Keshav, Karman, Nakar etc. 'who belonged to the period after the great poets like Narasingh Mehta and Premanand came into light, and literary history had to be reinterpreted. Similarly, he appreciated the importance of poets like Harilal Dhruv, Bhimrao Bhola-nath and Balashankar who were the harbingers of new poetry.

Narasinghrao's study of old Gujarati literature was without doubt discriminating. At the same time, his close contact with three generations of writers during his lifetime was very valuable and extremely fruitful. His innumerable critical articles covering works of literary creations ranging from stray, small pieces to voluminous treatises bear this out. It was his deep sense of appreciation for any literary creation, whether by a veteran or a new comer, that earned for him the honourable title of father of modern Gujarati literature. Exasperated by the hardships of day to day living, man not only seeks an escape, he also feels dissatisfied with the

same everywhere. That is why, he said one finds flashes of physical circumstances of his life. He aspires to soar high, break loose from his physical surroundings, sojourn in the realm of emotion, beauty and aesthetic experience. Narasinghrao was firmly convinced that only through spiritual means could man satisfy his hunger for that which is beyond mundane existence. In his view, the divine arts like music could provide such spiritual means. In this spiritual quality resided true greatness, he said, and it was wrong according to him, to allow these arts to degenerate into means to satisfy the baser hungers. Man yearns to free himself from the constraints of his physical circumstances and turns to the fine arts to find solace and joy. Only when this happens, does a creation of art, instead of being deliberate, becomes a spontaneous activity seeking beauty, emanating from the deep recesses of the human heart.

Narasinghrao believed that any genuine pursuit of art could never be guided by petty motives of money or fame. And, if it was so guided, he believed the end product could only be mediocre.

Poetry has been rightly defined as "the criticism of life." But to Narasinghrao's mind, this definition of poetry is incomplete. He says that poetry is not "only a criticism of life it is a criticism of life in beautiful words. It would mean 'keeping out philosophy on the one hand and discarding drab prose on the other.'"

Further, he says that the poet's heart should be sympathetic to human happiness and misery, hope and despair. Only when there is a touch of poetry in a living and awakened soul, that poetry can be directly experienced.

Moreover, man does not stand alone in the world. He is surrounded by the external world, by nature. This becomes the subject matter of poetry. This implies that poetry has to be the criticism of life and the world in beautiful language. In other words, poetry is born out of the poet's spontaneous reaction to life and nature under a certain blessed inspiration.

Therefore, he said, poetry created by man cannot help having a certain basic similarity despite diverse external characteristics. That basic similarity lies beyond the considerations of time and space. As such, there is no ground to label poetry as ancient and modern or Asian and European.

Just as Brahma, though manifesting in different forms on account of different attributes, is considered the purest and supreme element without attributes, so is poetry basically the same in spite of its differences of form. Narasingh Rao is certain that if any human pursuit is entitled to the high throne of Brahma, it is definitely the pursuit of poetry.

Referring to Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," Narasingh Rao says that while it is true that the original source of poetry lies in emotional turmoil, there is another process which helps in poetic creation. Both philosophy and poetry perceive and also reveal truth. But philosophical processes follow the line of analysis whereas the process of poetic creation follows that of synthesis. However, both these processes begin with a sense of wonder. Both philosophy and poetry find themselves facing the problems concerning life, the universe, and Brahma, which arouse curiosity and wonder. But poetry is not created till there is an emotional stirring.

Thus, according to Narasingh Rao, a merging of emotional stirring with a sense of wonder is essential for poetic creation. But he also grants that there can be exceptions to this rule and that at rare moments, the intensity of imagination can cause emotional stirring.

With regard to language as a medium of expression, Narasingh Rao says that language is the best means available to man to perceive and express in an intelligible manner the elements of truth, beauty and the good. But it is so difficult to grasp these occult elements, that even while attempting to fully convey them, words turn out to be inadequate tools.

Narasingh Rao expresses the view that in poetry there is an

attempt to make explicit, to disclose what is implied or concealed. This has to be done by the use of natural symbols. Such a revelation of invisible elements through symbols is beauty.

But what is really the meaning of beauty? According to Aristotle, he says, the origin of beauty lies in balanced proportions. Whereas, according to neo-Platonic philosophy, the origin of beauty is in emotion. But Narasingh Rao seems to favour the comprehensive view which regards beauty as a harmonious combining of the theory of balanced proportions with its emphasis on the physical, and the theory of emotional Kindling which places emphasis on the metaphysical aspect. He says that the principle of balanced proportions with regard to artistic creation should be applied to literature as well. In the absence of such a criterion of judgement, everything would become loose, discordant and harsh.

Along with a poetic sensibility, a poem must have a physical form also, so that the aesthetic quality of the poem is reflected in its physical form. But what is the physical form of a poem? Is it prose or verse? Narasingh Rao distinguishes between a poem and poetry. He says that poetry is the pursuit of the poetic act while a poem is a specific composition in a poetic form. 'Kavya' is a poem and 'Kavita' is poetry. Verse is a word arrangement guided by the rules of time beats, long (*guru*) and short (*laghu*) syllables or 'mātrā.' But prose means an arrangement of words not bound by these rules, and hence, irregular and set in the pattern of the language of daily usage. Thus, according to Narasingh Rao, verse is only the form of a poetic composition, while its poetic quality is independent of that form. Hence, it is possible to have poetic quality in prose, but a poem is expected to have a poetic form as well.

At some moments of despair during his last years, Narasingh Rao described such discussions as "churning the waters." But there is no doubt that it is possible to find something worthwhile from this churning even today. His own basic conclusions which were drawn by his experiences at the intellectual and emotional levels contain much that is of vital significance today too.

# 5

## Philologist

*(The study of language is also a part of literary criticism)*

**N**ARASINGHRAO'S contribution in this field was immense. His approach was scientific and guided by his insistence on purity, correctness and exactitude. It would be relevant to mention here that he was good in mathematics which necessarily shaped further his attitude of correctness and precision in everything. By implication, he had only contempt for anything that was slipshod. His grounding in mathematics was extremely helpful in his study of a precise subject like linguistics.

The University of Bombay accorded him the honour of inviting him to deliver his well-known Wilson Philological Lectures in 1915-1916. These seven lectures were published in two volumes under the title 'Gujarati Language and Literature.' dedicated to his guru Dr. Ramakrishna Bhandarker. The first volume appeared in 1921 and the second in 1932.

The three lectures published in volume II deal with the history and evolution of the Gujarati language, a historical sketch of Gujarati literature as well as the future of Gujarati language and literature.

These are extremely well-researched lectures with copious references quoted in support of his arguments. The elaborate list of references and books in the appendix are an indication of the vast research Narasinghrao had done to prepare the lectures.

As in the case of his works on literary criticism, these lectures too reflect Narasinghrao's logical thinking. Singlehanded, he did significant work in the field. He valued the contribution of his predecessors as well as contemporaries, to the subject. He also gave due importance to the work of Western authorities like Grierson, Tessitory etc. He made diligent use of the available material on the subject. He established his own principles and boldly defied those of his predecessors. In his own time, Balawantrao Thakore considered Narasinghrao's work in the field of linguistics of great significance. Scholars like Ramnarayan Pathak and Vishnuprasad Trivedi who occupy high position as literary critics of Gujarati have acknowledged the value of Narasinghrao's work in this field.

From the point of view of linguistics, Narasinghrao considered in great detail three types of *utsargas* (common rules of language) prevalent particularly in Gujarati, *utsargas* partly typical of Gujarati and *utsargas* commonly prevalent in Gujarati and other modern Indian languages.

The knowledge of Prakrit and Apabhramsha and old western Rajasthani languages is absolutely essential from the point of view of Gujarati linguistics. Equally important is the knowledge of western linguistics. Narasinghrao had equipped himself with this knowledge to the maximum extent and made his discussion of the subject scientific, supported with appropriate illustrations. He has discussed in detail and with illustrations the broad pronunciation of 'a' and 'o' occurring at the end of nouns and adjectives, "silent" 'o' 'u' and 'a' at the end of the words derived from Arabic and Persian. He has also shown the transpositions, interpolations and elisions of 'hakaar' or 'h'. He has examined the composition of the roots of verbs, 'anuswar' or nasal sign as well as three types of nasal accents, and also the elision of nasal accent prevalent



in Gujarati. He has dealt with 'samprasaran' or mutual interchange of vowels and 'pratisamprasaran' or no interchange of vowels, in the discussion of expanded 'a' and subjugated 'o'.

He has discussed in that connection the question of 'swarabhara' or accent on vowels and pointed out how because of *sanyogalop* or joining and elision the preceding vowel becomes long and the long vowel remains unchanged. He has also included an analysis of conjunction.

He has discussed the influence of the languages of other provinces (now states) as well as of Persian and Arabic languages on Gujarati and explained how it was historically appropriate as it was inevitable. In the context of varied human contacts and the mingling of different groups of people, how could their respective languages remain unaffected? By citing the example of Greece under the Roman impact, Narasingh Rao has tried to show how languages are shaped by political and social events. He has discussed in detail the guidelines to be followed while studying the growth and development of a language. These guidelines are : (1) historical validity, (2) distrust of mere external similarity of sounds ; (3) ignoring artificial derivation ; (4) 'laghava' shortness of syllables (5) adherence to historical context and (6) usage in the language itself. These six points have been called the forces that interact in the *beejalaghava* or both shortening of cardinal roots and economy of steps of a language. He has also convincingly dealt with the case terminations in Gujarati.

Thus, as the two volumes of 'Gujarati Language and Literature' amply prove, Narasingh Rao's approach to the difficult subject of linguistics was logical and scientific. He considered and criticised the views of his predecessors in the field and drew his own conclusions which, according to him were valid.

However, it should be mentioned that his knowledge of phonetics was limited. This has led later scholars who have entered the field with the latest knowledge of phonetics to

challenge Narasinghbrao's theories. They consider Narasinghbrao's approach old-fashioned. But this does not in any way diminish his importance as a pioneer in the field. His persistent efforts have been quite fruitful and have helped future development. Even so, as the editors of 'Rojnishi' have pointed out, no one has so far put forward new theories in place of the theories Narasinghbrao established without the help of the methodology which is being applied today. In spite of limitations, the fact remains that he put Gujarati linguistics on a firm and scientific basis. The present scholars of Gujarati linguistics owe a debt to him.

# 6

## Conclusion

NARASINGHRAO enriched Gujarati literature with his pioneering work in many fields. But, despite this versatility, he was primarily a poet who brought a touch of refinement to modern Gujarati poetry. Among the factors that shaped his poetic attitude, his study of Romantic English poetry and Sanskrit literature may be considered important. He had himself mentioned that it was his aim to write poems in his own language following the Western pattern and thereby turn the trend of Gujarati poetry in that direction. In order to attain this objective, he persistently attempted to have in his poems purity of language, depth of sentiment and metrical rhythm. He attempted with considerable success numerous forms of lyrical poetry. He also attempted many other forms, starting from the quadruped couplets of invocation to the elegy. But he did not seem to have any particular attraction for the sonnet form. With the exception of "Veenanun, Anuranana" (Reverberation of veena) which was included in the second edition of 'Hridayaveena' he is not known to have composed any other sonnet. However, he could and did appreciate the sonnet as a poetic form.

It may be said that because Narasinghbrao was primarily a poet, he was also a creative prose writer. In 'Vivertaleela' he gave Gujarati an essay form which is ebullient and full of meditative content. In 'Smaranamukur' he evolved

for the first time in Gujarati literature the art of writing faithful and pleasing character sketches.

The sources of his literary criticism also lay in his love for poetry, beauty and art. This is amply proved by his prodigious collection of critical articles in the four volumes of 'Mañomukur.' His ability to make subtle distinctions, his righteous anger and readiness to take delight and his concern with literary merit have been consistently reflected in these writings.

The scope of his critical writing is also very extensive. He has surveyed Gujarati literature from its earlier stages right up to the Gandhian era. He has remained alert and awake as a critic and a creative writer almost till his last moments.

Just as he brought about a quality of refinement to Gujarati poetry, he developed Gujarati prose also to a great extent. But he did not think he was peerless. To an admirer, praising his prose in all sincerity, he cited Anandashankar Dhruv as a far more powerful prose writer.

All those who came in contact with Narasingh Rao were convinced of his deep-rooted religiosity, faith in God and truthfulness. He rejected anything that was pretentious. His writings reflect his natural traits and his 'Rojnishi' gives intimate pictures of his inner self. Narasingh Rao was undoubtedly one of the leading figures of his time, with a broad vision of life. Whether in literature or in practical life, "purity" was the keyword for him. It is hardly possible to have a full estimate of the extent to which this commanding personality who had sought inspiration from many quarters, himself inspired others. He transmitted to the literary life of Gujarat a certain glow which he possessed himself.

If Narmad who was the father of modern Gujarati poetry was a man of valour, Narasingh Rao who introduced in Gujarati poetry a love for beauty, aesthetic sense, purity of sentiment, and contemplative content, was a man of gravity and an underlying quality of courage.

## APPENDIX 1

### THE END OF MUSIC

*(Author's Tribute to Narasingh Rao)*

He was a musician fascinated by the moon,  
He was ecstatic in the moonlit universe,  
He bathed in the waters of Heavenly Ganges,  
Delighted in the deep, dark hues of the clouds.

He tossed up the balls of myriad stars,  
He played on his veena the silent music of universe  
With grace that was gentle and sweet,  
And basked in joy.

The musician sauntered through many gardens,  
Gazed at the alluring charm of every creeper,  
Inhaled the exotic smell of every flower,  
Strung a garland of flowers rare,  
Sang melodies of joy embodied in them  
With grace spread their fragrance all the time.

The musician left, abandoning the quiet gardens,  
He heard mysterious calls from afar,  
And heard the quiet murmur of the springs.

And the rambling echoes from the valleys,  
And sombre notes of water-falls,  
He saw the distant lofty peaks,  
And the strings of the glorious veena trembled.

The musician left, abandoning quiet joy,  
He heard mysterious calls of the wild.  
Deep dents appeared all along the way,  
Wild, stormy winds blew over the difficult path,  
He faced dreadful darkness thickly laid  
Discovered the divine Purple Light  
Shining through the ages.

Sprawling mountains blinding the eyes,  
Their ravines arousing terror,  
Beastly growls rising from all directions,  
Dense clouds gathering overhead,  
Light and thunder playing the deadly game,  
Through these advanced the valiant figure,  
Alone, and firm of step.

On he went, this calm and resolute man,  
Tearing through darkness, his head held high,  
Waged his battles dutifully and with competence  
Fought his duels with unflinching faith.  
The veena was his sole companion,  
Singing gently the glory of the splendid light.

He saw the impact of the sun-rays,  
Saw the immense expanse of the sky,  
Gazing steadily at the rainbow hues,  
Cherished high hopes to imbibe  
Those colours in life.  
He let imagination fly high.

In his heart rose many ripples  
Sparkling in the flashes of his intellect ;  
Found those invisible whirlpools,  
In exultation sprang the "Jnanabal"  
To catch their playful sport.  
The deep emotion stirred by that sport.  
Its serene and unfathomable notes,  
While winding these up, there arose  
The plaintive chirr of the strings.

Singing new songs in cloudless sky,  
The clusters of stars in ever-new dance  
Mingled in eternal festivity  
On some lovely, quiet shore.  
He heard the jingle of some anklets  
And a new radiance flashed in his heart.  
And now, why this unbearable change of trend ?  
Why all those unseen blows ?  
Why do the strings of the veena snap ?  
Why does Fate indulge in pranks like these ?  
"Flowers have withered.  
Strings of the veena have snapped  
All the jingles of the anklets  
Now ring a hollow sound."  
Whose words could these be,  
Piercing the evening silence ?  
Is it the veena that has uttered  
The final words of the player ?

Profound silence pervaded the world,  
The moon had moved downward in the sky,  
Through the invisible wind arose  
Someone's words unheard before.

"Many joyous strings of the veena snapped,  
But their lingering vibrations are not lost in the void.  
The incessant music of the remaining string  
Acquires always a silent, tragic note.

"On many a night in supreme solitude  
New notes spontaneously rise from the heart,  
Rendering it mute in pervasive silence  
By bringing poise—there the silent music grows.

"But has my veena come to a sudden stop ?  
Have I ceased to delight in the tragic song ?  
Even the last string is snapped by a mysterious hand ;  
Tears more mysterious have surged in my eyes.

"That subtle harmonious string of the veena,  
Let not the music of the universal veena  
Ever be shattered."

Hearing these patient words the musician said :  
"In the hierarchy of the world's creation,  
I am so insignificant, and  
So sublime the song of the universe !  
What is the significance of my veena ?

"Unless I know the glorious musical notes  
Pervading the vast universe,  
How can I catch them in my veena  
And become one with the Infinite ?  
And how can I, a fish in waters of supreme joy,  
Be infused with new zest and enjoy  
Being a finite being within the Infinite ?

"I only awake from my deep slumber  
With the memory of the last note  
Of the snapping string of my veena  
Lying dormant in the ruins of my soul  
And pick up my hollow-sounding veena,  
Oh, why should I pick up my veena ?

"Why now ? My veena rendered mute  
After the music shattered may well go to pieces,  
And find solace in the thundering music  
Of the great Omnipotent Player.

"It is my sole desire,  
My only aspiration,  
That the great music of the universe  
May never stop because my veena has broken down."

Broken, also, is the glorious instrument,  
Its notes have sunk into silence,  
Its magnificent tunes are ringing  
With deep resonance in the illusory wind.

Sundarji Betai  
(From *INDRADHANU*)



## APPENDIX II

### BOOKS BY NARASINGHRAO

#### POETRY

Kusumamala (1887)  
Hridayaveena (1896)  
Nupur Jhankar (1914)  
Smaranasamhita (1915)  
Buddhacharit (1934)

#### CREATIVE PROSE

Smaranamukur (1926)  
Vivartaleela (1932)  
Narasinghraoni Rojnishi (1954)

#### CRITICISM

Manomukur—Vol. I (1924)  
Manomukur—Vols. II, III, and IV  
Narasinghraono Kavyavichar  
ed. Bhrigurai Anjaria (1969)  
Plays of Premanand

#### PHILOLOGY-RESEARCH

Wilson Philological Lectures, Vol. I  
Wilson Philological Lectures, Vol. II  
Thakkar Vassonji Madhavji Lectures

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## APPENDIX VI

### SELECT POEMS OF NARASINGHRAO

In transliteration (English translations on pages 12—25)

Uthi je swachchhanda hridayagirithi kavyasarita,  
Vahi chali manda kadi kadi kudi teh twarita  
Pachhi shushkaranye padi ja sahasa sera virami,  
Kidha yatno koti tadapi lahari pachhi na rami.

Bhamanto deshoman ajab kadi jadugar tahin,  
Chadhyo avi sadhu dithi sarita dubi rana mahin ;  
Bhani mantra mongha kathana patharae danda  
praharyo  
Ane jo chalyo tyan vahavi balavege jalazaro

Phari chali peli kavitasarita satvar rane,  
Haji na sukai ; vadun vadun hun to dhanya tujane ;  
Tune, sadhu, sho hun upakrititano apun badalo ?  
Samarpun le a e saritalahari arghya saghalo.

—*Kusumamala*

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Avo phuladan mudhuran, re. apana range ramiye,  
Din eka anande re bhelan rahi nirgamiye,  
Tamamanun hun pana re kusuma eka komaliyun,  
Rahi manuja samuhe re vadana karmai gayun.  
Nhasi tyan thaki aje re avyo tama pasa hun to,  
Tume komala haide re, mane nava ganasho judo,  
Nahin tamaman kulilata re, nahin vali krurapanun.  
Nahin vachana kapatnan re, hridaya premala ghanun.

Tyare avo madhuran, re apana range ramiye  
Dina eka to sukhaman re sathe vasi nirgamiye

Vhali sanbhala peli koyaladi taruvrundaman re  
Gati chhandaman re, vhali . . .  
Shanta rajaniman chamaki chandani,  
Jo achi pathai vadali,  
Ave tanuko anilalhera kain mandaman re,  
Gati chhandaman re, vhali . . .

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Vhali e tujane bolave,  
Mithi Mithine mana bhavae,  
Deni pachhou tahuko komala kanthaman re,  
Gati chhandaman re, vhali . . .

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Tuhu tuhu kari jo phari avyo  
Mitho rava amirasa jo lavyo,  
Koyaladi rahi chhupi zadanana zundamanre  
Gati chhandaman re, vhali . . .

Jala nirmala lai vahe kumari sarita peli,  
Nhase, pase dhase, ladati laje gheli,  
Ishvara karuna khare, vahi a nadiswarupe  
Smita kari pritibhare, bhare alingana tun pe.  
Tun pe, Patan ! daya dharati e suchavati,  
Bhale kalani gati manujakritine bughavati,  
Muja premasaritapura vahyun jashe anakhutyun  
Chho dhanavibhava luntaya zarana muja jaya na  
luntun.

Asha pankhidun men to puryun kanakamaya panjare,  
Ramya ranga dharantun aneka, jevo megha sanzare.  
Zini chanchu suvarnani meghasami shi opati !  
Indradhanurangadhari eka kalagi shira shobhati.

Pana eka divasa e to haya ! udine chaliyun  
Todi kanakanun panjara tyanya, rahyun nava zaliyun.

To ye gana karantun jaya, pachala dedyo hun jaun  
 chhun,  
 Pana e o to naya pakadaya, adhika lalachaun chhun.

Shantipura reli rahyun re undu, abdhuta, sahu thar.  
A purne zinun zinun halavi chhano anila rame suku-  
mara re,  
A shi undi rajani !

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Tyare tun gana kain shokabharela gato  
Rheje bhale ja, jaladhodha ! na muka thato ;  
Gambira hridayavadya bhale jagave,  
A vadyane karuna gana vishesha bhave.

Ramakadan muja kona gayun hari ?  
 Rudan ema karun hun phari phari ;  
 Bhayada nada thaki gabharaine  
 Giriguhuamabin besun lapaine.  
 Prakritimata rudan karauun chhaje nahi have tujane  
 kain

Rami ramakadan mane mojo gayun vaya e vahi ;  
 Tuja ramakadan balyavasthatanan padiyan ahin,  
 Tadapi palati chhya, gherun swarupa rahyan lahi.

Svargamandale thaki hun utari re lol,  
Svargamahin kain muja nivasa  
Diya asha hun re lol,  
Sarvathama mhalun kusuma verati re lol !

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**Sthayi saundaryani murti grahatan na jashe khasi  
Divya a bhavanasrishti ahinyan nitya chhe vasi.**

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Sandhya ramade dharine unchhange  
A shukratarakanine shi range

Ne sindhuman goodhu thai rahelo  
Joti rahi rasathaki Ravinatha pelo

Nimishamahin ja dubyun navadun sindhu manhin,  
Madhur sukhachhabio ne gai jo bhunsai,  
Udadhitudar sandhya shukra banne samayan,  
Timirmahin ja gheran sindhue gan gayan.

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Jo eka ashru tuja men kadi hoya lohyun,  
Ekada ashru tanun dana ja yachun to hun.

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Mangala Mandira kholo, dayamaya ! Mangala  
Mandira kholo !  
Jivanavana ativege vatavyun, dwara ubho shishn  
bholo ;  
Timira gayun ne jyoti prakashyo, shishune uraman lo  
lo !

Dayamaya ! Mangala Mandira kholo !  
Nama madhura tama ratyo nirantar, shishu saha  
preme bolo ;  
Divya trishatura avyo balaka, prema-amirasa dholo !  
Dayamaya ! Mangala Mandira kholo !

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Kusumo to thayan mlana,  
Veenana tara tutiya  
Nupure kinkini sarve  
Vaje chhe khokari havan.

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Yatra yogeshwaro Gandhi Vallabhashcha dhuran-  
dhara,  
Tatra shrivijayo bhutirdhruva nitirmatirmama.

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Gaje sindhujala gambhir,  
 Nache gatun saritaneer  
 Bahuvridha gana gaya samir  
 Ne jaladhoodha dhasato dhir  
 E sarvetana swararang  
 Kaushalthe bhari tuja ane,  
 Jivananan vividha sura-gan,  
 Swara vali maranana sumahan,  
 Undan geeta e ga bhavya  
 Dhali bhavanarasa divya.

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Nirvana sindhujalaman kadi na vikara,  
 Abhasa thaya kadi anya ja e prakara

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Chalyo, shyama rajaniman chalyo  
 Margajyoti anupano jhalyo

Param Vaidye apiyun  
 Atmabhitane kaja je  
 Kema sthira rahi na piun  
 katubhasi aushanha aja e ?

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Mrityukerun swarup jo  
 Sachun manav prichhashe  
 Dwar navajeevan tanun  
 Jani nirantar rijhashe.

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