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**Linguistic Peculiarities in Abhinavagupta's *Gītārthasaṅgraha*  
Representation of Rāma in Gujarati  
Literature Written During the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

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The beginning of Gujarati literature is traced back to the time of Jain Monk and Sanskrit grammarian Acharya Hemchandra i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The literature produced during 1185 to 1414 was mostly written by Jain monks and therefore it is classified as Jain literature in the history of Gujarati literature. The impact of Sanskrit literature on Gujarati language and literature is clearly visible and particularly the influence of the two major Sanskrit epics The *Mahābhārata* and The *Rāmāyaṇa* on Gujarati literature is seen frequently. This article focuses mainly on the representation of Rāma, the hero of Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa* in major works of Gujarati literature produced during the period from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After Jain influence on Gujarati literature ended in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, works of literature with special regional influences was produced and because of the popularity of the two major epics of Sanskrit among common people the representation of Rāma is seen frequently. This article specifically focuses on the literature produced during the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century i. e. how the character of Rāma is seen, interpreted and portrayed in Gujarati literature produced during these four hundred years. This article does not deal either with

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the beginning of Gujarati literature or the literature produced after the 19th century.

### 1. Literature based on 'Rāma kathā' written during the 15th century A.D.:-

Rāmānandi sect was in trend in Gujarat during this period and geographically it was greatly seen in the belt between Viramgam to Surat in particular. Therefore, literature based on Rāma Kathā was produced under its influence during this period in which poems of Rāma Kathā are found in Bhālaṇ's *Rāmabāla Carita*, Karman's *Sītāharāṇa*, Bhim's *Harililā śoḍaṣa kalā*, Udhhat's *Rāmabāla Carita*, conversation between Sītā-Hanumāna and *Rāmāyaṇa* and Māndav's *Rāmāyaṇa* are main. Thus, literature based on the representation of Rāma is explored to a noteworthy rate during the 15<sup>th</sup> century in which stories based on the life of Rāma are found.

(A) *Rāmāyaṇa* written by Gujarati poet Bhālaṇ (1550 to 1575 A.D. approximately):- Bhālaṇ has written 'Kadvās' on the life of Rāma. Kadvā is a poetic form written in four lines in Gujarati and its structure is similar to that of a 'chopāi' i.e. quatrain. The major events of Rāmāyaṇa specifically after the arrival of Sītā in Awadhpur after her marriage with Rāma to the killing of Rāvaṇa in Lanka and then back to Ayodhya are covered in detail by Bhālaṇ here. Each Kadvā ending with a common phrase i.e. the refrain 'Bhālaṇ nā swami Raghunāth' creates special musical effect and shows the poet's religious gratitude towards Rāma. The poet's creativity adds to his lucid depiction of various events of Rāma's life which is visible in these lines:

“Tān to Rāvan nākhyo re māri;  
Rāj Vibhishan ne besāri,  
Bhālaṇ nā swami āvyā dhām,  
Hun to Vālmik ratoo Rāma nām.”<sup>3</sup>

These lines depict the series of incidents like killing of Rāvaṇa, the coronation of Vibhishana to the throne of Lanka and Rāma's arrival to Ayodhya in a nutshell.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhālaṇ, Rāmāyaṇa Manuscript, p. 201*

(B) Udhdhava's *Rāmāyaṇa*<sup>4</sup> :-

Udhdhava is Bhālaṇa's son. According to the pre-eminent critic of Gujarati literature Shri K.K. Shāstri, Udhdhava must have started his literary career at the age of 20 to 25 years.<sup>5</sup> Even though most of the incidents depicted in his *Rāmāyaṇa* are based exactly on Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*, some significant changes can be seen clearly. There is a reference of Shiv Dhanushya (Lord Shiva's Bow) having been lifted by Sītā instead of Rāma. Vāli's rebuke for Rāma in his last speech on death bed is also differently narrated here in comparison to Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

(C) Ramjan Kunvar's *Uttara Kāṇḍa* (Vikram Samvat 1716):-

Though there is confusion about the authorship of *Uttara Kāṇḍa* appearing in Udhdhava's *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is commonly believed to have been written by Rāmankunvar according to *Madhya Kālin Gujarati Rāmkaṭhā Sāhitya*.<sup>6</sup>

(D) Mandan's *Rāmāyaṇa* (Approximately around 1500 A.D.):-

The fragmented manuscript of this *Rāmāyaṇa* is preserved in Gujarat vidyā Sabhā by manuscript number 552. The poet here has humbly accepted that it is completely based on Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and has not added anything of his own. The poet's sheer faith and respect towards Rāma is clearly seen. Mandav's *Rāmāyaṇa* is exemplary in its richness of Gujarati language and vocabulary because it represents the second stage of middle age Gujarati language.<sup>7</sup>

(E) Karman Mantri's *Sītā Haraṇa* (Vikram Samvat 1526)

The manuscript entitled Rāma Kathā is preserved by manuscript number 1604 and Sītā Haraṇa is preserved by manuscript number 1604 (8) in Gujarat Vidyā Sabhā. Sītā Haraṇa is an independent work in which the incident of Sītā's abduction is narrated in lucid language. For example,

“Ayodhya nagar sohāmanu,  
Ruyadā poli pagār,

<sup>4</sup> Kantwala H.D. and N.P. Shastri. (Ed.): *Gujarat Vidya Sabha, Ahmedabad.*

<sup>5</sup> K.K. Shastri, *Kavi Charit*, p. 272

<sup>6</sup> Joshi, D.S. *Madhya Kālin Gujarati Rāma Kathā Sāhitya*. pg. 35

<sup>7</sup> Shāstri, K.S. *Kavi Charit*. pg. 85

Vis sahas vivhāriyā,  
Prasād nā lahari pār.”<sup>8</sup>

The description of the effect of Rāma’s heart wrenching lamentation on nature after he receives the news of his father’s sad demise is the best example of richness of Gujarati language. For example,

“Rāma roantā royu van;  
Royā parvat shrung;  
Royā sāvajadā vani,  
Anai kurangi kurang.”<sup>9</sup>

(F) Bhālaṇa’s *Rāmbā Līlā* :-

The narration of Rāma’s life from his birth to Sits svaymvar is included in total forty poems in Bhālaṇa’s *Rāmbā Līlā*. This description is in specific structure of kadvā but it is in free verse. The original form of *Rāma Kathā* is derived in the form of ornament. The description of Rāma’s character is attractive and it is well known for its description of Rāmlīlā: “Tārā mā shobhe chandramā evā sabhāmā shobhatā Rām rākshas mārā ramakadā.” Rāma’s extraordinary valour is narrated in an effective style here.

(G) Bhālaṇa’s *Rāma Vivāh*:-

This is an ākhyāna i.e. a fable. It is preserved in Gujarāta Vidyā Sabhā. This is an average work written by Bhālaṇa. The episode of Niṣād is described beautifully here. Poet’s reverence for Rāma is clearly visible in this fable.

(H) Bhim’s *Hari Līlā (Poems of Rāma Līlā)* :-

Bhim’s Hari Līlā is based on the Southern scholar Bopdev’s work. The lengthy story of Rāma’s life is skilfully narrated in brief here.

(I) Mandan’s *Hanumantopākhyāna* :-

This fable particularly focuses on the incident in which Hanumān goes to the mountain of Herbal medicines and helps Rāma during the war. The influence of

<sup>8</sup> Gujarāt Vidyāsabhā, Manuscript no. 1604 (5), pg. 24

<sup>9</sup> Gujarāt Vidyāsabhā, Manuscript no. 1604 (5), pg. 29

grammar of Marathi language is seen prominently in this fable such as 'Pavanputrāchi'. However this was common during those days.

(J) Narsinh Mehta's *Sītāji nā Mahimā*:-

This work is believed to have been written by Narsinh Meht, the only source of which is preserved in manuscript number 1078 in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai. Its main focus is on the stay of Rāma in forest.

## 2. Literature based on 'Rāma kathā' written during the 16th Century A.D.:

Looking back to the political history of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that the empire of the moghal king Akbar was established in 1572 A.D. and the city of Ahmedabad was won by him. Thus, the political stability was established and it has impacted to a great extent to the literary world of those times. Most of the great poets like Akho, Premānanda and Shamal had enriched Gujarati literature by contributing their literary creations. If one looks for the works based on the life of Rāma, one comes to the conclusion that Surdās's and Nakar's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Shridhar's *Rāvaṇ- Mandodari saṁvāda*, Shedhāji's *Hanumāna Carita* etc. are the works which are mainly based on events from Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

(A) Surdās's *Rāmāyaṇa*:-

The information about the poet of this *Rāmāyaṇa* written in 32 kadvā is rarely available. All the major incidents of the story of Rāma's life is narrated here only in one or two lines instead of narrating them in detail. Even then the poet succeeds in creating an impressive and attractive character of Rāma. Apart from showing his divine qualities, the poet has artistically portrayed Rāma as a successful ruler by depicting the utopian Rāma Rājya.

(B) Nakar's *Rāmāyaṇa*:-

Two manuscript of this *Rāmāyaṇa* are available. Rāma's character is described according to the major incidents of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The poet has lavishly described the story of Rāma's life in detail in which he also lets the readers enjoy various rasa. Rāma's character is beautifully portrayed as a divine avatara. Along with the divine qualities of Rāma, the poet has also shown the religious faith of contemporary society towards Rāma.

(C) Vishnudasa's *Rāmāyaṇa*(Prose):-

All the works mentioned earlier in this paper were written in verse forms. It is noteworthy here that Vishnudasa's *Rāmāyaṇa* is written in prose form. Generally, *Rāmāyaṇa* was sung in Chopāi form under the influence of Tulsidāsa, but this might be considered to be the beginning of Rāma Kathā in which prose form was used.

(D) Shridhar's *Rāvaṇa- Mandodari Samvāda* :-

The conversation between Rāvaṇa and his wife Mandodari is published by Manilal Vyas which is based on three manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> Mandodari warns Rāvaṇa and also makes him aware of the adventures of Rāma in this conversation and thus the poet has portrayed Rāma as a mighty warrior.

(E) Meetho's *Rāma Prabandha* :-

The features of vaishnava written by Meetha of Talaja village in Vikram Samvat 1587 witness the religious devotion to Rāma in Gujarati literature. Immense love and devotion to Rāma is visible in *Rāma Prabandha*.

(F) Keeku Vasahi's *Aṅgada Viṣṭi* :-

Apart from showing the adventures of Aṅgada, the poet devotion to Rāma is also visible. This work is in Chhappā form.

(G) Nakar's *Lava - Kuśa Ākhyāna* :-

The tragic event of the abandonment of Sītā by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa leaving Sītā in forest is narrated in a compassionate language in Nakar's *Lava - Kuśa Ākhyāna*. Here Sītā sends her message to Rāma that even though she has been abandoned by him, she is and will always be an obedient maid to him. Depicting Sītā's agony, the poet writes, "Sītā rota van rou roi pankhi ni jāti." (i.e. The whole forest and even birds were crying along with Sītā's laments.)

(H) Kahan's *Rāmāyaṇa* :-

This work in chopāi has also been written after listening to the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki. The famous episodes of the provocation of Rāvaṇa by his sister Surpankhā and crossing the border created by Laxman are not found in this

<sup>10</sup> Publication of Farbes Gujarati Sabhā

*Rāmāyaṇa*. The killing of the phantastic deer produces fourteen thousand giants before Rāma and Rāma defeats all of them single handed. The poet's faith towards Rāma is visible in this work.

(I) Vishnudasa's *Rāmāyaṇa* :-

The events from Ayodhya Kāṇḍ to Uttara Kāṇḍ of Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa* are recreated in this work. However, the poet has made certain changes in some events of Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Apart from this, Vishnudasa has also written an ākhyāna on Lava-Kuśa which is also based on *Rāmāyaṇa*.

(J) Shedhaji Kashi Sut's *Hanumāna Carita*:-

This poet is one of the most prominent poets of Gujarati literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Hanumāna's devotion to Rāma is depicted by narrating Hanumāna's adventures in this work. It is notable here that Gujarati language reaches up to the third phase of development and the use of sophisticated language is the special feature of this work.

(K) Jasho's *Rāma Carita*:-

This poem is found in a fragmented and worn out form. The story from Aṅgada to Rāvaṇa's death is covered in it.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Literature based on 'Rāma Kathā' written during the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.:-

The period of 17<sup>th</sup> century was politically a stable period. The last twelve years of Akbar's empire are covered in this century. It is an affluent age in the history of Gujarati literature and new inspirational forces for new literature originated during this period. The poetry of Gujarat enriched with and polymorphic gems. Major works during this period are found in forms like ākhyāna, poems, garabi, translation and stories teaching morals. Even though not a single complete *Rāmāyaṇa* is available during this time, whatever is available is popular and rich in both quality and quantity.

(A) Narahari's *Yoga Vasīṣṭha Sāra* :-

<sup>11</sup> Gujarāt Vidyā Sabhā, Manu Script number 1116

This work in chopāi depicts the spiritual preaching of Vaśhisṣṭha to Rāghava. The glory of knowledge is sung in this work and it is established that proximity with God can be achieved only with the help of knowledge.

(B) Shivdasa's *Paraśurāma Ākhyāna* :-

The adventures of Paraśurāma are described in a glorifying manner here and the place and significance of *Paraśurāma* in *Rāmacarita* is narrated.

(C) Laxmidasa's *Rāma Rakṣā*:-

This work is rich in praise of Rāma. It is an average work written in Bhujangi style which has not much importance.

(D) Govind's *Raghunāthaji no Vivāha*:-

Rāma is addressed here as Raghunātha and the poet has tried to show the reputation of Rāma in Raghu dynasty.

(E) Govind's *Rāma Vanavāsī ni Sākhiā* :-

The glory of Rāma is narrated in thirteen sākhi of this short poem. The jubilation of Rāma's enthronement and the incident of Mantharā are described. The sākhi is written in three lines. The refrain "Rājā Rāmchandrajine rājgādi malo" adds to the musical recitation of these sākhis.

(F) Ranasut's *Mehe Rāvaṇa nu Ākhyāna*:-

The incident of killing Rāvaṇa, the obstacle creating rakshasa by Hanumāna, the remover of obstacle is mainly focussed in this ākhyāna. Various musical tunes like Bhīmapilāsi, kedāra etc. are used in this ākhyāna written in 30 kadvā.

(G) Hariram's *Sītā Svayaṁvara*:-

Rāma's glory is described in this work in dialogue form between Bhārdvāja and Vālmiki. The incidents from the birth of Sītā to the marriage of Rāma and Sītā, their journey to forest and back to Ayodhya are described.

(H) Vajio's *Ranjang*:-

Vajio is a popular poet of 17<sup>th</sup> century. This poem is written in 17 kadvā which are full of vir rasa i.e. quality of valour and Premānand was highly influenced by this writer. The glory of Rāma and his bravery are described affluently. Mandodari professes the demolition of Lanka by singing the bravery of Rāma. the wrath of Rāma towards the ocean is narrated artistically and there is an effective description of Rāma's victory over Laṅkā.



(I) Vajio's *Sītā Sandeśa* :-

This work describes the incident of Sita sending her message to Rāma from Aśhoka Vāṭikā when Hanumāna visits her. The line “āv roodā Rāmji” is used as the refrain in this poem.

(J) Vajio's *Sītā Velī* :-

Sītā svayaṁvara is the main theme of this poem in which some of the best uses of simile are found. For example,

“Mukh ādo pālav sāhyo re,  
Jāne Chandra chādarane chhāyo re.”

(K) Premanand's *Pranay Yajna* :-

It has been mentioned by the poet here that this poem of 26 kaddvā is written after the instruction of Desai Shankardas of Nandarbar focussing on the subject matter of Yudhdhakānd of Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is an ākhyāna in which listener's entertainment is given more importance than the minute description of Vālmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*. The poet expresses his inability to describe the perfect glory of Rāma as his character has immense qualities which is out of his imagination. It is worth mentioning here that Premanand is famous for writing ākhyāna in Gujarati literature.

(L) Premanand's *Sītāvelī* :-

Premanand has written this work under the inspiration of Vajio's *Sītāvelī* which focuses on Sītā svayaṁvara. This poem is an example of the popularity of the earlier poet Vajiā and at the same time it also shows the existence of Rāma in Gujarati literature. Premanand has tried to portray the personality of Rāma by writing lines like: “Hans mānsarovar bhāvyā re!”

(M) Haridasa's *Sītā Viraha ni Chāturio* :-

This is a poem in ten chāturī (a style of writing) written by Haridāsa who turned to writing under the company of Premanand. The events from the statement of 'dhobi' i.e. cloth washer to Sītā's meeting with Vālmiki are described here. The word 'Rāghava' is used repeatedly for Rāma and the language used in this work is simple and common.

(N) Bhavan's *Rāma Kathā* :-

This work of Bhavan is written in Garabā style. The events from Dasharath's invitation to Hrishis (hermits) to come to Ayodhya to the killing of Rāvaṇa and Rāma's arrival to Ayodhya are described. 'Ānand bhao Rāma Jitā ne Rāvaṇa hāo' is used as refrain in this garabā. It can be concluded from the availability of many number of manuscripts that these incidents would have been famous and popular during those days.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned works, Krishnadasa's *Sītāji ni Kāmali kānchali*, Vashidāsa's *Harmānaj no chhand*, Tulsi's *Pandar Tithi* and Morār's *Shri Rāmchandraji* were also written during this period. Thus it becomes clear that a plenty number of works were created during this period which were based on the theme of *Rāmāyaṇa*. All these works written in verse and prose forms show how Rāma's character was popular in Gujarat during those days of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4. Literature based on 'Rāma kathā' written during the 18<sup>th</sup> century A. D.:-

Looking to the political history of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Moghal Empire ended in India and the British Empire was established during this period. The rule of Gaikwar was established in Gujarat during this time. This political instability resulted into lacunae of significant literary work during this century. The prominent Gujarati novelist Govardhanram Tripathi calls this period as 'Nirmālya' i.e. worthless period for creation of literature.<sup>13</sup> Keshavlal Dhruv has also identified it as 'sham may durbal' i.e. weaker period in the history of Gujarati literature and has gone to an extreme where he calls this period as a period of 'sāhitya nā sukavaṇā' i.e. drying of literature.<sup>14</sup> Thus, whatever literature was created during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was Bhakti literature only which was based on the life of Rāma.

(A) Radhavdasa's *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* :-

<sup>12</sup> *Madhyakālin Gujarati Rāma Kathā Sāhitya*, pg. 154

<sup>13</sup> *Classical Poet of Gujarat*, pg. 65,67

<sup>14</sup> *Madhya Kāl no Sāhitya Pravāh*, pg. 383

The writer is inspired to write this work after listening to the Rāma Kathā from a monk of Rāmānujācārya sect. The poet himself does not know Sanskrit and therefore he has written this work in regional language. However, there is only a brief of *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*.

(B) Nath Bhavan's *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*:-

This work is based on the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* created in Sanskrit language. The significant events of Rāma's life are philosophically represented here.

(C) Pritam's *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*:-

The famous Gujarati bhajan 'Hari no mārag chhe shoorāno, nahi kāyar nu kām jo ne' is written by Pritam. He has also given the core of *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* in translation. The character of Rāma is elegantly portrayed from philosophical point of view here.

(D) Rājā Rām's *Rāma Kathā* :-

This work is available in two different titles: *Rāma Kathā* and *Rāmcharaṅgi nā Kadvā*. The incidents after Rāma's decision to move to the forest are described in eleven poems here. In Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is found that both the brothers Rāma and Laxman lament after Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa, while here it is changed and narrated that Laxman laments and Rāma consoles him. This does not seem normal, but the poet has tried to an extraordinary character of Rāma by making such minor changes in the original *Rāma Kathā*.

(E) Jagjivan's *Rāma Kathā* :-

This *Rāma Kathā*, written in 34 couplets attempts to convey the spiritual meaning of *Rāma Kathā*.

(F) Ranchhod's *Rāmāyan no Sār* :-

This poem is in dialogue form in which the story of Rāma's life is told by creating famous characters. It specifically focuses on the dialogue between Sītā and Hanumāna at Aśhoka Vāṭikā.

(G) Vallabha Bhatt's *Rāma Vivāha* :-

There is an elegant description of Rāma- Sītā's marriage which conveys the customs related to the system of marriage of those times.

(H) Vallabha's *Laṅkā nā śloko* :-

The incidents after Rama's arrival at Lankā are prominent in this work. It is mentioned by Rāvaṇa here that he was destined to abduct Sītā. Rāma's image as a divine incarnation is created here.

(I) Raghu Ram's *Lava- Kuśa ākhyān* :-

This ākhyāna includes the story after the killing of Rāvaṇa to the entrustment of *Lava- Kuśa* by Rāma to Vālmīki. The poet's name is referred at the end of each quatrain. The faith towards Lord Rāma is clearly visible. There is an impressive narration of the valour of Lava and *Kuśa*. The poet writes: 'Dise chhe to nana bāl, ati parākrami sarakhā bhoopāl.'

(J) Shambhuram's *Lava - Kuśa ākhyāna* :-

This ākyāna written in chopāi format describes the story of Sītā tyāg and the birth of *Lava - Kuśa*. Sītā's message to her husband when Lakṣmaṇa was returning from jungle after her abandonment attracts reader's attention.

(K) Shamal's *Aṅgada Viṣṭā* :-

Though it is written in a simple language, the poet has successfully narrated the incident of *Aṅgada Viṣṭā* and thus has shown his talent. He has also given a special touch to the character of Rāma. The poet has described Rāma's story in the language of common people.

(L) Diwali Bai's *Rāmajanma nī Garabō* :-

Being a widow from early childhood, Diwalibai had an opportunity to be in contact with Hindu monks from whom she learnt about Rāma's story which she narrated in simple language in garbā form. Thus, she has contributed to spreading the story of Rāma among the downtrodden people of Gujarat. She has created garbās focussing on incidents from Rāma's life like Rāma bāla līlā, Rāma vivāha, Rāma Rājyābhiṣeka. Even Puribai wrote *Sītā Maṅgala* and Krishna Bai wrote *Sītāji nī Kāñcaī* during this time. These female poets have narrated Rāma's character alongwith the description of Sītā.

Apart from the above mentioned works of major poets, other works like Kalidasa's *Sītā nā Kanyāa Vidāy nā Prasaṅga*, Prabhurm's *Rāma Vivāha Prasaṅga*, Tulsidāsa's (from Gujarat) *Rāmaji no Vivāha*, Rāmaiyā's *Sītāji nā Bāra Māsh*, Pritam's *Rāma Rājya* and Vishnuji's *Rāma Kathā no Kakko* etc. have contributed

to bring awareness about Rāma's character among the common people of Gujarat during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

It is worth mentioning here that the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows for the first time that female poets have contributed to the creation of literature related to Rāma Kathā. Therefore, for the first time female's voice for the injustice done to Sītā is heard. The influence of the feminist movement of the West is clearly visible in the works written on the life of Sītā. It shows the beginning of looking at the incident of the abduction of Sītā from a different point of view.

### 5. Literature based on 'Rāma Kathā' written during the 19<sup>th</sup> century:-

Looking at the political aspect of this age, it seems that the empire of Gaikwar flourished in Gujarat while the Britishers had also strengthened their roots all over India. Along with that, the western tradition of education was also implemented in India. Many social superstitious customs like killing a girl child immediately after birth were banned. Thus, many social reforms could be seen during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But no significant change is seen in the field of literature. However, writers and poets like Dheero, Dyaram, Swami Sect's poets, Bhojo, Ranchhodji Diwan, Girdhar, Brahmananda, Manohar Swami have written their works on Rāma Kathā.

#### (A) Girdhar's *Rāmāyaṇa*:-

Girdhar's *Rāmāyaṇa* is the most famous and celebrated one in Gujarat. It is a notable contribution of Gujarat among the *Rāmāyaṇas* written in other Indian languages. It was sung in a rhythmic manner and it brought bread and butter to many story chanters. It is interesting to note here that this *Rāmāyaṇa* was not only sung by Hindus but there was also a muslim believer named Suleman Bhagat from Sarod village who sung this *Rāmakathā* with musical instruments in both his hands. Thus, Girdhar has contributed not only in the preservation of *Rāmakathā* in literature but has also succeeded in increasing its glory among the common people by crossing the limits of religions. Rāma's character is portrayed as an ideal male and along with that the divine qualities are also accepted. Many

famous critics and scholars like Bhogilal Sandesara have wholeheartedly appreciated this *Rāmāyaṇa* of Girdhar.

(B) Krishnaram's *Saṅkṣipta* ( i.e.abridged) *Rāmāyaṇa*:-

The story of Rāma is narrated in an abridged version. Some incidents are avoided here and the influence of *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is visible.

(C) Dheero's *Aśvamedha*:-

Dheero is a famous poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Gujarat. This work has been created from the narration of *Rāmkaṭhā* in *Mahābhārata*. It is the best creation linguistically. Rāma's character is depicted in a grand manner.

(D) Jinedas's *Rāvaṇa nī Lāvaṇī*:-

Vibhīṣaṇa and Rāvaṇa's dialogue is mentioned in this work in which Vibhīṣaṇa's faith towards Rāma is expressed to the best.

(E) Jivan's *Rāmācarita nī Mahimā* :-

Main events of Rāmācharita are described in this poem which is written in Bārmāsi form. Apart from the above mentioned works, Raghunandan's *Rām Stuti*, Hemo's *Rāma Rājya*, Chhotam's *Jānakī Vivāha* are also based on Rāmkaṭhā. It became popular among people during this period and Girdhar was the main writer who made it possible.

**Conclusion:** - From the above mentioned analysis of the works of various writers from ages from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can be concluded that the reason behind the unavailability of any significant work based on *Rāmāyaṇa* in Gujarati literature during the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century was that the earlier phase of the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* was only available in Sanskrit language. It was for the first time in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that *Rāmkaṭhā* was found in regional languages. Thus, the narration of *Rāmkaṭhā* in Gujarati literature began in 15<sup>th</sup> century only. Therefore, this article focuses on Gujarati literature based on *Rāmāyaṇa* from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- Even though the *Rāma Kathā* found during the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century are based on Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Gujarati writers have made changes in their stories of Rāma's life which makes them more relevant to local people on concerned regions of Gujarat.

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- There are two reasons behind the visible influence of *Rām kathās* of other states on *Rāmakathās* written by Gujarati writers: 1. Gujarati people are known for travelling to other states for performing religious rituals, and 2. Gujaratis are also known for their simple and flexible nature which allows them to accept changes wholeheartedly.
  - Girdhar's *Rāmāyana* has presented the character of Rāma in the form of story which became famous not only during his time but even today the famous story teller like Shri Morari Bapu are inspired to recite the story of Rāma and people love to listen to these stories.

