

CHAPTER IV

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SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF GUJARAT

The term Gujarat originated from “Gujjar Rashtra” the land of the Gujjars, a migrant tribe who came to India in the wake of the invading Huns in the 5th century. The Gujarat state has become popular for religious pilgrimage and cultural heritage. It is popular mystical belief that the Lord Krishna left Mathura to settle and establish his kingdom on the coast of Saurashtra at Dwarka. The Dwarka is considered as one of the ‘Char Dhams’ (sacred place) of Hindus. The Somnath temple of Gujarat is as old as creation. The temple which has risen seven times from ashes till now depicts a saga of devotion and heroism. The legendary temple is believed to have been built by the Moon God-Soma and enshrined one of the 12 jyotirlinga (symbol of lord shiva). The Gujarat state is known for bastion of Jainism and survival and growth of different religion and communities of the world. It is the birth place of M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948) Modh Vaniya, father of Indian Nation; M.A. Jinha (1876-1948) Khoja Muslim, father of Pakistan Nation; and Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950) Patidar (peasant) community, whose contribution is significant for the socio-political development of Indian sub-continent and shaping of modern Gujarat. More significantly the people of Gujarat is known for the enterprising and mercantile activities and spread all over the world for the purpose of business and trade. In the recent past, the Gujarat has witnessed to rise of Hindutva ideology, Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and Communal carnage of 2002, which attracted the concern and attention of civil society and world community.

This Chapter attempts to provide detail information about the state of Gujarat. The information about the historical background, geographical, demographical and economic characteristics, socio-political situation and emergence of civil society in Gujarat are described in detail in this chapter.

Historical Background

The ancient history of Gujarat was explored in the early nineteenth century through the inscriptions written on the rocks of Mount Girnar situated at the outskirts of Junagarh district. There are total three inscriptions namely Ashoka Brahmi Script, Poetic Sanskrit and Gupta Brahmi Script together described the 800 years ancient history of Gujarat. (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005).

According to these scripts, The Indus Valley civilization penetrated Gujarat from 2400 BC and remained vibrant till 1800 BC. After its decline, probably in 1500 BC, Central Asian people speaking Indo-European languages, and also known as 'Aryans', came to Gujarat from the north and spread Vedic culture. Gujarat became part of the Mauryan Empire during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya in the third century BC and flourished under the great king Ashoka. From the second century BC, Gujarat witnessed the arrival of the Indo-Greeks followed by the Shakas or Scythians and the Kushans in the early centuries of the Christian era. The rule of various dynasties of Kshatras (Shakas) continued till the end of the fourth century AD in Gujarat. Between the fourth to seventh centuries the Gujarat had witnessed the reign of Gupta Empire, Maitrak kingdom, and invasion of Huns and 'Gujjars'. The eighth century for the small period the state had seen rule of Arabs and during the same

period the 'Parsi' community came to south Gujarat. From 9th to 12th century, the Gujarat prospered and progressed under the Chalukya dynasty.

The army of Sultan Alauddin Khilji defeated the last Chaulukya King, Karnadev, and Gujarat became a province of the Delhi Sultanate by the end of the thirteenth century. A large number of Turks and Afghans came to Gujarat as soldiers and settled here in the following decades. During 15th and 16th century Portuguese, Mughal, Dutch, British and French entered Gujarat and established themselves in the politico-economic aspects of the state. The developments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries played a crucial role in the shaping of modern Gujarat. After, the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the Maratha rule succeeded in Gujarat. From the mid eighteenth century, the Peshwa and the Gaekwad of Baroda shared the revenue of Gujarat between them. Later, the Gaekwad became an independent ruler with his capital at Baroda and territories spread over central Gujarat and Saurashtra. Most of the princely kingdoms accepted the supremacy of Maratha rulers and also seen constant internal and external squabbles of Maratha rule.

The British established their paramount power in Gujarat in 1820 after the Treaty of Bassein with the Peshwa in 1802 and with treaties with the Peshwa and Gaekwad in 1817-18. The British carved out four 'districts'—Surat, Bharuch, Kheda and Ahmdeabad—out of 'khalsa' (conquered) territory and allowed the remaining areas to be ruled by princely states under the close supervision of English Residents. Throughout their rule of 150 years or so, first as Company Bahadur and then as British Raj, barely one-seventh of the combined area of Gujarat, including Saurashtra

and Kutch, was under the direct rule of the British. Thus, the ancient Gujarat saw the reign of various kingdoms like Mauryas, Guptas, Maitrak, Chalukyas (Solankis) etc. Similarly, it had experienced rule of Mahmud of Ghazni, Muslims, Marathas and the British rules (ibid).

The Post-Independent period has seen different socio-political development in the Gujarat. After the reorganization of the Saurashtra and Kutch states in 1948 and making these two states part of the larger bilingual state of Bombay. There was a strong movement for a separate Mahagujarat state comprising of Gujarati-speaking areas. It was a popular movement centred on a linguistic assertion for a separate state. The present state of Gujarat was formed on 1st May 1960, as a result of Bombay Reorganization Act, 1960. The state has witnessed all round progress in every field. It has been recognized as one of the leading industrialized states in the country.

Geographical Characteristics

Location: The Gujarat state is situated on the west coast of India. It is connected by the longest coastline about 1600 kms of Arabian Sea in the west, the state of Maharashtra in the South and South-East, Madhya Pradesh in the East and Rajasthan in the North and North-East. At the North-West side, Gujarat has an international border with Pakistan. Gujarat geographically subdivided into six regions: Kutch, Saurashtra, North, Central and South Gujarat and the Eastern Hills Region. The Central Gujarat plains run in north-south direction and cover large parts of North, Central and South Gujarat. The Eastern Hills which rise up to 1000 meters above sea

level are the westernmost fringes on the Central Indian Plateau. This hilly and partly forested area is predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes.

Kutch region is virtually cut off from the rest of Gujarat due to vast salty plains of the Great Rann (Great Desert) in the North and the little Rann of Kutch to the West. In the monsoon, the barren plains are regularly flooded and there is connectivity to the mainland Gujarat. The Central parts of Saurashtra are hilly and 300 metres above the sea level. The irregular rainfalls and poor soils make agriculture difficult in this region. The British Rule never directly governed this peninsula due to its remote location. There were many small princely states ruled by local Rajput leaders or 'Darbars' (Warrior-varna) in the peninsula until India's independence in 1947. The Gujarat State has total 1.96 lakh sq.kms of geographical area, the 6.19 per cent of the total area of the country. For the administration purpose, it comprises of 25 districts, sub-divided into 226 talukas, having 18618 villages and 242 towns.

Rivers: Many of the rivers of the state originate in the adjoining state of Gujarat. The Sabarmati river rises from the Dhebar lake in Rajasthan and flows through Gujarat into the gulf of Cambay of Arabian sea. The biggest city of Ahmedabad is situated at the banks of Sabarmati River. The Mahi and the Narmada rivers originate in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The Mahi has several tributaries in Gujarat like the Bhadar, Anas, Panam and Meshro. The Narmada, one of the biggest rivers of the country, has only one tributary, the Karjan in the state.

In the southern part of the Gujarat state, the Tapi has its origin in the Satpura hills near Betwa in Madhya Pradesh. The ancient city of Surat is situated on the banks of

Tapi and it was a major port of India during the Mughal period, which attracted the Portuguese, Dutch and the English for the purpose of trade and commerce.

In the Saurashtra and Kutch region the rivers are mostly small and dry. The Machchu, Brahmani, Ali, Hirni, Kapila, Ojhat, Kamb, Surekh, etc. originate in Chotilla range, Girnar forest and Gir forest respectively. The rivers of Saurashtra and Kutch either disappear into the desert or fall into the sea.

Actual Forest Area: The state is rich in flora and fauna. Although the state has a problem of scarcity of water there is a large variety of forest produce and fruits in different parts. Honey, wax and bamboo are produced in fair quantities in different forests and medicinal herbs and fruits like jamun and guava are produced in plenty. The forests also yield considerable quantities of teak and good quality of wood. The social forestry policy followed by the state for years helps in bringing larger areas under forests in a state where the forest cover is insufficient.

Demographic Characteristics

Population (General): Gujarat stands at 10th rank among the States of India in respect of population in India and the state accounts 6.19 per cent of the total area of India. The total population of Gujarat according to 2001 census is 50,671,017 persons comprising of 26,385,577 males and 24,285,440 females. Rural population of the state is 31,740,767 (16,317,771 males and 15,422,996 females) and Urban population is 18,930,250 persons (10,067,806 males and 8,862,444 females) situated in the total area of 196,000 square kilometers of the state.

Population Density: The density of population of the state is 258 in per square kilometers in 2001. Gujarat ranks at 21st in India in population density. In 1991 Census state's density was 211 persons Sq. Km of area. The population density percentage has increase during 1991-2001. Ahmedabad has highest density of 718 persons per Sq. Km., Surat follows with 653 persons. 151 persons per Sq.Km have been added to the Ahmedabad district, where Surat has added 209 persons per Sq. Km during the period 1991-2001(COI, 2001).

Sex Ratio: The sex ratio has always been a cause of concern in the state. The sex ratio in the state has continuously declined from 942 in 1981 to 934 in 1991 and 921 in 2001. It is worth noting that all the major states (except Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana) and India as a whole have experienced an increase in the sex ratio during 1991-2001 (Hirway, 2001). The sex ratio of total Scheduled Castes (SCs) population in the state is 925 in 2001, which is below national average (936) for all SCs. The child sex ratio (0-6 age group) for SCs in the state is, however, alarmingly low i.e. 885.

Population (SCs/ STs): The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of the Gujarat as per 2001 Census is 3592715 persons (18666283 males and 1726432 females) and 7481160 persons (3790117 males and 3691043 females) respectively. Rural population of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of Gujarat as per 2001 Census is 2180441 persons (1127423 males and 1053018 females) and 6866637 persons (3471002 males and 3395635 females) respectively. Urban population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of Gujarat as per

2001 census is 1412274 persons (738860 males and 673414 females) and 614523 persons (319115 males and 295408 females) respectively.

Economic Characteristics

Poverty: Gujarat's state per capita income is above the national average. The growth rate of Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) of the state has rose to 6.6 per cent in the 1991-2001. The entire period from 1970-71 to 2000-01 has shown a growth rate of 5.3 per cent. The state's total income was Rs. 13,87,649 lakh in 1970-71 and has increased to Rs. 63,12,932 lakh in 2000-01. (Bagchi, et.al.,2005). The figure shows, the Gujarat state has high per capita income, high labour productivity and high growth rate in the country.

However, irrespective of high per capita income and growth rate in the state the incidences of poverty remains in both rural and urban areas. Kashyap and Mehta write, 'The high rate of growth of the Gujarat economy did not percolate down to the weaker sections to reduce the incidence of poverty. Poverty in the state is unevenly distributed amongst regions and various social groups too. A typical poor household is the one at the lower end of the caste hierarchy, subjected to social exclusion or a tribal family residing in a backward or remote region. It is a reflection of the poor endowment of the productive assets, but also of lower educational standards or little access to any kind of regular employment. A gap in the proportion living in poverty of 19.8% exists between STs and non scheduled households and that of 7.9% between SCs and non scheduled households in rural areas of Gujarat' (Kashyap and Mehta, 2007).

Employment: The Gujarat has been enjoying a comfortable position regarding employment in India. The overall employment scene in Gujarat is better due to the fact that the Gujarat has not experienced any decline in the level of employment in the recent decades. Similarly, the workforce participation rates (WFPRs) in Gujarat has shown a marginal increase and the rates of unemployment including the daily status unemployment rates are much lower for males and females both in rural as well as urban areas. The census data during 1981-2001 shows that the female participation rates rose in all categories of work (rural, urban, main and marginal) and the employment opportunities have been increased in Non-agricultural sector and less in the agricultural sector in Gujarat. However, According to 2001 census, the total workers 79.7 per cent have been recorded as main workers and 20.3 per cent as marginal workers. The percentage of Scheduled Castes workers to total population workforce participation rate is 39.6 per cent, which is slightly lower than the aggregated figure for all SCs at the national level (40.4%). Out of total main workers among SCs, 32.1 per cent have been recorded as agricultural labourers and only 10.8 per cent as cultivators. The female SCs workforce participation rate is only 27 per cent, which is lower than their male counterparts (51.3%). Kashyap and Mehta writes, “A larger share of households are engaged in agriculture labour and other manual jobs amongst the SCs and STs. “Others” category are the main land owning groups. Clearly, SCs is the only category in Gujarat which is worse off than the tribal sections as far as economic status is concerned. In urban Gujarat too the occurrence of self employment is much less amongst these groups, are largely engaged in casual labour” (Kashyap and Mehta, 2007:13).

Agriculture: Gujarat is one of the leading producers of groundnut, oil seeds, castor oil, tobacco, cotton and sugar cane in India. The total agricultural share of Gujarat is 4.6 per cent and it ranks ninth in the agricultural production at the all India level. The agriculture in Gujarat is highly commercialized and more than 45 per cent of the gross cropped area of the state is under cash crops. However, the high level of commercialization of agriculture in Gujarat is unstable and fluctuating in nature. This is largely due to the low level of irrigation, variations in rainfall, heterogeneity in agro-climatic conditions, semi-arid land and large proportion of drought-prone areas in the state (Hirway, 1995; Bagchi, et.al., 2005). Similarly, the highly commercialized and capitalistic growth pattern of agriculture of Gujarat is mainly responsible for unequal landholding among social groups and social inequity in Gujarati society. In this regards Thorat and Mahamallik write, "In 1999-2000, the proportion of cultivators among the SCs was the lowest (8.3 percent) in comparison to the STs (31.2 percent), the OBCs (30 per cent), and the Non SC/STs (46.7 percent) indicating the alienation of the SCs from land rights in Gujarat. The figures for self-employed in non-agriculture were, more or less, the same for the SCs (12.4 percent), the OBCs (13.2 percent), and the Non SC/STs (11 percent). However, only 3.2 percent of the STs were found to be self-employed in the non-agricultural sector. The situation was sort of reversed with respect to the agricultural rural labourers for the Non SC/STs. The percentage of agricultural rural labourers among the SCs was as high as 57.8 percent, followed by 44.7 percent among the STs, 34.8 percent among the OBCs, and 20 percent among the Non SC/STs. This indicates that the SCs access to agricultural land, which remains a major source of income in the rural areas, was extremely low

in comparison to other social groups. The lack of access to property rights in terms of landholdings compels the SCs to work as wage labourers in agriculture for subsistence. Even though, the participation of the SCs (12.4 percent) in the non-farm sector was identical to that of the Non SC/STs (13.2 percent), but despite that it was not enough to outweigh the negative effects of lack of access to agricultural land” (Thorat and Mahamallik, 2006:12).

Industry: Gujarat is one of the most industrialized states in India. It contributes more than 13 per cent of national industrial production. As far as the state economy is concerned, manufacturing sector contributes 32.6 per cent of the state income and employs about 16 per cent of the workforce in the increasingly diversified units such as mining and quarrying, manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs (household industry and other than household industry) and constructions (Hirway and Mahadevia, 2004). During the period 1980-81 to 1999-2000 the state has witnessed rising trend in the shares of some of the important indicators such as number of factories, number of employees, net value added, productive capital and value of output to their all-India values. More importantly, the capital-intensive nature of growth in the factory sector has been even more pronounced in Gujarat than in the rest of India (Bagchi, et.al., 2005).

In 1999-2000, it was found that the representation of social group also increased in the industrial sector. The participation of Non SC/STs (41.2 per cent), followed by the SCs (38.6 per cent), the STs (33.2 per cent) and the OBCs (27.1) were engaged in wage/salaried activities of industrial/manufacturing sector.

Education: The literacy rate of Gujarat state is better than all India level. After the independence total literacy rate in the state has increased from 21.82% to 69.97% during 1951-2001, which is higher than the all India average for all the censuses. Male literacy has increased from 30.32 to 80.50 per cent during 1951-2001. Female literacy is less than the males but improved over the period of time and reported 58.60 per cent in 2001.

The Sixth All India Education Survey (1998) by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) shows that 76 per cent of children of primary schools in Gujarat against only 64 per cent in India. The Net enrolment rates in Gujarat for boys and girls were 81 per cent and 71 per cent respectively whereas the corresponding rates were 71 per cent and 57 per cent in India. Net enrolment in elementary education was also 69 per cent in Gujarat compared to 58 per cent in India (Hirway and Mahadevia, 2004:155).

The education and literacy status of Scheduled Castes in Gujarat looks better than the all Indian level. According to 2001 Census, in Gujarat 70.5 per cent of the SC population is literate. This is higher than the aggregated national figure for SCs (54.7%). The gender gap in literacy among SCs is conspicuous with male and female literacy of 82.6 and 57.6 per cent respectively. According to 2001 Census, 74.8% SCs in the age group 5-14 years have been recorded as to be attending school or any other educational institutions. However, in terms of achievement in level of education, only 4.2 per cent of the SC literates in Gujarat have recorded educational level 'graduation' and above.

Health Status and Services: Gujarat's performance is better than all India aggregate with regard to all vital health statistics. The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) is 25.2 in Gujarat against 25.8 in India (2000), Crude Death Rate (CDR) is 7.5 against 8.5 in India, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is 62 against 68 in India, and the Child Mortality Rate (CMR) is 85.1 as against 94.9 in India (Hirway and Mahadevia, 2004). Similarly, the total hospitals are 4.34 against 1.32 in India, the total dispensaries are 15.22 against 3.25 in India, the Primary Health Centre's (PHCs) are 3.24 against 3.55, Sub-Centre's are 26.41 against 20.90 in India, the total Doctors are 52.98 against 47.19 and the total Nurses are 59.00 against 36.88 in India (Duggal et al, 1995).

The relatively better status of health and health facilities in the state is due to the good public expenditure. The private, voluntary sector, NGOs and charity institutions are also playing an important role and contributing to the health sphere of the state. However, the major health facilities are predominately located in urban areas. In the rural areas health care services provided through a chain of community health centres (CHCs), primary health centres (PHCs), and sub-centres (SCs).

In spite of good public expenditure and health facilities in the state, malnutrition is high among children. It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of children under age 5 are either moderately or severely malnourished. The severe malnourishment higher among the girls than boys (GOG, 1994). During the period 1999-2000 the infant mortality rates (IMRs) among the SCs were higher (80 per thousand live births) in comparison to the Non SC/STs (61 per thousand live births). The 21.6 per cent of women and 54.9 per cent of children among STs were suffering from anemia.

Similarly, 15.4 and 49 per cent of the SC women and children, and 15.7 and 49 per cent of the Non SC/STs women and children were suffering from anemia respectively (Thorat and Mahamallik, 2006). The disparity in the public hospitals and use of medical assistance at birth is an important phenomenon of health sector of Gujarat. Thorat and Mahamallik write “the Non SC/ST women having more access to institutional facilities for childbirth in comparison to SC/ST women” (Thorat and Mahamallik, 2006:8-9). The environmental health is an emerging area of health concern in Gujarat due to high level of industrialization and environment pollution.

Socio-Political Situation and Emergence of Civil Society in the Gujarat

In this section the efforts have been made to understand the socio-political situation and historical origin of civil society in the state of Gujarat. The purpose behind this exercise is to understand and examine the factors and nature of civil society that emerged in the pre and post independent period of Gujarat.

Pre Independence Period

The long spell of British rule contributed mainly to the development of trade, commerce, administration, judiciary, education and overall political situation of Gujarat. The British modern education and social reformist oriented British officer's efforts mainly responsible for the educational progress as well as socio-political consciousness of Gujarati society. The Governor of Bombay Presidency, Mountstuart Elphinstone formed ‘**Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor**’ in 1820, and ‘**Bombay Native School Book and School Society**’ in 1823 for the

educational development of Gujarat. These organizations were engaged in the educational promotion and opened primary schools in the different areas of Gujarat and prepared textbooks in Gujarati and Marathi languages. The educated sections of Gujarati used to join these schools and teach subjects according to the modern understanding. They were challenging Brahmanic rituals and practices. The educated sections of this period also started voluntary organization and used to discuss social, religious and cultural issues in their weekly meetings and vigorously propagated the idea of unity and equality of all human beings. The '**Manav Dharmasabha**' was one such organization formed by educated sections in 1844 for the purpose of social reform activities in Gujarat. In 1848, the '**Students Literary and Scientific Society**' another organization formed by educated sections, prominent among them was Dadabhai Naoroji with the aim of social reform and spread of knowledge and awareness among common people. The small branches of **Gnan Prasarak Mandali** (Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge) were formed to spread awareness and knowledge among common people in Marathi and Gujarati languages. There were different activities conducted by society for the dissemination of the knowledge and education such as publication of Gujarati and Marathi periodicals, opened schools for girls, etc. Similarly, the members of the society worked for the socio-religious reform of the Gujarati Society. They worked for the spread of new education and technology, and changes in the age-old socio-religious practices such as dowry and widow remarriage in the society (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005).

Similarly, many of the reform oriented British officers as well as native educated sections had initiated organizational efforts for the educational development and

spread of knowledge in Gujarati society. The important among them was Alexander Forbes, who established the **Gujarat Vernacular Society** in 1848, an association for the 'promotion of Gujarati language and literature, spread of useful knowledge and education in the Gujarat. The various activities conducted by the GVS such as publication of newspaper and weekly in Gujarati, establishing library and primary schools for the girls. The Bholanath Sarabhai native officer of British judiciary had formed the **Dharma Sabha** and later the **Prarthana Samaj** to challenge the religious orthodoxy of Hindu religion and advancement of women's education in Gujarat. Similarly, the **Bombay Association** was established in 1852 in Bombay by the English educated individuals as a forum to bring social and political matters to the notice of the British government. The idea of first and second Swadeshi Movement in Gujarat had emerged due to political consciousness and efforts of the English educated Indian community.

The patriotic sentiments and articulation against British Raj also contributed to the emergence of civil society in Gujarat. The idea of First Swadeshi Movement came into existence in Gujarat due to the writings of Gopal Hari Deshmukh, a native of Poona and member of the British Judicial service, who was transferred to Ahmedabad in the 1870s as a judge of the small cause court. He became secretary of the '**Gujarat Vernacular Society**' and started articulating about the concept of Swadeshi through the writings. Inspired by his writings, the others also wrote in the journals and newspapers viz., *Swaashvatsal*, *Deshi Mitra*, *Gujarat Mitra* etc. about Swadeshi and urgent need for economic self-reliance. Similarly, the different organizations such as **Swadeshi Hitvardhak Samaj**, **Swadeshi Udyam Vardhak Mandali** (Organization

for the Promotion of Indigenous Industry) were formed to encourage and promote local craft and industry. These organizations were strong supporter and promoter of natives self-created and self-generated machine, goods and less dependent on foreign machine as well as goods. During the same time, the local technical educational institutions set up in Baroda as **Kala Bhavan** in 1890. Kala Bhavan's focus was mainly twofold. One, to create a trained technical cadre which would manage existing industries and support the introduction of new industries, and the other was to serve as a route for the uplift of artisans and weaker sections displaced from their traditional occupations by new technology. The different technical subjects were taught in this Kala Bhavan and teachers from German universities and experts from the German chemical industry joined the department of chemical technology at Kala bhavan (ibid).

The nineteenth century has seen different crisis in Gujarat. First, the Bubonic Plague (1896-1930) which claimed sixty lakh lives and later devastating famine (1956) followed by epidemic of cholera and influenza claimed millions of life in Gujarat. The British government failed to handle situation both during Plague epidemic and Famine and there were rare helping hand from the wealthy mill owners of Gujarat. In such a situation, **Christian Missionaries** of many denominations ran comprehensive relief programmes, which included food-for-work projects, selling of grain at pre-famine prices and distributing free cooked food, clothing, medicines, etc. They started orphanages in the different parts of Gujarat and it is estimated that about 16,000 orphans, mostly of the lower castes, were given shelter. Consequently, mainly among the lower castes converted into the religion (Christianity) of their saviours. The

largest number of conversions took place in central Gujarat and these converts are derisively referred as Chhapaniya Christians means 1956 converted Christians. The work of Christian Missionaries during plague and famine and mass conversion to Christianity brought the **Arya Samaj** back to Gujarat in 1875. One year later, to promote modern English education among Muslim and overall betterment of Muslim communities, the Badruddin Tyabji founded the **Anjuman-i-islam** in 1876 in the Gujarat.

The unpleasant experiences of British Government during the natural disaster, licensed levied by British Government for famine relief and Swadeshi movement also brought about change in the political mood of the Gujarat state. The **Gujarat Sabha** was formed in Ahmedabad in 1884 to represent and address the issues of people to the government. This organization was formed by the lawyers and English educated sections, whose main activity was to advocate the cause of the people and write petition related to municipal matters to the government. Later, in 1885 the **Indian National Congress** was formed in Ahmedabad.

During the same period, other community-based organizations also emerged to address the issues of respective community. In 1895 the Jain textile mill owners established an association called the '**Shravak Sangh**' for the unity and educational development of Jain community. Similarly, the Jain Svetambar Sect formed **Jain Svetamber Conference** in the Ahmedabad to address the issues of female education, child marriage, vocational and technical education for their community. The Vaishnav mill owners of Ahmedabad followed the Jain and formed **Gujarat Vaishya**

Sabha in 1903 to increase the educational level of the Vaishnav community and address the issues of caste restrictions on foreign travel.

The contribution of **Sayajirao Gaekwad (1863-1939)** is an unique to the social reform activities and civil society of Gujarat. He launched a radical set of social reform programme by enacting legislation to allow Hindu widows to remarry in 1902, passed the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, 1904, Local Self-Government Act, provided free and compulsory schooling for all citizens irrespective of sex, caste and religion. He opened schools for untouchable children's and employed Arya Samaji teachers to teach 'untouchable' children, as upper-caste Gujaratis were reluctant to teach children from these communities. Similarly, In 1907 Sayajirao opened two hostels for 'untouchable' students, set up scholarships for them to study in India and abroad and launched library movement throughout the state.

It is worth mentioning here that the conscious and educated dalit also contributed to the civil society of Gujarat. The young Dalit artist, Makanji Kuber Makwana, wrote 'Mayavat Rajput Prakash' in 1908 and asserted the identity of dalits in the pre-independent Gujarat. He argued that Dhed or Vankars (weaver caste, considered untouchable in Gujarat) were originally Rajputs and so began a movement for raising the social status and identity of the caste. Under his leadership a **Panch Sudharak Committee** was formed in 1907-08 to frame the rules for the Mahyavanshi caste and later he helped various caste councils of vankars in various parts of Gujarat and in South Africa and United Kingdom to frame their rules and regulations. The movement for claiming Kshatriya status was continued even after his death in 1924

and eventually resulted the British government had withdrawn pejorative term 'Dhed' and its replacement by Mahyavanshi for his community(ibid).

Although above initiatives of dalits assertion for self-identity is significant. But, the dalits and dalit movement of Gujarat in real sense inspired and influenced by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's work and ideology after 1920. When Dr. B. R. Ambedkar founded the **Bahishkrut Hitkarni Sabha** in 1924 in Bombay, Gujarati dalits Dr. P.G. Solanki and Govindji Parmar were members of the managing committee able to influence a few Gujarati dalits through the Ambedkarite ideology. However, the real Ambedkariate impact witnessed in Gujarat only on the arrival of Dr. Ambedkar in Ahmedabad on 28 June 1931 on an invitation from **Dariyapur Navayuvak Mandal**. His public speech in Ahmedabad inspired many dalits of Gujarat to assert against the caste discriminations and injustices. Consequently, the state subject of **Gujarat Scheduled Castes Federation** was founded in Ahmedabad in 1942. There were different agitations such as Enter Temples, Enter Hotels, Enter Buses etc. led by dalits of Gujarat under the banner of the Gujarat Scheduled Castes Federation. The various weekly, fortnightly, monthly, newsletter and journals came into existence such as Navyuvak, Bherubandh, Dalit-Gujarat, Challenge, Jai Bhim, Samanta, Inquilab, Tankar, Tamanna, Jyoti, Mukti-sangram, Garud, Panther, Dalit, Dalit Mitra, Disha, Samaj Mitra, Chandarvo, Bahujano nu Bahujan Bharat, Avsar, Dalit-Bandhu, Sarvanam, Swaman, Ajampo, Muktinayak, Pragatijyot, Tara, Akshaya, Parishad Sandesh, Lagaam and Dalit Mukti etc. Similarly, the dalit literature and new forms of Dalit activism got impetus, which were responsible for post independent dalit

agitations/assertion in the state. However, the dalit movement unlike neighbouring state Maharashtra never emerged in Gujarat due to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi.

The contribution of Mahatma Gandhi is an important for shaping of modern Gujarat and emergence of civil society organization. After he gave call for non-cooperation the **Gujarat Vidyapith** and **Mahavidyalaya** were set up in Guajrat in 1920. The Gandhi had established Ashrams and initiated several satyagrahas/movements in the Gujarat and all over India. These ashram and Vidyapith, helped Gandhi to create mass movement for India's Freedom and later drew diverse group into his fold. The contribution of Gandhi and Gandhian Ashram is significant for the social reform of the Gujarat. The **Vedchchi Ashram** of South Gujarat established residential school for the tribal boys and girls, carried anti-alcohol campaign and anti-toddy campaign etc. The **Jyoti Sangh** (the first autonomous women's organization in Gujarat) in Ahmedabad came into existence due to the influence of Gandhi. To highlight and solve the textile mill workers problem the Gandhian trade union **Majoor Mahajan Sangha** was formed which dominated labour politics for decades and even after Independence. To remove untouchability from Hindu society, Gandhi dismantled the ashram in 1933 and renamed it **Harijan Ashram** and founded the **Harijan Sevak Sangh** for the welfare of dalit communities.

Mahatma Gandhi's entry into political scene in India also helped many ways to the emergence of voluntary organization in Gujarat. Gandhi gave a call to the youth to take up rural reconstruction. Responding to Gandhi's call many of the youth plunged into the rural reconstruction work through the voluntary action and organization.

They implemented various activities related to basic education, khadi and village industries, women's education, mitigation of untouchability etc. Iyengar writes, "Gujarat benefited the most from the Gandhian approach to development. Between 1925 and 1927, a large number of young persons came under his spell, spread themselves in different interior parts of Gujarat and initiated social reconstruction. As a result, even now there are a substantial number of active NGOs that had began their activities under the influence of Gandhian thought"(Iyengar, 2000:3230). Further, the establishment of Harijan Sevak Sangh and Gandhian Reform Movement helped for emergence of large number of voluntary organizations and NGOs in the different parts of the Gujarat.

Thus, in the pre-independent period, British modern education has created conscious educated section in the Gujarat, who had questioned traditional values and socio-cultural practices. They mobilized like-minded people and led social reform activities through the organizational efforts and contributed for the civil society of Gujarat. The contribution of Gandhi is an outstanding in this regard due to his charismatic leadership, mass movements and constructive programme directed towards welfare of dalits, tribals and women in the Gujarat. The next section will highlights the socio-political situation and emergence of civil society in the post independent Gujarat.

Post Independence Period

The Post-Independent period has witnessed to unique socio-political development and emergence of civil society in the Gujarat. After the reorganization of the Saurashtra and Kutch states in 1948 and making these two states part of the larger bilingual state

of Bombay. There was a strong movement for a separate Mahagujarat state comprising of Gujarati-speaking areas. It was a popular movement based on a linguistic assertion for a separate state where the lead was taken by students and prominent citizens, who were active in the social and cultural sphere of the Gujarat. After a prolonged struggle, and active involvement of civil society a separate state of Gujarat came into existence on 1 May 1960 and it included mainland Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch.

The Independent Gujarat continued its progress at the economic front but the state polity was remained unstable for almost three decades. It is on the record that the Gujarat state had seen seventeen ministries and four spells of President's rule in the period between 1960 and 1995. Except Madhavsinh Solanki (Congress) and Narendra Modi (BJP) no other Chief Minister could able to complete the full term of five years in the state. The Six were chief minister for less than a year. Apart from political instability, the Gujarat state also experienced upheaval within Gujarati society due to rapid urbanization, industrialization and increasing social consciousness and competition among various castes and communities for the meaningful identities, better social status, opportunities and greater share in the political power of the state. This socio-political situation of the state further paved the way for the rise of civil society in the state.

The post independent Gujarat has seen different collective agitations and mobilization. The **Navnirman Movement** of 1974 was one such agitation of students and upper caste middle class against the Congress government on the issue of price

rise of essential commodities. The large number of protest originated in college campuses and middle class colonies of Gujarat. The local students formed **Navnirman Committees** in every city and town to mobilize people for the movement. This popular agitation although was short lived but created unrest in the Gujarat and forced congress government to resign. When in 1975 the internal emergency was declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi's government in the country. This move was regarded as highly autocratic and fascist by civil society organizations. The civil liberty groups and NGOs leaders and activists, led dissent movement all over the country, many of them were arrested and jailed by the police under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). In Gujarat, the Sarvodaya or Gandhian NGOs had supported the dissent movement during emergency and subsequently lent support to the Janata Party government at the centre as well as in Gujarat. When the Janata Party formed the government in Gujarat in 1977, the NGOs establish rapport with the government and flourished under the state support. In 1980, when Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced in the state and later the Centre for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was set up to effectively channel rural development funds to NGOs all over the country. Gujarat took good advantage of this opportunity and large number of NGOs emerged to act as service delivery organization to the government and addressed the various welfare and development related issues of the people.

After 1970 the number and types of NGOs have increased in Gujarat. The studies reveal that different types of NGOs came into existence such as techno managerial, reformist, radical, welfare-oriented, development oriented, empowering

organizations, Gandhian organization, Delivery organisations, professional organizations, mobilization organization etc.,(Shah and Chaturvedi ,1983; Hirvay, 1995; Iyengar, 1998). The post 1970 period also witnessed to increase in village level small micro action group to big foreign funded NGOs in the Gujarat (Bhatt, 1989).

The early 1980s and later, the important development took place in the NGO sector of Gujarat. The internal emergency of 1974 made NGOs realized about the strength of unity and cooperation, networking, lobbying, create pressure over development related issues and conflict etc. This period saw emergence of various networking NGOs such as Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD), Gujarat Rajya Gram Vikas Sangh (GRGVS), GUJARAT LOKAYAN, SETU, JANPATH, Gujarat Voluntary Health Association (GVHA), SAKSHAM, VIKSAT, PRAVAH, JANVIKAS, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Samvad, VIKAS, Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG), Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), etc. These different Network NGOs highlighted issues of women, children, education, health, housing, slum improvement, drinking water, minimum wages for rural labour, unorganized labour, natural disasters, human rights violation, rural development, marginalized communities etc. To address these issues, the Network NGOs performs various roles and activities such as direct action, support to partner NGOs, training, capacity building, networking, lobbying, public advocacy, awareness generation through mass media, mass mobilization, organizing protest movement, pressurizing the government for policy formulation and reform etc., to promote social equity and justice in the society.

However, Joshi (2000) observes the emergence and growth of NGO Sector in Gujarat is highly influenced by the socio-cultural and regional factors. The central belt of Gujarat economically prosperous region has large number of NGOs. 'Almost all of them are development oriented NGOs. The specific term used for them is 'rachnatmak' (constructive) institutions' (Joshi, 2000:3167). In the Saurashtra and Katchch, the semi-feudal culture not only subjugating individual liberty but also creating hindrances for developmental activities and genuine organizations. All the well known NGOs of Saurashtra and Kachchh are charity organizations. Most of them have a religious base and believe that poor, downtrodden and marginalized people need charity in form of food (sadavrat), work (lowly paid works to sustain life), health services etc. The local word used for such NGOs are 'dharmada sanstha'(charity institutions). The tribal belt of Gujarat is exploited by the non-tribals and development models of the state. The infrastructure and industry in this region are fully in the hands of non-tribals, resulting patron-client relationship between non-tribals and tribals. The positive thing in this region is good number of NGOs and majority of them are called as 'Gandhian NGOs' (Joshi, 2000:3167-69).

After 1985 the Gujarat has witnessed to a rise of Hindutva ideology and series of BJP 'yatra's (rally) and communal violence in the state. The 2002 communal carnage was one of the most horrific incidents of Gujarat, which continued for three months and killed about 2000 people and 1.4 lakh people took shelter in the relief camps organized by the NGOs. Yagnik and Sheth write, "The most barbaric scenes were played out in Industrial Ahmedabad. On the afternoon of 28 February, forty-three people, including Ahsan Jafri, a former Congress MP of Ahmedabad, were burnt

alive in Gulmarg Society in the Chamanpura-Asarwa of north-east Ahmedabad. For four hours they had frantically tried to contact the police, senior bureaucrats and associates in Delhi, but the mob of over 10,000, most of them from the neighbourhood, finally set the colony on fire. That evening, in the slums of nearby Naroda area, eighty-four people were burnt alive by a 15,000-strong mob. According to those who survived, this mob consisted of people from 'outside'. As in the rest of Ahmedabad, in the industrial areas too, Muslim shops and homes were systematically wiped out" (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005:279).

The incidents of communal violence attracted national and international attention. The National Human Rights Commission of India took a serious note of the incident for further judicial inquiry and punished the perpetrators. In response to humanitarian crisis of such proportions, members of civil society, including NGOs, Human rights groups and Social organizations had taken initiatives and played pro-active role by organizing relief camps for riots victims and compiled citizens' reports on the extent of violence and brutality. In fact, the major relief and rehabilitation work carried out by different coalitions of NGOs such as Citizen's Initiative (CI), Action Aid (AA), and Aman Samudaya(AS) etc. in Gujarat. Their key areas of intervention were-- upholding the fundamental rights of the citizens, fighting against all types of violations of human rights, shelter rehabilitation and habitat security, livelihood restoration and promotion, reducing mental trauma, promoting children's education, reducing the vulnerability of women, addressing the special needs of vulnerable families, providing legal aid and services to the affected people, promoting communal harmony, etc. Thus, it is apparent from above description that the post-independent

Gujarat has experienced new forms of civil society due to the peculiar socio-political situation of the state. In the post-independent Gujarat, the NGOs emerged as distinct force, which played pro-active role compare to other constituent of civil society such as social movement and media. These NGOs of Gujarat are large in numbers with varied nature, type, activities and target groups. It is in real sense; NGOs represent the ‘New Social Movements’ in the state.

In nutshell, the present chapter has highlighted the various crucial aspects such as historical background, geographical characteristics, economic characteristics, socio-political situation and emergence of civil society in the pre and post independent Gujarat. The information in the chapter has also presented the paradoxical picture of human development, social disparity and emergence of large scale NGOs in the state. In the next chapter efforts have been made to understand the profile of selected NGOs involved in the dalit empowerment process in Gujarat.

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