UNIT 6 SITANSHU YASHASHCHANDRA: ORPHEUS
TRANSLATION: THE POET
NAMDEO DHASAL: A NOTEBOOK OF
POEMS AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY
TRANSLATION: SANTOSH BHOOOMKAR

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit is meant to introduce you to modern Gujarati and Marathi poetry through a close reading of three poems. The poems are Yashashchandra’s Gujarati poem Orpheus and Namdev Dhasal’s Marathi poems A Notebook of Poems and Autobiography. The overall objective is to place the selected poems in the context of Gujarati and Marathi poetry and also in the context of modern Indian poetry as a whole.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The first half of the unit deals with Gujarati poetry. We begin with giving you a brief account of the history of Gujarati poetry and then go straight to Sitanshu Yashashchandra and his poem Orpheus where he makes use of the Greek myth of Orpheus to depict man’s predicament in the modern world. Sitanshu has often used Indian and Greek mythological characters like the Greek prince-warrior Odysseus, the mythic king of vultures, Jatayu and the tribal woman Shabari in such a way that the new narration could present human condition in modern times as he has done in Orpheus.
The second half of the unit gives you a preamble of the tradition of Marathi poetry followed by a brief write-up on the development of modern Marathi poetry. Since Namdev Dhasal is a dalit poet, we shall also get acquainted with the factors responsible for the emergence, progress and stages in the development of dalit poetry as well. All this will, we are sure, help you to understand and enjoy Namdev Dhasal’s two poems that you are to study.

We hope that this discussion of three poems will whet your appetite for more Gujarati and Marathi poems.

6.2 A HISTORY OF GUJARATI POETRY

The history of Gujarati poetry can be traced back to 11th-12th century A.D. to the works of Hemachandrasuri (1088-1172) who used the form of verse to illustrate grammatical rules in his treatise Siddha Hema Shabdamahasana. The verses quoted by him as examples had mythological and didactic themes and were written in Prachin Apabhramsha, the language of the people of Gujarat and Rajasthan region. Literature written in Old or Prachin Gujarati till mid 15th century comprised forms like fagu, rasa, prabandha etc. was also in verse. Most of the literature in this period was written by Jain monks depicting virtues of their religious leaders and tenets of Jainism. They were well preserved in Jain temples and that is how most of them are available till date. Non-Jain poets had also written on various non-sectarian themes, but not much has survived.

The period from 1450 to 1850 was known as the Medieval period, also as the Bhakti Period practically in all bhasha literature across the country. Gujarat had two eminent saint poets in Narasimha Mehta (1414-1480) and Mirabai (1498-1547). They expressed their devotion to Lord Krishna through songs. Narasimha Mehta’s song ‘Vaishnava Jana to Tene Kahiye Je Peed Parayi Jane re’... was a favourite one of Mahatma Gandhi and has been sung by many eminent singers including M.S.Subbulakshmi. Akho, Premand, Samal Bhatt and Dayaram also wrote lyrics and ballads.

Dalapatram (1820-1898) and Narmad (1833-1886) depicted worldly wisdom and new awakening through their poetry. Around the same time began an era of scholarly writing, known as the Pandit Yug. Manilal Nabhubhai (1858-1898), Manishankar Ratnaji Bhatt, better known as ‘Kavi Kant’ (1867-1923), and Balvantrai Thakore (1869-1952) were scholars of Sanskrit and philosophy, and this got reflected in all that they wrote. Sursinhji Takhatshinhji Gohel, popularly known as ‘Kalapi’ (1874-1900) and Nhanalal Kavi (1877-1946) wrote romantic lyrics.

A great transformation took place in Gujarati literature with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi. Poets began to write on nationalistic and socio-political themes. The Gandhian era brought in patriotism and Gujarati language underwent a drastic change. Simplicity and communicability were preferred to artistry in language and content. Some of the poems of Jhaverchand Meghani (1896-1947) were directly addressed to Mahatma Gandhi and those who fought against the British rule.

Uma Shankar Joshi (1911-1988) and Niranjan Bhagat (1926 — ) had paved the ground for the ‘modern’ era of Gujarati poetry in the 1950s. Uma Shankar’s
Chhinnavhina chhun — ‘Fragmented’ and Bhagat’s Pravadaiveep — ‘The Coral Island’ are cases in point. The opening lines of the poem ‘Fragmented’, translated into English by the poet himself, are as follows:

I am fragmented, fallen apart,
Like rhythm striving to throb in a poem without metre,
Like a pattern trying to emerge upon man’s life canvas,
Like bread crumbs in several homes, not yet placed in a beggar’s bowl.

It is generally accepted that the ‘contemporary’ period of Gujarati literature comes only after 1960. Idealism and romanticism had cast their spell on Gujarati poets before the 60s, hence they were mainly concerned with reforms and society. Umashankar, Sundaram and Snehrashmi of yesteryears, and Rajendra Shah, Jayant Pathak and Ushana are important pillars of Gujarati poetry.

Niranjan Bhagat gave a new thought to the act of writing poetry. He has rejuvenated it through his sharp sensibility and intellect. In one of his poems he says:

I have just come to take a stroll, (Hun to bas farava avyo chhun)
I haven’t come to do any work of yours or mine. (Hun kyan eke kaam tamarum ke marum karava avyo chhun)

Writing poetry for Bhagat is not a mission or commitment. It is a casual act performed leisurely.

Some Gujarati critics like Suman Shah are of the view that ‘modernity’ is a broad term. It is more of a qualitative term. It does not denote only the timeframe. Similarly, post-modernism also denotes the spirit rather than the time. Suresh Joshi (1921-1986) is considered the trendsetter of modernism in Gujarati literature. He introduced Sartre, Baudelaire and Camus, and even Freud to Gujarati readers through his own writings. According to him it is not the content but the process of form and treatment that is more important. Let us see two lines from one of his poems:

In the desert sand of darkness
I roam like a ghost of the dead moon.

Some of his contemporaries and many poets of the next generation wrote in the same vein. The advent of surrealism in Gujarati poetry was the result of Western influence. This was reflected in the poems of Labhshankar Thakar, Sitanshu Yashaschandra, Gulam Mohammad Sheikh, Shrikanth Shah and others. This is evident in the excerpts from the poems of Sitanshu and Sheikh given below:

Stamping the hoofs and sweeping the tails ran
Pitch black horses harnessed to the white rocky chariot.
Startled right in front of my eyes as I tried to close the door
Bang bang bang bang and banged straight in
Tore the eyelids smashed the rocks crushed the skulls
And entered to sleep in the depths of my eyes.

Sitanshu Yashaschandra

People collapsed and turned into dust and
Thousands and thousands of green, long and yellow
Demons of cacti came out of their stomachs.
Cold breeze ran away after eating the flesh of drumstick tree.
In the rotten holes of Neem trees, like the bent neck of the vultures
The ants built their brown houses.

Gulam Mohammad Sheikh

It is said that it is due to industrialisation and urbanisation that we come across the emotions in modern poetry that portray emptiness, loneliness, mistrust and disillusionment. Many literary forms in the past twenty-five years have expressed the sentiments of dalits. An exploited underprivileged class of the society gives expression to its anger, protest, and at times depicts a ‘matter of fact’ situation. The latter comes out more forcefully in prose, whereas poetry as a form requires a different kind of handling. However, there are also non-dalit poets who pen the feelings of Dalits.

Ravji Patel, an emotional sensitive poet, died young, had experimented with the form of poetry. Let us see his poem titled ‘At Last’.

Felt, as if I’ve entered an unknown house.
The moment I stepped in,
Walls wept within my eyes;
To whom can I reveal this?
Nothing entered into my vacant vision;
It went to the old bird bath,
Which had also vanished.
But then, someone touched from within,
From the smeared ground as
I was about to leave.

Ravji Patel

Modern Gujarati poetry was extremely rich in the seventies. There were progressive poets who enjoyed experimenting with the form and content of poetry. They were Chandrakant Topiwala, Jyotish Jani, Radheshyam Sharma, Indu Pavar, Manoj Khanderia and others. Dileep Jhaveri, Sitanshu’s contemporary studied in the same college. They both wrote poems and were published when they were still in their teens. Dileep’s latest long sequence of poems Vyasaachchhivas (Exhalation of Vyasa) describing different characters from the Mahabharata is a unique contribution in the field of Gujarati poetry.

A lot has been written in popular forms like lyrics and ghazals. The poets of the nineties have made deliberate efforts to write successful poetry. They include Yagnesh Dave, Nitin Mehta, Jaydev Shukla, Harish Minashru, Dalpat Padhiyar, Ashraf Dabawala, Kamal Vora, Rajesh Pandya, and Kanji Patel. Kanji uses a tribal dialect. His symbols and proverbs are also from the tribal life. A number of poets employ the technique of traditional folk songs and rural settings. Pradyumna Tanna, Ramesh Parekh, Anil Joshi, Chandrakant Sheth and Vinod Joshi have been giving the most enchanting poetry of this kind for more than thirty years.

Contemporary women poets are not many. Gita Parikh of an earlier era, and Panna Nayak, Daksha Vyas, Usha Upadhyay, Sarup Dhruv, Sanskritirani, Varsha Das, Manisha Joshi, Urvashi Pandya and Kajal Oza have been noticed in the recent years.
In this scenario of contemporary Gujarati poetry Sitanshu Yashaschandra holds the ground with his creative contributions. During his stay in the U.S.A. as a Fulbright scholar and later in Paris under the Ford West European Fellowship Sitanshu was not only exposed to Western literature but pursued his studies in comparative literature, aesthetics and Absurd Theatre. Having had training in English literature he came across the influence of Greek mythology evident in the works of James Joyce, W.B.Yeats, Ezra Pound and others. Those in India who took to creative writing during this period could not avoid that strong influence of Western literature. Many modern poets writing in bhasha were influenced by Western mythology. Even those who wrote in English like Dom Moraes, Arun Kolhatkar, Nissim Ezekiel and others made use of it.

Sitanshu’s greatness lies in reinterpreting Western myths and technique in the Indian and at times even larger human context. He uses mythical method to put together contemporaneity and antiquity. In Odyssesman Halesan — ‘An Our of Odysseus’ he associates images and myths and portrays diversities of life at an intangible level. His depiction of surrealistic images has given him a special place in Gujarati poetry.

Let us now take a look at his life and works. This will made it easier to understand his poem Orpheus.

6.2.1 Sitanshu Yashaschandra : A Brief Life Sketch and an Overview of His Work

Sitanshu Yashaschandra Mehta was born in Bhuj, Gujarat, on 19th August 1941. He went to several schools in Bhuj, Vadodara and Mumbai, doing his school board finals from Kabibai School in Mumbai, in 1958. He took admission in the St. Xavier’s College in Mumbai to study science, but his heart was in literature. He wrote and recited his poems in the Gujarati Literary Circle of the college, received appreciation and encouragement from teachers and senior litterateurs. His middle name Yashaschandra, is his father’s name which, as per the practice in Gujarati literary tradition, he uses with his own. After spending two years in the Science stream, Sitanshu realised that science

Orpheus, A Notebook of Poems and Autobiography
was not his area of interest. So he changed the to literature. After obtaining his Master’s degree, with a Gold Medal, in Gujarati literature from the University of Bombay in 1965, he went to the U.S.A. in 1968 as a Fulbright Scholar. He did his doctorate in Comparative Literature. In 1971 he received the Ford West European Fellowship and was in Paris for a year doing research in the Theatre of the Absurd.

His first collection of poems was published in 1975 entitled Odysseusmun Halesun, which received the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad and the State Academy Awards for the best collection of poetry, followed by the collection, Jatayu in 1986, for which he received the National Sahitya Akademi Award. His books on literary criticism and theory include Seemankan ane Seemollangham, a collection of essays on Comparative Literature published in 1977, Ramaniyatamo Vagvikalpa, his doctoral work on aesthetics, published in 1979, and Asya Sargavidhao, lectures on theory of literature, published in 2000. Much acclaimed, these works in poetry and criticism as well as his plays earned him Ranjitram Suvarna Chandrak, one of the prestigious literary awards in Gujarati literature, in 1988. Sitanshu has written a number of plays, which include Aa Manas Madrasi Laage Chhe, Kem Makanji Kyan Chhatya? Khagras and Ashwaithama, all performed in different places in Gujarat and abroad and at national festivals of drama in Delhi, Bhopal and Udaipur. Eight of his plays were published in 1998, for which the well-known Narmad Suvarna Chandrak for drama was awarded in 2004. A recent play of his Jaagine Jonn To .... Narasimyo’ on the Gujarati saint poet Narsim Mehto received great applause when premiered at Prithvi Theatre Festival, Mumbai 10th Nov. 2007.

6.2.2 Orpheus : An Analysis of the Poem

Analysis of the poem before we study the Gujarati poem Orpheus let us find out who Orpheus was? He was a charming young man from Greek epic poetry, who loved to play a magic lyre. His music enchanted birds and beasts, flowers and trees, rocks and rivers. It is said that even stones gathered around him to listen to his music and danced with joy. Orpheus was madly in love with a wood nymph called Eurydice. Another man by the name Aristaeus was also in love with her. On the day of Eurydice’s wedding Aristaeus chased her. She ran for her life. On the way she stumbled upon a snake. The angry snake stung her and she died instantaneously. Orpheus was devastated. He followed her to Hades, the abode of departed spirits, the underworld. He wanted his beloved back. He played soulful music and managed to charm the captor. He agreed to let Eurydice go on condition that Orpheus would not look behind until they safely reached the earth. He agreed and began his journey towards the earth. But he was too anxious and impatient to fulfil the condition. He lost Eurydice once again. Orpheus wandered till he was torn to pieces, and sang ‘Eurydice Eurydice’ till the last breath of his life.

In another version of this story Eurydice followed Orpheus on the dark twisted path leading away from Hades. She was overjoyed at her release but being unaware of the condition was extremely pained that Orpheus did not look at her even once. She reproached him for his coldness and preferred to die. Orpheus could not bear her unjust accusation. He turned to look at her and she died. Orpheus wanted to kill himself but was saved by Cupid who revived Eurydice as well. This version has a happy ending. The couple was reunited.
on the earth. They along with their friends sang and danced with joy. That is Orpheus, a romantic character from Greek mythology.

Garuda is another key term in this poem. It has been translated as eagle. The poem hinges around Garuda. Garuda in Indian mythology is an imaginary god having his upper half like a bird and the lower half resembling a human being. Garuda had made an agreement with Lord Vishnu that he would be above Vishnu and Vishnu had desired to be above him. Garuda, therefore, became Vishnu's vehicle, and Vishnu put him on his flag. Thus both were above eachother! Garuda is regarded as the king of birds. His stepmother Kadru, the mother of snakes had given so much pain to Garuda's mother Vinata that he had taken a vow to destroy snakes. The poet is using the images of eagle and snake as interpreted in Indian myths.

Sitanshu had been interested in the Orphic myth for quite some time when he wrote the Gujarati poem Orpheus. What prompted him to pen it was a sense of discontinuity or many discontinuities. These images are presented in the poem. In the Greek myth Orpheus had lost his beloved, regained her with a condition and again lost her. In the modern Gujarati poem Orpheus a similar loss, a similar journey and a similar hero are narrated, yet they are dissimilar.

The poem is apparently a lyrical song, which upon a closer look turns out to be both anti-lyrical and anti-song. It is anti-lyrical because many units of lyricality of the original story have been replaced in the poem with their opposites; for example, the melodious magical music of Orpheus is replaced with the shrill cries of pain of the eagles in the first two lines of the poem:

The eagles crying out in sharp shrill notes,
The eagles, confused, are looking for their lost beloved.

The rulers of Hades were charmed by Orpheus' music, hence the relationship between the two was that of 'pleaser and pleased'. That has been replaced with 'killer-killed' relationship of eagles and snakes. This and many other elements make the Gujarati poem a narrative of disruptions that cause a different kind of 'loss'.

The opening lines begin to narrate the mythic story at mid-point. It seems the Orphic eagles have already lost their beloved 'Eurydice', and have, in pain, begun the search. But they have lost something else also: the music. They enter Hades, the underworld, not with any sweet music as in the myth, but with their shrieks of pain and perhaps something else. They are alien to the world in which they have intruded.

The poem begins to emerge as a poem of loss of the mythic means of recovery, the Orphic music. The fact that the poem is a 'song' and not a prose poem or a free verse assumes a tragic-ironic significance in this context. The form of traditional lyric/song assumes a new significance as a modern anti-lyric, anti-song.

The poet has described two-fold violence in the next stanza:

Layers of rock slide on each-other, lava liquid flows cascading down,
Cave-roofs are pushed and splintered,
Mistakes and fine follies howl,
Every eye hegets its many dreams,
And no King's ordinance is here honoured.
a) The innate violence of the place, Hades / the underworld, b) The violence caused by the intruder, Orpheus / eagles. The first is described in the myth; the second emerges only in the poem. What does it signify?

Looking closely at the stanza we see that as the Orphic eagles plunge into the underworld:

“Mistakes and fine follies howl,
Every eye begets its many dreams,
And no king’s ordinance is here honoured”.

It is an image of disorder, mistakes, errors and disruption. Unlike the tragic mythic man of enchanting music, the poem presents an image of the splintered, disrupted, absurd modern man. The poem thus becomes a travelogue of two kinds. It gives a narrative of the Orphic/mythic journey from the land of living to the land of the dead and back. It also depicts the modern man’s, eagles’ wanderings, absurd, ‘laughable’, tragic-comic.

The last two stanzas narrate how the gods of Hades/the underworld give the Orphic eagles a boon and a condition, They granted the boon: the beloved is yours, but do not look behind. In this the myth and the poem agree, but both, the boon and the condition are dwarfed by the ‘human condition’ of the modern man. The eagles that have plunged into the underworld have lost something. What they have lost is not a beloved, but love itself. They have lost any possibility of love. The eagles are also blind. They cannot possibly turn back to see and check if Eurydice is coming out of the dead.

The journey of eagles thus assumes significance, which is quite different from that of the mythic journey. One moves from myth to modernity.

6.2.3 How is the Translation?

Since the poet himself has translated his Gujarati poem into English he has taken care to explain the intent of each word. And yet Paataal as under-world and Garuda as Eagle do not seem to convey the depth and grandeur as depicted in the myths. This is due to limitation of English language and cultural diversity. E.V. Ramakrishnan and Anjana Desai have also translated this poem into English. You can see the difference in their translation quoted below:

The eagle incessantly moaning with sharp piercing cries
The eagle desperately searching for the lost beloved.
Masses of rock shift, lava cascades down,
Cave-roofs splinter
Past follies howl; eyes beget only dreams.
The mind runs blank,
In a sudden torrential descent
Sky-eagles reach the under-world.

The venomous empire of the underworld snakes
En trance d by the fatal music, grants
The boon: the beloved is yours
But do not look behind.
Each poem has its own rhythm and flow. And when that is found in the translation, keeping intact the poet's intent behind writing that particular poem, we call it a successful translation. The translator has to be faithful to the original. At the same time the translation should not read like a translation. Some translations read even better than the original but that is not so common.

6.2.4 Gathering the Threads

In this unit we have studied the Gujarati poem *Orpheus* written by one of the eminent surrealist poets of Gujarat, Sitanshu Yashaschandra. He has used the Greek mythological character Orpheus to depict utterly negative emotions of man, quite contrary to what Orpheus stands for. Sitanshu had been interested in the Orphic myth for quite sometime when he wrote this poem in Gujarati. In the Greek myth Orpheus lost his beloved, regained her with a condition and again lost her. In the modern Gujarati poem *Orpheus*, a similar loss, a similar journey and a similar hero are narrated and yet they are different. The poem is apparently a lyric-song, which upon a closer look turns out to be both anti-lyrical and anti-song. Many units of lyricality of the original story have been replaced in the poem with their opposites. For example, the melodious magical music of Orpheus is replaced with the shrill cries of pain of the eagles in the first two lines of the poem. The poem becomes a travelogue of two kinds. It gives a narrative of the Orphic/mythic journey from the land of living to the land of the dead and back. It also depicts the modern man's, eagle's wanderings, absurd, 'laughable', tragic-comic. The poem *Orpheus* thus moves from myth to modernity.

In the section on the history of Gujarati literature we saw that the first verse form was found in the works of Hemachandrasuri written in Prachin Apabhramsha in the 11th century AD, followed by the literature written in Old or Prachin Gujarati till the 14th century AD.

After that was the Bhakti period in which devotional songs and poems were written. Most of them continue to remain popular. Then there were reformists and also scholars. The advent of Mahatma Gandhi transformed Gujarati literature in language and content. Both became simple and down to earth. The poets of this era read Western literature, particularly English and French, and were influenced by it. This is reflected in their works. The trendsetter was Suresh Joshi followed by Labhshankar, Sitanshu and others. Sitanshu's surrealist poetry, his interpretation of Indian and Western mythical characters, his ingenuity in bringing together contemporaneity and antiquity have contributed towards making him a significant Gujarati poet of the modern era.

6.3 THE TRADITION OF MARATHI POETRY

Maharashtra has proved to be the meeting point of the north and the south by virtue of its geographical location. Marathi is the southernmost Indo-Aryan language of India. The earliest trace of Marathi is found in the *Kuvalayamala*
of Udyotan belonging to the 8th century. The available records enable us to trace the beginning of Marathi literature to the year 1278. The literary works composed during the first period were inspired by religious fervor and devotion to a guru. Three different religious sects, viz. the Nath sect, the Mahanubhav sect and the Varkari sect became quite popular in Maharashtra in the 13th century.

The first Marathi poetess, Mahadamba of the Mahanubhav sect, composed the Dhavalas or the wedding songs pertaining to the marriage of Lord Krishna and Rukmini. These songs make excellent lyric poetry due to the simplicity in their composition, the delicacy of the attitude and the intensity of the devotional love. There are seven esteemed poetical works in the Mahanubhav tradition. They are: Narendra’s Rukminiswayamvar (1292-93), Bhaskara’s Shishupalavatha and Uddhavageeta (1312-13), Damodara Pandit’s Yvacharam (1316), Raval Basa’s Sahyadrivarnana (1353), Vishwanatha’s Dnyanaprabodha (1418) and Narayana Basa’s Riddhipuravarnana (1418). Three of these are narratives, two are descriptive, and the remaining two are philosophical.

The poetry of Varkari saints showed two trends. One was the abhangas, sort of lyrical compositions expressing the poet’s experiences, emotions and observations in a subjective manner; and the other was the well-composed treatise deliberating upon philosophy, mysticism and spirituality in a style laden with literary excellences. Saint Namdev was the originator of the former and Saint Dnyaneshwar of the latter. All Varkari saints, coming from the uppermost stratum of the society like Changadev the Yogi and Parisa Bhagawat the Brahmin to the lowest one like Chokhamela the untouchable, Janabai the maid servant and Kanhopatra the courtesan, contributed to the former trend whereas the scholarly talented among them like Eknath and Ramdas, contributed to the latter. Tukaram is the culmination of the former trend and Dnyaneshwari stands at the zenith of the latter.

Another important tradition of medieval Marathi poetry was the Pandit Kavya or the tradition of the learned poets. It has its roots in the narrative poetry of the Mahanubhav sect, but was accentuated by Mukteshwar in the 16th century and flourished in the poetry written by Vaman Pandit, Raghunath Pandit, Shreedhar, Moropant and others. The distinctive feature of this trend is its imitation of patterns of Sanskrit epic poetry. All these poets had come from the higher stratum of society. They had thoroughly studied Sanskrit poetry and poetics. In their attempt to follow the Sanskrit models, these poets enthusiastically performed numerous experiments in the manifestation of emotive experiences as well as in the stylistic patterns. They maintained that poetry was a language-oriented intellectual form of recreation.

The third current of medieval Marathi poetry belonged to the Shahir poets, who wrote poetry for the masses in the forms Lavani and Powada. The former form indulged in erotic love in all its aspects and the latter aimed at highlighting heroic deeds of well-known historic figures with a view to instill values such as loyalty, self-sacrifice, valor and nationalism. Both these forms were adorned with rhythmic compositions, graphic descriptions, enriched diction and most of all, enchanting and thrilling experiences that could move common listeners.
Keshavsvat (1866-1905), the father of modern Marathi poetry, broke away from pedantic themes and prosody and struck a genuine lyrical note. He looked upon poetry as an expression of one’s inner self and an instrument of awakening. Narayan Vaman Tilak (1865-1919) wrote about his spiritual restlessness also, which made him embrace Christianity. Govindraj (1885-1919), the self-proclaimed disciple of Keshavsvat, wrote poetry marked with escapism, excess of sentiment, lavish fancy and an array of linguistic surprises. Balkavi (1890-1918) was a truly romantic poet. He had an ear for the music of words and an eye for the pictorial in nature. Imagery, diction, theme and form combined in an artistic whole in his lyrics. Bee (1872-1947) advocated revolt against the tyranny of the past and of tradition. He sung of not only “new hopes” and “new urges” but also of material beauties. Bhaskar Ramchandra Tambe (1874-1941) wrote lyrics with exquisite songqualities. He was influenced by Rabindranath Tagore and Hindi poetry besides the English romantics and Marathi saint-poets.

By 1920, poetry had once more lost its edge of intensity. It was gradually succumbing to sentimentalism, romance and a casual approach. It had, however, freed itself from the prosodic shackles by employing the elastic Jati meters and had ushered in some new forms like the sonnet. At this juncture, the gradual sophistication of the forms of literature such as the novel and short story stimulated young educated poets to refine their art. The poets who started the new era in poetry at this time belonged to a group known as Ravikiran Mandal (a circle of sun-beams). They gave poetry recitals and made poetry popular with the urban masses. They invented new patterns of prosody and content. The emotions of the common man, with his struggle for existence, his domesticity, his limited appreciation of beauty and his moderate range of emotions and experience for the sake of audience — these were some of the characteristics of the poetry of the members of this group. They adorned, with beauty and grace, in their poems, everyday topics such as the mother and child, the wife waiting for her husband, the flower dropped on the road, a patriot behind prison walls, the dying child of a poor man etc. They accepted the change that had come in the status of women in society, who were no longer mere objects of worship or pleasure. The Ravikiran poets looked upon women as comrades in every walk of life. Madhav Julian, Girish and Yashawant were prominent poets of this group. Madhav Julian translated Omar Khayyam in Marathi. He also introduced “gazal” and “Rubaya” forms into Marathi. However, after a few days, this trend also became monotonous and trivial. Mature readers began to ridicule it. The regularities and limitations of the Ravikiran poetry inspired Keshavkumar to write parodies (1925).

Another important stream of the modern Marathi poetry was the patriotic and nationalist stream. The premier poet within this stream is V.D. Savarkar (1883-1966). An armed revolutionary freedom fighter. Savarkar wrote passionate patriotic poetry and propagated the concept of worship of the motherland.

Two poets, who began writing poetry by 1940 and continued to accommodate new patterns and visions in their own stride till late, deserve a special mention. They are Anil and Kusumagraj. Anil (1901-1982) wrote in an individual, subtle and delicate manner. He practiced and propagated free verse in Marathi. His love lyrics range over all the subtle shades from the agony of suspense to the thrill of fulfillment. His poems contain a synthesis of the awareness of the
beauty of nature and a depth of personal feeling rising to the level of mysticism. Kusumagrag (1912-1999) was a master of word-picture, lyrical intensity and deep understanding. He remained evergreen as he was sensitive to the changing socio-political atmosphere and developed the form of his poetry in tune with the new modes of expression. He became more mature, more socially aware and more reflective with the passing days. He was awarded the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 1988.

6.3.2 Modern Marathi Poetry — The Second Phase

It was B.S.Mardhekar (1909-1956) who revolutionized Marathi poetry after 1945. In content, idiom, diction and imagery, his poetry was so different that the orthodox were shocked. They declared that his poetry was obscene, pervert, incomprehensible and almost criminal. In the commotion, they ignored the echoes of saint-poets like Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram and Ramadas in his diction, his metrical forms and his attitude of urgency. Mardhekar was also influenced by Balkavi, Madhav Julian and the English and French symbolist poetry of T.S.Eliot, Ezra pound, Baudelaire and Hopkins. He adapted the poetic techniques of T.S.Eliot such as sudden juxtapositions, cryptic allusions, use of the lines written by earlier poets with a few subtle and significant alterations in them and imagery derived from the world of machines, physical sciences, scientific inventions as well as the world of literature, religion, philosophy and other intellectual pursuits. The themes that he wrote on were dehumanization, boredom, wretchedness and despair in modern life. Mardhekar blazed a new trail by powerfully expressing anguish, which was personal, social and metaphysical at the same time. He fired the imagination of the young, removed all the taboos on the choice of diction, images and themes and thus inaugurated a "new age" in Marathi poetry.

The poetry of Purushottam Shivaram Rege (1910-1978) presents a contrast to that of Mardhekar. He was a major traditionalist modern poet in the post-war era. His poetry projects a mystical concept of love, which is erotic, emotional, and creative and which transcends chronological time. His subtle and controlled variations of the metrical and stanzaic patterns, his fine sense of music and his archetypal images reveal his modernity.

Sharatchandra Muktibodh (1921-1984) pioneered the third dominant trend in the post-war Marathi poetry. He has a Marxist perspective. He looks upon the present conflicts as products of the capitalist economy, which would ultimately lead to revolution. The image of the Sun as the source of power, hope, purification and creativity, which is so popular in the poetry of 70s and 80s was first used by Muktibodh.

These three trends did not necessarily proceed quite independently and separately thereafter. For example, in Vinda Karandikar’s poetry, we find a fusion of the Mardhekar-trend and the Muktibodh-trend.

6.3.3 The Scene after 1960 : Ultra-Modern and Post-Modern

The year 1960 marks the beginning of a change in the literary sensitivity as well as taste. The change was heralded by the little magazines, which broke away from what they called "the tyranny of the literary establishment". Shabda, Aso, Vacha, Bharud, Phakta, Ata, Yeru, Abakadai were prominent
little magazines. There was a protest against sophistication in diction and treatment as well as artificiality in themes and attitudes. They argued that the literary establishment was isolating literature from the contemporary reality and was downgrading instinct and spontaneity. The literary protest gradually gave way to the literature of social protest, as a result of which Dalit literature emerged as a distinct identity after 1965. Some of the names that stand out in this context are Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, Raja Dhale, Bhalchandra Nemade, Satish Kalasekar, Chandrakant Khot and of course, Namdeo Dhasal.

Chitre and Kolatkar have written surrealist-symbolist poetry. Their attempt was to surprise and shock, make dramatic juxtapositions and often write a dream-like intensely personal poetry. Satish Kalasekar and Chandrakant Khot turned the fearless simplicity of Mardhekarian tradition into sheer nakedness. Sexual images and sexual experience without any constraint is the most important factor in their poetry.

Apart from the poets of the little magazine movement, some other poets established still other trends.

Vasant Abaji Dahake calls himself an existentialist poet. His poetry is full of negative philosophy. It aims at the interaction between contemporary individual and society, as well as the futility and vacuum of human life. The most popular and influential poetry of this period, however, has been written by Narayan Surve. Though lyrical at times, his major concerns are social and economic inequality, poverty, and squalor of urban life and a struggle for revolution. He has forged a new idiom and rhythmical patterns based on the living speech of the have-nots and the working class. His diction draws upon the slang of those who live on the pavements of Mumbai and lead a marginal existence.

6.3.4 Dalit Poetry: The Poetry of Rebellion

Dalit is a short form of the Sanskrit adjective Pada-dalit, viz. crushed under feet. The social structure of the Hindu society caused the lowest class of the hierarchy to be crushed under the feet of the high castes. The atrocities against the lowest stratum reached the maximum limit during the eighteenth century. A never-ending fire was constantly flaming in the hearts of the downtrodden. Hatred was piling against the rituals, customs and religious framework responsible for this inhuman treatment. The attitude of rebellion emerged and developed among the Dalits, who were oppressed and suppressed for centuries in the traditional social pattern, mainly due to Dr. Ambedkar's inspiration and motivation. In the sixties, Namdeo Dhasal, Raj Dhale, Arjun Dangle, Vaman Nimballkar and others founded a socio-political group Dalit Panthers to combat the hideous atrocities towards the Dalits. For them, poetry writing was one of their many weapons to fight their battles and they deliberately used it to attack, ridicule and reject age-old concepts, customs and attitudes of the upper castes. Dalit poetry is the result of this approach. It is a poetry of protest, a call for total rebellion. It is also the poetry of negation, revolution and revolution. It discards the traditional social pattern, gives a call for violent rebellion and dreams of total revolution. It transparently presents realistic pictures of the horrible plight of the Dalits and expresses fiery anger and pungent hatred towards the so-called glorious tradition of culture and literature dominated by the upper stratum of the social hierarchy. It deals with topics like rejection of scriptures, entry for the untouchables into temples, the problems of food, shelter, faith and respect, the fights for drinking water, the
urge for education, the strength of Dalit unity etc. Dalit poets used straightforward and even abusive language and new unsophisticated imagery to achieve this purpose. It expresses the sarcastic and hateful feelings of these poets towards national freedom, their experiences about the meanness of society, their strong repugnance towards the fetters and slavery suffered by their forefathers etc. Prominent Dalit poets are Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, Daya Pawar, Waman Nimbalkar, Yashawant Manohar, Arjun Dangle, J.V. Pawar, Tryambak Sapkale, Jyoti Lanjewar, Hira Bansode, Meena Gajbhiye etc.

After the initial spurt, it was but inevitable for the Dalit poetry to become stagnant. Its limitations were lack of reflective thinking, absence of maturity of thought, one-sided acceptance of a particular philosophy, repetitiveness and repetition of diction and images. Once the shocking anger towards the age-old traditions is understood and accepted, Dalit poetry becomes like a ship without a sail. Just keeping on expressing more and more anger, using more and more abuses does not enrich the poetic experience. However, in the later stage Dalit poetry took a new turn, thanks to the efforts of poets like Yashawant Manohar. He renamed Dalit poetry as Ambedkar Kavita and held that, instead of just expressing anger towards the tradition, Dalit poetry should propagate Ambedkar's ideology in a positive manner. Dalit poetry took this new turn and started enriching Marathi poetry further. An example of this new trend of looking forward to a bright future in terms of Ambedkar's teachings may be seen in the poem Sun-flower giving fakir by Dhasal (poem). The poem expresses Dhasal's rejection of the past and the sense of freedom. As Dalit critic Vimal Thorat says.

6.3.5 Namdeo Dhasal: His Life and Works

Born on 15 February 1949, in a small hamlet in the Khed taluk of Pune district, he grew up in a shabby settlement named Dhor Chawl in Mumbai, near an area called Golpitha, inhabited by prostitutes. Here he was surrounded by small-time smugglers, drug-traffickers, professional murderers, thieves and goons. He studied up to S.S.C. and did a course in printing also. He worked as a taxi-driver for some time. He was a brilliant student at school, but could not
pursue higher education. However, he was an ardent reader and read Ambedkar after his schooling. He came under the influence of Ram Manohar Lohia. Later he read Marx. He married Mallika, daughter of the Communist folk-singer and poet Amar Sheikh. Then veteran Communist leader S.A. Dange became his mentor. After some days, Dhasal became disillusioned with Lohiaite Socialists, Communists, Naxalites and the Congress Party, as he felt that all of them were in some way restricted by their upper class leadership, and co-founded the militant activist movement Dalit Panthers, on the line of the Black Panthers in the U.S. He motivated Dalit youths with a rebellious social, political and cultural agenda. The Maharashtra police were instructed to wipe out the movement. Over 300 cases were filed against Namdeo Dhasal and his Panthers. Namdeo met Indira Gandhi during the Emergency and impressed upon her the need to withdraw these charges. Today, Dhasal is associated with Bal Thackeray and the Shiv-Sena. He has been awarded a Padma-Shree in 1999.

During all these political upheavals, Namdeo Dhasal kept on writing poetry. His first collection of poems Golpitha was published in 1972, which, according to poet and critic Dilip Chitre, “is a landmark in the history of not just Marathi poetry but the whole of South-Asian literature”. The poems vocalize the voice of the lumpen high above the traditional sophisticated poetry and express the exploitation, poverty, ugliness, agony and menace in the metropolitan city. This collection was followed by other collections Murkh Mhathaye Dongar Halawala (The Mad Old Man Shattered the Mountain), Priyadarshini-Anmehya Itihasatil Ek Apariharya Patra (Priyadarshini-An Inevitable Character in our History), Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi (What is Your Standard), Khel (The Play), and Gandu Bagicha (The Sodomised Garden), containing poems that attack hypocrisy in society. However, poems in his latest collections Ya Sattet Jeev Ramat Nahi (The Heart does not enjoy this existence) and Brihatparva (The Mega-chapter) do not only express his social commitment or political objectives, but also attempt to explore the meaning of human existence as well. Golpitha and Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi got the State Government Award as well as the Soviet Land Nehru Award. He received the Jeevan Gourav Puraskar of the Sahitya Akademi in 2004.

Dhasal’s poetry is very strong, sharp, rebellious and futuristic. With its passionate intensity and straight appeal, it not only makes the reader look inwards, but also shakes him out of his slumber. It presents a startling spectrum of the world beyond the reach of the sophisticated cross section of the society. There are prostitutes, smugglers, slum-dwellers, drunkards, orphans and all sorts of people who are so engaged in their struggle for just living that they neither have any time nor desire to care for the so-called values of the other privileged world. As a result of his passionate outbursts, Dhasal can bend his diction at will and mould it easily to suit his content. He applies the style of the rural dialect and the method of a dialogue in order to use his poetry as a means to achieve his ultimate goal of rebellion as well as to express his passions effectively.

Namdeo Dhasal has also written a novel Hadki Hadavala. An impressive book of essays in the form of compilation of his journalistic columns Andhale Shatak (the Blind Century) and his interesting memoir Those Magical Days of Dalit Panthers, published in a special issue of the little magazine AkaKadEe are his other literary endeavors. His books Buddha Dharma: Kahi Sheshaa Prashna (The Buddhist Religion: Some Remaining Questions),
6.3.5.1 A Notebook of Poems

This poem appears in the collection *Ya Sattet Jeev Ramat Nahi* (The Heart does not enjoy this existence). The original title in Marathi is *Kavitechi Vahi*. The original Marathi poem has three stanzas, whereas the English translation is printed in two. Apart from this, there are some other insufficiencies of translation, making it miss some of the nuances of the poem. The opening line *You do not open the door* can be mistaken to be imperative, whereas it is a complaint indicated by simple present tense in the original. An expression in the present imperfect might have been more appropriate in the translation. Further, in the original, it has been stressed that the “destination” is the last destination, which emphasis is missing in the translation.

The poem begins as a dialogue. The poet is talking to somebody in a complaining tone. The poet has reached the last destination, but that “somebody” is not opening the door for him to enter. Hence the complaint. But who is that somebody? Who is that “you”? With whom poet the is talking? Certainly not the God! Namdev Dhasal never talks to the God. The destination is not the destination of a spiritual journey. Then who is supposed to open the door for the poet?

The poet’s protest is aimed at the traditional social “system”. So, that somebody, the “you”, is representative of the “system”. Though the poet has traveled the path of his creativity and reached the final destination, the system does not allow him in. He remains an outcaste even at the helm of his creativity. His poetic genius has enabled him to grasp the constellations, but he does not know how he would write the alphabets of these constellations on the same old paper. The constellations represent bright, shining, glorious ideas foretelling bright future. The “old paper” symbolizes the poet’s worn out medium of expression. It was all right during the poet’s long journey of creativity so far. But now that the poet has reached his final destination and has grasped the constellations, he wishes to write the alphabets on a new fresh paper. However, the system does not let him in. He is stranded at the destination “outside” with alphabets of constellations eager to be written on a new fresh paper.

What has happened to the poet’s notebook of poems? Is he not carrying it during his journey to this destination? In the next stanza, the poet explains that he has handed over his notebook of poems to Kabir long back! Why Kabir? What is the significance of this reference?

This second stanza of the poem is a fine example of intertextuality. The reference indicates Kabir’s doha:

\[\text{Kabira Khada Bazaar mein Sabko Mange Khair}\]
\[Na Kahise Dosti Na Kahise Baïr\]

(Kabir is standing in the bazaar,
Wishing well to everyone!
He has friendship with none.
And enmity with none!)
The doha depicts Kabir’s detached, yet compassionate attitude towards people in the world. He stands amidst the busy, crowded bazaar, but is not involved in its affairs. Though he wishes everyone well, he is aloof from them. He is neither a friend nor a foe to any person around him. When the poet confesses that he has handed over his notebook of poems to Kabir long back, he not only establishes bondage with him, but also indicates that he himself has reached the same attitude towards the world around him. He is friend to nobody and enemy to nobody. He is all alone in the crowded bazaar, nurturing the dream of wellbeing to all. (This experience of intertextuality is quite conspicuous in the original Marathi poem, as the poet has used two key words “Bazaar” and “khada” from the text of Kabir’s doha. Especially, the use of the word “khada” is significant. For, the proper Marathi word would have been “ubha” meaning “standing”. Unfortunately, the English translation misses both these key words. At least the word “bazaar” should have been retained to promote intertextuality.) Then what has happened to his previous rebellious attitude? What has happened to his call of setting town after town on fire? What has happened to the innumerable suns ignited in his blood? What has happened to all those strong abuses mutilating the so-called cultural heritage? Perhaps this is the long journey performed by the poet to reach this final destination. Handing over the notebook of poems to Kabir means transcending that rebellious and fiery attitude to reach this detached and futuristic perception. He has liberated himself from the pulls of the impending and contemporary provocations.

However, the “system” is not prepared to accept this transcending transformation of the poet. That is why the door is closed at the destination. The tradition (cruel and insensitive as it has always been) does not accept this promissory note! (The original Marathi poem uses the word Vachannama — meaning the promissory note-and not just vachan-meaning the promise, another instance of missing the target in the translation). This reference of the tradition not accepting the promise of liberation joins the link with the door not being opened by the “system” in the opening stanza. The poem is filled with a feeling of helplessness, not out of rebellious frustration, but percolating through detached liberation of the attitude. The poet finds himself engulfed in the empire of darkness. The image of the empire of darkness is the artistic culmination of the previous images viz. the closed door and the inability to write the alphabets of the constellations. However, this empire of darkness cannot dominate the poet now. His desire begins to grow wings! Growing wings of the desire is again the culmination of the previous images of reaching the destination and alphabets of constellations. Thus, the pattern of the poem displays the confrontation of two entities — the poet and the “system”. The former entity is mobile and progressive whereas the latter one is static and conservative. The former entity, the poet, travels and reaches the destination, but the latter entity refuses him entry through the door. The former wants to write illuminating messages, but the latter refuses to cooperate. But finally, the empire of darkness spread by the latter is incapable of holding back the dream flight of the former. The desire of the poet wins despite all odds — the closed door, the lack of notebook, the empire of darkness.

The language of the poem is simple, conversational and transparent. Images are not fresh, but come naturally and evocatively. The poem is short, but carries a large content effectively. The content goes beyond the frame of the poem with inevitable and automatic references to Namdeo Dhasal’s previous poetry and also to the medieval poet Kabir.
This is the last poem in the collection *Ya Sattet Jeev Ramat Nahi* with the Marathi title *Atmcharitra*. The poem begins with the assurance that the image in the mirror of water is the poet’s own image. This opening line itself is multidimensional as it serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it presents the setting of a scene for the poem. The poet is seated on the bank of a river or on the seashore, staring at his own image in the water. Secondly, it also underlines that the image is shaky, apparently due to constant waves, so much so that the poet feels it necessary to ascertain his identity with the image. This assertion opens the gate of the suggested meaning. The shaky image becomes a symbol of the image presented in an autobiography. Is not the image we find in any autobiography as shaky and uncertain as the image reflected in waves here? Do we not get confused to make out whether the image in the autobiography is really the image of the person concerned?

The white mass of foam on the top of the waves makes the image blurred and momentary. Actually these are the functions of space and time in a person’s life. The image presented in an autobiography looks confusing because it is concisely reduced in a very limited space and time. The personality of the real person who has lived a considerable length of life is presented in a few pages of the autobiography, reducing the space and time to a considerable extent. Since the white mass of foam plays the same function here, the poet says that it touchingly passes through the identity of the space and time. (In the original Marathi text, the word *asmita* viz. identity is specifically used, which is missing in the translation). When this happens, the bulwarks of hellish agony slowly collapse. For, as long as the image is clear, the agony, which is related to the person in reality, is firmly rooted like bulwarks. As soon as the image becomes shaky, blurred, momentary and uncertain, the agony is bound to dismantle slowly.

From here on, the poem becomes distinctly metaphoric. The poet begins to feel that he is really seated on the shore of misery and not just remembering his past life, but carving the shapes of wounds. Life has given the poet nothing but misery so far, and remembering the span of life, as is done in an autobiography, is nothing but carving the shapes of wounds. The breeze blowing from the waters of misery is enough to flutter the transparent robe of existence of the poet. The surrounding also plays its part in this experience. It is the time of sunset and twilight, the bordering moment between the light and the darkness. The combat in the game of darkness and light arouses commotion in the mind of the poet. (The specific word *dhumashchakri* viz. combat is missing in the translation.) When darkness falls, birds go away to their nests. Here, the transparent birds of dreams also fly away, and the shapeless sky becomes restless after their departure. (The translated version totally misses this statement. It does not mention the departure of the birds, and also, instead of making the sky restless, it makes it nostalgic!). So we have parallel scenes here presented in the metaphorical style. On the one hand, the evening is getting darker, the light and the darkness combat with each other and create a feeling of sadness, birds go away, and the sky becomes lonely and darker. On the other hand, every detail of this scene has a metaphoric meaning related to the poet’s mood and his state of mind while reviewing his past life.
Suddenly the situation undergoes a radical change. Flowers begin to bloom in the innermost awareness of the poet. True, these flowers have no fragrance, but they are flowers all the same. The negation of fragrance eliminates anything romantic to be associated with the flowers. The flowers symbolize new consciousness arising in the heart of the poet. He has determined now not to feel let down by the agony of the past life. He is ready to take on life with new vigor and zest. He sheds off his skin, like a snake! This is a very beautiful image used by the poet to express the transformation in his attitude at this moment. It is visually evocative and charged with intensity.

Now the poet becomes one with his image. He even experiences the chill touch of the water. That chill touch snaps the ropes of desire. “Snapping of rope” has a special meaning in Marathi. It has a historical-cultural reference. Shivaji sent Tanaji, his trusted lieutenant, to conquer the mountain-fort of Sinhagad from the Mughals. Realizing that his troops were much smaller to take up a head-on battle, Tanaji climbed an unguarded cliff at the dead of night secretly and launched a surprise attack. In the fierce battle that followed, Tanaji was killed and his troupes began to run back. Tanaji’s brother Suryaji snapped the ropes with which they had climbed and made an inspiring speech to turn the troupes back to the battle and gain victory. Since then, “snapping the ropes” means eliminating the possibilities of retreat and rushing into the battle with determination. Here in this poem, the chill touch of the water snaps the ropes of desire. That means, once the poet sheds off his old appearance and determines to face the life with new vigor, he eliminates any chance of retreat thereafter. The last appeal is made to ensure that now there may not be any disturbance even from a sympathizer. Usually, one who wishes to show sympathy to a wounded person tries to give him a soothing soft blow of air through his lips. The poet, here, however, does not want such a soothing sympathy. He fears that his determination to maintain a changed face hitherto will be shattered by such a show of sympathy. This meaning is expressed by the image that the face of the poet’s autobiography will be shattered by such attempt.

As compared to the previous poem, this poem contains rich imagery, which is fresh, intense and evocative. Actually, it begins with an image, keeps the tempo throughout with images of increasing intensity and ends with a multi-layered image. The imagery incorporates metaphors and symbols as well. Philosophical, literary and realistic overtones help to enlarge the contents of the poem as it deals with the real personality of a person vis-à-vis the deliberate image presented by him in his autobiography. Moreover, these overtones are directly subjective to the poet and not just theoretical musings.

6.4 LET US SUM UP

In the course of this Unit we have looked at the history of Gujarati poetry and the tradition of Marathi poetry and the rise of Dalit poetry — the poetry of rebellion in Marathi. We have also studied the individual contributions of Sitanshu Yashashchandra to Gujarati and Namdeo Dhasal to Marathi poetry.

We hope the analysis of three poems, one by Sitanshu Yashashchandra and two by Namdev Dhasal has given you a feel of how poets in Indian languages use the resources of myth and earlier literature and history to express themselves. You will realize that their language even in translation is far from
being simple. Poetry is seldom easy and a fuller understanding often comes after you have read the poems several times and also pondered over them for some time.

### 6.5 GLOSSARY

**Allusion:** A reference in a literary work to a person, place, or thing in history or another work of literature. Allusions are often indirect or brief references to well-known characters or events.

**Escapism:** Using literary creativity to escape from the troubles and agonies of the real world.

**Existentialist poet:** Existentialism is a 20th century movement in philosophy. Existentialists are concerned with the study of being. They conclude that existence precedes essence. A man’s self is nothing except what he has become; at any given moment, it is the sum of the life he has shaped until then. At each moment, it is the man’s will that can choose how to act or not to act. A man is or should be responsible for the consequences of his actions; and each action necessarily excludes the other potential actions for that moment. A poet who displays this outlook is an existentialist poet.

**Intertextuality:** A term used by Julia Kristeva to describe the preexisting body of discourse that makes an individual text intelligible. Every text is a response to and an interpretation of other texts, and it can be read only in relation to them. The meaning of a text is dependent upon other texts that it absorbs and transforms.

**Juxtaposition:** Putting two statements or experiences side by side in order to emphasise the similarities or differences between them.

**Mysticism:** The experience of uniting the Self with the Supreme Self by meditation, contemplation, yoga etc. The spiritual apprehension of Truths that are usually beyond understanding.

**Negative Philosophy:** Negative attitude, extreme skepticism.

**Parody:** Humorous exaggerated imitation of a literary work.

**Pedantic themes:** Themes with an insistence on adherence to formal rules.
Sentimentalism: The effort to induce an emotional response disproportionate to the situation, and thus to substitute heightened and generally unthinking feeling for normal ethical and intellectual judgment. A pejorative term used to describe the effort by an author to induce emotional responses in the reader, that exceed what the situation warrants.

Surrealist poetry: Revolutionary poetry which argues for complete artistic freedom, for the abandonment of all restrictions which might be imposed on the poet. The poet relinquishes all conscious control, responding to irrational urges of the deep mind.

Symbolist poetry: Poetry, which believes that there is a magical and mystical correspondence between the natural and spiritual worlds. By exploiting the connotative, suggestive and evocative power of words, the poet, through his own suggestive private language, obliquely expresses his correspondence and triggers off a sympathetic vibration in the reader.

6.6 QUESTIONS

Orpheus

1. Why do you think Sitanshu Yashashchandra uses the myth of Orpheus? What purpose does it serve?
2. Comment on the use of symbolism in the poem.
3. What does the poet want to convey through ‘lava liquid cascading down’?
4. Why is the image of ‘blind eagle’ significant?
5. Identify metaphors used by the poet in the poem, for example, ‘follies howling’. How can follies howl?
6. The poem Orpheus has been translated by the poet and also by E.V. Ramakrishnan and Anjana Desai. Which translation do you prefer? Give reasons.

A Notebook of Poems

1. Explain the place of Namdeo Dhasal in Marathi poetry in particular and in Indian poetry in general.
2. Explain how Namdeo Dhasal rises above the monotonous negation and rebellion in dalit poetry.
3. Write critical appreciation of the poems A Notebook of Poems and Autobiography.
4. Describe the nature of imagery in Namdeo Dhasal’s poems.
6.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

Sitanshu Yashashchandra

Thakar Dhirubhai, The muse is Lovable, Indian Literature


Rangra Ranvir, From Soil and Water to Fragrence, Interviews with Indian Writers, 1985.

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Marathi Literature: An Outline by P.N. Paranjpe and Nishiklant Mirajkar, Maharashtra Information Centre, New Delhi.

History of Modern Marathi Literature edited by Rajendra Banahatti, Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad, Pune.